

Press Advisory
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Contact:
+670 3322437
Sierra James

Youth Center Brings Peace

Dili, Timor-Leste – Saturday, the 13th of October, at 3pm will be the official opening of the Seroja Center in Comoro, Dili just West of the airport roundabout.

Through the joint *Youth Integration and Development Initiative*, **Ba Futuru** and **Edge-ucate.org** have begun the process of engaging the Timorese youth in positive peace building activities at the Seroja Center due to a direct request from the **President Dr. Jose Ramos Horta**. This project has shown that the cooperation of individuals, local communities, international agencies and the government can stop the cycle of violence and help to create a sense of security and a vision for a positive future.

The Seroja center engages Dili's largest and most critical demographic, children and youth, by providing outlets and activities that afford youth opportunities to enhance their personal, professional and social development. Training programs will be combined with personal development and self-esteem building activities to prepare youth for integration into the economy and society. This will help to create long-term peace-building mechanisms that keep the Timorese youth off the street and more engaged in positive activities while processing the negative impacts of conflict.

The **President, Dr. Jose Ramos Horta** states, "First, I wish to thank ConocoPhillips for promptly responding to my request for assistance with US\$50,000 which enabled this project to get started when I was Prime Minister. Unfortunately, I was not able to get any additional funding from the government even though the then Secretary of State for Youth had plenty of money in his budget for Youth Centers which he ended up not using. I thank Ba Futuru and in particular it's Co-Founder & Capacity Development Program Manager, Miss Sierra James, for Ba Futuru's own financial contribution and for her leadership that has made this Center a reality."

After ConocoPhillips' start up support, UNMIT through its QIP program provided the most recent round of funds for the refurbishment of the bathrooms and the sports courts at the Seroja Center. Additional donor support came from the World Bank, CRS, UNICEF and individual donors, moreover this center was been made possible by the hard work of community and international volunteers, including the Australian stabilization forces, who teach English at the center three times a week.

Ba Futuru's vision is to build a culture of peace and non-violence in East Timor by developing the values, skills, knowledge and wellbeing of vulnerable and at-risk young people, and those who care for them. For more information see www.bafuturu.org.

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