The changing roles of NGOs in East-Timor (1975-present)

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POLSYS
Map of the World
The Democratic Republic of East-Timor
POLITICAL HISTORY OF EAST-TIMOR

- Portuguese colonial rule 1516-1975
- 1974 Decolonisation and the emergence of political parties
- 1975 The Indonesian invasion and occupation
- 1999-2002 UN Transitional Administration
- 2002 Independence
UK-based NGOs during the conflict 1975-1999

CIIR (Catholic Institute for International Relations/now Progressio)

CAFOD (Catholic Aid for Overseas Development)

TAPOL (Tahanan Politik – ‘Political Prisoner’)

Amnesty International
Role played by these NGOs

Raising awareness of human rights violations

Lobbying governments & international organisations (e.g. UN)

Supporting the Catholic Church in East Timor (e.g. orphanages, schools)
A changing role in the last decade of the occupation

Communication facilitated due to the advent of the internet e.g.

Communication with globalised media & with governmental contacts

Greater coordination between NGOs internationally
UK-based NGOs in the post-conflict phase (1999-present)

- TAPOL has shifted its primary attention back to Indonesia
- Amnesty International has refocussed on human rights in the new nation
- CIIR & CAFOD now work ‘on the ground’ in East-Timor (with local NGOs, women’s groups & the Church)
Role of the history of the UK-based NGOs?

- All except CAFOD were established in response to human rights violations

  CIIR - a response to the rise of Nazism

  TAPOL – a response to HR violations in Indonesia (from 1965)

  Amnesty International – a response to HR violations in Portugal under Salazar

- CIIR & CAFOD have built on their links with the Catholic Church
Effect of post-conflict environment?

- Shift from a primary focus on human rights to a focus on development
- Increase in the number of international NGOs in East Timor
- Significant increase in the number of local NGOs (working with international NGOs e.g. adult literacy)
Parallels with other contexts?

- Nicaragua (e.g. the role of the Catholic church)
- Namibia (CIIR, CAFOD and Amnesty were all involved)

However, the political contexts for these struggles were very different.
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