

# OUR VOICES OXFAM IN TIMOR-LESTE

January – June 2024





## Message from Country Director

Hello, friends and colleagues,

As I prepare to say farewell, I am filled with immense gratitude for the journey we've shared over the past 3.5 years. I joined Oxfam in Timor-Leste at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by one of the largest floods to hit the country in over 40 years. Our ability to face these challenges has been a collective effort to build a brighter future for this beautiful country. Over these years, our work in Timor-Leste has focused on three key areas: climate justice, gender justice, and just economic development.

Through our gender justice initiatives, we have empowered countless women, providing them with tools and opportunities to lead and thrive. Their resilience and determination have been a source of inspiration. In the face of the climate crisis, our climate justice programs have supported communities in adapting to and mitigating its effects. Together, we've promoted sustainable farming and ensured a greener future for generations to come. Our commitment to just economic development has seen us work towards creating equitable opportunities by supporting women, men, persons with disabilities, and youth, and advocating for fair policies.



None of this would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our incredible team, partners, communities, and government stakeholders. Thank you for your unwavering support and collaboration. As I move on to new challenges, I carry with me the lessons learned and the unforgettable memories we've created together. Oxfam in Timor-Leste will continue to thrive, and our mission will carry on with the same passion and commitment.



## About Oxfam in Timor-Leste's Work

Oxfam in Timor-Leste (OiTL) is part of a global movement that fights against inequality, poverty, and justice. In 2021 Oxfam worked in 67 countries in partnership with more than 3,500 organisations to deliver 22 million programmes. Over 50 percent of those working with us were women and girls. Oxfam has been part of the history of almost 50 years with the Timorese people. We are an organisation focused on rights and a leader in our partnership model, to enable our partners to conduct programme activities in rural communities. One of our objectives is to advance our work to influence development challenges such as land rights and economic diversification.

### Tree Distribution to Carbon Farming Communities

As the rainy season commenced, Rai Matak partners took a significant step towards sustainability by distributing a variety of trees to farmers engaged in Carbon Farming activities across the municipalities of Baucau, Covalima, Lautem, Liquisa, and Viqueque. The diverse range of trees provided included Mahogany, Pine, Sandalwood, Teak, Nitas, and Saria, ensuring a rich mix of species to support both environmental health and local livelihoods.

Farmers expressed their gratitude and enthusiasm for receiving high-quality trees, eager to plant and nurture them. This initiative not only enhances the well-being of the communities but also contributes to long-term ecological benefits, fostering a greener and more sustainable future for the region.





# Nurturing Resilience in Timor-Leste: AFFOS and Oxfam's Efforts in Suco Cunha

In the remote Oe-Cusse region of Timor-Leste, the Suco of Cunha, Noe Ninen, showcases community resilience through initiatives by AFFOS and Oxfam. Supported by the Australian Humanitarian Partnership – Disaster Ready project, funded by the Australian Government, these efforts aim to mitigate disaster risks and enhance sustainability.

Planting for Sustainability: The strategic planting of over 300 water and soil-preserving trees near water springs and disaster-prone areas stabilizes soil, reduces erosion, and ensures a steady water supply. This greening initiative involves the whole community, fostering biodiversity and safeguarding agricultural productivity.

Infiltration Basins: A Lifeline Infiltration basins, shallow depressions that capture rainwater, have been constructed to boost groundwater recharge. This communal activity has resulted in increased water flow in local springs, ensuring water availability during dry spells.

Gabions for Flood Defense: To combat floods, the community has built gabions—bamboo containers filled with stones—along riverbanks. These structures, combining modern engineering with traditional practices, reduce flood impact and protect homes and farms.

Empowering the Community: The success in Noe Ninen highlights the power of community empowerment. With support from AFFOS, Oxfam, and the Australian Government, the community has improved their environment and set a benchmark for resilience and sustainability. Their collective effort and determination ensure a brighter, safer future.



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#### The launch of the HAMRIIK Project

The launched of the HAMRIIK (Hamentin Reziliensia Inklusivu iha Komunidade) project in the RAEOA Special Region, generously supported by the Government of New Zealand through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). This NZ\$ 1.8 million initiative aims to build climate resilience and adaptation in rural communities and households in Oé-cusse and Liquiçá, with a special focus on women and persons with disabilities.

In her opening remarks, RAEOA Secretary General for Education, Social and Solidarity, Her Excellency Ms. Inacia Tamelo, stated, "Our communities face multiple challenges, and we understand the government alone cannot address them all. I appreciate Oxfam and the Government of New Zealand for launching HAMRIIK in Oé-cusse to support communities in better adapting to climate change."

HAMRIIK empowers communities by promoting climate-smart agriculture, enhancing water security, and addressing gender and disability issues. With direct engagement of over 1,400 individuals and a broader impact



on 7,800 people across 12 villages, this project aims to drive systemic change, foster inclusive practices, and equip decisionmakers for sustainable climate adaptation.



#### Strengthening Community Resilience: A Visit to Oxfam's Water Conservation and Disaster Prevention Projects in Oecusse

On May 24, 2024, Oxfam in Timor-Leste, alongside its Partners AFFOS, MANEO, BIFANO, RHTO RAEOA Focal Point and the local community, had the honor of welcoming H.E. Secretary of State for Civil Protection (SEPC) Mr. Domingos Mariano Reis to both Usi-Tasae in the Post-Administrative Oe-silo and Naimeco in the Administrative Post of Pante-Macassar, Oe-cusse, RAEOA. These visits aimed to observe ongoing water conservation efforts and the construction of traditional gabions, both crucial for the community's sustainability and protection against natural disasters.

In Usi-Tasae, Mr. Reis observed the technical aspects of water conservation implemented in collaboration with Oxfam in Timor-Leste and local partners. These efforts include the active participation of the community in planting various trees, which play a vital role in preserving water sources and preventing them from drying up during the dry seasons, thus ensuring a steady supply of water throughout the year. This initiative is part of the #DisasterReady project, generously funded by the Australian Humanitarian Partnership.

During his visit to Naimeco, Mr. Reis observed the construction of traditional gabions, an initiative developed by local partners and communities in partnership with Oxfam in Timor-Leste. Gabions, which are bamboo cages filled with rocks, represent a cost-effective and sustainable method for preventing soil erosion and managing water flow, thus protecting the community from floods and landslides.

These visits underscored the importance of cooperation between local authorities, the community, and international organizations in implementing disaster prevention and mitigation measures to enhance the safety and well-being of the population in Oe-cusse, RAEOA. The collaborative efforts in Usi-Tasae and Naimeco highlight the significant impact of community involvement and international support in creating resilient and sustainable environments.



# Enhancing Community Resilience: Oxfam Seminar on Climate Finance

Oxfam in Timor-Leste convened a national seminar titled "Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Change through Climate Finance." The event brought together a diverse array of stakeholders including government representatives, NGOs, academia, and community members to address the impacts of climate change, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women and people with disabilities.

The seminar aimed to foster dialogue and share innovative solutions, focusing on key outcomes from COP28, challenges related to accessing climate funds, and ongoing climate finance initiatives in Timor-Leste, especially those supporting vulnerable communities and women. Presentations and panel discussions highlighted local funding opportunities, identified strategic action priorities, and emphasized the importance of collaboration among stakeholders.

Participants included government officials, youth groups, NGOs, universities, and Oxfam partners, who collectively explored strategies to strengthen community resilience through effective climate finance utilization. The seminar underscored the critical role of partnerships and collective efforts in maximizing the impact of climate finance initiatives across Timor-Leste.

The seminar facilitated networking opportunities among attendees, fostering new collaborations and knowledge-sharing avenues. It provided a platform for participants to showcase successful innovative projects that have effectively enhanced community resilience to climate change. Discussions also delved into the role of education and advocacy in building climate resilience at the grassroots level, highlighting the need for continuous engagement and capacity-building initiatives.

The seminar served as a catalyst for renewed commitment towards sustainable development and climate adaptation in Timor-Leste, advocating for inclusive and participatory approaches to tackle the challenges posed by climate change on local communities.





### Oxfam in Timor-Leste Engages with Climate Affairs Ambassador Mr. Adao Soares Barbosa

Oxfam in Timor-Leste held a productive meeting with His Excellency Ambassador Adao Soares Barbosa, Timor-Leste's Ambassador at Large for Climate Affairs. The discussions focused on strategies to enhance access to climate finance, particularly for frontline communities such as women, persons with disabilities, farmers, and rural communities, within the framework of the UNFCCC.

In Timor-Leste, as in many regions globally, women and vulnerable communities bear the brunt of climate change impacts. The meeting highlighted the urgent need to address gaps in climate finance accessibility and the specific challenges faced by women in Timor-Leste and beyond. His Excellency Ambassador, one of only two Board members representing Least Developed Countries (LDCs) on the newly established Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), emphasized advocacy priorities for LDCs and Timor-Leste. These priorities include ensuring swift access to and disbursement of the LDF during rapid-onset climate disasters, facilitating timely support to frontline communities affected by climate-induced disasters.

The meeting also explored potential areas for future collaboration between Oxfam in Timor-Leste and His Excellency Ambassador.

Oxfam in Timor-Leste attendees included Fausto (Nino) Belo Ximenes, Country Director of Oxfam International for Timor-Leste; Lucio Savio, Climate Finance Manager; Teal Crossan, Climate Finance Advisor; Adilson da Costa Junior, Strategy and Engagement Lead; and Aderito Mambares, Communications Coordinator. Oxfam extends heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency Ambassador for his role as an LDF Board member representing over 40 LDCs, wishing him success in advancing climate resilience efforts globally.



## Strengthening Safeguarding in Timor-Leste

Oxfam in Timor-Leste, in collaboration with Forum Tau Matan, hosted a comprehensive three-month Child Protection training sessions for our program partners as well as Oxfam staffs. Moving forward, this essential training will be an annual fixture for Oxfam in Timor-Leste, ensuring that everyone involved in our programs is equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to safeguard children's well-being.



Our unwavering commitment to protecting children was the driving force behind this initiative. Through engaging workshops and indepth discussions, our partners gained crucial knowledge and tools to enhance child protection in Oxfam's project areas. Topics covered included recognizing signs of abuse, implementing effective reporting mechanisms, and creating supportive environments for children.

In addition to the formal training sessions, participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and best practices. This peer-to-peer learning approach fostered a collaborative atmosphere where everyone could learn from each other's successes and challenges. By the end of the training, participants felt more confident and prepared to handle child protection issues within their respective organizations.



At Oxfam, we emphasize responsibility and accountability in all our endeavors. This training underscores our dedication to maintaining high



child protection standards, empowering our partners to create safer, more secure environments for children. We believe that by investing in the capacity-building of our partners,



we are taking a significant step toward ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in our project areas.

Looking ahead, we plan to expand our child protection efforts by developing additional resources and support networks. We are also exploring opportunities to engage with local communities and schools to raise awareness about child protection issues. By working together with our partners and the broader community, we can create a more protective environment for children across Timor-Leste.



## NEW REPORT REVEALS NEEDS FOR WOMEN VENDORS IN OÉ-CUSSE

Oxfam, in collaboration with partners BIFANO, AFFOS, MANEO, and RHTO and with support from Bridging Peoples, has released a groundbreaking Gendered Market Assessment for Oé-Cusse. This report highlights the essential role local marketplaces play in the economic empowerment of women, who engage in various economic activities to support their households. The assessment identifies the challenges faced by women vendors in Oé-Cusse and suggests strategies to address barriers related to accessibility, safety, and security for women, girls, and persons with disabilities.

Research consistently shows that women typically reinvest their income into their families' welfare, contrasting with men who may spend on personal indulgences. In Timor-Leste, women make up 75-90% of municipal and sub-municipal market vendors, underscoring the importance of safe, secure, and accessible marketplaces for women's economic empowerment.

The assessment focused on two community marketplaces in Oé-Cusse: Maumate and Pune. Key findings highlight the urgent need for improvements in market infrastructure, including water and drainage systems, waste management, and building rehabilitation. Additional critical concerns include market expansion, the separation of market facilities for men and women vendors, improved access for persons with disabilities, and better animal control.

By addressing these issues, the assessment aims to enhance the accessibility, safety, and security of local marketplaces, thereby supporting the economic empowerment of women in Oé-Cusse.

#### Hera Communities Address Post-Cyclone Challenges

Representatives from the Hera communities, severely impacted by the 2021 Seroja cyclone, participated in Oxfam in Timor-Leste's "Ita nia Bainaka" TV program on Radio Telivizaun Timor-Leste. During the program, Ms. Dilva Emiliana Rodrigues Filipe, Mr. Tito Maia, and Mr. Pedro Hortencio shared their perspectives, urging the government to promptly assess living conditions and housing challenges faced by the affected communities over the past three years.

The discussion brought to light several critical issues, including unclear land ownership and the lack of alternative housing options, particularly for families with children. These unresolved concerns continue to pose significant challenges for the affected residents, highlighting the need for urgent government intervention.

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive government policies, as emphasized in the talk. The Land and Women's Rights Project plays a crucial role in advocating for solutions to these challenges, aiming to improve the living conditions and housing security for the Hera communities.



### Oxfam Report Highlights Challenges for Persons with Disabilities in Timor-Leste

Oxfam in Timor-Leste has released a new report detailing the challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in achieving societal inclusion. Despite updates to the National Action Plan and ratification of the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), implementation remains inconsistent, with no enforceable accessibility standards. Barriers include ministry coordination issues, funding shortages, and unclear accommodation policies. Limited disability data further complicates policy evaluation.



PwD in Timor-Leste encounter widespread prejudices, economic inequalities, obstacles to employment and education, and inadequate access to public services and infrastructure. These challenges significantly hinder their full integration into society, perpetuating systemic marginalization.

The report recommends aligning policies with the CRPD and DNAP, revising inclusion policies, updating DNAP with current census data, appointing Disability Ambassadors, legislating universal design standards, standardizing sign language, and partnering with Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs). These steps are crucial for creating a more inclusive environment where PwD can actively participate in all aspects of society.

#### Oxfam and Partners Hold Annual Reflection to Plan Future Initiatives

Oxfam in Timor-Leste, along with partners like Asosiasaun Defisiénsia Timor-Leste (#ADTL), Grupu Promotor, Raes Hadomi Timor Oan (#RHTO), and Core Group Transparency (#CGT), held an annual reflection in Liquiça to review progress and plan for the upcoming year. Participants engaged in fruitful discussions to pinpoint achievements, challenges, and collaborative solutions.

The program, facilitated by Oxfam in Timor-Leste in conjunction with RHTO, ADTL, and CGT, provided a platform for comprehensive evaluation and strategic planning. Key topics included the impact of initiatives, areas needing improvement, and potential strategies for overcoming obstacles.

This annual reflection is crucial for ensuring ongoing progress and enhancing the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in promoting societal inclusion and transparency in Timor-Leste. The event underscored the importance of partnership and collective action in addressing the challenges faced by the community.

Engaging in a thoughtful discussion, two women and a man collaborate to share ideas and insights. Photo: Aderito Do Rosario Da Cunha Mambares/Oxfam



#### Open The Book Project Focuses on Inclusive Education Initiatives

Oxfam and local partners, including ADTL, RHTO, CGT, the Promoter Group, and AHDMTL, convened a Courtesy Meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education to discuss key areas of disability inclusion in education. Among the attendees were the Director of Curriculum Education, Head of the Department of Inclusion, and Curriculum Advisor to the Minister of Education. The discussion focused on improving and expanding the Inclusive Resource Centre, establishing Equivalence Inclusive Schools, formulating national sign language policies, and addressing school accessibility.

The Ministry of Education representatives affirmed that disability inclusion is a top priority. The Curricular Directorate and the Department of Inclusion committed to allocating funds to extend the reach of the Centre for Inclusive Resources to the Municipalities of Covalima, Manufahi, and RAEOA. Plans are also underway to enhance school accessibility and develop policies for National Sign Language and Inclusive Equivalence Schools, aiming to elevate educational standards for People with Disabilities.

Additionally, the Department of Inclusion pledged to collaborate closely with the Organization of Persons with Disabilities, leveraging their expertise and resources to facilitate the implementation of disability inclusion initiatives. This coordinated effort, under the Open The Book project, underscores the commitment to creating a more inclusive and accessible educational environment for all students.

#### Collaborative Research on Daughter's Inheritance Rights in a Patrilineal System

In Timor-Leste, the patrilineal system traditionally favors men in inheritance and property rights. Oxfam collaborated with partners in the Land Network—such as Jurista Advocasias, Fokupers, and ACbit—to conduct six case studies across five municipalities on "daughter's land rights in inheritance in patrilineal areas."

The objective of this research, led by Oxfam in Timor-Leste, is to understand social norms barriers related to women's land rights and to empower collaborative research processes, emphasizing local design, field research, and analysis as part of decolonizing research practices. Findings reveal that in many municipalities, there is a trend towards equal distribution of land between sons and daughters. In Aileu municipality, this practice has been upheld since ancient times, with daughters encouraged to register land in their own names. However, challenges persist, such as informal land agreements that disadvantage women who lack written documentation. Additionally, Timor-Leste's lack of widespread land titling further complicates women's recognition as landowners.

The upcoming report will be launched to advocate at decision-making levels and raise awareness among rural communities. Future research aims to explore barriers hindering women from registering their land, continuing Oxfam's commitment to addressing gender inequalities in land rights. 

 THORAL ESTE'S BEIJING DECLARATION (SEI)

 VINDELATFORM FOR ACTION (BPFA)

 ATIONAL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL

 REPORT (2014-2018)

#### SEII of Timor-Leste Utilizes Oxfam's Gender Market Assessment

The Secretariat of State of Equality and Inclusion (SEII) in Timor-Leste has incorporated Oxfam's Gender Market Assessment into its review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) National Report (2014-2018). This assessment provides valuable insights into gender dynamics within market settings, supporting SEII's efforts to enhance gender equality initiatives aligned with national policy frameworks.

By leveraging Oxfam's assessment, SEII aims to strengthen its strategies and interventions aimed at advancing gender equality and inclusion across Timor-Leste.

### Empowering Communities through Saving for Change Initiatives

Rai Matak, in collaboration with partners such as Fundasaun Ho Musan Ida (F-HMI) in Baguia, Fundasaun Timor Verde (FTV) in Baucau, Centru Comunidade Covalima (CCC) in Covalima, and Fundasaun Nova Esperansa Timor-Leste (F-NETIL) in Liquica, has successfully established 35 Saving for Change (ROMANSA) groups across various communities. These groups collectively involve 529 members, comprising 386 women, 139 men, and 4 men with disabilities.

Over a 12-month cycle, Oxfam and its partners provided crucial support and guidance to these communities in developing operational guidelines for the ROMANSA groups. As a result, four groups—two from Fundasaun Timor Verde Baucau and two from Fundasaun NETIL-Liquica—have completed a successful cycle and are embarking on a new Saving for Change initiative.

This initiative underscores the commitment to fostering economic empowerment and community resilience through collaborative efforts. By enabling local communities to manage their financial resources effectively, the ROMANSA groups aim to enhance livelihoods and promote sustainable development across Timor-Leste.







# Empowering Youth: Exchange Program Fosters Creativity and Rural Development

A creative youth group named Tilofe - Timor Leste Organic Fertilizer (TILOFE), along with Forum Juventude Defisiensia Timor-Leste (FJDE), EAMO Ermera Aikulat Mutin Organiku (EAMO), Alumni Parlamentu Foinsa'e Timor-Leste (APFTL), and Association Journalist Timor Leste (AJTL), collaborated with Oxfam in Timor-Leste to organize an enriching exchange program. This initiative brought together energetic and innovative youths from twelve municipalities and Oe-cusse RAEOA under the theme "Bringing knowledge back home through our creativeness in building the rural economy and the country."

The first youth exchange program, part of the HAKFOUN Project (Haforsa Lian no Kreatividade Foinsa'e Inkluzivu), witnessed the enthusiastic participation of twenty-five youth groups. The event included representatives from the Ermera Municipal Authority, Railaco Post-Administrator, SEPFOPE of Ermera Municipality, National Police, Chief of the Village of Fatuk Kero, students from Institutu East Timor COFFEE (ETCI), and local media.

The Post-Administrator of Railaco, Ms. Micaela dos Santos Soares, and other local authorities expressed their appreciation for Oxfam and its partners' efforts in organizing the event in Fatuk Kero Village. They committed to continued support for creative youths from other municipalities, encouraging them to keep learning and sharing practical experiences during the exchange program implementation in Ermera Municipality.

This successful program highlighted the importance of collaboration among TILOFE, EAMO, FJDE, AJTL, and Oxfam in Timor-Leste, demonstrating the power of collective effort in driving sustainable development and youth empowerment.



#### **Tentative Calendar for Upcoming Activities**

July - December 2024

- Revise the SDMC (Cuco Disaster Management Committee) in number of suco within Oe-cusse, Ermera,
   Liquica and Dili (July December 2024)
- Rivise Community Action Plan in number of villages within 0e-cusse, Ermera, Liquica and Dili (July December 2024)
- Implementation of small-scale activities such as establish Local Gabion, Terracing, water catchments techniques at the target areas in 22 villages within Oe-cusse, Ermera, Liquica and Dili. (August 2024 – May 2025
- CBDRM training to partners and SDMC members (July December 2024)
- Open map street training (July December 2024)
- Partners Working Agreement July 2024
- Baseline August 2024
- Water and land conservation activities by partners in 12 villages within Oe-cusse and Liquica (August 2024 March 2025)
- Annual reflection with partners, government representative, community leaders and community members March 2025
- Agroforestry training in Liquisa (CCC and NETIL staffs will train for a week in Liquisa) while HMI and Timor Verde staff will be in Baucau (July 2024)
- Foundation Rai Matak Launch on (13 August 2024)
- Community reflection in each municipality where we will collect lesson learn of the project (October 2024)

## Acronyms

АНР	: Australian Humanitarian Partnership
CEDAW	: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CBRN-TL	: Community Based Rehabilitation Network Timor Leste
DRP	: Disaster READY Program
DFAT	: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EhD	: Ema ho Defisiensia
EU	: European Union
FONGTIL	: Forum ONG Timor-Leste
GALS	: Gender Action Learning System
GfD	: Governance for Development
HMI	: Ho Musan ida
KSI	: Kdadalak Sulimutuk Institute (KSI)
MFAT	: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
NETIL	: Nova Esperanca Timor-Leste
OITL	: Oxfam in Timor-Leste/Oxfam iha Timor-Leste
ОТВ	: Open the Books
OSS	: Organizasaun Sosiedade Sivil
RAEOA	: Rejiaun Administrativa Espesial Oe-Cusse Ambeno
RbR	: Rede ba Rai
RHTO	: Ra'es Hadomi Timor-Oan
SRA	: Sentru Rekursu & Advokasia
ETCI	: East Timor COFFEE Institute
SEII	: The Secretariat of State of Equality and Inclusion

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