

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

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Díli, Timor-Leste**



**Government establishes unprecedented standard of transparency with two-day
“open door” televised SWOT review of Budget**

The Budget Review Committee of the IV Constitutional Government is now undertaking the painstaking task of analysing the proposed budgets for 2012, a milestone year which will include Presidential and Parliamentary elections and important historical commemorations. On the 1st and 2nd of August at the Díli Convention Centre, the Government started this budget process by holding a two-day SWOT workshop (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) on the 2011 Budget. Involving the whole machinery of state, expenditure review was analysed and discussed in an open and transparent forum. As a part of the Government’s consolidated measures to provide transparency and accountability, the proceedings were broadcast live and unedited on National Television, an unparalleled level of transparency given that most Governments hold such reviews behind closed doors.

The Xanana Gusmão Government transparency measures around Budget implementation are amongst the most comprehensive in the world. Timor-Leste’s Transparency Portal tracks day-by-day budget execution and allows for up to date information by institution, line ministry and activity with public and peer review open to all on the web. State actors, Members of the Government, National Parliament, Directors and Civil servants all participated in the workshop with comprehensive information shared to guide better future action in executing the Budget.

The workshop marked a key step for Timor-Leste, demonstrating the equality of all State actors with an unprecedented level of ‘frank and fearless’ discussion, showing a secure, mature and de-politicized civil service with actors from all political parties sitting side by side, all striving for the same unified goal, better service delivery for the People of Timor-Leste.

Lessons emerging from the workshop included the need for enhanced human resources with more focus on middle management and more delegated roles over time under the Directors in Line Ministries. Identifying stronger coordination mechanisms within departments and increased training in public finance management were requested to strengthen the decentralization regime for better service delivery. Civil Servants wanted more training in roles and responsibilities. Line Ministers were asked to review their Budgets, prioritize and stay within the fiscal envelope. The discussion was considered a vital part of the Statebuilding process and an important part of inclusivity to enhance and engage all actors in the ongoing reforms under the Xanana Gusmão Government.

The 2011 Budget is thus far balanced within the fiscal envelope. All Ministers were asked to prioritize their allocated budgets and only utilize the contingency fund in the manner it was intended, as an emergency fund. Line Ministers will now re-evaluate and re-allocate budgets accordingly to stay within the fiscal envelope for 2011. The two-day workshop was a candid assessment highlighting the challenges of state building within a young nation accessible through a transparent and inclusive process televised for full coverage.

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Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers and spokesperson for the Government, Ágio Pereira noted “The greatest flaw of any Government is its refusal to identify and take ownership of weaknesses during the statebuilding process; the greatest assault to democracy is to hide those challenges behind closed doors. As good stewards of State finances, and in spite of inherent difficulties in the process of statebuilding, the Budget is to be used in the most effective way possible to build the nation and enhance the quality of life of our people; it must be responsive to the needs of the country as they emerge and consistent within the fiscal envelope. The Budget Review Meeting was not only an honest assessment of our challenges, with solutions on how to overcome them, but also demonstrated the strengths in our reformed public service; engaged, professional, dedicated, independent and disciplined working for the good of the country. The process of televising this two day workshop demonstrates the resolve of the Government to be transparent, accessible and accountable.”

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