

FOREWORD

As we present the UN Timor-Leste Annual Report 2023-24, it is with a profound sense of responsibility and a deep commitment to the transformative journey embarked upon by the Government of Timor-Leste, in partnership with the United Nations System. This document serves not just as a record of the year's endeavours but as a testament to the collaborative efforts aimed at fostering sustainable development, enhancing social protection, and ensuring environmental and economic sustainability within the vibrant island nation of Timor-Leste.

The United Nations in Timor-Leste has been pivotal in supporting the nation's developmental journey through a comprehensive and collaborative approach. In 2023, amidst a backdrop of political transition and global economic uncertainties, the UN Country Team (UNCT) and its partners, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, have significantly contributed to the country's efforts in recovery, resilience-building, and sustainable development. The successful review and presentation of the Timor-Leste 2nd Voluntary National Review (VNR) have showcased a forward-looking approach towards sustainable development, with a significant emphasis on youth engagement and envisioning a future benchmarked against the SDGs.

In May 2023, the UN helped Timor-Leste run successful elections, making voting more inclusive with new methods like braille for visually impaired voters. This strengthened democracy in the country. Timor-Leste navigated a pivotal year with the smooth transition to the 9th Constitutional Government post-May 2023 elections, emphasizing economic growth and sustainable development amidst global challenges. Despite a projected GDP growth of 2.8% by the Asian Development Bank, fiscal management and investment remained areas for improvement, with socio-economic impacts further compounded by global inflation and climate-related challenges.

The UNCT's strategic interventions through the Cooperation Framework have been instrumental in achieving significant outcomes across nutrition, food security, economic opportunities, early childhood development, healthcare, governance, and environmental resilience. The Framework's alignment with national priorities and global strategies has facilitated impactful advancements in these areas, exemplifying the UN's commitment to inclusive and sustainable development in Timor-Leste. An instrumental shift in the operational paradigm of the UNSDCF Result Groups to function as 'Policy Think-Tanks' reflects a dynamic approach towards policy formulation, engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders from academia, civil society, media, and the government. This evolution from reporting entities to catalytic forums for policy discourse signifies a deepened partnership aimed at addressing complex development challenges.

Efforts to combat food insecurity and malnutrition saw considerable progress, with large-scale assessments and targeted interventions bolstering agricultural productivity and nutritional awareness. Healthcare advancements were notable in enhancing COVID-19 vaccination rates and addressing non-communicable diseases through pro-health taxes, alongside strides in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The unveiling of two pilot 'Investment Cases' in Food Security and Nutrition marks a strategic intervention towards mitigating the prevalent challenge of malnutrition, thereby accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative, rooted in a comprehensive 'Food Systems Transformation Analysis', exemplifies a concerted effort of the UN Resident Coordinator to forge a sustainable and inclusive development pathway in Timor-Leste. Key achievements include significant improvements in healthcare, particularly in COVID-19 response, nutrition and food security advancements, progress in early childhood education, and enhanced disaster management capabilities. The Report also highlights the concerted efforts in advocating for environmental and economic sustainability, particularly through the promotion of renewable energy sources. The transition of the UN Compound to 100% solar power not only represents a significant cost-saving initiative but also stands as a testament to our commitment to reducing carbon emissions and advocating for green energy solutions.

The report notes progress towards ASEAN membership, improving Timor-Leste's ties with neighbouring countries. However, challenges such as improving government budget use, addressing food insecurity and child malnutrition, and enhancing health and education still need attention.

The UN's Strategic Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) for 2023 was implemented with a budget of US\$50.6 million, with an expenditure of US\$40.1 million, reflecting a high level of resource utilization towards

strategic priorities. The report outlines the financial contributions and implementation efforts across various sectors, emphasizing the efficient use of resources in pursuit of the outlined strategic priorities.

This year also marked a significant step for Timor-Leste, with the government and the UN working together on a major plan for Atauro Island. Led by the Minister of State Administration and with the support of the UN, we launched a Strategic Development Plan, fuelled by a \$3 million fund. Our goal is to improve people's lives and the economy, especially through the Blue Economy, while protecting Atauro's natural beauty and wildlife.

Heading into 2024 and beyond, the UN team, led by the Resident Coordinator in Timor-Leste is set to intensify its support to align with the country's development ambitions, echoing the UN's Six Transitions for Systemic Impact across food systems, energy, digital connectivity, education, social protection, and climate change. This commitment is geared towards stimulating economic diversification, safeguarding human rights, broadening digital access, and fostering inclusivity. Our comprehensive strategy includes refining policy and regulatory frameworks in collaboration with Timor-Leste's government to support sustainable and inclusive growth. We're also focusing on developing investment-ready projects in key sectors such as renewable energy and digital infrastructure to attract both domestic and international investment. Furthermore, mobilizing financing through various partnerships and innovative funding mechanisms will play a crucial role in supporting Timor-Leste's priority sectors. Additionally, we're committed to building local capacity through targeted training and support, enhancing skills across project management, digital literacy, and environmental conservation. Through these integrated efforts, the UN aims to be a pivotal partner in Timor-Leste's journey towards sustainable development, ensuring that progress benefits all members of society.

UN COUNTRY TEAM

There are 23 UN Agencies in Timor-Leste, 16 residents and 7 non-residents.

No.	Agency Name	Agency	Physical Presence	UNCT Member
1	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	FAO	Resident	Yes
2	International Labour Organisation	ILO	Resident	Yes
3	International Organization for Migration	IOM	Resident	Yes
4	United Nations Capital Development Fund	UNCDF	Resident	Yes
5	United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF	Resident	Yes
6	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	UNCTAD	Resident	Yes
7	United Nations Department for Safety and Security	UNDSS	Resident	Yes

8	United Nations Development Programme	UNDP	Resident	Yes
9	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation	UNESCO	Resident	Yes
10	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	OHCHR	Resident	Yes
11	United Nations Population Fund	UNFPA	Resident	Yes
12	United Nations Volunteers	UNV	Resident	Yes
13	United Nations World Food Programme	WFP	Resident	Yes
14	UN Women	UN Women	Resident	Yes
15	World Health Organization	WHO	Resident	Yes
16	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	UNIDO	Resident	Yes
17	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia	UN ESCAP	Non-Resident	Yes
18	United Nations Environment Programme	UNEP	Non-Resident	Yes
19	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction	UNDRR	Non-Resident	Yes
20	United Nations Office for Project Services	UNOPS	Non-Resident	No
21	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	OCHA	Non-Resident	No
22	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	UNODC	Non-Resident	No

23	International Telecommunication Union	ITU	Non-Resident	No
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23
UN
agencies
in 2023



16 resident in Timor-leste
7 non-resident

CHAPTER 1: KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN TIMOR-LESTE

In 2023, Timor-Leste witnessed notable advancements across multiple sectors, marking strides forward despite persistent challenges. The smooth transition of power to the 9th constitutional government followed the successful parliamentary election on May 21, 2023. Under the leadership of Jose Alexander Gusmao ""Xanana"", the coalition led by CNRT and PD assumed office, ushering in a new era in the nation's political landscape and establishing the 9th Constitutional Government.

The strategic program for the upcoming five years (2023 – 2028) of the 9th Constitutional Government received unanimous approval from the National Parliament. Subsequently, in August 2023, the parliament also passed the 2023 budget adjustment. During its initial days, the government made significant headway across key sectors. The focus was on conducting a comprehensive review of existing processes, systems, and methodologies that impede economic growth and sustainable development. This involved restructuring the organisational frameworks of ministerial lines, revising the legal-administrative framework of national structures and policies, and delineating goals and priorities for the next five years.

Despite facing global economic uncertainties influenced by events such as the war in Ukraine, regional trade fragmentation and geopolitical tension, Timor-Leste continued its efforts to recover from the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating floods and continued El-Nino threat. The Asian Development Bank projected a 2.8% annual GDP growth for 2023, underscoring the resilience of the economy amidst challenges. However, execution rates of the 2023 Government General Budget fell

below expectations, impeding private consumption and investment and highlighting the need for effective fiscal management and governance.

Social and humanitarian issues remain pressing concerns, with food security challenges exacerbated by global price increases and climate change impacts. Acute food insecurity affected nearly 22% of the population, while child malnutrition continued to claim lives at alarming rates. In response, interventions aimed at bolstering agricultural productivity and fostering resilience were prioritised, with initiatives to improve access to nutritious food and enhance maternal and child health services.

Timor-Leste made strides in healthcare, particularly in COVID-19 vaccination efforts and health-focused taxation. By the end of 2022, vaccination rates were commendable, contributing to lower case numbers and fatalities compared to neighbouring countries. Pro-health taxes on products such as tobacco and sugary beverages aimed to mitigate non-communicable diseases. Furthermore, progress was made in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, with Timor-Leste actively participating in international frameworks and receiving support for strengthening disaster management capabilities.

The 9th Constitutional Government continues various strategies and programmes to support households and vulnerable populations such as the Cesta Basica programme, Bolsa da Mae programme, and cash payments aimed to alleviate socio-economic burdens, while investments in education targeted youth unemployment and human capital development. Additionally, in its budget rectification, the new government continues to prioritise education, with a focus on improving access and quality across

all levels. Investments in the education sector aimed to address high youth unemployment rates and enhance human capital development.

Timor-Leste strengthened its regional partnerships, with significant progress toward ASEAN membership. Following the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, ASEAN granted Timor-Leste observer status at high-level meetings, signalling a step closer to full membership, and enhancing regional cooperation. Thus, 2023 marked a year of transition, progress, and challenges for Timor-Leste. As the new government embarked on its endeavours to address socio-economic issues, strengthen resilience, and

foster regional engagement paved the way for a brighter future for the country and its people.

[The Government of Timor-Leste in 2023 \(rectified\)](#)

Budget US\$1.9 billion

Expenditure US\$1.4 billion

[The UNSDCF Implementation in 2023](#)

Budget US\$50.6 million

Expenditure US\$40.1 million

CHAPTER 2. UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES – THROUGH THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

2.1. Overview of Cooperation Frameworks Results

The UNCT in Timor-Leste made significant progress across its Cooperation Framework upon the three years of implementation, effectively responding to evolving national priorities, achieving notable results across various outcome areas, and aligning with UN regional and global strategies. Efforts led to substantial advancements in nutrition, food security, and agricultural productivity, impacting thousands through food security assessments and capacity-building initiatives. In economic opportunities and decent work, the UN supported social protection strategies, child welfare plans, and income generation, benefiting numerous community members and promoting gender equality. Early childhood education saw transformative progress, with thousands of children impacted through community-based preschools and educational enhancements. Additionally, the UN's focus on emergency readiness and response fortified Timor-Leste's disaster management capabilities, benefiting communities through infrastructure projects and renewable energy access. These achievements underscore the UNCT's effective response to evolving country situations, regional strategies, and global initiatives like the Spotlight initiative which

significantly enhanced the support for gender-based violence survivors, improved access and quality of GBV services nationwide, effectively raising awareness and knowledge of essential recovery services. These achievements showcasing a commitment to inclusive, sustainable development aligned with the SDGs.

In 2023, Timor-Leste saw notable advancements in addressing food insecurity, markedly improving from the risks identified in the updated Common Country Analysis (CCA). The UNCT's efforts led to the production of the nation's first Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity analysis and an update to the 2019 Cost of the Diet analysis, significantly enhancing evidence-based advocacy and capacity building. The largest Food Security Assessment to date covered 9,488 households, informing targeted interventions. These achievements demonstrate a comprehensive approach to mitigating food insecurity, leveraging local resources, and promoting nutritional education, significantly contributing to the country's resilience against food insecurity as previously outlined as the risks in the CCA.

SP1. Nutrition, Food Security, and Sustainable Agriculture

Timor-Leste made significant strides toward improving nutrition, food security, and agricultural productivity through collaborative efforts led by the UN and various stakeholders. Initiatives included the country's first IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis, a comprehensive Food Security Assessment covering 9,488 households, and the creation of 65 nutritionally balanced school meal menus. Efforts also enhanced health and nutrition services, reaching over 85,000 people with social media campaigns on nutrition and treating 2,827 children for Severe Acute Malnutrition with a 73% cure rate. Agricultural advancements supported 7,200 households with modern farming techniques and rehabilitated irrigation canals, benefiting 650 farming households. These comprehensive actions aim to ensure equitable improvement in the lives of all Timorese, showcasing a commitment to leaving no one behind..

SP2. Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Decent Work for All

Timor-Leste advanced in creating sustainable economic opportunities, focusing on inclusivity. Key achievements included the launch of its first Social Security Portal, finalization of the Child Labour National Action Plan, and significant enhancements to the social protection framework. Notably, the Cash for Work program employed 4,128 individuals, while entrepreneurship training benefited over 743 youths. Additionally, 349 youth entrepreneurs received support across all municipalities, and the soft loan initiative enabled 8 MSMEs to secure loans. The UN's efforts in cultural preservation and economic empowerment through green agri-enterprises training for 115 rural youths and funding for 33 youth-led enterprises underscored a comprehensive approach to economic development and decent work in Timor-Leste. These achievements mark substantial steps towards Timor-Leste's goals for 2025.

SP3. Early Childhood Development and Life-long Learning Outcomes and Skills

The UN significantly advanced early childhood education in Timor-Leste, impacting 3,084 children through 96 community preschools and preparing 977 children for grade 1 with the help of 164 trained facilitators. The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics field trial involved 1,714 students, enhancing learning assessment capabilities. WASH facilities improvements and ICT education enhancements, including the Timor-Leste Learning Passport Platform, were notable. Efforts for inclusive education strengthened support for children with disabilities, with significant advancements in occupational therapy training and communication support. Additionally, innovative approaches to address social stigmas and promote inclusive dialogue reached thousands, while pioneering teacher training modules for history education aimed at peacebuilding were developed. Comprehensive Sexuality Education training certified 45 trainers, supporting youth education on critical topics. Legislative advancements and policy development efforts, such as the Decree Law on teacher competencies, aligned with SEAMEO standards, marking a commitment to enhancing education quality and teacher standards in Timor-Leste.

SP4: Quality Healthcare and Well-being

Timor-Leste made strides in healthcare, notably increasing skilled birth attendants from 30% to 57% and aiming to reduce under-5 mortality. With UN support, it enhanced midwifery education and inaugurated a new BEmONC centre, improving GBV response. The National AIDS Institute's plan and UN-backed initiatives led to widespread HIV testing, reaching nearly 12,000 people. Efforts in capacity building and digital health advancements were key, alongside significant enhancements in routine immunizations, achieving a 90% coverage rate. The UN's support in critical care, capacity building, and health infrastructure, including a \$260,000 procurement for essential

SP5: Accountable, Inclusive and Participatory Governance and Quality Public Services

Timor-Leste saw remarkable progress across peacebuilding, gender equality, and human rights, highlighted by the establishment of its first National Mediation Network and Community Mobiliser Networks to combat human trafficking. Efforts to combat workplace violence led to the development of a Pocket Guide, significantly enhancing GBV support and services, reaching over 74,305 individuals. Legal advancements included the Protection of Children and Youth in Danger Law, alongside a notable increase in female voter turnout and the election of the first female President of the National Parliament. Health sector improvements featured the development of disability and gender-

SP6: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Resilience to Climate Change

Timor-Leste, with the UN's support, significantly enhanced its emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Key initiatives included deploying Disaster AWARE Pro to extend early warning systems, protecting 5,200 individuals from agricultural droughts through the Anticipatory Action Protocol, and documenting over 30 first-hand accounts of natural disasters to improve future strategies. Efforts also focused on training 61,000 individuals in disaster risk management, completing 18 climate-resilient infrastructure projects, and improving renewable energy access for 7,000 rural residents. Additionally, a new Marine Protected Area was

health commodities, marked a year of comprehensive health system strengthening in Timor-Leste.

related indicators for the HMIS Strategic Action Plan. The year also marked the reactivation of the "Women in Leadership and Diplomacy Forum" and the development of Standard Operating Procedures for emergency protection by IOM and UNICEF, underscoring a commitment to inclusivity, safety, and resilience.

established, covering 51,000 hectares, as part of efforts to manage coastal and marine resources effectively

2.2. Cooperation Framework priorities, outcomes and outputs

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Nutrition, Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture



By 2025, nutrition, food security and agricultural productivity have improved for all, irrespective of individual ability, gender, age, socio-economic status and geographical location.

Strategic Priority (SP)1

Contributing agencies

WFP, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, FAO, UNEP

 **2,063**

out of 2,827 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), achieving a 73% cure rate through malnutrition treatment & prevention programme with UN support in 2023¹

 **40**

governmental and non-governmental institutions increased their capacity to design, implement and fund policies preventing and reducing malnutrition and promoting

healthy diets with UN support in 2023²



All Municipalities benefited from Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions with UN support in 2023. WASH services were upgraded in 13 CHCs and expanded to 32 more CHCs across seven new municipalities, achieving total coverage in 13 municipalities since 2020. the total municipalities

The concerted efforts and pivotal achievements under outcome area 1, aimed at enhancing nutrition, food security, and agricultural productivity for all individuals in Timor-Leste, irrespective of their ability, gender, age, socio-economic status, and geographical location. With the support of the UN and other key stakeholders, has embarked on a transformative journey to address the critical challenges of food insecurity, malnutrition, and inadequate agricultural productivity. Our overarching goal is to ensure equitable improvement in nutrition and food security, catalysing agricultural advancements that benefit every segment of the population.

During the 2023, UN have put together the efforts to achieve its commitment including contribution to the

Evidence-Based Advocacy and Capacity Building have been produced the country's first-ever IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis, updated the 2019 Cost of the Diet analysis, and conducted the largest Food Security Assessment covering 9,488 households. Designed 65 nutritionally balanced school meals menus under School Meals Program Enhancement by using locally sourced ingredients and trained 655 school feeding management teams across thirteen municipalities. Additionally, increased capacity-building efforts, training 215 government staff on fortified rice and nutrition, significantly up from the previous year and a successful social media on nutrition and health campaign reached over 85,000 people.

¹ Output indicator 2.4/ 2.1.1_6.

² Output indicator 2.3/ 2.1.1_2.

Some progressive initiatives have been taken by the UN on Health and Nutrition Assessments, in which Supported the assessment of food environments, focusing on HFSS foods, and institutionalised a standard training package for health workers on optimal nutrition behaviours and healthy diets. Breastfeeding Promotion Campaign have been launched a year-long national campaign, resulting in the promulgation of the National Decree Law for the regulation of marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

Additionally on the Nutrition and Health Services have been reached 2,827 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) treatment, achieving a 73% cure rate, and supported the expansion of the Mother Support Group (MSG) network, training 120 health workers and 4,223 MSG members on infant and young child feeding. To be more contributed to the health service, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services across 13 Community Health Centers have been enhanced.

On agricultural practices, the UN in collaboration with the government has supported development of the suco plan and vision, improving food security and nutrition for 244 households. UN has also expanded

Conservation Agriculture (CA), Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), and Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) to 10 municipalities, 84 suco, which benefited more than 7,200 households. To enhance the sustainability for the farmer, the training for 344 farmer groups was conducted for CA/CSA and NSA techniques, covering 3,800 ha of agricultural land, and rehabilitated 36 small irrigation canals, benefiting over 650 farming households and restoring 1,000 ha of paddy field. The UN has also procured 23 MT maize seeds, provided to 5,200 households as an incentive for adopting improved agricultural practices.

These collective efforts have significantly strengthened Timor-Leste's capacity in food security, nutrition, education, and social protection, showcasing a successful collaboration between international agencies, government partners, and local communities. The collaborative efforts detailed in this report underscore a significant stride towards realising our shared vision for Timor-Leste by 2025. By harnessing the strengths of each partner and focusing on inclusive, sustainable approaches, we are poised to make substantial progress in improving the lives of all Timorese, aligning with our commitment to leave no one behind.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2


Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Decent Work For All




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.

SP2 Contributing partners

UNDP, ILO, IOM, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNCDF, UN WOMEN, FAO, UNV, ITU

 **146** thousand registered workers and **4,700** employers are benefitting from the Social Security Portal which was launched in 2023 with UN support. The portal aims to inform the people and employers, disseminating information in a transparent and clear way³.

 **4 out of 7** targeted policies in 2023 on national social protection policies to extend coverage, enhance comprehensiveness and/or increase adequacy of benefits, with UN support⁴

³https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/public/pr/WCMS_914559/lang--en/index.htm

⁴ Output Indicator 1.1 Number of new or revised national social protection policies to extend coverage, enhance

comprehensiveness and/or increase adequacy of benefits, with UN support



648 private sector entities (including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)) with

In 2023, the United Nations enhanced the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion's capacity by developing tools for effectively implementing the National Strategy of Social Protection 2021-2030. This support led to accurate cost estimates for reforms in national financing schemes like Bolsa da Mae Jersaun Foun, the social pension, school feeding programs, and maternal and child health care expenditures. Additionally, the launch of Timor-Leste's first Social Security Portal by the National Institute of Social Security (INSS) marked a significant advancement, offering a user-friendly online platform for citizens, workers, and employers to access social security information, thereby streamlining the delivery of social protection programs.

By June 2023, Timor-Leste achieved a significant milestone in child welfare by finalizing its inaugural Child Labour National Action Plan (NAP), which was subsequently presented to the Labour Inspector General, the National Commission, and the Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs (MECAE). This development represents a key strategic advancement in the nation's efforts to address and mitigate child labour.

Additionally, the UN played a pivotal role in enhancing Timor-Leste's social protection framework. Key achievements include the revision of national legislative provisions for improved social protection coverage, aligning them with the country's needs and ILO Convention 102 standards. A governance structure for the National Strategy of Social Protection 2021-2030 was established, including the National Council of Social Protection, an Executive Secretariat, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group. Further to that, legislation was enacted to create an intersectoral statistics group for social protection, tasked with key indicator calculations and the publication of Timor-Leste's first social protection statistics bulletin. Efforts also included reviewing the hazardous child labour work list decree law, preparing a legal assessment for ILO Convention No. 190 implementation, and drafting new laws against workplace violence and harassment, involving extensive consultations across

improved performance, business transactions, and/or income generation as a result of UN support.⁵

six municipalities. These strategic developments mark significant progress toward strengthening social security and protecting vulnerable populations in Timor-Leste.

The UN effectively promoted income generation in Timor-Leste, focusing on young men and women through various initiatives. The Cash for Work program, aimed at rehabilitating irrigation canals, provided employment to 4,128 community members, including significant participation from youth and women. Additionally, a job match-making scheme through internships secured full-time jobs for 70 university graduates. In the Oecusse region, the introduction of innovative farming techniques boosted the incomes of approximately 123 farmers. Furthermore, over 743 youths benefited from entrepreneurship training, acquiring skills for income generation and job creation, including structured entrepreneurship programs and green agri-enterprises training.

In 2023, the UN significantly empowered micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Timor-Leste, focusing on youth and women-led businesses by facilitating access to finance and seed funding. A total of 349 youth entrepreneurs across all municipalities, including Oecussi and Atauro Island, benefited from this initiative. The UN also organised promotional events like the Entrepreneurship Expo and Tais Cultural Exhibition to showcase local products. Furthermore, a soft loan initiative with BNCTL enabled 8 MSMEs to secure loans for sustainable financial access. To foster green Agri-enterprises among the youth, the UN integrated green job initiatives into the National Youth Action Plan 2023-2027, training 115 rural youths and funding 33 youth-led green enterprises. The UN efforts in cultural preservation included launching a Tais Cultural Exhibition Center and hosting a workshop on Tais Certification, promoting economic benefits for weavers and cultural heritage to younger generations.

Various supports have been provided by UN agencies to both creating sustainable economic development and promoting decent works to all. A series of entrepreneurship training, support on

⁵ Output Indicator 8.2. The percentage increase approximately 30.65% from the targeted 496 in 2023.

access to finance, and promotional events have been implemented in 2023 to generate sustainable jobs especially for young women and men. The main reflection is to promote a more integrated approach in organising the supports, for instance, by streamlining the various entrepreneurship training and channelling all trainees to financial access through various platforms, such as business competition, seed funding, and low interest loan guarantee scheme. Similar for the promotional events, thematic promotional events can be organised periodically in a more integrated manner to not only build a clear

narrative of the UN but also to effectively measure the impacts. This integrated support will also help the UN to formulate concise policy recommendations for instance in MSMEs development or business enabling environment. A series of policy work in strengthening the national social security system as well as promoting decent works for all was completed in 2023. The key takeaway is to ensure the policy formulation is translated and embodied to the 'government's program and various employment support provided by the UN on the ground.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Early Childhood Development and Life-Long Learning Outcomes and Skills



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 lifelong learning) and acquire foundational, transferable, digital and job-specific skills.

SP3 Contributing partners

UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP, UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, FAO, WHO



3,922 people directly benefiting from

improved access to skills and lifelong learning including for comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), developed and implemented with UN support in 2023⁶

Over **2,500** individuals reached, as part of the efforts to combat social stigmas, like menstruation

and disability inclusion, involved engaging educational and community groups through innovative methods, including theatre performances that showcasing improved understanding on sensitive topics.

6,226 children from pre-school to grade 1 benefited from Early Childhood Education and Readiness programme through 96 community-based preschools and 71 schools.

The UN embarked on a mission to transform the landscape of early childhood education in Timor-Leste under the outcome area 3, marking a year of significant progress and outreach. This has been impacting 3,084 children through 96 community-based preschools. A strategic initiative ensured 977 children are set for grade 1 in 2024, complemented by specialised training for 164 facilitators. The establishment of an Early Childhood Development Steering Committee underlines 'UN's high-level advocacy for integrated ministerial efforts in education. Expanding the School Readiness Program to 71 schools benefited 3,142 grade 1 students, and

engaging 199 teachers, 226 young facilitators, 514 parents, and 751 community members in educational and community activities.

In October 2023, the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) field trial marked a significant achievement, involving 1,714 students. This initiative, supported by the UN and the Ministry of Education (MoE), aims at enhancing learning assessment capabilities. The success of the field trial was underpinned by comprehensive capacity building for MoE officials, including data management and coding training. The comprehensive review of WASH

⁶ Output indicator 4.3. In 2023, there was a significant increase in outcomes compared to the previous year,

with the number of beneficiaries rising from 847 in 2022 to 3,922, far surpassing the target of 900 set for the year.

facilities in 18 schools led to the initiation of construction for improved sanitation in 8 schools, with completion expected in early 2024. A detailed assessment among 249 teachers on ICT in education highlighted key challenges and shaped the refinement of training modules, including the Timor-Leste Learning Passport Platform, where 51 teachers received specialised training.

Following the National Parliament's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN's proactive support for inclusive education led to tangible outcomes. This includes strengthening ALMA Sisters, an organisation dedicated to children with disabilities, by training 19 staff members in occupational therapy. Collaboration with a Chilean start-up facilitated the localization of the C-Board app into Tetum, enhancing communication support for children with disabilities across three institutions, involving 63 staff members. Cboard is an open source Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) application created to support children and adults with speech and language impairments. Additionally, 47 facilitators and field officers were equipped with the Child Functioning Screening Tool, advancing early disability detection and educational access.

Additionally, efforts to combat social stigmas, like menstruation and disability inclusion, involved engaging educational and community groups through innovative methods, including theatre performances that reached 2,500 individuals, showcasing improved understanding on sensitive topics. The 'Back to School' campaign encouraged timely school enrollment through widespread media. Moreover, 'Girls' clubs' in 20 schools promoted inclusive dialogue, benefiting 400 students and PTA representatives, reinforcing UNICEF's leadership in education advocacy as evidenced by its re-election as Co-chair of the Local Education Group.

In 2023, UN's work in Timor-Leste marked significant progress in education reform, guided by global recommendations on education for peace, human rights, and sustainable development. Through a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Education, INFORDEPE, and Chega National Centre, UN

developed pioneering teacher training modules for history education. These modules, designed for basic and secondary education levels, offer transformative pedagogies aimed at peace-building. Additionally, the UN facilitated the formation of history teacher networks, engaging over 200 educators in workshops to enhance the quality of history and peace education across the nation.

In 2023, UN Timor-Leste successfully conducted three Training of Trainers sessions in Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), certifying 45 trainers. This initiative, aimed at both in-school and out-of-school settings, was led by the UN's expert team. The certified trainers are now equipped to deliver CSE, GBV, and SRH training as per the developed manuals. Additionally, UN's advocacy efforts resulted in the release of the National Action Plan for Youth, with plans to extend its reach by translating it into English and Portuguese. These initiatives address critical needs among Timor-Leste's youth, with 60.7% of the total population younger than 25 years old, 33% aged between 10 and 24, particularly given the high youth population and challenges such as unemployment around 14% and access to education for around 20,3%.

Timor-Leste advanced teacher quality and educational outcomes through the Decree Law 31/2023, defining mandatory teacher competencies in languages, scientific knowledge, pedagogy, and ethics, aligning with SEAMEO standards. This move reflects the nation's commitment to enhancing education quality through improved teacher competencies and international alignment. The UN conducted situational analysis supported Timor-Leste's educational policy development efforts, identifying a critical need for a national teacher competency framework to address inconsistencies in teaching and learning quality across regions. The report, completed in December 2023 and submitted to the Ministry of Education, underscores the impact of lacking a comprehensive framework and recommends the development of one to enhance teaching standards and competencies.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Quality Healthcare and Well-Being



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.

SP4 Contributing partners

WHO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, WFP, FAO, UN WOMEN



1.3

million people benefitted from the UN-supported health services in 2023⁷



41

out of 41 scores rated as a strength level of the primary health care system supported by UN in 2023⁸



16

national policies on health developed and adopted⁹ in accord with human rights standards with UN support in 2023

Despite challenges posed by national elections and leadership changes in the Ministry of Health, 2023 has seen significant progress in health and well-being, contributing to the achievement of SDG-2030 health targets. This progress is attributed to the concerted efforts of the UN, providing comprehensive support from national strategic planning to local implementation. Significant achievements include the strengthening of critical health systems, development of policies and strategies, strengthening its primary healthcare system by enhancing the availability, accessibility, and quality of health services, workforce, and facilities with the support of the United Nations and other international partners. These milestones, supported by technical assistance from the UN, are instrumental in driving forward Timor-Leste's health initiatives.

The nation broadened the scope of its essential healthcare services, incorporating a comprehensive approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), HIV, and Family Planning, with the guidance and support of the UN. A key achievement in this endeavour was the notable increase in skilled birth attendants, rising from 30% to 57%, alongside a concerted effort to reduce the under-5 mortality rate from 22 to 26 over the past decade.

With UN's assistance, the Ministry of Health ensured that midwifery schools met the International

Confederation of Midwives (ICM) standards for high-quality pre-service education. A significant achievement was the completion of the 13th competency based EmONC training batch, which included midwives and medical doctors from 8 different municipalities, totaling 154 healthcare providers skilled in EmONC across the country. The inauguration of a new Basic Emergency Obstetric Neonatal Care centre (BEmONC) in Atauro, along with three safe spaces within health facilities were established in Ermera, Bobonaro, and Liquiça for GBV victims, further exemplifies the country's dedication to improving healthcare services and infrastructure. These complement the integrated healthcare approach provided by the community health centres in Vera Cruz and Comoro, which offer first-line support to GBV survivors.

In 2023, the National AIDS Institute (INCSIDA) launched a comprehensive 5-year National Strategic Plan (2024-2028) to align and enhance national efforts for HIV prevention, aiming to meet the ambitious targets set in the Timor-Leste National Strategic Plan for HIV, STIs, and Viral Hepatitis (2022-2026). Timorese Civil Society Organizations, with UN support, successfully delivered SRHR-HIV information, care, and support to People Living with HIV. Concurrently, the Ministry of Health, backed by the Global Fund and UN, facilitated HIV testing for nearly 12,000 individuals, ensuring prompt referral for HIV-positive cases to ART services for treatment

⁷ Output indicator 3.3/3.8.1_2

⁸ Output indicator 3.2/3.8.1_1.

⁹ Output indicator 3.1/3.3.5_1

initiation. The culminating point of the great stride made in the area of HIV was the successful piloting of the Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) introduced within the key population and adopted by more than 200 beneficiaries.

Through capacity-building initiatives, such as clean and safe delivery and essential newborn care training, health worker competency has been significantly enhanced, addressing the challenge of low skilled delivery rates and antenatal care engagement. The review and update of the National RMNCAH Strategy and the National Immunization Strategy, supported by the UN, alongside the expansion of digital health technologies, exemplify the ongoing commitment to strengthening Timor-Leste's health system infrastructure.

The UN significantly enhanced healthcare services by supporting critical care units in regional hospitals, establishing simulation labs for health workforce capacity building, and initiating colposcopy clinics for early cervical cancer detection and management. Further achievements include the formation of the National Codex Committee for food safety, implementation of pro-health taxation on tobacco, alcohol, and sugary drinks, and advocacy for breastfeeding promotion and non-communicable disease (NCD) risk factor reduction. Additionally, the UN has played a pivotal role in the formulation of a decree law regulating the market for breast milk substitutes, expanding tobacco cessation centres, and introducing open gyms across all municipalities to promote healthy behaviours.

Through collective support the UN achieved a 90% coverage rate for routine immunizations, 80% for the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), and 95% PCV coverage for infants under one year in each municipality. A nationwide deworming campaign in schools and a successful pre certification mission for malaria elimination further exemplify UN's commitment to improving public health. The UN has bolstered the Timor-Leste Health Information System (TLHIS), achieving over 98% monthly reporting rates from each municipality.

UN's efforts in capacity building have led to the development of the first National Training Policy, institutionalising in-service training for healthcare professionals nationwide. This includes training in Basic Emergency Care, National Basic Life Support, maternal and perinatal death reporting, and essential newborn care, among others. NCD screening and control activities have seen substantial expansion, with significant improvements in oral health, eye care, and mental health initiatives. RG-4 also supported the Department of Health Financing to implement pro-health taxes and Health Budget Execution Study. Finalisation of National health Accounts is underway, which will help in monitoring the national health expenditures for better planning and resource management in the country. Through the Third-Party Procurement (TPP) system with the UN, the Government of Timor-Leste mobilised an additional USD \$260,000 in 2023 for the procurement of family planning commodities, essential medicines, and life-saving equipment, showcasing a commitment to bolstering health infrastructure and services.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Accountable, Inclusive and participatory governance and quality public services



By 2025, the most excluded people of Timor-Leste will be empowered to claim their rights, including freedom from violence, through accessibility, accountability and gender.

SP5 Contributing Partners

UN WOMEN, UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, UNESCO, ILO, WHO, OHCHR/HRAU, WFP, FAO



8 measures implemented with UN support to gender equality in 2023¹⁰

8 gender-responsive, conflict-sensitive development institutions, policies, plans, or cross-border initiatives in place, with UN support in 2022

Significant progress made in meaningful participation of right-holders, especially women and discriminated groups, reached **102,491** direct beneficiaries and **836,569** indirect beneficiaries, with more than 171,446 girls and 1601,276 boys, and; while advancing the principle of LNOB, the two joint programme reached directly 956 PwD, as well as 491 individuals identifying themselves as members of the LGBTI community. supported by the UN in 2023¹¹

Substantial oversight, accountability and protection mechanisms are in place and functioning, which conforms to international human rights standards, with UN support in 2023

In 2023, Timor-Leste marked a pivotal year with significant strides in peacebuilding, gender equality, and human rights, with the collaborative efforts of the UN. On 31 July, the nation celebrated the launch of its first National Mediation Network, a milestone in enhancing national mediation capacity. This initiative, fostered by the cooperation between eight line ministries, one civil society organisation, and the National Directorate for Community Conflict Prevention within the Ministry of Interior, aimed to promote gender-responsive mediation and women's participation in peacebuilding. It aligns with the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, emphasising the prevention of conflict escalation and the promotion of social cohesion. This work directly contributes to two critical national priorities - security and justice sector reforms. Timor has a dual justice system, the people, especially women, prefer the alternate dispute resolution mechanisms as they are easily accessible. The establishment of a mediation network will reduce the structural barriers that women face in accessing dispute resolution services, which will lead to an increase in 'women's leadership and participation in dispute resolution.

The Government of Timor-Leste does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Timor-Leste was upgraded to Tier 2. To further strengthen government's efforts the Ministry of Interior, with UN support, established Community Mobiliser Networks (MCN) in four municipalities recognized for their susceptibility to human trafficking—Dili, Bobonaro, Covalima, and Oecusse. These networks focus on enhancing community awareness, improving responses to trafficking cases, and challenging the stigma faced by survivors, showcasing a united front against human trafficking and gender-based violence. The CMNs directly engaged with over 300 community members across the target municipalities, identified and trained women and men community leaders, first-line responders and national experts to increase knowledge and raise awareness about human trafficking and related forms of exploitation and GBV, mitigate stigmatisation of survivors and ensure increased capacity of the local communities to prevent and respond to human trafficking in a gender-responsive way.

The Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment, alongside the Trade Union Confederation and Chamber of Commerce, took a stand against workplace violence and harassment by developing a Pocket Guide, with a Bipartite Agreement signed in December 2023 to ensure its implementation. This initiative is part of a broader effort to create safer work environments across Timor-Leste.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, the UN reached out to 74,305 individuals, significantly improving access to and the quality of services for gender-based violence survivors. This was achieved by partnering with 21 civil society organisations, illustrating a

¹⁰ Output indicator 5.2

¹¹ Output indicator 16.4. based on the two GBV Joint Programme such as Spotlight Initiative (SI) and Together for equality (T4E) in 2023.

nationwide commitment to supporting women and girls, with thousands gaining knowledge of essential GBV services and recovery services by the year's end.

The legal landscape saw advancements as well, with the enactment of the Protection of Children and Youth in Danger Law in 2023. This was complemented by a comprehensive capacity-building program that included the rollout of child protection laws, training for judicial actors, and the professionalisation of 125 social service workers. The operationalization of the Child Marker in state budgeting highlighted a significant shift towards prioritising children's wellbeing. The UN in partnership with the Ministry Of Finance supported the integration of the Child Marker in the Government budgetary system. The high-level advocacy efforts resulted in significantly increased government budget allocations for areas such as preschool (by 230 per cent) and nutrition (252 per cent).

The political arena witnessed a notable increase in female voter turnout in the 2023 Parliamentary Election, buoyed by the UN's efforts to strengthen 'women's leadership and participation in elections. This not only led to a 2.3% increase in female voter turnout but also the historic election of the first female President of the National Parliament, signalling a breakthrough in gender equality in governance. The total voter turnout for the 2023 Parliamentary Election was 705,638 (80.3%), disaggregated by women 343,268 (48.6%) and men 362,415 (51.4%).

In support of the Timor-Leste Parliamentary election, the UN supported the media to strengthen the National Fact-Checking Alliance, consisting of students, journalists, and academics. This included a series of trainings on fact-checking, pre-bunking and incorporating media literacy in the alliance's operations. The UN also enhanced the independence and capacity of the Timorese media to provide public interest reporting on climate change as well as to play an active role in disaster preparedness and risk reduction. This included capacity-building trainings, story grants as well as

roundtable discussions between the Press Council, the media and the government (including the Ministry of Social Communications and the Civilian Protection Authority) on establishing protocols and escalation mechanisms for ensuring access to and release of critical information during crises.

The Municipal Finance Law, adopted in 2023 with UN support, alongside initiatives to build capacities

among municipal public servants and improve support mechanisms for GBV victims, underscored a commitment to strengthening local governance and enhancing legal and trauma-sensitive approaches for GBV victims.

In the health sector, the UN collaborated with the Ministry of Health to develop disability and gender-related indicators for the National HMIS Strategic Action Plan 2024-2030. This effort, aimed at improving data collection on violence against women and girls in the health sector, sets a new standard for health monitoring and evaluation in Timor-Leste.

Additionally, the reactivation of the "Women in Leadership and Diplomacy Forum" in September 2023, with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, has created a vibrant network of over 90 national and international women leaders. This forum stands as a testament to the ongoing efforts to dismantle leadership barriers in governance and diplomacy.

In a significant milestone for the country, the law on the Protection of Children and Youth in Danger, which draws key elements from the Child Rights Convention (CRC), was passed by the National Parliament and promulgated by the President, showing a high level of political commitment to strengthen the child protection system. The law was widely consulted and developed with technical assistance from the UN. This was followed by a review of the standard operating procedures (SOP) for child protection. Other key legislations, such as the open regime regulation decree law for children in detention, SOP for birth registration, civil registration and vital statistics resolution and road map, also progressed to the final stages.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6

Sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to climate change




By 2025, national and sub-national institutions and communities (particularly at-risk populations, including women and children) in Timor-Leste will be 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.

SP6 Contributing Partners

IOM, UNDP, UNEP, UNDRR, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, ILO, UNIDO, WFP, UNESCO

 **75** ha preserved as Marine Protected Area (MPA) for sustainable land management, supported by the UN in 2023.¹²

 **7,000** households reached by clean, affordable, and sustainable energy with UN support in 2023¹³

Timor-Leste has made remarkable strides in bolstering its readiness and response to emergencies in 2023. The UN led the charge by enhancing emergency coordination through detailed logistics assessments, broadened the nation's early warning capabilities with the rollout of Disaster AWARE Pro, ensuring that timely alerts reached every corner of the country. The UN took significant steps to shield 5,200 people from the impacts of agricultural drought by implementing its Anticipatory Action Protocol, complemented by a monitoring mechanism that utilised the Combined Drought Index for early detection.

In a unique collaboration, the 'UN's through UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the Indonesian Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) embarked on a mission to document firsthand accounts from over 30 witnesses and survivors of earthquakes and tsunamis in Flores sea, Indonesia in 1995. This invaluable historical data is set to enhance

future preparedness efforts, ensuring that lessons from the past inform the strategies of tomorrow.

UN agencies worked in concert to fortify the disaster response framework of Timor-Leste, both at the national and community levels. The UN equipped officials with skills in multi-hazard mapping and drone usage, disaster risk management training programs reached an impressive 61,000 individuals, including contribution to logistics and supply chain management training enriched the capabilities of 382 government personnel, preparing them for swift action in times of need. Under UN's guidance, Timor-Leste saw the completion of 18 schemes of climate-resilient infrastructure projects, spanning rural roads, water systems, and more, alongside agroforestry interventions across 70 hectares in 24 villages. Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed to ensure the sustainability of these investments and disseminate best practices.

This initiative not only enhanced the nation's infrastructure but also supported environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. The UN has improved the access to renewable energy for 7,000 rural residents excluded from the formal grid, providing solar panel lights and water pumps to 1,000 households, meanwhile conducted environmental assessments and implemented nature-based solutions for water catchment management in certain regions and replant traditional Tais raw materials, like cotton trees, in targeted areas like in Oecusse to

¹² Output indicator 15.3/15.5.11. It was implemented at 24 sucos to support 21 highly disaster prone prioritized Small Scale Rural Infrastructures (16 rural roads, 2 water supply system and 3 irrigation schemes).

¹³ Output indicator 7.3 (7.1.1_6). In 2023, there was a significant increase in outcomes compared to the previous year, with the number of household reached rising from 1,000 in 2022 to 7,000 far surpassing the target of 10% set for the year.

improve water resource management and reduce the risks of landslides and soil erosion.

The 'UN's collaboration with Indonesia on sustainable fisheries bore fruit with the finalisation of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and the adoption of a Regional Strategic Action Plan. This partnership was instrumental in building the capacities of fishing communities for climate adaptation. Additionally, the 'UN's efforts in coastal and marine resource management culminated in the creation of a new Marine Protected Area, safeguarding 51,000 hectares of marine biodiversity.

Despite these achievements, challenges such as limited disaster risk management resources, coordination gaps, and sustainability concerns for

solar power systems persist. Advocacy efforts continue to highlight the need for integrated climate adaptation measures, improved coordination, and dedicated government funding for disaster risk reduction and management.

Looking forward to 2024, the UN is set to deepen its commitment to Timor-Leste by focusing on enhancing the capacities of government staff and stakeholders in disaster management, completing key infrastructure projects, and supporting the implementation of the National Disaster Risk Management Strategy. These efforts aim to reinforce early warning systems, emergency response capabilities, and the management of coastal and marine resources, ensuring that Timor-Leste is better prepared to face the challenges of tomorrow.

2.3. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

On January 12, 2023, Timor-Leste embarked on a groundbreaking journey to fortify its public health defences against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic with the official launch of an integrated immunisation campaign. This initiative, a collaboration between WHO, UNICEF, and other key partners, epitomised a holistic approach to healthcare by amalgamating routine immunizations with COVID-19 vaccinations, and augmenting these efforts with deworming and vitamin A supplementation.

The essence of this campaign was to counter the disruptions experienced by routine health programs due to the pandemic. As COVID-19 spread, the continuity of essential immunisation activities was challenged, with healthcare workers often redeployed to pandemic response duties and parents increasingly wary of exposing their children to the virus at health facilities. Amid these challenges, Timor-Leste's health authorities recognized the critical need to rejuvenate their immunisation efforts, leading to the innovative integrated campaign that aimed to leave no one behind.

This ambitious campaign targeted a broad spectrum of the population, offering vaccines against Measles Rubella (MR), Oral Polio (OPV), and Pneumococcal diseases (PCV) to the young, alongside Vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets for children under five. Meanwhile, individuals over the age of 12 were encouraged to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations, ensuring comprehensive protection across all age groups.

Parallel to these efforts, UNFPA and WHO intensified their initiatives to raise awareness about the prevention, transmission, and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Their collaborative endeavours culminated in the observance of World AIDS Day on December 1, 2023, marking a pivotal moment in the nation's fight against HIV/AIDS. This was further bolstered by the successful piloting of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) within the key population HIV Prevention program, exceeding its target by reaching 214 beneficiaries.

The year 2023 also saw the successful development and implementation of the 5-year National Strategic Plan by the National AIDS Institute (INCSIDA), with UNFPA's unwavering support. This strategic plan laid the groundwork for comprehensive HIV testing across the country, reaching an impressive milestone of 11,855 beneficiaries and surpassing the target set in collaboration with the Global Fund and the Ministry of Health.

Through these concerted efforts, Timor-Leste not only demonstrated its commitment to overcoming the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic but also showcased its dedication to the long-term health and well-being of its citizens. The integrated immunisation campaign and the strides made in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment

exemplify the nation's resilience and proactive approach to public health, setting a precedent for future healthcare initiatives.

[Funding, Contributing and Implementing Partners, and the SDGs in Timor-Leste](#)

To be included once all 2023 data updated in the UN INFO.

Note: From the left to the right, the figure shows the funding flows from contributing partners, SDGs, and implementing partners.

2.4. Results of the UN working more and better together: UN coherence, effectiveness and efficiency

Programme Management Team (PMT)

In 2023, the UN Programme Management Team (PMT) was established in Timor-Leste, marking a pivotal advancement in executing the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2021-2025. Aimed at bolstering coordination, implementation, and oversight, the PMT ensured alignment with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enhancing the UN's programmatic coherence, efficiency, and impact. Comprising Deputy Representatives or Senior Programme Staff of UN Agencies, the M&E Group focal point, and the Head of the Resident 'Coordinator's Office (RCO), the

PMT facilitated diverse and comprehensive program management, leveraging a broad spectrum of expertise. It played a crucial role in guiding program coordination, offering technical support, ensuring effective linkages between strategic priorities, and spearheading the UNSDCF evaluation process. Additionally, the PMT's efforts in finalising its Terms of Reference (TOR) and revising the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group (M&E WG) to function as a subgroup, including finalising CCA update, highlighted its commitment to accountability and continuous improvement.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Working Group

In 2023, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) group held two regular meetings prior to the Results Groups (RGs) meetings to collaboratively understand their responsibilities. Consequently, the M&E group, via its RG focal point, facilitated the RGs' 2023 annual review and the planning for 2024. Four members of the M&E participated in Cooperation Framework Evaluation training in Bangkok and were involved in the ongoing evaluation process as the Evaluation Technical

Management Team, which commenced in the fourth quarter of 2023. The M&E group also contributed to the first Common Country Analysis (CCA) update since its last iteration in 2020. Moreover, the M&E group assisted the RGs in providing inputs for the inaugural UNSDCF annual One UN Country Results Report. With the M&E group's assistance, the 2023 Information Management System (IMS) and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) surveys were completed and submitted

Operations Management Team (OMT)

The UN in Timor-Leste shared the common Premises whereby efficiency via economies of scale was critical. The OMT of Timor-Leste supported the harmonisation of Common Premises long-term

agreements (LTAs), resulting in three new and one renewed LTAs on security service, cleaning and gardening service, pest control service, building and maintenance service, waste and liquid collection and

One Internet solution. Harmonising common LTAs resulted in efficiency gains for UN agencies, forming part of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS), in which 14 UN agencies participated. Through the

United Nations Communications Group (UNCG)

The United Nations Timor-Leste Communications Group, supported by the Resident Coordinator's Office and as part of the UN System Reform, has significantly boosted the UN's influence and visibility in Timor-Leste through a unified and strategic communications. By adopting the "Communicating as One" approach, the group has successfully aligned its messages and policies with national priorities, the UNSDCF, and Agenda 2030, enhancing the UN's outreach and cohesive voice across the country.

This strategic communication has effectively highlighted the UN's contributions in areas like Food and Nutrition, Economic Development, Education, Health, Governance, and Disaster Resilience. Major events, UN days, SDG Summit, SDG Act Now

Leave No One Behind

Human Rights

In 2023, the UN in Timor-Leste navigated through a challenging landscape marked by presidential elections, which momentarily slowed program momentum due to the political focus in the first half of the year. However, it adeptly shifted its strategy to prioritise election-related activities, achieving notable success in monitoring human rights issues during the electoral period, providing essential support and analysis on political and human rights risks, and enhancing the capacity of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and civil society organisations in addressing human rights concerns tied to elections.

As the year progressed and political tensions subsided with the election of a new President, the UN witnessed a significant improvement in program implementation. It resumed and effectively executed its capacity-building initiatives for police and military personnel, in collaboration with NHRI, the National Police Academy, and the Ministry of Defense, delivering nine intensive one-week training sessions. This effort has been widely recognized for its

consolidated efforts supported by OMT, the UNCT Timor-Leste became one of the first countries in the region to complete and sign the BOS initiative.

Campaign, and initiatives such as the 2nd National Voluntary Review of SDGs, the 2023 Parliamentary Elections, Timor-Leste's steps towards ASEAN and WTO membership, transitioning to solar power, and the Census 2023, have all benefited from this focused approach.

The Government's recognition of the UN's efforts underlines the success of this strategy in strengthening the UN's role and story in Timor-Leste, demonstrating the power of unified communications in supporting the country's development goals. This approach not only amplifies the UN's impact on crucial issues but also solidifies its standing as a key partner in Timor-Leste's journey towards sustainable development.

impactful role in preventing human rights violations, garnering acclaim from government, civil society, and the beneficiaries themselves.

The UN has also played a pivotal role in strengthening civic engagement and collaboration in Timor-Leste. Its steadfast support and technical advice to the Office of the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ) throughout various challenges have solidified its position as a key ally and advisor. Moreover, its efforts to foster dialogue between the PDHJ and civil society organisations have facilitated meaningful exchanges on pressing human rights issues, through quarterly meetings that have been instrumental in bringing civil society concerns and recommendations to the forefront.

Expanding its focus to encompass economic, social, and cultural rights, UN has courageously tackled issues affecting vulnerable groups, notably advocating for the cessation of bullying and harassment against LGBTIQ students to ensure their

right to education. This initiative addresses the critical challenge of violence and discrimination that leads to high dropout rates among LGBTIQ students in schools and universities. Additionally, the UN has

ventured into advocating for social protection access for women in the informal sector, a significant portion of Timor-Leste's workforce, marking a strategic expansion into new areas of work and partnership.

Gender Equality and 'Women's Empowerment

In 2023, the Gender Thematic Group in Timor-Leste implemented a multidisciplinary strategy to address gender-based violence (GBV), aiming to challenge and change the deep-seated societal norms around gender roles. This effort aligned with one of the strategic pillars of the National Action Plan on GBV (2022-2032), which focuses on preventing violence against women and girls at educational institutions, within communities, and beyond.

Under this framework, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts, and Culture launched projects in collaboration with UNFPA and local civil society organisations, including Belun, Hamutuk Nasaun Saudavel (HAMNASA), Alola Foundation, and FOKUPERS. These initiatives were part of the ZONTA phase 1, Spotlight Initiative, and Together for Equality projects. They aimed to deliver comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education in youth centres and schools to foster gender-equitable attitudes and equality in intimate relationships, while also raising awareness of GBV's health impacts and the available support services.

Throughout the year, these programs successfully reached nearly 2,400 women and girls across Dili, Baucau, Viqueque, Ermera, Bobonaro, Covalima municipalities, and the SAR of Oecussi-Ambeno. Participants gained enhanced knowledge on maintaining healthy relationships, understanding GBV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH), preventing early pregnancy, recognizing the dangers of unhealthy relationships, managing anger, and financial literacy.

Additionally, approximately 2,300 women community leaders and members enhanced their understanding of gender, gender equality, and a human-rights-based approach to gender equality. They learned about GBV, its health impacts, prevention strategies, SRH rights, and the availability of support services. The collaborative efforts of the health, police, justice, and social service sectors played a crucial role in spreading information on multi-sectoral prevention strategies, GBV referral pathways, and case management systems. This comprehensive approach ensured a robust multi-sectoral response to GBV, offering continued care and protection for women and girls experiencing violence.

Youth Empowerment

In 2023, the UN Youth Results Group (YRG), comprising 11 UN agencies, took significant strides in supporting the National Youth Action Plan approved by the Timorese Government. This collaborative effort centred around the strategic pillars of education, employability, employment, entrepreneurship, ecosystem, and engagement - collectively known as the six E's- to catalyse a generational shift for the youth of Timor-Leste.

Recognizing the imperative for a more cohesive approach among UN agencies, government ministries, development partners, and civil society for youth empowerment, the Vice Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Affairs initiated an Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Social Affairs in

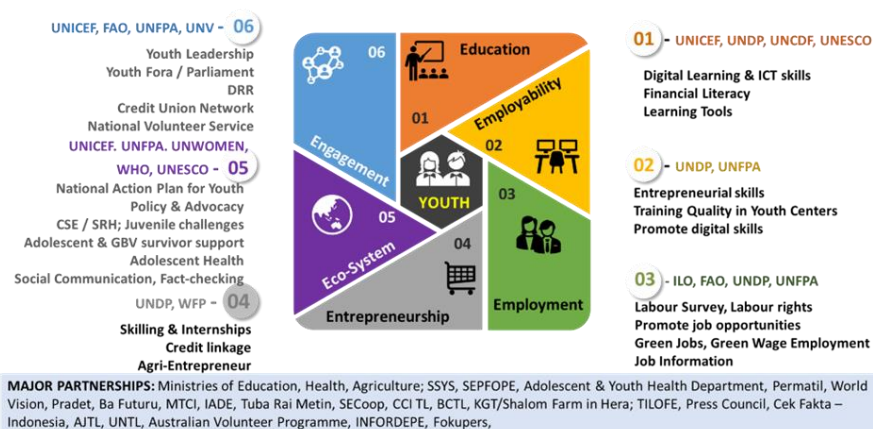
September 2023. This task force, with youth empowerment as one of its key focus areas, has seen committed support from UN agencies aiming for an integrated stakeholder engagement strategy.

The Youth Results Group, with active participation from all the 11 agencies, has successfully positioned youth empowerment at the forefront of the Vice Prime Minister for Coordination of Social Affairs' agenda. UN's engagement in comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) both in and out of school settings, along with youth empowerment and employment initiatives, has marked a pivotal contribution to this cause.

The Ministry of Education's approval of CSE implementation in over 47 schools has reached nearly 3,900 adolescents and youth nationwide. Additionally, the Boys and Girls Circle module has been disseminated to 1,400 individuals, fostering a supportive environment for comprehensive youth development. Furthermore, the Comoro Child and Youth Center (CCYC) has seen the review and enhancement of its learning content, with 133 modules across five subjects refined into 160 hours of training content, thereby enriching the educational resources available to young people.

With UN's support, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Art, and Culture launched the "Kolega" ChatBot, a digital platform designed for youth. This innovative tool facilitates job and training program applications, provides access to learning tools, and connects users to various learning platforms. Within a month of its launch, more than 500 youths had registered on the platform, underscoring the digital solution's immediate impact and reach among Timor-Leste's youth population.

The Six E's of Youth Programming & UN Involvement - Nov 2023



Persons with Disabilities

In 2023, the UN significantly advanced the rights of people with disabilities in Timor-Leste, advocating for their inclusion and supporting Disabled Peoples' Organizations (DPOs) in pushing for the country's accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This advocacy was crucial as Timor-Leste underwent its third Universal Periodic Review, highlighting the need to join the CRPD. Despite initial governmental hesitance, citing the need for a National Council for Persons with Disabilities as a prerequisite, persistent efforts led to the approval of a draft resolution on 4 May 2023 for Timor-Leste's state party status to the CRPD and its Optional Protocol, a process later completed with UN Secretary-General formal ratification in progress.

Moreover, the UN's role extended to offering technical advice for finalising the ratification process, resulting

in Timor-Leste acceding to the CRPD on 17 January and its Optional Protocol on 7 February 2023, marking a historic commitment to disability rights among 187 countries. Additionally, the 2022 Housing and Population Census, enhanced by the inclusion of Washington Group questions, aimed to provide more accurate data on people with disabilities, addressing their underrepresentation in previous data. The UN also facilitated a meeting with various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Justice, state representatives, and civil society organisations, to discuss implementing recommendations from human rights mechanisms on disability rights, further demonstrating a comprehensive approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities in Timor-Leste.

2.5. Evaluations and Lessons Learned

Timor-Leste embarked on a pivotal journey to evaluate its first UN Sustainable Development Country Framework 2021-2025, positioning itself as one of the four pioneering countries in the Asia Pacific region to undertake such a comprehensive review. This initiative was preceded by a meticulously organized planning phase in 2023, marked by significant preparatory steps and robust stakeholder engagement, underscoring a collective commitment to enhancing development effectiveness.

The evaluation's groundwork was laid with an official notification by the Resident Coordinator to the UN Country Team/Result Groups, the Development Coordination Office, and the apex national counterparts, ensuring alignment and readiness among all stakeholders. Following this, the Evaluation Manager, who also chairs the Project Management Team, was appointed alongside the formation of an Evaluation Technical Management Team, composed of four Monitoring and Evaluation group members. This strategic assembly of expertise and leadership was pivotal in steering the evaluation process.

Further solidifying the evaluative framework, a National Evaluation Steering Committee was established, incorporating members from the Country Framework Joint Steering Committee. This step fostered an inclusive and collaborative environment for the evaluation's execution. Additionally, the preparation of a comprehensive Terms of Reference delineated the evaluation's objectives, scope, and methodology, serving as a foundational guide for all activities. This phase of high engagement and strategic planning culminated in a strong platform for the subsequent selection of a consultant and the execution of the evaluation process in 2024.

2.6. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilisation

In 2023, the UN had a required budget of US\$82.8 million and of this amount US\$ 50.8 million was obtained, leaving the funding gap of US\$ 32 million for the UNSDCF implementation in Timor-Leste. The UN was able to spend a total of US\$ 40.3 million, resulting in an overall delivery rate for all the UNSDCF Strategic Priorities (SPs) is approximately 80%. This rate indicates the efficiency with which the available resources have been expended towards achieving the strategic priorities across the board and reflects a relatively high level of resource utilisation in the execution of the outlined strategic priorities.

The Delivery Rate across the strategic priorities varies, indicating how efficiently the available resources are utilised. SP4 & SP5 shows high delivery above 90%, with SP4 showing the highest delivery rate at approximately 94%, followed by SP5 with 91%. These demonstrate a high level of resource utilisation towards the expenditures.

SP4 has the highest discrepancy between the total required and available resources, highlighting a significant area for potential increased funding and attention.

UNSDCF Strategic Priorities (SPs)	Total Required Resources (US\$ million)	Available Resources	Expenditure	Delivery Rate (Expenditures vs.
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				Available Resources)
SP1: Nutrition, Food Security, and Sustainable Agriculture	7.6	4.3	3.7	86%
SP2: Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Decent Work for All	3.8	3.3	2.9	88%
SP3: Early Childhood Development and Life-long Learning Outcomes and Skills	4.5	2.6	2	76%
SP4: Quality Healthcare and Well-being	43	19.3	18.3	94%
SP5: Accountable, Inclusive and Participatory Governance and Quality Public Services	9	6.4	5.9	91%
SP6: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Resilience to Climate Change	14.7	14.7	7.4	51%
TOTAL	82.8	50.8	40.3	79%

2.7. Resource mobilization and quality of funding

The total funding amount through active joint programmes which which continued in 2023 was around US\$34. Of the total of ten joint programmes, two were newly initiated in 2023 with around US \$7.84 million.

Fund	Joint Programme	Amount
Continued in 2023		
EU	Spotlight Initiative	US \$14.2 million
UNTFHS PUNOs	SAY NO TO 5S (Starvation, Soil-transmitted helminthiasis, Skin diseases, Smoking and Sugary/Alcoholic Drinks)	US \$ 7.8 million
KOICA	Together for Equality	US \$ 7.7 million
SDGs Fund	Enhancing Early Warning Systems to build greater resilience to hydro-meteorological hazards in Timor-Leste	US \$ 1 million
BHA	Addressing Protection Risks in Humanitarian Settings in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea	US \$ 1.8 million

Fund	Joint Programme	Amount
SDGs Fund	Strengthening national food systems and promoting disaster risk reduction (DRR)	US \$ 0.95 million
UNTFHS	Assessing vulnerabilities and resilience in border communities in Timor-Leste through the human security approach in the context of COVID-19	US \$ 0.3 million
SDGs Fund	Entrepreneurship, Energy and Empowerment for Women	US \$ 0.15 million
UNPRPD	Empower for inclusion to eliminate violence against women and girls with disabilities in Timor-Leste	US \$ 0.1 million
UNICEF	Public Finance Management for Children and Climate Change	US \$ 0.04 million

Funding for the UNSDCF in 2024

Strategic priorities (SPs)	Total required (US\$)	Available (US\$)	Available /Total required
SP 1. Nutrition, food security, and sustainable agriculture			
1.1 Nutrition, access to water and sanitation	4,073,200	1,201,000	29%
1.2 Agri-food systems and food security	4,999,000	3,765,950	75%
Sub-total	9,072,200	4,966,950	55%
SP 2. Sustainable economic opportunities and decent work for all			
2.1 Policy and institutional framework for decent work and productive employment	1,080,000	418,000	39%
2.2 Business environment	585,000	485,000	83%
2.3 Skills development	5,863,500	5,312,588	91%
Sub-total	9,193,500	7,118,588	77%
SP 3. Early childhood development and life-long learning outcomes and skills			
3.1 Access to ECD and ECE	595,000	595,000	100%
3.2 Access to and completion of quality basic and secondary education	1,076,048	1,076,048	100%
3.3 Life-long learning	471,361	471,361	100%
Sub-total	2,142,409	2,142,409	100%
SP 4. Quality healthcare and well-being			
4.1 Primary Health Care	12,424,872	5,340,449	43%
4.2 Evidence-based decision-making and digital system	197,688	106,500	54%
4.3 Behaviour change	3,216,071	835,595	26%
4.4 Health financing and budgeting	395,000	60,000	15%
Third-party procurement	60,000	60,000	100%

Sub-total	16,233,631	6,342,544	39%
SP 5. Accountable, inclusive, and participatory governance and quality public services			
5.1 Rule of law and access to justice	1,380,812	1,080,812	78%
5.2 Reform of public administration	2,255,321	2,005,321	90%
5.3 'Citizens' participation and decentralised service delivery	2,363,222	1,251,526	53%
5.4 Elimination of GBV and violence against children	2,110,493	2,009,743	95%
Sub-total	8,079,848	6,347,402	79%
SP 6. Sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to climate change			
6.1 Disaster risk management and climate change adaptation	4,401,775	3,379,755	77%
6.2 Resilient infrastructures	4,849,181	4,749,181	98%
6.3 Terrestrial and ocean resources sustainable management	3,578,131	1,628,131	46%
Sub-total	12,829,087	9,757,087	76%
Total	57,550,676	36,674,982	64%

CHAPTER 3: UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

In 2024, amidst the global journey of post-pandemic recovery and the continuous shifts in the international landscape, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Timor-Leste embarks on a critical mission to refine and reinforce the United Nations' dedication to aiding Timor-Leste's strides toward sustainable development. The UNCT is at the forefront, championing collaboration, strategic foresight, and adept resource management to fuel national progress and confront the myriad societal challenges that persist.

The essence of the United Nations' engagement in Timor-Leste transcends conventional partnership paradigms; it emerges as a beacon of hope and a dynamic force for transformation. With a strategic vision set for 2024, the UNCT is passionately committed to unleashing the potential of Timor-Leste's vibrant youth, championing gender equality, fostering disability inclusion, and pursuing diversified economic avenues. This commitment underscores the imperative for a harmonious approach, drawing on the distinct strengths of each UN agency to cultivate a milieu of mutual respect and profound collaboration that propels meaningful change.

At the heart of the UNCT's objectives for 2024 lies the empowerment of young Timorese, recognized as pivotal agents of national advancement. Through initiatives designed to broaden educational access, enhance skill acquisition, and stimulate entrepreneurial ventures, the UNCT aims to catalyze the active involvement of youth in shaping Timor-Leste's future. Additionally, a sustained pledge to elevate gender equality and empower women and girls reflects an enduring resolve to dismantle systemic barriers, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for all.

Acknowledging the intricate tapestry of sustainable development, the UNCT steadfastly champions a comprehensive approach that weaves together economic resilience, social welfare, and environmental stewardship. This approach necessitates pioneering financing models and diversifies economic strategies to fortify Timor-Leste's economy, placing a pronounced focus on sustainable agriculture and the nurturing of green and blue economies.

Integral to the UNCT's strategy is the commitment to fostering robust collaboration and coordination across the UN spectrum as well as with government bodies, civil society, and the private sector. By formulating explicit criteria for decision-making and prioritizing initiatives based on their anticipated impact, the UNCT aspires to amplify its operational efficacy and accountability. This collaborative spirit, enriched by a focus on capacity building and technical support, sets the stage for a partnership paradigm that honors national sovereignty and is congruent with Timor-Leste's developmental ambitions.

As the year 2024 progresses, the UNCT in Timor-Leste is poised to confront both the challenges and opportunities that lie on the horizon. Through pinpointed initiatives, fortified alliances, and an unwavering allegiance to inclusivity and environmental sustainability, the UNCT is determined to make a substantial contribution to Timor-Leste's journey toward a thriving and resilient future, illustrating the profound impact of united efforts in fostering sustainable development and uplifting lives.