



PRESS RELEASE



BREAKING DOWN THE LANGUAGE BARRIERS **Pilot Project for Translators and Interpreters Graduation Ceremony**

Dili, 27 June 2005

Timor-Leste's natural conditions and long history of colonisation, occupation and interaction with different languages and cultures have made it a multilingual nation. This linguistic diversity is reflected in the country's option for two official languages (Tetum and Portuguese) and two working languages. The authorities are now striving to develop Tetum as a fully functional language and to introduce the official languages at all levels of public administration. But the country's linguistic diversity poses particular problems in the judiciary, where access to justice often requires overcoming language barriers.

A Pilot Project for "Capacity Development for Translators and Interpreters in Timor-Leste" was set up to train translators and interpreters for the courts and other judicial and legislative institutions. By training a set of professional Timorese language mediators, the project has contributed to uphold fundamental rights such as access to justice and non-discrimination based on language. It has furthermore contributed to the development of *tetun ofisiál* in the realm of law and justice.

The project included two specialized courses in legal translation and court interpreting. After a thorough selection procedure 23 trainees were recruited for an 8-month intensive training programme that included tuition in translation and interpreting techniques, language skills and basic notions of law. There was a strong emphasis on practical exercises and interpreting facilities were built at Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e for that purpose. The Instituto Nacional de Linguística provided a full course on standard Tetum spelling and grammar.

The courses started in October 2004 and trainees have recently taken their final exams. A graduation ceremony will be held at Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e, Liceu Dr. Francisco Machado building, on Tuesday, June 28th, at 5 pm. It will be hosted by Mr. Manuel Abrantes, Vice-Minister of Justice, Mr. Sukehiro Hasegawa, SRSG and Mr. Benjamim Corte-Real, Rector of the University.

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