

RETIRED STAFFDEL TRIP REPORT:
TIMOR-LESTE

AUGUST 2010



**ROBINSON AND MIKO TRAIN THE TIMORESE PARLIAMENTARY
RESEARCH CENTER STAFF ON POLICY ANALYSIS FOR THE LEGISLATURE**

Retired Congressional Research Staff, Bill Robinson and Francis Miko, visited Timor-Leste as part of the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) program in coordination with the Asia Foundation. They provided training to the staff of the Parliamentary Research Center (PRC) of the Timor-Leste Parliament from July 26-30, 2010. The training consisted of an intermediate course on techniques of public policy analysis and craft skills needed to work effectively with the Parliament. It included a seminar on critical thinking for legislative analysts. In addition, Robinson and Miko met with Committee Chairs, Members of Parliament, the Secretary General, and the Director of Research. The meetings provided an opportunity to get more insights into the research service's perceived strengths and weaknesses. They also sought to get client views on possible next steps in the development of the research service and the types of training they thought would help the researchers to better serve their needs.

This was their third in a series of visits to Dili for HDP and the Asia Foundation. The program was constructed as an intermediate Program on policy research and analysis, which featured more in-depth application of policy analysis skills, and also added some further development of essential craft skills (best practices used by policy analysts in applying their policy and subject knowledge to meeting the information and analysis needs of the legislature). The portion of the program addressing policy analysis skills included a critique of sample reports done by the Congressional Research Service in an effort to hone the skills of the PRC in improving their own skills in defining a policy problem, developing alternatives, and testing the impact of policy alternatives. This portion of the program also included the creation of a policy report applying the concepts discussed in the training program in an actual report that might be used for the Legislature in Timor-Leste. The resultant reports were then presented and critiqued for possible improvement.

The craft skills included how to deal with legislative clients, how to work in teams, how to anticipate issues, how to structure a report, how to deal with difficult policy issues, and how to balance work priorities and develop useful work plans. The training modules were designed to address the current stage of institutional development of the PRC – how to sharpen the critical thinking skills that are increasingly important to analysts working at higher levels in a legislative research service. The modules were designed to be highly participative and including many concrete examples of the skills and attributes needed to move to a higher level of performance.

In the training sessions, the retired CRS staff was impressed by the eagerness of the staff to acquire new skills and to apply them in their daily work for the legislature. "They are enthusiastic about the prospects of learning how to do their jobs better and they want more help. Their final papers reflected that interest". Also, the MPs they spoke to were pleased with the responsiveness of the researchers to their requests. Generally, the researchers were seen as doing a very good job on finding, packaging, and summarizing information.