

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE**

**GOVERNMENT**

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**GOVERNMENT DECREE No. 1/2004  
OF 14 APRIL 2004**

**THE STANDARD ORTHOGRAPHY OF THE TETUN LANGUAGE**

Tetun, a language that is at once both official and national, should be used in a consistent fashion by the entire State administration and all other institutions, as well as by the media.

Tetun is essential in building the Nation and asserting of Timorese identity, so its use constitutes a constitutional imperative that requires urgent implementation. And, for that purpose, it is imposed on us to standardise its orthography in the process of developing the language.

Aware of the strategic importance of the Tetun Language in cementing national unity, the Government enacts, pursuant to Section 115, paragraph (p), of the Constitution of Timor-Leste, the following that shall have the force of law:

**Article 1  
Standard Orthography**

1. The Standard Orthography of Official Tetun, as developed by the National Institute of Linguistics, National University of Timor-Leste, is hereby adopted.
2. The adopted Standard Orthography shall not prejudice the research and the development process of the Tetun Language being conducted by the National Institute of Linguistics.

**Article 2  
Orthography of Official Tetun**

1. The orthography of Official Tetun is the phonemic system, as developed and administered by the National Institute of Linguistics on the basis of scientific criteria.
2. Official Tetun is the variety of Tetun that has asserted itself as the official and national language, which is a modern literary form of the country's most common vernacular based on Tetun-Praça.
3. This option shall not prejudice the varieties of Tetun used exclusively in certain regions, which the State is preserving and promoting as national languages.

**Article 3**  
**Scope of Implementation**

1. The Standard Orthography of Official Tetun shall be applied in the general education system, in official publications and on the media.
2. Priority shall be given to the use of Official Tetun and Portuguese in public iconography and signs.
3. English and Malay-Indonesian shall, as simple working languages, not be used in public iconography and signs, unless they are accompanied by visibly prominent texts in Tetun and Portuguese.

**Article 4**  
**Role of the National Institute of Linguistics**

1. The National Institute of Linguistics shall be the scientific guardian of Official Tetun.
2. The National Institute of Linguistics shall continue undertaking scientific activities required for preserving and protecting all other national languages, by notably working on their respective standard orthographies.
3. Research and development work on Tetun and all other national languages of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste shall be conducted in close cooperation with the National Institute of Linguistics.
4. Foreign linguists and scholars must obtain from the National Institute of Linguistics authorisation to carry out their research activities by submitting to the latter their respective research projects for approval, under risk of manifest illegality.
5. The National Institute of Linguistics may refuse to grant authorisation where it does not recognize any scientific merit in a research project or such research would bring no benefits for the country.
6. A decision by the National Institute of Linguistics to refuse to grant the requested authorisation may be appealed against to the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, who shall take a final decision.

**Article 5**  
**Date of Entry into Force**

The present Decree shall come into force on the day following its date of publication.

Approved by the Council of Ministers on 31 March 2004.

To be published.

The Prime Minister

[Signed]  
(Mari Bim Amude Alkatiri)