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On World Malaria Day Timor-Leste celebrates major health achievement

On World Malaria Day, the 25th of April, Timor-Leste celebrates the success of its National Malaria Program led by the Ministry of Health. The number of reported cases of malaria has dropped from 223,002 in 2006 to 95 in 2016 and the number of deaths due to malaria fell from 58 to zero. The effectiveness of the program means that Timor-Leste is moving from the 'control phase' to the 'elimination phase' and the Government through the Ministry of Health has now begun to implement the *National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination 2017-2021*.

The goal of this plan is to interrupt indigenous malaria transmission by the end 2021, prevent the re-introduction of malaria in municipalities where indigenous transmission has already been interrupted and to have zero deaths due to indigenous malaria. The plan to achieve malaria elimination by 2021 includes three key interventions: universal access to early diagnosis and prompt treatment, malaria prevention and intensified surveillance.

The plan notes that the excellent improvement achieved in Timor-Leste over the last ten years is "due to a well-funded program with a technically strong strategy built on the foundation of a rapidly evolving health system that is providing basic health services down to the household level." The Government is committed to malaria elimination by the end of 2021 and is continuing to strengthen health services and facilitate national development in order to achieve the vision of "Healthy Timorese people in a healthy Timor-Leste".

The theme for this year's World Malaria Day "End Malaria For Good" captures the vision of the World Health Organization for "a malaria free world as set out in the Global Technical Strategy of Malaria 2016-2030." In the Sustainable Development Goals, championed by Timor-Leste, Goal 3 to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages" encompasses the target to "end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases by 2030".

Spokesperson, Minister of State Agio Pereira, noted "The Government is proud of what has been achieved in Timor-Leste to dramatically reduce the incidence of malaria. We know that in the area of health there is much more to be achieved and so, encouraged by this success, we press on with even more determination to achieve our vision of Healthy Timorese people in a healthy Timor-Leste". **ENDS**



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