



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



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Government responds to impacts of ‘El Niño’

The Government is closely tracking the impact of the 2015-2016 ‘El Niño’ in Timor-Leste and making the preparations necessary to assist those families most at risk. The Council of Ministers was fully briefed last week by the Ministry of the Interior’s National Authority of Civil Protection on the current situation and discussed the steps that are being undertaken to mitigate the challenges created by this weather phenomenon.

Over the last six months the El Niño has caused a delay in the start of the rainy season, lower rainfall and interrupted rains. This has in turn affected crop planting and growth, family incomes and the availability of water. The impact of the El Niño has been varied throughout Timor-Leste’s municipalities with communities on the costal plains the most stressed after having to delay or make multiple plantings, and now with current crops growing poorly or failing altogether. Most upland and mountainous areas, although also experiencing late rains, have had more consistent rainfall and have crops growing well.

The Council of Ministers was shown comparisons between historical rainfall and recent rainfall as reported by Agro-Meteorological Stations throughout the country. Stations in Betano, Los Palos, Pante Macassar, Same and Viqueque all recorded recent rainfall less than half of their ‘historical figures’.

In response to the impact of El Niño the Government has mapped five priority zones likely to need emergency food security support in the coming months and has identified state warehouses in the relevant municipalities. Criteria have been proposed to ensure that food assistance is distributed to those communities and households most in need.

Fortunately climate models are pointing to a decline of the ‘El Niño’ in the coming months with a likely return to a neutral weather pattern during the second quarter of 2016. The Government is committed to building the long-term resilience of rural communities through support for good farming practices and the provision of services.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “the impacts of the 2015/2016 El Niño are now becoming more evident in our country and indeed throughout the region.



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The Government is aware that assistance will be required in the worst impacted areas and is acting to make sure that this assistance will be accessible and appropriate to community needs. In particular the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Social Security are making the necessary preparations and continue to closely monitor conditions throughout the country.”**ENDS**



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