

Radio Povo Viqueque Project Report

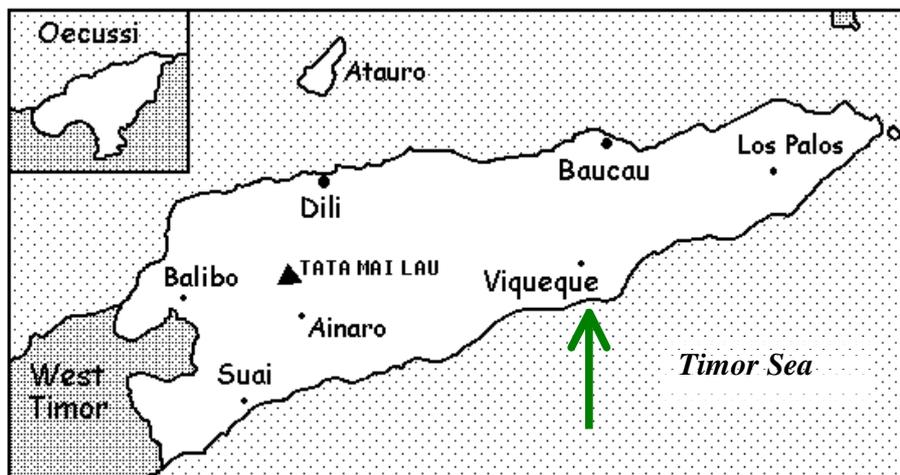


Learning from mistakes made in the past, by others and ourselves, when program demands would collide with private needs of volunteers, we found that a stronger fundament would be to build with the tools that we actually have – not with what we wish to have (page 15)

Community Radio Project in Viqueque, Timor Leste

Stichting Vrij Oost Timor in collaboration with Stichting XminY Solidariteitsfonds
(Free East Timor Foundation and XminY Solidarity Fund, The Netherlands)

Project: Radio Viqueque Support Group - RVSG.
Project Manager: Endie van Binsbergen
Local counterpart: NGO Radio Povo Viqueque (RPV). Registration Timor Leste: TIN 5002361
Target: Establish a community radio station in and for District Viqueque, train local volunteers until self-management.
Training: Conducted by Endie van Binsbergen (RVSG) and Radio Rakambia (Dili).
At stage: Installation completed in June 2004, RPV broadcasts seven days a week.
Follow up: Monitoring and consult, fundraising activities for basic financial back-up, technical complications and maintenance - through collaborative network.



Background

After many years of commitment to the human rights issues of Timor Leste and its struggle for independence, I became involved in the 1999 referendum as an observer for IFET (International Federation for East Timor) in district Viqueque. I witnessed a brave people voting their way into independence, despite severe threats and intimidation. As a member of the Free East Timor Foundation, I went back to Viqueque mid 2000 to survey local initiatives for reconstruction, and tried to set up a network for the distribution of wind-up radios. Here I met with local youths who informed me that the distribution of these radios would be of little use at that stage, as no radio signal from the capital Dili could yet be received in Viqueque. A new idea was born: to build a community radio station, together with local volunteers.

The Amsterdam-based XminY Solidarity Fund supported this idea and joined this project with their financial expertise and network. Together, we initiated the *Radio Viqueque Support Group* (RVSG), committed to work together with the local radio group in Viqueque until and after the radio station would be fully established and function independently. Based on my experience with social projects and my intensive time in Viqueque, I was chosen to be the Project Manager.

About district Viqueque

Viqueque is a pluralistic district regarding its languages (Makasai, Tetum-Terik, Kairui, Midiki, Nau-Eti), cultural backgrounds and variety in agriculture. The majority of the population makes a living as farmers. The situation in the Viqueque district is considered socially and economically unstable. Furthermore, the district suffers from severe land disputes. Besides that, due to the severe lack of facilities and possibilities in Viqueque, many competent youths move to Dili, which results in a decrease of intellectual capacity within the district.

Among other problems the main challenges the locals face are illiteracy and minimal access to information. Ever since the violent destructions during the aftermath of the 1999 referendum, there is no postal service other than PO boxes in Dili and Baucau.

After more than four years of disconnection, telecommunication in the city of Viqueque was finally restored in November 2003. However, basic distribution of newspapers and informative brochures is still problematic until today. It usually takes weeks for publications from the capital city Dili to reach the more isolated villages in this district.

Consequently, the local population misses announcements regarding meetings, job vacancies, courses of possible interest, political developments, etc. Apart from that, current Timor Leste media hardly cater for the specific needs of the people in and around Viqueque.

All this puts a strain on economic development. During the long rainy season, sub-districts like Lacluta and Uato Carbau become even more isolated, due to bad road conditions caused by floods and landslides. Lacluta and Uato Carbau still cannot receive the national broadcast from RTTL. From mid 2005 until early 2006, the entire district of Viqueque lacked RTTL signal, due to technical problems. In summary, the isolation and lack of access to information placed severe restrictions on people's capacity to participate in reconstructing their district and the country.

A local radio broadcaster keeps people abreast of local developments and caters to the specific needs of Viqueque district. Although most areas in Timor Leste now receive broadcasts from RTTL, community radio in every district remains of the utmost importance. Through a local radio broadcaster, people will be able to share dialogue and developments in their own district, such as village meetings, announcements of courses and job vacancies, activities for youth, women, markets, medical information, travel and exchange between the sub-districts and open dialogue. The signal of Radio Povo Viqueque also reaches Lacluta and most part of Uato Carbau, areas that cannot receive the national broadcaster RTTL.

Development of the Viqueque radio project

- July - September 2000: First survey

The first survey on the information flow into and within Viqueque District. I travelled with Helena Soares around the five sub-districts of Viqueque. We spoke with local leaders such as the village chiefs, political leaders, priests, teachers and women's organisations about the specific needs and possibilities in various areas. UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in Timor Leste) submitted the keys of an empty space in the Community Centre to the local radio group, to be used as their temporary office and meeting place.

Comments in District Viqueque, during and after field research around the district

"Radio Povo Viqueque is a challenge for the local volunteers of this project. It is also good for their personal development and it will stimulate social organisations of the local population."
(Aurelia Pinto, Head of School in Viqueque Town)

"Radio may bring national and international Law and Justice to the people."
(Antonio Soares, writer for news magazines in the '70s, former radio presenter for UDT.)

"In this transitional period, the people need information. People want to know what is going on. They want to know which way to choose on the road to self-determination."
(Germano Gomes Amaral, village chief of Ahic)

"I can only hope and dream that this radio will become reality."
(Steve Farley, UN Civil Police, Regional Commander, Viqueque)

"Radio is an important source of information for housewives. They listen while they are cooking in their kitchens or while they work in the field."
(Elda Ferreira, active member of the OMT women's organisation)

"We need information, so that we can participate in the process of reconciliation and the transition into the new era."
(Filomeno da Cruz, CNRT-secretary of Lacluta)

"If all international well wishes are here in East Timor for the welfare and security of Timorese people, give your strength for the initiation of radio broadcast."
(Krishna Neupane, UNTAET, Micro Business Promotion Unit)

"I hope that the Viqueque Radio Project will offer information to the common people, especially to those in the remote areas. We will surely support this radio station."
(Martin, nurse at the Viqueque hospital)

"We hope that this project will soon be reality, because radio is extremely important for Viqueque, and East Timor in general."
(Sidonio, human rights activist in Viqueque)

"The importance of this proposal, especially in educating and sensitising the population of this district, cannot be overemphasised."
(Cherno Jallow, UNTAET, Financial Officer in Uato Carbau)

"A radio which is community based, and has the support of this grass roots organisation dedicated to help East Timorese society to step peacefully into self government, has all the chances to grow strong"
(Elizabeth Deligia, UNTAET, Viqueque)

"Once in the air, always in the air!"
(Elda Ferreira, Regional Head of the OMT women's organisation)

- May - August 2001: Start of training

Start of a training in organisation, productive discussion, legal structures, draft statutes, network building and lobby. The local radio group in Viqueque chose the name for their future radio station: Radio Povo Viqueque (RPV), meaning Viqueque People's Radio - radio broadcast from and to the people. Viqueque doctor Odete Belo agreed to be the patron.

- November 2001 - April 2002: Accommodation and Complications

The space in the Community Centre proved to be unsuitable as a permanent studio. The ceiling and windows of the main building were soon demolished and the environment was too noisy. The Department of Land and Property appointed a new location for the future radio station: the former Indonesian TV station (TVRI) on top of a hill just outside Viqueque town. RPV registered as a member of the NGO-Forum, the national umbrella for NGOs.

However, the team still faced many difficulties: the practical exchange of information with the Support Group in The Netherlands, internal structures and the lack of experience. This showed particularly during the renovation of their building (sponsored by Ireland Aid), when financial mismanagement occurred caused by the (now ex-) director of the team. The other members of the radio group decided that he had to leave the project. After this, we all sat together and wrote a report for to Ireland Aid and discussed the matter openly.

Although the matter was well solved in good relations, the incident caused enormous frustration within RPV, and the process got stuck for many months from there. We concluded that the old structure needed to be revised intensively in order to continue the project and guarantee its success. We also agreed that the group would recruit some new people, from all five sub-districts, to join in for fresh input.

- September - December 2002: Collaboration with Radio Rakambia

After several intensive discussions with the RPV group, in which they expressed their frustrations and motivations about the radio project, we consulted mainly local organisations and individuals that were willing to help and lift the RPV project back on the rails. As a result, a community-based committee was established with representatives of the five sub-districts of Viqueque, to pull and monitor the process to its destiny. One of the frustrations that the group expressed was the lack of practical training on radio making.

After consultation with the people of Dili-based Radio Rakambia, they agreed with enthusiasm to join this project by sharing their knowledge and experience on all aspects of program making, and working in a community radio station.

The plan: a full year of co-operative broadcast at the empty studio building in Viqueque, three days per month, using Rakambia's mobile equipment (with antenna on bamboo!) Rakambia crew would operate the equipment, while RPV crew would learn step by step how to gather and present information for radio programs. With this, the radio team in Viqueque would get closer to their target and still have plenty time to develop themselves as a structured organisation.

As for funding, the first six months of co-operative broadcast were sponsored by the Viqueque Office of GTZ (Germany), and followed up by Oxfam GB. Apart from radio training in Viqueque, members of RPV took turns in spending time at the Rakambia studio in Dili to experience daily activity in and around a radio station.

- 13 - 15 December 2002: The first co-operative broadcast in Viqueque!



Members of Radio Rakambia presented the basics of news report, interview techniques and entertainment. The first three months, most of the programs were initiated and presented by members of Rakambia, while the Viqueque team was taking notes and joined in during the lighter programs. To inform the people of Viqueque, we spread flyers around the area. Even the police took flyers to spread during their patrol.

Step by step the Viqueque team took over, until most of the programs were conducted by RPV. As all programs were live on air, the people of Viqueque could follow this process on the radio.

As a contribution to the radio program, GTZ co-ordinator Astrid Paape and myself presented a show named "Around the World". During this monthly show, we presented an imaginary trip from Viqueque to Dili and around the world, discussing topography, cultures, languages, food, politics and of course we played music from the countries that we imaginary travelled.



Radio Rakambia's mobile broadcast unit with antenna attached to on a long bamboo stick

- 18 December 2002: Structure of RPV Monitoring Committee

All members of the RPV Monitoring Committee gathered for an intensive workshop on legal structures and basic principles of organisation. For this, I prepared all material in Bahasa Indonesia and conducted the workshop together with Rakambia's director, Eurico Pereira. At the end of the workshop, the Monitoring Committee officially elected the RPV board and the NGO's new structure was installed. The new RPV board presented the revised statutes on 5 January 2003. The statutes were unanimously approved by the Monitoring Committee.

- 15 January 2003: Media trouble

It was the front page news: "CEP (World Bank) will establish a community radio station in Viqueque". STL, a national newspaper opened with a full page article stating that the CEP planned to build a radio station in Viqueque as the Dutch project had failed to do so and there was no further activity. The article was published only a few days after the *second session* of our co-operative broadcast. The article was in contradiction with all the community participation that we had gained in Viqueque for the radio project. Rakambia's Eurico and I visited the STL office in Dili that same day to complain about the article. The STL manager received us and we proved our point by showing him digital pictures of the broadcast. He interviewed us for a new article. He also directed us to the CEP office, which had delivered the initial article.

Two RPV members joined us to the CEP office and we agreed that the statement about the failed project would be withdrawn officially. As a result, the next two days STL opened with extensive articles on the progress of Radio Povo Viqueque and Radio Rakambia, including excuses for the initial article. The whole issue turned into positive and widespread publicity for our radio project.

- 22 March 2003: Seminar

RPV organised a seminar in Viqueque on the topic: *Role and awareness of all components within society for the development of Viqueque District*. For this, I assisted RPV with the preparations, the lobby for forum speakers, and the fundraising. Rakambia assisted the seminar by live broadcast on location during that week. RPV provided a facilitator, a master of ceremony, and a kitchen crew. The seminar was attended by 88 registered participants from all five sub-districts and was sponsored by DAP (Australian Embassy, Dili).

- March - May 2003: Funding completed

The new structure and the revived enthusiasm of the Viqueque radio group gave us the thrust that we needed. We presented a positive report to CAF/SCO and Wilde Ganzen in The Netherlands who both, at an earlier stage, had pledged financial support for this project. As a third donor, HIVOS stepped in and completed the required funding for the studio equipment and transportation. Now we could actually get started with the technical part of the project.

We finalised the agreement with Stichting Worldcom for the purchase, shipment and technical installation of the studio equipment and the antenna tower. Oxfam GB pledged support for the expenses of Worldcom's technician, persuaded by the fact that all RPV volunteers would be actively involved in the construction as part of the technical learning process.

- 28 July 2003: Licences

The Minister of Transportation, Telecommunication and Public Works, Ing. Ovidio Amaral, gave his official positive recommendation for this project, which was required for the application for the operational licences and the frequency.

- October 2003: Solar-cell radios

A shipment of 200 solar cell radios arrived at Dili Harbour, to be distributed in Viqueque town and the outlying villages in the district. This freight was the result of a fundraising campaign held in The Netherlands by the Free East Timor Foundation, supported by many individuals. NOVIB helped with the transportation.

Clearing the radios through the channels of Timor Leste's bureaucracy took us three months. The radios were stored in Dili until the actual launch of the RPV station.



Freeplay Radio

- January 2004: Getting ready

Final renovation of the stairs leading from the main road to the RPV studio, and required adjustments to the building itself. After a year of broadcasting in co-operation with Rakambia, RPV had gained practical experience and confidence as a radio team. After a slow and hesitating start, they gradually developed new ideas and topics, inviting guests to the studio for interviews or discussion, recording events in the sub-districts, finding useful information, chatting away in the microphones and finally editing programs on CD or tape at the Rakambia studio.



Although the broadcast was still limited to three days per month, the two teams successfully attracted many listeners. Meanwhile, the RPV team learned how to perform interviews, present regional news, live discussion and entertainment such as practical tips, requests and poetry. Radio Povo Viqueque had established its name. Eurico (Radio Rakambia) and I conducted basic training sessions on scheduled programming and daily management of the radio station.

Clearing the studio equipment

- 21 February 2004: Arrival of studio equipment

The container with studio equipment for the community radio in Viqueque arrived at Dili Harbour. A time consuming procedure to acquire a tax-exempt status for the equipment started shortly after this date. According to regulations, donated goods for social non-profit projects need to be approved by the Minister of Planning and Finance before being granted tax-exempt status.

A long procedure and - to the frustration of many non-profit NGOs and donors - not often successful. Members of RPV started a support campaign to gain tax-exempt status and speed up the process. Little did they know of what was yet to come.

We had two good reasons for not paying import tax on this studio equipment: 1) The calculated 17.000 USD would mean the project was bankrupt, and 2) We felt it as a matter of principal to not be charged for bringing a donation for community purposes. It was also written in the Rules and Regulations for the Import of Goods that such donations would be tax-exempt. It was a tough exercise for the radio team to stand strong and demand their right. Of course we did not object against tax over wages for hired heavy labour and over the solar-cell radios, the latter likely to become private property after distribution.

- 24 February 2004: Columbia University

Three persons from the Columbia University Office in Dili (Constantino, Natalino and Brian) and a member of National Parliament (Eteuco, PD) visited RPV in Viqueque to follow up on a proposal that RPV had presented to Columbia University early 2003. The opportunity was taken to discuss the tax-exempt problem. Both Columbia University and Mr. Eteuco agreed to follow up on this. They have been of great mental support.

- March 2004: Lobby for tax-exempt

RPV director Florindo and I met with Januario Soares (the Viqueque District Representative in Parliament) to lobby for support on the tax-exempt issue. He contacted the President of Parliament (Lu-Olo), who advised him to discuss it with the Minister of Transportation, Telecommunication and Public Works. Later that day, Januario called us to inform that he had done so. As a result, the mentioned Minister gave his positive recommendation for a tax-exempt status to the Minister of Planning and Finance.

Meanwhile, we sent a notification of the arrival of studio equipment and an official request for tax-exempt to the Minister of Planning and Finance, with the complete packing-list of equipment. A petition for tax-exempt signed by all Dili-based (inter-) national organisations linked to community radio was presented to President Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, the Minister of Planning and Finance, Minister of Internal Affairs, and the President of Parliament.

The Frequency Management Office in Dili informed us that the STL as described on the containers packing list would not be licensed, as its frequency range did not match with the Timor Leste frequency regulations. It didn't seem wise to carry the STL back to The Netherlands as luggage, it was sent back to The Netherlands through special mail service to be replaced at a later stage.

In Viqueque, the RPV volunteers cleared the studio compound of rocks and bushes. They also dug the hole for the antenna foot 1.20mtr/1.20mtr/1.50mtr in preparation of the installation. Two m³ of pre-mixed concrete and two welded fence doors were ordered in Dili. A truck was hired for transport to Viqueque. Young fans of the radio station started bringing water up the hill and filled the drums that would be needed to process the concrete.



- 12- 15 April 2004: Tax-exempt granted, container cleared

After many fruitless attempts to clear the container, I called on Senhor Eugebio, who is a lawyer and a Member of Parliament. He came to the Customs Office and discussed the regulations on tax-exempt for acknowledged non-profit projects. This resulted in a positive recommendation by the Customs Deputy Director to the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

RPV became the first independent media organisation in Timor Leste that was granted tax-exempt, the container was cleared from the harbour the same day!

That night, I travelled with all the equipment in three trucks to Viqueque and arrived there at the GTZ warehouse at 3 AM, where we could store all material until the installation of the studio. I was welcomed by four RPV members who stayed up all night to guard the trucks.



- 16 April 2004: Checking and preparing the equipment

At 8 AM the rest of the RPV team joined us to unload the trucks and store the material in the GTZ warehouse on the road leading up to the RPV hill. We checked and marked all boxes and crates. The generator turned out far too big and heavy to be lifted all the way up the stairs to the studio on the hill. Therefore, we had to change the original plan (building a shed next to the studio) into a new plan: the renovation of a small empty building down the hill. After consulting with the District Administrator, the former scouting den next to the GTZ warehouse was appointed to RPV, and we initiated the renovation that same day.

This old building consists of two rooms only, perfect for a generator and a separated fuel tank room. The den needed new roofing and doors. Also, for security reasons, we decided to close up the two windows with cement bricks and add a fence with a welded door. Obviously, we would have to construct a 200 meter long underground pipeline with electricity cables straight up the steep hill side, leading to the studio. On the other hand, this construction enables a fuel truck to fill up the 500-litre tank, and therewith saves the radio team having to carry fuel up the hill. The renovation started immediately, by a combination of RPV volunteers and hired skilled labour, so that the generator could be moved to the shed before finalising the installation.

The team negotiated with the owner of the land through which the pipeline would lead from the generator shed to the studio. There was no problem and the owner's only condition was that he should be hired as part of the heavy labour staff for digging the ditch. This was agreed.

Installation of the studio

First phase: 24 April - 8 May 2004

- Preparations

The radio technician sent by Worldcom, Bas Stekelenburg, arrived in Dili. We did a survey on technical supplies in the Dili hardware stores. Antonio Amaral from local NGO Hamoris Timor Oan (HTO) showed us around the stores. Rakambia technician Lindo joined us in Viqueque for the two weeks of installation.

Meanwhile, the 2 m³ of pre-mixed concrete (in four huge bags) for the construction of the tower's foot, and the welded doors had arrived in Viqueque by truck from Dili. Florindo and three other RPV members had a tough job unloading the truck and protecting the concrete mixture from the pouring rain. The next day, a group of heavy labour workers was hired to carry the concrete up the hill, to be kept in the empty office space at the back of the studio building.

Upon arrival in Viqueque, we opened all crates and boxes stored at the GTZ warehouse in order to inspect the studio equipment.

We encountered some serious problems. It turned out that the first part of the manual for the construction of the tower was not included in the shipment. Due to limited communication facilities, it was quite an effort to figure out how to attach the accessories and install the tower (email and phone were both limited). Also, there was no way that the antenna elements would fit to this type of tower. We would have to add an extra construction. One box with smaller but essential parts seemed to be missing - but was mysteriously recovered at the warehouse, three weeks later.

We rented a small pick-up truck for the two weeks: to transport material from the warehouse to the stairs leading to the studio, to buy groceries for the kitchen team, and to drive the volunteers home at night after work. Most boxes and crates were carried up the stairs by the RPV team. For some very heavy crates we hired extra labour. Even the extremely heavy generator was moved by manpower: a team of 25 veterans used three iron pipes to roll and push it to the new shed. The tower remained in the GTZ warehouse until a later stage of the installation.



- Getting started

The volunteers formed small groups for all different tasks: the pipeline team (for the electricity cable), the welding team, the concrete team, the kitchen team (for coffee and meals during the installation) and the shopping team in Dili. For heavy labour extra workers were hired to work with the teams. Bas and Lindo were the technical team. My position was to oversee all these teams, the communication between the teams, mediate whenever miscommunication or working-stress occurred, place the orders for Dili, and keep track of the finances.

Fortunately, the mobile phone network in Viqueque started to function five months before. Had the situation still been as from August 1999 until November 2003, we would not have been able to communicate between the studio and the warehouse or between Viqueque and Dili.



Many accessories, tools and heavy materials needed to be ordered and brought in from Dili to complete the installation. Antonio (HTO) and Elio (RPV) were in Dili where they daily took down all the orders by phone or email and searched for the required materials. Some of the bigger materials were transported by hired trucks, but eventually also several public bus drivers got involved and delivered orders en route from Dili to the GTZ warehouse.

While Bas and Lindo worked at the studio equipment inside the building, a combination of RPV volunteers and hired labour started digging a ditch from the studio to the generator shed: 200 meters long and one meter deep. The electric feeding cable would run through a PVC pipeline. It turned to be impossible to find 45° connectors for the PVC pipeline, so the curves were produced on the spot by bending the pipe over a camp fire.

Heavy rain for several days and nights washed away part of the ditch, almost causing a landslide on the hillside. We moved some heavy labour workers from the concrete team to the pipeline team, to speed up the process of placing the pipeline and closing the ditch. The concrete team could not get started yet, as they needed to wait for the welding of the iron foundation for the tower foot. This foundation was to be placed in the hole with the concrete.

A borrowed smaller generator was carried to the studio to provide electricity, so that the studio equipment could be tested. Some problems occurred in the mixer as one element immediately produced smoke. Bas removed the element and after attempting to repair it, he decided to take it back to The Netherlands to have it fixed. Another element will need to be replaced at a later stage. A problem occurred also in one amplifier (only the right channel functioning).

Bas found that the hill did not provide enough space for the guy-wires of the tower. A tower of 30 meters height must stand in the middle of a 15 meters radius circle, to attach the guy-wires that will stabilise the tower. It was not possible to define such location on the hill. After our email exchange with Worldcom, it was decided to reduce the tower to 24 meters so that a 12 meters radius would be sufficient to set the guy-wires.

According to the calculations for the tower, the hole that was dug for the antenna foot was just off the most suitable location, to the frustration of the volunteers. We asked the hired labour group to dig a new hole, which they did in the pouring rain.

Bas worked out the measurements for the foundation of the antenna foot, and the welding team started cutting the iron hooklines by hand as the only professional welder in Viqueque had left town for a few days... On his return, the welder took over with suitable tools and finished the job.

An extra m³ of heavier concrete mixture arrived from Dili, and the concrete team started mixing two types of concrete together. As there is no such thing as a cement mill available in Viqueque, this was manual labour. Four oil drums were placed near the new hole and filled up with water carried up from a nearby well. Temporary roofing was created (UNHCR-shelter sheet) to protect the workers and the concrete from the burning sun as well as the rain.



Immediately after the welded foundation was delivered, the Concrete Team started mixing the concrete and filled up the hole. Two men kept the concrete moving by stirring it with long sticks. This is to release air and upgrade the concrete's quality. As they reached the instructed level, Bas monitored placing the iron foundation. Then the workers added concrete and worked until way after dark, as all concrete had to dry in one massive block. It takes at least two days to dry.

Meanwhile, Bas installed all the studio equipment and also the transmitter had been installed in the transmitter room. The electricity cable had been pulled through its pipeline. But, as the cable came in two lengths of hundred meters, it needed to be connected in the middle. The shopping team in Dili had a very tough job finding the right T-connector for this. It is essential to use a connector with a screw cap, so that the connection made in the middle of the electricity cable can still be reached at a later stage.

When the T-connector finally arrived in Viqueque, the weather was not helping us: the rain was pouring down! Bas and five volunteers climbed the muddy hill to connect the cable and two men held a sheet of tin roofing over Bas and the open ends of the cable. Two others rapidly dug a side drain to detour muddy water that came running down the hill. The operation was successful.

End of the first phase

Sadly, time was up. The two weeks had passed and Bas had to return to The Netherlands before installing the antenna tower. Several heavy tropical rain showers slowed down most of the work in open air. Also, a sudden power failure in Viqueque town did not make it any easier.

With the antenna tower still waiting in the GTZ warehouse, the concrete team joined the pipeline team. They closed up the ditch and build small buffers of stones and cement every five meters at the steepest parts of the hill, to avoid landslides. An extra buffer was build at the very foot of the hill, right behind the generator shed. It was here that the workers found a suspicious looking object and called for the police. These concluded that the object might be an old bomb and told the workers to stop digging. Police then sealed off the area with red and white ribbon and waited for a special military team to come and remove the bomb - which turned out to be harmless.

The Dili-based organisation Internews, working in support of new media in Timor Leste was very helpful. Their radio technician Gavin and two local colleagues visited Viqueque on June 3rd, to take a good look at the RPV station-in-process. We discussed what work could be done while waiting for the final phase of the installation. Gavin also checked the installation and the tower and wrote a report with recommendations, which I sent to Vrij Oost Timor and Worldcom.

Second phase: 12 - 24 June 2004

- Preparations

I contacted two workers from the Viqueque City Power Station to help us install the electric wiring in the studio building. These two men, two RPV volunteers and I literally worked day and night to finish the wiring before the return of technician Bas Stekelenburg to Viqueque.

I then travelled to Dili and joined the shopping team. The team in The Netherlands had sent a new list of required materials, to be bought in Dili. We had to find iron pipes (8 meters) with specific inside and outside measures, and several other accessories for the final attachments to the tower. We rented scaffolding, bought three more m³ of concrete mixture for the anchors and construction aluminium to install aircon in the transmitter room. Everything was loaded into two trucks and transported to Viqueque the night before Bas arrived in Dili. The next morning in Viqueque, the two trucks were unloaded and all material was carried up the hill to the station.

- Installing the antenna tower

Three anchors for the guy-wires were placed in the holes (1m³) that had been dug during the first phase. Three concrete teams filled up the holes simultaneously as a fourth team mixed and delivered the concrete.

A great adventure was bringing the tower from the GTZ warehouse to the studio up-hill. Again, we called on the war veterans who spectacularly carried the large and heavy tower to the top of the hill. Along the road, RPV volunteers stopped the traffic, guided the veterans around obstacles such as trees, big rocks and curves at the stairs. The next challenge was the smaller but much heavier foot of the tower, which they carried up in three teams, taking turns. The foot was placed over the concrete foundation and fitted perfectly! Bolts were secured and treated.



The tower was lifted and placed horizontally on the foot. It took some puzzling moments to connect the cables, but eventually the system worked well and the tower was slowly but surely erected as we all stood there gazing and finally cheered. (Detail: coincidentally, a children's choir in the valley below started singing the Timor Leste national hymn at the moment the tower stood straight). The system was secured and we started setting up the scaffolding.

The scaffolding from Dili was high enough, but could not surround the tower. The RPV team and some of the hired labour sat together to work out a plan.

They came up with the calculation that for the same expenses as renting and transporting another iron scaffolding from Dili, we could buy wood in Viqueque, build one, and attach it to the one that was already standing there (plus: the wood could be used again for other purposes later). They finished the job in less than a day and the construction was solid.



Meanwhile, Florindo and I worked out a construction for the hanging system of the aircon's outdoor-element. A technician from a Dili aircon store came over to connect the aircon system. We needed a lot of essential welding to complete the construction of the antenna system. But this time, the welder was available from day one, as we could inform him timely. Bas made clear drawings of all items that needed welding, and fortunately the welder had all required material in store. As some welded parts did not quite fit, the welder came to the studio and climbed the scaffolding to take a close look at the construction. He knew exactly what was needed.

The guy-wires were connected to the tower and the lightning protection device (copper rod) was placed at the top. For the antenna elements, an entire new construction was made and attached from the top of the tower: two 8-meters iron pipes hanging down at two sides of the tower, to be secured in the middle at a later stage.



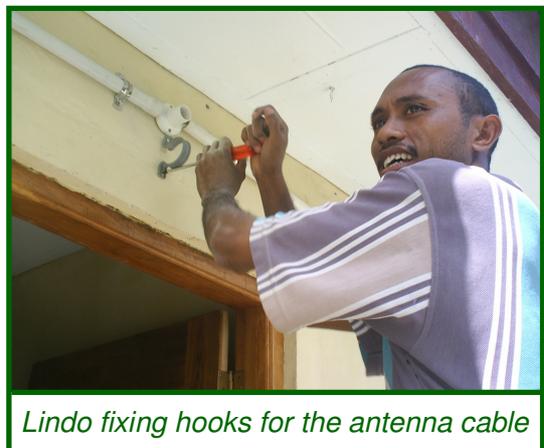
Step by step, the eight elements and the antenna cable (through splitters attached with tie-raps) were attached to the new construction. After every two elements, the tower was raised to the next level. The antenna elements were attached in an angle and direction that allows the signal to reach as many villages within Viqueque District as possible (away from the sea). The tower was growing higher bit by bit, and became visible for the people down at the market.

Excitement and encouragement all over Viqueque town!

Finally, the guy-wires were connected to the anchors and three teams simultaneously turned the connectors to pull the wires equally tight. Inside the studio, Bas and Lindo worked at the speakers, microphones, cables, etc. Bas made some adjustments to the electricity, installed the main switch box, and we checked the aircon (not perfect, but will do).

A hole was drilled and hacked out in the outside wall of the transmitter-room, to lead the antenna cable in. Rogerio and I worked on other preparations in that room, like wrapping the pallets under the transmitter with lino sheets, against dust and insects flocking under the transmitter.

When the heavy antenna cable was unrolled, we all spread out over the compound, two to three meters between two people, and passed the cable slowly to avoid internal breaking. As the height of the tower and its distance to the transmitter had been reduced, the antenna cable was far too long. Bas told us that it was impossible to cut the cable short without using special equipment (which was not available). Therefore, the antenna cable was lead once around the studio building before entering the hole into the transmitter room. Inside this room, the cable was lead around the ceiling and then connected to the transmitter. Inside the transmitter-room the cable was hung up on wooden hooks carved on the spot.



Lindo fixing hooks for the antenna cable

The antenna was connected by a system that needs screws to keep it in place. Some discussion about safety occurred here, as the manual that we used for training the local radio team instructs to immediately unplug the antenna in case of a thunderstorm (which is a common weather condition during the rainy season). The way it is now, one would have to unscrew the back of the transmitter, and then unscrew the connector. This takes a long time and it is not easily put back in place after doing so. We need to follow-up on this and change the connecting system.

24 June 2004: On Air!

The most exciting part of the whole operation was turning on the transmitter, while playing music in the studio. The whole team sat outside, close to a radio, holding their breath while waiting for the signal. There seemed to be some complication at first, but it was soon fixed and at 3.15 PM, Radio Povo Viqueque went on air with a loud "Pump up the volume". Stunned and exhausted, we just stood there listening to our own signal until the song ended and a new song began.

Finally, it was Dulce who took action. She walked into the studio, turned on the microphone and said the now legendary words: "Good afternoon Viqueque.... this is Dulce on Radio Povo Viqueque. We are on air, finally!" She then looked at me, as I was leaning motionless against the studio wall, and she said: "I think Endie is about to cry now!"



While Bas hurried down and packed his bags (he had a plane to next morning), we raised the Timorese flag into the top of the tower. This was a symbolic action and related to the huge Indonesian flag that flew in top of the telecom tower to intimidate Viqueque voters at the time of the Referendum in 1999.

Only few minutes later, my mobile phone rang, it was the Viqueque District Administrator, who said: "Endie, I see the flag on top of RPV-hill. Does it mean that you people finish the job?"

I told him that we were on air and he replied: "I am happy and proud. On behalf of the people of Viqueque, congratulations and thank you all for a job well done!"

We gathered to wave Bas goodbye, and then hurried back to the studio where we stayed on air until 10 PM, surrounded by a growing crowd of Viquequeans of all ages.

Try-out and programming

July - August 2004

- Introduction and monitoring

After finalising the technical installation, the RPV team performed an intensive two-month try-out, while monitoring the signal's frequency and reach before starting the actual programming. For this, RPV formed two groups:

One group operated the radio station in Viqueque Town, to practice and become familiar with the new equipment. They broadcast music and pre-recorded educational programs at the now official RPV frequency: FM 97,9. The second group did a tour around the district to broadcast by mobile unit and open a dialogue on various locations. While on their way, this second group monitored the RPV signal coming from the station. Results of the monitoring were marked on a map of Viqueque District. The try-out was scheduled from 07.00 until 10.15 and from 16.00 until 20.00, seven days per week.

Sponsored by DAP (Australian Embassy), members of RPV and Rakambia travelled around the Viqueque sub-districts (Uato-Lari, Uato-Carbau, Lacluta, Ossu) to perform a introduction and a civic education program about the meaning of community radio and how to participate in the reconstruction process through this community radio station.

This program was broadcast on location, using Radio Rakambia's mobile broadcast facilities. Unfortunately, the visit to Ossu was without broadcast, due to technical problems with the mobile unit. But despite that the tour was successful. Not only do the communities in Viqueque people need the information from their radio station: RPV also needs the moral contribution from the communities, by expressing public opinion, joining discussions and attending radio programs.

In general, the people of Timor Leste are highly capable of creating discussion and dialogue between groups within their community. Now, with the presence of a community radio station, communication can be extended. Ideas can be heard and exchanged by people in other villages. Differences between the various communities can be overcome and openly discussed. The people of Viqueque can receive information specifically related to their district.

- Distribution of solar-cell radios



Now it was time to distribute the solar-cell powered radios in Viqueque District. Members of RPV and Rakambia made a start during the tour around the five sub-districts of Viqueque.

At first, radios were handed over to the social institutions and co-operatives (health centres, churches, schools, farmers' collectives, police stations, women's organisations, etc.)

At a later stage, we visited more villages with the help of local NGO *Hamoris Timor Oan* and gave radios to people who had been selected as RPV-Monitor to close-guard the reach and

quality of the radio signal. During the distribution, RPV members Francisco Soares and Dulce da Costa Mariano demonstrated how to operate and maintain the radios to avoid early damage. They used the occasion to discuss how many people can group around one radio and to express our wish that women too will be actively involved as monitors.

September - October 2004

- Programming

After the self-training and the monitoring of the signal had been completed, RPV now started broadcasting on a more appropriate schedule for the volunteers, three days per week on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from 07.00 until 10.15 and from 16.00 until 20.00.

The main RPV radio programs at this stage: Happy Morning (music and morning chat), Regional News, Announcements, Info-program (pre-recorded CDs from the government, UNDP, CARE, Internews, etc), Children's Hour, Public Opinion or Discussion, Reports from Events in the Sub-Districts, Poetry and Reading the Coupons. These coupons are written requests, greetings and messages. The coupons were free at first, to promote the radio station. The RPV team planned to charge a fee of ten cents per coupon at a later stage.

The RPV reporters started to actively take interviews and follow developments in the district. However, due to lack of transportation (no motorbikes) it is hard at times to keep up with the news. Public transport is not always a solution, as return trips are often limited to two busses per 24 hours. However, now that the radio station had become a fact, more people came to bring information to the studio and participate in the program making. Also, police and the District Administrator proved very willing to provide a ride for RPV reporters when special events were scheduled in one of the sub-districts.

The official inauguration of the RPV studio

25 October 2004

- Preparations

Preparing the official inauguration of the studio took intensive internal discussions, external lobbying, fundraising and planning. We knew we could expect a high number of people from all five Viqueque sub-districts who would come from far to witness the inauguration.



In consultation with Radio Rakambia, we decided to combine the inauguration with a seminar: *Meaning and Sustainability of Community Radio*. For the local RPV radio team this would be a great opportunity to facilitate a public dialogue between government, local leaders, people's organisations and (inter-) national NGOs.

Young fans of the RPV radio station came to do the decorations, carried up drinking water and helped in the improvised kitchen to provide coffee for participants and guests.

To protect our guests from the burning sun, the radio team built a temporary traditional roofing. They also carried 150 chairs up the hill to the studio. Sadly, the Minister of Telecommunication was not available, due to a health condition. We did however receive many positive replies.

- The official inauguration



A special guest speaker at the inauguration was Max Stahl, the British journalist who became a living legend in Timor Leste after he managed to film the massacre at Santa Cruz in November 1991 and then brought it out into the rest of the world.

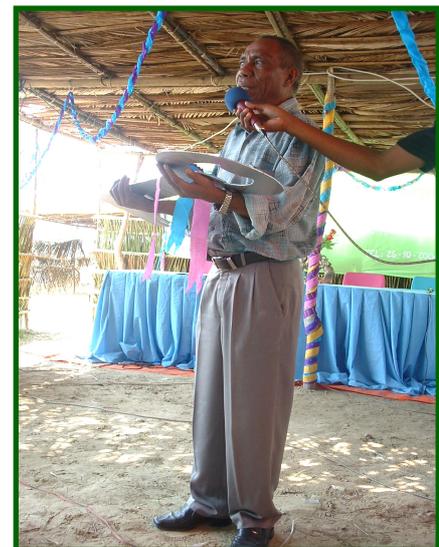
The audience cheered emotionally when he was introduced. Everybody in Timor Leste knows his name, but many had never seen his face.

Max looked back at the time he first visited Viqueque to do a reportage on Falintil fighters in the mountains. He held an intensive speech about the importance of free and independent media, and emphasized that free media is a foundation of democracy.

The actual inauguration was performed by Sr. Francisco da Silva, the Viqueque District Administrator, by handing over the symbolic key to the radio station.

As the Project Manager of Radio Viqueque Support Group, I presented a huge key and explained to the audience that this key was a symbol to open the door to freedom of expression. Then I asked Sr. Francisco da Silva if he - Head of Viqueque District Government - was ready and willing to hand over this key to RPV: free media in the hands of the people.

The crowd cheered and applauded as he handed the key to Florindo de Jesus, the director of the RPV team. After this, two RPV members presented a treasure case, containing two white doves representing the voice of the Viqueque people. The Administrator released the doves - and the voice of the people was set free to fly! Teenagers played guitar and sang for the audience.



After the lunch buffet, we proceeded the program with two forum discussions. Speakers during the first session were the Viqueque District Administrator and the Viqueque Representative in Parliament. Questions from the audience were mainly addressing a guarantee for media freedom. Both these speakers stressed that they would protect this radio station and independent media in general. The second session was for representatives of RPV, Internews and ARKTL (the umbrella for community radio stations), who spoke on behalf of independent media. The audience asked the media organisations questions on how they will guarantee impartial reporting. Both sessions were certainly alive, with active feedback from the audience.

The entire day of inauguration was broadcasted live, with the assistance of Radio Rakambia.

First year after the handover

After the official handover of the station to the local radio team in October 2004, I stayed with the team for one more year. This way, they could find and develop their own methods and organise their own structure. Where ever consult was needed, I would still be around. My new position in the team was to be the assistant of the station manager, Florindo de Jesus. But it was indeed Florindo who took final decisions, it had now become his task to shape and guide the RPV radio team and it's network.

RPV reporters had already gained extensive field experience during the year of broadcast with Rakambia. Still, RPV needed more training for specific skills such as the technical aspects of the studio equipment, maintenance of the generator, using computer programs, network building, proposal lobbying and internal management. Nevertheless, with their station finally on air, RPV started bringing the results of their field experience and training into practice.

- Memorial broadcast

A special radio program was created at the 4th of September 2004, five years after the outcome of the referendum that lead the country into independence. RPV set up teams of two reporters for each sub-district. These teams then interviewed people whom they met along the streets and asked how they remembered that historical day.

How did they hear the outcome: on the radio, the television, had they been told by friends? Where were they at that day: fled into the mountains, over the border, at home? What was their first reaction at that moment: happiness, relieve, fear, despair?



It took a full day to broadcast all the personal stories, and most people turned out to be eager to talk about their memories. Conform the special date, RPV played old resistance songs that day.

- Editing

The manual of the program that came with the studio computer (Mar4Win) was in Spanish, which is not useful in this country. Instead of waiting for the English version, we chose to switch to using Cool Edit Pro which is used by most other community radio stations in Timor Leste. We decided it would only help the exchange between stations.

As I was not familiar yet with Cool Edit Pro, we worked our way through the program together and depended on Radio Rakambia for some time for quality editing.

RPV sent out emergency calls for an exchange program within the circle of community radio stations. As a result, in November 2004, RPV's Rogerio Soares spent two weeks at Radio Tokodede (District Liquisa) to practice editing with Cool Edit Pro. After his return, he sat with his colleagues to teach them what he had just learned. Most members of RPV team picked it up amazingly fast!

- Junior Journalists

On 12 December 2004, RPV presented a program about the *International Day of Children's Broadcast* in collaboration with UNICEF. For this we selected 20 children at the age of 7-17 years. These children received two days of intensive preparation and training to prepare them for a full day of broadcast by children only (all except operating equipment).



The main topics of that day were children's rights, education, health and future. After many positive reactions, RPV met again with UNICEF in Dili to discuss a follow up. Soon RPV established a new radio group: *Jornalista Cilik* - the Junior Journalists.

Ten Junior Journalists received training and guidance from the RPV radio team about children's rights, interview techniques and reporting. The Juniors have their own program and participate in reading poetry and requests. Two great achievements were the interview with President Xanana Gusmão and a trip into the mountains of Uato Lari with journalist Max Stahl, working on a documentary for UNICEF.

- Tsunami Relief Campaign

January 2005, RPV volunteered for the Tsunami Relief Campaign and performed fundraising around Viqueque District. They initiated a radio campaign, broadcast programs about the tsunami and collected money door-to-door for the victims. The sum of this was handed over to the national campaign.

- RPV Library

June - July 2005, RPV built an extra room to the station which functions as a reading room for youths visiting the station. It is also used as a meeting room for the radio team.



The construction material was financed by DAP, Australian Embassy. The radio volunteers did all the construction work themselves. Books and magazines were all donated by local NGO's in Dili (Fokupers, Perkumpulan HAK, Lao Hamutuk and SAHE) and Lafaek children's magazine.

At a later stage, the Singaporean organisation *Love Singapore* rewarded the services of RPV members being their guides into the remote village by donating children's books for the library.

The library attracted more youths to the station and a number of them formed the RPV fan club, helping the radio by keeping its surroundings clean, carrying material up the hill etc.

At this stage, RPV began to develop into something even more substantial than a source of information.

- Interactive radio program

September 2005, we started with a new concept: an interactive program in which listeners can participate directly by sending an sms, while two or three people discuss a specific topic at the studio. At regular moments, the operator interrupts the discussion and reads an incoming sms. Despite the fact that not all five sub-districts of Viqueque have full access to GSM-signal, it soon became a very popular program and people enjoyed the variety of opinions and areas coming in through sms.

- Training

In August-December 2005, I facilitated intensive training and discussion for the strengthening of the internal structures, archiving, bookkeeping, lobbying, proposal writing and network building. Although the radio station was officially handed over in October 2004, I maintained my task as a trainer and consultant for the RPV team until Christmas 2005.

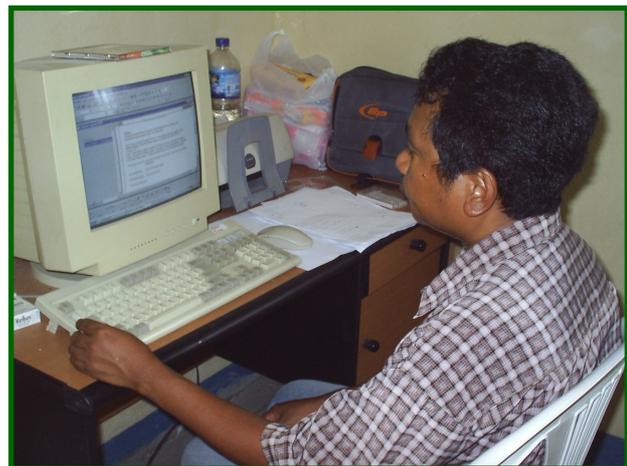
- Training by other organisations

APHEDA

In November 2004, the rigger training (antenna tower climbing) meant for Radio Rakambia took place at the RPV studio. Ray the rigger also helped us out by fixing the bottom ends of the pipes that hold the antenna elements. Now the construction is solid. March 2005: One RPV member received training in basic computer skills and technical knowledge.



Radio Rakambia's Lindo during rigger training in RPV's tower and Florindo de Jesus editing the news on computer.



UNICEF

September 2004: Two days of community research training in Viqueque. May 2005: Training to set up children's program and to teach children on Children's Rights. August 2005: Five days of training for trainers in Dare for two RPV members, including director Florindo de Jesus.

INTERNEWS

Starting July 2004: RPV members took turns and joined several courses in Dili, such as: talk-show, article writing, community information, editing, feature, gender issues. August 2005: Two members followed a 5-day course on Community Focused Business Planning, conducted by Internews, TLMDC and ARKTL. November 2005: Florindo successfully took an intensive course on investigative journalism and received an official certificate.

COMMUNITY RADIO VOX POPULI, LOS PALOS

September 2005: Two members of the Los Palos community radio station came to the RPV studio to conduct five days of theory on the use of Cool Edit Pro, sound editing on computer. After this, five members of RPV visited the studio in Los Palos to practice the editing.

- Network and support

RPV became an active member of ARKTL (Assosiasaun Radio Komunidade Timor Leste), the national umbrella of local community radio stations.

RPV linked itself to Internews, followed-up by TLMDC since 2005.

A community radio station in Geelong, the Australian sister-city of Viqueque, pledged support for a possible future exchange program. This may however need some follow-up, as there is not active contact yet.

The Singaporean Referent Eugene (Love Singapore) showed interest in supporting Radio Povo Viqueque by donating books for the library, writing material, digital recorders. He organised several delegations from Singapore to visit Viqueque District, always accompanied by one or two RPV reporters. More groups will follow and contact is active.

RPV maintains good contacts with Belun (Columbia University) and national broadcaster RTTL, who have helped us out with logistics more than once.

RPV continues collaboration with UNICEF for the training and support of Junior Journalists. They regularly visit the UNICEF office in Dili for report, feed-back and additional training.

RPV maintains good contacts with the HIVOS office in Jakarta, for ongoing moral and financial support.

- Obstacles

RPV studio runs on its own generator as city power is limited to the evening hours and is often unstable, therefore unreliable to the sensitive transmitter. However, diesel is costly and the radio team needs time to prepare (edit) programs before broadcast. We provided an extra voltage stabiliser so that the editing computer can operate on city power. The costs of diesel will be an ongoing need for financial support.

The radio station has no access to water, nor has the surrounding area. This is an obstacle for the volunteers, as water for consumption and sanitation needs to be carried uphill to the station.

The reporters desperately need their own means of transportation, preferably motorbikes. RPV has discussed this with HIVOS – Jakarta and contact is active. RPV writes proposals for this.

Finalising our collaboration on location

December 2005

The radio volunteers are committed and they function as a strong team. Their radio skills and the quality of program making are continuously growing. Members attend training and meetings in the capital Dili, local youths and elderly participate in the programs and maintaining of the studio.

The radio signal of RPV station covers the entire district of Viqueque, except a small part of Uato Lari due to its location behind a hill. RPV also reaches part of the districts Baucau, Los Palos, Manatutu and Same.

The Viqueque team has successfully built up a network of local and international organisations that can help them out in times of trouble.

I trust that this radio project has been successful and we can leave the daily management and operation of the station in the trustworthy hands of our local counterpart, the RPV team.

However, we need to keep in mind that the studio still has no access to water, the electricity in Viqueque is unreliable and diesel is costly. It is obvious that we cannot and must not end our support to Radio Povo Viqueque at this stage.

On my return to The Netherlands in January 2006, I recommended to the VOT-board that we move our focus from the intensive guidance on location to fundraising from abroad, in order to provide ongoing basic financial support for fuel, operational expenses, technical maintenance and when needed consultancy. We keep in touch with RPV through (at times limited) internet and email.

To see pictures of the entire process:

<http://s102.photobucket.com/albums/m109/radioproject/?albumview=slideshow>



Radio Povo Viqueque **97.9 FM**

Vision

Information is important in the process of participation, education and unity of the people.

Mission

Establish and strengthen community radio activities by providing independent and non-partisan information, committed to the interest of the people of Viqueque District as a whole.

Florindo de Jesus

Continue.....

UPDATE REPORT 2006 - 2010

Since early 2008, RPV now broadcasts seven days per week from 5 pm until 10.30 pm. As their power source, they have public electricity in the evening hours and they use the diesel generator for day-time production and editing. RPV has achieved to set up its own communication with the HIVOS office in Jakarta. They received financial support for power supply and two strong motorbikes to enable the reporters to conduct field trips for news gathering and monitoring in the sub-districts. RPV is discussing aid for access to water, but until now even with high power electric pumps they did not succeed to lead water to the studio. They need our help with this.

Wonderful network

18 February – 9 May 2006: RPV Off Air

Panic in the house: at the middle of broadcast, the transmitter stopped functioning. A dim email from Viqueque informed us in The Netherlands that the radio was off air, dead.

I contacted Columbia University (Belun) in Dili, and they contacted the technical unit of RTTL, the national broadcaster. Columbia University supplied a car and an RTTL technician drove to Viqueque to take the failing section out of the transmitter and bring it to Dili. Subsequently, we received an email with a description and serial number of the broken part, and I ordered a new one from the factory in Italy. The factory sent the part by courier to Radio Rakambia in Dili, who took the parcel to the RTTL technician, who placed the new part in the section. He then drove to Viqueque and placed the section into the transmitter. RPV was back on air within three weeks!

And while the technician was at it, he repaired the RTTL repeater that had been off for over a year. So, in one trip the people of Viqueque District could receive two radio broadcasters again. The supporting network functions wonderfully!

Radio Training for Women

February - May 2006

RPV's Angelina Alves joined a 16-weeks training for women, funded by the Norwegian Dutch Trust Fund for Mainstreaming Gender (GENFUND) and implemented by the Timor-Leste Media Development Centre under the guidance of Internews. The program brought together ten young women who work in community radio stations in ten different districts in Timor-Leste.



Through workshops, the women learned about issues such as governance, domestic violence and gender equality. Under the guidance of former BBC Radio and Radio Free Asia journalist, Landai Nguyen Rees, the women traveled into rural areas to put together documentaries and talk shows on issues ranging from domestic violence to infant and child health to women in politics. In Baucau, the women interviewed female police officers about the impacts of domestic violence in the community.

After the training, Angelina broadcast her results on RPV radio and shared her fresh knowledge with the other radio team members.

Elections 2007

March-July 2007

Two EU-observers rented RPV's reading-room as their base to process their observations on the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. This generated extra income for the radio, and proved yet another use for the reading room as an info-centre.

During the elections, RPV reporters were in the field in all five sub-districts and covered news from most polling centres in their area. They performed interviews with voters, polling staff, police, national and international observers and UN personnel. RPV was on air daily. They gave update reporting and held peace talks for free and fair elections.

To me, as their former program manager, it was a special reunion to come back to Viqueque for the elections and to be interviewed at the RPV studio on my findings as an electoral observer. To meet RPV reporters at work in the field, and to see the studio function as an ants' nest was the greatest reward a program manager could possibly expect.



Electoral observers at the RPV studio

Exchange in Lombok, Indonesia

October 2008

In October 2008, RPV's Florindo de Jesus and Angelina Alves joined a one-week exchange study in Lombok, Indonesia. This was arranged by HIVOS-Jakarts. In Lombok, they visited four community radio stations. According to their impression, the development of community radio is quite similar to Timor Leste – except for the radius which is much smaller in Lombok, because the capacity of radio stations is limited by the government. Studios in Lombok are very modest, and so is their equipment, especially when compared to Radio Povo Viqueque.

What impressed them most was the enormous participation of the population in the overall programming. The broadcasts in Lombok are very open to the people.

Training Life Skills

November 2008

RPV hosted a training-week on Life Skills for Viqueque youths, with Timorese trainers from Los Palos, Manatutu and UNICEF. The training took place in and around the RPV studio, with approximately 40 participants.

Expanding the studio

2008 - 2009

Most inhabitants of District Viqueque know the way to the RPV radio station. The station is often visited by people from distant villages, who come by foot to express their personal opinion on air or simply out of sheer interest and support for the station. As there are no regional newspapers, many people use the radio to spread family-ads (death, birth, wedding) and announcements of meetings or festivities. The station daily attracts many children and youths.

Throughout the years, the small field next to the studio grew out to be a noisy hangout. Mid 2005, the RPV team built a small extra room next to the station to serve as a reading room for these youths. Books and magazines came from local NGOs in Dili and aid-organisation Care delivered piles of the popular children's magazine Lafaek.

As was to be expected, the reading room attracted even more youths - but now it is productive. The youths became actively involved in work and activities in and around the station. A fan club was established, helping to keep RPV's environment clean, perform small repairs, and carry water uphill for the station. In exchange, this space has become a home-base for youths who wish to shape their personal ideas. Youths organised a poetry competition in the five district languages. The ten best poems were read on the radio. A few times, they initiated a discussion on the radio, to which listeners could respond by sms.

What we aimed at as we started this project, has indeed developed: Radio Povo Viqueque is not just a broadcaster of information. In this remote and rough district, a small radio station has grown out into a source of information and dialogue, an affordable and functional means of communication and the axle of growing activities.

With all the increasing movement around the station, the RPV studio is outgrowing itself. They obviously need more working space. Therefore, the RPV team sent us a financial request as they wish to build an other room, 5 by 7 meters, to serve as the new Info-Centre reading and activity room. The initial smaller reading room will become an editing room for children and youth radio programs. In reply to RPV's financial request, XminY Solidarity Fund was willing to support the expansion of the RPV facility.

Conference in Bangalore

February 2010

RPV has become is a wellknown community radio station and was therefore selected to attend the Asia Pacific conference of the *World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters* in Bangalore (India). Florindo de Jesus of Radio Povo Viqueque and Prezado Ximenes of Radio Comunidade Lorico Lian (Dili) were the first Timorese radio chiefs to represent their country at the conference. All their expenses were covered by AMARC, an international organisation with a worldwide focus on community radio stations. The participants originated from 20 Asia-Pacific countries.

At the end of the three-day conference, they presented their findings and demanded that the Right to Communication should be central at all aid and development processes.

Moving the RPV studio

2010 - 2011

Due to landslides, a part of the RPV building is in danger. Big cracks appeared in the walls and soil is washed away from under the building. We have no choice but to move the working studio to another location, downhill. The tower and the transmitter can and will stay on top of the hill, at their original location. The Viqueque District Administration approved RPV's proposal to move to a location near the generator shed. This new location needs a total rehab, but it offers plenty space for a working studio, a reading room and information centre.

As the studio on top of the hill still has no water, we have agreed to help RPV move to this new location. Most of the rehab expenses are covered by local funds. However, we will need to find funding and technical means to provide a Studio-to-Transmitter Link (STL) and an additional 5 meter high tower to send studio material to the transmitter for broadcast.

For this, we will organise several fundraising activities throughout the year 2011.

To be continued.....

WHO WROTE ABOUT RADIO POVO VIQUEQUE

(2009) HIVOS

<http://www.hivos.nl/esl/community/partner/10002981>

(2009) X min Y Solidariteitsfonds (Dutch)

<https://www.xminy.nl/project/radio-povo-viqueque-oost-timor>

(2008) UNDP Report - Independent Media Development Project

<http://www.tl.undp.org/undp/what%20we%20do/Democratic%20Governance/Media/Media%20Quarterly%20Report%20April%20-%20June%202008%20final.pdf>

Pg 4: The example of Radio Povo Viqueque was mentioned as a successful case in terms of volunteerism, fund raising, transparency, professionalism, human resources management and radio production.

(2005) Indra Monemnasi Weblog, UNICEF – Dili

<http://indradili.blogspot.com/2005/09/paradise-of-viqueque-short-story-on-my.html>