

***“THE KIDS OF EAST TIMOR ON THE ROAD FOR A BETTER FUTURE”***



*Slavena Ilieva (Bulgaria) holds M.A in Spanish philology and Interpretation, M.A in Diplomacy and International Relations; M.A in Human rights and Democratization from Universities in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy and France. She is fluent in 6 languages. She has participated in a number of election missions in Latin America, Asia and Africa with EU EOMs. She has also worked on a variety of projects in Spain, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Uganda, and Equatorial Guinea as an interpreter, communication officer, and researcher. She has participated in international conferences related to migration, international cooperation, culture and education. Currently is collaborating with the Bulgarian National Radio, working as an educator and interpreter for NGOs and businesses. With passion she is studying and exploring the culture and traditions of different countries and societies. She is passionate to communicate with local people; in every trip she does not miss to capture on “film strip” the genuine colors of nature, life and the traditions of the society. Every year she has the chance to work with kids from socially disadvantaged families in winter and summer camp schools organized by NGOs to supports the kids and their families*

*She is an open-minded person and in the further future she aspires to have more opportunities to interact with and present different cultures, traditions. Her work has been exhibited in Veliko Tarnovo, Sofia, Madrid and Strasbourg.*

*With the Exhibition “THE KIDS OF EAST TIMOR ON THE ROAD FOR A BETTER FUTURE”, I would like to present the innocent breath of life, to picture out the authentic portrait of the kids from East Timor and their reality. I do dedicate that Exhibition to the inspiring and extremely modest kids of East Timor. Even though the extreme poverty, the MALAE (the foreigner) is always a friend. With their particular and tender curiosity, combined with a begging look, but not begging for food or money, moreover, trying in a way to attract and gain your attention, to communicate with you and to reaffirm his presence in the 21st century.*

*Through this Exhibition I would like to show to the world the unknown face of one of the youngest nations in the world, a country that quite recently in 2002 gained its independence, after 25 years of struggle, fight against severe human rights violations and massacres under the Indonesian occupation and in those difficult moments the International Community was immune and silent, abandoning completely that nation. Indonesians troops killed randomly many people in the East Timorese villages, looted houses, and raped women and girls. Due to that repression and famine 200,000 people are thought to have died, many others were displaced and became part of this Global International process of migrations and refugees, towards the path of the uncertainty. In 2002 the Timorese voted in a Referendum to become an independent state and hardly after in 2017 the Timorese voted for the very first time without the UN supervision. This small nation has already started providing electoral assistance to other countries as Guinea Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, becoming in a way a great example for the International Community. Nowadays the dynamics have changed and the destiny on the road for a better future is in hands of the young Timorese kids.*

*Smiling eyes full of curiosity and pure energy are attracting the foreigner*

*There not far away, hidden in between the bush up up up are staying three kids*

*They know that day the Malae will come to play with them again*

*They don't know the hour, as the hour does not exist for them*

*There it is, the engine of the car has stopped and a few seconds after*

*A bashful and friendly without a word are welcoming us, are inviting us,*

*Showing to us that are ready to dream again, to play again, to walk again*

*Are observing, are touching, are playing with your hair, hand and face*

*Are loathing, are jumping, are mumbling words in Portuguese, Tetum and Bahasa*

*Were three, six and now are fifteen the kids surrounding the space*

*And you see them happy in the paradise of their tiny world of purity...*

*These are so many moments I retained in my mind during my work in East Timor, but those innocent kids that are the bouquet of the nation, so pure, effervescent, always full of joy, sparkling, never complaining and always receiving you with BOM DIA MALAE!; for me personally are the kaleidoscope of the young Timorese society and are a real inspiration and example to follow, especially for us from the Western society.*

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