

Urgent maize and rice seed multiplication at rural community level in Timor-Leste (phase I and II)



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Timor-Leste

Duration: April 2000 to February 2002

Implementing UN Agencies: FAO

Other Implementing Partners: UNTAET; WFP; Catholic Relief Services; World Vision International; East Timor Transitional Authority

Budget: \$819,444.31

Key Words: Rural communities; agricultural development; food security; capacity-building

BACKGROUND

The violence that followed the August 1999 independence referendum in Timor-Leste did considerable damage to the country's agriculture. As much as 30 percent of farm families lost all their assets; agricultural equipment was stolen and destroyed; livestock and agricultural seeds were looted; and service and support facilities were heavily damaged. At the time, nearly 90 per cent of the population was dependent on farming or fishing and

the vast majority of farmers practiced family-based subsistence agriculture that generated low yields and kept agricultural productivity at persistently low levels. In addition, due to poor storage systems, about a third of stored maize was lost annually to insect predation. Together the combination of these factors contributed to the growing food insecurity and placed the country at risk of a looming food crisis.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Divided into two phases, the project intended to mitigate food insecurity and foster agricultural sustainability in the immediate post-conflict recovery period in Timor-Leste by way of (i) supplying maize and rice seeds in order to boost crop production; (ii)

promoting improved seed production techniques and crop diversification; and (iii) reducing post-harvest losses through the introduction of metal silos for seed storage.

BENEFICIARIES

The project distributed high-quality rice and maize seeds to 23,260 households who were able to resume cultivation. Making use of existing local capacities and resources, blacksmiths from all 13 Timorese Districts were trained in silo construction and, as a result, farmers could access locally manufactured silos

that allowed them to improve storage capacities and reduce post-harvest losses. Lastly, approximately 800 community leaders, field extension workers and farmers received training in new seed production techniques.