

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



February 20, 2012  
Dili, Timor-Leste

**UNICEF and Save the Children media campaign should be aligned  
with good international engagement**

UNICEF, Timor-Leste and Save The Children, Timor-Leste/Australia, funded by UNICEF, both began a communications campaign to raise funding as the President of the Republic attended the United Nations to present the Joint Transitional Plan.

The original IRIN article, incorrect in the assertions that the MDG's were falling in Timor-Leste, was written by a reporter in Bangkok, the location of a UNICEF headquarters, and posted on the UN humanitarian website. Prior to the release the UNICEF communications officer in Timor-Leste made a round of funding calls to government officials and requested the MDG Secretariat speak with the journalist from IRIN.

Less than 24hours later, Save the Children also issued a statement, regarding Timor-Leste, also presented incorrectly. Save the Children has never participated in surveying Timor-Leste. The global report they mention has no reference to Timor-Leste except for one grid that ranks ten countries, no methodology is attached and data is presented from different years and different surveys, making the data incompatible or comparable. Misuse of indicators by international actors is now being challenged, with transparency of sources, back-sources, data sets and equitability between countries in data capture, being requested in every indicator and analyses presented.

Sadly, political parties in Timor-Leste used both these statements to attack the government even though the Save the Children article did not point out, the evaluation of stunting would include children born in 2004/2005 which would not reflect Government policies and that the challenge is one that should not be politicized.

It is unfortunate that both groups used negative media as an avenue to source funding, especially during the time of the UN transitional summit with the UN Security Council.

In fact the indicators concerning the health and nutrition of children have been improving since 2007. The rate for child mortality has fallen by 30%, the prevalence of underweight children has dropped and the incidence rates of TB and malaria have been significantly reduced. Other broader factors impacting child health are also showing marked improvement over the last five years including a 9% reduction in the poverty rate, a 30% rise in the number of pregnant women receiving antenatal care and increased production in the agriculture sector. For the first time the country has a system of social protection through social transfers, lauded as one of the highest in LDCs, including transfers to single mothers. School feeding programs, better access to health services through decentralized health care and increased monitoring of children's growth are also improving outcomes.

The Strategic Development Plan (2011-2030) sets out a strong roadmap to further build the health sector and prioritizes the increase of agricultural production.

Spokesperson for the Government Ágio Pereira noted "Child health and nutrition remains a priority for the Gusmão Government. We have made progress over these last five years and although we have much more to do and many more challenges, we should be proud of this progress. Our children are the future of Timor-Leste and so we express our gratitude to those in the health, education and agricultural sectors whose efforts are having an impact."ENDS

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