NATIONAL DIRECTORATE OF RECURRENT EDUCATION (NDRE)

The Ministry of Education National Directorate of Recurrent Education is the service provider for the development and implementation of the Recurrent Education National Literacy and Equivalency Programs, addressed to the population outside the formal education system. The NDRE is responsible for: setting up the education framework for the population outside the formal education system; drafting, in cooperation with other competent services, a National Literacy Program, through long distance education programs and others; developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the recurrent education equivalency program, in cooperation with other competent services; developing programs addressed to the population outside the education system, in the areas of language, literacy and arithmetic; promoting programs for developing technical and vocational skills; implementing the drafting of manuals and other education materials meant for recurrent education; promoting the creation of Community Learning Centres adapted to the needs of the local communities; promoting the articulation of the recurrent education programs with the courses promoted by technical and vocational schools; setting up evaluation standards and mechanisms for non-formal education programs and projects, in collaboration with the regional directorates; coordinating the equivalence processes resulting from education and training options; drafting and evaluating national exams; defining the professional skills, competences and conditions for teaching staff allocated to non-formal education.

LONG TERM GOAL (2030): As all Timorese are literate, the system recurrent education is mainly concentrated in providing the National Equivalence Program for adults.

SHORT-TERM GOAL (2015): By 2015, completely eradicate illiteracy in all age groups of the population and complete the introduction of the National Equivalence Program that will allow accelerated completion of basic education for all graduates of Recurrent Education.

In the National Strategic Plan for Education, 2010-2015, recurrent education was adopted as one of the priority programs of the government in education, which complements the basic education system in achieving MDGs and the Education for all by 2015. Recurrent Education includes both literacy initiatives and equivalency education, which bridges the gap in adult education by providing access to basic and secondary education for adults. Specifically, the overall goal is by 2015, DRTL will completely eradicate illiteracy in all age groups of the population and complete the introduction of the National Equivalence Program that will allow accelerated completion of basic education for all graduates of Recurrent Education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In 2010 the NDRE was running the following programs:

1. Literacy
   1.1 “Los Hau Bele” Program created in 2005 in cooperation with the Cuban Government.
   1.2 “Alfanamor” program for which the curriculum was created in 2004-2005, the books were developed and piloted in 30 groups in 5 districts in 2006-2007, and implementation in all 13 districts took place in 2007 (HbO) and 2008 (ID). Alfanamor consists of two phases of 6 months each including numeracy education:
      1.2.1 “Hakat Ba Óin” (A step forward)
      1.2.2 “Iha Dalan” (On the way)
   2. Equivalency to Basic Education was created in 2007, pedagogical materials were developed in 2008 and 1st level started in 2009.
   3. Other educational activities
      3.1 Portuguese Classes (level I and level II – 9months each level) – DNER certificate
      3.2 English Classes
   4. Community Learning Centers – 1st three were created in 2007 with the support of UNESCO.
The target learners of Literacy programs

The main target learners of the Primary School Equivalence Studies are those with age ranging from 14 to 44 years who could not finish their formal school education.

One of the obstacles for the completion of a formal education in a national context is the diversity of needs within each community and age range. Such is the case of the population between 14 and 44 years of age who had not completed their Primary and Pre-Secondary schooling or who completed only the Primary teaching but did not proceed to next learning phases. Data from the National Census 2004 and information contained in a UNICEF report published in 2005 indicate that 20% of the population within school age ranging from 07 and 12 years of age have no access to Basic Education. It is estimated that the number of out-of-school students from 13 to 15 reaches 40,000 and those from 16 to 44 who quit their studies amount to 100,000. If we observe the Timorese population and sum up population data concerning people out of school we conclude that nearly a fifth of the country's population, that is, 200,000 people, quit their studies or had no access to formal education at the proper age, which reinforces the need for the implementation of a policy of equivalence of studies.

This programme also serves as an opportunity for students who graduated in alphabetization courses to keep on studying (about 71,000 people have been graduated by NDRE alphabetization programmes since 2007).

Within the target group we can describe the following relevant sub-groups:

Isolated Sucos and villages (Aldeias) in remote areas – people who live in these areas have no access to education and live inside a subsistence culture, away from modern culture, where there is no electricity, information and modern technologies.

Coastal communities – they work a lot to achieve a minimum monthly income, and don't really consider their children education, as well as have no access to any knowledge or basic information on fishing activities. They work based on traditional methods without any awareness on the management and adequate skills in regard to the fishing market;

1. Rural people – most of them are poor, they live in a subsistence culture and work almost without resources. They work based on traditional methods without any awareness on the management and adequate skills in regard to the agriculture market. Frequently they are victims of manipulation;

2. Working women and housekeepers – Workingwomen receive low salaries. Most of them are illiterate or completed only primary education. **Women are the main target of the Equivalency Programme**;

3. Individuals with a vocation (music, sports, arts, etc) that have not completed Basic Education;

4. Employees and working people living in or near urban centres, who are willing to develop their studies so as to develop their professional careers;

5. Individuals with legal and social problems that could increase their schooling and increase access to personal income, as well as live within the community.

Policies and framework

CONSTITUTION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

The Preamble of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste from 2002 reinforces the determination to fight all forms of tyranny, oppression, domination, and social cultural or religious segregation, and also to defend national independence; to respect and to ensure human rights and fundamental rights of citizens; to ensure the principle of separation of powers in the organization of the State and establish essential rules for a pluralistic democracy aiming the building of a fair and prosperous country and the development of a solidarity and fraternal society.

Regarding the equality of opportunities for access to Education and Culture, Article 59 of the Constitution reads:

“State acknowledges and grants citizens with the right to Education and Culture and is in charge of creating a public system for universal basic teaching which shall be mandatory and, according to existing
possibilities, free of charge pursuant to the Law”.

“All citizens have the right for equal learning opportunities and professional training”.

BASIS LAW FOR THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Article 2 of Law for the National Educational System states that: Considering the principles of liberty and ideals of human solidarity, family, State, and society shall promote, stimulate, and provide for the access to school and non-school education.

Article 3 of the Law for the National Educational System established that the State shall ensure second-opportunity schooling for those who could not attend school at adequate age and those who look for the educational system due to professional or cultural promotion reasons.

Article 5 refers to the general organization of the educational system and established that the educational system comprehends Pre-School Education, School Education, and Non-School Education involving the literacy of adults, distance learning, and professional training.

Section III of Chapter II of the Basis Law for the National Educational System in its Article 29, item 1, provides for the scope of the Non-School Education as a level of teaching capable of allowing each individual to boost their knowledge and develop their competence in complementation of school teaching or in supplementation of the lack of that. Item 2 of the same Article provides for the modalities of Non-School Education as literacy of youngsters and adults, the distance learning, and professional training.

Article 30 of the Basis Law for the National Educational System established the objectives of Non-School Education while Articles 31, 32, and 33 brings the aims for each modality

NATIONAL POLICY FOR EDUCATION

Chapter III (items 3.2.3.4) establishes educational policies and priorities and provides for the Specific Policy for Non-Formal Education focusing on the literacy of youngsters and adults leaving aside other initiatives that also compose the Non-Formal Educational System. The last item mentions the importance of developing mechanisms of Equivalence in order to certify those who had not finished Basic education, allowing the continuation of their studies or their access to the job market. It includes equivalence as part of the policy for literacy and not as a post-literacy policy, of continuity of school learning allowing participants to reach college.

THE ORGANIC LAW AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2010 - 2015

The Organic Law of the Ministry of Education and Culture provides for the National Directorate of Adult and Non-Formal Education and its competences. Among these, item 2, sub-paragraph c) establishes that one of the competences is to convince families and communities, namely rural ones, and stimulate and promote their participation in the elimination of all forms of illiteracy by contributing in an effective way to the existence of gradual equality of educational and training opportunities. The same referred item 2, sub-paragraph G, of the Law establishes that the National Directorate of Adult and Non-Formal Education supported by the Government shall incentive the creation of a network of resource centres (Community Learning Centres) that could technically and materially support local or community initiatives. Sub-paragraph K of Ministry of Education and Culture Organic Law establishes also that the National Directorate of Adult and Non-Formal Education (DNEAENF) shall speak on the processes of equivalence arising from developed education and training initiatives.

The Ministry of Education developed thereafter the National Education Strategic Plan for the period between 2011 and 2015, which is currently in its final approval stage and which includes the equivalency programme as priority 5 in regard to Recurrent Education.

The effort now is to increase the collaboration between ministries in order to support programmes and improve the complementarities between the various available programmes, namely the programmes of the Ministry of Education and the ones of the Secretary of the State for Employment and Professional Training.

Place of these programs in the National Educational Offers provided by the government
Curriculum and materials development

The equivalency course curriculum is based on the Basic Education contents, so it is composed by the same basic disciplines that integrate the 1st and 2nd Cycles of Basic Education (see Annex II). The curriculum is structured in Learning phases: Phase I and Phase II correspond to the 1st Cycle, and each phase has the duration of one year, which is equivalent to two years of the Basic Education. Phase III also has the duration of 1 year and is equivalent to the 2nd Cycle (5th and 6th grades in Basic education). The basic disciplines to be worked are Tetum Language, Portuguese Language, Environmental Studies and Mathematics. The discipline of Environmental studies comprehends the study fields History, Geography and Sciences. The Religious Education, Ethics', Citizenship, Arts and Culture, and Life Skills are integrated in all disciplines that compose the Equivalency Programme Curriculum.

The curriculum development has been formulated based on the Basic Education curriculum, and has been developed by international experts in coordination with local experts, financed by UNICEF. They have adjusted curricular contents so as to be conveyed within a smaller period of time and in a more dynamic and interactive way, by always considering the reality in Timor Leste and the socio-cultural context of communities. Each pedagogical approach has been developed based on various methodologies, for instance, Andragogy, which was developed in the early 70s by Malcom Knowles, in the USA, based on the idea that adults and children learn in different ways, as well as the dialogical approach by Paulo Freire, the pedagogical principles promoted by John Dewey, and the project teaching approach. Teachers’ textbooks and students’ textbooks have been developed in order to convey curriculum and support this teaching methodology.
Process for recruitment and training for teacher

36 Cuban coordinators are responsible for overseeing the program implementation throughout the country. They give trainings to prepare the Timorese monitors to implement the literacy classes in different
locations, i.e., houses, churches, meeting halls, etc. in all the 442 Sucos all over the 13 districts and 65 sub districts. The coordinators provide assessment and support to the monitors every 15 days, and oversee the evaluation of students in the end of every trimester. The monitor conducts final evaluation, with the presence of the Cuban adviser, the DNER sub-district coordinator and many times with the village chief and/or Suco head and Suco secretary. Upon passing the final evaluation, the graduates are awarded certificates. If a student fails the final evaluation, he/she can continue again in the next 3-month literacy class. Decision to pass or fail is taken collectively between the monitor, the Cuban advisor and the sub-district coordinator.

Until the end of 2010, the Cuban team had already trained 1757 monitors, although only 1038 started the 1038 classes available in the beginning of 2011. The Cuban strategy is to focus on specific districts every year to completely eradicate illiteracy in those districts, although classes are implemented in all the districts. Until now, Atauro was the first sub district to be declared free of illiteracy in December 2009, and Oecussi district followed in September 2010.

NDRE has a team of 10 teacher trainers for the literacy and equivalency courses (reduced to nine in early 2011). These trainers have to be attending or have finished the Bachelor Education Course and have experience in teaching Portuguese. Presently, 4 trainers already received their Bachelor Diploma in Education, 5 are finalists and 1 is attending the 1st year. These 10 trainers have attended a training course of 740 hours under the responsibility of Brazilian and Portuguese international specialists. Since 2010 the training of teachers have fully taken over by the national trainers.

In relation to teachers, they should have the Secondary Education Certificate or SMA (Secondary Education under the Indonesian system) and have Portuguese Language Skills.

Recruitment is conducted as follows:

- In first place, the information regarding the opening of the recruitment process is sent to the 65 sub-district coordinators. These promote the vacancy and identification process of the candidates.

- In second place, teams with a teacher trainer and 3 administrative specialists visit the various sub-districts 3 and 4 weeks later, so that the candidates can fill a form of participation in the pre-selection phase which requests general personal information, their level of education and if they have knowledge and experience in adult education and knowledge of different languages used in TL, especially Tetum, Portuguese. Additionally to this form, a trainer, using interview guidelines, interviews the candidate in order to get to know better his/her knowledge and experience in adult teaching. The interviewers are in possession of an evaluation form where they write their comments and impressions about the candidates. The candidates have then to fill an evaluation sheet where their knowledge is evaluated in what concerns languages (Tetum and Portuguese), Maths and General Culture.

- After collecting all candidatures of the 65 sub-districts, an evaluation and pre-selection process is conducted, after which the selected candidates go through a 144-hour training organized by the team of 10 NDRE trainers, so as to be able to teach the 1st Phase of the Equivalency Course.

Subsequently, in each following year, teachers have to attend another 144-hour training for the 2nd Phase, 3rd Phase of first level and 1st Phase of the 2nd level (as soon as this last one is developed around November/December 2011.

Teachers training - the team of 9 teachers’ trainers of the NDRE ran the Annual Training for Teachers in each of the 3 phases of level 1 currently implemented, between October and December 2010.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Besides the yearly teachers capacity building training, the directorate is doing 3 monitoring visits to the classrooms (May, August and November in 2010 due to starting the school year only in February). These visits combine the collection of information regarding number of students and situation in classrooms with the development of student’s evaluation tests regarding that trimester. The second visit in August also adds a third element to the monitoring and evaluation process once that new teachers selection process starts with interviews and tests to assess their competences. This information is later processed in order to select new teachers to integrate the program in the following year.
The team responsible for the monitoring and evaluation is composed by elements of the administration and by teachers/trainers engaged, which are adequately trained by the advisor responsible for the Programme and for the pedagogical coordination.

Efforts are being made so as to introduce DNEAENF programme data in the Information System of the Ministry of Education (EMIS). Currently the information collected and analysed is very far from the planning needs of future actions, and it doesn't allow data crossing with the information system of the Ministry of Education in general.

**Financing and resource mobilization**

The Equivalency Programme towards Basic Education is financed by the Government of Timor Leste in partnership with the World Bank and UNICEF, and it is the responsibility of the latter to support teacher training, monitoring and activity evaluation, technical assistance responsible for the production of pedagogical/didactic materials and respective printing. A 5-year World Bank support project was started in September 2010 to support Recurrent Education, which includes the Equivalency Programme. UNESCO has also conducted some activities and sporadically supported NDRE.

The government contributes with part of their annual budget to the NDRE and Equivalence programme, paying staff, the 5 Regional coordinators, 13 District Coordinators and 65 sub-district coordinators, as well as Equivalency and Literacy teachers, among other expenses.

However, it is necessary to change the articulation between the various non-governmental agencies so as to increase complementarities and reduce duplication of efforts.

This programme doesn’t imply any costs to the families to the exception of travelling from home to the place where the classroom is established.

**Impacts and achievements**

The Equivalency Programme is having a good impact on the population of remote, difficult to access areas, mainly on young people and women, considering the great enthusiasm detected within this group during the monitoring and evaluation period between May and June of the current year. Since the Equivalency Programme of Primary Education is still in its early implementation phase, the majority of students will only achieve graduation and get their certificates by the end of the school year 2011, when the Programme will complete 3 years of its life, covering, then, the 3 phases that compose the 1st level of the equivalency program giving them certification matching the 2nd cycle of basic education, grade 6 of the formal system. Every data we have gathered until now make us believe that participants will have very satisfactory results in the exams.

**Core challenges**

To reach beneficiaries across the territory, the Equivalency Programme will have to be expanded, at least, to Suco level, that is, we should try to ensure the implementation of 442 classrooms. This is a major challenge, because additionally to its financial aspect, there still is the challenge regarding the lack of adequate qualified staff for such big undertaking.

One of the huge obstacles is the lack of qualified teachers in the country once that most of the graduated teachers with bachelor level are being absorbed by the formal system that is currently increasing the volume of demand for teachers.

The other challenge will be to find an alternative to the training of Timorese staff responsible for the production of didactic materials to teach young people and adults, that is, Timorese pedagogues, otherwise, in future, NDRE will be permanently dependent on international advisers for this kind of job.