

### Timor-Leste Program Summary

The International Republican Institute (IRI) was the first nongovernmental organization to work directly with political parties in Timor-Leste, and the only organization to do so continuously since 2000. IRI's programming in Timor-Leste has focused on strengthening political parties, initially helping prepare them for the 2001 constituent assembly and the 2002 presidential elections. IRI has also worked with political parties on institutional and organizational party strengthening and leadership. A U.S. Agency for International Development-funded pre-election program was completed in September 2008 which included national party agent training and a youth civic engagement program with the Center for Democracy in Action (CDA). Currently, IRI focuses on strengthening local elections by providing support to the government and political parties for suco council, a local administrative government unit, and municipal elections. Additionally, IRI continues to develop the potential of future leaders.

### Political Party Strengthening

IRI provides training and support to political parties at the district and national levels. Trainings focus on strengthening the institutional and organizational capacity of political parties in addition to developing the leadership skills of party leaders. IRI also provides training on enhancing constituent outreach. In 2007 and 2008, IRI collaborated with the United Nations Development Program to hold several rounds of party strengthening trainings in every district, with national leadership consultations taking place throughout the training period. IRI's long-term relationships with the parties have allowed it to become a trusted resource for political party assistance across the country.

In order to gauge the pulse of the nation one year after national elections which brought the new Parliamentary Majority Alliance (AMP) coalition to power, IRI fielded a poll in November 2008 in all 13 districts. While the poll results were favorable to the new ruling coalition and various government entities, it demonstrated the need for improvements in infrastructure, education and anti-corruption initiatives. IRI used the data collected from the survey to conduct an additional round of political party trainings and consult with Timorese leaders on how best to address the concerns raised by voters.

### Democratic Governance Initiatives

IRI has worked with the current government in Timor-Leste to help increase the institutional capacity of the Offices of the President and Cabinet Ministers in understanding the needs of Timorese citizens. After the assassination attempt on President Jose Ramos-Horta on February 11, 2008, IRI provided support to the Office of the President by assisting staff with crisis management protocol. Additionally, IRI provided support to the Council of Ministers through media trainings with ministers, vice ministers, and secretaries of state. IRI helped facilitate training with Cabinet members by conducting on-camera training sessions and providing constructive feedback.

## Leadership Development

In an effort to help develop a successful future generation of competent, democratically-minded leaders, IRI conducted an intensive leadership development program which provided a core group of young leaders with training in policy, leadership skills and e-literacy. Through a competitive application process, IRI selected 12 participants from a variety of organizations and institutions. Twenty-one training sessions were held over six months covering topics such as effective communication, public opinion polling, democratic governance, managing oneself and others, diplomacy and U.S. relations, private enterprise development, teamwork, security sector reform, ethics, eco-tourism development, and crisis management. A graduation ceremony was held at the end of the program where all participants received a certificate of completion and a laptop computer donated by an American school.

## Youth Participation in the Political Process

In July 2008, IRI and the CDA conducted a two-week model parliament program for more than 60 high school students in Dili. These students attended committee and plenary hearings of Timor-Leste's parliament and then conducted their own committee and plenary sessions using real bills that were being debated before Parliament. At the close of the program, the President of Parliament, Fernando "Lasama" de Araujo thanked IRI and the CDA during a full plenary session for putting together the model parliament. More than half of the participants expressed interest in running for public office at the end of the program. IRI is planning a second model parliament this year.

