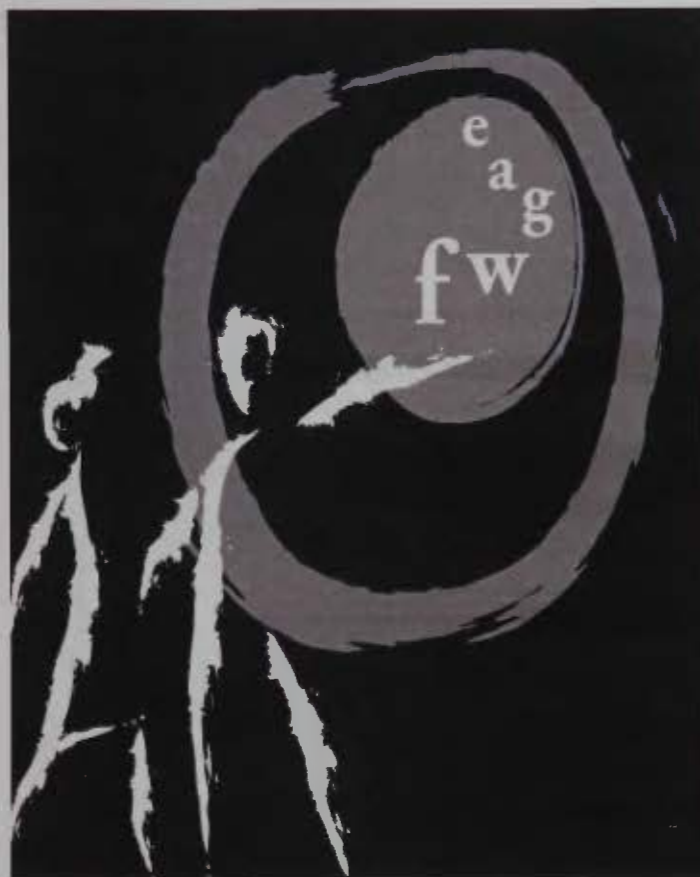


FIRST NASIONAL LITERACY CONFERENCE IN TIMOR-LESTE

15th of September 2004



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Table of content

TABLE OF CONTENT.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	5
UN SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN’S MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY (8 SEPTEMBER 2004)	7
CUBAN EXPERIENCE OF LITERACY FROM 1 ST JANUARY 1961 TO 22 ND DECEMBER 1961 BY: FRANCISCO MEDINA FELJO	25
EXPERIENCE OF TOTAL LITERACY CAMPAIGNS IN KERALA AND INDIA, A BRIEF NOTE BY K. K. KRISHNA KUMAR	33
FIRST LITERACY CONFERENCE TIMOR LESTE 15 SEPTEMBER 2004	
BY DANIEL RAVINDRAN.....	36
LITERACY COURSES FROM 1974-1975 BY: AICA BASAREAWAN.....	41
RESULT OF THE DISCUSSIONS	43
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	45
PARTICIPANTS LIST	47
ACRONYMS.....	53

We would like to thanks the following photographers:

Ms. Danielle Boon, Jose Sabino Gonzaga Xavier, Domingos Belo da Cruz and Domingos da Silva

Thanks to:

Jorge da Silveira Guterres (Oxfam GB Timor Leste) who prepared this report.

Introduction

This first National Literacy Conference was held in Dili on September 15, 2004 at the Teacher Training Institute. It was organized by the Department of Non-formal Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport of Timor Leste, with the logistical and financial support of UNICEF and OXFAM.

The objectives of this conference were to discuss and plan for national adult literacy campaign and plan for social mobilization for adult literacy.



Prime Minister of RDTL Mr. Marii Alkateri officially opened the literacy conference

The conference was officially opened by his excellency Prime Minister of RDTL, Mr. Marii Alkateri who praised this initiative, emphasizing the importance of education in the daily life of the society, and in particular, the role of parents in their children's

education, especially in remote rural communities.

Another important aspect of the conference was the participation and contribution of the 4 key speakers, three from overseas (Cuba, Australia, and India) and one from Timor Leste. The experience of Mrs Aicha Bassarewan was particularly important, since she had been involved in literacy in Timor since 1974, through her membership of the women's group OPMT.

The conference provided an opportunity for eight organizations who were really experienced in the area of literacy to gather together to strengthen cooperation and improve the coordination of the future work of the Non Formal Education Department. It also provided an opportunity for all 13 districts literacy coordinators to discuss the issues raised by the conference participants.

The Conference ended with a general agreement that its principle objectives had been met and that the coordination of all the participating organizations involved in teaching literacy throughout Timor Leste, NGOs, UN agencies and the Catholic Church, had enabled them to plan for a better future for literacy in Timor.

Dili, February 9, 2005

The National Director for Vocational
and Non-Formal Education
Mahafut Ambarac Bazi

UN secretary-general kofi annan's message
On international literacy day
(8 September 2004)

The theme of this year's International Literacy Day, Gender and Literacy, highlights the obstacle of gender inequality in our work for literacy for all.

In this second year of the United Nations Literacy Decade, more than 500 million women make up the majority of adult illiterates around the world, while girls constitute the majority of children who are not in school. At the same time we know, from study after study, that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, promote health -- including the prevention of HIV/AIDS -- and increase the chances of education for the next generation. For millions of women, literacy activities can offer a rare opportunity to learn a new vocabulary of possibility, opening up a new world beyond their immediate existence and that of their families. And what is true of families is true of communities -- ultimately, indeed, of whole countries.

In other words, literacy is not only a goal in itself. It is a prerequisite for a healthy, just and prosperous world. It is a crucial tool in our work to translate into reality the Millennium Development Goals -- adopted by all the world's governments as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century. Equally, literacy is a human right, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which spells out everyone's right to education.

It is unconscionable that 20 per cent of the world's adult population is still denied that right.

There is no time to lose if we are to meet the goal agreed by the world's governments to increase world literacy rates by 50 per cent by the year 2015. Although literacy campaigns have succeeded in increasing literacy worldwide, an enormous task lies ahead. That means we must go beyond efforts of the past, and apply lessons learnt from past mistakes. We must build on the most successful approaches we know -- those based on community action, which take into account local context and conditions. We must work in partnerships bringing together governments, civil society, the United Nations family and other international organizations. And we must place the needs of learner communities -- especially women -- at the centre of our efforts.

The United Nations Literacy Decade gives us an opportunity to step up our commitment and investment. The cost of building a literate society is relatively low compared with the cost of failure, in terms of prosperity, health, security and justice. On this International Literacy Day, let us rededicate ourselves to our mission of literacy for all -- women and men alike.

Adult Literacy and National Development : International Perspectives

**Paper presented to the First National Literacy Conference in
Timor-Leste, Institute of Continuing Education, Balidi, Dili,
September 15th, 2004**

**Authors: Bob Boughton & Deborah Durnan
University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia.
Presenter: Bob Boughton**

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss some international research findings about the role of adult literacy in the achievement of national development goals. I will begin by explaining my own background and experience as an adult educator and university –based researcher in the field. Then I will clarify assumptions in the paper, before reviewing the contribution which adult literacy makes to four key aspects of development, namely:

- health development, especially maternal and child health;
- the development of a ‘culture of education’ to support other education sectors;
- workforce development for sustainable economic activity; and
- more effective democracy through increasing participation and improving governance capacity.

The final part of the paper reviews the international policy context, especially the views of donor agencies, because this is an important part of the context in which national policy will be implemented.



Mr. Bob Boughton delivers his presentation at literacy conference

My background

I am the Coordinator of Adult and Workplace Education courses at the University of New England (UNE), an Australian public university with a strong focus on rural development. Prior to taking up this position, most of my working life was spent doing community development work, adult education and policy-based social research with Indigenous peoples organisations in Australia, particularly in rural and remote areas. For the last seven years, a major focus of my research and policy work has been to clarify the role of adult education in development in Indigenous communities, especially the contribution

which adult education programs make to community health development. Australia's 400,000 Indigenous peoples suffer some of the worst health and social conditions of any population anywhere in the world, despite living in one of the world's most successful advanced industrial economies. My focus has been adult education, because one of the biggest challenges these communities face is their low levels of adult literacy, in both English and their own vernacular languages.

In accepting the invitation to speak at this forum, I want to make it clear that I do not consider myself an 'expert' on Timor Leste. My role here is to share some information and analysis which may help you in your work of reconstruction.

I want to acknowledge the invaluable contribution to this paper made by Deborah Durnan, my co-author, who is doing research with UNE's Peace Centre on the role of popular education in peacebuilding in Timor Leste. She also has extensive experience in adult education in Indigenous communities.

Definitions and assumptions

A number of definitional issues need clarification when we discuss adult literacy policies and programs in a national development context. These revolve around the meanings we give to the following terms:

- adult literacy
- adult basic education
- adult education
- lifelong learning
- professional and technical education
- vocational education and training
- non-formal adult education
- popular education

- adult community education
- informal adult education

Following our visit last March, we wrote a brief report for the Ministry of Education, suggesting the need for an agreed system of classification for all the different adult education programs, to assist data collection and policy and program development (Boughton & Durnan 2004a). This is a problem worldwide, as the Argentinean educationalist Carla Maria Torres demonstrated in her recent comprehensive analysis for UNESCO (Torres 2003), and we cannot overcome it here today. However, it may help if we clarify three key assumptions made in this paper.

1. The challenge of adult illiteracy is best addressed in the context of wider adult education policies and programs, which in turn need to be integrated with individual, family, community and national development plans.

Literacy is not a subject, like History or Biology; it is an outcome. Adults acquire literacy through learning about other things. English-speaking educators call this literacy 'in context.' Adults acquire literacy through participation in adult education programs, which can occur in different parts of the education sector, but also in community development programs in other sectors e.g. agriculture or health.

2. Adult education is very different from school education, or education for children, in its curriculum, methods and delivery mechanisms, and, most importantly, in the way its participants learn.

We sometimes use the term basic education for programs which develop

literacy. But adult basic education is very different from basic education for children, which is delivered through schools. Why? Because adults and children have very different learning needs, and ways of learning. By adults, I mean people who have passed the age of compulsory schooling, but have missed out on acquiring the skills and knowledge base that primary and secondary schooling provides. The aim of adult education policy and programs, which include programs for people with low literacy or no literacy, is to provide learning opportunities for all those people who are no longer of school age, but have unmet basic learning needs. These opportunities have to be provided in ways that are sensitive to the specific needs of adults. This is why adult education has developed as a distinct field of practice, within the discipline of education. However, while adult education is a distinct and specific field, it is also very broad in its reach and type of programs. Earlier this year, a major Conference in Botswana, supported by UNESCO's Institute of Education and the World Bank, examined the role of adult education in poverty reduction. Their definition of adult education demonstrates its breadth:

Adult education ... includes concepts such as popular education, lifelong learning, non formal education and adult learning. It can be a skills development or an empowerment process, or both. It can therefore contribute to both direct and indirect poverty reduction strategies. It can have a political focus (such as raising awareness of human rights), an economic focus (such as issues of investing in adult education, addressing economic disempowerment), a social focus (for

example, inspiring a spirit of sharing or collective action), an environmental focus (such as fostering indigenous knowledge and environmental sustainability) or an intersectoral focus (for example, encouraging integrated approaches for effectivity and efficiency) (University of Botswana Department of Adult Education 2004)

In this paper, while the focus is the role of adult literacy in national development, the assumption is that adults can become literate through a similarly-wide variety of formal, non-formal and informal adult education programs.

3. Literacy is both a basic learning need, and a right – it is the foundation for the exercise of other rights and the achievement of basic needs.

Adults *need* literacy, in order to participate in social, economic and political development in the modern world. To be illiterate is to be excluded, because with development comes a whole range of new challenges which require people to have literacy as a basis for engagement. We should be mindful of the fact that people *seek* to be literate, as is their right, to enable them to participate effectively in development.

Impact Of Adult Literacy On Health Development

Improving the health of the population is clearly a major priority for national development in most countries of the South, as it is in the industrialized world. For several decades now, it has been universally accepted that the health of populations improves with rising education levels in the adult population, measured in terms of years of formal schooling or adult literacy rates. Writing

in 1991, Professor Jack Caldwell¹ summarised what was then known internationally about “the cultural, social and behavioural determinants of health”:

The most firmly established generalization ... [is] that parental education, particularly maternal education, has a major impact on the survival of children even when controlled for income and other indices of material well-being... There [is] agreement that any kind of modern schooling reduces mortality levels and that the phenomenon occurs in all parts of the Third World. Furthermore, the change is linear, with a reduction in child mortality of 7-9 per cent for each additional year of maternal education (Caldwell & Caldwell 1991).

The most common health indicator used to demonstrate the link is reduced child mortality, leading to increased life expectancy. This effect persists even after the positive effects that education has on income and employment are taken into account. In most societies, it is the education levels and literacy rates of mothers that have been shown to be most important for children's health, although the effects of fathers' education and literacy are also significant.

The positive health effects of education are usually associated with a wider social movement for increased social and economic equality, especially movements which reinforce women's

autonomy (Boughton 2000). The countries where this is said to have occurred include Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, Cuba and China; and the state of Kerala in India (Caldwell 1989; Parayil 2000). One of the most striking studies, for example, examined the long term effects of the 1980-1985 Sandinista-led popular education and literacy program in Nicaragua, called the National Literacy Crusade (CNA). This study shows that a mass adult literacy program can achieve a similar health effect to several years of schooling. It found that the children of women who had participated in the program had significantly lower mortality and better health outcomes (measured by nutritional status), compared with the children of those who had not. It also found that the women themselves enjoyed better health (Sandiford et al, 1995).

Higher education levels have a much more pronounced impact on child survival and health when accompanied by improved access to primary health care services, especially maternal and infant health care. This works both ways. Improved schooling and literacy works better to improve health when there is more primary health care; but improved access to primary health care has been found to have less of an impact on maternal and child health where there is not a corresponding improvement in education and literacy levels, especially among young women (Caldwell 1989; 1994).

The reasons that adult, especially women's, education levels have a positive impact on health are many and varied (Hobcraft 1993). Among the reasons established are that literate women:

¹ In July this year, Caldwell, now 75, received the UN Population Award, which recognises individuals who have brought “remarkable benefits to the health and quality of life of people around the world, and to the wider cause of sustainable development.” UN Press Release DSG/SM/229 POP/906, accessed 19/8/04, from www.un.org/News/press/docs/2004/dsgsm229.doc.htm

- Understand public health messages better
- Access primary health care services more, especially ante-natal and post-natal services;
- Help maintain better public health and domestic hygiene;
- Delay their first pregnancy longer, which increases the chances the infant will survive;
- Interact more effectively and more confidently with health workers and health professionals e.g.
 - They are more likely to go to a service when they or their children become sick
 - They communicate what is wrong more effectively
 - They understand treatment advice better, have confidence in it, and find it easier to follow
 - If treatment does not result in improvements, they are more likely to go back and ask for further advice
- Manage their lives and households more effectively, because they have greater influence in family and community decision making about resource allocation.

Adult literacy programs also contribute to better population health by helping to create a pool of better educated people to undertake health work and health development work. Primary health care services staffed by local people can provide cost-effective health care where there are no doctors and few nurses, but these local health workers need some basic literacy. There are many good health worker training programs available internationally which can be adapted to local needs, such as in Timor Leste, but basic literacy is usually a prerequisite for undertaking such

programs and obtaining some form of certification (Durnan 2002).

Our experience working with Indigenous communities suggests one further point which may be relevant. As you are probably aware, Australia's Indigenous communities are still recovering from a brutal invasion which in some parts of the country amounted to an attempted genocide; and in some communities in which we have worked, the experience of para-military style oppression occurred within the living memory of older people. These communities are therefore 'post-conflict' societies, and this history has specific effects in terms of health and well-being. For example, there are very high rates of domestic violence, high rates of abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and a high rate of morbidity and mortality associated with trauma, especially among younger people. This is usually talked about in terms of the need to improve 'social and emotional well-being.' In our experience, adult education programs designed to help communities to deal with these problems have to address the powerlessness, alienation and frustration that arises from a lack of literacy and basic education (Bell, Bartlett and Boughton, 2004).

The link between adult education and health is not confined to countries of the South. In the last few years, the Centre for the Wider Benefits of Learning at the University of London² has been comparing different countries across Europe in terms of their education system outcomes and their population health indicators. What role, these studies are asking, are education systems

² An account of this work and some publications are available at www.learningbenefits.net

playing in the reproduction of social capital, that controversial attribute of communities, regions and even whole countries which is said to be protective of individual health and well-being? This is a huge field, not easy to summarise in a brief paper. Two points can however be made. Once again, education – this time re-configured as learning, as in ‘lifelong learning’- has been found to be intimately implicated in health and health development, not just at an individual but at a population or collective level. The second point is more thought-provoking. Inter-country comparisons suggest that national education systems *which produce highly unequal outcomes* play a role in worsening, not reducing, health inequalities.

To summarise, adult education programs with young women, in particular, will have significant long term effects on population health, because the better the health conditions of mothers and their babies, the less likely it is that their children will have health problems as they grow older. The early years of life are recognised worldwide, including by the World Health Organisation, as having major effects on an individual’s health for the remainder of the lifespan. In other words, by investing now in women’s education, and in men’s education too, a country can produce a significant improvement in subsequent decades in its overall population health. The consequences are far-ranging, since this reduces the cost of providing secondary health care as this generation of children become adults and grow older, and it makes also for a healthy and more productive workforce.

The Impact of Adult Literacy on the ‘Culture of Education’:

Learning Communities

In debates around education and development, the different education sectors – schools, vocational education, higher education, and community or non-formal adult education - are ‘championed’ in different periods over others, especially by funding agencies. The problem with this approach is that education programs succeed or fail inside families, communities and cultures. Therefore, no one sector can achieve the outcomes it requires unless attention is also paid to the other sectors. The education of children and young people, in particular, is highly unlikely to succeed where there is no ‘culture of education’ among the significant adults to whom the children relate, particularly older siblings, parents, grandparents and neighbours. A wealth of evidence exists to show that where attention is not paid to including adults in the educational process, children and young people fail to engage with schooling and finish up leaving it without having attained the desired outcomes, thereby perpetuating inequality from generation to generation.

It is therefore worrying that international agency policies appear to be forcing education sectors to compete with each other for scarce resources. In her exhaustive survey of adult basic education programs in countries of the South, Torres (2003) describes this trend :

Poor children and their parents (are) forced to compete in terms of educational priorities. The “option” between adults and children has been institutionalized in educational policies and in recommendations by international agencies, in the name of

scarce resources and the need to prioritize.

But, as her study makes very clear, such a position will finish up with countries not achieving their goals even in primary or basic education. Why is this so? Because it makes no sense to separate adult and child learning and well-being. This 'option' is therefore not an option at all, because it "denies and breaks the family and the community as fundamental learning organizations... The children's right to education includes the right to educated parents" (ibid).

One of the strongest arguments for adult literacy programs is therefore that they help create an enabling environment in which children and young people are more likely to participate and succeed in school and post-school education and training programs. Research in at least seven countries, including Ghana (cited Oxenham 2004, p. 3) and South Africa (Desmond 2004), has found that children are much more likely to attend and complete primary and secondary school when their parents are also engaged in education programs. The South African Family Literacy Projects described by Desmond are particularly important. They were developed because research was showing that increased primary school participation was not producing the desired literacy outcomes among children. Similar research is behind UNICEF's concern to include mothers in their children's education, and to address the literacy issue for young women, but again, this excludes many significant other adults in a child or young person's community. In Australian Indigenous education, and in other countries, governments who have recognised this link are beginning to support 'learning communities', where schools become

education centres for the whole community (Schwab and Sutherland 2001). The Learning Centres being set up in sixteen countries under UNESCO's Asia Pacific Program for Education for All (APPEAL) have a similar aim – to establish an "intergenerational" culture of education. However, it is best to think of the idea of learning communities as a policy, not a program, a way of understanding how to build education into the very core of both national and community-level development:

The *learning community* proposed here does not refer to a particular institution (a community learning center, a school, a network) but rather to an area or territory: an organized urban or rural human community that constitutes itself as a "learning community", defines and implements its own collective learning strategy to meet and expand the basic learning of all its members – children, young people and adults – in order to ensure personal, family and community development (Torres 2003).

This is borne out by our own experience, working with Indigenous communities with low literacy levels, where we discovered that a major reason why adults undertake adult education programs is so that they can support their children's schooling, and have some way of participating in it (Durnan and Boughton 1999). The 'take-home message', then, is that "adult literacy has an important role to play in making mainstream education both more effective and more pro-poor" (Cawthera, cited Oxenham 2004).

Finally, one of the obstacles to creating a policy environment in which there is a

'whole-of-community' and intergenerational approach to learning is that formal school, vocational and university programs have more easily-measurable outcomes which can be inserted into economic models. Adult basic education with people who have low literacy levels is usually better done in the context of community development work, alongside people as they carry out the tasks of their daily lives. This makes it very hard to measure, or to point to, and its outcomes may take some years to manifest themselves. Consequently, this sort of work does not 'fit' as easily within the dominant development models of many international agencies. However, as experience in Sri Lanka, Cost Rica, Cuba, and the Indian state of Kerala has shown, paying attention to adult literacy in this way does have a positive impact, if not in immediate economic growth, then in the longer term in the maintenance of social equality and in the collapsing rather than the widening of educational inequality (Parayil 2000). This in turn, as we saw above, has a major effect on the overall health of the population, and its political and social cohesion.

Impact of Adult Literacy on Sustainable Economic independence

The third way that adult literacy contributes directly to national development is by increasing peoples' capacity to earn income, raise themselves out of poverty, and achieve greater economic independence. This occurs alongside and in interaction with its effects on health and educational participation, because people with higher incomes are generally also more healthy

and are also more likely to send their children to school.

There are at least four ways in which literacy programs support economic development. Firstly, literacy skills help people to establish and manage micro-enterprises and income-generating activities. Secondly, literacy levels affect productivity directly, in a range of areas, including agriculture. Thirdly, basic literacy is often a pre-requisite for attaining greater vocational skills, including formal vocational qualifications, which enable people to increase their incomes. Fourthly, literate adults engage more effectively with the market economy and with the government and non-government agencies which regulate and support economic activity.

Some examples will illustrate this. Oxenham (2004) conducted an exhaustive review of evidence that adult literacy helped alleviate poverty. This included World Bank studies in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ghana; programs in El Salvador, Uganda, Nepal, and Bolivia; and his own research in Senegal. The benefits from individual literacy projects included improvements in savings and investment, improvements in production practices especially in agriculture, and improved incomes. In Senegal, people who undertook literacy programs subsequently took on leadership roles in local producer cooperatives. With agricultural communities participating in REFLECT programs in El Salvador, Ghana and Bangladesh, participants reported that it had stimulated them to improve their use of their land, water, crops and money.

This does not mean that literacy programs can do this on their own. The best programs are those which link into actual economic development programs and the development of practical and technical skills. This has been referred to as the 'Learning and Earning Approach'. For example, in Kenya, literacy programs are being successfully integrated with economic development projects for women. The Department of Adult Education in the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development reported:

To make the teaching of the 3Rs meaningful, deliberate efforts were made to integrate income-generating projects into the literacy programme.... These [projects] helped learners get some income and improve their living standards. It was [observed] that centres with income-generating projects registered more learners due to high motivation as skills learnt were put into practical use and the income generated helped learners to solve some of their domestic problems (Kenyan DAE, cited Thompson 2002, p. 103)

Similarly, in Uganda, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) is sponsoring a program which connects adult education to sustainable agricultural development, under the auspices of the Ugandan government's Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, which is part of the government's Poverty Eradication Action Plan. In this project, adult literacy is integrated with the development of rural micro-credit programs and adoption of new and sustainable agricultural practices (Olinga & Lubyayi: 2002). Interviews with Botswanan women participating in their country's national literacy program

likewise reinforced the crucial links between 'learning and earning' (Raditloaneng & Mulenga 2003)

Finally, sustainable economic development requires that the fruits of economic growth are distributed equitably, and lead to improved living standards across the whole population. This is not possible unless attention is paid to raising literacy levels in the adult population, because these literacy levels will determine the extent to which the mass of people are included in the development process. There is strong evidence, e.g. from Kerala (Franke and Chasin 2000), that societies which pay attention to adult literacy achieve more equitable development outcomes, with the benefits of growth flowing through to improved living standards and quality of life for the majority of the population.

An important lesson we learned in Indigenous development in Australia was that once the bulk of education resources are locked up in urban-centred formal education systems, the more educated classes who benefit most from such systems (who in North Australia are predominantly the non-Indigenous people) resist efforts to de-centralise and redistribute resources to rural and remote areas, where illiteracy is high. The education system then itself becomes one of the ways that social inequality is legitimated and maintained.

The Impact of Adult Literacy on Participation, Democracy and Good Governance

As a teacher of adult educators, I point out in my introductory lectures that adult education has a long and proud historical connection with movements for independence and democracy. In 19th

century Europe, the early trade union, cooperative, and women's movements all made adult education a central feature of their activity. Twentieth century independence movements in the colonial world did the same, and it would be hard to find a social movement for democracy and independence anywhere in the world in the last two hundred years which did not include adult education, especially with less literate and marginalised peoples, in its program and activities. Timor Leste has its own history in this regard, with the mass literacy program of Fretilin in 1974-75 (Hill 2002) as an example. In El Salvador, the FMLN ran literacy programs and taught their guerrilla soldiers to conduct classes in the areas under their control (Hammond 1998). My own work has uncovered examples of trade unions and political parties and producers cooperatives doing similar education work in Australia from the late 19th to the middle 20th century (Boughton 1997). When I began working as an adult educator in Central Australia in the 1980s, it was with local Aboriginal organisations who wanted their young leaders to learn about politics and government, so they could more effectively campaign around their basic needs, for housing, health care, and legal rights.

This integral connection between adult education and political participation does not stop once independence is achieved, democracy established and a popular government elected to power. On the contrary, without a strategy for continued mobilisation and involvement of the whole population in pursuit of national development goals, there is a risk of dependency on governments and donor agencies, on the one hand, and

bureaucratic stagnation, even corruption, on the other.

The recent literacy campaign in Kerala is a case study which shows the positive relationship between literacy and participation. In the early 1990s, there was a popular movement to involve the people more in the development process, to decentralise the planning and decision making. Even though Kerala already had an 80% literacy rate, it was decided that the first priority of development should be the eradication of illiteracy, because without literacy, it was not possible to include the people most marginalised into the development process. In a program supported by progressive elements within government and local political leaders, utilising thousands of volunteers recruited through an NGO, some districts attained the extraordinary rate of 100% literacy – this in a country, India, where the national literacy rate is around 56% (Tomquist 2000).

Literacy is a fundamental element in the building of a modern democratic state. Oxenham's (2004) study, which examined the contribution of adult basic education in countries around the world to the Millennial Development Goals, concluded that:

In sum, suitably organized and implemented literacy programmes do tend to engender stronger and more confident social and political participation by poor, unschooled people -particularly poor women.

But the corollary is also true, that illiteracy is very often the accompaniment to inequality and tyranny. Without basic literacy, people are excluded from the political processes, and are prone to manipulation by populist leaders. Low literacy levels

form a fertile ground in which unrealistic notions of democracy can develop, as recent experience in some Pacific island states demonstrates. This is why adult education has always seen itself as an ally of democracy, because it helps ordinary people, who have not had the benefit of schooling and higher education, achieve sufficient basic understanding to be able, as Freire said, to 'read their world.'

Our work in Indigenous communities where literacy levels are extremely low confirms the contribution that adult literacy makes to the effective operation of governance and democracy at the micro-level. In the absence of programs which address adult illiteracy, Indigenous communities have enormous difficulty taking control and becoming active agents in their own development, and the few leaders who do have better literacy levels quickly burn out. In our direct experience, this results in high levels of wastage of funds applied to local development goals, and increasing alienation, frustration, and socially-destructive behaviour, especially among young people. Literacy programs can be developed around helping people to clarify their needs, identifying and accessing the resources within and outside their communities to meet those needs, and then managing those resources to achieve their goals. This is not rocket science, but it does involve literacy, as a first step towards establishing good governance at the local level and participatory development strategies which have the consent of the local population.

Finally, governments in the South which seek to engage critically with the major forces of the global economy cannot

afford not to have a literate population actively engaged in political participation. A politically literate population provides essential support to governments wanting to maintain an independent position internationally. Adult education programs which are organic, coordinated and integrated across the different sectors of government and non-government activity help to engage people actively in national dialogues, and to reflect critically on the way global issues impact on their own development aspirations and needs.

International Policy Context

This last part of the paper briefly reviews the international policy context in which the support for adult literacy has to be addressed. This international dimension is important, because, with the best will in the world, and the most progressive education policy, Timor Leste, like every other peripheral country in this globalised world, will be required to establish and implement its policies with reference to the policies of international agencies and donor nations. The lack of understanding and commitment among these external parties to the critical role of adult education presents a major obstacle to obtaining support for an enhanced effort in relation to adult literacy. This policy impediment will need to be addressed, through arguments based on reliable international, but also local, research.

This conference was called to recognise International Literacy Day, declared by the United Nations and supported by its many agencies and key multinational institutions. Historically, this commitment goes back at least to 1990, when the Education For All (EFA)

manifesto was adopted at Jomtien. The international adult education community re-asserted its commitment to adult literacy at the UNESCO CONFITEA V Conference in 1997, and the World Education Forum, held in 2000 in Dakar adopted a Framework for Action on EFA by 2015 which included a commitment to improve literacy rates by 50%. The UN, moreover, has declared an International Decade of Literacy 2003-2013. We can hope that these developments will over time help create a more supportive policy environment for national governments and NGOs who wish to prioritise adult literacy. A declaration of a recent conference of Southern African development agencies, for example, included the following statement:

WE SEE ADULT BASIC AND LITERACY EDUCATION as a fundamental human right and an indispensable complement to the formal education of children and youth. It is a vitally important component of education policy that must stand alongside formal schooling, as it is adults who hold the responsibility for building sustainable futures. We believe that adult basic and literacy education is the essential foundation for lifelong learning that can be the portal to the development of knowledge, values, skills and sustainable livelihoods. Policies, programmes and legislation should reflect this. THEREFORE, this community of adult educators and development practitioners constituted by people from governments, education and training institutions, NGOs, unions, adult education networks and donor agencies, expresses its commitment to the revitalization of adult basic

and literacy education for democracy and sustainable development (cited Schugurensky 2002).

However, it is important to recognise that there are counter tendencies. Despite strong international policy commitments, implementation has proved less straightforward. In particular, a World Bank study in 1994 seriously questioned the value of adult literacy programs in national development, and this scepticism flowed through into the Millennium Development Goals, based on OECD international development targets; and the World Bank-funded Fast Track Initiatives on EFA, which prioritised primary school education, at the expense of adult education programs, in the campaign to overcome illiteracy. This occurred even though, by 1998, the World Bank had acknowledged the inadequacy of the 1994 study (Torres 2003; Burchett 2004).

A second challenge is that international policy trends reflect national policy shifts inside donor countries. During the 1990s, broadly- defined adult education, which included a wide range of social and community development goals and programs, suffered a substantial reduction in financial support from governments which chose to prioritise the vocational education and training sector. However, this trend has begun to be reversed again, in the last two years. Such national policy shifts flow through into the attitudes of aid agencies, both government and non-government. It is also important to acknowledge that very few OECD countries prioritise adult education in their aid budgets (Youngman 2000).

Thirdly, the dispersed nature of adult education makes it difficult to measure,

and leaves it without a single institutional base inside governments. As a sympathetic commentator from UNESCO puts it:

Lack of clarity on what constitutes adult education, lack of specified recording of financial support to adult education and lack of knowledge on what financing is needed to undertake adult education activities and achieve the adult education-related EFA goals act against provision of funding for adult education. In a context of scarce resources, this may reinforce the trend towards paying particular attention to investing broadly in school education for children, and particularly girls, rather than ensuring systemic development, of which continuing education and special programmes for marginalized and excluded adult population groups form a necessary part (Burchert 2004).

Nevertheless, there is substantial international evidence which can be used to advocate for improved programs targeting adult illiteracy. In some areas, particularly health, the evidence is simply overwhelming, while in other areas, the evidence is still being accumulated.

In a world increasingly dominated by economic thinking, it is important to point out that short term savings in education budgets 'upstream' do not take long to translate into higher 'downstream' costs. These can include poor maternal and child health; reduced economic productivity; lowered participation in education by children and youth; reduced political participation; less effective governance at a local level; and ultimately,

increasing social inequality with its consequences in terms of increased risk of social conflict and a breakdown of peace and order.

Conclusion

This paper has set out some of the evidence from around the world that demonstrates the fundamental importance of adult education to sustainable development, especially programs with people who are illiterate or have low literacy. We have presented this with a view to supporting your own democratically-decided national development plan, which commits to the elimination of illiteracy.

The main thing, as you go forward, will be to develop your own Timorese system for addressing these issues. All education, including adult education, has to grow from within the culture and the experience of the people it is to benefit. There are no 'cheap imports' which can substitute for your own national system, and education is not a product that can be bought off the shelf, much as some industrialized countries, our own included, would sometimes have us believe. As we argued in another paper, the key to an effective Timor Leste adult education system, which addresses the problems of adult illiteracy in the context of local, regional and national development goals, will be the capacity and leadership of your own adult education workforce, because only Timorese adult educators can really know what is needed (Boughton and Durnan 2004b).

To add a final point, the other activity which deserves some attention is the development of a local capacity to undertake the research and evaluation of

your programs which generates the data on which submissions for funding and of policy development depend. Such locally-run evaluative research can become an extremely powerful tool in your negotiations with donor agencies and your own Treasury. It will also help to rectify the continued Euro-centric and Anglo-centric focus of much adult education research.

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Cuban experience of Literacy
From 1st January 1961 to 22nd December 1961

By; Francisco Medina Feijo



- 1. The Campaign for Literacy**
- 2. The setting up of a national education system which would eradicate illiteracy**

The Cuban Experience in the Country Literacy Process should be seen in 2 Stages:

- 1- The Campaign for Literacy
- 2- The Setting up of a National Education System which would ensure no more illiteracy cases and would eradicate it.

LITERACY

why literacy is it the Cuban State's first priority?

- The fact that the geographical and social illiteracy distribution is nearly identical to that of poverty is not accidental; an illiterate is generally the poorest, the worst nourished, the least healthy and the most marginalized. Frustration in the development of human capacities and potentialities, limitation of an individual as a person and part of the community, lack of knowledge on a better future, and social drama of underdevelopment, loss of national identity and social and economic backwardness are all seen in illiteracy.
- Requirements for a qualitative transformation of the society, for struggle



Mr. Francisco Medina Feijo deliver his presentation at literacy conference

against social sources of a neocolonial, inherited alienation and creation in Cuba of a new society, needed appropriation of culture as well as national and universal science instruments and values by great majority and, first of all, eradication of illiteracy.

- An unprecedented campaign is currently being carried out against illiteracy. It is a valuable experience to learn what people can do when they decide to apply all their energy to attain a great goal.
- The fight against illiteracy in Cuba should not be conceptualized solely as a state phenomenon. The National Campaign for Literacy in 1961, assumed a significant national and popular feature which was precisely expressed in the formation of a mass educational movement-movement which was the main protagonist of future events.

Methodology

Quantitative and Qualitative Problem Magnitude Identification

- When the struggle ended in 1959, 23.6% of Cuban population was illiterate (Just adults 979.207) with a big difference between the rural and urban areas.
- 50% of children at schooling age (approximately 800,000), were not attending school.
- There were 7,000 classes, when there should be 35,000, with children living in the country the most affected.
- The number of illiterate adults increased every year.

Literacy Campaign Organization



- Once the numbers of illiterates had been identified, the most ample scientific and human concepts historic, ethnic, sociologic, psychological, religious and politics were used to motivate them to enroll in literacy classes.
- Procedures, means and didactic methods for literacy and post literacy were defined.
- A National Committee and Literacy and Education Municipal Councils were created.
- An agreement with the management of communication (Radio, TV and Media) was signed for publication of the materials in the daily newspapers, and the broadcast of special programs for the population information on the Campaign.



- The country leaders appealed to secondary schools, the pre-university and university students, encouraging them to teach the children and adults at the farms and up in the hills.



- An educational movement was developed to turn all citizens into agents of the education process as well as moral and cultural development and a large group of voluntary teachers was set up – 271,000 in total.

- Teachers were trained (they were taught how to teach), in adult education methodology for the whole country. Material with terminology which would be easily understood by the rural population and called “TEACHER’S SPELLING-BOOK” was arranged



- Teachers went to live with farm workers. With “The Teacher’s Spelling-Book” and a lantern, they taught the children during the day and the adults at night, after they came back from their farm work. They taught this way for 11 months and 22 days.





- 1961 was named the Year of Education. From January the first, when the Campaign commenced, to the 22nd of December 1961, **70,000 students had been taught.** This way, Cuba reduced the rate of illiteracy to **3.9%** of its total population, and placed those Cuba among nations with the lowest illiteracy rates, like the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, France, England and Japan.

The Setting up of the National Education Which ensures no more illiteracy

- The fundamental needs of the primary school were fulfilled, by carrying out the follow up Campaign, the “Worker’s Improvement” Courses (continuation of studies) and promotion the adult education plan which was also developed with the support of popular organizations.
- Schools were opened in the whole National Territory. In one year alone (1960 to 1961), 15,000 new classes were created in rural areas and the enrolments in elementary schools rose from 582,198 to 1,118,942 students (92.1%).
- Free education was established from primary school to university and school attendance was compulsory up to 16 years old (working age in Cuba).
- Semi Internal Centers with lunch included, were created up to Grade 6 and morning and afternoon classes for working mothers children.
- Internal Classes Centers were created for secondary studies and pre universities for children who live in places with difficult access and students’ residence for university students, with food and lodgings for free.
- A National Special Schools Network for Children with mental problems has been created, where besides reading and writing, they are trained in any trade according their abilities.
- In the same schools built all over the country, night secondary school and Faculties (SOC and FOC) classes were run.

CONCLUSION

- The Cuban experience of eradicating illiteracy and the subsequent development of the Educational System may be expressed as:
- GUIDELINES
- GENERAL PRINCIPLES
- PRINCIPLES ON WHICH POPULAR EDUCATION SHOULD BE BASED

GUIDELINES

- To achieve the elimination of the class barriers which limit the massive access of all citizens to educational services
- To defend education as a political fact, maker of citizenship, participation and social commitment.
- To develop a scientific education, made up from history and indigenous culture, oriented to develop and universalize the world surrounding the participants.
- To provide educational change and transformation in the sense that school overcomes rigidity and traditionalisms.
- To get a teaching method which develops and maximizes the learning and emphasizes the formation of patriotic and human values
- To conceive schooling work in relation to society, family, community and the nation.
- To pay constant attention to teacher training and in general to the integral rise of the quality of educational services.

General principles to eradicate illiteracy

TO DEVELOP:

- Campaign for compassion.
- Campaign for Science and Awareness.
- Campaign for Unity of the State and the Society .

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH POPULAR EDUCATION SHOULD BE BASED

In its fundamentally liberating aim to educate people committed to progressive change and human dealienation:

1. Identification of individual and collective needs and aspirations by dealing with the valuation of the present diversity in local values.
To understand the complexity of life in terms of personal and social identities and to support the construction and strength of collective wishes.
2. To put into practice democratic methods and procedures in social and political organizations: for making decisions, for management and interaction with institutions, for implementation and evaluation of actions.
3. To prepare adequate projects and strategies which should express the interests of the most diverse popular sectors, without overlapping or abolishing their particularities and also to articulate their radical revolutionary aims to

achieve in an efficient way, economic, social and cultural improvements.

4. To redeem and recreate the values which reinforce identity and popular and national democratic self-determination.
5. To work with an integral methodology which among others articulates strategically the investigative, pedagogic and communication dimensions.
6. To consistently articulate the diversity and unity of specific and global aspects; the qualitative attention and the reach of masses; capacity building and training; technical and social content; methods and contents; direct action and strategic projection of the practice of the social agents

CURRENTLY

- The Minimum schooling level is Grade 9.
- In each class there is a teacher for a maximum of 20 students.
- Universities were set up in all provinces of the country.
- Each class has a TV set and a video for teaching.
- Two TV channels were opened just for education, classes are televised from them to all levels, universities are included in the latter at night and associated to "Spelling-Books" which can be acquired in the whole country.

Experience of total literacy campaigns in Kerala and India

A brief note by K. K. Krishna Kumar

The concept and practice of what is today known as the Total Literacy Campaigns, in India got evolved in the district of Ernakulam in the tiny green state of Kerala situated on the southern tip of India, in the year 1988. The programme was spear headed by the Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad-a renowned Peoples Science movement with the full backing of the district and state administration and the financial backing of the National Literacy Mission of the Government of India.

The main characteristics of this programme were the following:

- A strong, meaningful and democratic partnership between all the government agencies/departments, voluntary non-governmental agencies and various sections of the society.
- A highly participatory movement mode to evoke the voluntary spirit of individuals and organisations of all kinds
- A high pitched, high-temperature campaign using cultural and other media to create a strong demand for literacy and also to involve every individual (literate or non literate) in the programme
- A highly functional management and academic team consisting of experts as well as peoples activists/representatives to carry out the programme in a time bound and result oriented manner.

The Ernakulam Campaign involved around 200,000 learners and about 20,000 voluntary teachers. In the initial days there were misgivings and disbelief. Most of the people thought that this would be yet another governmental programme without any heart or spirit. But we were able to overcome this cynicism through a massive cultural campaign. We were trying to show the linkage between illiteracy and various kinds of social problems and exploitation. It worked well. People started considering literacy as a fundamental issue.

The key word in the campaign was voluntarism. After the initial round of the campaign large number of young men and women came out and registered as voluntary teachers. We did not have money to pay them any honorarium. But all of them said we have not come for money or any other material gain. This was the beginning of the success. Slowly, as we went ahead, we were amazed to see the kind of support and cooperation that people were willing to provide. The poor and the rich, the learned and the ordinary, all came to support the campaign.

As the society started owning the programme fully, it was so easy to move forward. Various groups in the society came out with all kinds of material, moral and creative support. It won't be an exaggeration if I say that the programme slowly turned into a massive peoples festival. Many of the traditional festivals in Kerala were transformed into Literacy

Festivals (for example there was Akshara Onam and Akshara Deepavali). We did not have to spend anything for the massive training programmes for the voluntary literacy instructors. People were so supportive that they sponsored food and various other requirements.

It is not to say that there were no difficulties. There were times when the campaign went into slumber due to rains, agriculture seasons, political turmoil and so on . But since the society was conscious, they immediately came out with solutions. The impact of the first round of the campaign lasted only for a few months. As time went ahead there was necessity to device new types of campaigns. But this time the volunteers, learners and the local peoples committees themselves came out with new ideas and solutions. At one point of time the school children were involved in a big way to enthuse the non- literates who had not enrolled themselves in the literacy classes. The children went around requesting their mothers, fathers and grandparents to become literate for their sake. As the literacy classes got started, we had to keep the learners interest. Merely concentrating on the 3Rs (Reading, Writing and Numeracy) was not sufficient. We had to link it up with their day to day problems and life situations. Thus linkages were made with health, environment, livelihood issues and so on.

People from all walks of life were willing to help and support the programme. But we had to be sufficiently innovative and creative to point out to them in concrete terms how each one of them can participate in the programmes. We requested the shop keepers to exhibit literacy posters and

price boards in their shops, we requested the post office people to invite new learners to visit their offices, we requested the bus operators to sing songs of literacy while they travel.. Each and every department of the government (including the police and the jail departments!) were requested to evolve their specific programmes to involve with the Total Literacy Programme. It was slowly turning into a massive people's festival. Festival is the highest form of participation.. Is it not?

At the same time we had to be careful about the academic aspects of the programme as well. We evolved a massive Three-tier training programme. This involved a set of Key Resource Persons, Master Trainers and Voluntary Instructors. There was a vigilant peoples monitoring group working round the clock. There was a district control room which functioned round the clock.. Every time when there was some serious problem there was a sytem to immediately intervene and help. This was essential to keep the morale of the learners, instructors and the organizers high.

The Ernakulam Total literacy Campaign was a major success and it became a milestone in the history of independent India. Ernakulam became the first totally literate district in India. Later in 1989, the same approach was adapted to make the entire state of Kerala totally literate. This was a much more massive programme involving around 2.5 million learners and around 25,000 volunteers. The same kind of enthusiasm was visible throughout the state during the campaign.

After the success of the Ernakulam district Total Literacy Campaign, the Government of India decided to make use of the campaign approach throughout the country. Between 1990 and 2000 more than 350 districts were covered under this programme. Even

though there were variations in the nature of the campaign depending upon the concrete situation on the ground, the basic concepts remain the same. India achieved a path breaking decadal growth in literacy as a result of the campaign.

FIRST LITERACY CONFERENCE TIMOR LESTE 15 SEPTEBER, 2004

Speech by Ravindran Daniel,
Director, Human Rights Unit, UNMISSET

I am invited to speak on the Indian experience particularly the experience of state of Kerala in achieving total literacy in the state. I was not involved in the campaign conducted in the state of kerala. However, I was involved in a major literacy campaign that was conducted in 1977 by the Government of India. I had just finished my law degree. Instead of becoming a lawyer, I joined a literacy programme. I was responsible for coordinating 100 literacy centers in a sub -district. Therefore, I have first hand experience in organizing literacy campaigns. More importantly, I am fully aware of the joy and empowerment literacy brings to ordinary people.

I am therefore, very pleased that the Ministry of Education in collaboration with several NGOs is organizing this first literacy conference. I am grateful to the organizers for giving me this opportunity to be part of this important event.

Let me share the experience of India in particular the campaign organized by the state of Kerala in achieving total literacy.

Kerala has a population of thirty million people.

In the 80's Kerala's literacy was about 70 percent double that of the Indian average. In 1988, the Kerela state Government decided to embark on a

campaign to achieve total literacy in the state. Total literacy is defined as a population where about 95% can read and write.

The pilot project for achieving total literacy was first started in a district called Ernakulam with a population of 3 million people.



Mr. Ravindran Daniel presents the Kerala (India) experience of an adult literacy campaign

" On January 21, 1989, Thousands of literacy activists chanted the slogan - "Sakshara Keralam, Sundara Keralam— A Literate Kerala is a Beautiful Kerala as they began five simultaneous *jathas* or processions from different parts of the District.

The procession groups marched for 5 days through villages and urban neighborhoods, stopping at hundreds of reception points to perform songs and street dramas, to hold public discussions and to issue calls to illiterate people to come forward and learn to read.

Local communities provided food and lodging for the procession members who included many of Kerala's most famous writers, artists, professors, and university administrators. On arriving in Ernakulam City on January 26, they joined thousands of students and other volunteers in a massive public meeting to light a ceremonial literacy torch and take the literacy pledge:

"I do hereby solemnly pledge that I will do everything within my capacity to liberate my motherland India from illiteracy and to arm the toiling and suffering millions with the weapon of the letter."

The next day the campaign began to mobilize the 50,000 volunteers needed for a one-day survey of all 600,000 households in Ernakulam District.

In April another series of processions were organized, with at least one performance conducted in every village and urban neighborhood. These processions converged once again in Ernakulam city where 250 costumed artists formed an Akshara Chakram, or "Letter Circle."

This visual display capped 10 days of dramatic actions that mobilized nearly 22,000 volunteer literacy teachers.

Classes began in May of 1989. Additional processions and artistic

performances helped create an atmosphere in which illiterates felt they could come forward and join in the classes. After the classes began, literacy walls were set up in each ward of each village and town to give news of the campaign. Literacy banners sprouted throughout the District. Organizers ran a competition for the most attractive banners.

At special events called *Kalamelas* or cultural shows illiterates were encouraged to come forward and display any talents they had. Many could sing, dance, or recite. The campaign encouraged such activities to bring out the self-esteem and self-awareness of the learners. Thousands of prizes and certificates were awarded.

The campaign was turned into a massive people's festival.

Organizers hoped to teach villagers to read in Malayalam—the language of 97% of Kerala's people—at the rate of 30 words per minute, to copy a text at 7 words per minute, to count and write from 1 to 100, to add and subtract 3-digit numbers, and to multiply and divide 2-digit numbers.

In minority language areas, the classes were conducted in the local languages, not in Malayalam. Most of the learners were women from the lowest castes and classes.

The campaign drew inspiration from the ideas of the great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire: take the immediate problems in people's lives as material for literacy training. In Kerala, the poor have won many recent battles, so the organizers altered Freire's approach,

using it primarily to encourage participation and awareness. A total of thirty-seven lessons were given. Readings centered on hunger, poverty, safe food and drinking water, housing, and employment. Many lessons included songs. The health lessons were coordinated with an immunization campaign that eventually led to near 100% levels of immunization against measles, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and polio.

The academic aspects of the programme was also given equal importance. The programme had Resource Persons, Master Trainers and Voluntary Trainers for providing massive training to voluntary teachers. There was a monitoring group working to ensure that the academic aspects of the programme are maintained. The district office worked 24 hours to respond to any problems faced by learners or voluntary teachers to maintain the morale of the learners and the teachers.

On February 4, 1990 Ernakulam District was declared totally literate.

Of 174,000 illiterates identified in the original survey, 135,000 scored over 80% on the test; the other 39,000 failed the test, but gained some literacy skills they could build on in follow-up programs.

Volunteerism kept down costs: students became literate for less than US\$26 each. The main organization running the campaign, the Kerala People's Science Movement, was awarded the UNESCO literacy prize for 1990.

The campaign was not over. From March 1990 to April 1991, activists extended the Ernakulam District

campaign to Kerala's other 13 districts. They mobilized 350,000 teachers, and conducted more processions, street theater, songs, and contests. In April 1991 Kerala was declared the first state in India to achieve total literacy.

Today several Indian states are attempting to copy the Kerala program with varying degrees of success. The Kerala experience led to the establishment of the National Literacy Mission covering 350 districts in the whole country.

Why did the state of Kerala embark on the total literacy campaign?

It was primarily aimed at increasing participation. Kerala had achieved high – level of social development with limited economic growth.

Its per capita income is ranges between US \$ 300 – 350 per year. Its income is about one seventh of the American average. It means American have seven times more wealth than the population in Kerala. However, Kerala's development indicators are more or less same as that of North America. Life expectancy is 71 years for males and 73 years for females. Infant mortality rate is 17 per thousand against the Indian average of 79 per thousand. It has achieved 95 per cent literacy rate.

To sustain the social development achieved with limited economic growth, it was important that people were involved more actively in the development process. Two major programmes that followed the total literacy campaign show how the literacy campaign is linked to consolidating the development process.

The first is the People's Resource Mapping Program. The idea was to map how to identify and use the resources available in the state. In each village with the help of trained volunteers, people mapped the resources available in their village. As a result of the mapping process specific projects were planned. For example, reclaiming of water logged areas; building of canal, growing of dry season vegetables emerged as a result of the mapping.

The second is the launching of the local planning and community development. It involved granting 35% of the state's development budget to local elected councils to spend as they choose on local projects. In 1996 – 97, people wrote up over 100,000 project proposals for inclusion in the state's plan. As a result real development plans emerged from the local communities. People donated labor and materials adding up to 10% of the resources provided by the Government. Public accountability in the use of funds was greatly increased. Importantly, more funds reached traditionally disadvantaged groups.

The People's Resource Mapping and the Local Planning both were possible as a result of the literacy campaign. The literacy campaign did provide basis as well as mobilized people for participating in development. If people have to become the subjects of development, then literacy is the starting point. The kerala's total literacy campaign was an essential part of making people subjects of development.

Let me conclude by quoting the poem used by the organizers of the literacy campaign in Kerala. It is a poem by the German poet Bertolt Brecht and was sung in the local language. It goes like this:

Do not hesitate.
The old and the young,
Worker and farmer,
Begin studying today
To read and write...
Study everything,
Question everything,
Do not hesitate.
Take a book in hand –
It is the new weapon.

Thank you

LITERACY COURSES FROM 1974-1975

By; Aica Basareawan

INTRODUCTION

The political and cultural system during the Portuguese colonial administration hindered access to education to many East Timorese. The Portuguese left many East Timorese illiterate and in the dark so that they could continue to oppress and exploit the natives. Then this system oppressed many East Timorese, especially the Timorese women. Therefore, when the revolution took place in Portugal on the 25th of April 1974 and granted freedom to the so called overseas provinces, many East Timorese chose independence through Fretilin.

The constitution and the policy guidelines of Fretilin led the people to liberation.

Non-formal education on how to teach literacy to the East Timorese was one of its policies.

WHY WERE LITERACY AND AWARENESS IMPORTANT?

Any revolution can only succeed when the whole population takes part in it. How can a people take active part in a revolution against colonialism if it is illiterate, namely if it is unable to analyse its situation and the actions of the colonialists against it?

AIMS

The aims of literacy courses, namely awareness, were to:

- 1- unite and raise people to take part in the revolution against colonialism

- 2- stop the people from being deceived and robbed
- 3- grant people access to everything
- 4- not just teach the people but change their attitudes and minds so that they could liberate themselves and their motherland
- 5- improve living conditions, eradicate poverty and misfortune.



Ms. Aica Basareawan presents her experience of adult literacy in Timor Leste

PARTICIPATION AND TEACHING METHOD

Men and women (elders, adults and youths) took part in the literacy and awareness courses.

They took part with heart and soul in this task. The teachers were exclusively voluntary youths (boys and girls) who really wished to share their skills with their fellow country men and women. They were guided by Comarades Sah'e, Hata e Mauleas. Professor Paulo Freire's teaching method was used. Those who provided literacy courses were not teachers, but students, because they were in turn learning from the experiences of their illiterate fellow country men and women.

The word: **"TABAKU"** was the first word we used for literacy course. Many words connected to five vowels **A E I O U** are derived from this word.

Example:

TA	BA	KU
TA	BA	KA
TE	BE	KE
TI	BI	KI
TO	BO	KU
TU	BU	KU

On the other hand many words are derived from five vowels and the above three consonants, according to many languages of our country. (Makasae, Waimoa, Galolen, Baikemu, Mambae.....)

HOW WAS IT INTRODUCED?

The comrades were organized in groups of ten to fifteen people at each home and we started from a comrade who grew tobacco.



Member of adult literacy class in Craras

We asked him what the process entailed, from the day of tobacco seeds

sowing to it's readiness for consumption as a cigarette. When this comrade finished his explanation of the process, we spoke about health and economy. Then we told the comrades how to write the word "tabaku". This was the way in which we started to teach them. Because we realised that the schools we had been studying at were not good for the people at large, the youth left their schools and spread all over the districts to teach. At the same time they learnt from the various experiences of the people, namely, in the field of sowing; according to Paulo Freire's method of: teacher - student, a student too is a teacher (mutual learning).

In Dili literacy courses were carried out at Quintal Boot, in Baucau at Bucoli village, Aileu at Aisirimou and other villages.

As a result, within three months some of the comrades knew how to read and write their names (were able to write on their Fretilin membership cards)

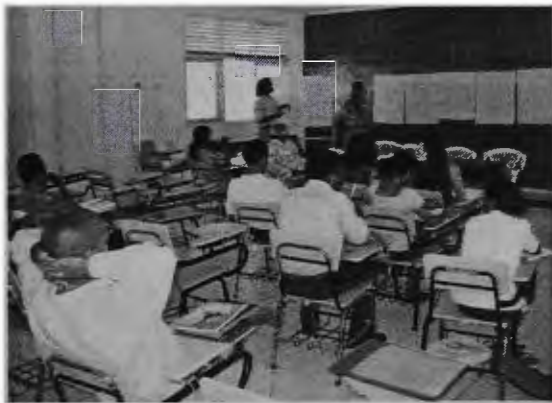
During the invasion and occupation, the comrades in the jungle carried on, as they could, with literacy and awareness courses (in some zones)

THE LESSONS FROM THE LITERACY COURSES WERE TO:

- reunite people for collective work and mutual love
- encourage people to talk about and get involved in the process, namely the women
- learn many experiences especially on sowing
- preserve the culture (tales, folk song, dancings, poetry) of Timor-Leste
- directly deal with issues involving the suffering and misfortune of the people.

RESULT OF THE DISCUSSION

There were four groups set up to discuss two topics. **National literacy campaign** and **Social mobilisation**. Two groups discussed the National Literacy Campaign and another two groups discussed Social Mobilisation against illiteracy in Timor Leste. The results of the discussion were as follows:



National Literacy Campaign

On this topic, participants were asked to discuss the theme of the campaign, how to do the campaign, who will do it and any other recommendations.

Themes of the campaign

Themes select:

- *through literacy human beings can be brought out of the darkness and into the light*
- *Revive the idea of literacy and spread that idea across society to eliminate illiteracy*

How to conduct campaign?

Literacy campaign will be conducted as follows:

- Through media; radio, TV, and national newspapers
- Socialization through the development plans of Government (MECJD)

- Through local authorities
- Government Departments like Health, Agriculture, Economy
- Religions institutions, national and international NGOs, UN agencies and University (when they have field work/KKN)
- Participation of community

Who will do the campaign?

Those who will conduct the literacy campaign are as follows;

- Ministry of Education, Cultural, Youth and Sport in cooperation with other ministries
- Community leaders
- Religions institutions, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, University, women's organizations (OPMT, OMT, GFFTL, GOMUTIL) and other youth organizations.

Recommendations

- To government that the literacy program to be priority for the development of RDTL
- The literacy campaign should use both national and official languages of East Timor
- Create good cooperation between the government and NGOs.
- Celebrate literacy day on 8th September every year.
- The Government, especially the Ministry of Education should have a clear literacy plan.
- Government to devise a literacy policy
- responsibility of all Timorese to socialize the program all over the country
- Vision forward:

The awareness of all people especially Timorese youth to realize the importance of a literacy programme for the future of the country



SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

The result of the social mobilization group is as follows:

- a) National plan
- b) Form groups: voluntarily from all the sectors
- c) Groups:
 - National
 - Districts
 - Communities

- d) There is political commitment from the government to ensure in a basic law
- e) How to create a strong structure which might involve all components
- f) Mobilize volunteers and build their capacity to teach and deliver a literacy curriculum.
- g) Create a good system of education in order to ensure a compulsory system of education at elementary and secondary level

The group can coordinate with Government, Church, businessmen, Local NGOs, local institutions like heads of villages and so on

The group also agree to set up a permanent working group for adult literacy in Timor Leste. The government institutions and organizations that involve in working groups are as follows:

- a) Rede Feto
- b) Non-Formal Education Division
- c) National division of youth and sport
- d) SAHE (SIL)
- e) GOMUTIL
- f) Human right unit (UN)
- g) And others .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This conference happened because of the hard work of many people. Therefore, first of all we would like to thank you his Excellencies Prime Minister of RDTL who officially opened this conference. Thanks to the Minister and vice Minister of Educational, Cultural, Youth and Sport of RDTL who has moderated the presentation, discussion and for closing the conference. Thank to all the speakers, Bob Boughton (Australia), Ravindran Daniel (India), Francisco Medina Feijo (Cuba), and Aica Basarewan (OPMT, Timor Leste) who have shared their ideas and experiences on adult literacy.



Members of the organizing committee

This conference would not have happened without the hard work of the organizing committee. So we would also like to thank them contributing their thoughts and time to make this conference possible. Members of organizing committee are OPMT, GOMUTIL, GFFTL, OXFAM GB, UNICEF, Dai Popular, Division of Non-formal Education (MECYS) RDTL, SIL, and Naroman Bucoli.

Thank you to OXFAM GB and UNICEF for funding.

Thank to the cultural groups that was organized by OPMT, to entertaining the conference from the opening to closing.



Participants at the conference

This conference would not have been a success without the participation of participants. Therefore, through this report we would like also to thank all the participants who came from different governments institutions, UN agencies, international and national organization and religions institutions in 13 districts of Timor Leste who attended and actively gave their thoughts in group discussions.

PARTICIPANTS LIST
FIRST NATIONAL LITERACY CONFERENCE
IN TIMOR-LESTE
15 SEPTEMBERU 2004

DILI

no	Name	Organization /Institution	Address
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Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

1.	Dr. Armindo Maia	Minister of MECYS	MECYS
2.	Rosaria Maria Cortereal	Vice Minister of MECYS	MECYS
3.	Vergilio Smith	Secretario Estado da Educação	MECYS
4.	Domingos de Sousa	Director Geral	MECYS
5.	Cecilia Maria Belo Asis	Diretor Cultura	MECYS
6.	Francisco Osler	Ministerio da Educação	MECYS
7.	Marcello Salvaterra	Ministerio da Educação	FSOP/ MECJD
8.	Marcos da C. dos Santos	Superintendeti da Educação de Dili	Distrito Dili
9.	Dili litracy coordinator	Dili	Distrito Dili
10.	Ivanildo	Ministerio da Educação	Educação Não-Formal
11.	Helena Nunes	Ministerio da Educação	Educação Não-Formal
12.	Daniella Boom	Ministerio da Educação	Educação Não-Formal
13.	Mahafud Ambarac Baziher	Diretor Educação Não-Formal	Educação Não-Formal
14.	Dra. Manuela Gusmão	Ministerio da Educação	IFCP
15.	David	Adviser – Vocational Training	Ensino Tec- Prof
16.	Anita	Ministerio da Educação	
17.	Jose. C. de Oliveira	Director Joventude e Despoto	MECJD

Ministry of Health

18.	Dr. Rui Maria de Araujo	Minister of Health	Ministry of Health
19.	Luis Lobato	Vice Minister of Health	Ministry of Health

Ministry of Agriculture

20.	Dr. Estanislau da Silva	Minister of Agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture
21.	Francisco Benefides	Vice Minister of Agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture

Ministry of Planning and finance

22.	Maria Madalena Boavida	Minister of Planning and finance	Ministry of Planning and Finance
23.	Aica Basarewan	Vice Minister of Planning and Finance	

Ministry of development

24.	Abel Ximenes	Vice Minister of Development	Fomento
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UN AGENCIES, INTENATIONAL AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

25.	Fátima Calçona	OPMT	Bemori
26.	Fernando Caldeira	OPMT	Vila - Verde
27.	Maia	OPMT	
28.	Justina Pereira	GFFTL	
29.	Saturnina	GFFTL	
30.	Filomena Fuca	GFFTL	
31.	Domingas Amaral	GFFTL	
32.	Diamantino da Cruz	Dai Popular	
33.	La'o Hamutuk	Dai Popular	
34.	Nuno Rodrigues	SIL	
35.	Nug	SIL	
36.	Mateus Gonsalves	SIL	
37.	Oscar da Silva	Yayasan HAK	
38.	Joaquin Fonseca	Yayasan HAK	
39.	Sandra Gusmão	UNICEF	
40.	Briget Jod-Johnson	UNICEF	
41.	Ted Redden	UNICEF	
42.	Danny	Concern	
43.	Roni	Concern	
44.	Maria Madalena	Concern	
45.	Brazilian Embassy		
46.	British Embassy		
47.	Ireland Embassy		
48.	Portugal Embassy		

49.	Rumiana	Unesco	
50.	Alisher	Unesco	
51.	Dr. Benjamin Corte-Real de Araujo	Reitor UNTL	
52.	Agostinho Almeida	Chefe Comisaun ESS (UNTL)	
53.	Miguel Maia dos Santos	Decano FCE (UNTL)	
54.	Laura Pina	Rede Feto	
55.	Clementina Quintao	Gomutil	
56.	Zelia Fernandes	Gomutil	
57.	Olimpia Saldanha	Gomutil	
58.	Heather Blackwell	Oxfam GB	
59.	Ilana Scherl	Oxfam GB	
60.	Cecilia Fonseca	Oxfam GB	
61.	Jorge da Silveira Guterres	Oxfam GB	
62.	Jose Sabino	Oxfam GB	
63.	Keryn Clark	Oxfam Australia	
64.	Frank Elvey	Oxfam Honkong	
65.	Antero Bendito	KSI	
66.	Hasasatil		
67.	FOKUPERS		
68.	Jose Francisco de Sousa	Plan International	
69.			
70.	Director	Timor Aid	
71.	Bendita	Timor Aid	
72.	Ravindra Daniel	Head of the human rights unit	
73.	Antonio Ximenes	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
74.	Jorge A. Baptista	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
75.	Alexio Bareeto	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
76.	Oldegar M.I	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
77.	Sabino Soares	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
78.	Cornelia Ram	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
79.	Amelia de Araujo	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
80.	Kalhari Hewage	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
81.	Sabino	Direitus humanu	

		Unmiset	
82.	Abel	Direitus humanu Unmiset	
83.	Nicole Wiseman	Xanana Reading Room	
84.	Anita da Costa	Xanana Reading Room	
85.	Jose Francisco	Plan International	
86.	Francesco Medewa	Coordenador Med. Cuba	

Media

87.	Timor Post		
88.	Suara Timor Lorosa'e		
89.	TVTL		
90.	Radio Timor Leste		

Distritcs

Aileu

91.	Superintendi Aileu	Menisterio da Educação	
92.	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	

Oecusse

93.	Superintendi Oecusse	Menisterio da Educação	
94.	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	
95.	Maria Luiza Sequera	OPMT Oecusse	

Ermera

96.	Superintendi Ermera	Menisterio da Educação	
97.	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	
98.	Francisca Martins	OPMT Ermera	

Liquica

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100	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	

Maliana

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103	Guiomar P. de Carvalho	OPMT Maliana	

Baucau

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105	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	
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110	Sabina da Silva	Naroman Bucoli - Baucau	
	Silveiro da Silva	Naroman Bucoli - Baucau	

Suai

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113	Maria Balbina	Gomutil Suai	

Ainaro

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115	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	
116	Carlota Olinda	OPMT Ainaro	

Same

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119	Rosela	OPMT Same	

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123	Celina Fernandes	Gomutil Viqueque	
124	Rosa Saldanha	Gomutil Viqueque	
125	Zulmira	TOHA Viqueque	
126	David	TOHA Viqueque	
127	Lidia	TOHA Viqueque	
128	Domingas	TOHA Viqueque	

Lospalos

129	Superintendi Los	Menisterio da Educação	
130	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	
131	Benigna dos Santos	GFFTL Lospalos	
132	Joaninha	GFFTL Lospalos	
133	Lucia Sanches	GFFTL Lospalos	
134	Albina dos Santos	GFFTL Lospalos	

Manatuto

135	Superintendi Manatuto	Menisterio da Educação	
136	Coordenador Alfabetizasaun	Menisterio da Educação	

Acronyms

GFFTL:	Grupo Feto Foin Sa'e Timor Lorosa'r (East Timor Youth Women Organization)
OGB:	Oxfam Great Britain
OMT:	Organização Mulher Timor (Organization of Timorese Women)
OPMT:	Organização Popular Mulher Timor (Popular Organization of Timorese Women)
UNESCO:	United Nation for Education, Scientific and Culture Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTL:	Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (East Timor National University)
GOMUTIL:	Grupo Observador Mulheres de Timor Leste
Dai Popular:	Popular education network
SIL:	Sahe Institute for Liberation

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