



Prepared for the
Pearson Peacekeeping Centre

UN ELECTORAL OPERATIONS:

CASE STUDY

EAST TIMOR 1999

A. Walter Dorn
District Electoral Officer,
United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET)

First presented 13 November 1999; Updated 6 August 2011



EAST TIMOR: LOCATION

- South East Asia
- Island of Timor:
 - Part of huge archipelago of some 17,000 islands
 - Size of Vancouver Island
- East Timor: Half-island
- 500 km north of Australia
- Estimated population (1999): 900,000
- Area covered: 14,500 km²





HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Portuguese colony, beginning early 1500s
 - Timor island divided by Portuguese and Dutch
- Coup in Portugal 1974
- Formation of official Timorese political parties
- Civil war: August-November 1975
- Invasion by Indonesia 7 December 1975
- 24 years of deadly oppression and genocide along with infrastructure building



FALINTIL — THE REBEL FORCE

- Armed wing of FRETILIN, the original pro-independence party
- Well disciplined guerrilla force
- Wide-spread support from the Timorese people
- Ambushes, attacks and atrocities committed





ENTER THE UN

- Negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia start in earnest February 1999
 - Discussions begun 1983 under UN auspices
- May 5 agreements
 - Autonomy Agreement
 - Modalities Agreement
 - Security Agreement
- Latter two agreements also signed by the UN Secretary-General



MODALITIES AGREEMENT

- The ballot options:
 - *“Do you ACCEPT the proposed special autonomy for East Timor within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia?”*
 - *Do you REJECT ..., leading to separation from Indonesia?”*
- 200 polling centres inside East Timor; 13 cities outside
- Eligibility rules for voting (e.g., 17 years old)
- Observers permitted
- Schedule for the process, leading to ballot on August 8



SECURITY AGREEMENT

- The responsibility to ensure a “secure environment ... rests with the appropriate **Indonesian** security authorities”
- Police “solely responsible for the maintenance of law and order”
- Neutrality of the TNI and police essential
- Prior to start of registration, SG shall determine if “necessary security situation exists for full implementation” of process



SECURITY COUNCIL

- Endorses the agreements
 - May 7 (res. 1236)
 - Asks SG to prepare a plan
- Creates the United Nations Mission in East Timor (**UNAMET**)
 - 11 June (res. 1246)
 - “to organize and conduct a popular consultation”



UN Photo



SC RESOLUTION 1246

- Stresses that security is responsibility of Indonesian government
- Calls for the laying down of arms by all groups
- Up to 280 UN civilian police (CivPol) “to act as advisers to Indonesian police” and to escort ballots
- Up to 50 military liaison officers (MLO) “to maintain contact” with the Indonesian armed forces



RESOLUTION 1246

(CONT'D)

- Political component of UNAMET
 - “for monitoring the fairness of the political environment ... and for monitoring and advising the S.R. on all matters with political implications”
- Information component
 - to explain “the terms of the general agreement and autonomy framework” and voting process



MORE THAN MONITORING

- Traditionally UN is tasked with “elections monitoring”
 - Nicaragua 1989: first time for a national election in a UN Member State
- In East Timor UN was to *organize and conduct* the referendum
 - Namibia (1989) forerunner



SPECTRUM OF ELECTORAL OPS

- Election monitoring
 - selected polling sites to all sites
 - balloting and counting
 - campaigning and implementation
- Electoral Assistance
 - Provision of supplies
 - People provided
- Electoral supervision
 - Decision-making powers
 - Part of Electoral Commission
- Electoral organization
 - All aspects of conduct of election
 - Monitoring the campaign period



INCREASING
INVOLVEMENT &
RESPONSIBILITIES



OPERATIONAL COMPONENTS

- Electoral
 - Administration of the consultation
- Political
 - Monitor the fairness of environment
 - Ensure NGOs can carry out their tasks
- Public Information
 - Voter education



THE LEADERS



- Ian Martin (UK), Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)



- Ambassador Jamsheed Marker (Pakistan), Special Envoy of the Secretary-General



PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING

- 3-4 days in Darwin, Australia (launching point)
 - Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base
 - 500 km south of East Timor
- Daily seminars
 - Materials distribution
 - Registration exercise (with local Timorese)
 - Importance of neutrality
 - Avoiding press contacts
 - Security brief
- Driver's test (4WD), Radio comms
- Vaccines, VISAs, Contracts, Admin



ELECTORAL PROCESS

- Voter registration: 20 days + 2 day extension
- Voter Education: 1 month
- Distribution of electoral lists and challenges: 6 days
- Polling: 1 day
- Vote counting: less than 7 days
- Results to be announced simultaneously in NY and Dili



KITS FOR UN ELECTIONS OFFICERS

- Steel containers
 - 2 locks; plastic seals
- Forms (ETR)
 - Voter registration forms/cards
 - Tamper evident bag labels
- Stamp pad
 - also used for fingerprint signatures
- UV lamp



UN Photo



UN LOCAL STAFF

- Employment applications made at Dili Headquarters or Regional Headquarters
- Approx. 1,500 for registration
- 4,000 for polling day
 - 3-4 days training
- typical pay (Rp 50,000/day or \$5/day)
- Pro-independence bias



UN Photo

East Timorese wait in Dili to apply for UNAMET positions.



IDENTITY AND ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS

- Concern about false registrants
 - Many Indonesians from West Timor (incl. militias) attempt to register
- Affidavit problems
 - signed by a recognized village leader or church official
 - Village leaders often were militia leaders
 - Witness of registered voter during process



VOTER EDUCATION

- Posters
- TV and Radio
- Newsprint:
 - Backpage of daily newspaper *Suara Timor Timur*
- Talks to groups
 - UN electoral officer visits

UNAMET - UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN EAST TIMOR - UNAMET

If you
accept
autonomy...



- ▶ ...The United Nations will recognise East Timor as a part of Indonesia
- ▶ ...East Timor will become an autonomous region within Indonesia
- ▶ ...The United Nations will monitor the implementation of the autonomy proposal

UNAMET - UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN EAST TIMOR - UNAMET

If you
reject
autonomy...



- ▶ ...Indonesia will end its links with East Timor
- ▶ ...East Timor will separate from Indonesia
- ▶ ...The United Nations will oversee East Timor's transition towards Independence



DEO DORN

- District electoral officer for Suai Cathedral
- Voter education session
- Held inside the Catholic Church compound in Suai, home of over 1,000 IDPs (Internally Displaced People)





MAIN TALKING POINTS

- Neutrality of UNAMET
- Secrecy of the vote
 - For individuals, villages and districts
- Integrity of the ballots
 - UN supervision at all times
- Only one result will be announced
- Other points
 - Challenges and appeals process
 - Rules and code of conduct



PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

- Information dissemination unit at Dili HQ
- TV: half-hour spots every night at 7 pm
- Radio UNAMET: several broadcasts per day
- Message from Secretary-General Kofi Annan (16 June)



UN Photo



VOTER EDUCATION

- DEO teams travel to remote villages
 - Give informal talks to small/large groups
 - Provide handouts and posters
 - Provide radios (e.g., through raffles)
- Radio and TV information broadcasts
 - 2,000 AM/FM radios and 8,000 batteries donated by Japanese government
 - Daily TV broadcast; radio news several times a day



MILITIAS ON PARADE



- Indonesia Day (August 17): “celebrating” the independence of Indonesia from the Dutch
- Shown here is one of about 20 trucks and dozens of motor cycles motoring through Suai



UNAMET INITIATIVES

- Goal: to avoid violence during campaign rallies
- Code of Conduct agreed by both parties
 - For participants, For campaign, For observers
- Regional Campaign committees established
- “Notification of Intention to hold a campaign event” requirement (3 days prior to UNAMET)
- In Suai: alternate days for campaigns



OBSERVER ORGANIZATIONS

- “Official observers”
 - 48 Indonesians and 38 Portuguese (“equal number” in Modalities Agreement)
- Domestic Observers
 - Half dozen groups
- International Observers
 - Dozen groups
- Accreditation process by UNAMET
 - IO, IGO, governmental/parliamentary organization, NGO, etc.
 - Issued identity badge and accreditation letter
- Agree to abide by Code of Conduct for Observers



INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER ORGS

(Observing the UN and the election)

- International Federation for East Timor (IFET)
 - 112 persons
- Australia International Volunteers Project
 - 27 persons
- Carter Center (based in Atlanta, Georgia)
 - 19 persons
- New Zealand government
 - 11 persons
- Catholic Institute for International Relations
 - 5 persons



PRE-BALLOT INTIMIDATION

- Militias prevent Timorese from registering
 - Checkpoints on road
- Government officials marking down registration numbers
- Registration cards taken away
 - Demanded at gunpoint
- Forced displacement
 - far from registration/voting centres
- Killing and intimidation of pro-independence leaders, CNRT offices
- Killing and threats re. before/after vote



AUGUST 30: THE BIG DAY

- Long queues, defying intimidation
 - many returned from hiding in hills to vote
- **98.6 per cent** turn out
- Calm environment, “model vote” (NY Times, August 31)
- absence from the scene of the anti-independence militias
- One death reported: East Timorese who had been working for UNAMET in Ermera
- 7 of 850 polling places suspended operations briefly due to small disturbances or rumors



BALLOT COUNTING

- Ballot boxes sealed at polling sites and dispatched under guard to Dili
- Approx. 100 DEOs assist with counting in Dili (Museum)
- Party agents present
- Number of ballots in each boxes counted
 - Compared with polling records
- Mixed and then sorted into two categories
- Counted in teams of at least two people



ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS

- Promised by SG within a week
- Announced after 4 days
 - Simultaneously in Dili (Sept 4) and New York (Sept. 3)
- **78.5 per cent** reject autonomy agreement
- exuberant but cautious celebrations



CATASTROPHE STRIKES!

- Wide-spread militia violence begins within hours of announcement; reign of terror
- TNI/Militia plans made in advance
- Killings of pro-independence supporters
 - Massacre in Suai Church Sept. 6
- Massive deportations
 - 200,000 refugees in West Timor
 - 400,000 take to the hills
- Scorched earth policy
 - 90% of Dili burned



UNAMET REACTION

- UN regional centres evacuated
- UN Dili headquarters evacuated
 - Timorese seek refuge in UN compound
 - UN personnel petition to stay
 - All leave except few military personnel (transitional)
 - East Timorese in compound airlifted
- Ambassador Marker's understatement:
“Indonesia has failed to maintain security”



PROMISES NOT KEPT

- Key assurance provided by UNAMET leader Ian Martin: UNAMET WILL STAY (see poster)
- SG's Aug. 28th message: "UNAMET is committed to securing the peace today, and in the future."





INTERNATIONAL ACTION

- Strong pressure applied on Indonesia to accept peacekeeping force
 - Pres. Habibie agrees after US cuts military ties and calls for suspension of IMF loans (12 Sept)
- Security Council authorizes International Force for East Timor (INTERFET)
 - Resolution 1264 of 15 September
 - Led by Australia
 - Airdrops begin (17 Sept.)
 - First troops arrive (20 Sept.)



INTERFET INTERVENES

- Redeems the international community
- Australian-led force
 - US helps with logistics and intelligence support
- Mandate to disarm militias
- Overall cooperation from Indonesian military
- Several gun battles
 - Over half-dozen militiamen killed
 - Several Australian soldiers wounded
- 600 Canadian forces personnel sent





DAWN OF A NEW NATION

- Xanana Gusmao returns to Dili (October 21, 1999)
- Last Indonesian troops leave East Timor (31 October 1999)
- UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET)
 - Established October 25, 1999 (res. 1272)
 - 2-3 year mandate to help prepare nation for independence



UNTAET Governs

(Oct 1999 – May 2002)



(AP PHOTO)



UN Photo, 27 Sep. 2002

UN membership

... UNMISSET



UNTAET (CONT'D)



Issues its own stamp

Builds infrastructure



UN/E. Debebe 2000



TIMOR LESTE: A NEW NATION IS BORN

Flag raising outside UN headquarters
in New York as East Timor becomes
191st members state.

President Xanana Gusmao standing
under the Timorese flag



Source: <http://www.etan.org/etun.jpg>



THE END

(of the Beginning)