

## Social and Environmental Evaluation

Project : Health Strengthening Systems for the Ministry of Health of Sao Tome and Principe´

Award : 00125203

Donor : 00132900

Implementation period: 2021-2023

Date : December 2021

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### Background

The Project **Health Strengthening Systems for the MoH** is the result of the signature of the Financial Agreement signed between UNDP and the Ministry of Health (MoH) of Sao Tome and Principe. The project aims to reinforce the global functioning of the MoH and the new Project Management Unit (PMU), after the transition of The Global Fund project from UNDP to the MoH.

The project is part of the Democratic Governance portfolio of UNDP in STP and will last during three years. At the moment of the signature of the agreement, the project didn't have any social or environmental evaluation, and this evaluation is being done post-signature and after 6 months.

The country is composed by two main island, Sao Tome and Principe, with just over 200 thousand inhabitants, the epidemiological situation of the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe is characterized by the emergence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the persistence of various tropical diseases, with emphasis on endemic epidemics. This combination of pathologies is not limited to the country, but is common to most developing countries. This mixed epidemiological profile is further complicated by the poor utilization of health services, although the country has acceptable health coverage and low quality secondary and tertiary services. In addition, the country suffers from a shortage of skilled human resources (WHO, 2020).

São Tomé and Príncipe faces difficult challenges due to its insularity, remoteness, and small size. Its soils, topography, and weather patterns make it vulnerable to small-scale natural hazards and climate change. Natural hazards affect agriculture, particularly food production, limit access to roads, and destroy housing and household goods, affecting the lives and resilience of women, men, girls, and boys differently. In 2017, it ranked 143rd out of 189 countries ranked according to the Human Development Index, with a value of 0.5895, placing it in the "medium" category of the same index and above the average for Africa. In 2017, it ranked 143rd out of 189 countries ranked according to the Human Development Index, with a value of 0.5895, placing it in the "medium" category of the same index and above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the country faces major challenges in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and there has been little progress since 2000 in this area. In 2012, it was estimated that nearly two-thirds of the population lived below the poverty line and that women were more exposed to the risk of poverty than men. More recent assessments indicate that little progress was made in reducing poverty after 2007.

Poverty is more pronounced in urban centers than in rural areas due to limited employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women. Almost 50% of the active labor market population is employed in the informal sector and does not have access to decent wages. The unemployment rate in the country is about 13.6% (19.7% among women, 9.3% among men, and 23% among youth). The country ranked 131st out of 160 countries classified as "poor" (2020, WFP).

In 2009, an estimated 24 percent of households were food insecure. Poverty, the main cause of hunger, remains high with about one-third of the population living on less than \$1.90 per day. Poverty, the main cause of hunger, remains high, with about one-third of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day. Two-thirds of the population live below the poverty line, which stands at \$3.20 a day. High unemployment rates and weak agriculture, fisheries and livestock sectors, along with the effects of frequent natural disasters such as floods, landslides and environmental degradation, prevent the national food production sector from meeting the needs of the population.

Food availability (especially for the poorest households and on a gender and age differentiated basis) and market stability are not predictable due to poor infrastructure and limited access to markets, particularly at the peak of the rainy season. São Tomé and Príncipe's heavy dependence on food imports (cereals, beans, oil, meat, dairy and other animal products) makes it vulnerable to food price fluctuations and affects household livelihoods, especially for women, children, the elderly and people with HIV (2020 report, WFP).

This situation of food instability, however, is combined with a sustained growth of the economy in recent years. Thanks to the country's social and political stability, as well as support from the international community, STP has maintained economic growth between 2009 and 2016 at an average rate of 4.5 percent, with a slight slowdown from 2014, and relatively low inflation. This resulted in a consistent increase in the overall budget of the Ministry of Health and supported the implementation of public health measures that improved the well-being of the population. This macroeconomic stability, as well as public health policies adapted to the country's reality, allowed indicators such as infant mortality in children under 5 to be reduced by 20% between 2001 and 2012. Childhood diseases such as measles, polio, whooping cough and diphtheria are no longer public health problems, radically improving the well-being of children and the general population (WHO, 2019).

The service sector accounts for two-thirds of GDP, while the primary and secondary sectors make up the remaining third. Although agricultural production has declined since independence in 1975, agricultural products, especially cocoa, continue to represent the majority of the country's exports. The limited number of skilled workers in São Tomé and Príncipe is an obstacle to producing the goods and services needed to meet market demand. Export costs are high due to the country's insularity. Land is a limited resource and workers are scarce, which hinders economic diversification and makes the country vulnerable to terms of trade shocks.

### **Alignment with UNDAF, CDP and CPAP**

The project **HSS for STP** is in line with the first UNDAF's Strategic Objective for 2017-2020, which is the strengthening of the social cohesion by increasing access to basic social services of quality and to reduce inequality and disparity between citizens and communities. In this aspect the HSS project will ensure that vulnerable populations will receive quality medicines by ensuring that ARVs, ACTs and other supplies are kept in the best conditions. Another way of improving access to quality services will be the rehabilitation of the MDR Tb ward, which will provide better possibilities of care for people infected with MDR TB. At the same time, the HSS project will provide technical assistance to improve the quality of care for people living with HIV/Aids.

The HSS project is also framed by UNDP's Country Program Document (CPD), in which Priority # 29 addresses the problem of the low absorption of international aid. This project aims to improve the management capacity of the MoH by actively supporting the new CGS, which implements the GF grant. This will happen with direct technical and management support to ensure adequate program implementation and budget delivery. At the same time, the technical assistance for the supply and chain management will ensure that medicines are properly delivered and consumed, improving access of vulnerable groups to crucial medicines and increasing budget delivery. These activities will have impact on the Strategic Plan Outcome # 3, of the 2017-2021 CPD, which is the strengthening of institutions to progressively deliver universal access to basic services.

### **Components of the project**

The project is composed by three types of activities:

- 1. Infrastructure for the MoH. This includes the construction and rehabilitation of key structures for the MoH. The main component is the construction of a new warehouse for the MoH.
- 2. Technical assistance for the MoH. The technical assistance will be provided through International Consultancy, recruited through the Global Procurement Unit (GPU). This includes the recruitment of international consultants for key aspects of the MoH, as the PSM and the HIS, as well as IC for the protection of vulnerable populations.
- 3. Support for the new PMU. This includes administrative support for the implementation of the GF project, purchase of computers and motorcycles, as well as support for procurement for the new project.

Social and environmental impact of the three components.

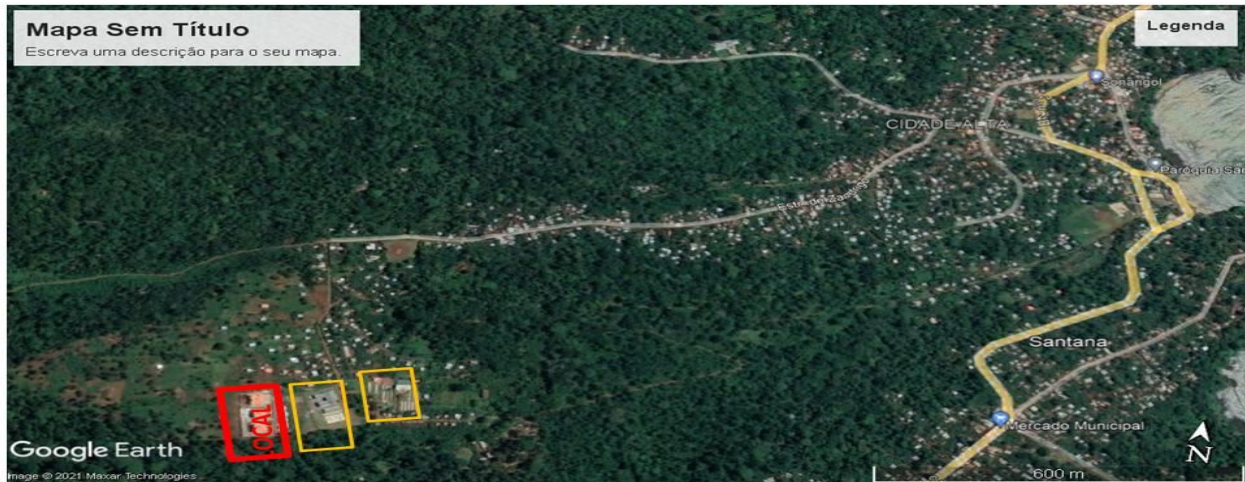
- 1. The infrastructure component. The MoH provided a plot of land located in the suburban area of Sao Tome (see picture attached). The area in which the warehouse will be constructed is a 500 x 100 square meters plot of land with an inclination of 9 % in the district of Santo Antonio, which has been recently declared as urban area by the Ministry of the Interior. Please see an areal photo of the plot and its location in the district of Santo Antonio.



- The plot is an urban area in which other constructions have been recently built, including a public school and a development of buildings. The city planning considers this area as a district with rapid demographic growth, and the city has been extending the electricity grids and the water pipelines to support this growth.
- As seen in the aerial photo, the plot is empty. The social impact of the construction is considered minimal as there are no populations affected by its construction.
- The project is conducting a comprehensive social and environmental evaluation of the construction, including the possible compensations needed by the destruction of existing topsoil.







- 2. The Technical Assistance for key activities. This component will have a significant social impact on the vulnerable population as it will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the service packages offered to this population. At the same time the ICs will help in the evaluation of the treatment provided to people living with HIV (PLHIV) and will research in the causes of stigma and discrimination of sexual minorities and sex professionals.
- 3. The Support for the new Program Management Unit for the Global Fund project. This component will increase the possibilities of an adequate implementation of the GF project, a project with wide social impact on vulnerable populations in STP.

#### Overall SESP Assessment:

<p>1. Review available data from UNDAF, CPAP, Gender and Human Rights</p>	<p>The project is aligned with item 18 of the UNDAF 2017-2021, which states that ... 'Disparities and inequalities at all levels will be tackled through participation by vulnerable groups, and by increasing their access to social protection and basic social services'.</p> <p>By supporting vulnerable populations as sexual minorities and sex professionals, the project addresses key gender and human rights issues.</p>
<p>2. Review if social and environmental</p>	<p>This is the first social and environment assessment conducted for this project.</p>



assessments, review quality and consistency	
3. Conduct iterative pre-screening of project concept and draft	No SESP pre-screening was done for this project.
4. Is there a link between identified risks and the SESP. Overall SESP assessment.	The only component of the project, which presents a low SESP risk which can be considered low is # 1, the construction of the warehouse. This risk can be mitigated by implementing the Mitigation SESP plan, which will be implemented once the SESP consultancy is finalized.
5. If further assessment is needed, project developer needs to ensure integration of additional project management actions	Yes, the Mitigation SESP plan will be implemented once the consultancy is finalized.
6. Conduct mandatory final screening	Pending
7. Ensure on-going compliance with SES	On-going

**Risk Assessments**

Relevant SES requirements	This is considered a low risk SESP assessment
Human Rights	Addressed by the project
Climate change	Not applicable
Biodiversity conservation	Addressed by the project
Community health safety	Not applicable
Displacement and resettlement	No community will be displaced by the project
Pollution prevention and control	Pollution prevention mechanisms will be in place to prevent any pollution during construction
Gender equality and women's empowerment	GEN 2 project
Cultural heritage	No cultural heritage will be affected
Indigenous peoples	No indigenous people will be affected