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Yellow Road Workshop to Realize the Dream

The month of May has seen the running of two Yellow Road Workshops (YRW) in Dili. The first held on the 9th and 10th of May included members of Government, members of National Parliament, Director Generals and the Finance Directors of Line Ministries. Then, to ensure the inclusion of a broad group of community stakeholders, a second workshop was held on the 22nd of May for members of the Private Sector, Civil Society, Development Partners, Academia, the Church, District representatives and other interested groups.

The Yellow Road Workshops are an innovative mechanism established to encourage national inclusivity and allow broad participation in the budget process of Timor-Leste. During the workshops participants identify, analyse and discuss annual priorities and other matters vital to the nation building process.

This activity takes place under the framework of the Strategic Development Plan (SDP), Timor-Leste's long-term road map for planning which aims to see the nation develop from a low-income country to an upper middle-income country in two decades.

Both workshops began with a "SWOT" analysis reviewing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Government operations. Some of the strengths identified included gains made in institution building including the Public Service, the National Petroleum Authority and success in consecutive elections. Global strengths included leading the g7+, EITI compliance and Board Membership and most recently being appointed to lead ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission of Asia Pacific.

Weaknesses identified included weak inter-Ministerial coordination and procedural conformity across Government systems, especially under the newly decentralized procurement regime. The need for greater oversight in project execution was also identified as requiring improvement

Opportunities included strengthening the existing mechanisms using the Transparency portals, strengthening meritocratic hiring and capacity building; and using the budget available to maximize benefits for the People of Timor-Leste.

Lastly, threats included challenges like inflation, ensuring equal distribution to rural and district areas, unemployment and minimizing leakage of budget funds.



Ágio Pereira
+670 77045002
agio.pereira@cdm.gov.tl
govtmedia@gmail.com
www.timor-leste.gov.tl

Where are we as a nation? What do we want to achieve? How do we achieve those priorities? Constituted the three basic questions forming the road map for the workshop, facilitating robust discussion with all stakeholders present, working in tandem and articulating short and medium term action plans aligned to the objectives in the SDP.

Consensus emerged that withdrawing in excess of the yearly estimated sustainable income from the Petroleum Fund to invest in both infrastructure and human resource development is critical to diversifying the economy. Now the focus must be on the quality of both of these investments. Through these workshops, understanding the Government policy of Frontloading these expenditures to become a non-oil dependent economy becomes enhanced. The risks involved in executing this policy, which requires extreme care and caution to maximize each investment so it can make a long-term difference, also becomes better understood.

Therefore, the workshop proved to be a vital mechanism in the Statebuilding process, integral to achieving a unified vision. Most importantly the YRW is the initial step in the 2014 budget process providing a foundation and context for each Ministry, Institution and sector to begin planning for 2014. Participants were pleased with the mechanism and their joint role in it bringing a new level of national inclusivity, unity and understanding into everyone's role in nation building.

Agio Pereira noted "The Budget process should be participatory, understood and owned by each stakeholder with robust discussion and debate. The Yellow Road Workshop begins this process each year. Not everyone will agree on the end outcome, but everyone should agree the process is transparent, fair and inclusive. All participants ought to be very proud of the level of integrity and cooperation from which this technical exercise has been undertaken." **ENDS**

