

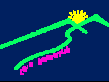
1

Continuing solidarity – the example of La’o Hamutuk

Presentation by Charles Scheiner to the
International Workshop on Solidarity with
Timor-Leste struggle for Self-Determination

Lisbon and virtual

16 May 2022



Thank you. Most of this conference is discussing international solidarity during the Indonesian occupation, I’m going to look at a form of solidarity that began after 1999. In a globalized world with powerful international forces and actors, self-determination for a small, new country requires more than political independence.

La’o Hamutuk, the Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis, is one way to continue solidarity. I am not unbiased – I have worked for La’o Hamutuk since 2001 – but I hope this example is relevant, and that it will encourage others to focus on the present and the future.

2

1999: Some of the 120 IFET Observers



The International Federation for East Timor Observer Project brought activists from 22 countries to observe the 1999 referendum. Because IFET-OP was unable to stay in Timor-Leste after the results were announced, it provided the human and financial base which jump-started La’o Hamutuk.

In late 1999 and early 2000, activists from several countries asked people in TL what they needed now from the international solidarity movement. The consensus was “We are governed by the UN, the World Bank is controlling our development and the IMF is managing our finances. Donors from places we never heard of are telling us what is best for our country. Although we’ve been isolated from the world for 24 years, we know enough not to take everything they say at face value. Please help us understand what the real goals of these institutions are, and how to deal with them.”

3

2000: LH first office and staff



La’o Hamutuk – solidarity activists and the Timorese civil society “walking together” was founded on 20 May 2000 as the Timor-Leste Institute for Reconstruction Monitoring and Analysis, with the intention to monitor the activities of international organizations in Timor-Leste during the UN transitional administration, and to strengthen South-South solidarity and share models of alternative development.

This our first office, in Bekasi. A few years later, we opened a field office in Baucau for a short time, and our Dili office moved to Faról and then to Bebora, where it has been since 2009.

4

2018: LH celebrates our anniversary



LH has a collective organizational structure – unique in Timor-Leste. We have no director or hierarchy, and all researchers, both Timorese and international, receive the same pay. Decisions are made in regular staff meetings. Initially, all staff shared administrative responsibilities, although a few years later we hired a specialist to handle financial management. In recent times, we have 8 to 12 people on staff, and only one or two are not Timorese.

Our policy is that more than half our staff should be women, which we are not always able to achieve, although we do better than most Timorese NGOs.

Over the years, international staffers have come from the USA, UK, Japan, Indonesia, Australia, Brazil, the Netherlands and France; most stay for 2-3 years, learning a lot from their Timorese experience.

Our Timorese staff stay longer. After leaving La’o Hamutuk, some have become Ministers, Parliamentarians, diplomats, UN staff, lawyers, government advisors, and the heads of NGOs.

Everyone’s time at La’o Hamutuk helps shape their awareness and their careers.

5

2000: Public Meeting about the UN



We hold “public meetings” to learn and share information, usually with a panel including representatives from an institution and/or government, and from civil society. This is one of the early ones – attendees included future national leaders Adérito Soares and Adaljiza Magno.

6

2001: Bulletins on international organizations active in TL



For many years, the La’o Hamutuk *Bulletin*, originally published in Bahasa Indonesia and English, was the largest circulation publication in the country. In 2008 we switched from Bahasa to Tetum, and lately have foregone the English version.

The issues during UNTAET focused on international organizations.

All our *Bulletins* and other materials are on our website www.laohamutuk.org.

Although LH was created to inform and empower Timorese people, it soon became clear that well-intentioned internationals arriving in TL, many of whom had barely heard of the country before 1999, also wanted to be informed. For a while, we had a bookstore with English-language materials about Timor-Leste.

From the beginning, La’o Hamutuk would not seek or accept grants from organizations with their own agenda in Timor-Leste – the UN, major bilateral and multilateral development partners, and companies operating in TL. When the TL government started funding civil society, we declined their support. Fundraising was easy at the start, but became more challenging as international attention shifted from Timor-Leste.

7

2002: Independence!



Two days after independence was restored in 2002, about a hundred Timorese and solidarity leaders met to discuss the Role of International Solidarity after Independence. In my talk, I said “For more than a quarter-century, activists in this room have lobbied, pressured and harassed governments which violated the rights of East Timor. In this new era, sometimes the government of East Timor will be among our targets. ... East Timor’s governmental leaders must now consider diplomatic and political realities, developing cordial relations with governments who conspired to kill your people only a few years ago. As solidarity activists, our role has changed less. We remain in solidarity with the Timorese people, to see our liberation and yours as a common struggle.

In this new phase of the journey, international solidarity means helping to ensure that independence is more than legal -- that you have the economic, political and diplomatic space to develop your nation in the interests of all its people.”

La’o Hamutuk broadened our work to include the government of Timor-Leste, although we continued to engage with international institutions. We changed “reconstruction” to “development” in our name, which is now the “Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis.”

8	<p>2012: UNMIT mission ends</p> 	<p>Since 2000, LH has helped Timorese people understand the role of the UN, and tried to encourage the UN and their local personnel to be more responsive to people's needs.</p> <p>Before the last UN peacekeeping mission left in 2012, we organized a public meeting – and we continue to engage with UN agencies.</p>
9	<p>2005: Donor's Conference in Norway</p> 	<p>LH has attended nearly every conference of donors to Timor-Leste, whether overseas or in Dili. We present when we are asked to, and we always distribute a written memo to the participants.</p> <p>Starting in 2002, we researched many donor projects in the country, but we kept finding the same shortcomings: insufficient community involvement, exclusion of women, disrespect for local staff, lack of sustainability, poor coordination. In 2007, we decided it was a waste of our resources to keep learning the same lessons – which the global aid effectiveness movement was realizing at the same time. We shifted our focus from particular donors and projects, and toward examining international systems that affect Timor-Leste, such as global trade, debt and the petroleum economy.</p>
10	<p>2001: observing the Constituent Assembly election</p> 	<p>LH has officially observed every national election. We have organized debates, and regularly send candidates questionnaires about their views, and publish their responses.</p>
11	<p>2002: Exchange with Nicaragua on Gender-Based Violence</p> 	<p>Part of LH's mission is to help Timor-Leste learn from the rest of the world, especially similar countries. We brought two Nicaraguan activists to TL to discuss gender-based violence. We have also hosted people from Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Sri Lanka, West Papua and many other places, and they have helped shape La'o Hamutuk's work.</p>
12	<p>2004: Delegation to Nigeria to learn about effects of petroleum extraction</p> 	<p>Exchanges go both ways. We sent civil society activists to Nigeria to see the impact of oil and gas exploitation; we have sent groups to learn from models and struggles in Cuba, Brazil and the Philippines, and to many international conferences.</p> <p>We have also shared Timor-Leste's experiences in India, Burma, Mozambique, Thailand, Bangladesh and many other countries, including in Europe, Australia and the USA.</p>
13	<p>2010: OilWatch regional meeting</p> 	<p>LH is an active member of the OilWatch international network working to prevent the harmful effects of oil and gas exploitation in tropical forest countries. We participated in global conferences in Ecuador and Colombia.</p> <p>In 2010, we hosted OilWatch activists from Indonesia, Burma, Thailand and the Philippines.</p>

14

2003: worldwide protest against war in Iraq.



Solidarity is reciprocal. We joined 50 million people worldwide to try to prevent the U.S. from invading Iraq.

15

2009: Solidarity for Palestine



Although the Timor-Leste government endorses self-determination for Western Sahara, it is silent on Palestine and opposed on West Papua. Civil society applies the Constitutional principle to support self-determination more consistently.

16

2012: Solidarity with Burma



As Burma's democratic space began to open in 2012, civil society there invited LH to present about managing nonrenewable resource wealth. Prior to that, we had organized solidarity actions in Dili and met with Burmese refugees in Thailand. A few years later, we called on TL and ASEAN to condemn repression against Rohingya people, and we recently urged Timor-Leste's government to oppose last year's military coup.

17

2012: Jakob Rumbiak from West Papua



LH invited local activists and students to talk with a visiting West-Papuan leader, one of many similar events we have organized.

18

2013: Close the Guantanamo prison



As part of a worldwide day of action, LH and other human rights groups marched to the US embassy and delivered a letter urging the U.S. to close its illegal prison in Cuba.


19

10-10-10 Global actions against climate change




In October 2010, people in nearly every country held actions. We marched and planted mangroves. We have also attended COP conferences, and continue to press Timor-Leste's government to act more forcefully to prevent climate change, and to help people understand how the country's petroleum operations, potential carbon capture project, and diesel-fueled electricity system impact on the global climate.

20 **2009: Solidarity Conference on 10th anniversary of referendum**




LH played a key role in organizing an international solidarity conference on the 10th anniversary of the referendum. This is a reception outside our office. We organized another conference three years ago, for the 20th anniversary.

21 **Advocating for international accountability in 2002**




Since 1999, La’o Hamutuk and others in civil society have steadfastly insisted that the Indonesian perpetrators of crimes against humanity in Timor-Leste be brought to justice, and that governments which supported them also be held accountable. We organized countless protests, letters and publications, and have met with dozens of UN officials and diplomats. We helped create ANTI – the National Alliance for an International Tribunal. We also reported on the flawed CAVR, CTF and “reparations” processes.

22 **2009: Impunity for Maternus Bere**




In September 2009, after indicted criminal Maternus Bere was freed due to political pressure, LH and others brought flowers and candles to the Indonesian Embassy where he was given sanctuary.

23 **2012: Public meeting on impunity**



Although we continue to believe that impunity is unacceptable, LH has not prioritized this issue in recent years, because of disinterest from most Timor-Leste leaders and donor-driven shifts in focus among other civil society groups.


24 **2012: LH video testimony to UN Human Rights Council in Geneva**



LH was the first NGO in the world to testify to the UN Human Rights Council by video, when their Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty reported on Timor-Leste.

She wrote: “Ending impunity is an essential prerequisite to ensuring stability, peace and sustainability. The Special Rapporteur encourages the State to take measures to ensure that post-conflict justice and reconciliation is prioritized. ... [T]he Government of Indonesia, the United Nations and the international community [must ensure] that the perpetrators of crimes during the Indonesian occupation are brought to justice.”

25 **2011: Report on farmers’ wisdom**



The majority of Timorese families support themselves by farming, although this gets little official attention. LH, as well as coalitions we support, continues to press for food sovereignty, agricultural processing, and avoidance of GMOs and “green revolution” technologies.

We have also been a key member of the Rede ba Rai NGO coalition opposing misguided land laws which prioritized companies and developers over local communities; there has been some success in this area but the work is ongoing.

26

2013: Discussing airport expansion with the Beto Tasi community



We visit local communities to learn about proposed projects and help them understand future impacts – some of my colleagues are in Suai as we speak, talking with people affected by onshore oil exploration.

We encourage environmental agencies to be more impartial and effective, comment on proposed legislation, and fulfil neglected transparency obligations by putting their documents online.

27

2004: Demonstration for a fair maritime boundary with Australia



Since our founding, LH has been a leader of what became MKOTT – the Movement Against the Occupation of the Timor Sea – which urged Australia to respect Timor-Leste’s sovereignty by agreeing to a fair maritime boundary. We encouraged protests at Australian embassies around the world, and supported Australian activists to form the Timor Sea Justice Campaign. We have given oral or written testimony to at least ten Australian government inquiries.

MKOTT organized many demonstrations, bringing out tens of thousands of people in 2015 and 2016.

28

2018: Maritime Boundary achieved!

Why won't Australia come to the table?



For several years, We wore the badge at the top of this slide to Australian functions. When Canberra finally signed the Maritime Boundary Treaty, we celebrated!

29

Supporting Timor-Leste’s friend Bernard Collaery who faces prosecution in Australia.



Although the Boundary is settled, Australia continues to prosecute two people who exposed Australia’s bugging of private government meetings in Dili 18 years ago.

Timorese NGOs and leaders have expressed their solidarity.

30

2006-8: Writing the book on Sunrise



15 years ago, LH researched and published a book on the Greater Sunrise gas reserve and the proposed LNG plant on the south coast. It is still the only in-depth, fact-based, balanced publication on the topic.

The cover photo is a meeting with community leaders and members in Com.

31

2006-8: Writing the book on Sunrise



The Secretary of State for Natural Resources spoke at the launch and bought 100 copies for his staff.

32

Providing current information about Sunrise

Buletin La'o Hamutuk
 Sosa Partisipasiun Iha Greater Sunrise husi ConocoPhillips
 Sigifika sáida mai Timor-Leste? Sigifika sáida kona-ba kadastera?

16 January 2019
Misinformation and facts about the Greater Sunrise project
 At the end of September 2018, Timor-Leste and ConocoPhillips announced that the company will sell its 30% share of participation in the Greater Sunrise asset holders to Timor-Leste for 2150 million. A month later, Shell agreed to sell its 26.5% share for 2100 million more. Timor-Leste is obtaining loans and budgets to implement these transactions.
 These events have stimulated a lot of talking and writing by journalists, leaders and experts. Unfortunately, much of the commentary has included inaccurate content and factual errors. La'o Hamutuk is publishing this list of common misunderstandings, with relevant facts, to help people understand the issues better. We hope that it will also improve the accuracy of future reporting.

Some Timorese leaders still believe the myth that Greater Sunrise and the Tasi Mane project will underwrite the future economy, and the state has already spent more than a billion dollars on them, although this is less than one-tenth of the estimated capital cost.

We continue to promote evidence-based decision-making and to help people understand that it takes more than wishing to make something real.

33

2009: Order of Timor-Leste



Timor-Leste appreciates those who supported their nation during difficult times, including many of the participants in this conference. We also enjoy “malae privilege” and have easier access to Timor-Leste officials than most of their own citizens.

We can use that access to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable and ignored Timorese people, more than 40% of whom live in poverty.

34

2018: Asking the President to safeguard the Petroleum Fund

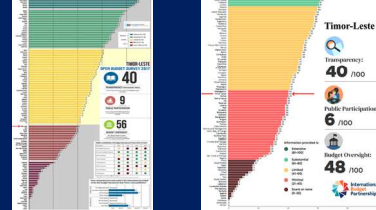


La’o Hamutuk often meets with Timorese leaders; this discussion with President Lu Olo led to his vetoing some ill-intentioned legislation.

Now we are asking him, in his last week in office, to veto a billion-dollar spending increase.

35

Budget transparency with the International Budget Partnership

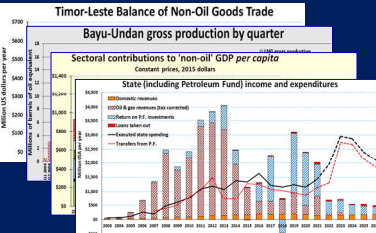


LH reports on Timor-Leste for the International Budget Partnership’s Open Budget Survey; the latest Survey will come out this month.

LH and IBP are currently providing a six-month training on budget monitoring to civil society across Timor-Leste.

36

Clarifying evidence for policy-making



LH has built our credibility on accurate analysis; most of the data we use comes from official reports. We make graphs to help people understand what the numbers mean.

These are part of the “Rights and Sustainability” presentation which we share with many audiences.

37

Testifying to Parliament on the proposed State Budget



Parliament often invites us to speak on the economy, state budgets, freedom of the press and expression, and other topics.

38 Submissions and testimonies

Even when we're not invited to testify, we write submissions or open letters, and summarize them for our blog and the media.

39 Briefing, training, presentations

LH gives training and presentations for civil society, journalists, public servants, local communities, academics, visiting delegations, overseas conferences, government and international agencies, foreign volunteers and others. These are a few recent ones.

40 Bringing issues to the public through media.

Local and international journalists often misunderstand or misreport our findings, due to ignorance or intention. Therefore, we prefer to write our own articles and op-eds.

41 2019: Presenting to the Timor-Leste Studies Association

LH has presented many papers to conferences of the Timor-Leste Studies Association in Dili, Portugal and Brazil. We facilitate communication between the academic world and civil society.

42 Academic articles and presentations

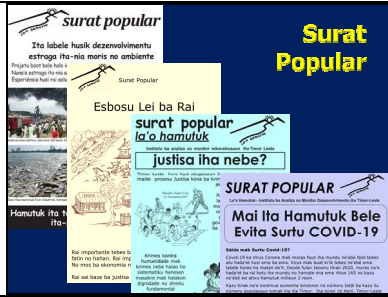
In addition to TLSA, we publish in international academic outlets, and participate in other conferences.

43 Programa Radio Igualdade

Data	Asuntu (MP3)	Nov 2020	Plano Reoperasao Economica - PIR
Abr 2022	Food System Summit (Sineira Sistema Ai-han)	Jun 2020	Loron Mundial ha Meia-Ambiente
Mar 2022	Kaptara no rai hela karbona (CCS) lha Bayu-Undan	Mar 2020	Rec-moos no Saanesamento
Fev 2022	Efetsuan pecaadolezal peccada 2022-2027	Dec 2019	Investimento Fundo Petroliferu
Nov 2021	Ezbosu Orsamenta Jeral do Estado 2022	Jul 2019	Orsamenta Jeral Estado 2020
Out 2021	Plano urbano no territorjal	Jul 2019	Lei Anti Korrupsaon
Julio 2021	Juventude no Aerhoitara lha ho Programa lha Governu	Fev 2019	Relatoriú Peskiza Rejistrasao Rai (Analiza ha Impaktu lha Sistema Nasionál Cadastro - SNC)
Mai 2021	OIE 2021. Rectifikativa lha ha Covid-19 no Dezastre Naturalis (Kalamidade)	Fev 2019	Projeto Saerise no Tasi Mane
			Importancia lha Infrastrutura Rjizhu ha Setór Produtiva

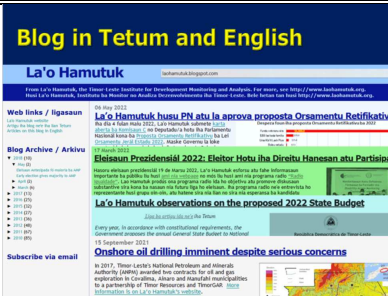
Our half-hour, Tetum-language program is broadcast on community radio stations across the country, making information available to grassroots people. Recordings are on our website.

44



Our four-page, illustrated “Surat Popular” pamphlets try to make complex issues understandable to a broader audience, based on popular education pedagogy. Each one includes questions to guide local community discussion and action.

45



Our blog, usually in Tetum and English, conveys short versions of our research to an online audience. Most people in Timor-Leste use Facebook, and these are easily shared.

46



Our website is a comprehensive reference, with more than 18,000 files. In addition to our own material, it includes documents from government and international organizations – and is easier to use and longer-lasting than many of their sites.

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La’o Hamutuk is recruiting new Timorese and international researchers. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to Chris’ presentation and our discussion.