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2007 Parliamentary Elections

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Media release

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27 June 2007

## FRETILIN Government outlines its main achievements in health

**The rehabilitation and reconstruction of health infrastructure, increased access to basic health services and the bilateral health program with Cuba are some of the main achievements of the FRETILIN government said the Minister of Health and current Deputy Prime Minister Dr Rui de Araujo.**

Dr Rui de Araujo said, “Our achievements in the last five years have set a very good platform for the future and I believe the FRETILIN government’s health policy will make Timor-Leste’s health system a model for the whole region. It has resulted in East Timorese having much greater access to health than they ever did during the Indonesian occupation.”

Dr de Araujo is an independent and was appointed as Minister for Health by former PM Mari Alkatiri to become part of FRETILIN’s government of inclusion, since the Second Transitional Government of UNTAET. FRETILIN’s government of inclusion allows independent people with the appropriate technical skills to be appointed to ministerial positions provided they implement FRETILIN policy.

As Minister for Health, Dr de Araujo is responsible for one of the most important policies of the FRETILIN government as set out in the National Development Plan.

“The FRETILIN government believes all citizens have a right to good health, and to free health care,” said de Araujo. “We are well on the way to achieving our goal. Every citizen now has free access to hospitals and basic primary health care and 85% of the rural population has access to health services.”

Dr de Araujo outlined some of the achievements of the FRETILIN government in respect to health. He said the Ministry has spent \$30 million dollars rehabilitating and reconstructing infrastructure such as hospitals, health posts and community health clinics.

“The government is rehabilitating and expanding the national hospital in Dili at a cost of USD\$9 million. Five referral hospitals are being built in the districts of Oecussi (west of Dili), Bobonaro (west of Dili), Maubisse (south of Dili), Baucau (east of Dili) and Suai (west of Dili) at a cost of USD\$16 million. The government is also overseeing the building of a national laboratory, 47 health centres and 104 health clinics stations across the country.”

Dr de Araujo said, “The Ministry has established a faculty of medicine at the National University of Timor-Leste which it jointly runs with the Ministry of Education. We are now looking at establishing a faculty of nursing.

“The Ministry has also established the Institute of Health Science. The Institute provides certificated and non-certificated short courses in areas such as nursing, training for midwives, management, safe motherhood, integrated management of childhood illnesses, mental health, oral health and radiography.

“We are now trying to set up research facilities with the assistance of AusAid and the University of New South Wales. The international community is also helping the East Timorese to complete studies on diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

Dr de Araujo thanked the Cuban government for its generous assistance in helping Timor-Leste build its health workforce. He paid tribute to FRETILIN Secretary General Mari Alkatiri, who during his time as PM negotiated the bilateral health program with Cuba.

“Under this agreement, the Cuban government agreed to train up to 1,000 East Timorese doctors at its universities at no cost to the government of Timor-Leste. Cuba has also sent 228 doctors, 23 nurses, 40 health technicians and 11 Spanish-language teachers to Timor-Leste.

"105 East Timorese are studying locally under the guidance of Cuban health experts. More importantly, there are now 698 East Timorese studying medicine in Cuba and the government will send more students in the next few years. Once all the students return from Cuba, Timor-Leste will have at least one doctor for each of its 442 sucos (administrative levels which cover a group of villages). This is far more than at any time prior to the restoration of independence in 2002.

"In addition to the students studying in Cuba or in Timor-Leste under the guidance of the Cuban doctors, we have students studying in Fiji, Indonesia, Australia, Malaysia and in other countries."

Dr de Araujo said that under the FRETILIN government, the Ministry has increased its health inputs. For example, approximately 61% of children under 1 have received measles immunisation and approximately 63% have received DPT3 immunisation. This is far greater than at any time during the Indonesian occupation.

He said, "We have also passed legislation in relation to pharmaceutical activities, health practice and private health facilities."

Dr de Araujo said, "As an independent minister, I have the full support of the FRETILIN government in implementing its health policy which is aimed at making widespread and real improvements in the health and well being of the East Timorese."

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