



**P R I M E  
M I N I S T E R**

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,  
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE  
“HEALTH RECOVERY HOUSE”**

**Tíbar, Timor-Leste**

**24 April 2015**

Your Excellency the Minister of State, Coordinating Minister of Social Affairs, Minister of Education and President of the Commission for Combating HIV-AIDS in Timor-Leste

Distinguished Members of Parliament

Your Excellency the Minister of Health

Your Excellency the Executive Secretary of the Commission for Combating HIV-AIDS in Timor-Leste

Distinguished Representatives from Civil Society Organizations

Illustrious guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with enormous satisfaction that I am here today for the inauguration of the Health Recovery House, a house dedicated to supporting citizens living with HIV-AIDS. I would like to start by congratulating the National Commission for Combating HIV-AIDS in Timor-Leste, its President, its Executive Secretary and its staff for completing this important project.

As you know, the social policies defended by this Government include the commitment to supporting vulnerable citizens. The Health Recovery House is without doubt an innovative and key initiative that meet the needs of citizens with HIV-AIDS. As such, the Government defends and supports this initiative.

Timor-Leste has a relatively low prevalence of HIV-AIDS cases. However, in view of the seriousness of this disease, it is essential that the Government and its social partners, including civil society, work together to fight this disease. This includes providing support to citizens with HIV-AIDS; in addition to suffering from an incurable disease they are also the victims of stigma and discrimination, causing them to become marginalized. We must put an end to this.

Today I want to use my medical knowledge to share with you some important aspects about the HIV-AIDS virus, so that we may take another step to end the prejudice surrounding this disease and the people who have it. This is an essential condition for eradicating HIV-AIDS.

HIV is the virus that can cause the disease we know as AIDS. As you know, the main ways in which this virus is transmitted are sexual intercourse and contact with infected blood, which can happen for instance when sharing syringes and needles. AIDS is a disease that affects and weakens the immune system. This means that a person infected with this virus and without access to proper medication has serious risks of developing other diseases, thereby having his or her life expectancy substantially reduced.

However, a person with HIV-AIDS who is medicated and aware of his or her condition may live a life with dignity and quality, and does not represent any risk to his or her family and community.

It is essential that we understand that discrimination is harmful and dangerous. It can even lead people not to undergo diagnosis exams, to conceal the disease and to abstain from seeking medical assistance due to the fear of being excluded and stigmatized. Indeed, it is discrimination that makes people become a risk factor to themselves and to others.

Here I must stress that AIDS is a serious and incurable disease, which is why the greatest weapon against it is prevention!

And prevention starts with education. We must inform our young people and our adults about the dangers of this disease. People must understand that their acts have consequences, which means that they must put an end to their risky behaviours in order to protect themselves and others.

In addition to an effective education strategy, we must also ensure a policy of public health care and assistance to people with this disease. It is essential to create good mechanisms for diagnosing this disease, enabling people to have access to tests, and we need to ensure that all people with HIV-AIDS have access to quality medical treatment and monitoring.

Today the National Commission for Combating HIV-AIDS in Timor-Leste, which has a tremendously important role to play in this mission, takes a vital step to ensure that people with HIV-AIDS can live with dignity and without discrimination. The Health Recovery House will provide shelter and medical assistance, as well as technical and professional training in order to support the reintegration of patients in their communities. The Church will also provide spiritual guidance.

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Combating HIV-AIDS requires us to combat fear and prejudice. We need to have a social consensus on the problem and to provide an answer that is based on the dignity of the human being. We need to support people who have the disease and to alert people to the dangers of the disease, as well as to reduce its transmission. This is an effort that requires the participation of everyone, including the sector of health, the sector of education and welfare. It also includes civil society, which is involved in the development and implementation of projects and policies concerning HIV-AIDS and which should have an active participation in the design and execution of innovative measures directed both to people with HIV-AIDS and to their families and communities.

I would like to conclude by reiterating this Government's commitment to creating the social prosperity conditions that enable us to transform Timor-Leste into a country that truly contributes to the end of this epidemic that has cost the lives of millions of people.

Thank you very much.

Dili, 24 April 2015  
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo