



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



MEDIA RELEASE

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Díli, Timor-Leste

Health Initiatives protecting Timor-Leste's children

The National Measles, Rubella and Polio Immunization campaign conducted by the Government of Timor-Leste officially ended on Saturday after an enormous effort across all health posts to reach children under 15 years of age to protect them from measles, polio and rubella.

Based on 2010 census data the campaign has reached 93% of all Timorese children under the age of fifteen. Some activities will continue to be undertaken through till the 8th of August to raise this percentage even higher and maximize the impact of this highly successful initiative.

The campaign was supported at the highest level with Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, participating in the launch on the 13th of July and drawing on his experience as a medical doctor to administer the vaccines to one of the school students on this special occasion. At the launch event he encouraged all parents, health care workers and community leaders to support not only this campaign but also the routine immunization program so that Timor-Leste can reach the goal of 90% immunization coverage nationwide.

The Ministry of Health, under H.E. Minister Dr. Maria do Céu Sarmento Pina da Costa, led the campaign with support from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of State Administration and partners including the World Health Organization, the Measles and Rubella Initiative and UNICEF.

Timor-Leste has made remarkable progress in the area of children's health over the past ten years with a 23% reduction in child mortality recorded between 2003 and 2010 and immunization coverage of children aged between 12 and 23 months almost tripling over the same period. Vaccines in Timor-Leste have already successfully eliminated smallpox, polio and maternal and neo natal tetanus.

The immunization campaign will have long lasting effects beyond the immediate protection from measles, rubella and polio it has now enabled. The associated training for healthcare workers, improvements to cold chain refrigeration and allied social communications efforts have strengthened the Ministry of Health's capacity to deliver its routine immunization program and raised community awareness of the ongoing importance of vaccination.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira, congratulated all



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involved in the campaign noting that “this campaign and the ongoing routine immunization program are making a life changing contribution to the health of our children and in doing so, to the future of the nation.”**ENDS**



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