

CEPAD



Hosi Ita Ba Ita

## CEPAD

*Centre of Studies for Peace and Development  
Sentru Estudus ba Dame no Dezenvolvimentu  
Centro de Estudos para a Paz e Dezenvolvimento*

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **Peace House opens in Manufahi Municipality**

*Vice President of the National Parliament, Minister of Justice representing the Prime Minister, CEPAD and local community launch Peace House in Manufahi Municipality*

**The Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD) opened the doors to its fifth Peace House in Same, Manufahi Municipality on Thursday 16 April 2015.**

Over 400 guests took part in the event, including Minister of Justice Ivo Valente, representing the Prime Minister Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo; Vice President of the National Parliament Adérito Hugo da Costa; and President of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC-TL) Francisco Miranda Branco. On behalf of the local community, village chiefs (Xéfi Suku), sub-village chiefs (Xéfi Aldeia) and traditional leaders took part in the proceedings. Together, they honoured and celebrated the joint effort over the past fourteen months of the Manufahi community, Timor-Leste's government and CEPAD, in planning, designing and building this new space for dialogue.

**Peace Houses (Uma Dame) are based on the traditional Timorese custom of 'rolling out the mat' (nahe-biti boot) - or meeting to discuss and resolve disputes. These safe, neutral and community-owned venues act as a bridge between municipalities and Timor-Leste's capital by fostering local debates and linking these to issues of national importance.** Peace Houses are also designed to host a range of complementary activities that bring people together and encourage civil society participation, including youth group meetings, workshops on craft commercialization and language classes.

'Today, in this very suiting place, on behalf of the State, I thank the local community for providing their land for the construction of the Peace House. Secondly, on behalf of the State, I thank the non-governmental organisation CEPAD for regarding peace as an important matter which contributes to our development. CEPAD deserves all the appreciation from the community and from the State, for its contribution', **said Adérito Hugo da Costa , Vice President of the National Parliament.**

'There is a general perception that the civil society is only good at criticising and not proposing solutions, but I want to say that CEPAD already demonstrates to be working to solve conflict and is already helping the State, directly and indirectly, to contribute to peace and development in Timor-Leste', **said Ivo Valente, Minister of Justice representing the Prime Minister.**

'As President for GOPAC, and originally from Manufahi, I congratulate this initiative from CEPAD which is funded by the Prime Minister's Office Civil Society Fund. Today, we also open a community centre with internet access, with the hope that the local youth will use the space as a resource for peace', **said Francisco Miranda Branco, President of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption Timor-Leste (GOPAC-TL).**

'It took a long time to make the dream of a Peace House become a reality. The process started back in 2007 with focus group discussions at the community level and a dialogue with the Government and National Parliament about the causes of conflict that happen almost every other year in Timor-Leste. We completed activities across the 13 districts to understand the causes of conflict and promote peace. And today, we fulfil the dream of a Peace House in the Manufahi Municipality, Letefoho village, just like the ones we already opened in other districts. For this reason, I am grateful to the National Government and the Manufahi Municipality for offering their support to build this Peace House', **said João Boavida, CEPAD Executive Director.**

'The process to build the Peace House actually started in 2007 with the work to prevent conflicts that were happening in Timor-Leste. And this saw the creation of a dialogue in Same itself, then in the Maubisse region and finally in Dili. From that process, the necessity to have a safe space that could be turned into a centre for permanent dialogue was identified. That is how in 2014 we made the local community's idea to help build a Peace House, which would become a permanent centre for community dialogue, a reality. With the Peace House being located in Letefoho, in the centre of Manufahi Municipality, it means that the entire community is able to engage through dialogue when there are disputes. People can sit together in order to talk and look for solutions', **said Romeo Duarte, President of the Manufahi Peace House Steering Committee.**

The Peace House is located in Boraixa Laran neighbourhood, Maniku sub village, Letefoho village, Manufahi Municipality (Bairo Boraixa Laran, Aldeia Maniku, Suku Letefoho, Munisípiu Manufahi) on a parcel of land donated by the local community.

Adding to the previously established spaces in the municipalities of Aileu, Bobonaro, Baucau and Ermera, the Manufahi Peace House will offer a permanent space for the community to meet and discuss local issues and come up with solutions that contribute to sustainable peace. **Local leaders and Focal Points will be in charge of facilitating the different programs of the venue, leveraging their already established status as community mediators.**

The Manufahi Peace House project is the result of a partnership between CEPAD, the local community, the Prime Minister's Office Civil Society Fund and Interpeace.

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**About the Centre of Studies for Peace and Development**

The Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD) is a Non-Governmental Organization in Timor-Leste founded in 2008. CEPAD contributes to breaking the cycle of violence and creating a climate in which Timorese can identify and address priority issues in a non-violent and durable manner.

**About Interpeace**

Interpeace is an independent, international peacebuilding organization. It was initially established by the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to build peace. Today it supports locally-led peacebuilding initiatives in over 21 countries across Central America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

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