

**The Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers and  
Official Spokesperson for the Government of Timor-Leste  
Ágio Pereira**



**December 5, 2009  
Dili, Timor-Leste**

**Decentralization of Justice System delivers results**

Reforming and decentralizing the Justice System for equitable access to all citizens has been a major priority for the Xanana Gusmão Government since August, 2007.

The Ministry of Justice prioritized five key focal points: Institutional Development, Legal Reform, Development of Human Resources, Infrastructures and Information Technology, and Access to Justice.

The results; Courts, Prosecutors and Public Defenders have had their capacity increased in the four judicial districts of Díli, Baucau, Suai and Oecusse, strengthening the judicial system to deliver better services to the people of Timor-Leste.

More cases have been addressed in the courts on a national level than in the entire previous six years of successive Governments. In 2007/2008 1,457 cases were addressed, between 2000-2006 only a total of 1,137 cases were addressed.

The cases addressed outside Díli have trebled, in 2007 / 2008 the courts addressed 336 cases, between 2000-2006 only 125 cases were addressed. New 'mobile courts' have allowed judicial actors to travel to other districts and sub districts for greater accessibility to judicial outcomes.

Between August 2007 and October 2009, the public defenders attended, at the national level, and unprecedented number of cases; 2,253 criminal cases and 1,514 civil cases, 1,994 notifications of criminal proceedings and in 672 civil proceedings.

In the Prosecutor General's Office (PGR), the number of cases processed increased dramatically. In 2006 - 401 cases were processed; in 2007 – 1,830 cases were processed and in 2008 and 2009 – 5,778 cases were processed.

The legal frameworks governing the justice system of Timor-Leste and, in general, the legal system, have been substantially improved under the Xanana Gusmão Government with a broad range of new legislation introduced to the nation.

Most notable is the implementation of the National Directorate of Registries and Notaries. Thirteen offices have been established across Timor-Leste. Birth registration has increased some 300% from 2007, marriage registration has doubled and death registration has increased by 800%. The most impressive increase is the number of passports issued. In 2007 7,093 passports were issued, in 2008 13,657 passports were issued, and so far this year 9,425 passports have been issued.

Women and children will benefit from the establishment of the National Commission on Children's Rights which is now fully operational and the law on Domestic Violence which is currently with parliament.

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The Ministry of Justice has just completed the National consultation on the draft Land Law, a massive undertaking which is central to the social and economic development of Timor-Leste ensuring validity and integrity of land ownership.

A pillar of reform has been the enacting of **the new penal code**, (Decree-Law no. 19/2009, 8 April) based on principles of the democratic rule of law and modeled after the most progressive penal codes in the world. The new **civil code** has also been submitted to parliament and is awaiting approval.

Secretary of State Pereira said “Building a strong justice system is paramount to any well functioning democracy. The justice sector in Timor-Leste is severely burdened; however, with these improvements, we can see that the reforms are working.’

‘Furthermore, the legislative foundations that are being implemented now will be the cornerstone for rule of law of all future generations. This, in itself, is a great accomplishment.”

The 2010 budget cleared the way to double the number of judicial actors (judges, prosecutors and defenders) from 27 in 2006 to 51 in 2010.**ENDS**

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