



PRESIDENCY OF THE
COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS

Launching of “Timor-Leste’s Poverty Report 2014”

Opening Remarks of the Minister of State

and

of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers

H.E. Minister Agio Pereira

28 of September of 2016
Hotel Timor

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Colleagues Members of our Government

Excellencies Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, Civil Society and the Private Sector

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here for the launch of “Timor-Leste’s Poverty Report 2014”, the third survey of living standards of Timor-Leste.

I congratulate the Ministry of Finance for the oversight of this work, undertaken by the General Directorate of Statistics, with technical support from the World Bank.

Good data and analysis are critical for the Government and for our citizens to assess the effectiveness of our actions. Knowing whether we are on the right track, whether our policies are making the expected difference, or whether change of policy is needed and, if so, why and when such a change should be undertaken, are of vital importance for effective governance.

It is vital that we all get a sense of how our country is progressing through our own impressions and experiences; and a good survey, well designed and implemented, and the results properly analyzed, will provide us the *source* for accuracy in the understanding of this progress.

And we can say that the picture we are getting for our Nation is encouraging.

Earlier this month, Timor-Leste was ranked in the world 'top ten' for making the most progress in converting economic growth into wellbeing for the period 2006 to 2014.

Then only last week, at the United Nations, a report based on in-depth analysis of data, rated Timor-Leste, as the world's 'most improved' in the health -related SDG index for the period 2000 to 2015.

Today we gather here to launch "Timor-Leste's Poverty Report 2014" and, again, this report gives us similar message; that good progress is being made. Nevertheless, we ought to also agree that there is always more work to do, more improvement is still needed.

Therefore, we celebrate this progress, but equally important, we must acknowledge that sustained progress demands that we continue to press on towards even more achievement in the years ahead.

With the launch of this important report today, our Government wants to reiterate its commitment to promote transparency and to encourage the participation of all citizens in decision-making processes that affect our country as a whole, particularly the living conditions of our people.

No doubt the report will be studied and subjected to academic scrutiny - as it should be.

The Ministry of Finance asserts that this *Survey of Living Standards* is the highest quality survey of its kind, so far conducted in Timor-Leste. The sample size was bigger than the previous surveys undertaken in 2001 and 2007; and that the design uses the latest technical development in the area of statistics. The third survey was conducted over a 12-month period from April 2014 to April 2015 and it included 5,916 households, 30 percent more than the previous survey.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The focus of the report, the reduction of poverty, is to reduce poverty in every municipality, previously referred to as districts. This priority was identified since 2002, as a national priority, a national cause.

This is because after almost a quarter of a century of the struggle for national liberation, having successfully achieved national independence and sovereignty, the importance of liberating our people from poverty

cannot be underestimated. Fighting poverty continues to be top priority of our government - a national priority. This high quality survey, undertaken with academic rigor, certainly contributes towards that end.

Our Strategic Development Plan, adopted in 2011, reaffirmed this national priority, adding that Timor-Leste must work towards elevating itself to the category of an upper middle income country; and by 2030 'extreme poverty' eradicated.

Data from the *2014-15 Survey of Living Standards* show a significant reduction in poverty in the country since 2007. I am sure the Ministry of Finance will articulate the details this morning, thus providing a better picture of what I am referring to.

In a nutshell, this report points to the fact that using the national poverty line, which represents the cost of meeting basic needs in relation to food, shelter and non-food items in Timor-Leste, the proportion of Timorese living in poverty has declined; more Timorese are able to afford essential items compared to 2007.

The survey also indicates that when comparing Timor-Leste to many other countries, the international extreme poverty rate dropped from 47.2 per cent in 2007 to 30.3 per cent in 2014. This means that Timor-Leste has been able to reduce poverty *faster* than many other countries.

In line with the decline in poverty rates, other indicators, detailed in the report, show improvement in the period between 2007 and 2014. Significant nationwide improvements include access to electricity, education of children, and better health outcomes. In addition, improvements can also be seen in access to sanitation facilities and to safe drinking water. More Timorese can now afford items such as mobile phones, television and motorcycles; and access to electricity means that appliances such as fans and electric rice cookers are now within reach of our population.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This accurate information is vital for us to monitor national progress in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals that are at the heart of the United Nations Agenda 2030, one that Timor-Leste also played a pro-active role in defining its priorities.

Our Prime Minister on Saturday, speaking to world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, highlighted Timor-Leste's commitment towards making these Goals part of our planning and budgeting, noting that we have already "mapped indicators for the 17 Goals and selected 20 targets that will allow us to monitor implementation based on measurable results."

I am pleased to commend this report to you; and thank all those involved, particularly the 5,916 Timorese households that answered the questions, the survey teams that asked the questions, the designers, statisticians and the report writers.

Again, I congratulate the Ministry of Finance, the General Directorate of Statistics and the World Bank for an important job duly implemented.

We are encouraged by our progress of understanding the constraints and opportunities inherent in the dynamic of development. Our goal is to relentlessly pursue the path of national development in Timor-Leste that leads to extreme poverty belonging to the past; eradicated. Until then, we remain conscious that there is still much to be done.

As a nation, we are blessed with the ability to learn, we are fast learners. As time goes by, we are not only learning better about exactly what to do, but also, how best to get it done - for the sake of the well being of our nation.

Thank you.