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Launch of the Roads for Development (R4D) Phase II Program:

Rural Road development for better rural employment and economy

THE MINISTRY of Public Works, Transport and Communications (MPWTC) launched on 23 March 2017, Phase II of the Government of Timor-Leste's key programme in the rural roads sector – the Roads for Development Programme (R4D) – in Same, Manufahi. As part of the launch, one of R4D's rehabilitated core rural roads, the Same-Daisua-Grotu road (length 11.2 km), was inaugurated.

Delivering the keynote address was H.E. Mr. Gastao Francisco de Sousa, Minister for Public Works, Transport and Communications. Other invited guests included H.E. the Ambassador of Australia to Timor-Leste, Their Excellences Ministers of the Cabinet of the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL), the Director of the International Labour organization (ILO) for Indonesia and Timor-Leste, Representatives of Municipal authorities, Government officials, Representatives of Employers and Workers' Organizations, and ILO R4D staff.

R4D's first phase started in March 2012, implemented by the MPWTC's Directorate of Roads, Bridges and Flood Control (DRBFC) with financial support from the Australian Government, which funds technical assistance delivered by the ILO. The overarching rationale and goal for R4D is that: Women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved rural road access. R4D focuses on the rehabilitation and maintenance of Timor-Leste's 1,975 km of core rural road network – covering 12 Municipalities.

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Without compromising quality, local contractors employ community members to build and maintain roads servicing their communities. Strengthening the capacity of the public and private sector to plan, design and implement rural road improvements is also an important objective of R4D.

The first phase of the R4D program ends on 31st March 2017. The Government of Australia (GoA) contributed AUD 36 million (approximately USD 32 million) for capital investments and technical assistance for this first phase. The GoTL contributed USD 23 million for physical road works and the provision of resources for staffing and operational costs.

R4D Phase II will continue receiving financial support from the Government of Australia - AUD 26 million (approximately USD 18 million) over the next four years for the ILO to continue to provide technical assistance. GoTL's contribution to phase II will cover capital investments (including investments in rural road maintenance) and

resources for staffing and operational costs. MPWTC-DRBFC will assume the full responsibility for R4D's implementation of rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance works during phase II, with the ILO technical assistance mainly focussing on capacity development.

H.E. Mr. Gastao Francisco de Sousa, Minister of Public Works, Transport and Communications of Timor-Leste, stated that rural roads development and access have been the key priority of the Government of Timor-Leste. Improved rural roads access has significantly impacted the livelihoods of the rural people of Timor-Leste in terms of economic and social development.

"Through the R4D program, we have witnessed increase in local economic activities and local job opportunities, improved access to agricultural land, markets, schools, clinics and other social services. We are proud of the achievements and we are committed to the R4D programme as it is aligned with the Government of Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and the Programmes of the Constitutional Government," Minister Gastao said.

Supporting the commitment of the Government of Timor-Leste to the improvement of rural development access, H.E Mr. Peter Doyle, the Australian Ambassador to the Timor-Leste, emphasized the commitment of the Australian Government as a development partner of Timor-Leste.

"Economic growth and business development are priorities for both Timor-Leste and Australia. These priorities could be achieved through the development and improvement of rural infrastructure. Therefore, the Government of Australia is committed to being an effective and responsive long-term partner of Timor-Leste's development by continuing to support efforts taken on improving livelihoods, enhancing human development and strengthening government institutions," he said.

Similarly, Ms. Michiko Miyamoto, Country Director of the ILO for Indonesia and Timor-Leste, said that the ILO has a long standing commitment to promoting the development and application of employment-friendly policies and strategies for public investment in infrastructure *"The ILO will continue to promote small enterprises in the construction sector, including labour-based contractors and the usage of locally available resources, and job creation in the infrastructure sector with improved and decent working conditions,"* she said.

Benefiting from the R4D programme, Mr. Filomino dos Santos, the Village Chief of one the villages located along the Same-Grotu road, lauded the inauguration and the rehabilitated rural road to his village. The rehabilitated road has benefited three villages (sukos) living in the area and have brought improvement to the livelihoods of the local communities.

"We have never seen a good quality road like this. Due to the poor road condition, no cars and vehicles passed our village. But now we have seen more cars and vehicles passing by, as a result we have better access to markets. Our local farmers can now bring their products to the market. The transportation cost has reduced as well as the travel time," he said.

Under the second phase of the R4D, the ILO's technical assistance to the Government's R4D programme will be called the R4D Support Programme (R4D-SP). The emphasis of the R4D-SP will shift from demonstrating the benefits of improved rural road access to strengthening the capacity of relevant government officials at both the national and municipality levels so that they can manage the rural road network on a sustainable basis.



Achievements to date

- **138 km of rural roads have been rehabilitated** to all-weather standards;
- **400 km of rural roads are being maintained**, using trained Community Maintenance Groups;
- A 5-year (2016-2020) **Rural Road Master Plan and Investment Strategy has been developed to guide the planning and prioritization of rural roads** in Timor-Leste, which has been approved by the Council of Minister in May 2016.
- **Soils and Materials Testing Equipment sets were procured and five operational laboratories were established.** These laboratories are used to test and ensure quality control on R4D projects. The laboratories are also used for training the National Directorate of Roads, Bridges and Flood Control (DRBFC) and would be used by the municipalities.
- **Strategies, studies, systems and standards have been developed for Planning and Budgeting, Design and Cost Estimation Tendering and Contracting, Works Implementation and Quality Control, Contract Management** as well as Monitoring and Evaluation.
- **882 technical and managerial staff of contractors and 345 government officials have received training in planning, procurement**, as well as implementation management of rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance using labour-based methods.
- **611,000 worker-days of employment have been created** in the project areas of the Municipalities with an approximately 25 percent being women.

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