

UPDATE 2023



**UNITED NATIONS
TIMOR-LESTE**



COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS

TIMOR-LESTE

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INTRODUCTION:

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) update represents the ongoing analytical function of the United Nations system in program countries. It aims to detect shifts in the national development landscape, highlighting implications and challenges for the country's development pathway as well as regional collaborations across the development-humanitarian-peace nexus towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achievement by 2030.

In 2023, the UN Country Team (UNCT) presents the CCA updates, including:

- Executive summary,
- Country situation, highlighting developmental trends,
- Summary of six outcome areas outlined in the 2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and
- Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) analysis summary update, specifically focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, persons with disabilities, and youth.

The CCA updates serve to provide stakeholders and partners with timely public analyses from the UN. This facilitates the identification of necessary adjustments in the UNSDCF. Additionally, it equips the UNCT to actively engage with the government and other relevant stakeholders in policy discussions and advocacy efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the UN common country analysis in Timor-Leste in 2019, the political landscape has changed substantially. Global and regional partnerships are strongly pursued, with the country on track to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) by 2024 and attain full membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) by 2025. Recent elections in 2023 further consolidated the country's commitment to democracy and the rule of law.

Human rights recommendations for Timor-Leste reflect both progress and concerns. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) praised equality efforts but expressed concern about domestic violence rates. The Committee on the Rights of the Child review is pending, without a scheduled date. There is a need for a systematic mechanism for tracking and implementing recommendations. In the 2022 Universal Periodic Review (UPR), 194 recommendations were made, with 186 accepted. Noteworthy steps include the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2023. Recommendations also touch on marriage age, same-sex marriage, and abortion decriminalization.

The economy in Timor-Leste is recovering post-COVID, with public spending at a historic high. The country continues to face challenges around a heavy reliance on petroleum revenue, demanding careful fiscal management. Inflation rates are driven by food and oil prices. Labor force participation remains low, especially in the private sector. Youth face educational and employment challenges. Informal employment remains common, especially for women. Private sector growth is hindered by poor data, regulations, and limited credit access. Strengthening human capital and the private sector is key to sustainable growth. Policies exist for economic development but face serious challenges in implementation. Implications include investments in export-oriented industries, monitoring labor and social protection, and strengthening rural development.

Severe food insecurity and malnutrition continue in the country, with 36% facing chronic food insecurity, and 22% acute insecurity as of 2020. Opportunities exist, including Government prioritization of food security, but risks loom large. These include compounding impacts of El Niño, floods, and the global food price crisis. Timor-Leste's heavy reliance on food imports, particularly rice, is concerning, with prices soaring in 2023. These challenges directly impact nutrition, exacerbating stunting and wasting in children and limiting human capital development. Inadequate food control mechanisms escalate the crisis. Scaled investment in nutrition and food security plans, reinforced laws, streamlined information systems, and food product regulation are vital steps towards a more food-secure country. Strengthening school feeding programs and establishing strategic grain reserves are crucial.

The President declared preschool education as one of his priorities, with a 230% budget increase in 2023 compared to the previous year. It also joined the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and committed to the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) assessment, a significant policy move. Challenges include low preschool enrollment and grade repetition. Disparities exist among municipalities, and infrastructure gaps persist. Implications include developing a targeted National Youth Employment Strategy, conducting a joint sector review of the Education Sector Plan, implementing a re-entry policy for pregnant girls and other early drop-outs, investing in transition and knowledge management, prioritizing teacher certification and upskilling, and embracing digitalization through initiatives like Timor Digital 2032.

COVID-19 left heavy impacts on the health sector of the country, with 22,951 cases and 133 deaths by June 2022. Health services, especially primary care, experienced disruptions. The country responded by expanding healthcare, setting up intensive care unit (ICU) beds, and boosting testing capacity. Immunization efforts saw success, with over 1.9 million COVID-19 doses administered. Efforts to combat tropical diseases and strengthen communicable disease control have shown progress. The Government is committed to expanding Universal Health Coverage. Challenges include weak data capacities, limited resources, and coordination issues. Efforts to overcome barriers for marginalized

groups are of crucial importance. Key implications include improving health sector resources and digitizing the health system.

Legal frameworks for child protection and social impact have been finalized, along with laws pertaining to decentralization and judicial organization. The revised Criminal Procedure Law prioritizes the protection of victims of gender-based violence. Notably, in early 2023, Timor-Leste ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a significant step towards furthering inclusivity. National Action Plans have been instituted to address gender-based violence and to increase women's participation in peace processes. Additionally, the National Mediation Network aims to enhance access to justice for women and vulnerable groups. Key policy messages emphasize the importance of a Human Rights Based Approach for inclusive development, continued focus on migrant rights based on data-driven strategies, and the need for inclusive National Planning and Budgeting aligned with national priorities. The call for greater decentralization remains a priority for future progress in the country.

The country continues to face challenges due to its vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change impacts. The country experienced devastating floods and landslides in April 2021, causing extensive damage to homes, infrastructure, and agriculture. Timor-Leste is particularly sensitive to climate change effects and El Niño events, which may lead to shifts in rainfall patterns, increased risk of landslides, and heightened flooding intensity. Additionally, rising sea levels are projected to affect 300 kilometers of the country's coastline, resulting in coastal erosion, infrastructure damage, and forced displacement of coastal communities. Timor-Leste has taken steps to enhance its resilience, including establishing disaster response agencies and developing climate change laws and plans. However, there remain challenges such as limited cross-sectoral budget allocation and data availability, as well as the need for better coordination among stakeholders for effective disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation efforts. Addressing these issues is imperative to safeguard the country's environmental sustainability and resilience.

Significant improvements are needed to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. The society continues to exhibit patriarchal tendencies, with women predominantly confined to traditional domestic roles. Economic and social empowerment opportunities for women are limited, resulting in a prevalence of informal employment and an increased risk of poverty. While there has been some progress in women's participation, leadership roles remain underrepresented. Despite a lack of recent data updates, gender-based violence is considered pervasive, and there is a need for further strengthening of social protection schemes. It is imperative to maintain ongoing investment and resource allocation to drive progress in achieving gender equality.

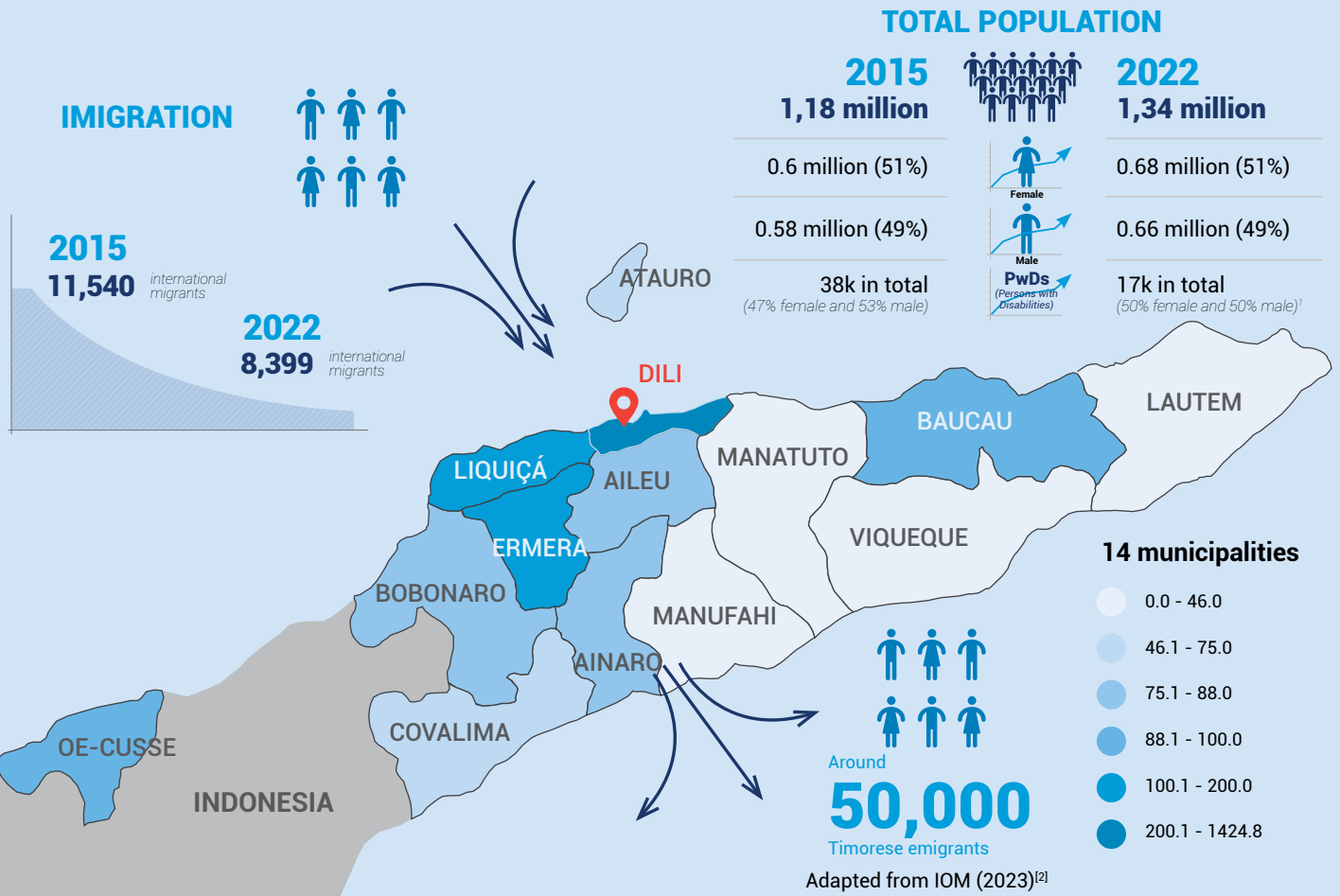
The country has recently established legal frameworks and policies for disability inclusion, including joining the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in January 2023. However, stigma persists, and implementation of plans is slow due to limited resources. Government services face challenges in various sectors, with accessibility issues and lack of training being prominent. The lack of reliable data on disabilities hinders effective programming. Gender, inequality, and limited participation of marginalized groups further affect progress. Women and girls with disabilities face heightened risks, and psychosocial and intellectual disabilities remain stigmatized. Participation of people with disabilities varies depending on location.

For youth in the country, the Government launched the Youth Action Plan in 2023, emphasizing education, employability, and entrepreneurship for youth development. The 2023 budget allocates US\$ 58 million, which is around 2.7% of the total budget, towards youth-related initiatives. However, challenges persist, encompassing resource gaps, insufficient vocational training opportunities, a scarcity of job openings, digital disparities, concerns regarding the quality of education, coordination difficulties, gender inequality, cultural barriers, and psychosocial hurdles. To address these challenges, several program implications have been identified, including strengthening institutions dedicated to skill development, expanding their capacity, and enhancing employability initiatives to equip young individuals with the skills needed for the job market.

CHAPTER 1



COUNTRY SITUATION UPDATE



Adapted from Timor-Leste National Institute of Statistics (INETL) (2023)^[1]

	2020	2021	2022	Trends
GDP per capita growth (annual %)	29.9%	3.6%	-18.7%	[3]
Non-oil GDP growth rate	-8.3%	2.9%	3.3 %	[4]
Government expenditure (% of GDP)	44.4 %	28.3%	Not Available	[5]
General Gov Gross Debt (% of GDP)	10.1%	6.5%	7.5 %	[6]
Trade Deficit	(-) US\$ 361.4 million	(-) US\$257.3 million	(-) US\$56.9 million	[7]

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

30.5%

(Female: 24.2%/Male: 36.9%) in 2021^[8]

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)

0.607

Ranking - remained as 140th between 2019- 2021^[9]

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

TOTAL

5.1%

(Female: 24.2%/Male: 36.9%) in 2021 ^[11]

LIFE EXPECTANCY 67.7 Years in 2021

PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY (IPC 3 or above)

430K (36%) ^[10] in 2018

¹ There was an adjustment in the census to count persons with disabilities. In 2015, the census counted people who answered "2. Some difficulty" to "4. Cannot do at all". In 2022, the criteria was then further refined to include only those who answered "3. A lot of difficulty" to "4. Cannot do at all", as guided by Washington Group on Disability Statistics.^[12]

Updates on the summary of political shifts

Timor-Leste has actively been bolstering its regional partnerships, expressing its interest in becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) by the end of 2024 and full membership of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) by 2025. Notably, Timor-Leste participated in the ASEAN summit this September, marking its inaugural presence, a move expected to expedite its full accession into the ASEAN community. Membership in these organizations could potentially bring economic benefits, but it requires identifying and leveraging areas of comparative advantage and investing in human capital to meet the standards and requirements.

The country has continued to maintain peace and is moving towards an inclusive and consolidated democratic system, showcasing a stronghold of democratic freedom in the region. The presidential election in 2022 was held in two rounds, boasting an impressive voter turnout of 75.2% in the second round, with Jose Ramos Horta securing victory with 62.1% of the vote.^[13] Following the presidential election, the parliamentary election was held in May this year, running 17 diverse political parties, witnessing a peaceful transfer of power to the IX Constitutional Government. Xanana Gusmão, from the CNRT party, took office as head of the Government, reflecting a call for change. The high 78% voter turnout^[14] indicates strong citizen participation, with notable youth engagement emphasizing Timor-Leste's commitment to inclusive governance.

Improvements in electoral laws and the consolidation of democratic institutions have been pivotal to Timor-Leste's political progress. In February, Parliament amended the National Parliament Elections Law. Despite a presidential veto, Parliament confirmed and sent the amendment back for compulsory promulgation. The recent successful organization of the 2022 presidential election and the 2023 parliamentary election by the National Elections Commission (CNE) attests to its commitment to electoral integrity. The National Human Rights Institution (PDHJ) championed civil liberties, safeguarding citizens' rights, while the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) proactively combats corruption, bolstering accountability and transparency. These institutions underscore Timor-Leste's steadfast dedication to democratic ideals, playing a vital role in political stability and system advancement.

Since the political instability in 2006, Timor-Leste has maintained a commendably stable

and secure political environment. This stability is supported by several key factors: efforts to prevent politicization within the security forces, successful resolution of potential issues in the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL), a resilient democratic system with effective checks and balances, and a noticeable decrease in political violence in recent years, indicating the consolidation of peaceful political processes.

Updates on the summary of economic situation

Economic Growth: Timor-Leste's economy has faced challenges, including COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. After a period of negative growth, it is now in a mitigation phase and is expected to transition to moderate growth by 2024-2025. The country's economy continues to depend substantially on public sector spending.

Petroleum Revenue: The country heavily relies on petroleum revenue, with petroleum fund revenue contributing to about 75% of public sector spending in 2022. However, declining petroleum receipts and reserves pose fiscal sustainability challenges.

Public Debt: Timor-Leste's public debt is growing and is expected to reach about US\$ 330 million or 21% of GDP by 2023. The key point of comparison is between the cost of borrowing (average financial cost of 1.21%) and the return on the Petroleum Fund at an average of 4.28%. As long as borrowing costs are lower, the country is financially advantageous in this issue. However, future borrowing may reach a point where it is no longer cost-effective.

Exports and Trade: The country faces a trade deficit and is highly dependent on petroleum resources to finance it. Diversification of exports is crucial, with coffee currently dominating, but other commodities show growth potential.

Agriculture: Agriculture is the backbone of the non-oil economy, employing a significant portion of the population. However, it faces challenges related to low productivity, limited technology adoption, and competitiveness.

Infrastructure: Timor-Leste has made significant infrastructure improvements, enhancing accessibility and connectivity. These

developments, including the Tibar Bay Port, are vital for economic growth and trade. Over the next few years, the country is expected to make headway in setting up digital infrastructure, extending the submarine fiber optic cable.

Employment: The labor force participation rate in Timor-Leste was 30.5% in 2021, which is relatively low. There is a gender imbalance, with females participating much less (24.2%) than males (36.9%). The lack of diversification in the economy reduces job opportunities, while a high fertility rate and rising enrollment rates in secondary schools increase the demand for care and domestic work.

Private Sector: The private sector faces hurdles related to access to finance and a challenging business environment. Streamlining regulations and improving transparency are necessary to foster private sector development. Timor-Leste's aspirations to join the WTO and ASEAN offer potential economic benefits but require strategic investments in human capital and the development of the country's comparative advantage in selected areas.

Program of the IX Constitutional Government: The Government has a clear five-year vision, focusing on fostering economic growth in vital sectors like agriculture and tourism, while attracting domestic and foreign investments. Human capital development is a key priority along with developing accessible infrastructure. These goals align with the 2024 General State Budget (GSB)'s strategic focus on economic growth, education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, and responsible resource management.

Review of recommendations from Human Rights Obligations and Reporting (CEDAW, UPR, CRC, etc.). If any, changes in development, human rights and peacebuilding contexts that need further interrogation.

In 2021, Timor-Leste submitted its fourth report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In May 2023, the Committee reviewed the submission and issued its concluding observations, commending the State's efforts in advancing equality for women and girls. It referenced the adoption of the latest national action plan as an example of progress in this area. However, the Committee also expressed concern over the high rates of domestic violence in the country, despite national efforts to reduce them.

In 2022, Timor-Leste submitted its fourth periodic report to the Committee on the Rights

of the Child. Due to the backlog of reports to be considered in view of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a date has not yet been set for the review. Timor-Leste continues to be significantly delayed in its reporting obligations to other treaty committees, and there is still no mechanism in place to systematically report and follow up on the implementation of various recommendations.

In January 2022, Timor-Leste's human rights record was examined for the third time by the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. Throughout the interactive dialogue, 81 delegations participated, and 194 recommendations were made on a broad range of human rights issues. Timor-Leste's first and second UPR reviews took place in 2011 and 2016. In June, Timor-Leste confirmed the acceptance of 186 recommendations and took note of eight recommendations. Noted recommendations included raising the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls from 17 to 18 years old, recognizing same-sex marriage, and decriminalizing abortion, including in cases of rape, incest, and severe malformation of the fetus. One of the recommendations most widely supported during the UPR, and accepted by the Government, was the accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Timor-Leste finally became a member in January 2023.

In 2022, Timor-Leste announced that it was running for membership of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026. However, in May 2023, the Government decided by Resolution 61/2021 (12 May) to suspend this decision, justifying it with the need to align the country's position with the ASEAN decision, which endorsed the Republic of Indonesia as the organization's only candidate for the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026. The resolution also stated that the country's candidacy is suspended only until the election of the Human Rights Council for the period 2027-2029. Even though Timor-Leste is not a full ASEAN member yet, on 11 November 2022, during its annual summit taking place this year in Cambodia, ASEAN made a public statement informing that its members had reached an agreement in principle to integrate Timor-Leste into the regional organization as its 11th member. ■

CHAPTER 2



**SUMMARY
UPDATES**

OUTCOME AREA 1

Nutrition, Food Security And Sustainable Agriculture



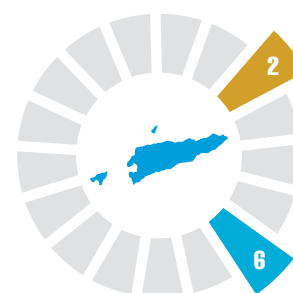
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Note: SDG colour-coding

Outcome 1: By 2025, Nutrition, Food Security And Agricultural Productivity Have Improved For All, Irrespective Of The Individual Ability, Gender, Age, Socio-economic Status And Geographical Location.

- ↑ Progressing
- To Accelerate
- ↓ Regressing
- To Be Updated



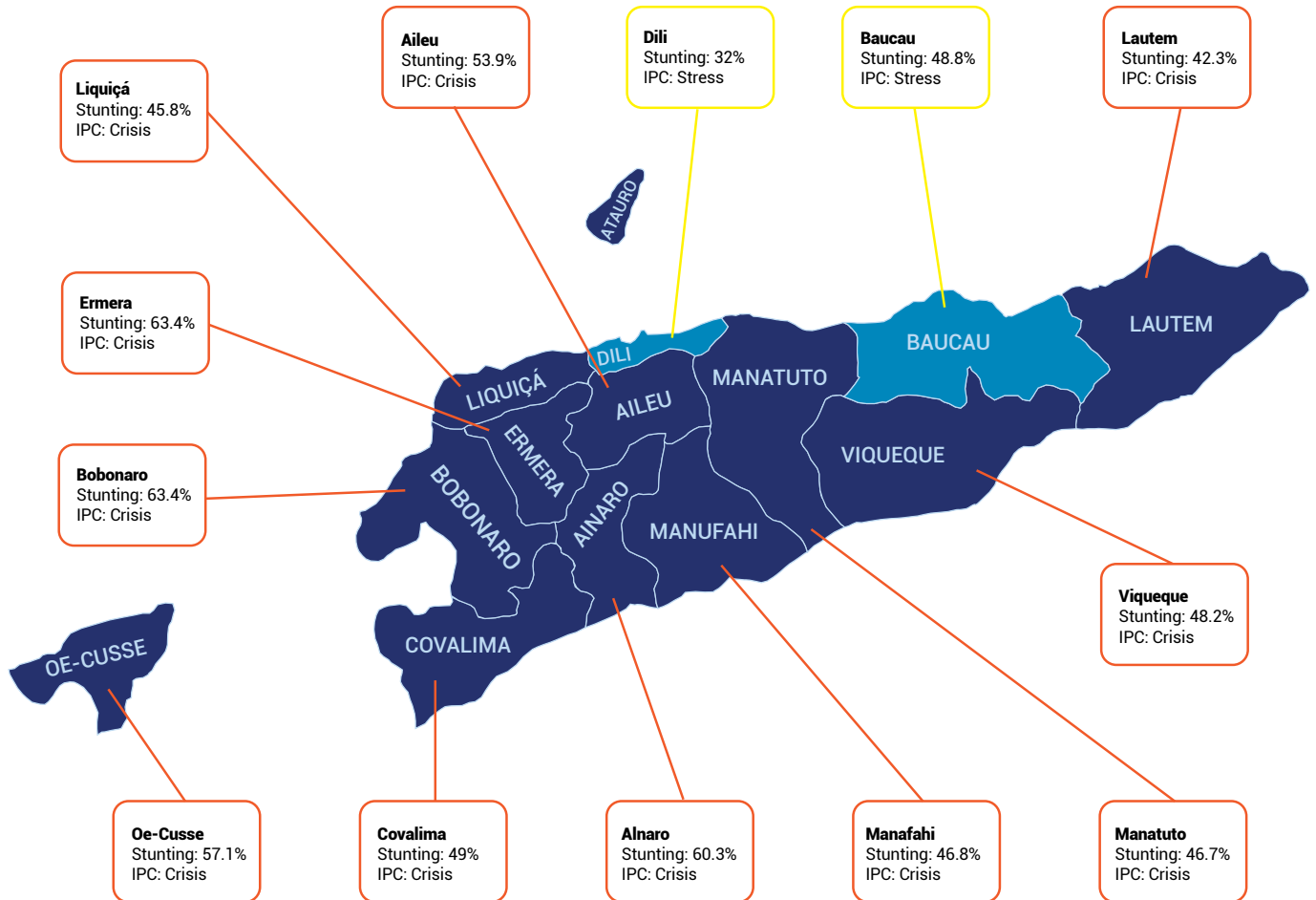
I. Developmental challenges at a glance

SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point	Data Year	Progress	
2 ZERO HUNGER	2.1.1	Prevalence of undernourishment	22.3%	2021 ^[15]	↓	
	2.1.2	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	●			
	2.2.1	Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age	45%	2022 ^[16]	↓	
	2.3.1	Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size	●			
	2.3.2	Average annual income from agriculture, PPP (constant 2017 USD)	●			
2.4.1	Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture					
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	6.1.1	Proportion of households using safely managed drinking water	At least basic service:		2020 ^[17]	↑
			Total	85%		
			Urban	96%		
			Rural	80%		

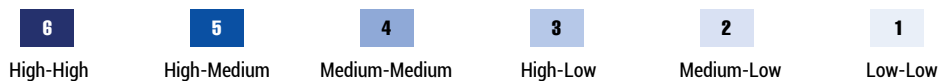
II. Situation Update

Food insecurity and malnutrition persist as Timor-Leste's most pressing challenges, exerting a significant impact on both economic growth and human capital development. Despite some progress made in addressing malnutrition since 2010, the available data indicates that the country still ranks among the highest in the world. As of 2020, progress remains slow, with elevated levels of food insecurity (36% chronic and 22% acute), alarming rates of stunting (47%) and significant wasting rates (8.6%) observed among children under five years of age. Coupled with high incidences of anemia and under-nutrition among women of reproductive age, Timor-Leste faces significant challenges in achieving SDG 2 by 2030.

Stunting prevalence and food insecurity



Combinations of Stunting and IPC classifications/ratings:



Source: See^[18] in the References. Updated as of 2018. Note: The map overlaps levels of stunting and food insecurity by municipality, with stunting prevalence below 10% classified as "low", between 11 and 30% classified as "medium", above 30% classified as "high". Food insecurity levels reflect IPC classifications: people in food security ("low"), people stressed ("medium") and people in crisis ("high").

Regarding climate outlooks during the main maize and rice planting period and the early growing season in the country, meteorological forecasts anticipate a high probability of below-average rainfall until October 2023, with reduced precipitation likely to continue in the following months in Timor-Leste.^[19] This is associated with the ongoing El Niño, the warm phase of the Pacific Ocean's temperature cycle, which typically lasts for 9 to 12 months but can sometimes extend for several years. It is forecasted to reach its peak in strength at a moderate-to-strong intensity from November

2023 to January 2024 and remain active until February to April 2024.^[20] Soil moisture conditions already indicate levels below the average, and the expected persistence of dry conditions is expected to have a severely negative impact on the agricultural sector.^[21]

Most households in the country are engaged in crop production. Approximately 79.6% of private households in Timor-Leste are involved in crop production, focusing on crops such as maize, rice, cassava, and vegetables. In rural areas, this figure increases to 94.8%.^[22]

Opportunities



The IX Constitutional Government has unveiled its initial priorities, placing strong emphasis on the first 120 days and a one-year plan, with a particular focus on food security and nutrition. This is seen as an opportune moment to reach potential beneficiaries.



Timor-Leste boasts a highly supportive policy environment, showcasing the commitment of the Government, partners, donors, and other stakeholders.

Risks



Between 262,000 and 300,000 people (over 20% of the population) are facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) due to the global food price crisis triggered by the Russo-Ukraine conflict, the floods from 2021 to 2023, El Niño, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.^[23]



There is a high dependency on food imports, along with increasing food prices in exporting countries. Timor-Leste relies heavily on food imports, with an estimated 60% of its food consumption needs being met by imports.^[24] Rice, a crucial staple in the country, also serves as the primary source of caloric intake for the

majority. In 2023, rice prices, which are largely imported, surged due to increasing export quotations, reaching record highs globally. The Russo-Ukraine conflict led to spikes in prices for other grains, making rice an attractive alternative and driving up demand. Production shortfalls in key exporting countries further limited global availability. This, along with heightened demand, exerted upward pressure on international rice prices, significantly impacting Timor-Leste, which was already grappling with high food costs. The cost of food in Timor-Leste has surged in recent years. The 2023 Cost of the Diet analysis reveals a stark increase - from an average monthly cost of about US\$ 170 in 2019 to over US\$ 300, now more than double the minimum wage.^[25]



The impact of El Niño and the increase in the Cost of Diet directly affects nutrition indicators, such as the minimum acceptable diet for children (aged 6-59 months) and for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Similarly, it elevates the risk of stunting and wasting, which can further hinder human capital development.



Inadequate food control mechanisms, coupled with a high dependency on food imports, increase the risk of foodborne diseases that can further exacerbate the malnutrition crisis in the country.

Key messages



Invest at scale in resources and coordinated efforts to operationalize the consolidated plan of action for nutrition and food security (CNAP-NFS) to address food insecurity and malnutrition.



Implement and enforce laws and approve draft laws in the pipeline, including the Food Fortification decree-law, and Breast-Milk Substitutes (BMS) code. Develop and endorse a 'National Food Law' encompassing food safety regulations and related inter-ministerial responsibilities.



Empower families and communities for nutrition and care behavior. Promote community networks for social behavior change, ensuring that families have sufficient knowledge about nutritious food and change their practices accordingly.



Streamline Nutrition Information Systems. Ensure regular use of available data and institutionalize routine program monitoring, focusing on monitoring coverage under high-impact nutrition interventions.



Institutionalize policies for the promotion of healthy diets and regulation of marketing of unhealthy food products, especially foods high in salt, sugar, or trans-fats.



Invest in pre-service learning on nutrition and food systems, by integrating updated information on these subjects into pre-service curricula for courses on dietetics, nursing, and medicine.



Strengthen and expand school feeding programs to support the nutrition and food security of households. Invest adequately in Merenda Escolar to improve human capital development.



Monitor and provide early warnings for food security. Agree on common datasets with National Government and Municipality Authorities. Implement regular monitoring of key indicators. Initiate community sensitization and Communication with Communities (CwC) plan. Establish community-based feedback mechanisms. Assess market functionality and retailer capacities. Refine food security targeting criteria. Develop trigger criteria for action. Strengthen linkages with safety nets. Review national food stock and capacities.



For preparedness and readiness, begin large-scale procurement of rice and alternative cereals. Preposition food and non-food items in high-risk Municipalities. Cascade early warning dissemination. Target and pre-register vulnerable households based on monitoring and IPC analysis. Initiate an appeal process if drought is declared.



Active and well-coordinated responses are crucial when trigger thresholds are exceeded.



Medium to Long-term Actions need to be ensured, including the establishment of a national Strategic Grain Reserve. Invest in resilient food systems and value chains, and explore drought and climate-resistant crops.

OUTCOME AREA 2

Sustainable Economic Opportunities
And Decent Work For All

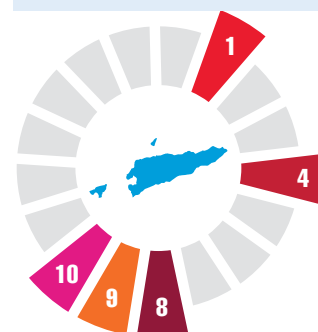


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Note: SDG colour-coding

- ↑ Progressing
- To Accelerate
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- To Be Updated



Outcome 2: By 2025, Institutions And People Throughout Timor-leste In All Their Diversity, Especially Women And Youth, Benefit From Sustainable Economic Opportunities And Decent Work To Reduce Poverty.

I. Developmental challenges at a glance

SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point	Data Year	Progress	
1 NO POVERTY	1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/ systems	At least one social protection benefit	30.6%	2020 ^[26]	→
			> Pension	100%		
			> Persons with severe disabilities collecting disability social protection benefits	21.6%		
			> Unemployed receiving unemployment benefits	0%		
			> Employed covered in the event of work injury	31.3%		
			> Children/HHs receiving child/family cash benefits	38.2%		
			> Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	26.5%		
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	4.4.1	Percentage of youth/adults with ICT skills by sex and type of skill	●			
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	8.2.1	Annual growth rate of real non-oil GDP	2.9%	2021 ^[27]	↓	
	8.3.1	Proportion of informal employment in total employment	Both sex	77.3%	2021 ^[26]	↓
			Female	80.4%		
			Male	75.3%		
			By economic activity:			
			Agriculture, forestry and fishery	95.3%		
	8.5.1	Average hourly earnings of employees (US\$)	Both sex	2.7	2021 ^[26]	↓
			Female	3		
			Male	2.6		
	8.5.2	Unemployment rate, by sex, age group and persons with disabilities	Both sex	5.1%	2021 ^[26]	↓
			Female	5.9%		
			Male	4.6%		
			With any disability	19.6%		
Female			3.1%			
Male			27.8%			
If aged 15-24: both sex:			9.6%			
8.6.1	Percentage of youth (aged 15–24) not in education, employment or training	Both sex	30.5%	2021 ^[26]	↓	
		Female	31.5%			
		Male	29.8%			
9 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9.2.2	Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment (%)	Both sex:	5.6%	2021 ^[26]	→
	9.3.2	Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit	●			
10 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	10.4.1	Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers	37.4%	2020 ^[28]	→	



II. Situation Update

Despite the remarkable progress made since independence, achieved through the investment of oil revenue, restructuring public infrastructure, and government facilities, as well as enhancing the provision of services to its citizens, gaps do persist to this day.

Timor-Leste faces a shortage of recent data on poverty, as the most recent available information dates back to 2016, which indicates that 45.9 percent of the population experiences multidimensional poverty, reflecting very high levels of impoverishment.^[29] Poverty is associated with a lack of income and various limitations related to access to food, water, sanitation, social protection, education, skills, healthcare, discrimination, and decent work. These issues can often be intertwined with institutional and social discrimination.

In terms of human development, reflecting the country's progress in social and economic dimensions, Timor-Leste's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking has improved. Between 2000 and 2021, the country's HDI value increased slightly from 0.484 to 0.607. This places the country in the medium human development category, ranking it at 140 out of 189 countries and territories.

After the COVID-19 crisis and since 2022, the economy continued its recovery, with the gross domestic product (GDP) expected to grow by 3.9 percent in 2022, primarily due to an increase in public and private investment. Government spending in 2022 reached the highest level in the history of the country at US \$1.74 billion, including expenditure from the Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno (RAEOA).^[30] However, private consumption growth remained low. Labor force participation remains a challenge because the private sector is not creating enough new jobs and responding to the market's needs. The economy is projected to grow 2.4 percent in 2023 and positive growth is expected in the medium term (2025-2027).^{[31][32]}

Recent inflation rates in Timor-Leste have been relatively high, following the global trends. Overall CPI inflation reached 7% in 2022 and has remained at or above this level so far in 2023.^[33] International food prices and oil prices remain the most important drivers of inflation.

The most updated labor market information, based on the 2021 Labour Force Survey, highlights several challenges. The working-age population (aged 15 years and above) in 2021 was 809,300 (405,800 women and 403,600 men). However, only about 30.5% of the working-age population participated in the labor market (meaning they had or were looking for jobs). Of this number, nearly 95% (234,300 people) were employed (92,300 women and 142,000 men). More than half of employment is in the services sector (59.1% of total employment), followed by Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery, representing 26.9% of total employment, and Industry with 13.5%. A gender pay gap persists, with women (US\$240) earning on average around 6.6% less than men (US\$257).

On the other hand, the unemployment rate was 5.1%, with a female unemployment rate of 5.9%. The unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 years was 9.6%, which was relatively higher compared to adults aged 25-64, whose unemployment was 4.7%.

Furthermore, around one-third of youth (30.5%) are not in education, employment, or training. The low level of educational attainment of those employed raises concerns about building the necessary human capital for economic growth. Almost one-third (30.7%) of youth had no formal education or had not completed primary schooling.

In Timor-Leste, informal employment in 2021 accounted for 77.3% of all employment, which was higher for working women (80.4%) compared to working men (75.3%). Of total employment, 67.2% of women are own-account workers (self-employed) or contributing family workers (48% own account, 19.2% contributing family worker). This compares with 39.3% of

men (26.6% and 12.7%). Both kinds of work are considered vulnerable employment due to difficulties in regulating employment standards and the high risk of exploitation. Women perform contributing family labor throughout their lives, whereas men largely do so as youth, and to a lesser degree in old age.

It's important to note that the jobs created are predominantly in the public sector, and economic growth has been largely driven by public expenditure, financed by petroleum revenue. However, the Petroleum Fund may be depleted by 2034, highlighting the urgent need for economic diversification and fiscal consolidation. As the largest share of the economy outside the public sector, the agriculture sector has the potential to create jobs, enhance productivity levels, and create sustainable socioeconomic opportunities for farmers and their households.

The private sector remains weak in Timor-Leste and has not generated sufficient jobs or driven new areas of growth. While engaging the private sector is key to closing the gap in financing the SDGs, private finance does not play a significant role in the country's economy. A lack of reliable data on local and foreign investment flows and a poor business and regulatory environment, coupled with limited access to financial credit, are the major obstacles to private sector growth. The 2022 National Central Bank (BCTL) Annual Report showed that there was a 33 percent increase in credit granted by banks to the private sector from US\$271.9 million in 2021 to US\$361.7 million in 2022. However, the sectoral analysis revealed that the loan taken was mostly in the construction and transportation sectors with respective amounts of US\$65.8 million and US\$48.2 million while in the productive sectors like agriculture, water, and forestry, there was a decline from US\$1.5 million to US\$1.9 million. This data indicates the barriers to rural agricultural communities and enterprises in accessing credit. Banks remain reluctant to lend to businesses due to collateral issues related to the underdeveloped regulation of land registries, in which the land is considered as a common asset for rural communities. Moreover, the lack of legal certainty and unclear procedure to enforce the contracts in the courts and most businesses

not having financial statements further hamper the banks to expand credit access to the private sector (IMF, 2022). In November 2021, BCTL introduced a requirement for all banks to gradually increase their share of loans to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) or their loan-to-deposit ratio (LDR) to a minimum of 35 percent by December 2023. However, the underlying structural issues related to credit access such as collateral, land registration, legal actions, and financial literacy must also be addressed in parallel.

The accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), represents an opportunity for this country to accelerate important and necessary reforms and may bring notable benefits to the economy and increase the country's access to international markets. However, fully availing of these memberships will require proper identification of products and services where Timor-Leste has a comparative advantage. Further investment in the country's human capital will be vital to ensure that the necessary skills, knowledge, and technology are acquired to compete in these markets.

Achieving the SDGs by 2030 requires annual investments across sectors and industries. The country needs to diversify the economy and channel available domestic and international finances to achieve sustainable economic growth and continue gains in poverty reduction. Diversification of the non-oil economy, while expanding the productive sectors (including sustainable agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, etc.), is key to mitigating the country's dependency on the petroleum sector.

At the policy level, regulatory and planning frameworks have been agreed upon and are being implemented for private sector development, employment, skills development, and social protection. The Timor-Leste IX Government program refers to the acquisition of more and better qualifications by youth and to promoting their access to more and better employment, personal, and professional development opportunities, as well as to decent work conditions, including social protection throughout the life cycle. Other specific policy frameworks include, (i) the National



Qualifications Framework (2010), (ii) the National Education Strategic Plan (2011-2030), (iii) the National Employment Strategy (NES, 2017-2030), (iv) the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Plan (2011-2030), (v) the Policy and Strategy for Private Sector Development (approved in 2022), and (vi) the National Strategy for Social Protection (2011-2030), approved in 2021. Youth National Action Plan 2022-2026 considers “youth as the key actors and resources for the development in social, economic and technological areas”. In this regard, the Government aims to promote the spirit of volunteerism among young people, mobilize youth in municipalities for community service as well as establish a youth national volunteer scheme for skills development and civic engagement to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, one could state that the labor code in Timor-Leste shows commitment to tripartism and collective bargaining while the country has ratified some of the fundamental international

labor conventions (C29, C87, C98, C100, C1381, and C182 dealing with the worst forms of child labor).

Despite the existence of programmatic frameworks, gaps remain in implementation, coordination, monitoring, and budgetary commitment. For instance, skills development programs and labor market policies still have limited outreach and effectiveness and overall are executed in an environment characterized by low demand for labor and productivity. In addition, linkages between labor market policies and social protection policies are weak and not fully coordinated. A third of the population covered by at least one benefit of social protection prevents workers and citizens from having access to social protection throughout their life. On a parallel note, conditions to promote employment and enterprise creation, such as business registration, business regulations, and effective access to finance, are not fully in place.

Opportunities



Investment in human capital, considering the high proportion of the youth population in the country, remains a fundamental precondition for future growth, competitiveness, and diversification of the Timorese economy, as acknowledged by the new president. With experience and a track record on policy and institutional frameworks for decent work, business environment, and skills development, UNCT is well positioned to address the challenges of human capital development holistically. In addition, UNCT supported the development of legal and policy frameworks on social protection and will continue playing a role in further development of social policies.



Promoting diversification of the country's economy through private sector-led growth. In addressing this challenge, UNCT can work in synergy with the Government, development partners, private sector, and civil society to promote favorable business environments, access to finance, encourage innovation, while supporting the development of policy

and institutional frameworks. In particular, the UNCT's work on the normative aspects of regulation, institutional capacity, as well as hands-on support to entrepreneurs, including among youth and women, presents an important opportunity for joint programming.



The growing depth of commitment displayed by the global Timorese community through the strengthening of their remittance flows to Timor-Leste pinpoint diaspora finance as a priority area of developmental importance for the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) to meet the challenges and opportunities emerging. Timor-Leste Remittance Mobilization Strategy sets out a clear process through which the GoTL can begin to embed diaspora finance as a key contributor to the socio-economic well-being of Timor-Leste.



Increasing the effectiveness of Government spending. Considering the existing and future budgetary constraints, this is an area that will

receive significant attention over the next few years. The UN, under the framework of results group two, can operate at different levels, advising on social, education, and labor market policies expenditures.



Advising on trade facilitation and supporting the Government to develop relevant policy frameworks. The ongoing negotiations on Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN and WTO represent a priority policy area. The UNCT has a significant opportunity to use its role as a convener of various stakeholders to analyze and discuss implications on integration.

Continuation of support to develop legislative framework and its implementation. The UN is supporting the Government in developing the legal and policy frameworks for several areas, including, for instance, child labor and social protection. However, capacity gaps in policy making and implementation persist, and the quality standard required for Government systems to operate efficiently and effectively are not yet fully warranted. UN technical assistance and financial support can be targeted to address those.

Challenges:



Continuity. The government aims to ensure the uninterrupted operation of UN programmes and assistance. This will be achieved by maintaining adequate capacities at both the ministerial and public sector levels and managing staff turnover along aligned programming cycles. This is particularly crucial for initiatives addressing pressing issues like youth employment, social protection, MSMEs financing, and economic diversification.



Resources. Limited domestic resources, both in terms of the state budget and among the public, coupled with an underdeveloped private sector and low levels of foreign direct investment, present a significant obstacle not

only to implementation but also to capacity development.



Systemic gaps impacting the implementation of UN programmes and projects. There are broader challenges affecting the entire country and UN efforts in specific areas, including:

- Increased natural hazardous events like floods, typhoons, and diseases.
- An unclear legal framework for land management.
- Very limited monitoring and evaluation of social protection, education, and labor market policies.

Key messages



Promote economic diversification through targeted investments in export-oriented industries like agriculture, agroforestry, sustainably harvested fisheries, fish processing, and tourism for a sustainable Timor-Leste economy.



Focus on better implementation and monitoring of the existing labor and social protection policies and programs.



There is a need to strengthen delivery systems, such as the beneficiaries' single registry and digital payment systems.



Prioritize risk reduction and financial preparedness strategies for agricultural and infrastructure resilience.



Implement reforms for rural development, access to financial services, land legislation, infrastructure, and digital advancement.

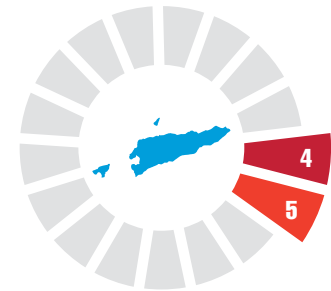


Embrace a low-carbon development path for enhanced natural capital and resilience.



Note: SDG colour-coding

Outcome 3: By 2025, All People Of Timor-leste, Regardless Of Gender Identity, Abilities, Geographic Location And Particular Vulnerabilities, Have Increased Access To Quality Formal And Innovative Learning Pathways (from Early Childhood Through Life-long Learning) And Acquire Foundational, Transferable, Digital And Job-specific Skills)



I. Developmental challenges at a glance

SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point	Data Year	Progress	
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	4.2.1	Proportion of children aged 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex	●			
	4.2.2	Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	Both sex	60.1%	2020 ^[34]	↓
			Female	62.8%		
			Male	52.5%		
	4.3.1	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex	Both sex	24.5 %	2021 ^[35]	↓
			Female	23.8%		
			Male	25.2%		
	4.6.1	Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex	Available for Literacy rate, adult (aged 15+) only			→
			Total	70%	2022 ^[36]	
			Female	67%		
Male			73%			
4.a.1	Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic hand washing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)	Available for (a) Schools with access to electricity		2019 ^[37]	→	
		Upper secondary	78.7%			
		Lower secondary	84.2%			
		Primary	84.2%			
		(e) Schools with access to basic drinking water				
		Primary	68.1%			
Lower secondary	68.1%					
Upper secondary	64.5%					
4.c.1	Proportion of teachers in: (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country	●				
5 GENDER EQUALITY	5.3.1	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18				

At the policy level, a significant milestone has been achieved in early childhood development and lifelong learning outcomes and skills. The President of Timor-Leste declared preschool education as one of his key presidential priorities, resulting in a 230% increase in the government budget for preschool education in 2023 compared to the 2022 budget. In 2022,

Timor-Leste signed and submitted a Letter of Engagement to the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), committing to participate in the 2024 round of the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM). This marks the first nationally representative learning assessment ever conducted in Timor-Leste and represents a critical moment in improving learning

OUTCOME AREA 3

Early Childhood Development
And Life-long Learning Outcomes
And Skills



UNITED NATIONS
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COUNTRY
ANALYSIS

policies. Additionally, in 2022, Timor-Leste made a Statement of Commitment at the Transforming Education Summit, taking a significant step towards enhancing education and mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity, and solutions to address COVID-19 pandemic-related learning losses and transform education.

Access to education has shown mixed progress. The primary net enrolment rate was 87.2% in 2021 (girls: 91.90%, boys: 82.98%)^[38], compared to the previously reported rate of 64% in 2005. However, children with disabilities are still largely excluded from the education system. The preschool enrolment rate has been slow, with only 27%, significantly below the national target of 50% to be achieved by 2024 and the 80% set in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). This may be attributed largely to the scarcity of preschools in rural areas and a low awareness among parents regarding the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education as a foundation for school readiness.

For school attendance, it is estimated that about 45.4% of the total school-going population in the age group between 3 and 29 years old are currently not in school.^[39] Of them, only about one in five children in the pre-primary ages are attending school. High levels of grade repetition continue, including in early grades of cycle 1 (EMIS 2020 shows Grade 1 repetition rate is 19%) and early drop-out (4.2 % in cycle 1 according to EMIS 2020). For preschool attendance, disparities remain among municipalities. Some regions, such as Ermera and Manufahi, have seen impressive growth although the overall enrolment rates remain lower than the national average in these municipalities, while municipalities with large populations, such as Dili and Baucau, lag behind with less than 20% of children enrolled.^[40]

The national average of student to teacher ratio has improved to be 27 in 2021 from 29 in 2015,

but when disaggregating it by school level, preschool (35 in 2021, 31 in 2015) and secondary school (29 in 2021, 25 in 2015) has increased its pupil-to-teacher ratio, suggesting increases in class size or a decrease in the number of teachers, which could negatively impact the quality of education.^[41]

Many teachers do not have pedagogical training even though they may have a Bachelarato and many teachers acquired their qualifications through equivalency programmes. Many schools still do not have access to safe drinking water or gender disaggregated toilet facilities and several schools do not have access to electricity. Violence is still highly prevalent in schools, and teachers are not familiar with student-centered positive discipline approaches.^[42]

As of 2020, the combined dropout rate for primary and pre-secondary levels was 3.5% at the national level, 2.99% for girls and 3.99% for boys. Dropout rate was highest in Liquica (5.4%) and lowest in Dili (1.8%).^[43]

While literacy rate for individuals aged 10 and over is 72.4% in 2022, a substantial improvement from 67.3% in 2015, there are still regional disparities in literacy rates. Dili, the capital, holds the highest literacy rate at 89.6% for those aged 10 and over, which is considerably higher than in Oecusse (56.7%), which shows the lowest rate in the municipalities.^[44] On ICT and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), internet users in the country have increased from 28 % in 2019 to 39.5 % in 2021.^[45] While it is still relatively low compared to the regional average of 72% in 2021^[45], the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has been active in improving the ICT and STEAM education for Timorese, such as the first online learning platform - Learning Passport - developed with Microsoft to deliver a distance learning programme.

Opportunities

- The Government has been showing strong willingness in improving early childhood development and life-long learning outcomes and skills, making progress in regional partnerships and showing commitments through the Transforming Education Summit, SEAMEO, and SEA-PLM.
- The President of Timor-Leste declared preschool education as one of his key

- Presidential priorities and has led to a 230% increase in the original Government budget in 2023 for preschool education, compared to the budget in 2022. The Government allocation for education, including higher education and technical education, in 2023 is around 7% of the national budget.^[48]
- Local education partner group (ACETYL) has been active, conducting regular meetings.

Challenges



While preschool education is not compulsory by law in the country, municipalities are responsible for the preschool financing and implementation, which needs an improved guidance on preschool standards.^[46] A high level of absenteeism deteriorates school readiness, which is related to a high level of grade repetition and early drop out. High grade repetition and dropout are both a cause and outcome of system inefficiencies. There is a severe shortage of qualified teachers and trainers especially in rural areas for preschools, mainly because of lack of formal training. Plus, there's a scarcity of training opportunities for educating children with disabilities, denying these children access to educators equipped to meet their needs. This is coupled with a lack of necessary teaching and learning materials.



Language barriers can also pose challenges to delivering effective education and improving literacy. In many municipalities, the mother tongue is not Tetum, while at schools, children need to learn Tetum and Portuguese. In Oecusse (RAOEA) for example, most people speak Baiqueno rather than Tetum.^[47]



At a systemic level, it is unclear whether the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) is being used to identify annual priorities such as the IXth Government's priorities for education, and whether these are based on evidence. There is no systematic tracking of progress against ESP or SDG targets. An M&E framework for monitoring progress seems lacking. Timor-Leste's commitments at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022 need to be followed up.



The policy on decentralization for improving school quality is still not implemented fully and roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders are still unclear.



Allocation of the education budget is still well below the international benchmark of 15 – 20 % of public expenditure on education. Around 8% of the public expenditure was allocated to the education sector, according to the approved allocation for public administration sector expenditure of the IX Constitutional Government.^[48]



For life-long learning, there is an absence of a policy on re-entry to schools. Ratio of basic schools to secondary schools in 2021 is 8:1 nationally - lowest in Dili 3:1, which is ideal, and 12:1 in Covalima, which is the worst-case scenario - reducing access to secondary education and life-long learning.^[49] The curriculum is non-contextualized (e.g., an elevated level of Mathematics for children pursuing agriculture at the secondary level, lack of Timorese history content for history education). 'Learning while working' opportunities are limited. There is a need for a more distant mode of learning, with adequate centers to facilitate such learning, as this can help bridge the gap in lifelong learning.



Drop-out of students between 11th and 12th grades for reasons of a) early pregnancies; b) difficulty in pursuing education due to poverty, need to support family, taking up temporary jobs; c) moving to Dili in search of jobs or to pursue other studies.

Key messages



Follow-up on the implementation of the commitments made at the Transforming Education Summit.



A targeted National Youth Employment Strategy should be developed to improve access to quality education. (Sanghwa checking with UNESCO)



Conduct a joint sector review to assess progress made on the Education Sector Plan and adjust planning and strategies accordingly.



Finalize and adopt a re-entry policy to enable pregnant girls/young mothers to return to school, and integrate comprehensive sexuality education into the school curriculum to prevent early pregnancies.



Invest in improved transition management and knowledge management to mitigate the negative

impact of frequent staff turnover and/or changes in government.



Prioritize teacher certification and upskilling, curriculum review and content development, and ensure learning materials (books and other materials) are accessible to all students. A national plan, along with budget allocations for execution, will be necessary.



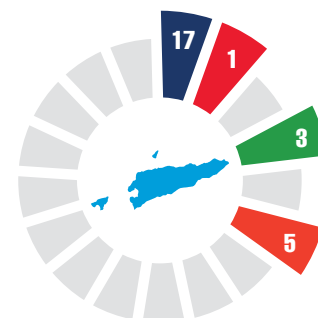
Explore the establishment of rural libraries, book banks, and similar initiatives to reduce initial investment costs. Digital learning platforms utilizing newer technologies like LiFi can facilitate a leap to the next level of learning and development.



Recognize the importance of digitalization in accelerating the development process. The government, through the newly established public institution TIC Timor, has drafted the national strategic plan for digital and ICT development, Timor Digital 2032.

Note: SDG colour-coding

Outcome 4: By 2025, The People Of Timor-
leste Increasingly Demand And Have Access
To Gender-responsive Equitable, High-quality,
Resilient And Inclusive Primary Health Care
And Strengthened Social Protection, Including
In Time Of Emergencies.



I. Developmental challenges at a glance

SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent data Point	Data Year	Progress	
1 NO POVERTY	1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/ systems	At least one social protection benefit	30.6%	2020 ^[50]	→
			> Pension	100%		
			> Persons with severe disabilities collecting disability social protection benefits	21.6%		
			> Unemployed receiving unemployment benefits	0%		
			> Employed covered in the event of work injury	31.3%		
			> Children/HHs receiving child/family cash benefits	38.2%		
		> Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	26.5%			
SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point	Data Year	Progress	
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	3.1.1	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 Live Births (LB))	204 (2020)	2020 ^[51]	→	
	3.1.2	Proportion of births attended by Skilled health personnel	●			
	3.2.1	Under-five mortality, Deaths per 1,000 live births	Total	50.5	2021 ^[52]	→
			Female	46.2		
	Male	54.6				
	3.2.2	Neonatal mortality rate, Deaths per 1000 LB	22.2	2021 ^[52]	→	
	3.3.1	No. of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population	Both sexes	0.08 (0.05-0.11)	2021 ^[53]	↑
			Female	0.07 (0.05-0.1)		
			Male	0.09 (0.05-0.12)		
	3.3.2	TB incidence (Rate per 100 000 population)	486 (322-684) ²	2021 ^[54]	→	
	3.3.3	Malaria incident cases per 1000/yr	0	2020 ^[55]	↑	
	3.3.4	Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) prevalence among children under 5 years	0.72 (0.55-0.93)	2021 ^[56]	↑	
	3.3.5	No. of people requiring intervention against NTDs	464, 413	2021 ^[57]	→	
	3.4.1	Probability of dying between the exact ages 30 and 70 years from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases	Both sexes	19.95 (11.25-30.28)	2019 ^[58]	→
			Female	18.41 (10.96-27.21)		
			Male	21.49 (11.56-33.28)		
	3.4.2	Age standardized suicide mortality rate per 100,000 population	3.69	2019 ^[59]	→	
3.7.2	Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 and aged 15-19) per 1000 women in that age group	●				
3.8.1	Universal Health Coverage (UHC) service coverage index	52	2021 ^[60]	→		
5.6.1	Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total HH expenditure or income	●				
3.b.3	Proportion of health facilities that have a core set of relevant essential medicines available and affordable on a sustainable basis	●				
5 GENDER EQUALITY	5.6.1	Proportion of married women aged 15-49 who currently use modern contraceptive methods				
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	17.19.2	Proportion of countries that(a) have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years and (b) have achieved 100 percent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration	(a) Yes	2022 ^[61]	●	
			(b) No			

² Estimates of TB burden are produced by WHO in consultation with countries. Ranges represent uncertainty intervals.



II. Situation Update

Since the last CCA in 2019, the world – and Timor-Leste – were hit by the worst health crisis in a century. Following the COVID-19 outbreak and declaration of a public health emergency in 2019, there has been a significant impact on the country's health system. Timor-Leste has recorded 22,951 cases of COVID-19 and 133 deaths as of June 26, 2022. Most public health services, especially primary healthcare services like ANC, immunization, screening, primary treatment, and referral, faced a significant downturn. The summary of disruptions to health services in the country, as recorded by the four rounds of the Pulse survey (countrywide surveys of the effect of COVID-19 on essential health services conducted by WHO across all Member States), is shown in the figure below:

Timor Leste - COVID-19 Impact: Disruptions to Health Services

	Round 1 (May-Sept 2020)	Round 2 (Jan-Mar 2021)	Round 3 (Nov-Dec 2021)	Round 4 (Nov 2022 -Jan 2023)	Trend over four rounds
Percentage of essential health service disrupted	43%	87%	78%	20%	
Number of essential health services disrupted	10 out of 23 services	27 out of 31 services	43 out of 55 services	14 out of 69 services	
Level of service disruption by service group	Round 1 (May-Sept 2020)	Round 2 (Jan-Mar 2021)	Round 3 (Nov-Dec 2021)	Round 4 (Nov 2022 -Jan 2023)	
Primary care	Not applicable	All services disrupted	Not applicable	No services disrupted	
Emergency, critical, and operative care	No services disrupted	All services disrupted	All services disrupted	No services disrupted	
Rehabilitative and palliative services	All services disrupted	All services disrupted	All services disrupted	No services disrupted	
Community care	Not included in round 1	Not included in round 1	All services disrupted	No services disrupted	
Hospital inpatient services	Not included in round 1	Not included in round 1	All services disrupted	No services disrupted	
Appointments with specialists	Not included in round 1	Not included in round 1	Not applicable	No services disrupted	
Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health	Some services disrupted	All services disrupted	Some services disrupted	Some services disrupted	
Nutrition	No services disrupted	All services disrupted	Some services disrupted	No services disrupted	
Immunization	All services disrupted	Not applicable	All services disrupted	All services disrupted	
Communicable diseases	Some services disrupted	Some services disrupted	Some services disrupted	No services disrupted	
Neglected tropical diseases	Not applicable	All services disrupted	All services disrupted	Some services disrupted	
Mental, neurological, and substance use (MNS) disorders	Not applicable	Not applicable	All services disrupted	Some services disrupted	
Noncommunicable diseases	Some services disrupted	All services disrupted	Not included in round 1	No services disrupted	
Care for older people	Not included in round 1	Not included in round 1	All services disrupted	All services disrupted	

Source:^[62] see References.

Post-pandemic, the country made a significant expansion of health services across all levels. From six hospital ICU beds at the National hospital and no critical care facility at regional/referral hospitals in 2020, the country was able to set up 26 High Dependency Unit (HDU) beds by September 2021 and trained more than 600 healthcare professionals, including general practitioners, paramedics, and nurses. Additionally, the laboratory testing capacity increased from 100 samples per day to 1000-1500 per day during the second wave of transmission. Similarly, the cold chain capacity for vaccine storage was strengthened in all regional warehouses, including the installation of walk-in freezers. By 2023, major activities are focused on increasing health emergency resilience and food security and safety as the country prepares to join ASEAN.

To revive universal healthcare in the country, an essential service package for primary care was launched, and health services were delivered to the population through community health outreach programs (SISCa). The country revitalized Mobile Medical teams (SnF). Due to consistent and intense immunization efforts, over 1.9 million doses of COVID-19 were administered, reaching 90% of the eligible target population for the 1st dose, 80% for the 2nd dose, and 29% for the 1st booster dose of COVID-19 vaccination by the end of 2022. In the third quarter of 2022, there were considerable efforts in the revival of routine immunization services and their integration with COVID-19 vaccination. There was a 24% dropout in routine immunization during 2021, which by the end of 2022 bounced back to normalcy, reaching 100% administration coverage for DPT3/Penta3. In early 2023, the country launched an integrated immunization campaign and will be ready to introduce two more vaccine programs by 2024.

Similarly, partner-driven collaboration has supported the Ministry of Health towards maintaining and scaling Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services, focusing on antenatal, intrapartum, and immediate postpartum care for

women, the introduction of emergency birthing centers, and increased focus on the care of sick newborn children and nutrition in the first 1000 days of life. In 2023, significant efforts are underway to revitalize other routine essential services like School Health and interventions towards increasing climate resilience for the health sector.

Under the 'Neglected Tropical Diseases Elimination and Control program' for Lymphatic Filariasis (LF), Soil-transmitted helminths (STH), and Yaws, Transmission assessment survey (TAS) was conducted during 2020-21 to evaluate the impact of the Mass Drug Administration (MDA during 2016 – 2022). Since no cases of Lymphatic filariasis and Yaws were found in the survey, the country has started progressing towards their elimination, while already on its way to achieving malaria-free certification by the end of 2023. Similarly, COVID-19 has adversely affected the service delivery for communicable disease control programs, resulting in a sharp drop in TB diagnoses, HIV testing, increased attrition to antiretroviral therapy (ART), and an upsurge in Leprosy and Dengue cases. Following partner-supported Government efforts by 2022 – 2023, there has been a significant rise in the country's capacity towards TB diagnostics, intensified case-finding, door-to-door vulnerability assessment, advocacy, treatment, and follow-ups.

Another significant achievement has been the increase in a variety of pro-health taxes on tobacco, alcohol, and sugary drinks though these are again being reviewed by the Government. Similarly, several advocacy efforts to increase healthy lifestyles and reduce non-communicable diseases are underway in the year 2023. There is a new IXth Government in place now with a revised organogram for the Ministry of Health, still evolving stabilization of major health institutions like INSP-TL and SAMES, and a review of health priorities going forward is underway. Development partners are working with MoH to align their support in line with Government priorities.

Opportunities



Strong willingness and support from the Government to expand Universal Health Coverage to the population.

Through the integrated health program, the Ministry of Health is committed to delivering the package of essential services for primary healthcare through various healthcare delivery platforms – health facilities, outreach camps, mobile medical teams, and community health workers. This provides a strong foundation for collaborative work for RG-4 agencies to deliver services across all programs such as immunization, Sexual and Reproductive Health services, control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), communicable & non-communicable diseases, nutrition, and health promotion,

etc. The Government is equally committed to strengthening hospital care and associated human resource capacity in the country, in order to reduce overseas referrals.



In addition to these efforts, simultaneous initiatives from all Ministries and autonomous institutions are underway to bolster all associated health system support services including training and skill-building, quality standards and protocols, drugs and diagnostics, rationalized financing, and data quality through improved and integrated HMIS platforms. The Government is also revisiting and refining the governance mechanisms, as evident from the integrated health program policy.

Challenges



While the data gaps are clearly recognized as hindering the country's progress towards the SDGs, technical and institutional capacities in ministries and Government bodies to plan, allocate resources, and undertake data collection, analysis, monitoring, and reporting remain weak. The quality of administrative data is a key obstacle to evidence-based policymaking and to establishing the projections necessary for Government planning.





While many ministries need additional human and financial resources to implement

their action plans or strategies, most have very limited institutional and absorptive capacity to manage extra funding, and to execute allocated budgets and effectively monitor implementation.




Although several important coordination mechanisms have already been established to work across sectors, showing a certain level of Government commitment, their functioning is poor, with a weak legal basis and insufficient understanding of the role of each member and institution in improving multisectoral action.





 The lack of technical and institutional capacity in sector ministries to manage reforms and accelerate progress on the SDGs remains a core challenge. Limited inter-sectoral coordination and poor policy coherence make it difficult for the country to progress towards the implementation of the SDGs.

 The identified challenges to the implementation of policies and reforms and slow progress towards achievement are: availability of accurate and timely disaggregated data and analysis; technical and institutional capacity; sector financing;

inter-sectoral coordination and policy coherence; institutionalization and monitoring of the SDGs; and partnerships and citizen participation.

 Children, women and girls, persons with disabilities, those with long-term illnesses, migrants, and households in remote rural areas are identified as groups at the most risk or those who have already been left behind. More effort is needed to overcome the legal, institutional, and social barriers these groups encounter in accessing their socio-economic and political rights

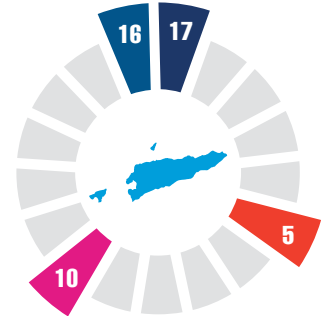
Key messages

-  Increase resources for the health sector to prevent stock-outs, ensure functional diagnostics and equipment, and improve the quality of the health workforce and services.
-  Increase investments in supporting women and families in making informed and empowered decisions for contraceptive use and reproductive health care to gain triple returns in terms of preventing stillbirths and saving the lives of mothers and babies.
-  Health promotion should be accelerated, including the management of alcohol and tobacco use, as well as promoting healthy eating and physical activity.
-  Promote the digitalization of the health system, including the use of tele-medicine where possible.



Outcome 5: By 2025, The Most Excluded People Of Timor-leste Are Empowered To Claim Their Rights, Including Freedom From Violence, Through Accessible, Accountable And Gender-responsive Governance Systems, Institutions And Services At National And Sub-national Levels.

Note: SDG colour-coding



I. Developmental challenges at a glance

SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point	Data Year	Progress	
5 GENDER EQUALITY	5.2.1	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age				
	5.c.1	Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment				
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	Proxy indicator to 10.3.1	Proxy indicator: Number of policies that are discriminatory in accordance with the prohibition of discrimination ruled out by international human rights law in the past 12 months				
	10.7.2	Number of new or updated migration governance-related policies and strategies to facilitate orderly, regular and responsible migration	8	2023 ³	↑	
16 PEACE AND JUSTICE STRONG INSTITUTIONS	16.2.2	Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation	<5	2020 ^[63]	↑	
	16.3.1	Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms				
	16.6.2	Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services				
	16.7.1	Proportions of positions in national and local public institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups	Legislatures		2023 ^[64]	→
			Female	36.9%		
			Male	63.1%		
			Public Service		2022 ^[65]	
			Female	35.4%		
Male			64.6%			
Judiciary		2023 ^[66]				
Female	37.1%					
Male	62.9%					
	PwDs					
16.7.2	Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group					
16.9.1	Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age	Total	90%	2022 ^[67]	↑	
SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point		Data Year	Progress
17 ZERO HUNGER	17.3.1	Additional financial resources mobilized from multiple sources	Foreign Direct Investment, net inflows (% of GDP)	8.3%	2022 ^[68]	→
			Gross Official Development Assistance (ODA)	256.9 USD million	2021 ^[69]	
	17.3.2	Volume of remittances (in United States dollars) as a proportion of total GDP		5.9%	2022 ^[70]	↑

³ IOM Timor-Leste internal calculation using The migration profile, labour mobility policy, immigration and border management national strategic action plan, trafficking in persons victim identification guidelines, remittance mobilization strategy, diaspora engagement policy, border management assessment, Migration Governance Indicators.

II. Situation Update

Timor-Leste has made significant strides in promoting women's participation in politics at the national level in recent years. Currently, 38% of the seats (8 out of 38) in the National Parliament are held by women, which is above the regional average (19%) and the global average (26%) in 2020. Nonetheless, women in Timor-Leste are still under-represented in leadership and decision making roles nationwide. Only 1 out of 13 Presidents of the local authorities in 13 municipalities and special administrative region is a woman.^[71]

In 2022, the Government committed to allocate a total of US\$ 203.8 million (12% of the total national budget) to the National Programme on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion.^[72] This important hallmark demonstrates the Government's commitment towards advancing in gender equality and women's empowerment. Priority actions under the National Programme on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, are the implementation of the National Plan on gender-based Violence (US\$ 240,178), the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (US\$ 349,448), and the Maubisse Declaration (US\$ 206,457).^[72]

The budget allocation for the implementation of the National Programme on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, has increased for the fiscal year of 2023. Gender inequalities in the labor market are significant in the country, including a higher rate of female vulnerable and informal employment, and an underrepresentation of women in most of economic sectors, particularly in managerial positions. Only 13.3% of employed Timorese women are in managerial roles in 2021.^[73]

According to the Socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in Timor-Leste, developed in 2021, "Timorese women mostly depend on the informal economy, particularly in food production and small-scale informal trading (markets, kiosks)". Women make up 42.6% of the labor force in agriculture, forestry and fishing.^[74]

Women are disproportionately represented in the national security force. In the highest ranks of the Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL) (Inspector to Commissioner), only 10 % of all officers are women. All positions at the Commander level are occupied by male officers. Amongst 66 Superintendente (including Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent Chief), only 4 of them are women (6%).^[75]

More than half (53%) of all female PNTL officers occupy the position of Agente Chefe, comprising 2% of the rank. Other than the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU), women are under-represented in operational roles, with low women's representation in the specialist units - women making up merely 3 % of Tactical Police Unit members, 4% of Border Patrol Unit members, and 5% of Maritime Police Unit members.^[75] To promote women's meaningful participation and leadership of women the PNTL launched the Gender Strategy of the PNTL 2018- 2022.

One of the challenges in Timor-Leste is that the Government needs to expand service delivery in the context of a growing economy and in preparation for a possible ASEAN membership. This means strengthening border governance as well as migration management as the country will integrate broadly into the ASEAN region. Current gaps in resources, capacities and coordination, hamper the efficient management of the migration flows, as well as the capacity of the country to detect cases of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons. This requires strengthened capacities among all the relevant authorities and agencies involved in border security and trade facilitation, including improved inter-agency coordination and enhanced border management processes. The Government also needs to enhance their national capacities to prevent TIP and ensure the effective protection of victims of trafficking. Such as, the lack of proper travel documents due to backlogs and costs associated with obtaining such documents is the major obstacle faced by women and girls seeking to migrate, forcing them to illegally cross the borders into Indonesia, falling prey to smugglers or traffickers.



Migration data is critical for evidence-based analysis to form future policies and decision-making of the Government as well as risk analysis to address transnational organized crime. In comparison to the last CCA, Timor-Leste now has an integrated border management (IBM) system and National Action Plan, relevant gender-sensitive Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and SOPs on Victim Identification and Referral Mechanism for TIP Cases.

Opportunities

Below are the progress made by the country, providing opportunities to reduce discrimination and promote equality:

SEFOPE and social partners developed a proposal for a national Law Against Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, after consultations and analysis between the Timor-Leste regulatory framework and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (NO. 190). The approval of such a Law would represent an important advance for workers and will facilitate the promotion and ratification of the ILO Convention 190.

The national parliament approved the first protection law for children, the Law for Protection of Children and Youth in Danger. Additionally, legal frameworks for the National Institute for Social Impact (INIS) and Child and Family Welfare Policy were finalized and tabled in the Council of Ministers for approval.

Laws on decentralization (Law on Local Power and Administrative Decentralization, Law on Municipal Election, and Municipal Finance Law) have been promulgated.

The law on judicial organization was promulgated, establishing the Supreme Court of Justice, judicial courts of the first instance in all 13 municipalities, and specialized courts (administrative, tax, and accounting court and family and minor court).

The Criminal Procedure Law was revised with significant attribution of GBV victim protection, including the formalization of legal representation for victims and streamlining compensation requests.

In January and February 2023, Timor-Leste acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. In this way, Timor-Leste finally joined the 185 States Parties to the Convention, and the 100 State Parties to the Optional Protocol. The ratification of the Convention was one of the main recommendations consistently presented to Timor-Leste during the three Universal Periodic Reviews the country had undergone, and which it had accepted.

The third National Action Plan (NAP) on GBV was approved, recommitting politically to accelerated actions on GBV through a multisectoral, comprehensive and coordinated approach.

Development of the second NAP 1325 (pending approval) towards enhancing the participation of women and vulnerable groups in community conflict prevention and resolution, peace processes, and increasing women's participation as frontline mediators in building peace at the community level and contributing to the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda.

The National Mediation Network was established to ensure women and vulnerable groups have improved access to justice systems in Timor-Leste.

Key messages



Continued focus on using a Human Rights-Based Approach to advocate for a development model centered on children, women, and youth.



Strengthening border governance based on data, risk analysis, as well as a rights-based approach.



Continued focus on the rights of migrants based on a data-driven, evidence-based approach.



Continued emphasis on inclusive National Planning and Budgeting focused on national priorities.



Continued emphasis on greater decentralization.

OUTCOME AREA 6

Sustainable Management Of Natural Resources And Resilience To Climate Change

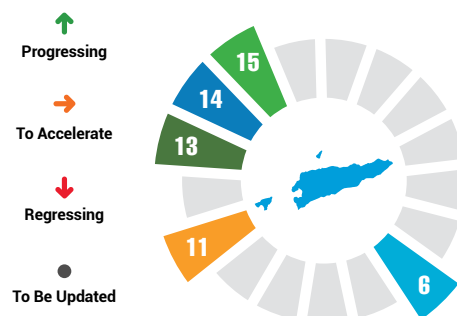


UNITED NATIONS
TIMOR-LESTE

COMMON
COUNTRY
ANALYSIS

Note: SDG colour-coding

Outcome 6: By 2025, National And Sub-national Institutions And Communities (particularly At-risk Populations Including Women And Children) In Timor-leste Are Better Able To Manage Natural Resources And Achieve Enhanced Resilience To Climate Change Impacts, Natural And Human-induced Hazards, And Environmental Degradation, Inclusively And Sustainably.



I. Developmental challenges at a glance

SDGs	Indicator	Name	Most Recent Data Point	Data Year	Progress	
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	6.1.1	Proportion of households using safely managed drinking water	At least basic service Total: 85% Urban: 96% Rural: 80%	2020 ^[76]	↑	
	6.3.1	Proportion of wastewater flow (safely) treated	●			
	6.4.1	Change in water-use efficiency over time (US\$ per cubic meter)	1.53	2020 ^[77]	↓	
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	11.1.1	Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing	34%	2020 ^[78]	→	
	11.2.1	Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	●			
	11.5.2	Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP)	●			
13 CLIMATE ACTION	13.1.1	Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population	●			
	13.1.2	Whether adopted and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction	No	2023 ⁴	↓	
	13.1.3	Proportion of local Governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies	●			
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	13.2.1	Nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	Yes	2022 ^[79]	↑	
	14.4.1	Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels	●			
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	14.b.1	Degree of application of a legal, regulatory, policy, and/or institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries	●			
	15.1.1	Forest area as a proportion of total land area	61.9 %	2020 ^[80]	↑	
15 LIFE ON LAND	15.2.1	Progress towards sustainable forest management	Above-ground biomass in forest	150 (t/ha)	2020 ^[80]	→
			Annual forest area change rate	-0.15 %	2020 ^[80]	
			Forest area under an independently verified forest management certification scheme	0	2022 ^[80]	
15.3.1	Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area	●				

Still in progress (Consultation with IOM and UNDRR on October, 2023).



Timor-Leste is in a region prone to natural disasters, and unfortunately, these events have had a devastating impact on the country and its people. The floods and landslides that occurred in April 2021 caused significant damage to homes, infrastructure, and agriculture. The country is sensitive to the impacts of climate change and the effects of El Niño. Changes in rainfall patterns and extreme weather events may impact agricultural productivity and water availability. This will increase the risk of landslides, making the soil more susceptible to erosion and increasing the intensity and frequency of flooding. Evidence shows that sea-level rise will affect 300 kilometers of Timor-Leste in the next five years, causing coastal erosion and environmental degradation, destruction of infrastructure, salinization of water sources, and forced displacement of coastal communities. The country also faces a higher frequency of extreme climate events, such as strong tropical windstorms, landslides, and flash floods. These climate-induced hazards happen alongside other natural events, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, which also affect Timor-Leste, making it a highly vulnerable country.

As guided by the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2030, the Government made significant progress in strengthening institutions and policymaking to improve resilience against climate and disaster risks. The Civil Protection Law mandated the Civil Protection Authority (CPA) on disaster risk reduction, while the draft Climate Change Law seeks the establishment of a National Council for Climate Action (NCCA). The National Adaptation Plan (2020-2030) was approved in 2021 in Timor-Leste to respond to these challenges. Policies such as the National Adaptation Plan for Addressing Climate Risks and Building Climate Resilience and the National Disaster Risk Management Strategy are being developed and spearheaded by key stakeholders including the United Nations, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Environment.

The CPA increased its commitment to integrating gender equality and protection concerns into disaster response, particularly addressing the needs of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and LGBTQI+ groups, as stated in the draft national disaster emergency plan. The CPA

and the National Directorate of Meteorology and Geophysics (NDMG) have increased their capacity to provide weather forecasting and early warning systems by establishing the DisasterAware platform, the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and the development of service and product information such as establishment of NDMG website. There are more projects underway which will address the urgent need for integrated and end-to-end climate information services and multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS) through comprehensive institutional, technical, and technological capacity building from national to local level. Timor-Leste was also able to acquire funding from the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) to enhance its observation network and maintain existing observation equipment.

In response to global policies, the Government ratified the Kigali Amendment and finalized the legal text to include hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) control into existing national regulations. The Agriculture Stress Index System is set up in Timor-Leste and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF's) and Land-use Geographic Information System are trained to operate it.

Comprehensive climate hazard mapping and risk assessment and development of risk models for Timor-Leste were also established to undertake a detailed country-wide mapping of the major climate hazards and develop clear, usable risk profiles consolidated through an easily accessible and usable risk model for Timor-Leste. Further, the National Environmental Information System (NEIS), local Integrated Coastal Management (ICM), the Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDI) lab at the national command center, and climate-proofed rural road infrastructure in four municipalities were also established.

The Secretary of State for Environment has been collaborating with Environment Brigade movement volunteers on forest protection, reforestation, urban environmental protection, environmental control, fire protection and rubbish collection. With 300 volunteers mobilized in 2020, the target was set high to 1,000 youth volunteers who are mainly young people from different universities.^[81]

Opportunities



There is a significant investment in Early Warning Systems and early action mechanisms, which provides opportunities to increase understanding and application of risk information, coordination, information management, and data sharing vertically and horizontally. A clear policy guidance and coordination mechanism must be established to coordinate these efforts.



The adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022 provides opportunities for Timor Leste to revise its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) in alignment with the new Framework and significantly scale-up efforts towards protecting biodiversity and ecosystems in the country.



The first sectoral DRR strategy in the agriculture sector provides valuable lessons learned to inform mainstreaming of DRR into sectoral planning.



Urban development, while highlighting the urban resilience challenges associated with rapid growth and population concentration, provide opportunities to rethink spatial planning and ensure risk reduction and climate change adaptation considerations are informing the urban upgrading and infrastructure development plans in cities, including through nature-based urban solutions.



The accession process to ASEAN provides regional collaboration and knowledge exchange opportunities. Leveling up Timorese country systems to ASEAN disaster management standards, as per the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) and subsequent work plans, provide opportunities to strengthen policies and implementation while providing access to additional

expertise and regional resources to facilitate risk reduction and support preparedness, anticipatory action and response efforts. On biodiversity and ecosystems-related issues, Timor Leste's accession to ASEAN will provide opportunity for the country to engage more actively in key initiatives facilitated by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity in scaling up its efforts towards protecting nature and implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.



The revision of Timor Leste's National Biodiversity and Action Plan, in alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework will provide opportunity for Timor Leste in scaling-up its efforts towards achieving globally agreed commitments such as protecting 30 per cent of the terrestrial and marine environment, scaling up financing for protecting biodiversity, as well as phasing out or reforming harmful subsidies.



Experience in donor coordination around issues of shared concern (e.g., nutrition or public financial management) and willingness to establish a continuous dialogue platform development partner – Government, provide opportunities to strengthen coherence, align policy advocacy, and support from donors and development partners.



Timor-Leste's latest revision of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2022 has identified contributions required from all the major social and development sectors in reaching climate resilience and environmental sustainability. However, the compliance of respective sectors with NDCs seems to be inadequate. In this backdrop, the members of UNSDCF results group no.6, an operational arm of the outcome area no.6, have a key role to play in advocacy, technical support and coordination pertaining to respective social and development sectors they are engaged in.

Challenges



Frequent Government restructuring, staff turnover and staff retention issues.



Vertical and horizontal coordination and policy coherence for improved institutional capacity.



No cross-sectoral national budget allocation for DRR, CCA, biodiversity conservation and other environment-related investments but competition over funding across Government.



Disconnected governance, policies, and financing mechanisms between climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, pollution, and other environment-related issues and those policies and mechanisms related to development

planning such as the National Development Strategy and Plan and key economic sectors.



Lack of availability of accurate and timely disaggregated risk, vulnerability, exposure, and climate and disaster impact data and analysis.



Partnerships and citizen participation. Limited participation of different stakeholders from the communities, including women, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ group and the most marginalized group in the DRR planning, implementation and monitoring.



Overlapping of climate resilience and DRR agendas in stakeholder mandates.

Risks



Risk Governance: Line ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Works, and Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Environment, have varying levels of DRR and environment and mainstreaming resulting in limited evidence for other critical high-impact social and economic sectors.



Risk Information: While hazard monitoring is being strengthened, the end-to-end early warning systems require strong risk knowledge that includes vulnerability, exposure, and coping capacity. As for reporting on Loss and Damage (L&D), the country has been unable to present direct economic losses from past experiences.



Risk-informed Planning: Limited data and access to available data hinder the coherence and alignment of Government priorities. As it stands, one ministry

conducted its risk assessment, and it is not shared across line ministries.



Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
Investment: Lack of guidance and understanding of what DRR investment entails.



Growing impacts of plastic pollution:
There are growing impacts of plastic pollution on marine ecosystems, biodiversity and human health in Timor Leste. It is estimated that approximately thirteen percent of the waste stream is made up of plastic. The Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility estimated that approximately 20.7 Mt of plastic waste was released in the waters around Timor Leste in 2010, with the amount expected to rise to 64.2 Mt by 2025.^[82] Lack of national-level waste prevention or waste management legislation poses a significant challenge and risks.

Key messages



It is necessary to ensure better access to national-level data, including geographic, risk-related, and inventory tracking systems.



Enhanced coordination is required for the efficient management of displaced people, prepositioning emergency food stocks, and work planning for emergency response.



To better respond to emergencies, further clarification and coordination on requests to humanitarian partners are needed (distinguishing between large-scale and small-scale emergencies).



There is a need to strengthen the Government's internal coordination with the line ministries in addressing climate change and other environmental issues, such as biodiversity loss and pollution, and ensure that they are treated as cross-cutting themes.



Climate change resilience should be bolstered as a crucial strategy for long-term sustainability, considering the agricultural dependence of Timor-Leste and the potential risks to infrastructure. Alignment with the National Adaptation Plan and exploration of financial preparedness strategies to enhance the Government's ability to weather financial challenges, particularly in post-disaster financing, are essential. Prioritizing risk reduction efforts when rebuilding after disasters, as demonstrated by the TC Seroja post-disaster recovery program, is crucial.



In line with the Timor-Leste Nationally Determined Contribution (2022-2030), a low-carbon development strategy should be promoted. Timor-Leste should introduce an integrated approach that enhances the environment and natural capital, focusing on carbon sequestration potential, holistic landscape management, and resilience. This will support the diversification of the non-oil economy, leveraging opportunities in carbon

markets, nature-based solutions, green tourism, and sustainable agriculture practices.



There should be a continuation of investments in climate-resilient infrastructure as a key factor in building resilience to natural disasters, and further integration of the National Adaptation Plan into budgetary planning. Greater investment in disaster risk reduction measures, including the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure, and implementation of measures to protect areas at high risk of disasters are necessary.



A gender-responsive approach should be ensured in DRR, including promoting more meaningful and equal participation of women, people with disabilities, and the most marginalized groups, who are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of disaster and climate change, in the risk and vulnerability assessment. DRR planning and implementation should take into consideration the specific needs of these vulnerable groups and their diverse capacities.



To enhance climate resilience in agriculture, the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) should integrate disaster risk management strategies into agricultural and food production systems. This entails adopting climate-smart, and nature-positive agricultural practices, reducing reliance on food imports, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices such as agroforestry, composting, and the rehabilitation of degraded lands through community-led efforts. Additionally, it is crucial to allocate sufficient financial resources towards research on climate-resilient crop species, climate-smart agricultural practices, as well as nature-positive agricultural production practices such as the promotion of agrobiodiversity. This commitment necessitates access to climate financing and technical assistance. Technical assistance will be vital in supporting the implementation of these recommendations.

CHAPTER 3

A young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a vibrant pink shirt with a floral pattern, is focused on weaving on a wooden loom. The loom is set up outdoors, with a blurred background of green trees and a white pillar. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day. The woman's expression is one of concentration and skill.

UPDATES ON LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

(LNOB) Analysis - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), and Youth

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (GEWE)

Timor-Leste remains committed towards gender equality and the empowerment of women as is evident at both national and international levels.

At the international level, Timor-Leste has ratified most of the international human rights treaties that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- International Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- International Convention on the Elimination of forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- International Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ILO Conventions to Equal Remuneration and Discrimination (employment and occupation)

The Timor-Leste Parliament had the accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its requisite Optional Protocol in April 2003. The fourth Periodic Report to the CEDAW committee was presented in 2021. During this time, Timor-Leste has marked significant strides in adopting international legal frameworks and policies in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. Timor-Leste has advocated for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. The Prime Minister's Office developed a Roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda, and the Roadmap notes that achievements on gender equality will have an "acceleration effect" on the other SDGs.^[83]

At national level, Timor-Leste's Constitution explicitly guarantees gender equality and prohibits discrimination, including based on sex and gender. The Constitution emphasizes gender equality by providing the right to social assistance. To this end the Government of

Timor-Leste implements the social protection program "Bolsa da Mae", which provides cash transfer schemes for vulnerable women.^[84] Commitments towards gender equality are also expressed through the country's Strategic Development Plan (SDP), a comprehensive "living document" that articulates Timor-Leste's development goals and priorities, focusing on social capital, infrastructure, and economic development. The SDP highlights that "gender equality is fundamental to achieve the overall goal and vision for a fair society".^[85]

The country has adopted and is implementing the following Key National Legal Framework towards gender equality:

- Law against Domestic Violence
- Law Establishing the Social Security Contribution Scheme (Law 12/2016)
- Law Establishing the Special Regime for Definition of Ownership of Immovable Property (Land Law, Law 13/2017)
- Suco Law (Law 9/2016)⁵
- Law Against Human Trafficking⁶

The Suco Law, adopted in 2016, was an important hallmark towards enhancing women's participation in leadership positions at the Suco (Village) level. The Suco Law specifically requires that at least one-woman candidate stands in every Suco Chief election.⁷

In 2017, the anti-trafficking law was ratified by the Parliament, promoting protection measures for victims of human trafficking, including forced marriage as a type of human trafficking.⁸

Also in 2017, Timor-Leste adopted the new Land Law, although the new approved law recognizes community land rights and enshrines women's equal rights to land, discrimination persists, and women still commonly lack access to and control over land.^[86]

5 Law 9/2016 protects the equal rights of women and men to participate in leadership positions at the Suco (Village) level, which specifically requires that there should be at least one woman per Suco standing for the elections as Suco Chief.

6 In 2017, the anti-trafficking law was ratified in Timor-Leste, providing voluntary return assistance to victims (not expulsion or deportation). As per the Law, forced marriage is defined as a form of human trafficking. However, child marriage, which has been termed a form of forced marriage owing to the inability of children to give their valid and volitional consent to marry, is not explicitly mentioned under said Law.

7 Interview held with UN Women Timor-Leste, 2022

8 Interview held with UN Women Timor-Leste, 2022. It is important to mention that child marriage is not explicitly mentioned under the said Law.

Key National Policies and Plans towards gender equality

- Maubisse Declaration (2018-2023)⁹
- National Action Plan to end Gender-Based Violence (2022-2032)
- NAP 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2017-2021)
- National Action Plan against Human Trafficking (2016-2020)¹⁰
- National Action Plan for Children (2016-2020)
- Child and Family Welfare Policy (2015)
- Guidelines to address Sexual Harassment in the Civil Service (2017)¹¹
- National Police (PNTL) Gender Strategy (2018)¹²

In 2016, Timor-Leste was the third country in Southeast Asia to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, through the development of the National Action Plan (2016-2020) on Women, Peace and Security, to advance crucial roles of women and girls in prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding, humanitarian response and post-conflict recovery.

In 2018, the Second Phase of the Maubisse Declaration was adopted by the Government, reinforcing its commitment to improve the lives of rural women and girls. The Second Phase of the Maubisse Declaration provides specific actions for a five-year period.¹³

The Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII) is the national women's machinery in Timor-Leste, and a key mechanism to promote gender equality through gender mainstreaming, gender planning, gender advocacy, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation.¹⁴ The SEII is the institution responsible for designing laws, policies, and programs to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In November 2017, a Government decree outlined the following responsibilities for SEII: i) providing sectoral policy support, ii) combating domestic violence, and iii) enforcing international conventions, agreements,

protocols and international guidelines on gender equality at the national level.¹⁵

Despite the available legal and policy framework towards gender equality, translating these legal frameworks and policies into practice has been difficult.

National action plans, policies, and institutional mechanisms have set goals, and established a strategic vision towards gender equality, as well as raised public awareness. However, the implementation of actions remains low, as the resources are limited.¹⁵

Although Timor-Leste has a robust national and international legal and policy framework, which promotes the grounds for gender equality and women's empowerment, gender discriminatory practices exist, mainly based on cultural and customary traditions.

Timor-Leste is a patriarchal society, where men are traditionally seen as the main income earners, while women are required to play the traditional role of mother and wife. The consequences of this sphere division are felt in the economic and social sectors, hindering the efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Even if gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary education, women still face challenges in accessing high and tertiary education, mainly due to the burden of domestic unpaid work. Overall, women's economic and social empowerment is still weak in the country.

All these factors lead women to work in the informal sector and in part-time jobs, increasing their potential risk of poverty. COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these economic and social gender inequalities.

In terms of meaningful participation and decision making, there are shy advancements, and women are progressively more engaged within the social and political arena. However, women participation is still low in leadership positions at both national and sub-national

⁹ The Second Phase of the Maubisse Declaration, adopted in 2018, highlights strategic actions to improve the lives of rural women and girls over a five-year period. The Declaration recognizes the need for all agents, public and private, to work together for improving the well-being of women and girls in rural areas.

¹⁰ The NAP against Human Trafficking was adopted for the period of 2016-2018, from which the Inter-Agency Counter-Human Trafficking Working Group (HTWG) was established in 2016 to improve implementation and coordination in achieving four goals namely - prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership.

¹¹ The Guidelines are a hallmark towards preventing sexual harassment within the workplace in Timor-Leste.

¹² The Gender Strategy provides concrete actions to enhance women's participation within the institution, including at leadership and management levels.

¹³ Interview held with SEII, 2022

¹⁴ The SEII was formerly known as the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI), which was established in 2008 as a legal agency and central Government body. It has been also called Secretary of State for the Support and Socio-Economic Promotion of Women (SEM) and "Secretariat of State for the Promotion of Equality" (SoSPE).

¹⁵ Please see Chapter 2 - Outcome aArea 2 for further information on GRB.

levels. Participation within the local power has increased since the new Suco Law, but the community still needs to overcome stereotypes regarding the ability of women to lead, particularly in the rural Timor-Leste.

Gender-based violence remains a critical issue for Timorese women, alarming the rate of social acceptance, particularly for intimate partner violence. Social protection schemes are fragile and limited in scope, and mostly reliant on

faith-based organizations or non-Governmental organizations. It is crucial to strengthen coordination mechanisms between institutions, as well as enhancing capacities (both financial and technical) of those actors within the referral network.

It is fundamental to continue investing efforts and allocate the necessary resources to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including in the social, economic and political life.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)

Key situation update for PWDS



17,061

PWDS
POPULATION
(+5 YEARS)



8,517

Female



8,544 ^[88]

Male

Literacy rate among PWDS:



23.9% which is much lower than the average literacy rate of the whole population **72.4%** aged 10 or older.^[88]



19% PWDS (aged 5-25) are currently attending school (Female: 20% / Male: 18.2%).^[88]



Unemployment rate with any disability:

19.6% (female 3.1%, male 17.8%), much higher compared to without any disability 5.1% (female: 6.0%, male: 4.5%).^[89]



Disability benefits (social protection):

Only **21.6%** of the potentially eligible Timorese for disability benefits was effectively covered in 2020-22, a slight increase since 2019 (19.3%).^[90]

Accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in January 2023, as well as existing laws and policies, provide a strong legal and political framework to support disability-inclusive development. A National Action Plan on Disability was adopted in October 2021. Nonetheless, stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities are still widespread. While policies and plans are increasingly adopting the language of disability inclusion, implementation of these plans remains slow and under-resourced, which limits opportunities to address unequal participation and improve access to inclusive services. For example, the establishment of a planned National Council on Disability, which is envisaged to play a role in monitoring implementation of the CRPD, has been repeatedly postponed due to delays in the consultation and legislative process.

Government service provision is not yet inclusive and many challenges exist across sectors, especially in social protection, health, education, vocation training and employment, access to justice, transport and infrastructure. Key challenges include lack of accessible facilities for people with mobility and visual impairments, discriminatory attitudes and practices among service providers, lack of training in disability awareness and inclusion, and lack of accessible information about available services. Additionally, monitoring of services and collection of disability-disaggregated data is weak and decision-makers do not have reliable data upon which to base programming and budgeting decisions. There is widespread recognition among stakeholders that Government investment is not yet sufficient to meet the objectives

for inclusive service delivery outlined in the Disability National Action Plan.

By becoming a party to the CRPD, Timor-Leste has committed to ensuring people with disabilities have equal access to all services, activities and entitlements that people without disabilities can access. However, the country's legislative and policy frameworks do not mandate enforceable standards of accessibility. As such, implementation and compliance is varied. Opportunities exist to improve accessibility of public buildings and services, advance the promotion of a national sign language, develop materials in inclusive formats, and provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities to ensure their participation. Outside of Dili, lack of accessibility is even more pronounced and is a significant barrier to the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities.

Government budgets for disability-inclusive programming remain small and there is a lack of transparency around the planning and

budgeting process. Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) want to be more involved in these processes as they recognise that this is when key decisions are made, and that once approved, ministry plans and budgets are generally not flexible. Lack of reliable, accurate data relating to people with disabilities is also a barrier to effective programming and greater accountability.

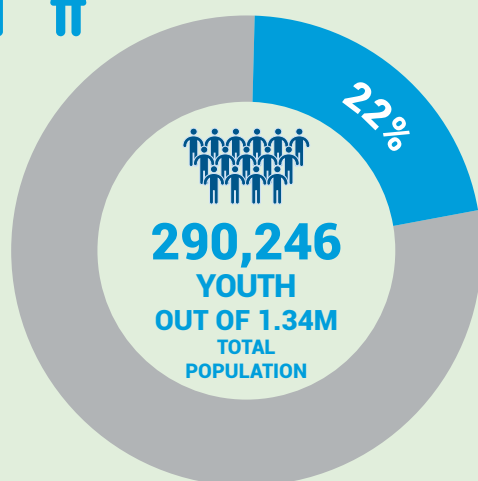
Cross-cutting issues of gender, inequality (of the most marginalized groups) and participation of people with disabilities impact national progress across all pre-conditions necessary for disability inclusion. Women and girls with disabilities face intersectional forms of discrimination including increased risk of physical and sexual violence. People with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities remain highly stigmatized and under-represented in service provision and in OPD membership. And while participation of OPDs and people with disabilities in political and public life is increasing, this is much more progressed in Dili than in regional and rural areas.

YOUTH

Key situation update for Youth



YOUTH (age 15-24)



Source: [91]



30.5% of youth (age 15-24)

are not in employment, education or training (NEET) (2021)



31.3%

Female



29.8%

Male



Literacy rate of youth 87.3 %

(age 15-24): (2022)



88.3%

Female



86.4%

Male



Nationally, 1:8 Secondary-Primary school ratio

(ideal is 1:3) (2021)



Population aged 3-29 years attending school (%):

Total 54.6%



88.3%

Female



86.4%

Male

The Youth Action Plan has recently been approved in 2023 to further deliberate on education, employability (skills), employment, entrepreneurship, ecosystem and engagement (six E's) as core levers for the generational

shift for youth. Additional Government policies with a specific focus on youth encompass the National Employment Strategy (2017-2030) and the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) spanning from 2011 to 2030.

Youth access secondary education through the general secondary schools and technical secondary schools. As of 2021, there is one secondary school for every eight primary schools, which is below an ideal 1:3, and way below standards such as Singapore where the ratio is 2:3.^[92] Regional variations are stark: Covalima has 1 secondary school for 12 primary schools, whereas Dili has 1:3. Secondary Schools for 180 primary schools.^[93]

Currently, the average year of basic education acquired in Timor Leste is nine years and for secondary education, it is three years and there is a large cohort of children who transition from learning-to-work or learning-to-not in employment, education or training (NEET) earlier in life. The stakeholders have taken their best efforts to improve education in Timor-Leste. For example, 77,667 youth are pursuing secondary education, while approximately 82% of youth of the appropriate age group are in education, 24% of the youth of 15-17 years age are out-of-school. However, the impact of Covid on children is telling, and it will have a significant impact on the youth within a decade, and challenge SDG goals on education. At least 92,000 children were eligible to be at the Basic Cycle 1 (Grades 1-3), but only 68,750 children were in that education, missing out about 25% of the children of that age group.^[93] The number of children between EBC-1 and EBC (Grade 4-6) has also widened to 43.9%, indicative of increased dropouts during the Covid pandemic, which will add to the challenges. Many of those who join secondary school also experience a transition from their home environment as they move from their home villages to district centers or from neighboring municipalities to Dili for secondary schooling.^[93] Here too, lies the decision between regular secondary school or technical secondary school which provides the option to study subjects such as basic computing, electronics, building and construction, travel, and tourism to enhance post-school employability. Tertiary education is almost entirely limited to Dili. Net enrolment rate at secondary education lags at 48.8% against 88.2% for primary.^[93]

As of 2018, 33% of primary school pass-outs chose to join technical secondary schools. Additionally, about 5,000 youth enroll in other skilling centers such as in English language or computer courses at 'youth centers' under Ministry of Youth, Sports, Art and Culture, Technical and Vocational Training Centres (TVETs) promoted by Ministry of Economic Affairs, or in private training centers that provide part time trainings in domain skills such

as Office Management, Hospitality, Carpentry, Plumbing, Electrical works Most of the students join these centers on completion or dropping out of the secondary education. The 2022 national census data reports 36,766 (female: 16,721, male: 20,056) being illiterate for those aged 15-24.^[94]

The youth population (15-24 years) is 36.3% of the total working population of 799,597, indicating an increase in the youth bulge between 2015 census and 2022 censuses. As per the Labour Force Survey, 2021, for young people aged 15-24 years, the unemployment rate was significantly higher at 9.6 per cent compared to unemployment of 4.7 per cent among adults aged 25-64 years.^[95] Informal employment accounted for 77.3% of all employment. The informal employment rate was distinctly higher for working women (80.4%) compared to working men (75.3%). Furthermore, the gender gap in the youth unemployment rate was sizable at 5.1% to the disadvantage of young women, suggesting their disproportionate challenges in finding employment in the labor market.^[95] Young people aged 15-24 years with subsistence production as the main work totalled 179.2 thousand, representing 66.1% of people of this age group.^[95]

Labor force participation also is clearly gendered. For example, in 2021, only 24.7% of women who have completed secondary education participate in the labor market, while it is 19% higher (i.e. 43.7%) for men. Similarly, 55.5% women with graduate or tertiary education participate in the labor force, while it is 70.1% men in 2021. In other words, a Timorese female youth who has completed secondary education is at the most disadvantaged level of getting a formal job. "Informal employment in 2021 accounted for 77.3 percent of all employment. Even in the formal sector, informal employment accounted for almost half (48.6 per cent) of employment, reflecting a high share of paid employees in the formal sector that did not receive any social security benefits. Almost all employment in the informal sector and household sector was informal". As per the most recent World Bank Report, the NEET among youth is one of the highest among smaller countries, standing at over 30%.^[96]

The sexual and reproductive health of youth is critical to their well-being, yet there has been no updated data since the 2016 demographic health survey (DHS). Although the survey was already used in the previous

common country analysis (CCA) of Timor-Leste, it may be worth highlighting the youth age-disaggregated DHS data showing lack of access to information for sexual and reproductive health of youth. Only 23% of young women and 20% of young men claimed to have received any sexual and reproductive health-related information. For the information source, while 59% of young women mentioned their mothers as the main

source of information, young men split it at 27%, 29% and 25% between mother, father and friends.^[97] TV and health centers are the most preferred medium of information on reproductive health, while friends played an important role in starting a romantic relationship. Comprehensive understanding of HIV was only 7.7% among female youth, and 14.6% among male youth of 15-24 years.

Opportunities for Youth

- The Development partners are expected to disburse in Timor-Leste about US\$162.2 million in development aid in 2023 (US\$152.9 for activities related to the Government sector, US\$9.2 million for non-Governmental sector). Investment in youth and adolescents especially on skills, employment and empowerment comes across as a shared prioritized area for support among these donors.
- According to the Knowledge, Attitude and Perception Survey carried out by Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in 2023, 91% of young people-respondents view volunteerism as a means of getting new knowledge and addressing youth unemployment. In addition, most of the survey respondents were predominantly young men, which points to limited opportunities and other factors contributing to young women's limited civic engagement. The commitment by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Art and Culture to create the National Youth Volunteer Scheme would not only create an amplitude of opportunities for skills development but also potentially increase youth employability.
- A recent review by the ILO highlights how there is a considerable number of youth targeted labor market policies which, however, fail to consistently deliver the desired outcomes. Issues with implementation and design, together with the non-exploitation of complementarities between schemes (e.g. returning migrants or youth engaged in public work schemes not engaging in entrepreneurial activities or benefitting from job search assistance) appear to be critical elements to be addressed.^[98]

Challenges to Transformative Growth in Youth

- **Resource gaps:** Youth-specific programs often lack adequate funding. In 2023, the Government increased the national budget to US\$ 58 million for youth, about 2.7% of the budget.^[99] This must be doubled immediately and taken to 6% of the national budget to realistically set the stage for access to excellent secondary and tertiary education, employable skills and job opportunities. Also, a large part of this government investment is toward secondary and higher education.
- **Coordination and Participation:** Lack of coordination between the Government and development partners working on the youth sector. Barriers to participation and representation for rural youth, young women, and youth with disabilities.
- **Enabling Ecosystem:** Lack of awareness and support from parents, Suco councils, and the community regarding the role of youth in society. The private sector's limited capacity to invest in, and increase employment opportunities for the youth of the country.
- **Limited Vocational Training and Skill Development:** This limits the ability of young people to acquire the skills needed for the job market. Tailoring programs for unsettled youth population: Customized support may be needed for youth migrating domestically or internationally. Opportunities in agriculture and other economies need to be leveraged.
- **Job opportunities:** Lack of job opportunities for youth, which correlates with the unsettled youth population. A lack of job

opportunities, particularly for those with limited education or skills, can lead to frustration and wasted potential among young people.

- **Banking and Credit:** Low access to soft credit, along with other constraints, reduces motivation for entrepreneurial efforts.
- **Digital Divide and Reach:** Digital divide and technological deprivation hinder the acquisition of relevant skills and completion of education, especially in rural areas. Lack of tailored communication strategies to better reach youth with the right messages in different groups.
- **Limited Quality Education:** Issues include inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient learning resources.
- **Health Challenges:** Health issues, including malnutrition, limited access to healthcare,

and high rates of preventable diseases, can hinder the physical and cognitive development of young people.

- **Gender Inequality:** Discrimination and limited access to education and economic opportunities can hinder transformative growth for female youth. These inequities also feed into aggravated violence, especially against women.
- **Cultural and Social Barriers:** Traditional norms and customs can sometimes limit the opportunities available to young people, particularly when it comes to making choices about education, employment, and personal development.
- **Psychosocial Challenges:** Exposure to conflict and violence, as well as the stress of economic hardship, can have adverse effects on the mental health and well-being of young people.

Implication for Programs Targeting Youth against Development Deficits

- **Holistic Approach:** Beyond education and employment, include healthcare, social inclusion, peace-building, conflict-resolution, and psychosocial well-being.
- **Gender Equality:** Efforts to combat gender-based violence and promote female education and economic participation are crucial. Target-oriented, micro-planned approach is needed to reduce gender-based violence, protect women and adolescents, and provide access, services, and knowledge on sexual and reproductive health.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging youth in community development projects can not only improve their skills and confidence but also contribute to the overall well-being of their communities. Appropriate communication strategies need to be engaged.
- **Increasing youth participation** in governance processes (e.g. youth parliament) to address resource allocation disparities.
- **Access to Information and Technology:** Initiatives should be in place to improve access to information and technology, as these can be powerful tools for learning and personal development. It includes equipping youth with the digital skills necessary for specialized job

opportunities and fostering a digitally adept society.

- **Enhancing education, training, and upskilling,** particularly for domestic challenges, requires increased scale and depth.
- **Improving the capacity of Government departments** to plan, budget, and execute complex projects like secondary education, industrial training, and rural upskilling for all education levels. It includes building the capacity of institutions to deliver, track, and place youth in various industries, both domestically and internationally, and collaborating between Ministries and Secretariats on commonly accepted indicators – measured against the National Action Plan for Youth, and measuring the same effectively.
- **Improving the quality of employability initiatives** to equip young people with the skills and knowledge needed to compete in the job market.
- **Developing ecosystems** that foster entrepreneurship and engagement.
- **Integrating youth,** particularly those in the informal sectors, into the social protection system, promoting inclusivity and sustainability.

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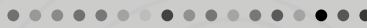
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