

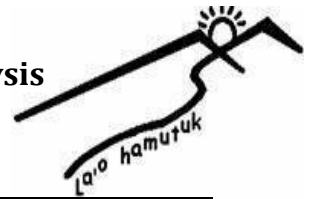
# La'o Hamutuk

**The Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis**

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Dili, 9 April 2019

**To: Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Re: Impacts of the Tasi Mane Project on the environment, land, and future sustainability of community people's lives in Timor-Leste**

## Introduction

Firstly, La'o Hamutuk expresses our appreciation for the invitation from Special Rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, who has asked civil society, including La'o Hamutuk, to share our thoughts, information and analysis regarding large infrastructure developments in Timor-Leste, particularly the government's pending petroleum industry project on the South Coast, the Tasi Mane Project. This mega project is described in Timor-Leste's National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030,<sup>1</sup> but many people have questions about its economic viability and social and environmental impacts. We monitor plans and events relating to this project's impacts on the environment, land and future sustainability of communities' livelihoods.

La'o Hamutuk "Walking Together" is a Timor-Leste civil society organization which does research and advocacy to improve human rights in Timor-Leste, including economic and social rights. For the last 19 years, we have provided information and analysis to citizens, policy-makers, diplomats, international agencies, journalists and others to support their efforts to protect human rights and advance sustainable, equitable development in this new country.

We hope that our information will help your mission and work in Timor-Leste and will be included in your report to the Human Rights Council. We trust that this letter will complement the information you receive from other people and institutions, leading to better understanding of our people's reality, especially critical problems related to human rights, land, the environment and other social issues stemming from infrastructure and economic development in Timor-Leste.

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<sup>1</sup> Timor-Leste Government (2010), *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030*, p. 138-140

## **We would like to express the following concerns:**

- In 2011, at the start of the Tasi Mane project, the government contracted with Worley Parsons to produce Environmental Impact Assessments and Environmental Management Plans for its components – a Supply Base and airport in Suai, a highway between Suai and Beaçu, an oil refinery and petrochemical plant in Betano, and a natural gas liquefaction plant in Beaçu.<sup>2</sup>

Large scale infrastructure projects in Timor-Leste are Category A according to the Decree-Law No. 5/2011 on Environmental Licensing.<sup>3</sup> Worley Parsons was told that the Government had consulted with local communities, but they found that many communities had little or inaccurate information about the project, due to a failure to conscientiously socialize and communicate with people who would be affected. Furthermore, because the Government did not provide Worley Parsons with concrete information about plans for the other components, Worley Parsons was able to produce an EMP and EIA only for the Suai components of the project, and wrote a more generic report about the types of projects involved in other Tasi Mane components. Due to political pressure, the Suai Supply Base, highway, and airport received an environmental license in 2013.

- The only components of the Tasi Mane project which have been built so far are Suai Airport and the first 30 km of the highway from Suai Vila to Zumalai (the plan is to construct 126 kilometers more, to Beaçu). After the highway EIA was done, the project design was changed to add an 80-km onshore oil pipeline alongside the highway, but this has not been incorporated into community consultation or the environmental license.

La'ó Hamutuk is concerned that the construction and subsequent operation of the Tasi Mane project will further endanger local communities, including those communities who have already felt the impacts from the implementation of the airport and highway. We note that the government continues to break its promises to local communities. For example, before the construction of Suai Airport, the government promised people who would be displaced that they would identify new land and build houses for them. However, the government has still not provided a place for 64 households in Aldeia Mokbelis, Suku Labarai, and these people have lived with uncertainty for the last five years.<sup>4</sup> In addition, these communities have lost the land that they had farmed in order to sustain their lives.

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<sup>2</sup> South Coast Petroleum Infrastructure project, <http://www.laohamutuk.org/Oil/TasiMane/11TasiMane.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Decree-Law 5/2011 on Environmental Licensing. <http://www.laohamutuk.org/Agri/EnvLaw/DL5-2011En.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Core Group Transparency, CGT report (2018), on *The Impact of Highway Project to The Local Communities Life's in Suai*. [www.transparansia.blogspot.com](http://www.transparansia.blogspot.com)

La’o Hamutuk is also worried that construction of the first phase of the highway continues to affect approximately 4,700 people in Sucus Matai, Labarai and Debos.<sup>5</sup> Most of these families support themselves by subsistence agriculture, and the highway interfered with their access to their farmland, cultural activities, access to markets, schools and health centers. Pregnant women are particularly impacted by the increased difficulty of getting to health facilities.

- The yet-to-be-built Betano and Beaçu components of Tasi Mane will involve large quantities of flammable and toxic liquids and gases, posing an even greater risk to local communities’ water, air, land, health, agriculture and fishing. Although contractors have begun preparing EIA studies, community information and consultation are still severely inadequate. As political and economic pressures to rapidly develop Greater Sunrise escalate, we worry that the human rights of the people in the affected area will be sacrificed.

### Conclusion

In closing, La’o Hamutuk would like to encourage you to consider our information as you prepare your report. This information can help inform policy-makers and implementers about the real situation of our people, especially vulnerable communities whose lives are and will be affected by the development of massive petroleum installations on the South Coast of Timor-Leste.

If you have any questions or need additional information, we would be happy to try to provide it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Four handwritten signatures in blue ink are displayed horizontally. From left to right, they appear to be: a stylized signature, a signature that looks like 'Mig', a signature that looks like 'Gue', and a signature that looks like 'Charles Scheiner'.

Adilsonio da Costa Junior, Mariano Ferreira, Elizaria Febe Gomes, Charles Scheiner  
Research Team, La’o Hamutuk

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<sup>5</sup> The Core Group Transparency, CGT report (2018), on *The Impact of Highway Project to The Local Communities Life’s in Suai*. [www.transparansia.blogspot.com](http://www.transparansia.blogspot.com)