



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

REMARKS BY

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OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**AT THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM
ON**

**“SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM, ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES FOR GENDER
EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS”**

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Check Against Delivery

Thank you for giving me the floor.

I would like to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women and UN Women for the opportunity to exchange views and share actions that have been taken by Timor-Leste regarding the issues in this panel's discussion, under the theme of Social Protection Systems for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.

First of all social protection in Timor-Leste is a right guaranteed by our Constitution and is viewed also as an important element for cohesion and social peace, given our recent history and experience of having emerged from conflict.

Social protection programmes in Timor-Leste include a contributory scheme through the general social security scheme, that covers all workers in all sectors, both public and private, and provides for mandatory and voluntary contributions.

It also covers a non-contributory scheme that is covered by the state budget. This includes:

- Universal social pension for older persons and people with disabilities
- Programme Bolsa da Mãe "an allowance" for mothers through a conditional cash transfer for vulnerable families with children, requiring children 6-17 years of recipient families to be enrolled in and attending school. It also requires children younger than 6 years of recipient families to receive vaccinations and having semi-annual health check ups
- School Feeding programme
- Rural public works programme
- Social assistance programmes for persons in vulnerable situations – such as part of disaster relief programme, in cases of domestic violence
- Free universal health coverage

The current government has as one of its priorities the adoption and consolidation of a National Strategy for Social Protection which has been drafted with the support of the ILO.

This includes the revision of current programs and integrating these and other issues that were identified through a nation-wide consultation into a holistic strategy.

A National Social Security Institute has also been created to manage and execute the social security system, including the elaboration and management of the social security budget, compliance with obligations of the social security regime and ensuring the application of international agreements.

As the Institute progresses with its work, it will also afford the opportunity to address gaps and ensure that social protection schemes can be inclusive and have maximum coverage.

Now to respond to the specific questions raised for discussion by the panel:

What are examples of national social protection systems that recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work?

The issue of unpaid care and domestic work is an ongoing concern of the government of Timor-Leste.

To this end a draft has been produced on the rights of domestic workers for proposed inclusion in the Labor Law.

The Law on the Contributive Social Security Scheme covers domestic workers, who along with individual entrepreneurs and self-employed workers are able to inscribe in the scheme.

How are gender and age-specific risks and vulnerabilities being taken into account in the design and implementation of social protection systems, including pension system?

The social protection at old age is the most comprehensive among the age groups. The Social Pension for the Elderly and the Invalid has near universal coverage. Its benefits and impact on poor and vulnerable households have been important, although adjustments relative to cost of living are still needed.

The conditional cash transfer under the “Bolsa da Mãe” is a government response to address the specific needs of widows and single mothers, families with many children and those with a per capita income below \$456 per year.

The Support to Victims of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Programme provides protection and support for the social re-integration of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence. Women and children receive financial support and support to access services, including legal and psychological support. This provides the necessary conditions for victims to restructure their lives away from abusers.

Considering that at least one-third of women have reported experience of some form of violence in their lifetime, this is a particularly important protection mechanism.

The Rural Employment Program which was launched in 2008, now covers approximately 50,000 beneficiaries. The program seeks to provide employment to rural communities, decrease the isolation of the rural population, and encourage local money circulation among people in rural areas.

The main program activities are maintenance of rural roads and opening of new rural roads to isolated hamlets or villages. The program is offered to each Suco (village or community), with each entitled to one project. One person from each family in the Suco is entitled to participate in the project. Any family member who has permanent employment or is receiving cash transfers is no longer eligible for participation. Priority is given to unemployed members of Sucos, with a strong focus on women. In 2012 approximately 14,500 women were engaged in activities under the Rural Employment Program.

Timor-Leste also has several components of a gender-responsive planning and budgeting system to track and make budget allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Achievements to date include the use of gender statistics and analysis in annual action planning processes across government, and directives from the Ministry of Finance to integrate gender in budgets. Since 2017, government agencies are required to use a gender marker in their annual action plans and budget reports to indicate gender-related results.

In 2018, for the first time, the Government implementation report included a chapter on results achieved related to Timor-Leste's gender equality commitments.

What efforts have been made to extend social protection coverage to workers in the informal sector, and how are women benefitting from this?

The informal sector constitutes about 69% of the workforce, with 70% being women.

As referred previously the Law on the Contributory Social Security Scheme facilitates voluntary contributions from the informal sector.

As implementation of the Law has only just started the socialization of the law is an important aspect for targeted groups, including the informal sector to achieve full benefit from the provisions of the Law.

In 2017, the Government of Timor-Leste also adopted a resolution to establish the "Observatory for women's working conditions". The aim of the Observatory is to collect and analyse data on work environments and propose actions to establish equal rights and conditions between women and men in all public institutions and organizations and may also extend its reach to the informal sector.

What actions are governments taking to expand parental leave provisions and incentivize men to take on more child care?

Parental leave is covered in the Labor Code of Timor-Leste. There are provisions for both maternity and paternity leave.

Paid female workers can take up to 12 weeks paid maternity leave, whilst paid male workers can take 5 days paternity leave.

However, there are special provisions in cases of death of spouse or person with whom the male worker lives in cohabitation, provides for paid paternity leave of the 12 weeks. This provision implies a responsibility of the father to also partake in child care.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion is piloting parenting programmes in rural communities and is implementing public advocacy to promote male involvement in childcare is being undertaken.

For example, the former Prime Minister launched the HeforShe Campaign during International Women's Day in 2017 and in November 2018, UN Women and UNICEF, with support from the Embassy of Sweden in Jakarta, organized a Timorese and Swedish Fathers Photo Competition and Exhibition, as well as a parenting workshop with the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion.

Conclusion

Gender equality is a key component of the development objectives of Timor-Leste. The government is working towards consolidation of the social protection schemes through integrated and coherent legislation and policies.

There is also recognition that the following is needed:

Behavior change strategies to transform attitudes and norms related to women and men's employment and caregiving roles toward more parity across sectors;

A coherent women's economic empowerment strategies that feed into the overall development strategies, accompanied by adequate indicators and a monitoring mechanism that includes key elements such as access to credit, markets, land and other productive resources on an equal basis with men;

The adoption of legislation on informal work, informed by the experiences and recommendations of informal workers, for example, the draft Domestic Workers Law, to ensure that women and men in informal work have legal protections for their right to decent work;

Adoption of measures to eliminate discrimination in recruitment and promotion against women, including effective mechanisms to ensure and monitor compliance with existing legislation in both public and private sectors; and

Programmes to reduce women's unemployment and to promote their access to employment in the formal sector together with social security coverage including a focus on women with disabilities, and on monitoring the working conditions of

women in the informal economy, particularly in agriculture, to ensure that they have access to social protection, including with regard to maternity protection.