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News Release

USAID-Funded Demographic and Health Survey Details Successes and Challenges in Timor-Leste's Path to Development

Dili, 9 February 2011 -- US Deputy Chief of Mission Jonathan Henick launched the 2009-2010 Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in December 2010. The survey, funded primarily by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provides data from more than 11,000 household interviews conducted across the country. The 2009-2010 DHS provides a rich and expanded source of detailed information, building on earlier surveys that were more limited in scope. The main survey focus areas are:

- fertility and family planning behavior
- child mortality
- adult and maternal mortality
- child nutritional status
- use of maternal and child health services
- knowledge of HIV/AIDS

In addition, the new survey also provides data on household composition and wealth, employment and women's status in the household. Much of the detail comes from individual interviews with 13,000 women and 4,000 men.

The 2009-2010 DHS was conducted under the worldwide MEASURE DHS, a standardized survey project funded by USAID and conducted for the past 25 years in more than 75 countries. By funding the full, standardized DHS, USAID has enabled Timor-Leste to collect data that can be compared directly to other countries. Vital new data is also part of this DHS. For the first time, the country has verifiable nationwide and district-level statistics on attitudes and incidence of gender-based violence.

The 2009-2010 DHS also tracks more than 15 Millennium Development Goal indicators. These include primary school attendance rates, adolescent birth rates and antenatal care rates.

"The DHS confirms the tremendous progress Timor-Leste has made, reducing infant and child mortality, increasing immunization coverage of young children, improving access to antenatal care, and increasing contraceptive use," Mr. Henick said. "But the data also shows that much more work remains. It is my hope that the Government of Timor-Leste and its local and international development partners will use this data to develop effective public policies, improve health services, change people's behavior, and give the Timorese people a healthier future."

"Data such as this is vital to make sound planning decisions for investing resources to address the priority needs of our citizens," said Minister of Finance Emilia Pires, whose National Statistics Directorate implemented the survey.

Some of the key findings show notable improvements in some areas:

- The total fertility rate is dropping: women have 5.7 children on average, down from 7.8 in 2003.
- The under-5 mortality rate has decreased to 64 deaths per 1,000 live births from 83 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003.
- Immunization rates are increasing: 46% of children are now fully immunized, up from 18% in 2003.
- The number of women using skilled birth attendants is up: 30% receive skilled support, up from 18% in 2003.

Other findings highlight the need for increased attention:

- More than 50% of children under 5 are stunted or underweight, an increase of about 5% in each category from the 2003 data.
- Nearly a third of children are born less than two years after the birth of the previous child, which raises under-5 mortality rates significantly.
- The maternal mortality ratio is high. The survey data shows a maternal mortality ratio of about 557 deaths per 100,000 live births. Pregnancy and pregnancy-related causes account for 42% of all deaths of women aged 15 to 49. Timor-Leste's 2015 maternal mortality ratio target is 252 deaths per 100,000 live births.

The 2009-2010 Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey was funded primarily by USAID with additional support from UNFPA, AusAID, IrishAID, UNICEF, UNDP and WHO. The survey was implemented by the National Statistics Directorate, under the aegis of the Ministry of Health, with technical assistance from ICF Macro, USAID's MEASURE DHS project partner. The Timor-Leste DHS data will be widely available and used to focus programming by the Government of Timor-Leste and USAID.

The final report and data sets will be available online at the ICF Macro website:

http://www.measuredhs.com/countries/country_main.cfm?ctry_id=117&c=Timor-Leste

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