



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Embargo: 06 November 2008

MINISTER OF JUSTICE, U.S. AMBASSADOR LAUNCH LAND DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Today, the Minister of Justice and the US Ambassador launched the national land data collection process at a ceremony in Manatuto. The land data collection, to be piloted in Manatuto (east of the capital) and Liquica (west of the capital), will make use of data collection procedures and digital land surveying technologies that have never before been used in the country.

The activity is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Ita Nia Rai (Our Land) or Strengthening Property Rights project--a five-year, \$10 million project providing technical and policy support to the National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services (DNTPSC) and the Ministry of Justice.

On the occasion, the Minister of Justice, Lucia Lobato, commented: "Today we are taking an important step in the history of this nation, because for the first time, all people will be able to record information about their land." She added: "Collecting and organizing this information is a key step towards creating a land administration system, which will guarantee people's rights to land in the future."

US Ambassador Hans G Klemm presented uniforms to the community members from the two pilot districts, who have been trained as data collectors by the USAID-funded program. "A strong reason to strengthen property rights in this country is that it will contribute to stability and support peace," Ambassador Klemm stated. "I encourage communities to participate in this process in order to prevent future conflicts over land," he added.

Following these remarks, Ambassador Klemm and Minister Lobato released two doves into the sky, a symbol of the peace that this program hopes to promote.

Director of the DNTPSC, Antonio Verdial de Sousa, said: "I would like to thank the Government of the United States of America for their support in helping us develop our land administration system." He further added, "land rights are recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a fundamental right for all people. Therefore, all men and women have the right to make a claim to land during this process, free of any form of discrimination or intimidation." Director Verdial added that in the near future, the program would be expanded to other areas, and encouraged all Timorese to participate peacefully in the process.

The Ita Nia Rai ('Our Land') program is a five-year project funded by USAID and implemented by ARD Inc., ACDI/VOCA, and Land Equity International, organizations with worldwide experience in developing land systems in post-conflict countries and in conflict prevention for community stabilization. Working with the DNTPSC and the Ministry of Justice, the program provides technical and policy support to develop a sustainable and transparent property rights system in Timor-Leste.

- Ends

STRENGTHENING PROPERTY RIGHTS IN TIMOR-LESTE **Balide, Dili, Timor-Leste**

For more information, please contact:

Breanna Ridsdel

TEL: +670 731 2407

Email: bridsdel@sprtl.tl

Jose Caetano Guterres

TEL: +670 730 4325

Email: jcaetano@sprtl.tl