



Fast Facts

Country: Timor-Leste

Duration: March 2010 to August 2013

Implementing UN Agencies: UNDP; FAO; ILO; UNFPA; UNICEF; WFP

Other Implementing Partners: National Ministries; local authorities; civil society organisations

Budget: \$4,203,099.98

Key Words: Conflict-affected communities; poverty reduction; agricultural development; access to basic social services

BACKGROUND

Decades of violent conflict and civil unrest had destroyed much of the country's infrastructure and economy and led to the deaths of more than 100,000 people when Timor-Leste gained independence in 2002. While significant gains had been made towards consolidating peace and development during the first years of independence, the people of Timor-Leste still faced serious human security challenges. Threats to people's survival, livelihood and dignity were most pronounced in rural areas where underdevelopment in the agricultural sector as well as limited access to basic social services continued to hamper peacebuilding and development efforts. In particular,

in the districts of Ermera and Oecusse, two of the most isolated districts in Timor-Leste, extreme poverty and limited livelihood options had led to severe food insecurity, limited opportunities for education and high rates of maternal and child mortality. Moreover, in an environment of widespread unemployment and persistent social unrest, women and girls in these communities often suffered from gender-based violence. Subsequently, a people-centred, context-specific and comprehensive approach was needed to ensure that the dividends of the country's hard-won peace and independence could be shared by all social groups across every region of Timor-Leste.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Through a comprehensive human security response, the project aimed to protect and empower vulnerable people by reducing extreme poverty and promoting social inclusion in the delivery of basic services. With specific focus on female farmers, widows, unemployed youth, returning IDPs and food insecure people in the districts of Ermera and Oecusse, the project aimed to: (i) facilitate income generation and

improve food security through community mobilization and development; (ii) increase participation of children and out-of-school youth in educational activities; (iii) raise awareness of maternal and child health; and (iv) develop the capacity of service providers in planning and delivering basic services including water, sanitation, primary health and hygiene schemes.

BENEFICIARIES

The project was implemented in 17 communities in Ermera and Oecusse districts where 25,850 people benefitted by directly participating in project activities

and more than 160,000 people indirectly benefitted from positive outcomes of the project.



Credit: UNICEF



Credit: UNMIT

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) Through collaboration between UNDP, FAO and ILO, the project created more than 150 community-based self-help groups to reduce the vulnerability of households to hunger and poverty. Once established, the self-help groups received training on improved agricultural practices as well as entrepreneurship and business skills. Moreover, under the guidance of UNFPA, these groups also provided information and served as discussion forums on family planning and maternal health, which for the first time brought both men and women together around these issues.

(ii) At the same time, UNICEF supported learning activities for children and out-of-school youth within the communities. Approximately 2,500 children and out-of-school youth received literacy and life-skills training, and local community leaders and parents were involved in sessions to raise awareness on importance of education and literacy. Furthermore,

water and sanitation facilities were installed in 16 primary schools and outreach activities on proper hygiene were organized, targeting parents and teachers as well as students.

(iii) Lastly, after consultations with community members, infrastructure projects were implemented which enhanced the human security of vulnerable individuals and communities in a number of ways. For example, using WFP's food for work approach, feeder roads were constructed to improve access to markets and agricultural land; irrigation systems were rehabilitated to enhance agricultural production and improve food security; and water supply systems and latrines were installed for better sanitation. These improvements resulted in concrete and sustainable benefits for the health, economic and food security of the participating communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

In the aftermath of conflicts, when peace is often very fragile and the needs of people are far greater than the capacities available, this project highlighted the importance of a peacebuilding architecture that cultivates public participation, strengthens local ownership and governance, and minimizes the space in which communities may relapse into conflict. Faced with critical and pervasive insecurities, it became clear very early on that efforts to build and consolidate peace must be grounded in the needs and aspirations of local communities. Among these, the establishment of community-based self-help groups was considered central to promoting an inclusive framework for

reducing poverty, improving access to essential services and enhancing social inclusion. At the same time, by applying the protection and empowerment framework, the project not only provided protection from immediate economic, food and health insecurities, but also empowered vulnerable communities and built their capacities to tackle future challenges in a sustainable manner. This played an important role in fostering greater social cohesion and reinforcing local ownership in a stable and inclusive manner to further cement the country's hard-won peace and independence.