

Action brief

Consolidating resources and multi-sectoral action for better nutrition in Timor-Leste

Country: Timor-Leste

Date: 28 August 2022

Themes: Coordinating action through improved functional capacities

Sub-themes: Strengthening capacity to better coordinate with sectors or groups



Overview



Timor-Leste is a small, relatively new country with one of the highest burdens of malnutrition and food insecurity in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic, the tropical cyclone Seroja, and the rising costs of food and other necessities due to the war in Ukraine have all contributed to increasing this burden. Timor-Leste is committed to achieving its 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 on Zero Hunger.

Since the country achieved independence in 2002, many policies and strategies have been launched with strong political commitment from a range of state institutions and leaders. For example:

- The National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition (KONSANTTIL) was established in 2010

following the Comoro Declaration, aimed at ending hunger in the country.

- In 2014, the President's Nutrition Award was launched to recognize and encourage best practices across sectors and raise awareness of the issues.
- The President led government-wide round-table dialogues, which resulted in the *Consolidated National Action Plan for Nutrition and Food Security (CNAP NFS)* – approved by the Council of Ministers in 2020.

The CNAP NFS is a multi-sectoral action plan that consolidates over 300 different interventions across a range of strategies into 18 high-impact, evidence-based priorities spanning seven sectors (health; agriculture and fisheries; social solidarity; education, youth and sports; tourism, trade and industry; public works; and equality and inclusion).

The CNAP NFS was developed as a multi-stakeholder national action plan to achieve SDG 2 targets and improve nutrition and food security in Timor-Leste. This action plan will help the country make best use of its available resources, identify gaps for government and development partners to fill, and advocate for increased investments.



Objectives of the action brief

This brief highlights the work of CNAP NFS, which provides to provide a framework on high-impact interventions to achieve targets and goals related to food and nutrition security in Timor-Leste.



Period covered

The initial round-table dialogues at national and sub-national level for the CNAP NFS began in 2019. The Council of Ministers adopted the plan in July 2020.



What action was taken?

To tackle food security and nutrition in the second decade of the twentieth century, Timor-Leste adopted four nutrition-related strategies which involved 357 interventions, with a range of targets and indicators. However, the government realized that there was insufficient time and resources to invest in all intervention areas and a prioritization process was required to meet the country's SDG 2 targets. In 2019, the Prime Minister, conducted a meeting with all United Nations organizations to ask for interventions to be streamlined and prioritized across sectors, with a focus on those with greatest reach and impact. The prime minister also called for a single multi-sectoral consolidated and costed national action plan.

To respond to the prime minister's request, a process of consultation began in 2019. It involved:

- Two cross-sector round-table dialogues hosted at the national level.
- Several rounds of subnational and community-level consultations, starting in late 2019, to understand grassroots priorities and complement the national dialogue.
- The continuous engagement of various sectors such as government, private sector, civil society, academia, non-governmental agencies, community groups and others.
- A dedicated lead to oversee the whole process. The process was led by the nutrition and food security adviser at Prime Minister's Office and National Focal Point for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The process was supported by development partners.

Following these consultations, the SDG 2 Consolidated National Action Plan was finalized, adopted by the Council of Ministers, and launched by the prime minister during the Timor-Leste Development Partners Meeting in 2021.



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With the costing and launch of the CNAP NFS, the government of Timor-Leste has increased its budget allocations in several CNAP key intervention areas. Recently, as part of the CNAP NFS, the government launched the *Bolsa da Mãe, Jerasaun Foun* programme, which:

1. Provides a cash subsidy to pregnant women and children under six;
2. Includes nutrition interventions under the minister of health's Saude na Familia (Family Health Programme);
3. Facilitates the drafting of legislation for food fortification, increased budget for rural water and roads programmes, and increased budget to scale up fish production.

In addition, the *Bolsa da Mãe, Jerasaun Foun* a food basket intervention (*Sesta Básika*) was implemented during COVID-19 and the budget for nutrition-sensitive emergency response was increased during the Seroja cyclone.



What would the country do differently?

The costing and the development of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is delaying the implementation of the plan. It is difficult to assess the implementation status across so many sectors without a clear M&E framework.

Additional areas of improvement include: the development of a theory of change which (this step should have been taken at an earlier stage), nutrition-related sub-activities flagged for action, and a clear budget tracking outlined for the implementation process.



Adaptation and applicability



Three key lessons to share with other countries include:

- 1. For coordination and for a programme to succeed, a good plan is needed. However, goals will only be achieved if the plan is simple, realistic and comprehensive.**
- 2. It is important that all relevant stakeholders at all levels decide on the priorities and indicators for action in line with existing national targets.**
- 3. The process of developing consensus and ensuring effective coordination is essential but, even in a small country like Timor-Leste, this takes time: time for sectors to fully understand their contribution and time to get sectors and organizations together to share a common goal and unite around common advocacy efforts. Even with high level leadership this process in Timor-Leste has taken several years.**



Next steps

Recently the SUN Movement has been facilitating the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform involving development partners, civil society and the private sector. Additionally, the Movement is facilitating national dialogues and seminars to keep all stakeholders engaged and maintain advocacy efforts.

Through the SUN Focal Points, the CNAP NFS 'package' (including the costing and M&E framework) will be presented to relevant stakeholders, including parliamentarians. This is intended to achieve high-level buy-in and ensure an adequate level of investment is made to meet the 2030 SDG 2 targets.

Progress on the CNAP NFS will be reported to all development partners and sectors. This reporting will be monitored regularly through government systems.



Further information

- [Food Systems National Pathway Commitment and Position Statement](#)
- [Timor-Leste Food and Nutrition Survey 2020](#)
- [Timor-Leste National Nutrition Strategy 2014-2019](#)
- [Timor-Leste: Standard DHS, 2016](#)
- [SUN Countries: Timor-Leste](#)



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