

Fostering Social Cohesion Through Public Art Project

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Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed advocates of peace,

Greetings and salutations. I am honored to stand before you today as Joao Antonio Soares, a professor of International Relation Theory at the University of Peace in Timor-Leste.

Allow me to express my deepest gratitude to Chairman Lee Man-hee of HWPL, whose unwavering commitment has paved the way for this remarkable World Peace Summit. I extend my appreciation to each individual present, united by their passion for peace.

My journey with HWPL and IPYG began in 2022 when I joined the online World Peace Summit. In witnessing Chairman Lee's steadfast dedication and the ceaseless efforts of the peace-driven volunteers, I was deeply moved. Their impact on creating peace is real and powerful. This motivated me to join hands with them and work towards bringing peace and prosperity to my own homeland, Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste is young, having gained independence in 2002 from Indonesia. Our history includes tough times, like the violence in 1999 and later coups in 2006. These events left scars, reminding us of the cost of conflict. We're committed to teaching the youth the value of peace and love so they won't repeat these mistakes.

HWPL and IPYG have discerned the imperative of empowering the youth and steering peace-building initiatives in Timor-Leste. This recognition led to the formation of the Youth Engagement and Peace-building Working Group, or YEPW, in tandem with government officials as well as youth organizations and university students. Together, we embarked on a momentous journey to transform Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, into a City of Peace.

Under the visionary guidance of IPYG's Global Branch 4, we conceived the Public Peace Art project, an endeavor that would decorate Dili's walls with the vibrant colors of Peace Mural Paintings with the volunteering hands of young people, local artists, university students and high schoolers.

This united effort of HWPL and Timor-Leste has the potential to convey the values of peace to all who look at the Peace Mural Paintings. Simultaneously, it can promote local tourism as these beautifully decorated murals reflect Timor-Leste's culture, history, and aspirations. Additionally, the enthusiastic involvement of the youth volunteers can nurture social cohesion and unity within the community igniting a sense of ownership among the youth, empowering them to shape the future of their city with their own hands.

However, our journey hasn't been easy. We've faced challenges convincing different groups to support our cause. We needed permissions to use city walls, support of paint supplies, mural designs and youth participation.

We initiated dialogues with Deputy Prime Minister Francisco Kalbuadi Lay and Minister Nélio Isaac Sarmiento, Minister of Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture. Their unwavering support granted us the privilege of adorning the city walls with our message of peace. The Xanana Sports Center Wall, located at the heart of Dili, became our canvas, sending the message of peace to all who pass by.

Getting the paint supplies was a challenge. The team of IPYG Global Branch 4 showed remarkable dedication in their pursuit of finding a company willing to provide the necessary paint without cost. Through continuous efforts, Vinod Patel, an international hardware company, emerged as a gracious supporter. Mr. Vikash Ray, the Operations Manager in Dili, generously promised to supply the essential paints and brushes. This was a big leap forward for us.

We, YEPW working group, also reached out to university students from six institutions in Dili. Their ardent enthusiasm filled our project with fresh vigor. A Korean art association contributed to mural design, while ten local Timor-Leste artists from Arte Moris provided guidance and outlined the design. It truly became a team effort.

The culmination of our tireless efforts manifested on July 31, 2023, as the Launching Ceremony of the HWPL Public Peace Art Project was held at the Xanana Sports Center Event Hall. Influential guests, including the Minister of Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture, and the Senior Advisor for Ministerial and Governmental Affairs, personally attended and congratulated the event.

The presence of university presidents, vice presidents, and leaders of various youth organizations, alongside students representing six universities, served as a vivid testimony to the collective dedication of our youth.

Seven media platforms, including the esteemed national broadcaster, RTTL, covered the event, spreading the message of peace far and wide.

Right now, our project is in full swing. Local artists and university students are transforming our city with messages of peace, creativity, and unity. The wall that initially looked like the photo on the left has become beautiful as shown in the photo on the right.

What's truly inspiring is how all these achievements were made possible by individuals coming together. The relentless motivation from HWPL and IPYG team and the dedication from every individual, from Ministers to university students had made this work possible. This journey has shown that when we united with a shared purpose of peace with genuine hearts, nothing is impossible.

Our Public Peace Art Project will continue until our entire city shines with peace.

May my words today ignite the flame of inspiration within each of you working for peace with HWPL and IPYG.

Once again, I extend profound gratitude to Chairman Lee of HWPL whose visionary leadership sparks our collective zeal for peace, the tireless dedication of the HWPL and IPYG volunteers, the esteemed ministers of Timor-Leste, and every individual whose unwavering commitment has forged this remarkable journey.

We are one ! Thank you.