

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



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Dili, Timor-Leste**

Investing in Youth, Securing the Future

With over 50% of Timor-Leste's population under the age of 18 years, providing opportunities for youth has been, and will always be, a major focus for Xanana Gusmão's Government. The creation of the Secretariat of State for Youth and Sports (SEJD) has been a major step in addressing the needs of youth.

With a strong vision to provide youth with opportunities in sporting activities, artistic endeavors and centers for learning and achievement, the program of the Government has given youth a new found sense of self by instilling the notion of team work, a higher understanding and respect for cultural awareness and confidence through various learning explorations.

The Secretariat of State for Youth and Sports (SEJD) established and supported more youth initiatives than any other Government, providing opportunities for youth to participate in various projects from the sub district to the national level. Overall 44 organizations have received support from SEJD.

Across the last two years four additional Centers for Youth have been completed and opened in Maliana, Oecusse, Ermera and Manufahi. 58 fields for basketball and volleyball have been constructed across all the 13 districts. Musical instruments have been distributed in the districts of Covalima, Bobonaro and Atauro.

Following the launch of Community Sports in 2008, the Community Games for youth were held this year across 65 sub-districts, including sports such as volleyball, basketball, football and athletics.

Training at the local level is being offered to support these kinds of initiatives such as the course on Project Management and Annual Action Plans in the districts of Ermera, Maliana and Díli, held in conjunction with the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development.

Timorese teams have participated in international sporting events, representing the nation as ambassadors for Timor-Leste with much success. Adding to the 14 medals won by some 117 national athletes in the Arafura Games in Darwin, 16 medals were won by 24 disabled athletes who participated in the Special Olympics in Singapore in June. These celebrated athletes are key role models for their communities and all youth who aspire to achieve.

With the establishment of the Martial Arts Commission and through working with the Congress of the *Silat* of Timor-Leste to establish *Silat* Federation Timor-Leste (FESTIL), the Secretariat has sought to reduce conflicts between different members of martial arts and channel their skills and energies into the sporting aspects of their disciplines. Along with other contributing factors these measures have seen the frequency of violence among young people in neighborhoods, in sub-districts and throughout the country, fall dramatically.

To encourage the voice and leadership of youth, the National Council of Youth of Timor-Leste (CNJTL) has been supported to expand their structure to Sub District level. Conferences have been held with up to 5,200 participants across the nation.

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A National Consultation on the Establishment of the Youth Parliament was held in Díli from 26 to 28 June 2009 attended by 26 young women and 26 young men from the 13 districts. On 7 October 2009 a resolution was approved by the Government to establish Youth Parliament (Parlamento Foinsa'e Nian) with the main objective to raise awareness and initiate young people into democratic and civic participation as citizens. Through this initiative, they are able to identify and understand the problems and issues that face the nation and can contribute to education in their communities amongst their peers.

The SEJD has continued to publish the monthly journal Lian-Foin Sae (Voice of the Youth) sharing information on the process of national development with the free distribution of 5,000 copies per month in the 13 districts, the institutions of government, the universities, secondary schools, youth organizations, training centers and NGOs.

Three months training in Basic Journalism, in cooperation with the Institute of Journalists (IFJ) has just been completed by 35 youth to encourage and give skills to Timor-Leste's budding journalists so they may give voice to the Timorese youth and express their concerns and aspirations.

Spokesperson for the IV Constitutional Government, Ágio Pereira noted "The youth of Timor-Leste are the hope for the future of our Nation. The importance of engaging and inspiring youth in a post conflict environment is vital. The Xanana Gusmão Government is committed to exploring and establishing creative projects and programs to motivate our youth, helping them to become free thinking young men and women. We congratulate all of them for their contribution to date. In all our endeavors we are mindful of our goal: that these young people, many of whom played vital role in the struggle for our national liberation, will not only have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of independence, peace and prosperity, but also be well prepared to take due responsibilities for our Nation's future."

The 2010 Budget allocated for the Secretariat of Youth and Sports will facilitate ongoing projects for youth across the nation. **ENDS**

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