

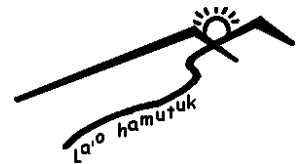
La'o Hamutuk

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2 May 2012

Your Excellency Emilia Pires
RDTL Minister of Finance
Dili, Timor-Leste

Dear Excellency,

As you know, La'o Hamutuk has worked for years to help the Government, State and people of Timor Leste design and implement effective policies regarding planning, budgeting and sustainable economic development. We share your commitment that transparency and public access to information are essential components of the development process, and welcome the "Timor-Leste Transparency Model" and other initiatives to make Timor-Leste's people more aware of how our resources are being used.

Unfortunately, the implementation of this model does not yet meet its promises, and we would like to make you aware that some people make claims which are not reflected in what is available to the public, which is undoubtedly different than what you can access from inside the Ministry of Finance. Although some of the following examples are outside your area of responsibility, we hope that pointing them out will assist our mutual goals.

- **Procurement Portal:** No new information has been posted to the Procurement Portal since you launched it eight months ago. There has not been anything on tenders offered since then, nor on contracts awarded since then. Nevertheless, the Spokesperson for the Government issued a press release¹ last week saying "citizens [have] the ability to view contract tenders, details about who wins a tender, and details on projects and costs."
- **Budget Transparency Portal:** We support the concept of the Budget Portal and appreciate the Ministry's efforts to make it current and comprehensive. Last week, the Secretary of State for Natural Resources told the international Peace and Reconciliation Conference that this portal included detailed information, and said one could look up how much fuel his agency has used. Unfortunately the level of detail available leaves much to be desired.² For example (see attached printout), the portal shows that of the \$4.4 million SERN spent between 1 January and 26 April 2012, \$3.8 million was for "public grants" from their Planning Directorate. The most detailed information shows that \$4.1 million was granted in February, and negative \$0.3 was granted in April. There is no information about what the money was used for or who it was transferred to and from.
- **EITI:** One-third of 2012 has already passed, but neither the 2010 nor 2011 EITI reports have been published. Nevertheless, Timor-Leste continues to show pride in having been the "third country in the world to be awarded EITI compliance status in July 2010."¹ Although EITI rules allow Timor-Leste to publish its 2010 report until the end of 2012, more timely publication would be more consistent with the spirit of EITI. Fourteen

¹ "Lançamento do Portal de Resultados do Governo", 24 April 2012, <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=6852>

² We tried to check what is available about fuel usage, but the Budget Portal has not worked at all for several days.

months elapsed between the publication of Timor-Leste's EITI reports for 2008 and 2009, and another 14 months have passed without the next "annual" report.

- **Government Results Portal:** We appreciate this new initiative and look forward to its further development. At the moment, it shows more vision than actual results. Of the 25 projects currently included in the portal, only two are "finished," six are "planned" and the rest are "in progress." We hope that this portal will be expanded to include more than the planning and construction of large physical objects, so that people can see how the Government is providing education, health care, services and local infrastructure to people across the country, especially in rural areas. It would also be helpful if the portal included information about the number of dollars allocated and spent for each project, and the timetable for completion, in addition to the percentages shown.
- **Parliamentary budget transparency:** Timor-Leste is rightly proud that the entire budget debate in the plenary sessions of the National Parliament is open to the public and broadcast live on television and radio. Unfortunately, the rest of the budget process is not so transparent. "Public hearings" of Parliamentary Committees are closed to media and to the public except by special invitation. Even worse, the entire budget process prior to approval by the Council of Ministers is conducted in secrecy, with no overall or concrete information available to anyone outside Government. Unfortunately, transparency is not applied to "the complete discussion of the State Budget,"³ but only to its final Parliamentary phase.
- **Council of Ministers meeting reports:** Although this timely information on what the Council of Ministers has discussed and decided is useful, the brief press releases rarely contain enough information, and supporting documents or other detailed material is often impossible to obtain. Although laws and resolutions will be published in the *Jornál da República* months later, after they have been enacted into law, the long-promised public information office of the Council of Ministers is not yet operational.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing communication and remain ready to help the Government make information public in any way that we can.

With Respect,



Juvinal Dias
La'o Hamutuk Natural Resources Team



Charles Scheiner

Cc: Prime Minister, Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers, Secretary of State of Natural Resources, Civil Society Advisor to the Prime Minister, President of National Parliament, public.

³ Government press release "Timor-Leste - um Modelo de Transparência," 3 May 2011, <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=4962>