

## **re various conferences on Timor Sea matters**

*By Rob Wesley-Smith, 30 June 2016, on ETAN's east-timor email list*

Folks

some splendid articles, demos, conferences held and planned, but can anyone help me answer this fundamental question?

***What difference to the economic development of Timor Leste will getting an agreement on Maritime Boundaries make?***

To move the eastern 'lateral' boundary to its proper place which will encompass all or most of Greater Sunrise would be great for the future.

But this will involve agreement from Indonesia to cede agreed boundaries to East Timor.

When the Timor Sea Treaty was signed by E.Timor's luminaries on 20th May 2002, under unconscionable pressure from Howard and Downer; but pleas NOT to sign by those aware that section 5e of the agreement said that if signed, the TL government would not be able to change maritime boundaries for 50 years. But they signed.

Perhaps the original Timor Sea legal expert Jeffrey Smith from Canada, who also is the legal guru for Maritime Boundaries for the Saharawi country on Saharan coast resisting colonisation by Morocco, has never been invited to help on the Timor Sea maritime boundaries continuing saga.

The Timor Leste government, under pressure from Xanana Gusmão, has denied the advice received from Australian development Oil and Gas companies, that to require a pipeline to Timor Leste would result in 5bn, not 5m, 5bn, less \$\$ for Timor Leste.

Further to develop the world's deepest undersea oil and gas pipeline was fraught with difficulty, OK it's possible, but difficult. So instead of being sensible, the TLG looked around for consultants to say it was easy. So now they are developing expensive infrastructure on the south coast, which Lao Hamutuk and others have said and outlined why these are a waste of time and money.

Xanana said TL would not be a guinea pig re development of floating LNG facilities, which are being built anyway in Korea. Yet he is prepared to be the guinea pig for the extraordinarily deep oil and gas pipeline to a remote part of Timor Leste's south coast.

A perfectly good solution for TL's needs was proposed by Oil and Gas Engineer, Geoff McKee, and long time Timor supporter. Xanana would recognise him as providing the intellectual advice he followed while in gaol to indicate a future independent TL would not throw out the existing oil companies from the Timor Sea. This allowed them to have confidence, and not act against TL getting independence.

Then he produced a few years ago a comprehensive document suggesting a 'middle way' out of the dilemma of how to develop Greater Sunrise, while providing enough energy for TL's needs for decades and decades. I distributed to many, but it's also on the internet.

I myself have suggested a slightly modified view of this indicating that the LPG from Greater Sunrise, (not the LNG), would alone be enough energy, would be safer, and cheaper, and easier. Anyway, the electricity supply is not generated by efficient gas turbines, but by big diesel/oil piston engines.

No response I am aware of from a TLG intent for a pipeline to East Timor based on the intellectual argument: you got the first one, so it's our turn to have the second!!

This would require an enclave of overseas experts, mostly men, near Beça, probably fenced to provide security, restrict the men from prowling the countryside, and to stop women entering to provide services to the men for much needed profit - but at what cost to the nation?

Of course if TL was training top quality oil and gas engineers, welders, and technicians and ensuring they got experience in such projects overseas, maybe this scenario would be reduced.

To top it all off, while this dispute continues, due mainly to coal seam gas in huge quantities from the USA, and other deep gas deposits mainly on land, development of Greater Sunrise with all its risks has become uneconomic. Do these conference etc. organisers recognise this??

Secondly, the excessive uncontrolled or poorly controlled spending on south coast facilities is contracting the cash reserves which are already being spend well above the agreed usage of just the income earned by interest rates. Again this is most clearly reported repeatedly by Lao Hamutuk. Also wasteful expenditure in Oecusse. Does Xanana have to go before serious action is taken on these issues? In this country such discussions cannot be held!

Further, interest rates have seriously reduced, so incomes from the reserve are low and can be expected to be low for some time to come.

Maybe conferences can discuss what can be done, realistically, in these chastened times. Timor's output of agriculture, and the people especially the young people, prepared to work in the fields, has reduced, while Dili is more crowded. Xanana imported/imports much rice, OK possibly needed for a short time to reduce unrest, but at the cost of farmers now unable to sell their excess production, so many just grow enough for family needs.

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I bet many in Timor Leste now do not recognise that the food staple was CORN, and rice was made essential and preferred by Indonesia's military occupation. Growing Corn, Beans and Pumpkins in the same field was an efficient integrated methodology for food production.

Today as I write this, most leaders of the National Seed Systems set up mainly during the last 5 years of the Seeds of Life (SoL) program have ceased being employed or paid, and some have already left the country.

While the program is in the hands of East Timorese, as designed and hoped for, to lose the designers and hopefully mentors for the next few years is criminal and crass in my humble opinion.

The same applies to indigenous affairs in Australia, where it seems the governments never learn. When people have not had responsibilities for self-management in a new era, especially financial control, it requires a substantial period of time to mentor changes. A recent 4 corners program on ABC starkly showed some examples. The costs to governments, whichever, to continue support for a few key people, is minimal.

The National Seed System (under SoL) has published an impressive book outlining the system, in both Tetun and English. Some key points are mentioned following.

MAFF and SoL have worked for 15 years to improve food production by researching and releasing improved varieties of staple crops, maize, rice, cassava, sweet potato; and legumes peanut, kidney beans and mung beans. The 19 varieties had 24-130% higher yields, and often or mostly improved nutrient content, taste, and tolerance to environment problems, etc.

No extra fertilisers are required, and the varieties are all pure line or open pollinated varieties. NONE are hybrid or genetically modified, so farmers can replant seeds each year.

(Despite this I hear many people supportive of green issues for East Timor claiming the opposite. An example is in my epic ebook *117 Days in East Timor*. ahem.) I think these key people, and others including of course many Timorese, deserve medals not the sack! Agriculture science is a science, not just a version of gardening. So say I, with a Rural Science 4 year university degree to 1965, and 25 years professional experience thereafter, and also being dumped for non-performance reasons. And I say after another 10-20 years the claim no extra fertilisers are needed may need review, and that is where systems such as by the vaunted Permaculture may be needed more (not that they are not needed or useful now also). Enuff ....

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