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

MEDIA RELEASE

Manatuto community lays first stone of Peace House

Local Community, Secretary of State for Land and Property and CEPAD lay first stone of Peace House in Manatuto Municipality

The Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD) launched the construction of its sixth Peace House in Ma'abat village, Manatuto Municipality on Friday 7 August 2015.

Over 30 guests took part in the event, including Secretary of State for Land and Property Jaime Xavier Lopes and Village Chief João da Silva. Together with the community, including local representatives from Rede Feto, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the State Secretariat for Youth and Sports, and members of the Manatuto Peace House steering Committee, they participated in the groundbreaking ceremony.

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.

"The construction of this Peace House will allow the community to come together and solve the problems they face. Having a Peace House here means that the peace will indeed be forged in this space", **said Sr. Jaime Xavier Lopes, Secretary of State for Land and Property.**

"We say that the love for peace is already dead. I stand here as I want us to further strengthen peace in this place, and by breaking the ground for this Peace House, I am contributing to the growth of

Manatuto, my municipality. And I pass on the message that together, as partners, we can consolidate and strengthen peace for our community”, **said resistance veteran Sr. Sebastiao Soares ‘CURI’**.

“To all the members of the local community who have passed and whom we remember today: we want you to continue living here. We want you to show us the way and I hope that with this stone I lay here today I will indeed contribute to build and to strengthen peace in this municipality”, **said Sr. João Boavida, CEPAD Executive Director**.

The Peace House will be located in Nunu Sarau sub-village, Ma’abat village, Manatuto Municipality (Aldeia Nunu Sarau, Suku Ma’abat, Munisípiu Manatuto) on a parcel of land donated by the local government.

Adding to the previously established spaces in the municipalities of Aileu, Bobonaro, Baucau, Ermera and Manufahi, the Manatuto 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 Manatuto Peace House project will open its doors in 2016 thanks to a collaboration between CEPAD, the local community, the Prime Minister’s Office Civil Society Fund and Interpeace. To continue expanding its network of Peace Houses, CEPAD is actively seeking partnership opportunities and welcomes expressions of interest.

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. Initially established by the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to build peace, today Interpeace supports locally-led peacebuilding initiatives in over 21 countries across Central America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

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