

Project Final Report

UNDP Timor-Leste

Emergency Food Supplies in the time of COVID-19

Support to the Government of Timor-Leste in responding to COVID-19



WOMAN CARRYING FOOD BASKET, PHOTO©YUCIHI ISHIDA, UNDP TIMOR-LESTE



PROJECT PROFILE

Project Identification	Geographic coverage of the project
<p>Project Title: Emergency Food Supplies in the time of COVID-19 (<i>Support to the Government of Timor-Leste in responding to COVID-19</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project ID: 00126827; Output ID: 00122893 	<p>National level coverage (Yes/No): No</p> <p>Number of municipalities covered: 5 (Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, Dili and RAEOA/Oecusse)</p>
Strategic Results	Implementing/Responsible partner(s)
<p>UNDAF/CPD Outcome: By 2019, state institutions are more responsive, inclusive, accountable and decentralized for improved service delivery and realization of rights, particularly of the most excluded groups.</p> <p>UNDP CPD Output: Capacities and system of sub-national institutions developed to provided more efficient, accountable and accessible service to citizens, particularly for the rural poor and other disadvantaged.</p>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries</p>
Project Budget (US\$)	Project Duration
<p>UNDP Contribution: USD 105,335</p>	<p>Start Date (day/month/year): July 2020</p>
<p>Government/Donor Contribution: USD 1,000,000</p>	<p>End Date (day/month/year): 28 February 2021</p>
<p>Total project budget: USD 1,105,335</p> <p>Total approved budget: USD 1,105,335</p>	<p>Implementation Modality (NIM or DIM)</p> <p>Direct Implementation Modality (DIM)</p>

Table of Contents

Acronyms	4
1. Executive Summary	5
2. Background and Context.....	6
3. Project summary and objectives.....	7
4. Narrative on Key Results Achieved	11
4.1 Beneficiaries Stories	17
4.2 Progress towards the UNDAF/CPD Outcome or Project's Outcome.....	18
4.3 Progress on Outputs.....	19
5. Cross Cutting Issues.....	23
5.1 Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, and Social Inclusion	23
6. Partnerships	23
7. Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned.....	23
8. Financial Report Summary	25
Annex I. Distribution Schedule	26

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CFI	Chronic Food Insecurity
CPD	Country Programme Document
DV	Domestic Violence
GoTL	Government of Timor-Leste
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
MSA	Ministry of State Administration
MSSI	Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion
RAEOA	Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOE	State of Emergency
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. Executive Summary

The COVID-19 crisis has severely impacted food systems worldwide, undermining food and nutrition security. In Timor-Leste, the crisis has exacerbated existing food insecurity, with 40% of households reported engaging in coping strategies and reducing food intake.¹ Small-scale food producers have been particularly affected by the crisis due to emergency restrictive measures early in the pandemic. To mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on both supply- and demand-side of food insecurity, emergency support was initiated to increase food security to the most vulnerable populations as per the Government of Timor-Leste's priority under the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Japan through the Ministry of Finance (MoF), and with additional resources from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a co-financing agreement was established between UNDP and the MoF to implement the project '*Support to the Government of Timor-Leste in responding to COVID-19 -Emergency Food Supplies in the time of COVID -19*'. The project aims to support the Government of Timor-Leste in collaboration with the Ministry of State Administration (MSA), Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI), the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and the local authorities of Dili, Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima and the Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno (RAEOA), to provide emergency three-four week food supply to 25,000 destitute individuals in the five selected municipalities. The project met and exceeded the target of 25,000 individuals benefiting from the food distribution.

In the past 8 months, the Project has achieved the following key results:

- **Data of over 30,000 vulnerable individuals were collected into a registry of destitute individuals in coordination with the Ministry of State Administration, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusivity, and local authorities from Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, Dili, and Oecusse.**
- **30,411 vulnerable individuals from 6,054 households and 37 institutions were provided with 3-4 weeks worth of emergency food supply.**
- **A mapping of farmers, fishers, cooperatives, and other food suppliers was developed in 5 municipalities.**
- **7,629 food baskets' worth of commodities, equivalent to over USD 900,000, from local farmers, food suppliers, and basket weavers were procured, packaged, and distributed, resulting in over 2,000 cash flow recipients in the local economy.**

Approximately half of the identified beneficiaries were vulnerable due to low, unstable, or no income. Low income was defined using the established national poverty lines of \$56.16 per person per month in Dili and \$45 per month in districts. 18% were households with health and disability issues, 15% were female-headed households, and 8% were elderlies living without family support. Institutions supported included 22 orphanages, 5 disability centers, 4 domestic violence protection centers, and 6 other community centers that provide support services to vulnerable people.

Food baskets were sourced directly from local producers and from the MAF-run cooperative (Loja dos Agricultores), ensuring that the procurement funds were injected into the local economy. For many small-scale food producers, the food basket project was their only major source of income in the past few months. Direct mitigation support such as food aid and local sourcing will help maintain standard of living and business continuity needed as the country looks to transition from the immediate post-pandemic phase to mid-term recovery.

¹ Rapid Food Security Assessment 2020. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Government of Timor-Leste, 2020

2. Background and Context

Timor-Leste, as a small island developing state and a least developed country, is highly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. Timor-Leste has 102 cumulative confirmed cases of COVID with 62 recovered and no deaths as of early February 2021. The country is currently under a continued State of Emergency (SoE) as a response to the COVID-19 situation. The restrictions on mobility were strict during the first two months of the SoE which not only included closing of the borders and international flights, but also restricted mobility between the municipalities. The restrictions also included closure of mass gatherings, including markets, cutting off sales channels for most small-scale food producers. The country saw a period of very few COVID-19 cases from May 2020, with lessening of social distancing measures, until mid-December 2020, where increasing case incidence prompted stronger restrictive measures.

The country faces a multitude of immediate challenges such as a) border closure directly impacting the import of essential food, consumables, medicines and equipment; b) weak health systems are already overburdened with very high incidence of TB, wasting (especially among children), dengue, and other tropical diseases; c) as Asia's youngest nation, the governance structures have not yet matured to effectively respond to crises and risks; d) 30% of the population live under the extreme poverty line²; and e) many other issues such as lack of water and sanitation, widespread GBV, cash-based subsistence economy, and high unemployment.

Before Covid-19, Timor-Leste was already facing moderate to severe levels of chronic food insecurity (CFI). According to the first IPC analysis report in 2019³, 21% of Timorese faced moderate CFI and 15% faced severe CFI. UNDP's human development report also shows that 46% of the population suffers from multi-dimensional poverty, including food and housing insecurity.⁴ Despite the progress seen in the last several years, malnutrition remains a severe public health concern, with stunting in 47% of children under 5 and wasting at 8.6%.⁵

During COVID-19 times, there are signs that these issues have worsened. In 2020, 38% of households had been affected by moderate or severe food insecurity as a result of COVID-19 due to restricted mobility, loss of income, and general economic downturn.⁶ 58% of households lost their income during the first few months of COVID.⁷ In the context of high rates of malnutrition and worsening food insecurity, 'food aid' will become a critical tool in preventing a crisis of malnutrition.

The project sought to contribute to the following strategic goals:

- **SDG 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- **GoTL COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan:** In post-pandemic immediate period, to guarantee, as much as possible, the existing jobs before the crisis and to recover family incomes, by maintaining employment and direct support to citizens.
- **UNDAF Outcome 1:** People of Timor-Leste, especially the most disadvantaged groups, benefit from inclusive and responsive quality health, education, and other social services, and are more resilient to disasters and the impacts of climate change.
- **UNDAF Outcome 4:** State institutions are more responsive, inclusive, accountable, and decentralized for improved service delivery and realization of rights, particularly of the most excluded groups.
- **CPD Output:** Capacities and system of sub-national institutions developed to provided more efficient, accountable, and accessible service to citizens, particularly for the rural poor and other disadvantaged

² Poverty in Timor-Leste 2014 (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, 2016.

³ The First IPC Analysis Report On The Chronic Food Insecurity Situation In Timor-Leste. National Directorate of Food Security and Cooperation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2019.

⁴ Human Development Reports 2019 Country profiles. UNDP. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TLS#>

⁵ Timor-Leste Food and Nutrition Survey 2020, preliminary results. UNICEF Timor-Leste, 2020. (unpublished)

⁶ Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Timor-Leste. United Nations Timor-Leste, 2020

⁷ Ibid.

3. Project summary and objectives

The project was initiated to help alleviate the immediate challenges facing vulnerable populations due to COVID-19 by providing emergency food supply in the form of food baskets. While doing so, the project aimed to benefit local farmers and food suppliers by procuring the food from local farmers and food suppliers, who struggle to sell their products due to the economic difficulties arising from COVID-19. The project used a circular economy approach, introducing cash flow into the local market and encouraging local consumption. A high emphasis was placed on local procurement, while maintaining the nutrition value of the food baskets.

Vulnerable populations are especially at risk of food shortage during the COVID-19 crisis. As a large proportion of Timorese can be classified as vulnerable to certain extent, the characteristics of the “most vulnerable” were determined. Drawing from the ‘UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19’⁸ which calls for special attention on populations for whom the COVID-19 emergency compounds existing vulnerabilities, and combined with beneficiary targeting criteria in pre-COVID-19 food aid programs,⁹ groups targeted as beneficiaries of emergency food provision were individuals with limited source of livelihoods, with particular consideration for households with one or more of the following characteristics: orphans, older people living alone, people affected by gender-based violence, people with disabilities or chronic health conditions, female-headed. Households with little to no proper income source, such as those experiencing crop failure or unstable employment, or those without proper housing were also included.



Figure 1. Target groups: Who are most vulnerable to food insecurity in Timor-Leste during COVID-19?

Small scale food producers and food vendors who depend on the market for food are also hard-hit during COVID-19, and identified as an “at-risk population”. Coupled with the support given to local food producers through food

⁸ A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. United Nations. 2020.

⁹ Manual for the Provision of General Food Distributions during Emergency Programmes in Malawi: Joint Emergency Food Aid Programme (JEFAP). Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP). 2003.

basket procurement, the project sought to target 10 of the 14 vulnerable groups specified in the 'UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19'.

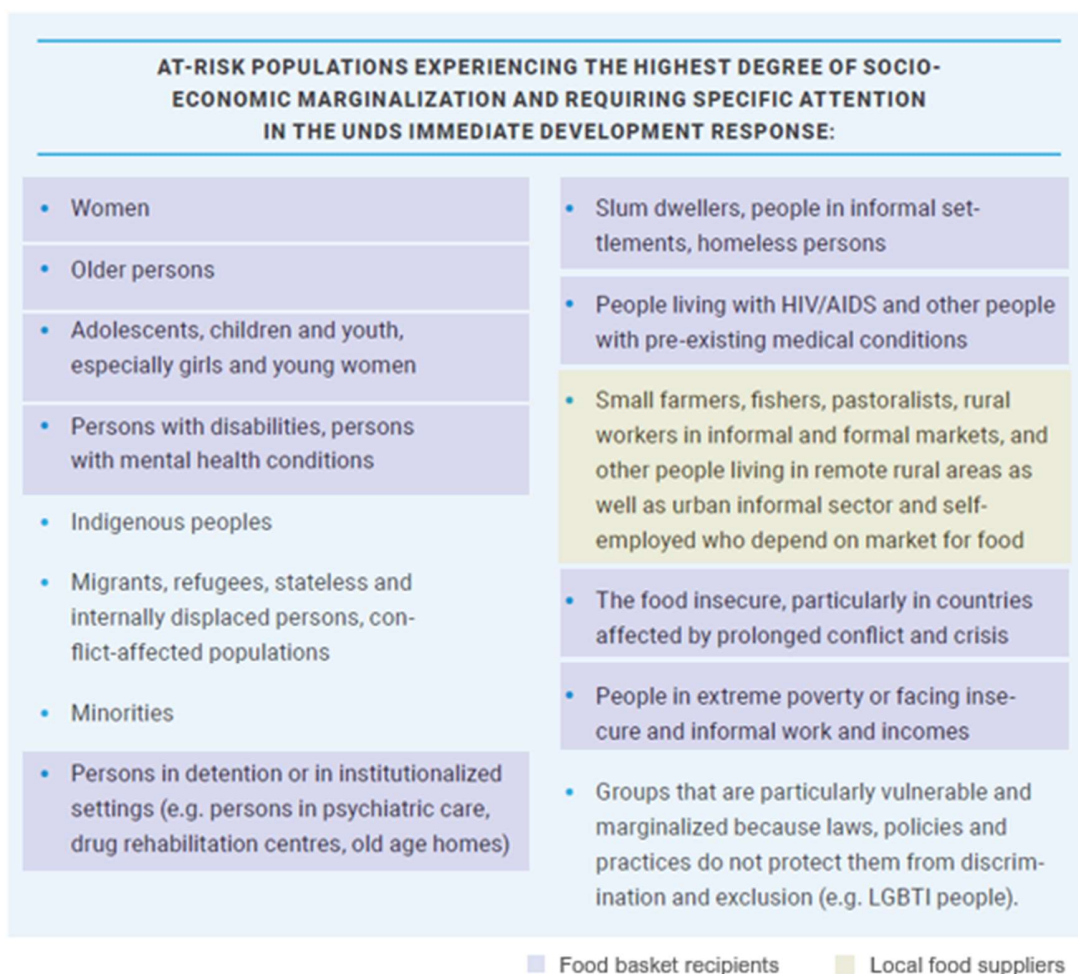


Figure 2. At-risk populations experiencing highest degree of socio-economic marginalization. Adapted from the 'UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19'

Municipality and Beneficiary targeting

The food supply was to feed a household of 4-5 people for 3-4 weeks. The intended objective was that the most vulnerable population in the 5 selected municipalities would be provided with emergency food supply to address urgent nutritional needs. A target of 25,000 vulnerable individuals was identified to ensure the baskets would be nutritious, of sufficient quantity, and be within budget. This would allow at approximately 5,000 individuals from each municipality to benefit.

Based on the IPC analysis report, guidance from the Government, and UNDP's field presence, five municipalities were selected for this project: Oecusse (20% of population under Severe Chronic Food Insecurity), Covalima (18%),

Baucau (17%), Bobonaro (10%) and Dili (7%).¹⁰ Within these 5 municipalities, Sucos were chosen based on consultation with municipal authorities.

Beneficiaries were considered eligible for food aid if they had an income of \$56.16 per person per month in Dili and \$45 in districts, or if they met any of the other vulnerable population criteria listed above. The income threshold is the established national poverty line based on cost of meeting basic needs in relation to food, shelter, and non-food items, and takes into account the different cost of living between urban (Dili) and rural areas.¹¹ As income levels are sometimes difficult to ascertain, alternate signs of determining poverty levels were also used (i.e. living in damaged/non-permanent housing)



Figure 3. Food distribution target municipalities: Baucau, Bobonaro, Dili, Covalima, Oecusse

Circular economy approach

Food systems present many potential levers to support socio-economic recovery and build a healthier, wealthier, and more resilient Timorese society. These levers include supporting nutrition to improve health outcomes, strengthening market linkages and productivity, value addition through food processing and agro-industry development, generating sustainable economic opportunities, and reducing import dependence. While longer-term initiatives will be needed to achieve some of these outcomes, it is necessary to strengthen some aspects of the weakened food ecosystem through emergency support provision. It is with this conviction that this project applies the principle of circular economy in designing emergency food support to vulnerable groups in Timor-Leste.

A circular economy approach focuses on creating local feedback loops of production and consumption. Local products are supplied within a specific geographic area, allowing money to remain fluid within these communities, rather than being sent to external suppliers for imported goods. As such, under this project, food will be procured locally from local farmers to the extent possible, and distributed to pre-identified vulnerable groups in the form of nutritionally balanced food baskets. The circular economy approach is especially critical during COVID-19 as sustaining the local economy and the food systems is necessary to curtail the crisis' impacts from worsening and maintain communities' well-being outside of the most vulnerable.

¹⁰ The First IPC Analysis Report On The Chronic Food Insecurity Situation In Timor-Leste. National Directorate of Food Security and Cooperation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2019.

¹¹ Poverty in Timor-Leste 2014 (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, 2016.

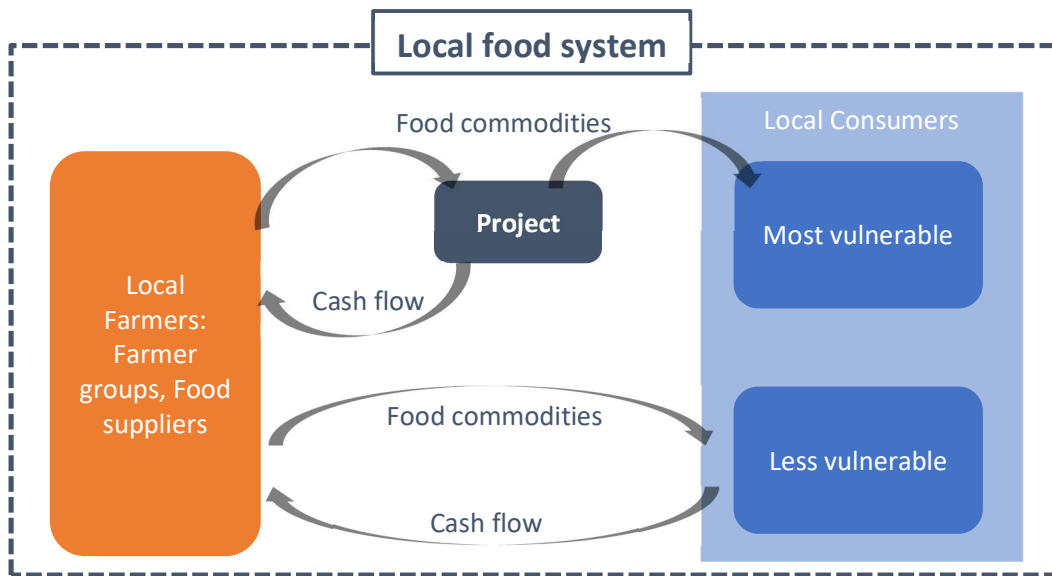


Figure 4. Circular economy approach for food procurement and distribution within the local food ecosystem

The main targets of the project included the following:

1. Data of 25,000 vulnerable individuals are collected in coordination with the Ministry of State Administration, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusive, local authorities from Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, Dili and Oecusse;
2. Mapping and data collection of food supplies and farmers;
3. Procure from local farmers and food suppliers, to the extent possible, and distributed to the pre-identified vulnerable groups in the form of nutritionally balanced food baskets;
4. Food baskets are distributed to 25,000 vulnerable individuals by 31 December 2020.*
5. Production of report on data collection and analysis of the beneficiaries of the project including poor and vulnerable individuals living in households and institutions; farmers and other food and service providers.

* Project timeline has been extended to 28 February 2021 since project initiation.

4. Narrative on Key Results Achieved

Target beneficiary identification

Within the 5 municipalities Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, Dili, and Oecusse, sucos and aldeias were selected based on guidance and approval from the Government of Timor-Leste in particular the local authorities. Target households and institutions meeting the criteria were pre-identified with consultation from Suco chiefs, community leaders, and civil society organizations working in these areas. The distribution plan for each Suco was developed considering the location of the recipients, including those with reduced mobility who need individual delivery. Suitable distribution points and collection centers were established with support from local authorities, utilizing existing public buildings, church-run institutions (shelters, orphanages) and schools.

Farmer and food mapping (registry of suppliers)

Local food suppliers were mapped with consultation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, local authorities, and other institutions with local presence. Suppliers included individual farmers, farmers groups, Loja dos Agricultores (MAF), and consolidators for each municipality. Additionally, we worked with NGOs and specialized organizations that work with farmers to process and distribute their goods, such as Agora Food Studio, Aroma-Parcic (People's Trade Company), Cipriano Felix, Nelia Alfaiate, TOFTA, Acelda, Bubulisi, and Quantum. For each municipality, priority was given to suppliers within the municipality, and those from neighboring municipalities were included when the volume of locally produced food was insufficient.



Figure 5. Number of local food suppliers and employees benefited from supply-side cash flow

Purchasing and collection of food to collection centers

To procure local food commodities, UNDP engaged with 432 individual farmers, fishermen/women, 22 food suppliers, 34 farmer groups from both MAF’s cooperative system (Loja dos Agricultores) and other cooperatives. Through these purchases, 950 farmers and 530 employees were reached, and 17 fishers, of which 14 were women (82%). They made up nearly 1,500 individuals in the local food production ecosystem that were supported, providing much-needed income during the economic downturn. When including the number of basket weavers and local volunteers, the individuals supported through procurement totals approximately 2,000, of which 53% are women.

Over 280 tons of local food was purchased and distributed. Must have staples were procured from Loja dos Agricultores, the MAF’s established agrobusiness system, and included locally produced rice, milled maize, mung beans, kidney beans, and peanuts. Fresh fruit and vegetables were procured from the local farmers and farmer groups directly. Back up local suppliers were identified in case of insufficient supply on the day of delivery. Upon arrival to the collection centers, quality checks and sorting was performed manually to ensure consistent food quality at time of packaging. Food items were distributed to beneficiaries within 24 hours. Baskets were packed with care to minimize food damage.

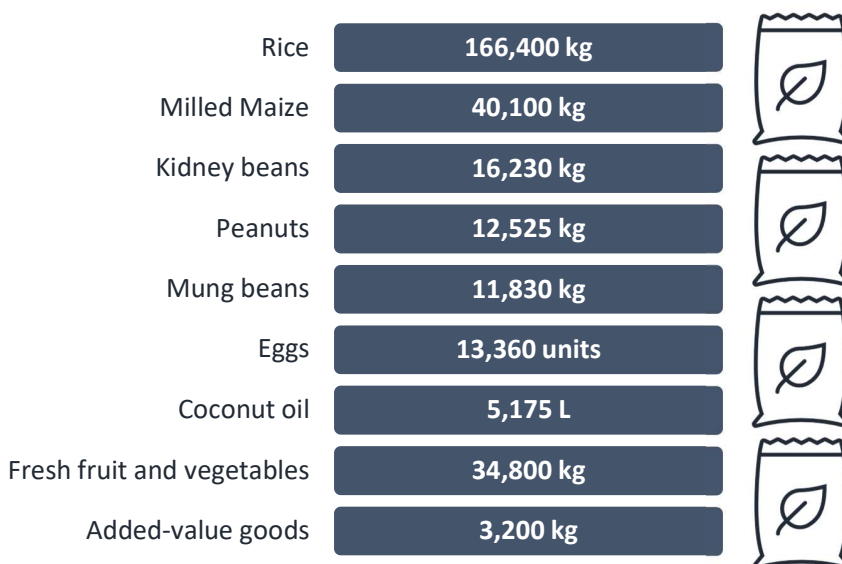


Figure 6. Total quantity of food commodities distributed

Basket composition

A nutritionally balanced food basket was designed for each municipality, accounting for the region’s local agricultural output. Each basket was designed to provide food sufficient for 4-5 individuals for 3-4 weeks, to fulfill the macro and micro nutritional needs of children, nursing mothers, and elderly. Due to seasonality and variation in local availability, food baskets were prepared with different food items with equivalent nutritional value. Each basket was composed of three categories of food items: must-have staples, a selection of fresh vegetables and fruits, and optional value-added food products depending on supply. Additionally, as many households do not have access to refrigeration, food items with longer shelf lives were selected when possible. Providing Timorese rice was important as most Timorese cannot afford to eat local Timorese rice due to its high cost.



Figure 7. Standard food basket composition, consisting of must-have staples and local selection of fresh produce and value-added products

Nutritional value

A nutrient profile analysis of the must have staples of a standard basket found that approximately 70% of the household’s energy needs were met and 60% of the full protein needs of a 4-member household for 3 weeks. An average household composition was used based on the five municipalities’ population distribution from the 2015 Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census. 30% of the iron needs were met by the must-have grains and pulses. Additional iron, Vitamin C, A, and calcium was supplemented by the locally procured fresh vegetables and fruit. Reaching 70% of the daily nutrient requirements was considered adequate as the households would have access to other foods during this period.

Table 1. Selected nutrients in the ‘standard average’ basket

Commodity	Quantity (expected)	Energy (kcal)	Protein (g)	Iron (Fe) mg
Unfortified local rice	20kg	76,800	146	60
Assorted beans ¹²	2kg	6,660	442	134
Mung Beans ¹³	1.5kg	4,515	348	88.5
Maize ¹⁴	5kg	19,800	490	150
Peanuts ¹⁵	1.5kg	1,548	355	339
Coconut Oil	750 ml	6,750	6	0
TOTAL		116, 073	1,787	772

12 Average of local assorted beans

13 Assuming green variety

14 Assuming common variety

15 Assuming raw and unroasted

Table 2. Selected nutrients in the 'standard average' basket met per average household.

Nutrient	Unit	Household nutrition needs for 21 days	Nutrient needs met by the 'standard' basket	% of nutrient needs met for 21 days /household
Energy	kcal	167,559(kcal)	116,073 (kcal)	69%
Protein	g	2,961(g)	1,787 (g)	60%
Iron, Fe	mg	2,730(mg)	772 (mg)	28%

Procurement of packages

All basket packaging was locally sourced, made from natural or recycled material, and reusable. Over 4,000 baskets were purchased from nearly 200 local weavers (of which 172 are women), and 4,000 recycled sacks from Nelia Alfaiate, an NGO based in Dili. Both the baskets and sacks were selected not only for local economic incentive but also to reduce the environmental impact and support the government in its efforts to reduce plastic and promote use of recycled material. Baskets were prioritized when possible for the added benefit of supporting local weavers. Food products contained limited packaging and when necessary, (loose items such as beans or liquids) items were packed in recyclable or reusable material to ensure food quality and shelf life (e.g., glass jars).



Photo 1: Woman weaving traditional basket

Food Distribution

Throughout August 2020 to February 2021, **over 30,000 of Timor-Leste's most vulnerable people were provided with a 3-4 week supply of nutritionally balanced food.** The project reached 6,054 households and 37 institutions in one hundred Sucos. More than 12,700 children and 4,300 elderlies benefited from this project. Of these, 1,300 children were from orphanages and 496 older persons had no family members to look after them.



30,411 most vulnerable individuals benefited from food baskets



6,054 households were reached from 100 sucos and 428 aldeias



37 institutions were supported, reaching 1,909 beneficiaries

Baucau	Bobonaro	Covalima	Dili	Oecusse
5,981	5,490	5,182	8,434	5,324

Among the households, the majority (72%) were poor families with no or little proper income stream, which includes the 15% of households that are female-headed (single mothers, widows). 18% was households with adults with disabilities or health problems that hinder them from working, and 8% are older persons without family support. The average household size was 4.7 individuals per household.

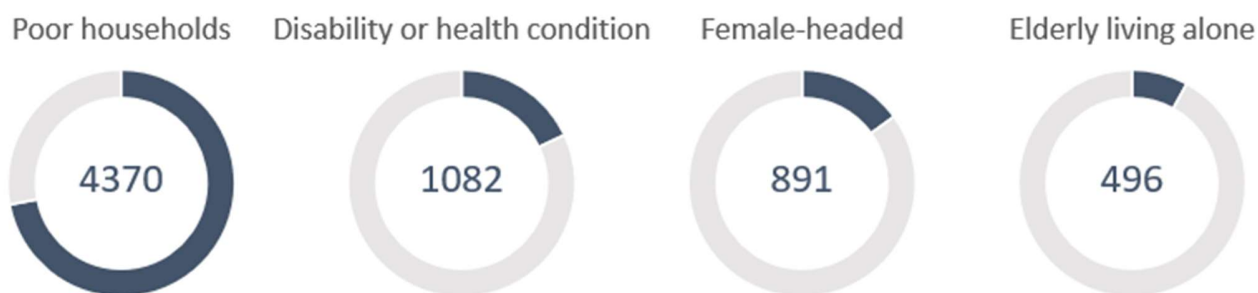


Figure 8. Number and proportion of households with vulnerability characteristics

For all institutions, at least one repeat distribution was done so that all 1,909 beneficiaries received two rounds of food supply. An additional repeat distribution was done for institutions in Baucau, Bobonaro, and Dili, resulting in over 1,000 beneficiaries receiving three rounds of food supply. New households that were unidentified the first round were also identified and provided with food baskets during these subsequent distributions.

A total of 7,629 baskets were distributed. Most of the baskets were distributed at a central point and collected by the beneficiaries. Recipients with reduced mobility were pre-identified and the baskets were delivered directly to their doors. Baskets were also directly delivered to the institutions.

Cooking demonstration using ingredients from the basket (local noodles and fresh produce) was given by a local social enterprise during two distributions to inform recipients on the various ways to eat and enjoy the food. Participants, especially children, were encouraged to try the finished product to assure that the ingredients will be acceptable.



Photo 2: Cooking demonstration using ingredients from food basket by Agora Food Studios

Volunteer capacity building

Many volunteers were involved throughout the distribution cycles. 317 local volunteers participated in the distribution from scouts, associations, and colleges. Many local volunteers were youth and young adults who stopped going to school or were unemployed. They contributed to the distribution process, including logistics, distribution, purchasing from local markets, and basket preparation. Volunteers were provided with food, drink, and a daily stipend of \$8-\$10. Volunteers were trained in advance of each distribution on proper food handling, and respectful treatment of beneficiaries. Local volunteers gained skills in enumeration, quality control, cooperation and communication with local authorities, and vulnerability sensitization, especially those who took part in multiple distributions. Volunteers were also instrumental in maintaining a good relationship with local vendors and local authorities. Many volunteers were exposed for the first time to the hardships of other people in the community. 8 national UNVs, who are young Timorese, gained valuable project experience in data collection and validation, managing local volunteers, finance, and direct collaboration with municipal and local authorities. They were also trained in food quality control, logistics, and by Agora Food Studios on the nutritional value of Timorese food commodities to explain to beneficiaries.



Photo 3: Volunteers delivering food basket to beneficiary with disability

Data collection

Data was collected throughout the pre-identification, procurement, and distribution process to ensure transparency, accountability, and for monitoring purposes. Data templates were developed, and data was collected on the following for each distribution/purchase:

1. **Farmers and food tracking** - purchased products, quantity, price, names of farmers and suppliers, number of employees;
2. **Households** - the number of households, number of people benefiting from the food delivered by age group and sex, identification of the vulnerability and number of baskets delivered.
3. **Institutions** - name of the institution, type of institution, number of baskets distributed, number of people who benefit from the products delivered by age group and sex
4. **Volunteers and other service providers** - number of volunteers and drivers and other service providers hired in municipalities / sucos to support distribution
5. **Basket composition** - quantity and type of products distributed in each distribution

COVID precautions

Precautions to prevent transmission of COVID-19 were taken during distribution process. All volunteers and UNDP staff were equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE). Handwashing stations were installed at distribution points along with Ministry of Health posters for COVID-19 awareness. In many distributions, reusable cloth masks were distributed along with the baskets. Some baskets included hand sanitizers and soap depending on the supply.

4.1. Beneficiaries' Stories

1. Providing emergency food for orphanage Uma Mae-Clara

The project supported 37 institutions. One of these was Uma Asrama Mae-Clara, an orphanage in Opa, a remote suco in the mountains of Lolotoe, Bobonaro. The orphanage cares for 17 orphan girls. When we arrived in October, the situation was dire; they had difficulty accessing food and limited access to other towns during the rainy season. The housing was very crowded, with no proper mattresses. The nuns who ran the orphanage did their best to provide for the children, but had no stable contribution source. It had been especially tough with COVID to get enough food. The night before the distribution, the majority of the girls in the orphanage went to sleep with an empty stomach. A few girls told us that they were so hungry that they couldn't fall asleep last night.



Photo 4: Girls with food baskets at Uma Mae-Clara orphanage

UNDP distributed 20 nutritionally balanced food baskets to Uma Mae-Clara over 3 distributions: 370kg of rice, 110kgs of maize, 85 kgs of beans and nuts, and 105kg of fresh produce, including cabbage, carrot, eggplant, squash, and sweet potatoes. The orphanage staff were excited to see all the food and said the rice of each distribution was enough for a month at least. The baskets had arrived at just the right time.



Photo 5: Beneficiary's house in Bobonaro

The orphanage received distributions in October & December 2020, and January 2021. During these 3 months, the children were able to have nutritious meals and get the desired hours of sleep. They would now be able to focus better while studying and have energy to play and exercise. Although the housing condition still had much to be improved, the emergency food supply was at least able to give the orphanage immediate, critical nutrition relief.

UNDP also distributed food baskets to 367 additional beneficiaries in 122 households in Opa suco, including 47 female-headed households and 20 elderlies with no family members to take care of them.

My condition does not allow me to do hard jobs. I can only care for my five children through daily support I receive from my family... With this little help we can lighten our struggles for few days.
– Gracilda, widow with lower limb disability

Here our main difficulties are water and food. A dry season like this one is terrible for us. Water sources are dry, making women's life, specifically, more difficult. With this assistance, we have lessened our burdens so far, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic.

– Elizabeth D, orphan, 17yo

Across the 5 municipalities, 1,300 orphans, 496 elderly without family support, 891 female-headed households, and 1,082 individuals with disabilities or health conditions were supported by food aid. Institutions ranged in size from 225 beneficiaries in an orphanage in Oecusse, to a training home for 28 young adults with disabilities in Dili, to smaller institutions in remote aldeias, like Uma Mae-Clara.

Many beneficiaries shared their expressed contentment with being provided with local products as opposed to imported goods, and that the money was staying within the country. They were especially happy to receive Timorese rice, as many cannot afford it due to the high cost.

We accept women and girls who are victims of domestic violence and alike. There are currently 64 people. They really need special care. The assistance from UNDP is very significant for us at a time like this. I also appreciate that they distributed food that are really from local farmers. So far, we have received and bought a lot from outside, but during the Covid-19 pandemic, it has shown that Timor-Leste is actually possible to support each other from what exists. From what we have.

– Madre Santana, Uma Mahon in Salele (domestic violence shelter)

2. Supporting local food producers

The initial COVID19 State of Emergency was difficult for many, but especially so for farmers and food vendors whose livelihoods depended on selling their wares at the market. During the initial months, when the restrictions were stricter, markets were closed, cutting off their source of income.

“There were no buyers, and many of our products were lost (rotted). We had very little income.”

– Dominga, onion farmer

“Even if there was fish, we couldn't sell them.”

– Adalberto, fisherman

In support of these local producers, UNDP's emergency food supply project sourced the food baskets locally, and directly from farmers groups and individual farmers when possible. Nearly 1700 farmers, fishers, food product supplier employees, and basket weavers benefited by selling their products to the project.

"We feel this program is really supporting us. Currently no one buys our products if we sell in the market. But we now [are providing] baskets and earning some income."

– Albertina, basket weaver

"I feel satisfied with this program. The income from the sales covers our daily needs and school fees for our children."

– Natalia, farmer



Photo 6: Onion farmer showing her crop

Fortunately, restrictions have lessened and things are not as difficult as in the early months of the pandemic. However, economic activity is not as it was before and many are still unable to sell their products. The increased income from the project was crucial for many farmers to recover from previous losses and to provide for their family' immediate needs.

Another challenge for the farmers was the frustration of feeling that their hard work and crop was unvalued, as they watched their crop go unsold and perish. Farmers were happy that their products were still seen as valuable, and that their work was helping other vulnerable people in their community.

This project showed that it is possible to give emergency food aid to the most vulnerable while also benefitting the local producers and redistributing cash so that the funds are circulated within the local economy. When food insecurity is worsened by sudden economic impact, coupling food relief with cash distributions via procurement, and thus giving aid to people who struggle to make a living but do not meet the criteria for food aid, may be a good approach for distributions during COVID-19 and in future economic crises.

"During the state of emergency, we didn't know if our crops could be sold. With this program, we saw our products still had value."

– Joao, farmer

"Helping many people by buying food from people like us and redistributing it to the most vulnerable communities makes us feel happy."

– Theophilho, farmer group member

4.1 Progress towards the UNDAF/CPD Outcome

UNDAF Outcome: *By 2019, state institutions are more responsive, inclusive, accountable, and decentralized for improved service delivery and realization of rights, particularly of the most excluded groups.*

SO4.4: Relevant state institutions have improved capacity to collect, analyse and use reliable and timely socio-demographic disaggregated data for evidence-based planning, budgeting, monitoring, reporting and decision-making targeting disadvantaged groups.

4.2 Progress on Outputs

CPD Output: Capacities and system of sub-national institutions developed to provided more efficient, accountable and accessible service to citizens, particularly for the rural poor and other disadvantaged.

Suco chiefs and local leaders from 100 Sucos and 428 aldeias were involved in the pre-identification, validation, and distribution of food aid to the vulnerable individuals in their community. Community-managed targeting increases ownership of the aid project and empowers the local actors to make decisions to benefit the most disadvantaged.

Project Output: Emergency food supplies provided to vulnerable groups in selected municipalities

The output target of 25,000 individuals provided with emergency food supply by the end of the project was achieved. By the original project end date of 31 December 2020, the baskets had already been distributed to 28,800 beneficiaries, well over the target. After the project was extended to end of February 2021, **the number of individuals increased to 30,411, reaching an additional 5,000 vulnerable individuals over the target. The increased number does not count the repeated food basket distribution to the beneficiaries living in the institutions.**

The indicator was originally designed with the understanding of individuals benefitting from one basket of food supply. However, some households and all institutions also benefitted from repeat distributions in the last two months of the project, receiving a second and third basket's worth of provision. **The total number of baskets distributed for was 7, 629. Thus the actual impact is greater than the absolute number of individuals.**

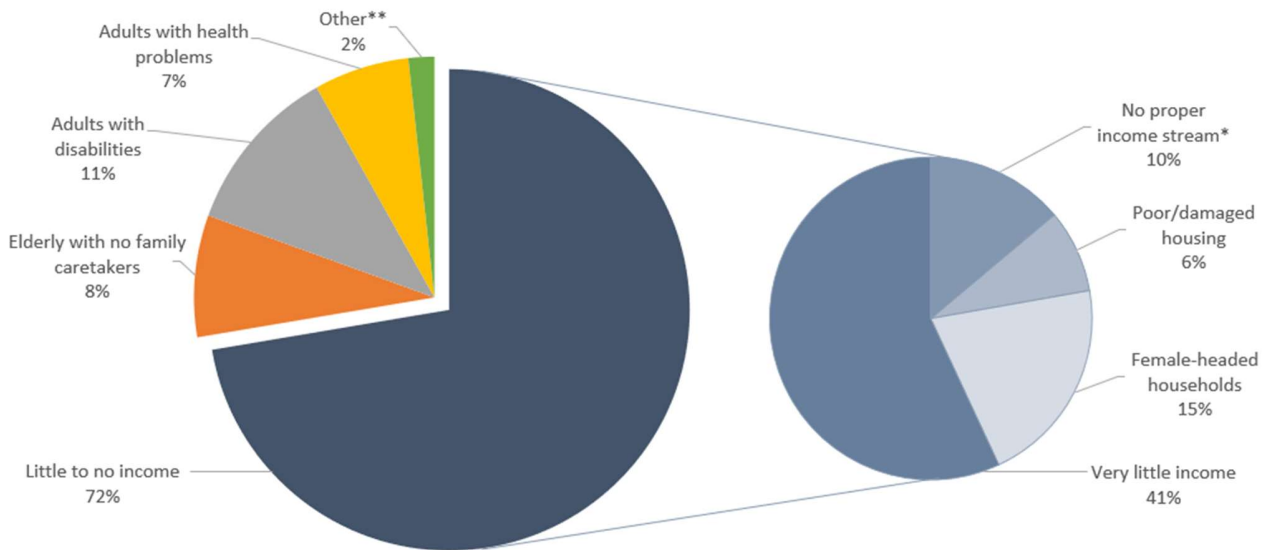
Table 3. Project indicator targets and results

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Remarks
Number of individuals benefitted from the distribution of food baskets.	Date: Start of project, July 2020 0 individuals benefitted	Date: End of project, Feb 2021 25,000 individuals benefitted	Date: 28 Feb 2021 30,411 individuals benefitted Male: 14,344 Female: 16,067 (53%) Children (0-17): 12,726 Adults (18-59): 13,297 Elderlies (60+): 4,388	Source of data: project database, collected as detailed in Section 4.0

Household and institution breakdown: Emergency food supply was provided to a total of 6,054 households and 37 institutions. Of the 30,411 individuals who benefited from the food relief, 28,502 were from households and 1,909 from institutions. The project serviced 5 municipalities, in 23 postos administrativos, 100 sucos and 428 aldeias.

Most (72%) of the households were vulnerable due to limited to no income. 18% were unable to work due to disability or health problems, 15% were female-headed households with no income stream, 8% were elderly with no family to care for them, and 2% were other vulnerable individuals (orphans/child-headed household, single fathers, etc). There was only one household that reported experiencing domestic violence/gender based violence/human trafficking, however it is highly likely that this is underreported due to the sensitive nature of the question.

Figure 9. Proportion of households by vulnerability classification



*Subsistence farming, crop failure, or informal employment ** orphans/child-headed household, single fathers

A total of **1,909 beneficiaries were provided for through institutions**, of which 1,365 were in orphanages, 165 were in disability centers, 208 in domestic violence centers, and 171 in other institutions. Institutions reached were orphanages (22 institutions), disability centers (5), domestic violence protection centers (4), and other religious/collegiate/community centers that provide support services to vulnerable people (6).

Figure 10. Beneficiary age group distribution by institution

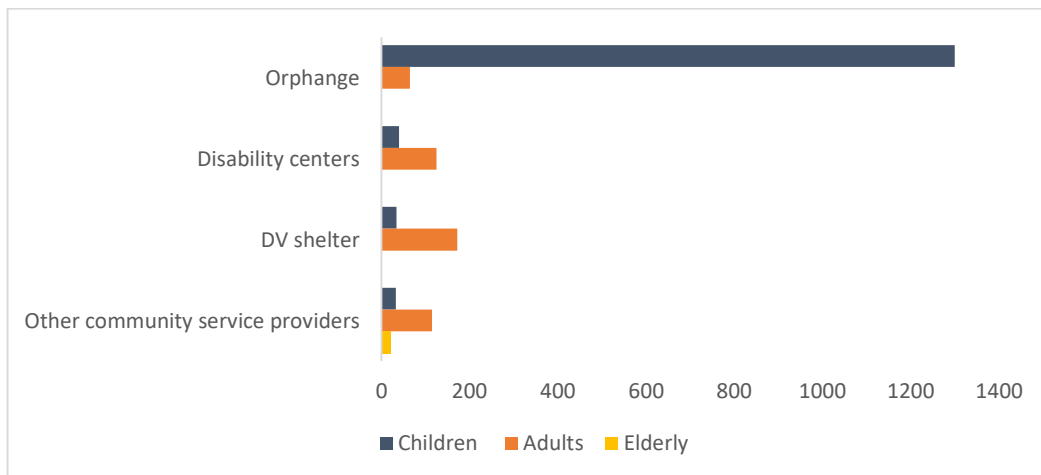


Figure 11. Number of beneficiaries by institution type and gender

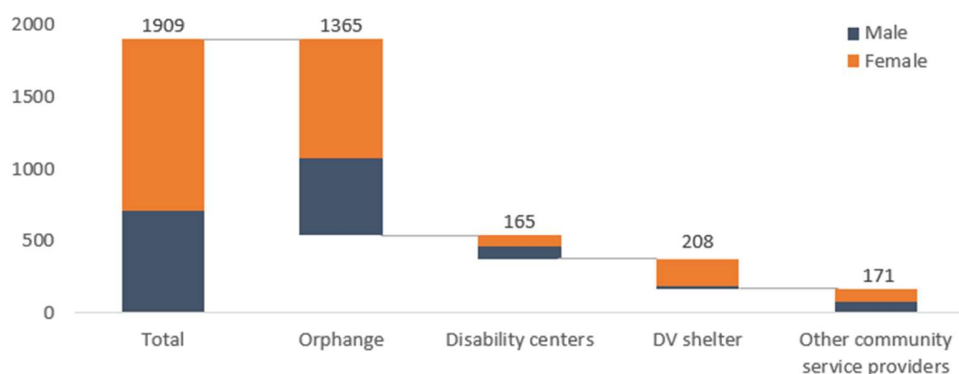
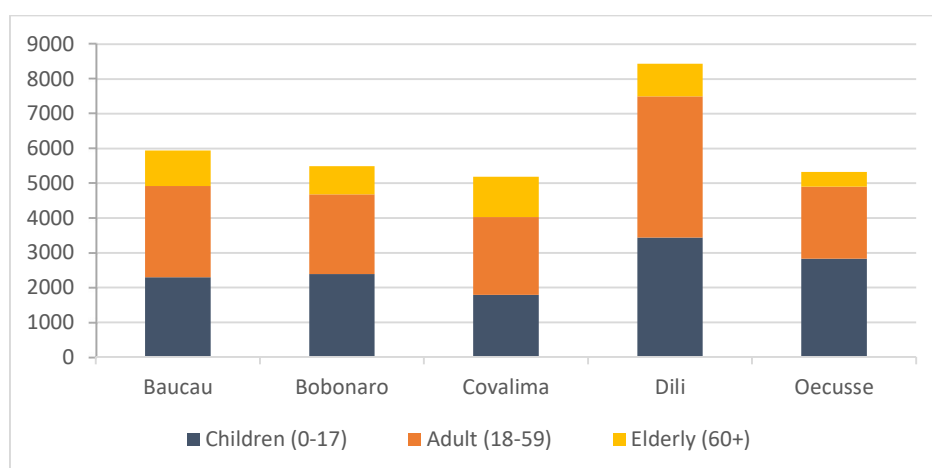


Figure 12. Number of beneficiaries by age group, per municipality



Age group: 12,726 children (42%), 13,297 adults (44%), and 4,388 older persons (14%) benefitted from food relief. Age group distribution was similar in all municipalities, with slightly more children in Oecusse and slightly more older persons in Covalima.

Gender: Female beneficiaries represented 53% of the total, and this proportion was similar across municipalities. The proportion of women was higher in institutions (63%) than in households (52%). Adults showed similar trends as the overall average. Among children, there were slightly more boys than girls (49% female). Among the elderly, women represented 64% of the beneficiaries, suggesting more older women are living in vulnerable conditions than older men.

Figure 13. Beneficiaries gender distribution by municipality

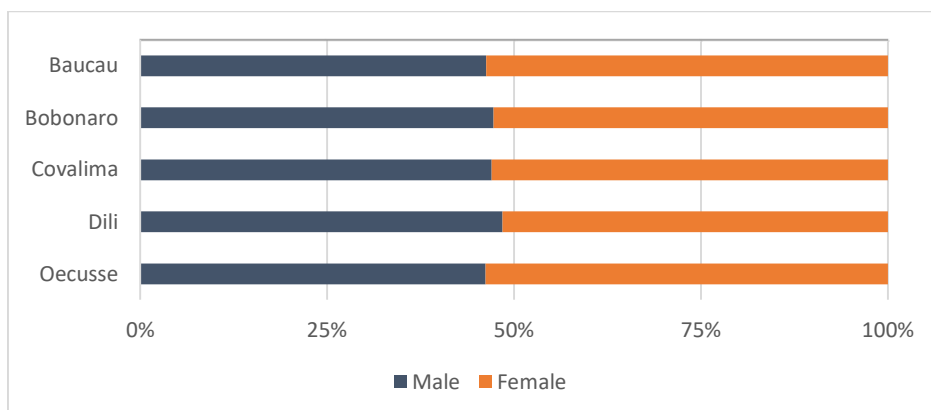
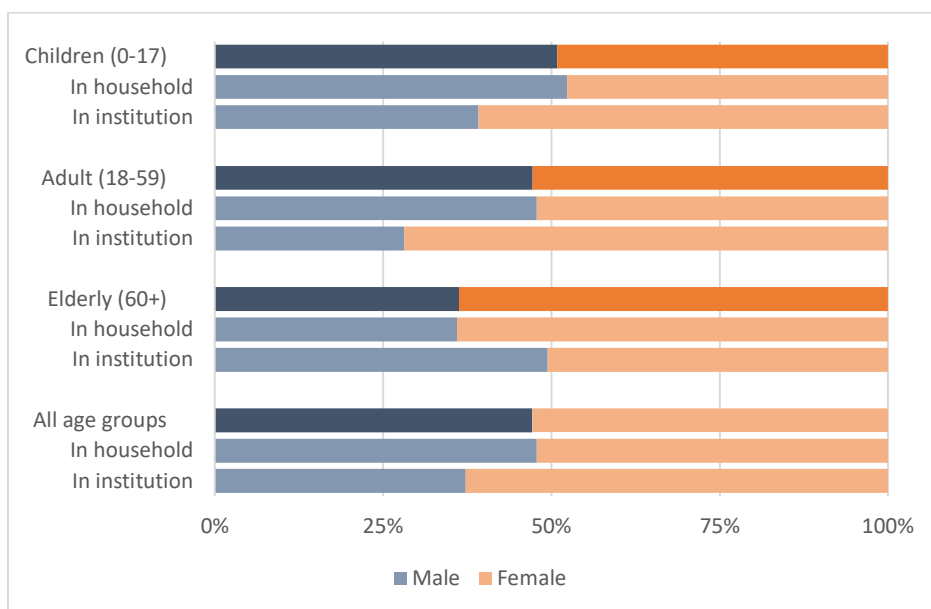


Figure 14. Beneficiaries gender distribution by age group and institution vs household



Basket variation: Baskets were generally consistent in nutritional value in all districts. Variation in fresh vegetables and fruit was expected due to seasonality and local sourcing limitations.

5. Cross Cutting Issues

5.1 Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, and Social Inclusion

The project was committed to economic empowerment of women through supporting their businesses. 56% of farmers engaged were female. The project purchased goods from several fisherwomen to support their business, as fishing is traditionally a male-dominated occupation. Of 17 fishers supported by the project, 14 were women (82%).

The project was designed to benefit the local basket weavers, traditionally done by women. Of the 200 suppliers engaged, 172 were women (86%). The project's supplier network also included local women entrepreneurs and women-led food suppliers. Supporting these suppliers through the procurement of food items helped them have business continuity during COVID times. For example, in Oecusse, UNDP had supported a woman-led dried meat producer through a previous agri-business entrepreneurship project. Her business was engaged as a local supplier for the Oecusse food basket, and as Oecusse was especially hard hit economically due to COVID19, the food basket orders were an important and timely source of income.

6. Partnerships

The success of the project was enabled through new and existing partnerships established with state authorities at national, municipal, and local Suco level. The MAF was a key partner for supply-side activities, and shared information on farmer groups that were then developed into a mapping of local farmers, farmers groups, and suppliers. The MAF-operated agribusiness system, Loja dos Agricultores, was the main operational partner for procurement of grains and pulses.

Support from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of State Administration, Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion, and municipal authorities helped develop income threshold criteria for vulnerable populations for Dili and other municipalities and provided data to act as starting point for beneficiary registry. Supports from Municipal Presidents were instrumental in forming a common understanding of beneficiary targeting criteria at the Suco level. Partnership with Posto Administrativos, Suco chiefs, NGOs with local presence, and other local authorities provided the crucial knowledge of their local communities to collect and validate the beneficiary registry. This resulted in a strengthened cooperation and common understanding of goals.

7. Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned

The project encountered challenges typically seen in food relief distributions as well as additional challenges arising from the less common local sourcing program design.

- Distance from the warehouse to the distribution point, exacerbated by rough road conditions, made it difficult to maintain the food quality between packaging and distribution. Adjustments were made to have more than one warehouse so that the distance was reduced, and to reduce damage to the baskets via increased training for volunteers.
- It is very important to achieve a common understanding and agreement on beneficiary criteria for local authorities and community at large, as the project team learned from several sucos. As the project depended on the local authorities for household information during pre-identification, discussion, follow-up, and validation was important to ensure fair, comprehensive, and feasible beneficiary targeting. In some instances, when there was difficulty in agreement on the criteria, support from the municipal president to explain the financial constraints and the necessity of targeting the most vulnerable

population was helpful in gaining consensus and buy-in from the local leaders. However, at times there were community members that were not eligible that did not understand the concept of targeting and why they did not receive food, who were sometimes angry at the staff. Better communication and sensitization with community members would be helpful the future.

- During pre-identification, data collection of vulnerable people was more effective when Suco and Aldeia leaders were re-visited by project team and the data validated together, to reduce chance of bottlenecks and inaccurate data.
- In early distributions, unregistered individuals would show up on the day of distributions, some who met the beneficiary criteria but were previously unidentified. In subsequent distributions, up to 10 extra baskets were brought to the distribution point to accommodate for unexpected beneficiaries.
- Fresh produce availability from local farmers were not always consistent or sufficient. Some farmers would change the price or the quantity after the order has been placed or be unable to fill the order. The challenge was in part remediated by pre-identifying back up suppliers in case of shortage. In cases when the volume could not be supplied locally, suppliers from neighboring posto administrativos were contacted. However this took more time and money, which need to be budgeted for in the future. Similarly, truck drivers would ask for a higher price moments before the delivery due but was dealt with by having alternative truck companies available.
- As many local suppliers were unaccustomed to such large volume orders, filling orders on time or maintaining product quality throughout the project posed a challenge for some suppliers. Regular quality checks enabled the team to discontinue and replace certain products so that the overall quality of the food baskets were maintained. However, in future distributions, identifying more substitutes, placing orders early (for items with longer shelf-life) or staggering the orders from multiple vendors may help maintain product quality throughout the length of the project.
- Detailed on-site monitoring, validation and reporting from field teams were important in making improvements with each distribution. On-site monitoring could be improved to include beneficiary-centered questions, such as distance walked and perceptions of safety. In addition, it was difficult to make inference into the acceptability, proper utilization, and risk of exploitation (forced or voluntary redistribution) after the point of distribution because post-distribution monitoring and evaluation was not written into the project design.

8. Financial Report Summary

Activity	Source Funding	of	Approved Budget (USD)	Expenditure (USD)	Balance (USD)
Activity 1- preparation	UNDP		40,400.00	40,400.00	0
	GoTL		0	0	0
Activity 2 -food purchase, packed, distributed	GoTL		900,085.00	900,085.00	0
Output 3- PMU cost (staff, comms, coordination)	UNDP		64,935.00	64,935.00	0
	GoTL		50,065.00	50,065.00	0
Direct project cost (2%)	GoTL		19,940.00	19,940.00	0
GMS (3%)	GoTL		29,910.00	29,910.00	0
TOTAL			1,105,335.00	1,105,335.00	0

Annex I. Distribution Schedule

Municipality	August	September	October	November	December	January	February
Baucau	2020-08-06		2020-10-16 2020-10-23 2020-10-29	2020-11-27	2020-12-15 2020-12-17	2021-01-28	2021-02-11
Bobonaro		2020-09-11 2020-09-25	2020-10-02 2020-10-15 2020-10-16		2020-12-15	2021-01-28	
Covalima			2020-10-09	2020-11-17 2020-11-20	2020-12-18		2021-02-05
Dili	2020-08-19 2020-08-28	2020-09-04		2020-11-17 2020-11-20	2020-12-01 2020-12-04 2020-12-23	2021-01-28	02-10-2021
Oecusse	2020-08-28		2020-10-09	2020-11-17	2020-12-17		04-02-2021 05-02-2021 06-02-2021



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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