



**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE  
SECRETARIAT OF STATE OF EQUALITY AND INCLUSION (SEII)**

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**TIMOR-LESTE'S BEIJING DECLARATION  
AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BPfA)  
NATIONAL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL  
REPORT (2014-2018)**

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**PREPARED BY  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Timor-Leste submitted its first National Review and Appraisal Report of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2014, which covers the progress and achievements since the restoration of its independence until 2013. This report outlines Timor-Leste's progress towards gender equality and promotion. The Secretariat of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII) is the primary coordinating body within the government. SEII has worked closely with all line ministries to ensure that their policies are gender inclusive and are promoting the empowerment of women and girls in society.

### Priorities

To ensure the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Timor-Leste, the National Government has outlined the following priorities. To:

- Strengthen the National Women's Machinery
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming across government institutions
- Increase and empower women's representation in political life at local and national levels
- Improve systems and mechanisms for Gender Responsive Budgeting and planning
- Reduce maternal and infant mortality rates
- Eliminate all types of violence against women and girls
- Increase literacy levels among both females and males
- Improve the social protection system to reduce extreme poverty and to support women's participation in the national development process

### Achievements and progress to date

From 2014-2018, Timor-Leste has made significant progress towards the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This progress is evident in the number of laws, policies and programs that the National Government has designed and implemented to equally protect the human rights and safety of men, women and children. The National Government has worked in partnership with Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, development partners, and the private sector to integrate a gender mainstreaming approach across all sectors including health, education, justice, politics, and the economy.

### Women in Poverty

- The Poverty Mapping and Gender Perspective Analysis (Director-General of Statistics, World Bank 2019) identifies remarkable progress in poverty reduction over the past 10 years.
- SEII has supported women through public transfer funds and also assisted 5 women's groups from Dili to access credit in the Timor-Leste's National Commerce Bank (BNCTL) to run their businesses.
- In 2017, SEII in collaboration with Heineken have provided support for 6 vulnerable families in Dili to increase their family income and to free them from extreme poverty.

### Education and Training of Women

- The implementation of 'Zero Tolerance for Violence' policy is supporting the eradication of sexual violence and corporal punishment in the education sector. This aims to increase security for girls and children to participate safely in education and learning.

- SEII has developed a Gender Based Violence (GBV) subject at the Judicial Training Centre to improve awareness of GBV amongst those that work in the judicial system. This subject will also be offered to the National Institute of Public Administration in 2019.
- The Basic Education Law No. 14/2018 highlights that education should provide equal opportunity for all boys and girls and ensure gender balance.

### **Women and Health**

- The maternal mortality rate has reduced from 557/100,000 child births (DHS, 2010) to 218/100,000 child births (DHS, 2016).
- The infant mortality rate has reduced from 45/1,000 child births (DHS, 2010) to 30/1,000 child births (DHS, 2016).
- The children under-5 mortality rate has reduced from 64/1,000 child births (2010, DHS) to 41/1,000 births (DHS, 2016).
- The fertility rate has reduced from 5.7 children (DHS, 2010) to 4.2 children (DHS, 2016).

### **Violence Against Women**

- The National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2016-2020) is a transformative gender policy that provided support for women to participate in peace building, state building, conflict resolution and the development process.
- Approval of Law No. 3/2017 on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking on 24 October 2016, provides measures to protect victims and prevent and combat human trafficking. This is an important step to reduce human rights violations associated with human trafficking.
- Guidelines on 'No to Sexual Harassment in the Public Service' have been developed by the government to reduce female experiences of sexual harassment in the public service.

### **Women and Armed Conflict**

- The NAP-UNSCR 1325 includes compensating and recognising women suffering during past conflicts as well as recognising and valuing the contribution made by women during the struggle for independence.
- In 2018, PNTL established and launched gender strategies that will help contribute to the achievement of the Timor-Leste National Police mission. Currently there are 6 women in the PNTL who will be participating in trainings for United Nations Peacekeeping Missions.
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI) has provided assistance to victims of past conflicts.

### **Women and the Economy**

- The Timor-Leste Government committed to a two-year implementation (2015-2017) of the Maubisse Declaration in 2015 to promote the socio-economic empowerment of women and renewed this commitment in October 2018 for a period of five years.
- SEII effectively advocated for an increase in state institutions to commit to the Maubisse Declaration, seeing an increase from 9 prior to 2014 to 16 state institutions following the Declaration in 2018.

- The Road for Development program on Social Safeguard Frameworks provided Guidelines for the Ministry of Public Works and local contractors. The Declaration was renewed in October 2018, which resulted in the Ministry of Public Works setting a quota for women's participation at 30% and people with disabilities at 2%.
- Approval of the Government Resolution No. 38/2017 supports the rights of men and women to receive equal pay at work.
- Women are disproportionately represented in the formal labour economy.
- SEII has been working in partnership with NGOs and civil society groups in the development and implementation of programs to encourage greater participation of women in the formal labour economy.

### **Women in Power and Decision Making**

- Approval of the Suco Law No. 9/2016 confirmed that at least two women candidates must run in the Village Chief Election.
- The Decree-Laws on: Contests Regime, Recruitment Selection of Public Administration Officers; General Regime for Public Officers Career Promotion; and the Distinction and Awards in the Public Service support preferences for women to obtain employment when women and men receive equal scores during the recruitment process. These laws aim to increase women's participation in the public sector, particularly at the decision-making level.
- Women's participation in the National Parliament is at 38%, the highest in the Asia Pacific region.
- Women have less representation at the municipal level. SEII holds women's congress at the municipal level to encourage an increase in women's leadership.

### **Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women**

- SEII, operating under the office of the Prime Minister, advocates, coordinates, and evaluates gender mainstreaming strategies within government institutions.
- SEII advocates for the inclusion of gender mainstreaming within government laws and policies.
- Approval of Government Resolution No. 35/2017 on Inter-Ministerial Working Group, National Gender Working Group, and Municipality Gender Working Groups is improving intersectoral cooperation and coordination. These groups are working together to increase knowledge of gender equality issues at all levels of society.

### **Human Rights of Women**

- Approval of the Decree Law No. 3/2017 on Municipality Administration aims to integrate gender issues at the municipal level to promote women's rights in rural areas.
- In 2017, approval of the Law on the Expropriation for Public Purposes and Utility; and the Law on the Special Regime for Definition of Ownership of Immovable Property stated that women had equal rights to men to own property. In the development of these laws, a broad consultation process was undertaken with local communities, including with women in rural areas.
- The Government has adopted the National Policy for Family Planning and the National Strategy for Reproductive Health, Maternal, Neonatal, Children and Adolescents (2015-2019).
- Reproductive rights are included in Timor-Leste's legal frameworks.

- The independent Ombudsman of Human Rights and Justice is responsible for the promotion of human rights and good governance.

### **Women and the Media**

- Secretary of State for Social Communication (SEKCOMS) promotes gender equality in media.
- SEKCOMS helps to promote and implement programs to train journalists and editors in conducting gender sensitive reporting.

### **Women and the Environment**

- The Government provides support and compensation to women who run their businesses on the sides of roads and rivers, which are affected by climate change, and especially those that are at risk of natural disasters such as landslides.
- The Government carries out gender analysis when building public infrastructure, considering any potential impacts to women. Women's access to water is also a major consideration where in some communities their household is dependent on women going out and fetching water.

### **Children**

- The NAP for Children in Timor-Leste is a policy roadmap for the Government to create an environment where boys and girls' rights are protected, particularly children living in low-socio economic situations.
- The National Youth Policy provides a framework to support the challenges boys and girls face in their daily life.

### **National Institutions and Processes**

- The Gender Responsive Budgeting Policy outlines institutional responsibilities and detailed guidance to support ministries to integrate gender issues into the government budget cycle. As a result of this policy, it is required that all government entities integrate gender issues into their Annual Action Plans.

### **National Data and Statistics**

- SEII is working with the General-Directorate of Statistics to produce joint research and to provide advice on sample design for data production.
- The National Statistics and Data System has prioritised the production and utilisation of gender statistics.
- Government efforts related to data collection and the strengthening of administrative systems should support the development of baseline data and help monitor targets and indicators related to gender issues.

### **Major Challenges**

However, there are still significant barriers to the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment. Current challenges include but are not limited to:

- Political representation of women in the municipalities is significantly low
- Gender-based violence is still high and sometimes disputes are resolved based on traditionally held beliefs, rather than in the formal justice system
- Women's participation in the labour force is still low, and predominantly resides in the informal sector, such as hospitality and agriculture, meaning employment is less stable

- Women are still disadvantaged when it comes to equal access to land rights
- Sexual violence in schools is still a threat to some girls in the education system
- Vulnerable women and girls are still facing barriers to access land rights and ownership under the Land Law that was passed in 2017
- Budget allocation for gender policy implementation was insufficient to address all gender concerns in rural areas from 2014-2018.

The National Government are showing strong commitment to improve these current barriers to gender equality through dedicated training and mentoring programs, dedicated staff such as police officers that focus on gender-based violence, funded entrepreneurship programs for women, implemented guidelines for appropriate conduct in the workplace, an established gender-responsive budgeting system, and dedicated data collection mechanisms to inform future policies and programs on gender equality. As a new country, Timor-Leste has made strong advancements towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in a short period of time. The National Government is committed to continue advancing the promotion of women in the future to ensure they have equal access to resources and equal opportunities to participate across all aspects of society.

## INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste has undertaken significant work to achieve the effective promotion of gender equality outlined by the Peking Declaration 2020. This work included reforming legislation and policies to promote and uphold human rights and the principles of equality to achieve gender equality by 2020. For the second time, Timor-Leste will present its progress to the Beijing Platform after its first presentation in 2014. In the first report, Timor-Leste demonstrated progress towards equal participation of men and women. This report outlines Timor-Leste's continued work and dedication towards achieving gender equality in their policy and program implementation from 2014 to 2018. Over the past four years (2014-2018), a significant number of women have experienced equal rights and women's empowerment in a short period. In addition, over this period women have had access to increasing opportunities in the labour market, the judicial system, and political, social and cultural life. This is a result of the Timor-Leste Government's work in actively promoting gender equality at the international and national level.

Timor-Leste has implemented a number of National Action Plans and will continue to integrate the National Action Plan in all priority areas, to continue its implementation of gender equality. The Government of Timor-Leste has achieved significant success in the following sectors including maternal and child health, economic development, and women in politics. The Ministry of Health implemented programs that have significantly improved maternal and child health contributing to the reduction of maternal and child mortality and improved the rate of family planning. In addition, the Ministry of Health also guarantees that victims of sexual violence have quick access to support services.

In the sector of economic development, the Government has committed to the Maubisse Declaration to support the implementation of gender equality. The Declaration was renewed in October 2018, which resulted in the Ministry of Public Works setting a quota for women's participation at 30% and people with disabilities at 2%. The Declaration has also influenced institutions to support women in the economic sector, specifically focused on women's economic life. The Maubisse Declaration is also linked to legislation that allows women to access loans from the bank.

Women's participation in politics and decision making has significantly improved as a result of new legislation and policies approved by the Government. These include the Electoral Law for the Village Election No. 09/2016 that supports women's participation at the local government. This law has increased women's representation in politics at the local level from 2% in 2009 to 5% in 2016. The establishment of a quota for women in the National Parliament has also been developed, resulting in an increase of women's participation in the National Parliament from 30% in the previous government to 38% this year.

Despite Timor-Leste showing significant progress in the implementation of gender equality, there are still many barriers and challenges in integrating the promotion of gender equality in program implementation and planning. However, this will not deter the Timor-Leste Government from prioritising the promotion of gender equality, ensuring strong attention is given to programs and targets for women and girls. In the next four years, Timor-Leste will endeavour to become a strong nation in the promotion of women's equal role in society to further support its national development.

## SECTION I: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

### 1. Priorities

Timor-Leste has made strong commitment and effort to promote gender equality in various sectors and at different levels since its restoration of independence in 2002. Gender equality issues were also guaranteed in the Constitution of RDTL and the National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030. Priorities for gender equality promotion have been considered by Timor-Leste and have been valued within the period of 2014-2018 as the following:

**Strengthen the National Women’s Machinery by improving its technical and financial resources and decision-making power, and improve coordination mechanisms at national and municipality levels.** SEII is a state institution that has the main functions and responsibilities to advocate, coordinate, implement and assess Gender Mainstreaming strategy in policies, laws, programs, and budgets across all government ministries to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This includes advocating for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, girls and groups at risk, establishing appropriate mechanisms for women’s economic empowerment, and enhancing women’s participation in politics and decision making at national, municipal and local levels. Since 2017, the role of SEII has also included social inclusion particularly for marginalized groups in lower socio-economic and LGBTI communities. Under the VIII Constitutional Government Decree-Law, SEII holds its portfolio directly under the Office of the Prime Minister with strong influence at the national level. SEII participates at the Council of Ministers and plays a key role in advocating for gender equality and inclusion in policy making and legislation. SEII has also been an observer in the Budget Review Committee (BRC) to ensure that the gender perspective is integrated into Government planning and budgeting.

SEII implements gender mainstreaming strategies to promote gender equality with the aim of achieving gender equality by 2030. Strategies utilised by SEII involve empowering women’s participation in the economy, reducing and eliminatng forms of gender based violence and domestic violence, empowering women’s participation in politics and in decision making, improving women’s access to health services, education and justice. Timor-Leste is a prosperous and peaceful nation and a gender fair society. Human dignity and human rights, including the rights of women and girls, are valued in Timor-Leste’s culture, with this repect reflected in the laws of the country. In the pursuit of its goals, SEII adheres to the key values of equality, non-discrimination, participation of women and men, socio-economic empowerment of women, human rights and the rights of women, justice, peace and transparancy. SEII seeks to promote a culture of gender equlity. As a government institution, SEII has the authority and responsibility to implement gender mainstreaming programs in government institutions, and to influence laws and policies to be gender responsive.

Timor-Leste has already made great progress in strengthening the coordination mechanism to promote gender equality through the establishment of three levels of coordination - an Interministerial Working Group for Gender, the National Gender Working Group, and the Municipal Gender Working Group. The objective of the gender working group mechanism is to enhance government coordination, resource allocation, gender mainstreaming strategy and monitoring mechanism for the implementation of gender commitments in ministries, secretariats of state and the municipal administrations. There are also additional inter-ministerial working groups that specifically oversee and monitor the implementation of the national gender policies such as National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence and National Action Plan on UNSC Resolution 1325. Additionally, SEII has 13 focal points that have been deployed throughout 12 Municipalities and the Special Administrative Region of Oé-Cusse Ambeno (RAEOA).

**Strengthen the Gender Mainstreaming (GM) strategy across government institutions, particularly in government legal frameworks, policies, planning and programs to accelerate the promotion of gender equality.** Timor-Leste has made great progress in strengthening gender mainstreaming across government. From 2014-2018 the Government have developed a series of gender sensitive legal frameworks and policies to support the promotion of gender equality and to empower women and girls. The Government has adopted the Maubisse Declaration<sup>1</sup> the first phase from the period 2015-2017 and the second phase from the period 2018-2022; the National Action Plan (NAP) on Gender-based Violence (GBV) for the first phase from the period 2012-2016 and for the second phase from the period 2017-2021; NAP on the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security from the period 2016-2020; NAP on the Children in Timor-Leste from the period 2016-2020; NAP on Gender and Private Sector from the period 2014-2017; NAP on the Rights of People with Disability from the period 2014-2018; and the National Youth Policy from 2016. Timor-Leste also approved Law No. 3/2017 on the Prevention and Combat against Human Trafficking on 24 October 2016, which legally requires human trafficking issues to be addressed. Moreover, gender issues have been strongly considered in the Suco Election, Law on Municipality Administration, Law on the Expropriation for Public Purposes/Utility, and Law on the Special Regime for Definition of Ownership of Immovable Property. The approval of these Laws and Policies has shown that Timor-Leste has a strong commitment to eliminate gender inequality in multiple sectors at the national and municipality levels.

**Increase and empower women's representation in political life at the local and national levels.** Timor-Leste has made great progress towards supporting women's participation in political life. This is evident through the establishment of a female quota in the National Parliament, resulting in women comprising 38% of the Fifth Legislature. Despite this, women's participation at executive level is still under 30%

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<sup>1</sup> The Maubisse Declaration aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against rural women and people with disability in order to improve their lives, engaged them in planning for public investments and in the decision making and promoting their participation in various aspects within development process. The second phase of the Maubisse Declaration was renewed by sixteen (16) Government entities, including Timor-Leste National Commercial Bank (BNCTL) and launched on 12 October 2015, in Fatisi-Aileu.

and at municipal level it is low. The approval and ratification of the Law on Suco Election No. 9/2016 in September 2016 supported an increase in women's political participation at the local level. This Law promoted women's opportunity to become candidates in the Election of Suco Chief. This resulted in an increase of women's participation from 2% (11 females elected) to 5% (21 women elected) out of 452 positions in 2017. Although the percentage is still low, it demonstrates Timor-Leste's ability to implement legislation that enhances women's political participation at the local level. In addition, the Law on Suco Election, "100% I'm Ready" Program (*Programa "100% Ha'u Pronto"*)<sup>2</sup>, Suco Development National Program (SDNP) (*Programa Nasionál Dezenvolvimentu Suku (PNDS)*)<sup>3</sup>, and the Women's Congress on Potential Women in 12 Municipalities and RAEOA have also contributed to the increase of women's participation in local government and decision making.

**Improvement of systems and mechanisms for Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and planning to ensure the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.** In 2017, SEII worked with the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (UPMA) at the Office of the Prime Minister to integrate gender perspectives into Public Finance Management Reform (PFM). As a result, SEII and UPMA developed essential tools for planning and budgeting systems including Gender Marker and Indicators that promote gender equality. Gender marker is an instrument to help track the proportion of funds earmarked for the promotion of gender equality. Gender marker will support data collection on the proportion of budget allocation and actual expenditure on gender equality. By developing these essential tools, SEII and UPMA are advancing gender equality commitments that public institutions are required to follow in their planning and budgeting systems. Gender specific programs entitled "Gender Policy Implementation" require implementation of national gender policies in Line Ministries' Programatic Budget Structure. These fall under 3 sub-programs described in the Gender program – The State Financial Management Information System (FMIS) and The Way of the Future (*Dalan ba Futuru*). These are:

1. Implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) against Gender-based Violence (GBV);
2. Implementation of National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (UNSCR 1325);
3. Implementation of Maubisse Declaration

Public institutions that are not directly responsible for gender national policy implementation are still obliged to promote gender equality in response to the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) Committee recommendations. The Programatic Budget Structure regulations require each institution to abide by a standard budget structure outlined

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<sup>2</sup> "100% I'm Ready" Program (*Programa "100% Ha'u Pronto"*) is a program which was led by Civil Society Organizations with the support from the Government to encourage women and increase women participation in political life and local governance, particularly in rural areas.

<sup>3</sup> PNDS is a Government program lead by Ministry of State Administration (MAE) aims to improving the living standard of citizens in rural areas by supporting women and men to rehabilitate small-scale infrastructure projects based on their needs and priorities.

in the “*Good Governance and Institutional Management*” policy. SEII and UPMA have developed gender specific requirements entitled “*Gender Mainstreaming*” under this standard budget structure. Change to this budget system will support the Government to generate a gender sensitive report and will enable all public institutions to be responsible for gender commitments within their service delivery. This gender reform within the planning and budgeting system will provide opportunities for strong data collection. This data collection will provide important resources to inform future policy development and political decision making, to enhance the promotion of gender equality in service delivery. As such, this new approach will provide a fundamental base for developing policies, plans, programs and allocation of qualified resources.

**Reducing maternal and infant mortality rates.** In the Health Sector, the Constitution of the RDTL states that everyone has the right to health and medical care, and the State shall promote the establishment of a universal national healthcare service that free of charge in accordance with the capacity of the State and in conformity with the law. The National Health Service shall have, as much as possible, a decentralized participatory management. The Government through the Ministry of Health has already worked hard to improve public health services for all East Timorese citizens. The National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Department of Maternal and Infantile Health has provided training and capacity building to midwives and health professionals in Community Health Centres to enhance their skills in Emergency Assistance for Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care – (EmONC). This is part of the Government’s strategy to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. The training has supported a reduction in pregnancy related mortality rates. In 2010, 557 pregnant mothers died out of every 100,000 newborn babies, and in 2016, this number reduced to 218 pregnancy related mortality deaths out of every 100,000 newborn babies. Timor-Leste has also achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) to reduce the rate of infant mortality. In 2010, there was 45 infant mortalities for every 1000 newborns, and in 2016 this rate reduced to 30 infant mortalities per every 1000 newborns. In addition, on 2 August 2018, Timor-Leste was the third country out of 11 countries in South East Asia to obtain certification from the World Health Organisation for eliminating Measles diseases and Congenital Rubella Syndrome.

**Eliminate any types of violence against women and girls.** The Government of Timor-Leste together with Civil Society and members of the Women’s Network (*Rede Feto*) have implemented various activities for the first phase of NAP-GBV from 2014-2018. In addition, they have reaffirmed a commitment for the second phase of NAP-GBV implementation from 2017-2021. This commitment will focus on promoting and enhancing people’s behaviour change to eliminate various types of violence against women and girls. This includes the provision of support and delivery of services for victims and survivors, particularly in access to health, social security and access to justice. During the first phase of NAP-GBV implementation, SEII together with Civil Society service providers have made a lot of progress under gender-based violence Pillar I: Prevention and Pillar II: Protection. The first phase results of NAP-GBV

implementation shows that the communities' knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence, and its impact particularly on women, increased. However, there were many victims who still experienced gender-based violence, specifically domestic violence in the home. The majority preferred to resolve the issues via a family process or using the informal justice system rather than a formal justice process.

Timor-Leste has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Therefore, it has a State obligation to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment. The Constitution of RDTL and the Code of Conduct and Ethics of the Public Service considers sexual harassment in the workplace a violation of the rights of the victim. In 2017, the Government of Timor-Leste through the Public Service Commission developed a specific Guideline to Prevent and Combat Sexual Harassment in the Public Service (Orientacao n.12/2017, August 9<sup>th</sup>), launching also specific instruments and campaign materials to ensure that all public sectors at national and municipal levels have increased knowledge and understanding of sexual harassment as unacceptable conduct. Moreover, the Public Service Commission, supported by UN Women, has developed and launched an innovative application called "ChatBot Rosa." This tool is an innovative way for Timorese to report cases where public officers have committed sexual harassment in and outside the workplace. This tool aims to strengthen service quality of the public administration. The innovative application was launched during the 16-Day Campaign against Gender-based Violence in 2018. SEII has also collaborated with the Secretariat of State for Social Communication (SEKOMS), and the Australian Embassy's NABILAN program implemented by the Asia Foundation to distribute gender equality messages through the media. SEII and the Asia Foundation have produced a referral network application "Hamahon", as an innovative way to provide detailed information on all support services available to victims of violence. A Media Resource Package on the Prevention of Violence against Women was also launched. This will assist journalists to appropriately cover incidents of violence against women and children. The Government has also implemented a Zero Tolerance policy on sexual violence in schools throughout the country to ensure all girls are safe to participate in education and learning.

**Increase in literacy levels among females and males as a key foundation for fostering sustainable development in Timor-Leste.** From 2010 to 2015, literacy rates for Timorese above 15 years old have increased rapidly from 57.8% (2010 Census) to about 63% (2015 Census). There have been strong improvements in literacy rates in Tetun among young people. In 2010 only 68.9% of young people aged 10-14 years could read and write; however, 5 years later this stood at about 79% showing marked progress. Crucially both girls and boys have shown strong progress in increasing their literacy and numeracy levels, demonstrating that gender equity is present in primary and secondary education (Census 2015). A new evidence-based curriculum for pre-school and primary was finalised in 2015. This progressive curriculum focuses on developing knowledge, critical intellectual and social skills, and promoting creativity and problem-solving skills. Improving assessment of

students' learning outcomes and improvements in education quality are important for monitoring progress against Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education).

**Improvement of the social protection system to relieve extreme poverty of East Timorese people and to ensure women's participation in the national development process.** The Government has focused more attention on social protection policy, which provides opportunities to relieve East Timorese from poverty. Since 2008, the Government has provided financial assistance (Conditional Cash Transfer<sup>4</sup>) to East Timorese citizens in particular, the elderly and disabled support allowance (non-contributory scheme), the transitional regime to support state workers and their families in old age, disability and death, veterans, vulnerable families who are cronically suffering from diseases, vulnerable households with single mothers/widows/orphans (the *Bolsa da Mãe/Mother Pursue* program), women's groups, people with HIV and other people who are experiencing insecure or poor living conditions. Currently, the *Bolsa da Mãe* program is the only program in Timor-Leste that targets poor and vulnerable households with children. The *Bolsa da Mãe* program was launched in March 2008 by the Government of Timor-Leste, together with United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and IOM). The objectives of the program are to help reduce poverty, promote attendance of nine years of compulsory basic education, and increase utilization of primary health care services. It provides cash transfers of US\$5 per child per month for up to three children, so US\$15 is the maximum grant amount a household can receive per month. The government recognizes the necessity to assess the current targeting system, coverage and the monthly amount transfer to maximize poverty reduction for effective implementation. The Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI) supported by ILO, is carrying out a review on types of social protection schemes and also finalising the Social Protection National Strategy. MSSI has been working on promoting gender inclusion and improving public monetary transfers to support individuals and families who are beneficiaries of the Government financial assistance. This approach aligns with the principle of 'no one left behind' in the National Development Plan 2030 Agenda.

In May 2018, MSSI and the United Nations Organizations launched the Report of "Challenges and Future Actions to Expand Social Protection for all East Timorese Citizens", as part of the review process on social protection policy and schemes. The report also recommendeds to increase social protection impact and efficiency such as strengthening child protection for children under the age of 5 years, protecting vulnerable youth workers in informal sectors and improving the balance of financial resource distribution to better support vulnerable groups. Following the promulgation of Law No. 12/2016, which created the Social Security Contribution Scheme, a major campaign was launched to publicize and socialize the new law, which

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<sup>4</sup> Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) aims at reducing poverty through cash transfers to poor families while at the same time making these transfers conditional upon the recipients' actions. Individuals targeted by the programme receive cash transfers if they meet specific criteria such as ensuring that their children attend school or regularly use basic health care services.

was attended by teams from all Ministries, Courts and Attorney General and some autonomous services and funds. This Universal Contribution for Social Security scheme has been implemented in public and private sectors since 2017, ensuring that workers and their families receive their pensions at times of retirement, disability or death. Additionally, subsequent a national seminar on “Social Security: A Right for All” in April 2019, a bilateral cooperation between Timor-Leste and Portugal in the areas of social protection and social security was signed for a three-year period (2019-2022).

## 2. Key Achievements during the period of 2014-2018

Timor-Leste has already made key achievements related to gender sensitive legal frameworks and gender policies from 2014 to 2018. These include:

- In 2015, the Government of Timor-Leste committed to a two year (2015-2017) implementation of the Maubisse Declaration to eliminate all forms of discrimination against rural women and people with a disability to improve their lives, engage them in public investment planning and decision making processes and to promote their participation in various aspects of the development process. This commitment was renewed in October 2018 for a period of five-years which resulted in the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) showing their commitment to gender equality promotion by establishing a quota of at least 30% of women’s participation in infrastructure development. It is also evident in MOP’s Road for Development’s (R4D)<sup>5</sup> Social Safeguard Frameworks for local contractors and others laying out a quota of at least 30% representation of women and 2% representation of People with Disabilities in the infrastructure development. Under Phase-I of the Maubisse Declaration, only 9 State institutions (the majority operating in the economic sector) signed and became implementing agencies of the Declaration. However, under Phase-II of the Maubisse Declaration, SEII undertook an advocacy campaign and effectively influenced an additional 7 State institutions to work under the Declaration, bringing the total to 16 State institutions including the Timor-Leste’s National Commerce Bank (BNCTL). In addition, the implementation period for Phase-II of the Maubisse Declaration was extended from two to five years (2018-2023).
- The existing National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2016-2020) is a transformative gender policy focused on how to develop more equal relationships between females and males in areas including the separation of power, resource control, decision-making, social and political statutes, and access to justice and security. This policy provided strategies and concrete actions to enhance East Timorese women’s

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<sup>5</sup> R4D is a Government program led by the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) with the support of Australian Embassy and ILO aims to improve the rural communities’ living standard, improving rural road access, includes accessible bridges for People with Disability (EHD) and provided a fair and equal employment opportunity for men and women.

participation in peace building, state building, conflict resolution and the development process.

- NAP for Children in Timor-Leste (2016-2020) is a policy roadmap for the Government to consider how to create an environment where boys and girls' rights are respected and protected, particularly children who are living in unfavorable situations in Timor-Leste.
- The approval of the National Youth Policy in 2016 recognises young girls and boys as a vital socio-economic resource for Timor-Leste's future. This policy provides a framework and vision outlining the guidelines for youth development to promote an optimal environment for young boys and girls to thrive. This youth policy aims to address key challenges and concerns confronting young boys and girls in their daily life.
- Approval of Suco Election Law No. 9/2016 has been reinforced in Article 65, confirming that at least two women candidates run in the Suco Chief Election.
- Approval of the Decree-Law No. 3/2016 on Municipality Administration to institutionalize the integration of gender issues at the municipal level.
- Approval of Law No. 3/2017 on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking on 24 October 2016. This Law provided measures to prevent and combat human trafficking and also protection measures and assistance to victims. Approval on this legal instrument has become an important step for Timor-Leste to reduce Human Rights concerns on human trafficking.
- Approval of Law No. 05/2017 on Judicial Regime Related to Martial Arts Practices, Rituals, Traditional Weapons, and Ambon Arrow (*Rama Ambon*).
- Approval of the Government Resolution No. 34/2017 on the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Coordination, Implementation and Monitoring of NAP-GBV on 6 June 2017. This Resolution provided concrete directives to monitor and supervise the implementation of NAP-GBV over the period 2017-2021.
- Approval of Government Resolution No. 35/2017 on Inter-Ministerial Working Group, National Gender Working Group, and Municipality Gender Working Groups. This Resolution has adapted to those working groups established in 2011, to improve administration, intersectoral cooperation and coordination. These working groups will help to enhance the knowledge of gender issues across Government agencies and ministries by developing a gender strategy. They will also contribute to incorporating gender issues in their work plans and integrate the knowledge from the national level to the municipalities.
- Approval of the Government Resolution No. 38/2017 on recognition of rights to men and women's remuneration for equal pay for equal work.
- The Government has evaluated the National Action Plan (NAP) towards Gender-based Violence (GBV) for the first phase of implementation. This relates to strategies and mechanisms that the Government together with Civil Societies have implemented and the on-going reaffirmation of commitment for elimination of gender-based violence in 2017 with the reapproval of NAP-GBV for the second phase for the period from 2017-2021. The objective of Phase II was to improve multi-sectoral strategies in addressing GBV in Timor-Leste,

focusing on service providers' delivery for victims and survivors. The policy covered a broader Gender Mainstreaming policy, which invested efforts in the provision of services to victims in multiple sectors. These included essential services, access to justice, and the establishment of coordination mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The Government is continuously showing its commitment to stop violence against women and has taken prevention measures through the implementation of the "Zero Tolerance for Violence" policy. This policy aims to limit administrative negligence in the education sector, focusing on eradicating sexual violence and corporal punishment in schools to increase security for girls and children and to improve the learning process. The Government has approved operational guidelines on "No to Sexual Harassment in Public Service" in order to address sexual harassment that occurs in the Public Service. SEII has introduced a GBV subject at the Judicial Training Centre and Judiciary, and will introduce GBV in the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) in 2019.

- The government approved a Decree-Law on Contests Regime, and Recruitment Selection of Public Administration Officers, a Decree-Law on General Regime for Public Officers Career Promotion and the Decree-Law on Distinction and Awards in the Public Administration that provide preference to women when the final result showed that men and women achieved equal scores. This is a mechanism aims to increase women's participation in the public sector, particularly at the decision-making level.
- The government approved two major Land Laws on Law on the Expropriation for Public Purposes/Utility, and Law on the Special Regime for Definition of Ownership of Immovable Property approved in 2017. These two Land Laws stated that men and women have equal rights of property ownership and heritage in Timor-Leste. The process of these two laws have been developed on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and CEDAW. In the developing phase a participatory consultation process was established with local communities, including rural women throughout the municipalities.
- The existing Gender Responsive Budgeting Policy in Public Financial Management (PFM) reform provides clear institutional responsibilities and detailed guidance, describing how to integrate gender issues into the Government budget cycles and 11 critical areas of Public Finance Management reform based on the Government's Roadmap for Public Finance Management reform.
- The existing Gender Marker in the Government planning and budgeting system will facilitate and provide data that will indicate how much budget the Government allocated and spent for gender equality promotion.
- The government began with the roll-out of the implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting in the PFM reform. For the 2019 Annual Action Plan (AAP), Gender issues have become an obligation for all Government entities including autonomous agencies and those entities are required to allocate budget for their activities and programs that contribute to the promotion of

gender equality. To have all government and autonomous agencies dedicating work to gender equality shows Timor-Leste's progress in gender equality promotion, particularly in the Asia Pacific region and also at an international level. Through gender reform in the planning and budgeting system, significant data resources will be collected to inform policies, programs and political decisions that will contribute to improving the promotion of gender equality in all service delivery.

These achievements and successes show that Timor-Leste is strongly committed to promote gender equality and to empower women and girls. The approval of legal frameworks that address gender issues, and various gender policies are the first steps in the process to eliminate gender inequality. These processes cannot be achieved quickly, as it requires change in knowledge, behaviour and education. The State is strongly committed to reduce discriminatory behavior that limits the attainment of gender equality in Timor-Leste.

### 3. Major Challenges and Setbacks

While Timor-Leste has achieved great progress towards promoting gender equality through the ratification and implementation of new policies and legislation, women are still experiencing barriers to education, the labour force, formal justice, and healthcare. These barriers increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence. In some communities, interpretations of women's rights and gender equality are seen as confronting traditional customs inherited by ancestors, where women are still seen as guests, limiting their ability to exercise their rights. This perception has created obstacles for women candidates to participate at the local government and decision-making levels. In addition, women have limited rights to land or heritage ownership. While the National Parliament has approved the Land Law that outlines men and women's equal rights to land ownership, traditional patriarchal views are still impeding women's opportunity to be a land or heritage owner. These examples suggest that traditional social norms and cultural values are still influencing men and women's roles in Timor-Leste. Society still views men as responsible for decision-making in the family (household) and in the public sphere, and believe that only men should generate family income, particularly in the formal sector. This patriarchal ideology still binds Timorese society, particularly perspectives in rural societies. This creates barriers for women in accessing the formal justice system when they experience violence, accessing education, participating in the labour force and receiving healthcare related to sexual reproductive rights. Key challenges that Timor-Leste are still experiencing in gender equality promotion and the empowerment of women and girls include:

**Domestic violence rate is still high throughout the country.** Based on the national data from the 2016 Demographic Health Survey 33% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence. Almost 74% of women and 53% of men agreed that husbands can beat their wives when the wife doesn't comply with her obligations.

This can include incidents were if the food is undercooked or burnt, if she debates with her husband, if she leaves home without informing her husband, if she abandons her children, or if she refuses sexual intercourse with her husband. While the implementation of the Law against Domestic Violence has shown progress with an increase of domestic violence cases reported to the court, some domestic violence cases are still resolved at the family level. Cases are sometimes reported to local authorities when there is no solution reached. Moreover, many victims and survivors are still confronting various barriers, particularly access to formal justice due to a limited number of police and judicial actors available to support gender-based violence cases and distance from the Courts. Low language and literacy levels and long delays for legal proceedings are also barriers to accessing the formal justice system. Implementation of the Law against Domestic Violence is experiencing significant challenges in rural areas as many communities still have limited. This shows that increasing access to specialised police for gender-based violence cases and improving judicial processes is very important to strengthen support for victims and survivors of domestic violence.

**The Land Law that was approved in 2017 provided a modern legal framework to ensure equal rights to land ownership; however, it is still a challenge to guarantee the land title ownership to vulnerable women and girls.** In 2010, 80% (4/5) of land in Timor-Leste was obtained from heritage through traditional law. This meant that women had limited access and control to the land (IFC, 2010). This is a challenge particularly for adolescent mothers who have been abandoned or left by their partners (spouse/husband) and more vulnerable widows when participating in land issues/disputes. The proportion of women who own land is still very low and often they have no rights to be a land owner. Some women must negotiate with land owners about their rights to use the land, which is essential for them when they want to invest in farms and developing their business ideas (TOMAK 2016). Security of the right to own property is still a critical concern to support East Timorese women's ability to invest their time and finance in agricultural production compared to other non-agricultural activities. The Land Law that was approved in 2017 is very progressive in the promotion of equal rights and protection of vulnerable groups.

**Even though, women's labour force participation rate has increased from 54.7% in 2010 to 56.1% in 2015, women's participation in the labour force is still low.** Employment rate in Timor-Leste is different between men and women in all areas; with the male employment rate higher than that of women. Domestic labour and low literacy and education levels are still barriers for improving women's participation in the formal economic sector. Generally, women's labour participation is in hospitality, horticulture, administration and finance. In the private sector, women's participation has reached 40% (AEMTL, 2017) and most of them are business owners. The Government has established 'Governu Estabelese' a specific program with resources provide by "Public Transfer Funds" for women's economic empowerment. The program aims to support women to run small businesses, improve their living standards and to actively participate in economic development.

However, evaluation results from the implementation of the Maubisse Declaration (First phase) showed that in the agriculture sector, women's capacity in efficient production is still low. In addition, women are experiencing difficulties accessing national and international merchandise/good markets. Moreover, the irrigation system is still not able to facilitate strong production due to its seasonal cycle. This means that there is an over reliance on imports rather than promotion of local products, leading to food security concerns. Eventhough the Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the Maubisse Declaration, this sector needs strong investment from all parties including the Government, Civil Society, development partners and the private sector to better support gender equality and increase progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Promoting women's participation in the labour force, including as entrepreneurs or business owners, will increase women's revenue and contribute to improving private sector development. Maximum participation of men and women in the economic sector will improve family well-being and community development, which will positively impact the country's economic development.

**Budget allocation for gender policy implementation was insufficient to address gender concerns in rural areas for the period from 2014 to 2018.** A lot of effort has been made by the Government and the National Parliament to implement the Parliament Resolution on Gender Responsive Budgeting (2009). However, the allocation of budget for gender equality promotion has not been sufficient to support inclusive development. There are still some implementing line ministries that have not allocated sufficient budgets to implement gender activities outlined in the gender policies. Since 2012 however, the government through SEII has developed gender checklists to analyse the line ministries program and monitor its implementation. Before the the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (UPMA) in the Office of the Prime Minister was established, SEII received the line ministeries annual action plan through the Ministry of Finance. SEII only received the line ministries' Annual Action Plans after they were submitted to the National Parliament, therefore the majority of line ministries did not incorporate observations and suggestions made by SEII.

However, in 2015 with the establishment of UPMA, SEII now can oversee and support planning and monitoring systems for policy and program implementation. Since 2017, SEII has worked together with UPMA to integrate gender perspectives in Public Finance Management reform that resulted in the introduction of planning and monitoring instruments that are gender responsive, included Gender Markers in the line ministries' Annual Action Plans (2019). SEII and UPMA are introducing a Gender Standard Program in the Annual Action Plan, which requires the implementing line ministries to allocate budget for gender policy implementation such as NAP-GBV and NAP-UNSCR 1325.

## **SECTION II: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN FOR THE PERIOD OF 2014-2018**

Under the Constitution of RDTL in Articles 16 and 17, women are protected to exercise their human rights. These articles outline that women have universal and equal opportunities to live life without experiencing discrimination based on sex. The Constitution requires that the development of future laws and regulations are responsive to gender without discrimination. The State's role is to promote laws that provide pathways to women, to provide them with the opportunity to compete and fully participate in the development of society.

Despite the challenges and obstacles noted above, in 2015 the Government of Timor-Leste adopted the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs (hereinafter referred as “2030 Agenda”). These include specific objectives to improve gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment (SDGs No. 5) and goals to reinforce implementation in 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BPfA). The 2030 Agenda emphasises the importance of systematic integration of gender perspectives as a cross-cutting issue across all policy areas. Viewing the relation between implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and 2030 Agenda; 2030 Agenda consisted of many targets which are strongly inter-related in order to address the critical issues in the Beijing Declaration from women in extreme poverty to women in environment.

### **I. Women and Poverty**

Extreme poverty has the greatest impact on women and children. Women’s access to financial means and family income are very low in rural areas. This is one root cause of poverty and can create problems for children and family health. Based on the study of Poverty Mapping and Gender Perspective analysis generated by the Director General of Statistics and the World Bank in 2019, Timor-Leste has already made remarkable progresses in poverty reduction over the past ten years. However, this progress differed throughout the country; with gender inequality prevalence still present in socio-economic life such as access to economic activities, education, health, power and agency. The Poverty and Gender Perspectives mapping provided two key results showing that high prevalence of poverty was caused by low participation of women in education and women experiencing high domestic violence. In addition, the mapping also showed inequality between men and women’s participation in the labour force. The Poverty Mapping and Gender Perspectives will assist the Government for developing policies and programs at the village level and mainly to improve living standards in extreme poverty areas and to simultaneously reduce gender inequality with poverty rate, particularly women who are in extreme poverty.

The Government has already taken a series of measures to address these issues including through the approval of policies and programs that are gender inclusive and providing financial support through Public Transfer Funds and micro-credit. For

instance; SEII has a Women's Economic Empowerment program which provides financial support through Public Transfer Funds and also builds capacity in the business management area, accounting, and market systems through collaboration with IADE, SERVE and Trade Invest. SEII has also assisted 5 women groups from Municipality of Dili to access credit in BNCTL to run their businesses.

In 2017<sup>6</sup>, SEII in collaboration with Heineken have provided support for 6 vulnerable families in the municipality of Dili to increase their family income and to free them from extreme poverty. These supports included provision of basic food stuffs for vulnerable groups and also to built their capacity in business management, accounting, and market systems. The program has transferred USD\$ 4,500.00 from 2017 along with USD\$ 750.00 as financial support to each vulnerable group. The monitoring and evaluation report, "Women's Economic Empowerment through FTP from 2008-2014" showed that 77% of vulnerable groups were assisted – and they were still running their businesses successfully in 2015. Key challenges beneficiaries experienced included storing and transporting their goods and products to the markets; bad road conditions, market channels and supply chains, and how the groups dealt with distribution of their goods and products. In February 2019, the Support Office for Conjugue Activity of the President of the Republic, Women Entrepreneurship Association in Timor-Leste (AEMTL) and Heineken also offered Kiosks to seven vulnerable families such as small businesses to improve their living condition, family income. They also provided them with goods and basic needs so they could actively participate in the national development process of Timor-Leste.

The Government of Timor-Leste believe that empowering women's economic and financial inclusion via smart investment is essential and is key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. Women's economic empowerment means women have self-confidence, they can generate their own income, manage their own money and make decisions, defend their rights, and say no to violence, discrimination and traditional practices that prejudice them. Women's economic empowerment will result in poverty reduction and equality as it will increase the nutrition of children, family health, and children's participation in education. Moreover, the Government recognizes that a review and analysis is needed for the total budget of *Bolsa da Mãe* program, which contributed to extreme poverty reduction and assisted vulnerable women and children in Timor-Leste.

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<sup>6</sup> During the 2018 political impassing, the Government entities only utilized temporary funds of *duodecimo* therefore, there was no budget allocated for Public Transfer Funds.

For 2019, SEII will provide financial support to these following groups of beneficiaries:

No.	Group Name	Total Group	Budget Amount (USD)	Total Amount (USD)
1.	Beneficiary groups (new groups)	35	US\$ 2,000	US\$ 70,000
2.	Accessors groups (6 municipalities 6)	12	US\$ 2,500	US\$ 30,000
3.	Vulnerable groups (new groups)	25	US\$ 1,000	US\$ 25,000
4.	NGOs in economics sector	4	US\$ 5,000	US\$ 20,000
5.	NGOs in public sector	4	US\$ 5,000	US\$ 20,000
6.	NGOs in prevention of GBV sector	4	US\$ 5,000	US\$ 20,000
7.	Support for Women National Congress	13	US\$ 5,000	US\$ 65,000
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>US\$ 250,000</b>

## II. Education and Training of Women

Education is a key priority for Timor-Leste post-independence. It has been included in the national strategy development plan with a clear mandate for the provision of investment in primary and secondary levels of education, vocational/professional trainings and higher education to support education for all without discrimination. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is in charge of developing and implementing educational policies at all levels by providing public school infrastructure and learning guidelines. Since 2008, Timor-Leste has had a formal education system consisting of a four level system (preschool, basic education, secondary and higher education), where basic education is universal, compulsory and free of charge. Secondary education consists of general secondary and vocational/technical school. Higher education is classified into two areas; university and technical higher education. University education includes undergraduate and postgraduates degrees and also specialized diplomas. Higher technical education is like some institutes that provide short-term courses for 1-2 years in specialized areas and technology. This country has 11 higher education institutions.

Education from pre-school to secondary school is free for public schools. Generally private school fees have a range from \$5-\$10 per month. However, there are costs associated with school uniforms and others. Rural or urban households spend up to 30% of their budget on educational costs. Education at schools is taught in Tetum and Portuguese languages. There are many children who cannot communicate in these two languages, as they are most familiar with their local language (mother tongue). This can significantly impact some children's ability to achieve important learning outcomes. The Ministry of Education's policy has been carried out to allow the use of mother tongue languages at the lower classes at primary school as a bridge communication tool to ensure equal opportunities for educational success irrespective of the language knowledge at the start of the school life .

Basically non-formal education including the national literacy campaign, focuses more on Tetum and Portuguese languages for youth above the age of 14 years old. Since the demand for adult education has increased, vocational education has become an important pillar as well. Provision of specific knowledge for adults will be able to address the needs demanded by economic growth. The education, technical and vocational training sectors have carried out reform and efforts to address gender inequality in employment and occupation through providing vocational training opportunities for women. The Ministry of Education is in charge of education at secondary vocational or technical level. Vocational and technical trainings at the higher education level carried out coordination with the Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment (SEFOPE) to promote an integrated effort between education and job opportunities.

The policy process to achieve education quality is linked to the SDGs No.4. From 2014 to 2018, the Ministry of Education concentrated more on the process to promote education with quality such as a) Strengthening learning (increase curriculum quality and increase lecturers' capacity), b) Strengthening schools as institutions (including school management and school feeding program) and c) improving school infrastructure.

### **Curriculum Development**

From 2012-2019, the MoE has worked to ensure education quality for all students. They have done this by considering students' economic situation, linguistics and abilities. This came about in response to identifying that the teaching methodology in the 2004 Curriculum was not responding to East Timorese reality, as shown by extremely poor results in the 2009 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). With that, the Ministry of Education has developed a new curriculum for Pre-school and Basic Education 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycles in order to establish modern pedagogy and student centred approaches, and also to encourage parent's participation at school, and maximum participation of students. The methodology of language learning has also changed in order to engage children from various areas. Education is initially being taught in Tetum then gradually incorporating Portuguese language. There are also teachers' handbooks to support their students who do not speak Tetum. Students are able to use their first language for communication in the classroom while they are learning Tetum and Portuguese (DM-7/2015). To accommodate more children who speak local language as their mother tongue and explore the use of different teaching methodologies, the Ministry of Education has developed Multi-lingual Education Based on Mother Tongue (EMBLI) program, which is being piloted in 10 schools. The pilots have shown better results of literacy and numeracy for children who do not speak Tetum or Portuguese. This new methodology will improve education access for children who cannot communicate in an official language before they enter school.

This formal curriculum has provided Lesson Planning to facilitate teachers to teach according to quality pedagogy, and has also provided guidance on student textbooks for respective subjects. Up to 2018, the MoE has distributed these textbooks to pre-

school up to the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, and in 2019, MoE plan to distribute all textbooks to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade. The Ministry of Education has developed supplementary materials such as Videos to facilitate learning processes. In addition, MoE has provided a small library in each classroom to provide students the opportunity to developing their reading skills. The new curriculum includes strong gender equality integration measures in the curriculum and learning content materials. It has also emphasized reproductive health as well, changes during puberty, and healthy relationships.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education with the support of the World Bank have carried out a diagnostic assessment tool named EGRA in four municipalities to evaluate curriculum changes and positive changes by new teachers' training styles such as mentoring. It demonstrated that there have been positive changes in students' ability to read and write. However, MoE is still seeking better techniques to support children in rural areas to better communicate in official languages.

### **The School Quality Assurance Programs**

The Ministry of Education carried out teachers' training sessions 3 times per year for subjects such as Maths, Science, and Official Languages of Tetum and Portuguese. The MoE has also started implementing mentoring programs to support teachers and leaders (managers) to improve their skills. The MoE has emphasized the importance of sharing experiences in the teachers working groups as part of the mentoring program. All of these programs are supported by SEAMEO and UNESCO.

To ensure the minimum standard for schools, licensing standards have been developed for respective levels and licensing processes are starting for all schools. The Ministry has developed Disciplinary Rules to Teachers to impose disciplinary sanctions on teachers and school directors who do not follow ethics and professionalism in their teaching practice, including corporal punishment. The number of sexual harassment and abuse against girls in school is being increasingly reported due to increased understanding of the fact that these should result in both disciplinary and criminal actions against the perpetrators, which are often teachers or school managers.

Timor-Leste has education inspectorates to support the oversight of schools. These are gradually becoming more familiar with issues related to gender equality due to provision of . The Inspection General has added one Pre-school Inspector to expand the oversight of this policy, and aims to provide training for school inspectors according to their respective area of work. Moreover, the Ministry of Education has started generating educational data and carried out preliminary diagnostic on human resources to support institutional strengthening.

### **School Facilities**

The school feeding program has been decentralized to the municipalities aimed to facilitate the financial transfer process. In order to facilitate the school feeding process, the Ministry of Education has also reviewed school guidelines, and started

the implementation of a school garden. This increased children nutrition at school and improved the school feeding program.

MoE is carrying out an analysis on the needs of good classrooms for each school, including its projection up to 2025. School and classrooms for respective levels are continuously establishing in accordance with budget allocation, and currently all schools should include good bathrooms and toilets (sanitation). In 2015, distribution of 1000 chairs and tables were distributed to schools. In 2018, a playground design was developed to be built in 126 public pre-schools.

The Ministry of Education has carried out an analysis on the education sector, with the support of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) conducted by the World Bank. This analysis will allow the MoE to review the Strategic Plan and ensure its relevance to the current situation. Through strengthening of partnerships with development partners it will be able to increase offerings in trainings, materials, infrastructure, and school management at the central level. The partnership included UNICEF, New Zealand, Korea, Japan, Portugal, Thailand, Philippines and United States of America.

### **Inclusive Education**

Policies that have been undertaken by the MoE will support the goal to leave no one behind, particularly women and girls, to support their participation in education. Good pedagogy to support students with special needs is also a focus of the curriculum, to ensure equal education for all children. The Basics Education Law No. 14/2008 highlights this focus, stating that education should provide equal opportunity for all boys and girls, and education should ensure gender balance.

In January 2017, the Council of Ministers approved the Government Resolution on Inclusive Education policy that guaranteed equal rights for men and women at all levels of education; and also promote increased women participation as teachers and management positions in schools. The Water and Sanitation policy requires that all schools should have bathroom/toilets facilities, specifically to address students' needs during the school hours, including menstrual hygiene.

#### **a. Provision of assistance to female students with special needs**

In schools providing special assistance to students with special educational needs, non-discrimination between male and female must be exercised. According to the data, there are more female students than male students, and the MoE is currently collecting the data on students who have special educational needs.

In order to address the needs as described above, the MoE has provided training to school Directors and Coordinators, all who are included in the mentoring program on how to provide assistance to students with a disability. Curriculum and training provides clear directives/guidance on dealing with male or female students with special needs.

Based on the priority areas in the VIII Constitutional Government, some schools are currently establishing ramps and modified bathrooms/toilets. These need to be approved by the Ministry of Finance to allow budget for construction of classroom modifications for students with special needs.

The MoE is continuously ensuring good provision of assistance to boys and girls students through:

- i. Teachers who have received specific trainings on inclusive education in total 520 (Female: 250, Male: 270).
- ii. Students with a disability who have access to formal education in total: 931 (Female: 430, Male: 501). These data haven't included all students, therefore in 2019 there will be a new developed policy that allow us to obtain more up to date data.

#### **b. Laws and regulations that become directives/guidelines to Inclusive Education**

Laws and regulation from the Ministry of Education have integrated gender perspectives by outlining equal treatment of all genders, and highlighting various issues that may have a negative impact on girls and other vulnerables students.

As in the legislation, the curriculum provided with equal treatment is highlighted in Article 11,19 Pre-school Education Curriculum-Decree-Law No. 3/2015; Article 8, 16 and 27 Basic Education Curriculum-Decree-Law No. 4/2015; and Article 2, 13, and 14 Recurrent Education Curriculum-Decree-Law No. 30/2016. There is disciplinary regulation for teachers that clearly states discrimination is a violation that must hold all teachers to account under legislation.

Currently, it needs to improve the legislative framework of the education system to include many issues related to students discipline, national exams, student's attendance and school management. The MoE identified that these areas will be classified as a priority and must be considered to enhance the protection of girls' rights and non-discrimination. The National Directorate of Pre-School Education has conducted research on gender balance between boys and girls in Pre-school. All the work in 2019 included data collection of children with special education needs and developed a specific action plan for inclusive education.

The Inclusive Education policy, approved in 2017, is an important tool to support non-discriminatory practices in education, including to ensure that clear position exist to demand accountability for gender based violence in schools as well as to guarantee pregnant students continued access to schooling, despite cultural beliefs to the contrary.

#### **Recruitment process for Training and Promotion**

For the period from 2014 to 2018, the Ministry of Education hasn't conducted any recruitment process. Currently there is a lack of women in school leadership

positions. To address this, training was conducted for local leaders in 2016, including female teachers. This aimed to enhance women's participation in leadership roles, and prepare them to compete in the recruitment processes. The MoE itself has been committed to conduct recruitment in 2019 and ensures at least 25% of the leadership positions are women.

### III. Women and Health

**The Government strongly values maternal and infant health, which has resulted in a reduction in maternal and infant mortality rates, and an increase in ante-natal and post-natal visits from pregnant mothers.** Based on the national data from 2016 Demographic Health Survey Timor-Leste has made significant progress, particularly in the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates compared to 2010. The detailed information on maternal and infant mortality rates are presented in the following:

- Maternal mortality rate has reduced from 557/100,000 child births (DHS, 2010) to 218/100,000 child births (DHS, 2016)
- Infant mortality rate has reduced from 45/1,000 child births (DHS, 2010) to 30/1,000 child births (DHS, 2016)
- Children under-5 mortality rate has reduced from 64/1,000 child births (2010, DHS) to 41/1,000 births (DHS, 2016)
- Fertility rate has reduced from 5.7 children (DHS, 2010) to 4.2 children (DHS, 2016).

These results occurred after investment into ante-natal care visits.<sup>7</sup> This investment supported a significant increase in the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, from 30% in 2010 to 56.7% in 2016 (DHS). The remarkable progress in maternal and infant health is also a result of Government investment in the health sector labour force and the strengthening of health system in Timor-Leste. The National Strategy for Health Sector (2011-2030) has been approved in order to improve and strengthen the quality of services and access to universal healthcare (which is free in Timor-Leste as stated in the Constitution of RDTL). The Department of Maternal and Infant Health in the Ministry of Health together with the National Institute of Health (INS) has been providing training and capacity building for midwives and health professionals (doctors) in Community Health Centres in order to increase their abilities in the area of Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC). The health infrastructure has also contributed to the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates. Timor-Leste's efforts up to 2018 included health infrastructure such as health facilities with levels of 1 National Hospital, 5 Regional Hospitals, 69 Community Health Centres, 317 Health Posts, 48 Maternity Clinics, and 388 SISCa Posts – Community Health Integrated Service.

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<sup>7</sup> The first Ante-natal visit (ANC I) and the fourth Ante-natal visit (ANC IV) have increased from 74.6% and 41.6% in 2014 to 78% and 46% in 2018, respectively. Births attended by skilled health personnel have also increased from 57.7% in 2014 to 65% in 2018 and births at health facilities have also increased from 42.2% in 2014 to 45% in 2018. The first post-natal visit (PNC I) and the second post-natal visit (PNC II) have increased from 43% and 42.4% in 2014 to 50% and 46% in 2018, respectively.

The Ministry of Health has established comprehensive service packages for primary health care, particularly "*Family Health Program: Bringing health services closer to the household*". This program performed an important role to strengthen rural access to health care. The Family Health Program adopted from the primary health care system in Cuba aimed to bring health services that are important to people in their households, and this program is designed to ensure that "no one is left behind". Through 'family/household visit', health professionals evaluate, register and ask questions according to the health condition of family members. By bringing health care to households and to the communities this identifies people in the household who need assistance. This program has contributed greatly to the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates. From May 2017, the Health Family Program has provided health professionals for 94% of households in Timor-Leste (WHO, 2018).

Furthermore, the *Liga-Inan*<sup>8</sup> mobile health program (*Connecting Mother* mobile health program) which is implemented by the Ministry of Health with development partners is also contributing to the reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates. The *Liga-Inan* program began in Timor-Leste as a pilot project in Manufahi Municipality in 2013. Since 2013, almost 47,000 pregnant women have participated in the *Liga-Inan* program in Timor-Leste and the program is now well on the way to achieving 50,000 registrations. The *Liga-Inan* program through telephone SMS and "Call Me" has been established in 12 municipalities, included RAEOA. This program facilitates direct communication between pregnant mothers with health professionals while also sending weekly text messages to mothers that promote healthy behaviours while pregnant, including with regard to nutrition while pregnant, birth planning and pregnancy danger signs. The objective of this innovative technology is to facilitate health professionals, particularly in rural areas, to assist in the health program of pregnant mothers during their pregnancy. This is to know of their delivery and encourage them to come to the Health Centre for the delivery of their child, where there are facilities for childbirth. Through the *Liga-Inan program*, following delivery the mothers continue to receive postnatal and neonatal care including nutrition, breastfeeding and family planning messages until their baby is six months old. The program has shown promise towards contributing to its main objective, with a 2015 evaluation of the program showing that women participating in *Liga Inan* are twice as likely to give birth in a health facility and seven times more likely to receive postpartum care than women who do not participate in the program.

Additionally, the Government has worked closely with civil society groups in establishing health programs for mothers and infants, and has made efforts to increase the knowledge of the community on the importance of maternal and infant health, family planning, access to health facilities and nutrition for the pregnant mother and child. This program has promoted mother's breastfeeding to the baby

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<sup>8</sup> Liga Inan is an innovative program, funded by the Australian Government through the Partnership for Human Development (PHD), that uses mobile phones to connect pregnant women with health providers in Timor-Leste, with the aim of increasing the number of women who give birth in a health facility. In 2019, the implementing partners Health Alliance International and Catalpa International have begun the process of national handover of the program to the Ministry of Health.

aged 0- 6 months and has established group support for mother and child in 12 municipalities, included RAEOA. This program has also carried out demonstrations and promotions of local food that is full of nutrients for pregnant mothers and their babies to enable a reduction in malnutrition.

The Government has recognised that there is still large inequalities related to access to ante-natal and post-natal care in Timor-Leste. These inequalities are based on wealth, level of education, and geographical area (rural and urban areas). Women who are living in extreme poverty often don't receive ante-natal and post-natal care. Wealthier women, with higher levels of secondary education tend to have greater access to ante-natal and post-natal care. The Government has recognised challenges and barriers in the National Strategy for Reproductive Health, Maternal, Neo-natal, Children and Adolescent (2015-2019) and also in the Action Plan for Emergency Obstetrics Care and Neo-natal in Timor-Leste (2016-2019). It also included recommendations to improve coverage, availability and geographical distribution from facilities to emergency obstetrics care and neonatal care throughout the country.

**During the past 15 years Timor-Leste has achieved rapid reduction in its fertility rates.** In 2003, the fertility rate reached 7.8 which was considered the highest fertility rate in the world. However, from 2009/10 the fertility rate reduced to 5.7, and in 2016 (DHS) the fertility rate reduced more to 4.2. Currently, the average women in Timor-Leste is estimated to have 4.2 children. In the rural areas, the fertility rate is higher, with each women estimated as having 4.6 children. This is markedly higher compared to those living in urban areas, where on average each women has 3.5 children (DHS 2016). Although there has been a significant reduction to the fertility rate, this rate is still considered the highest in the Asia region. The fertility rate continues to be reduced, but the major barrier to further reduction is that many women do not understand contraceptive methods. Based on the National data the Demographic Health Survey showed that there is only 47% of women with reproductive age (15-49) who said that they are satisfied with their demand for family planning using modern methods of contraceptives.

**The Government together with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) have implemented many activities that focus on the prevention of HIV-AIDS disease, and also have established safe rooms for patients with HIV-AIDS.** The Government has established the National Commission for Combatting HIV-AIDS as an autonomous state organ to address the implementation of the National Strategy for Combatting HIV-AIDS and STIs. It is also focused on improving multi-sectoral coordination to focus on the prevention of the virus, as well as education to fight against transmission of HIV-AIDS in Timor-Leste. The Strategy also includes service delivery for women and children who have been born with HIV-AIDS. The Commission of HIV-AIDS has conducted many activities that contribute to the prevention of HIV-AIDS including campaigns and national seminars to spread basic information on HIV-AIDS to the public. Groups that are especially targeting include students and groups that are at risk of being infected. It is aimed at changing people's

risky attitudes and behaviours, and also raise public awareness to voluntarily participate in the Voluntary Confidential Counseling and Testing – VCCT at HIV-AIDS Centre, which the Ministry of Health has established in the Referral Hospitals.

The Ministry of Health through the National Commission for Combatting HIV-AIDS also worked with local NGOs to disseminate HIV-AIDS information and other related information on the prevention and impact of HIV-AIDS, particularly for women and young girls. The Commission also works with Grupu Estrela Plus and Esperansa to provide support to all East Timorese who are affected by HIV-AIDS disease. The Commission also gathered women that have been involved with sex work to listen to their concerns and to help find solutions to their problems. The Commission also shared information to increase knowledge on prevention, availability of health services and impact of HIV-AIDS disease. The Ministry of Health has worked closely with the Red Cross of Timor-Leste (*CVTL*) and the Global Fund conducted awareness campaigns in 8 Municipalities where there has been maximum participation of 73.000 individuals. During the campaign, there was also group discussion to help reduce stigma related to HIV/AIDS. Campaign materials and condoms were also distributed to raise awareness on the prevention of HIV-AIDS and other transmissible infections.

The Government has established safe rooms for women and girls who suffered from HIV-AIDS, such as the HCT Centre that provides assistance and ensures people's secrecy. Patients are able to take the HIV test voluntarily to find out whether they have been infected, where the results of the tests are confidential. The HCT Centres that have been established in the National Hospital, Klínika Bairopite, Sentru Saúde Komunitáriu Vera-Cruz, Hospital Referál and Sentru Saúde in the territory of Timor-Leste. The health professionals and laboratory technicians also gained professional training on how to ensure the patient's privacy. The Government has established Casa de Recoperação de Saúde in municipality of Liquiça for health recovery. The shelter is not to quarantine or to localize people who have lived with HIV-AIDS disease, but to help monitor those with this disease. In this place, patients not only receive treatment and counselling, but there is also capacity building on language training, human activities and sewing and other activities to people living with HIV-AIDS.

The HIV-AIDS report, publicised by the Health Information Statistics Services in the Ministry of Health, showed that for the period of 2013 to 2018, out of 832 patients with HIV-AIDS, there are 338 patients who are now actively receiving ARV (Anti Retro Viral) treatment. Conversely there are almost 361 patients that are not receiving treatment. There are numerous reasons for this, some of which include that patients can no longer access the ARV treatment or just decide to no longer attend the centre. Some patients have a greater belief in traditional methods of healing rather than undertaking conventional medical treatments. Others are ashamed to visit the treatment room out of fears relating to stigma and discrimination that they believe is associated with HIV-AIDS. In some cases patients are no longer receiving active treatment of ARV because of reasons of stigma and discrimination from health workers and technical laboratorium themselves.

On the other hand, the health workers and other officers who work within the wider Dili community noticed that some widowed women as well as some children in orphanages are affected by HIV-AIDS. It has also been found that the transmission of HIV-AIDS from mother to child have resulted in child fatalities. These results have also shown that HIV-AIDS has been present in Timor-Leste for almost for 10 years. Although current cases of HIV-AIDS are at a relatively low, those that are HIV positive continue to be vulnerable. It is evident that there are a multitude of factors in Timor-Leste contributing to the vulnerability of HIV-AIDS patients. The conditions of poverty combined with limited opportunity to gain revenue from employment, particularly for women contribute to a greater risk of contracting HIV-AIDS. Accordingly, commercial sex and transactional sex are both contributors to HIV-AIDS infection. Conversely, low literacy rates are barriers to social mobilization of education campaigns aimed at the prevention of HIV-AIDS. Although there are numerous factors contributing to the rates of HIV-AIDS in Timor-Leste, a key factor is the increase of gender inequality within the supply chain side, which influences demand for commercial sex. In Timor-Leste, women who are living in poverty conditions have a higher probability to resort to sexual services. Men with available income have a higher probability to pay and acquire sexual services.

**The Ministry of Health has developed and implemented the guidelines and series of Standards Operational Procedures (SOP) in order to ensure the quality of health service delivery from health workers.** For the period from 2014-2018, the Ministry of Health has established Guidelines for Establishment of Review of Maternal Mortality in the Hospital and SOP on Verbal Autopsy for Low Level Facility and Community, and also provided capacity building *Maternal Death Surveillance and Response - MDSR* to health workers who are working in the HNGV and 5 referral Hospitals (Baucau, Maliana, Maubisse, Suai and Oecusse) and guidance for verbal autopsy to health workers in the Community Health Centre. In addition to health workers, these trainings are also provided to local authorities, community leaders, NGOs groups, women groups, and relevant sectors. The Ministry of Health has developed SOP for intrapartum and postpartum imediata in the Hospital, and Community Health Centre. Currently, the Ministry of Health is in the process of final revision of the Guidelines on Gender-based Violence that will be utilized in health facilities throughout the territory of Timor-Leste and will assist in educating health workers on how to provide assistance to victims and survivors of various types of violence.

**The existing national NGO which specializes in the provision of health assistance to victims of Gender-Based Violence.** PRADET is a national NGO that provides psychosocial assistance to people that have experience trauma, mental health, and other psychosocial problems. PRADET is in charge of forensic documentation of injuries relating to gender-based violence, and also offers medical treatment to victims of gender-based violence. So far PRADET has provided medical assistance to victims in the Health Centre or in the PRADET office building. PRADET worked in collaboration with health services in order to carry out medical forensic

examination and collect evidence performed in the 5 Safe Rooms established in the National Hospital, Referral Hospitals Oecusse, Suai, Maliana, and Baucau. Currently, health workers include doctors and senior midwives skilled and accredited to perform medical forensic examination, totalling 64 persons. From this total of health workers, 42 officers are actively performing the work as examiners with PRADET and also in the Health Centre in Municipality of Ainaro, Viqueque, Lospalos, and Manufahi.

#### **IV. Violence against Women**

The following information details the progress and challenges in thematic areas according to four (4) pillars for National Action Plan (NAP) towards Gender-based Violence (GBV): Prevention to Gender-based Violence, Provision of Essential Services for Victims/Survivors of GBV, Access to Justice, and Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation.

##### **Prevention of Gender-based Violence**

The Government of Timor-Leste is committed to prevent and eliminate any types of gender-based violence through approval and implementation of gender policies at the national and international levels. The Government has approved and implemented NAP-GBV with the following objectives:

- To address the needs of victims;
- To provide multi-sectoral services to victims, including access to justice, access to health and also establishment of coordination mechanisms including monitoring and evaluation; and
- To overall prevent all types of gender-based violence.

In 2010, the Government of Timor-Leste approved the Law Against domestic Violence No. 7/2010 which criminalize domestic violence. The definition of domestic violence includes sexual violence, including violence within marriage. The Government of Timor-Leste understands that the impact of sexual violence and Gender-based Violence are serious. Gender-based violence impacts not only the victim, but also their family as well as the wider domestic and international society. When a woman experiences sexual violence or physical violence, it has a detrimental impact on her health and her active participation in the workforce, family life and the greater society. This has the greater impact of affecting the development process of the country, and contributes to gender inequality in various sectors. SEII is responsible for the Prevention pillar in the NAP-GBV, and has the important role to work in cooperation with all partners including government ministries, civil society, local NGOs and the greater international community. SEII also carries out advocacy with the goal of eliminating gender-based violence. During the period from 2014-2018, SEII has conducted numerous campaigns and workshops to encourage community dialogue. SEII also utilises a variety of methods such as talkshows used as advocacy mechanisms to increase community awareness as well as contribute to community leaders' understanding regarding the prevention of gender-based violence. The 16-

Days Campaign against Gender-based Violence towards women has also become a main activity for civil societies advocating for the prevention of GBV. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports have include study of human rights within the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, with the intention of teaching the new generations to respect each other, and especially respect the dignity of women. The National University of Timor-Leste (*Universidade Nasionál Timor-Lorosae*) has also integrated a gender curriculum within their teaching materials. Futhermore, the National Institute of Public Administration (*INAP*) integrates gender materials/subject in the training module/induction for Public officers.

The Government of Timor-Leste has evaluated the strategies for implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) towards Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The Government together with Civil Society groups has implemented and reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating gender-based violence. In 2017, the Government approved the NAP-GBV for the second phase for the period of 2017 to 2021. For the second phase, this policy has the objective of improving the multi sectoral approach established within the first phase of NAP-GBV. This has helped address the GBV problems in Timor-Leste, particularly in regards to service delivery for service providers to victims and survivors. The Government is continuously showing its commitment to stop violence against women and continues to its efforts in prevention. This in part includes implementation of “zero tolerance” policies to violence in order to prevent violent acts in the schools throughout the country. The Government has also approved the operational guidelines on “No to Sexual Harassment in Public Service” in order to respond to the sexual harassment that occurred in Public Service. SEII has introduced materials on GBV to the Judicial Training Centre and Judiciary, and also will introduce materials on GBV in the training of National Institute for Public Administration (INAP) in 2019.

Civil Societies that become implementing agents of NAP-GBV also contribute to the prevention of GBV. They provide assistance and services to victims and survivors at both the National and Municipality level. For instance, the organisation PRADET has implemented strategies for prevention which directly target families and households. The objectives of such strategies include but are not limited to:

- promoting gender equality,
- developing communication skills;
- changing violent attitudes and behaviors; and
- reducing alcohol consumption in accordance with other measures undertaken by the organisation.

In 2018, these strategies had been implemented in 2340 households across 26 Sucos. Civil societies also take the opportunity in commemoration of Women’s Day to hold workshops on gender-based violence. For example, FOKUPERS organizes workshops on Trauma Healing. These workshops are aimed at survivors, women prisoners in the prison of Gleno, and the national police. International Women’s Day and the 16-Days Campaign on gender-based violence are also important events for the facilitation of Trauma Healing workshops. Cooperation between government and civil society

groups in integrating reforms and policies relating to gender-based violence will have a beneficial impact in reducing rates of violence against women in Timor-Leste.

Overall Timor-Leste has achieved significant progress working towards reducing rates of gender-based violence. There are however challenges that victims and survivors continue to confront. Access to justice continues to be a barrier for victims of gender-based violence. A severe backlog of cases within the judicial system result in a loss of motivation for victims in pursuing formal legal action within the judicial system. Family attitudes can be a barrier to victims seeking legal action. In cases of spousal violence, there are instances where victims decide against seeking legal action due to financial dependency on their partner. Coercion by way of threats by family members or other members of society also impact on whether a victim decides to obtain legal assistance. Victim-blaming continues to be commonplace in Timorese society. Furthermore despite government approval, Witness Protection provisions are yet to be strongly implemented across the entirety of Timor-Leste.

### **Provision of Essential Services for Victims/Survivors of GBV**

The Government together with civil society groups has established *Safe Rooms* as secure and protected places for victims and survivors. The purpose of this service is to provide support to victims and survivors, provide temporary accommodation for one or two nights and to provide specialized services to victims and survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, child abuse, abandonment or trafficking. Safe Rooms have been established across Timor-Leste. Safe Rooms are currently available in the National Hospital, Referral Hospital and Internament Health Centre, in the municipalities of Ainaro, Viqueque, Lospalos, and Manufahi. Based on the data from PRADET, clients who accessed PRADET's Safe Room services reached between 600 and 750 in 2018. Current government and civil society plans for 2010 are to establish more Safe Rooms for clients in six Internament Health Centres. The establishment of Safe Room is to provide protection not only to persons who have experienced violence, but also to those who are threatened from family members and/or the perpetrator.

In addition to the Safe Room, there are also Shelters (*Uma Mahon*) available to victims. Shelters are secure and protected, designed to provide support to victims and longer term accommodation for two nights. Victims are able to access shelters free from discrimination. Between 2014 and 2018, the Government together with civil societies established seven Shelters and one Transitional House to provide integrated assistance to women and girls who become victims of GBV. When victims and survivors are living in the Shelter, psychosocial assistance is provided in addition to 'Life Skill' training. When victims and survivors decide they are ready to return home to their family and wider community, the Shelters will provide assistance and support to help them re-integrate into their community.

The Government is committed to maintaining positive and collaborative relationships with referral networks providing vital services to clients. Services include provision of legal aid to women and children and provision of training for

women to assist them in becoming Suco authorities/local leaders as well as encouraging greater participation by women within education institutions and the wider community.

### **Access to Justice**

Since the restoration of its independence, Timor-Leste has faced remarkable challenges in establishing a judicial system. The normative framework and institutional structures needed to be established from zero and deal with a complex post-conflict situation. Access to formal justice system remains a challenge for the majority of the population and continues to be a pervasive issue for victims and survivors of gender-based violence. Courts have only been established in four locations, which in practice means that geographic access is extremely difficult for most people. The majority of victims face a long journey from their community to the nearest Court, creating further difficulties in accessing judicial support. The backlog of thousands of cases presents an additional challenge. Resources within the police and judiciary systems that are afforded to gender-based violence cases are often very limited. Furthermore, the co-existence of a customary justice system and a formal justice system is another barrier for victims trying to access justice. For most Timorese the customary justice system an integral part of everyday life and play a central role in resolving disputes between individuals and communities, such as land disputes, conflict between communities, domestic violence and natural resources management. These practices focus on maintaining community and environmental harmony, in contrast to the formal justice system, which is perpetrator focused. Customary justice is the natural first resort for the vast majority of the population. The customary justice system is settled at the hamlet (*aldeia*) or village (*suco*) level. These are decided by local Elders (*Lia Nain*) or the elected Suco Council according to customary rules established by the local community. These rules are based on spiritual traditions of sacred practice (*Lulik*) which for many centuries have regulated community relationships according to kinship in sacred houses (*Uma Lulik*). Hearings in customary justice systems are commonly conducted in public, which is clearly unsuitable for crimes relating to vulnerable victims of domestic violence and child abuse. Additionally, language barriers and low literacy rates also create difficulties for victims needing to understand the legal process of under the formal justice system. Also, most judges were trained in Bahasa Indonesia under Indonesian rule and were then required to operate in the official languages Portuguese and Tetum. Judicial actors thus operate in languages that are not mother-tongue for the majority of the population. Only in 2017 was Tetum explicitly recognised as an official language in the judicial sector (Decree No. 11/2017) and interpreters in indigenous mother-tongue languages remain unavailable.

Notwithstanding these barriers, there has been progress made in resolving cases of gender-based violence through the formal justice system. Data obtained from the Public Prosecution and depicted in the table below shows that between 2014 and 2018 a clear majority of registered cases were indicted through the formal legal system.

No.	Year	Crime	Registered	Indicted	Archieved	Pendent	Observation
1.	2014 - 2018	Sexual violence	610	384	92	89	Dispatch to archive the processes as there were no evidence and the accused person is unknown
2.	2014 - 2018	Sexual abuse to minors	217	169	24	13	
3.	2014 - 2018	Domestic Violence	3891	3430	177	263	

Source: Data from Public Prosecution

Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice is continuously working with the SEII to achieve the objectives set out in the NAP-GBV, particularly in regards to improving access to justice for victims of gender-based violence and also in regards to the provision of further training for judicial actors including prosecutors, public defenders and lawyers.

### **Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Government Resolution No. 34/2017 on the establishment of Inter-Ministerial Committee for Coordination of Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation of NAP-GBV for the period from 2017 to 2021 was approved by the Government in June 2017. The Resolution provides guidelines to monitor and supervise the implementation of NAP-GBV from 2017 until 2021. There was an official dispatch from Prime Minister on the approval of focal points at the ministerial level for the Inter-Ministerial Committee to monitor the implementation of NAP-GBV. The Inter-Ministerial will hold meetings three times every year. SEII will also hold coordination meetings with referral networks four times a year. Meetings with referral networks are aimed at identifying risks as well as other important factors that will assist in providing protection and assistance to women and children who are victims of GBV. SEII will also hold workshops with Municipality Administrators with the aim of disseminating information on the Structure for Municipality Gender Working Group. Information about the Gender Working Group at the Municipality level, which is to get reappointed by SEII, is also included.

The Government has already established mechanisms in partnership with development partners, Civil Society actors, National/International NGOs and the

public in general to directly provide services to vulnerable people. These services are directed at those who are suffering or experiencing domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse, abandonment and human trafficking, and is also directed at women prisoners in prison. Throughout 2019, the Government will actively work with development partners, NGOs, Civil Society actors, and Private Sectors to provide assistance to victims. They will also work on continuously improving mechanisms to monitor gender-based violence cases with the overarching goal of preventing cases of gendered violence.

## V. Women and Armed Conflict

Women and children as citizens of Timor-Leste have the right to live in peace in a safe and secure environment, free from all forms of violence and discrimination. They also have the right to actively and equally participate and contribute to peace-building and state-building in regards to Timor-Leste's development. Timor-Leste has gained its independence through a long history of conflicts and violence. East Timorese people had felt and experienced the consequences of such conflict. Women and girls in particular who have lived through these conflicts were victims of all types of violence. As a consequence of war, people have been subjected to horrific experiences including but not limited to death, disappearance, torture, sexual violence, sexual slavery and imprisonment, all of which are gross human rights violations. Such experiences have not only resulted in life-long damage to individuals, but have also impacted upon State institutions. The Government of Timor-Leste recognises its important role in stopping such violence, and is committed to establishing laws and policies that prohibit violence and discrimination, as well as raising awareness about human value and dignity. The Government is also committed to fostering respect amongst all citizens, and promoting peace in all communities. The violence experienced by Timor-Leste in past times of conflicts have taught Timor-Leste as a nation to focus on peace-building from the grassroots level of community, all the way up to Timor-Leste's institutions. As a result, each person is taught to respect each other and together eliminate all forms of discrimination. It is recognised nation-wide that everyone has the right to live peacefully in a secure environment, free from all forms of violence and discrimination. This is vital for citizens to fully participate and actively contribute to the peace-building, state-building and overall development of the country.

The Government of Timor-Leste has committed to eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women through the implementation of National Action Plan – UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-UNSCR 1325) and National Action Plan (NAP) on Gender-based Violence (GBV). Preventing violence against women will further enhance women's participation in decision-making and peace-building. The National Parliament signed and ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2003. A number of other international treaties and conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women have also been ratified by the Timor-Leste Government. The approval of NAP-UNSCR

1325 has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to continue the promotion of gender equality and furthering of women's rights in accordance with the Constitution of RDTL and international conventions. The implementation of NAP-UNSCR 1325 has also demonstrated Timor-Leste's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Commission on the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR). The objectives behind the approval of NAP-UNSCR 1325 includes compensating and recognising women's sufferings during past conflicts as well as recognising and valuing the contribution made by women during the struggle for liberation. Women have had an integral role in supporting resistance during the struggle for liberation. Recognising the valuable contribution that women have made in the past and continue to make in the present and future, the Government recognises the importance of implementing policies that encourage women's participation in the development of Timor-Leste.

In 2018, the Timor-leste National Police (PNTL) established and launched a gender strategy for the period from 2018 until 2022. This strategy will help contribute to the achievement of the Timor-leste National Police's mission. The mission is to defend East Timorese citizens' rights and liberty, and support professional development, within an inclusive defence force which is entrusted by people. The gender strategies will support the PNTL to provide services according to the security needs for men and women in Timor-Leste. It will also assist in ensuring maximum and equal participation of men and women within the PNTL. The strategies have also supported PNTL in executing their responsibilities in accordance with NAP-UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for the period from 2016 to 2020, and NAP on Gender-based Violence for the period from 2017 to 2021. Currently, there are six (6) women in the PNTL out of total of sixteen (16) women in PNTL who will participate in trainings for United Nations Peacekeeping Mission. The Government has also established Community Policing Council (CPC) in order to resolve conflicts in the community.

The State has a moral responsibility to ensure women and girls are free from any future armed conflicts. The establishment of laws and application of heavy sanctions and punishments for groups that generate armed conflict has helped maintain Timor-Leste's internal peace and security. After instances of armed conflict in 2006, the Government has put into place measures to ensure the stability of population. Through the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI), the Government has provided social assistance to victims of past conflicts. There is also *Centro Nasionál Chega (CNC)* which reports to the office of the Prime Minister. Since the establishment of CNC, they have utilised the materials of the CAVR report to increase public awareness of the negative impacts of armed conflict. The information is aimed especially at the youth, with the intention to increase their knowledge of past historical events in order to prevent them from becoming involved with martial arts and other organised groups.

In addition to efforts made by the Government, civil society groups have also been heavily involved in taking care of victims and survivors of past conflicts. Acbit, for

example, has carried out research in consultation with victims. This has allowed Acbit to hear the opinions and experiences of victims, which has informed the core basis of their research. Together with development partners, they have provided training to survivors in conflict resolution, which can assist them with being advocates for peace in their communities. Civil Societies across Timor-Leste are strong advocates, working closely with the Government, development partners and private sector enabling peace and justice which is responsive and inclusive to gender in Timor-Leste. The local NGO, BELUN, is in charge of conflict prevention in the community. BELUN has developed innovative systems which contributes to conflict prevention. Every month BELUN publicizes the Early Warning System which provides data for social networks on indicators of potential conflicts in a total of 66 areas. These areas include the economic, political and social sectors. In September 2018 for instance, the Early Warning System identified a significant increased in violence against women and girls. BELUN has also identified issues affecting the wider community as a whole. Conflicts identified include land disputes, conflict among youth (martial arts groups), domestic violence and conflict between police and community as well. BELUN has provided this information and recommendations to the Government to make decisions and assist in taking action to minimise and prevent such conflict.

## VI. Women and the Economy

Women are disproportionately represented in the informal labour sector. Domestic labour throughout the majority of the country is undertaken by women. Throughout the country, women are tasked with the responsibility of caring for children and elderly relatives, gathering and preparing meals for the family and undertaking household chores such as cleaning and washing. Such work is not considered formal employment, meaning that many women are not afforded an equal chance of participating in the formal labour economy.

Women are more likely to be employed in vulnerable or unsteady employment, with many women earning their salary with unstable benefits. This is particularly commonplace in rural areas, where 87% of rural women work in vulnerable employment compared to 54% of women in urban areas. This trend is also similar to the figures of men working in vulnerable employment, with 78% of rural men working in vulnerable employment compared to 37% of urban men. Distribution of employed men and women in industry sectors show that 25% of employed women work in selling goods and managing small-business, whilst 12% are in education, health, sports, arts, and other areas. Compared to women, men have greater opportunity to gain employment in the private sector with larger industries.

Through the SEII, the Government between 2014 and 2017 has provided financial support to beneficiary groups, success groups, vulnerable groups, and NGOs in the economic sector aiming to:

- Promote gender equality and equality of opportunity for work;

- Strengthen women's subsistence economies through self-employment and self-confidence;
- Provide opportunities to women to practice and demonstrate their ability and capacity;
- Encourage women to organize each other and to work in teams;
- Contribute to the poverty reduction by encouraging women to participate in the process of national economic development; and
- Provide opportunities to women to gain trust from micro-finance institutions for women to access credit.

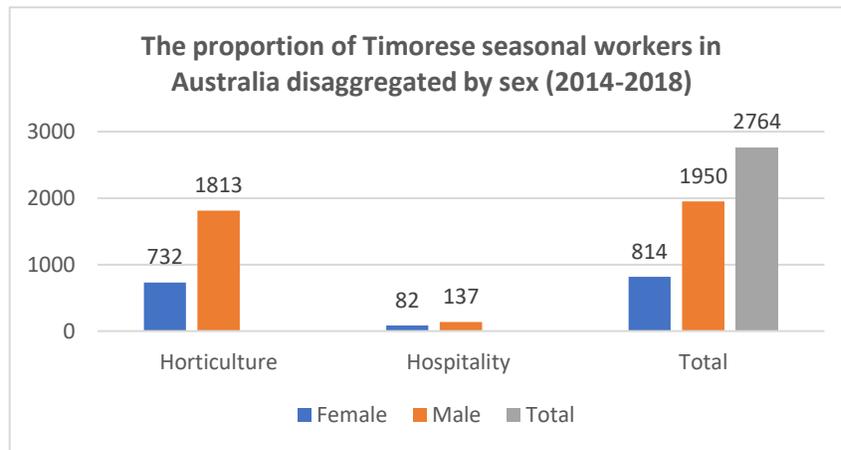
PTF has provided funds with equal distribution to 12 municipalities and RAEOA. They have also organised different economic activities to work towards achieving gender equality in economic life and reduce women's economic dependency to men, thereby strengthening women's economic capacity. For the period of 2014 to 2017, a total of 194 beneficiary groups received Public Transfer Funds in the total amount of USD \$ 347, 807. 10 NGOs that operate in the economic sector received financial support from SEII in 2016 and 2017 (5 NGO per year) with the total amount of support being USD \$ 49, 875. For the period of 2015 to 2017 SEII conducted training on accounting management on two occasions. Beneficiaries of the training are small-business groups, women in business, entrepreneurs, success groups, and vulnerable groups. The training has been conducted with intention to increase their capacity in finance administration and business.

The Government and civil society groups have also conducted the Women's Economic Empowerment Program. Between 2010 and 2018, Fundasaun Alola's work with the program resulted in the creation of 52 women groups in 12 municipalities and RAEOA. This work has helped increase family income and also assisted women in contributing and participating in work and programs aimed at preventing economy dependency. It has also contributed to programs aimed at reducing violence against women and children. Fundasaun Alola is continuously providing assistance to these 52 women's groups. They particularly busy during the time of Christmas and Easter where Fundasaun Alola organizes fairs to give the opportunity for the groups to promote their products and sell their goods, helping increase their income. Access to financial services is also very important for economic empowerment. This is especially the case for women who have a tendency to have less opportunity to control their own wealth. Improving women's access to financial services involves improving banking services and increasing access to micro-finance programs. Money transfers can help perform this role, which is important in assisting women to manage their own financial resources.

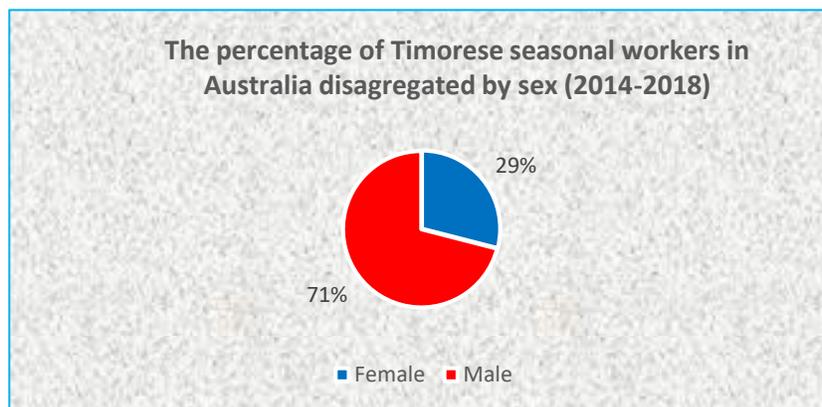
### **Women in Overseas Seasonal Workers Program**

The Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment (SEFOPE) is the State machinery in charge of professional training issues, employment and labour. The Government through the SEFOPE has established legal frameworks aimed at promoting capacity building for men and women. This is aimed at enabling gender

equality promotion in the national development. SEFOPE has established provisions to ensure women’s rights such as annual leave, maternity leave, and breastfeeding leave for those with young babies. SEFOPE has also established agreements for at least 50% of women to participate in recruitment for trainings and recruitment for employment. SEFOPE has had an attaché to assist in it’s work regarding labour. The attaché’s role involves overseeing women working overseas, assisting them in receiving fair and equal treatment. In the period of 2014 and 2018, SEFOPE has assisted many East Timorese youth in obtaining work overseas. The graph below presented data of the seasonal workers in Australia disaggregated by sex for the period of 2014 to 2018. As shown, the representation of men in the seasonal workers program in Australia is higher than women.



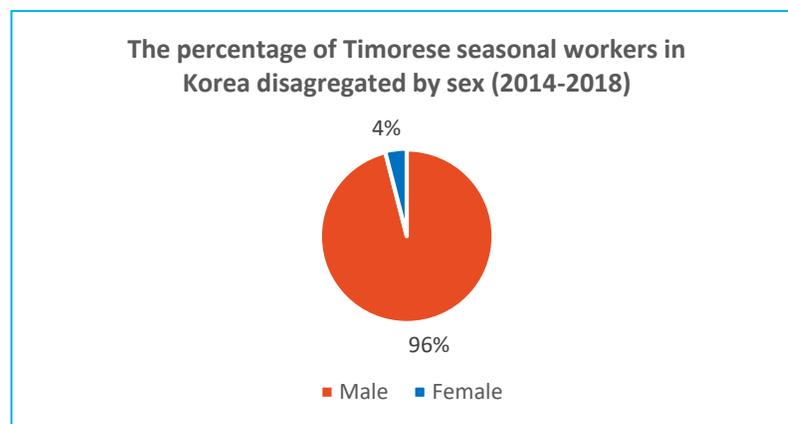
- The pie graph below shows that the percentage of women in the workforce hasn’t yet reached 50% based on the recruitment agreement. It has however been considered that women beneficiaries have reached 29%.



East Timorese labour data on those who are working in South Korea is presented in the graph below. It shows that women’s participation has only reached 4%. It is therefore evident that it hasn’t complied with the condition of having 50% of women in the recruitment process and the representation of Timorese women in South Korea is still low in comparison to the participation of East Timorese women in the seasonal

workers program in Australia. Even though figure has not reached to 50% as agreed, SEFOPE considers women participation in seasonal works to be a great advantage enabling promotion of gender equality.

Work Sector							
Year	Fabrics		Agriculture		Fisheries		Total per annum
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
2014	7	111	0	0	0	128	246
2015	6	147			0	264	417
2016	10	148	0	0	0	346	504
2017	13	128	0	0	0	143	284
2018	4	160	0	0	0	138	302
	40	694				1019	
Total							1753



### Women in Private Sector and Business

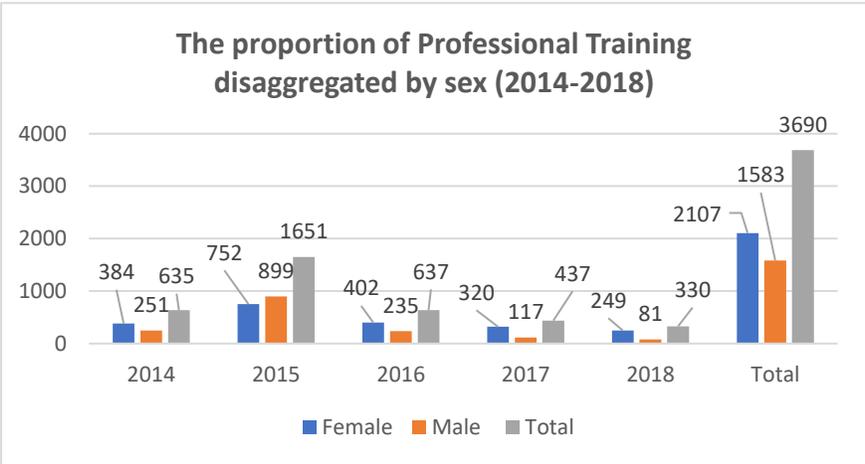
It is estimated that 40% of women are small business owners in Timor-Leste, with about 16% of their businesses formalized in 2010. Although women have a lower representation in the formal sector, their participation is very high in agricultural businesses, where many sell their products in markets, and also manage kiosks. Women in businesses do confront obstacles. Barriers for women in business include lower educational participation in a cultural environment which is dominated by man. Current legal frameworks and operation of these frameworks are not yet responsive to gender balance, where negotiation with social and domestic responsibilities is an important factor to address. Small business initiatives have been

established as important mechanisms for dialogue between the business community and the Government. A women's business association has been established and consists of 15 women who lead medium-sized businesses in Dili. This formal organization however does not wholly represent women's interests involving agricultural products, including their interests in small businesses as well as larger businesses. NAP for Gender and Private Sector for the period of 2014 to 2017 provided recommendations to the Government to carry out reform in improving legal frameworks for women's businesses. Reform would enable gender responsive business registration and also raise awareness about women's rights, particularly in a commercial context.

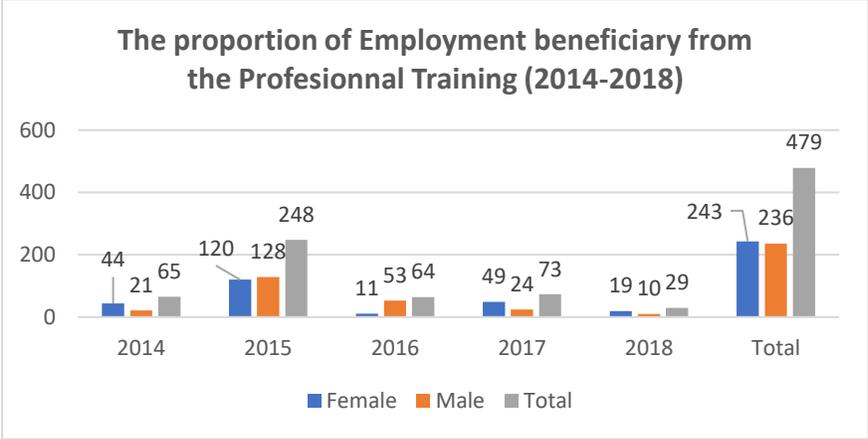
The Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry (MTCI) also has been providing a provision of technical and financial support for the development of business activities for women in micro and small enterprises in Dili Capital, in Municipalities and rural areas. MTCI's programs include but are not limited to granting of financial support, equipment and short-term Technical-Vocational Training Courses for the group of women entrepreneurs who operate in business activities in the areas of Tourism, Commerce and Industry and Cooperatives, building basic infrastructures to facilitate economic activities such as markets, training centers/incubator centers, industrial parks and tourist areas, and promoting and facilitating producers especially women's groups in accessing the Domestic and International Market. According to the MTCI's database from 2014 to 2016, the number of women who operate their business activities in the areas of commerce, handicrafts, and micro and small enterprises is significantly higher than men, with a total of 584 groups and individuals. In the area of Development of micro and small industry, around 369 women's groups are involved in micro and small industries registered at national level from the total of 1,326 groups. Annually, there is an increase in the number of women and men in the respective business area, developed by local business communities. In regards to the Development of Cooperatives, as of 2016, female's participation in the organization and operational activities in the different branches of cooperatives of micro, small and medium economic activities is 9,886 (46.7%) in comparison to male's participation of 11, 288 (53.3%).

### **Women in Professional Training Program**

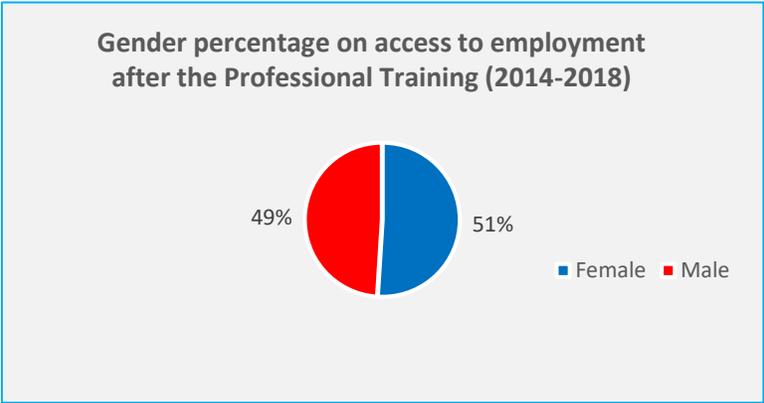
SEFOPE has established professional training centres to educate women about enhancing their careers in private and public sectors. SEFOPE also provides financial support to accredited training centres and community training centres to provide trainings for adolescent youth (boys and/or girls) to increase their capacity in creating self-employment. During the period of 2014 and 2018, participation of women in the training programs has reached over 50%. This is a positive development, where it is anticipated that the greater participation of women in training will equate to a greater opportunity for women to participate in the workforce. The results of evaluation reports showed that the high number of participation by women may have been boosted by the specific programs on offer, where the majority of training areas provided by the Training Centres were hospitality, bakery, administration and IT.



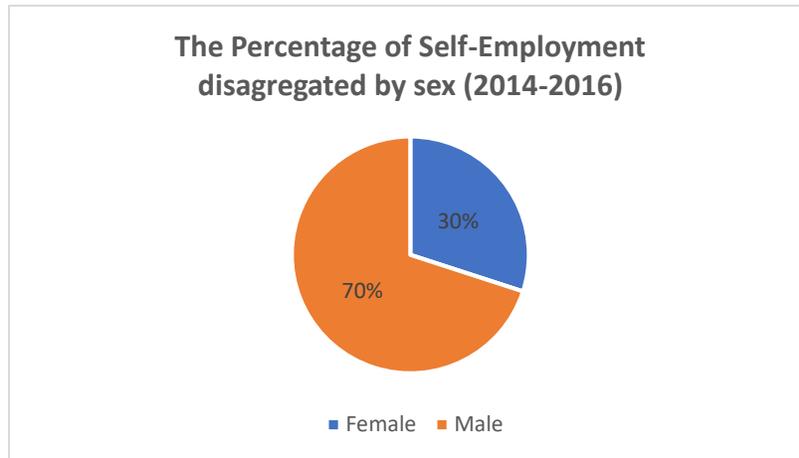
SEFOPE has also carried out data collection on the benefits of employment opportunity in private and public sectors. Women’s participation is high in the private sector as many women are working in areas of Hospitality, Administration and IT as presented in the following graph.



51% of women that have are benefited from professional training have obtained jobs:



SEFOPE has provided financial support to people that are self-employed to assist in managing their small businesses. This financial support assists them with raising animals, tailoring, growing vegetables, fish-raising, with the intention of helping improve their living standards and increase their family income. The following data provides information on beneficiary groups for the period of 2014 to 2016:



### **Women access to Credit**

In Timor-Leste, access to financial services and credit is very difficult when starting up a business. This is especially the case in rural areas. Despite the recent increases in credit growth, banks and financial institutions continue to prefer larger clients as the transaction cost is smaller and there is greater availability of collaterals. This has disproportionately affected women as many of them are involved in small enterprises and have limited access to collateral.

The Government has successfully adopted the Maubisse Declaration. This is a guideline for improving the economic empowerment of women by strengthening their capacity, improving their access to resources and developing favorable environments for them to be able to contribute to economic development. The strengthening of women's power and socio-economic capacity, as well as for people with disability is a pre condition for the creation of a modern and developed society. MTCI in collaboration with the Timor-Leste National Commercial Bank (BNCTL) has been implementing a program called Social Business which provides micro-credit credit funds to Cooperatives groups to help in the development of micro-businesses. As of 2018, there have been a total of 18, 005 people access to micro-credit funds in which 8, 727 persons are mostly women, representing approximately 48.47% of the members benefiting from the access to credit in their cooperatives.

Furthermore, SEII's program for women's economic empowerment through Public Transfer Funds supported the initiative to start up productive economic activities in agriculture (agro-business, horticulture, husbandry and fisheries), home industries, tourism and also commerce in urban and rural areas included in remote areas. This is aimed at promoting gender equality and employment opportunity for women. This

program aims to empower the economic development of women through self-employment, and provide opportunities for women to practice and demonstrate their ability and capacity in encouraging women to organise each other to work together as a team. The Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion has worked together with SEII to provide support to women groups, particularly women who have been engaged in provision of sex services and groups affected by HIV-AIDS. This support is to assist them in running business activities such as starting up kiosks, restaurants, weaving and sewing activities to improve their living standards.

Civil society groups and NGOs also provide support in assisting women to get access to credit. The Judicial System Monitoring Program (*Programa Monitorizasaun Sistema Judisiál (JSMP)*) has a policy on internal loans and it gives priority to women based on their salary level, and tailors the credit to their capacity for repayment. PRADET also provides direct credit to beneficiaries or women clients who wish to improve their family income with an amount ranging between \$15 and 350 for each client. The majority of beneficiaries utilized the credit to pursue business opportunities, such as by starting up a kiosk and raising animals (chicken, pigs and goats).

## VII. Women in Power and Decision-Making

The Government of Timor-Leste has established a quota as a special measure to increase women's participation in political life. The mechanism of this quota provides that at least 30% of seats in the National Parliament are held by women. As of now women participation in the National Parliament has reached 38%, which is the highest figure in the Asia Pacific region. The Political Party Law has also promoted women and youth participation, particularly in the decision-making level.

Composition of women at the executive level is however only 21% of 29 government members. There was an increase of women representation at the local level as Suco Chief from 2% in 2009 to 5% in 2016, and women's participation as Aldeia Chief has increased from 35 in 2009 to 87 in 2016. The Suco Election Law No. 9/2016 aimed at encouraging women to be able to become candidates themselves and run in the Suco Election. The "100% Ha'u Pronto"<sup>9</sup> Program, National Program for Suco Development (NPSD) (*Programa Nasionál Dezenvolvimentu Suku (PNDS)*)<sup>10</sup>, and Women Congresses for Potential Women in 12 Municipalities, and RAEOA, also contributed to the increase of women's participation at the local governance and decision-making level and the empowerment of women at the local level. The Government of Timor-Leste has however recognised that it needs to review the legal frameworks to address

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<sup>9</sup> The Program of 100% *Ha'u Pronto* was a program organized by the Government and Civil Societies in order to increase women's participation in political life and local governance, particularly in rural areas. From the recruitment done, it was able to provide training and finally, women were having courage (brave) to candidate themselves to be Suco Chief in total 339 of 442 sucos.

<sup>10</sup> PNDS is the Government program led by the Ministry of State Administration (MAE) aimed to improve citizens' living standards in rural areas by supporting men and women to establish and rehabilitate small-scale infrastructure projects based on their needs and priorities.

women's participation as Municipality Administrators to further increase women's access to politics and government.

**Percentage of women participation at the decision making level in the Parliament 2002-2018**

No.	Legislature	Total seats	Total female	%
1.	I	88	22	25%
2.	II	65	20	30%
3.	III	65	25	38%
4.	IV	65	25	38%
5.	V	65	25	38%

**Percentage of women participation at the executive level (government members):**

No.	Lejislature	Total government members	Male	%	Female	%
1	I	25	21	84%	4	16%
2	II	35	30	85%	5	15%
3	III	31	24	77%	7	23%
4	IV	39	34	87%	5	13%
5	V	53	43	81%	10	19%
6	VI	38	30	79%	8	21%
7	VII	37	31	84%	6	16%
8	VIII	22	22	78%	6	21%

**Percentage of women participation at the village and hamlet levels**

Position	Results of Suco Election							
	2004	%	Total Suco and Aldeia	2009	%	2016	%	Total Suco

								<b>and Aldeia</b>
Village Chief	7	2%	442	11	2%	21	5%	452
Hamlet Chief	22	1%	2225	37	2%	87	3%	2225

In the public sector, women’s participation in public administration reached 11,847 out of total 34,142 of public officers in 2018. From this total, 1,971 of public officers held positions in the decision-making level. Out of this number, only 409 (21%) were women. Whilst this figure is significantly lower compared to men’s participation, it has increased from the previous year where women’s participation in the decision-making level was 384. Based on the Public Service Regime, there were only two regimes where women’s participation in the decision-making level over 50%, with the two regimes being the Health Professionals Regime and Parliamentary Regime. The Government recognises that equal representation is still an ongoing issues, particularly in regards to women’s participation in public service, which is at 35%. To address this issue, the Government has approved the Decree-Law on Recruitment Regime, Selection, Promotion and Distinction and Awards in Public Service. This provides preference to women in instances where there are number of candidates with the same skill and experience levels. This strategy has that by ensuring legislation is responsive to gender, increasing knowledge and building capacity in regards to gender will have the greatest impact. The Government is currently carrying out a long-term strategy to inspire cultural change and promote the value of women in their engagement in the political and decision-making level.

On the other hand, women are continuously confronting internal and external obstacles in political life. This includes a lack of political capacity, a lack of self-confidence, a lack of self-motivation, and also a lack of financial resources to support their campaigns. External obstacles such as social and cultural norms of society have become a barrier to women gaining access to political opportunities, and has contributed to on-going discrimination occurring in public and domestic life. The other important obstacle relates to a lack of opportunity for women to gain experience in leadership within their communities. Media has an important role in increasing representation of women in government as it can influence public opinion regarding participation of women in political life. In response to the obstacles facing women, SEII is implementing the program “Women Empowerment in Political Life” to help increase women’s participation in the suco and municipality election and also to assist them in preparing for their roles. SEII has been implementing programs focused on enabling women’ empowerment in political life since its establishment in 2002. In 2014, SEII worked together with civil society groups and international agencies to establish a strategy framework on women’s participation in political life. This strategy consists of seven (7) priority areas:

- 1) Capacity building and training;

- 2) Strengthening gender equality in political parties;
- 3) Infrastructure and logistics;
- 4) Security of women candidates and voters;
- 5) Media and communication;
- 6) Gender responsive budgeting for women in political life; and
- 7) Strengthening a gender equality culture.

The Government has carried out dissemination on decentralization policies directly led by the Prime Minister. SEII has also been involved in disseminating information on decentralization policies and ensuring that women are actively participating in expressing their voices in meetings, which held in 12 municipalities and the special region of RAEOA. From the meetings it was shown that it is necessary to identify potential women for leadership and to identify their human resources for the respective area, so that they will be actively participating in politics and will be able to make decisions when the municipalities are established by 2020.

In 2014, SEII began to hold women's congress at the municipality level to identify potential women for leadership. This was with the aim of giving women the opportunity to put themselves down as candidates for the suco election and municipality, and also to enable women to be involved in policies, programs and budget at the local development level. The municipality women congress identified capacity building for women as an important component in preparing women for suco and municipality elections. In 2015, SEII established strategies to directly support women in managing the organization. SEII has also supported civil society groups such as Fundasaun Patria and Fundasaun Caucus in identifying training opportunities within the platform of women congress at the municipality. Both Foundations are dedicated to improving women's empowerment in political life, and also work towards building capacity of potential women in rural areas to be prepared for leadership in their communities.

Timor-Leste has established the Human Capital Development Fund (HCDF) (*Fundo Dezenvolvimentu Kapítal Umanu (FDCH)*). It provides scholarships and training for East Timorese citizens, including public officers, to assist in their capacity building, professional skills and educational level. This program has an important role in helping young people access opportunities in major industry sectors such as petroleum, tourism, agriculture and civil construction. Human Capital Development Fund (HCDF) program also includes technical training for public officers, school teachers, defense forces and police members, aiming to provide academic diplomas for public officers which will in turn contribute to increasing women's participation in decision making level.

## VIII. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women<sup>11</sup>

The Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SSEI) is responsible for gender equality issues and inclusion. It directly operates under the office of Prime Minister. SSEI's roles and responsibilities include advocating, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating Gender Mainstreaming (GM) strategies in conjunction with policies, laws, programs, plans, and budgets within State institutions. This is with the aim of promoting gender equality, eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women, girls, and the risky groups, empowering women in economic sector and also increase their participation in political life and decision making at national, municipality and local levels. It's very important for SSEI (*SEII*) to ensure the Government appropriate mechanism for women's participation effectively in political, social and economic development of Timor-Leste.

SSEI's vision as stated in the National Strategic development Plan (NSDP) 2011-2030 that "In 2030, Timor-Leste will be a prosperous nation full of peace and a fair society in terms of gender and where human dignity and women and girls' rights are valued protected and promoted by our laws and cultures."

## IX. Human Rights of Women

Population, development and human rights all intersect. Women's emancipation and women's reproductive health needs are important components of human centred development. Since the restoration of independence, the Government is committed to enabling all East Timorese to have access to information regarding sexual and reproductive health as well having access to impartial, comprehensive and evidence-based sexual and reproductive healthcare, including family planning and contraceptives.

The Government of Timor-Leste has adopted the National Policy for Family Planning and also the National Strategy for Reproductive Health, Maternal, Neonatal, Children and Adolescents (2015-2019) which explained that women have the right to decide when to have children as well as the right to decide upon the number of children they wish to have. Women also have the right to access information as well as the right to access quality sexual and reproductive healthcare. The Health Sector National Strategy Plan 2011-2030 identified maternal and infant health as two key priorities for the national health program. Reproductive rights are included within the greater human rights framework, and have been recognised in domestic laws, international human rights document and other consensus documents. Civil Code (Law No. 10/2011) also provides equal rights for female and male within marriage.

The Government has also approved legal frameworks and national policies which state that everyone has the right to be free from practices which may harm women

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<sup>11</sup> Please refer to section III for more details of the national women's machinery including its budget allocation for the period of 2014-2018 and interministerial gender coordination.

and girls, including sexual violence and gender-based violence. Article 18 of the Constitution of RDTL provides that children are entitled to protection. Furthermore, the Law against Domestic Violence criminalises domestic violence, which includes sexual violence and violence within marriage. The Penal Code, the Witness Protection Act, the Labour Code also prohibit verbal and non-verbal abuse, and physical and sexual abuse. The National Action Plan towards Gender-based Violence outlines the policy of “Zero Tolerance” towards administrative negligence, which covers sexual violence and corporal punishment. A country which is free from violence against women will have a positive impact in women’s capacity for service delivery, and their participation will in turn generate great benefits for national development. Important steps in promoting women’s rights is to raise awareness of human rights for rural women, so that they are empowered to protect themselves and fight for their rights to enjoy the benefits of national development. Empowering women to become financially independent, and helping them stand against all forms of violence, discrimination and traditional practices which prejudice women will help strengthen women across all of Timor-Leste. Women are a strong component in society, and should become a strong partnership for men to contribute to the development of our country.

Timor-Leste has an independent Human Rights Institution named Ombudsman of Human Rights and Justice (*Provedoria Direitos Humanos e Justiça (PDHJ)*), which is responsible for human rights promotion and good governance. The PDHJ’s role is to investigate and monitor human rights abuses and Government standardisation, and also make recommendations including indictments to the relevant authorities. Gender-based violence has become a serious problem. Although sexual violence in marriage is criminalised with a 20 year sentence as penalty, reporting of crimes and finalisation of investigation processes remain low. PDHJ has also worked with the organization Coalition on Diversity and Action (CODIVA) to raise awareness and understanding for LGBTI communities on their rights including legal proceedings available for them to lodge an appeal on human rights issues.

Although the Government has created and approved laws and policies which are gender sensitive and recognise human rights, women in rural areas continue to have a low level of understanding of their rights. The socio-cultural and religious influences have also become barriers for women to exercise their rights, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health rights.

#### **X. Women and the Media**

Secretary of State for Social Communication (SEKOMS) continues to give full consideration to gender equality promotion issues. During the 16-Days of Campaign, SEKOMS worked closely with the Australian Embassy’s NABILAN program, which is implemented by The Asia Foundation, to produce and launch a media resource package on prevention of Violence against Women. This package may assist journalists in having a deeper awareness and understanding of gender issues, and may enable them to report and present news in a gender sensitive manner. This could

help enable changes of values, attitudes and beliefs relating to gender, thereby helping combat types violence against women and girls. In 2018, SEKOMS in cooperation with SSEI and supported by the Australian Embassy, NABILAN Program, and UN Women conducted training for journalists and editors (24 female and 24 male) on gender sensitive media and news report. The training aimed to enhance the knowledge of journalists and editors regarding gender concepts, and help educate how to make a gender sensitive news report where victims of gender-based violence are not blamed for the crime. Since 2014, SEKOMS also provides opportunities for women to continue their studies both in Indonesia and to attend overseas trainings until their completion. SEKOMS considers the roles of both men and women to be essential in media, particularly in attitude and behaviour change to promote transformation in development.

FOKUPERS is a Non-Governmental Organization which provides support services to victims, particularly victims from during the Indonesia occupation period. They also provide support to victims of non-gender based violence in early childhood education, and also work in advocating and empowering women in communities. During the period of 2013 and 2018 FOKUPERS has carried out media campaigns to enhance women and civil society critical awareness with various publications of FOKUPERS. As part of the campaign, FOKUPERS has done the following:

- a. Released 15 editions, 250 exemplars for each each edition;
- b. Released 19 editions of Barbados, 500 exemplars for each edition; it is a quarterly publication Bulletin to provide information to beneficiary members, Government, civil society and public.
- c. Created 2 special editions and historical factsheets used by survivors in total 5-250 exemplars for each edition.
- d. Produced T-shirts "I'm a Survivor Actor for Change" (*"Ha'u Sobrevivente Autóriba Mudansa"*)
- e. Produced bags and handbooks added to the the facts of victims' chronology.

A media campaign was conducted with the aim of sharing information to communities on the chronology of cases faced by victims. This included the use of media for effective local discussions and trainings provided by FOKUPERS.

## **XI. Women and the Environment**

In Timor-Leste, the role of men is more prevalent in the public sector whereas the role of women is more concentrated in domestic affairs, commerce and business, financial matters, education, health care and other social issues. Climate change is having a big impact on women's roles and activities, and is a particular threat to the agriculture sector and micro-businesses such as kioks. The Government provides support and compensation to women who run their businesses on the sides of roads and rivers which are affected by climate change, and especially those that are at risk of natural disasters such as landslides. The Government carries out gender analysis when building public infrastructure, considering any potential impacts to women.

Women's access to water is also a major consideration where in some communities, their household is dependant on women going out and fetching water.

Agricultural activities may be economically vulnerable as the agricultural activities are seasonal-based and rely on the meteorological conditions as well as the market conditions. Many women do not have access to information on utilising modern materials in addressing the climate change. Many women lament about the low financial return from their agricultural products. The TOMAK assessment report has shown that many women are not land and property owners. Some women have been able to negotiate with land owners to use land for running their businesses. Property rights are still a critical problem in determining East Timorese women's ability to make financial investments in agricultural products compared to other non-agricultural activities. The Land Law was approved in 2017. It is a progressive way to promote equal rights and protect vulnerable groups. The National Parliament and Government should work together to address these concerns and ensure that these rights will be exercised, particularly by women under the Timor-Leste norm of the *de facto* union.

## XII. The Girl-Child

The Government ratified the Child Rights Convention (CRC) in April 2003 and has made great effort during the period of 2014 to 2018 to ensure that the rights of children are considered during the process of developing laws, policies, programs and budget. Following establishment of the National Commission for the Rights of Children (NCRC) in 2016, NCRC worked closely with UNICEF to launch NAP for Children in Timor-Leste. The period of 2016 to 2020 is a roadmap for the Government to further develop an environment which respects and protects the rights of boys and girls, particularly those who are in unfavourable living conditions in Timor-Leste. NCRC's role is to promote, protect, and safeguard the rights of children. One important role of NCRC is being a mediator in cases of violence against children and also in cases of divorces, in supporting children whilst referring to Public Prosecution and Court for the final decision regarding custody. NCRC also provides capacity building to children, particularly girls in the municipalities of Ermera, Bobonaro, and Baucau. For the period of 2013 to 2017, NCRC focused on health problems and education, including advocating for the improvement of an equal health and education system for all.

In the education sector, the Law for Basic education No. 14/2008, provides for a universal education, compulsory and free to all children. This Law shows that the education system promotes development in the spirit of democracy and pluralism, promoting respect for each other and a free education to exchange ideas and opinions. The Government has reinforced the Zero-Tolerance Policy against administrative negligence in the education sector. This covers sexual violence and corporal punishment in schools, helping to ensure security for girls and children in

the school. The Government has recognised that it needs to review the legal frameworks and mechanisms in Timor-Leste and further monitor the implementation of these laws and policies. The Government continues to work in to improve legal frameworks that protect children's rights based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

FOKUPERS has fully supported 20 girls who are victims of sexual violence and incest cases in continuing their study. This provides a good opportunity for victims of incest and sexual violence to continue to go to the school and to not lose their opportunity to get an education. At school, the family and school can provide support to the victim. The NGO ALFELA has worked to accelerate the progress of gender equality promotion and promote the rights of child by providing assistance and access to justice through free legal aid. They also provide protection to victims and girls as well as provide legal education to the wider community. Action that been carried out by ALFELA includes the submission of incest case, submission of human trafficking case, submission of code of child protection and utilising CEDAW Optional Protocol to defend victims who have been charged and punished after defending themselves from violence. ALFELA has a data collection method which is responsive to gender that particularly focused on gender-based violence case. From the legal aid provided by ALFELA, the following statistics show the number of cases that have been able to be resolved by legal proceeding in the Public Prosecution and the Court:

- There are 702 cases been decided by the Court
- There are 1216 cases in the process are still pendent
- There are 27 cases where victims withdraw from the process as the clients themselves don't want to get legal aid from ALFELA

The JSMP has had programs on TV and Radio on the Rights of Child in order to promote access to formal justice. JSMP has also had active discussions with members of Parliament regarding infanticide cases. They hold meetings with members of Parliament, Government, and other relevant institutions related to women and children issues, particularly relating to the implementation of laws.

## SECTION III: NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

The evolution of the national women's machinery dates back to Timor-Leste's restoration of Independence in 2002 where it began with an office of the Advisor to the Prime Minister on the Promotion of Equality. In 2007, this office was transformed into an independent governmental body as Secretariat of State<sup>12</sup>. Most recently, Decree Law N.º 14/2018 of 17 August 2018, which approves the structure of the eighth Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste, renamed the national women's machinery to the Secretariat of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII). The Secretariat sits under, and reports directly, to the Prime Minister. This mechanism is beneficial to SEII, as it provides a political authority for the national women machinery to execute its mandate and coordinate the process of gender mainstreaming across all government entities, including other portfolio services.

SEII's strategic plan for five years (2018-2023) provides strategic clarification related to the SEII and its partners roles. Based on this plan, SEII identified 4 principal objectives aligned with the National Strategic Development Plan (2011-2030):

1. Reinforce the gender mainstreaming strategy in all government policies, laws, programs, plans, and budgets as well as continue to strengthen gender equality advocacy in the community level;
2. End violence against women, girls, and groups at risk;
3. Empower and promote effective participation of women in the economic development of Timor-Leste;
4. Increase the participation of women in politics and in decision-making at national and local levels.

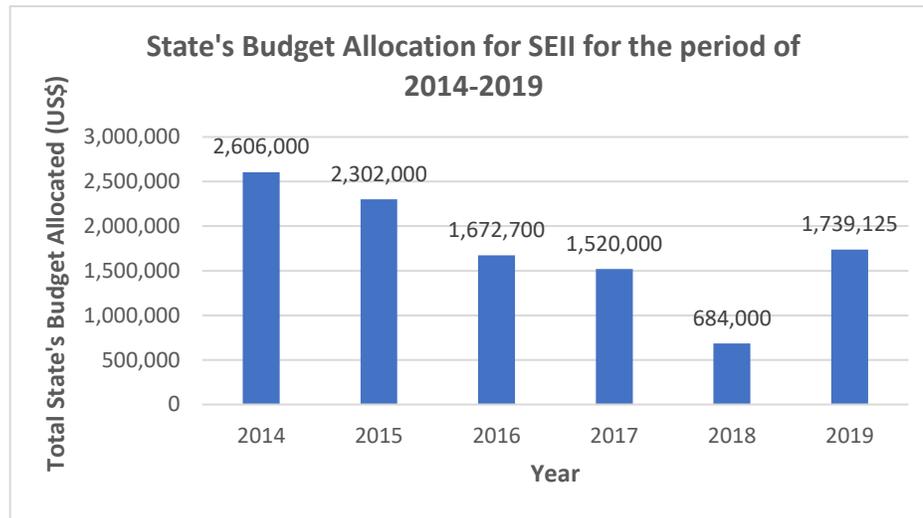
Since 2017, the role of the women's machinery has broadened its mandate to also advocate for social inclusion, especially marginalized communities such as groups at risk and LGBTI community. SEII participates in the Council of Ministries and has an important role in advocating for gender equality in laws, policy, plans and programs, and also has a responsibility to coordinate with the relevant entities in government. SEII is also a member of the Budget Review Committee (BRC), and has an important role to ensure that gender aspect is integrated into the government plan and state budget.

During the period of 2014 to 2018, SEII was faced with the problem of budget reductions. In 2019 however, SEII's budget has increased to USD \$ 1,739,125. Even though SEII's budget was reduced between 2014 and 2018, SEII continues to show significant progress in the promotion of gender equality and in empowering women

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<sup>12</sup> Between 2015-2017, the name of the secretariat has changed from the Secretariat of State for the Support and Socio-Economic Promotion of Women (SEM) to the Secretariat of State for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (SEIGIS). Under the Decree Law N.º 6/2015 of 11 March 2015 of the sixth Constitutional Government (2015-2017), SEM reports directly to the Minister of State, Coordinator of Social Affairs (MECAS) who meet ordinarily once per month with the members of the Government for which it is responsible for and inform the Prime Minister subsequently. Under the Decree Law N.º 35/2017 of the seventh Constitutional Government (September 2017-June 2018), SEIGIS was under a direct supervision of the Prime Minister.

and girls in Timor-Leste. This is especially evident in the development of legal frameworks and gender-sensitive policy in response to Gender- Based Violence.



Since the Government adopted the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the Government has established the Inter-ministerial Working Group for SDGs. This working group is led directly from the office of the Prime Minister and involves line ministries and Government entities in implementing and monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Government has developed a roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the plan, it will be a review on the National Strategy Development Plan (2011-2030) to enable the alignment of priorities and global commitments that Timor-Leste has ratified. This includes commitments that link to promoting gender equality. The roadmap shows that gender issues are a priority and are a cross-cutting target in the development plan for short, medium and long-term. Timor-Leste will for the first time, present and submit the Voluntary National review (VNR) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a State report in July this year during the High Level Policy Forum Conference (HLPF) in the UN, New York. SEII is also a permanent member in the Working Group of SDGs to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### **Gender Working Group Mechanism**

SEII has already made great progress in strengthening the governance mechanisms to increase coordination and decision-making regarding gender equality. In June 2017, the Government approved Resolution No. 35/2017 to establish effective and efficient coordination in three levels, including the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, National Working Group, and Municipality Working Group. This Resolution amended Resolution No. 27/2011 to improve coordination mechanisms and representation, particularly at the municipality level in the administrative decentralisation process. The Resolution aimed at reaffirming gender commitments through the Gender Mainstreaming strategy in Government policies, plans and programs, including improving coordinations and monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of gender policy at the national and municipal levels.

SEII has already provided support and assistance to gender working groups at the national and municipality levels through training on various areas, particularly those related to gender issues, implementation of gender policies, strategies for gender equality promotion, and gender sensitive planning and budgeting. SEII is going to maintain the support to implement the resolution and provide assistance to gender working groups. This will enable the implementation of agreed action plans. SEII will also keep advocating and negotiating with line-ministries to allocate sufficient financial resources to support the activities of gender working groups.

### **Supplementary Coordination Mechanism**

In addition to having Gender Working Group, the Government of Timor-Leste has also established high level coordination mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of NAP-GVB and NAP-UNSCR1325. These mechanisms have been established by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Coordination and Monitoring to assist in the implementation of NAP-GBV. This was consolidated in the Council of Ministers through an approved Resolution No. 34/2017 in June 2017. The Committee is in charge of coordinating and evaluating the implementation of NAP-GBV, supporting strategies for monitoring and evaluation, identifying challenges and obstacles and providing recommendations for effective implementation of NAP-GBV. The Resolution also provides authority for the Prime Minister to appoint higher level members of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. SEII has a role to organise regular meetings on a quarterly basis and also organise other strategies to mobilise resources for implementation of NAP-GBV.

The Ministry of Interior is an entity that is responsible for the leadership and coordination mechanism for implementation of NAP-UNSCR1325, and is under supervision of the Prime Minister's office. The Ministry of Interior has already established an Advisory Committee, a Gender Working Group that is in charge of the implementation of each Pillar under NAP-UNSCR1325, and a Secretariate for NAP-UNSCR1325 to ensure that the implementation of NAP-UNSCR1325 will be executed effectively and efficiently. The Advisory Committee consists of the Director General from line-ministries and the Executive Directors from Civil Society as implementing agents of this gender policy.

## SECTION IV: NATIONAL DATA AND STATISTICS

The General Directorate of Statistics (DJE) under the Ministry of Finance lead the production of essential national data such as the Census and national surveys such as Demographic Health Survey (DHS) and Living Standards Survey (TLSLS). This Directorate also works with Government entities and partners to produce joint research and to provide advice on sample design for this data production. DJE has an important role in directing and providing assistance to the Government entities on statistics data production from administrative data such as IMS, EMS, and HMIS, so that this data production meets the required standard. They also provide assistance on the use of consistent definitions and classifications to ensure that this data has been acknowledged by DJE and can be shared whenever needed.

The National Statistics Data system in Timor-Leste has prioritised the production and utilisation of gender statistics. This is visible in information regarding statistics data and gender sensitive analysis that has been generated over many years. The Government's efforts related to data collection and the strengthening of administrative systems should facilitate the Government to establish a baseline and to monitor targets and indicators related to gender issues under the 2030 Agenda. On 25 March 2019, the General Directorate of Statistics under the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the World Bank in the production and launching of Poverty Map with Gender Perspective which covered the village (suco) level. In July 2018, SEII in cooperation with the General Directorate of Statistics produced and launched various thematic reports from the 2015 Census and also launched the publication of an innovation report entitled "Gender and Sustainable Development: As key to no one left behind". The objective of the launching of these reports is to facilitate the Government of Timor-Leste to settle the Government programs for Timor-Leste's future development. The summary report on gender and SDGs in Timor-Leste was generated under a collaboration between SEII and the General Directorate of Statistics, UN Women, and SDGs Working Group of the office Prime Minister, and with the generous support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Bank and European Union.

This report is a contribution of the on-going effort of State Government to advance with the localisation of SDGs and timing for the National Strategy Development Plan (NSDP) review. This summary report provided key information, including:

1. The main issues of gender that need to be taken into account in the implementation and monitoring of SDGs (along with targets and indicators) in Timor-Leste, under recommendation, commitment and consultation with civil society, government and development partners;
2. Identification of available data on gender issues and recommendations to prioritise the SDGs' objectives in reviewing the targets and indicators of the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), as part of State's commitment to promote gender equality, to establish a baseline and to review the (NSDP) for the achievement of 2030 Agenda.

## CONCLUSION

In conjunction with civil society partners, the Government of Timor-Leste has made significant progress in reducing gender inequalities. This success is the result of the implementation of various policies, as discussed throughout this report. Policies targeting areas such as women's health, access to justice, access to employment and access to political representation have contributed to closing the gap of gender equality. Timor-Leste is proud to have one of the highest rates of women represented in the National Parliament, and is committed to empowering women throughout the whole of the country to become community leaders and to further contribute to the development of Timor-Leste.

Notwithstanding the significant progress made, there are still a number of key concerns for women in Timor-Leste. Domestic violence rates continue to be high, with victims facing barriers in accessing justice and support. Gender-based violence is a pervasive issue for women across the country, especially those in rural areas. Furthermore, although land laws relating to equal rights for ownership to land have been approved, the provisions of the laws are not being implemented throughout the country. This has a detrimental effect on women's livelihoods, as many women work in the agricultural sector. Women working in the agricultural sector are unable to access land to assist in growing produce, meaning that they are not able to maximise their economic potential.

Participation of women in the labour force continues to be disproportionately low notwithstanding improvements made in recent years. The disproportional representation of women in the informal labour sector means that women are unable to reach their full economic capacity, thus impacting negatively on family incomes. The overall budget allocation for implementation of gender policy is insufficient to enable implementation in rural areas. This is a major concern as it is consistently evident that women in rural communities face the most extreme effects of gender inequality due to their isolation from support networks.

The Government of Timor-Leste reaffirms its commitment to improving gender equality. It recognises the challenges that women in Timor-Leste continue to face, and is committed to working in close partnership with civil society groups, NGOs and international agencies to enable a better future for women, where women are empowered to fully and actively participate in political, business and public life, free from fear of violence or discrimination. The Government believes that with strong women comes a strong nation. It is proud of the efforts Timor-Leste has made in reducing gender inequalities, and is committed to continuing its work in further dismantling barriers affecting women across the country.