



# TIMOR-LESTE

## COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT



Secretaria do Estado para  
Promoção da Igualdade



# TIMOR-LESTE

## COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT



Secretaria do Estado para  
Promoção da Igualdade



© 2014 Asian Development Bank

All rights reserved. Published in 2014.  
Printed in the Philippines.

ISBN 978-92-9254-649-6 (Print), 978-92-9254-650-2 (e-ISBN)  
Publication Stock No. RPS146652-2

#### Cataloging-In-Publication Data

Asian Development Bank.  
Timor-Leste country gender assessment.  
Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2014.

1. Gender. 2. Timor-Leste. 3. Pacific. I. Asian Development Bank.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of ADB or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent.

ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this publication and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use.

Use of the term “country” does not imply any judgment by the authors or ADB as to the legal or other status of any territorial entity.

ADB encourages printing or copying information exclusively for personal and noncommercial use with proper acknowledgment of ADB. Users are restricted from reselling, redistributing, or creating derivative works for commercial purposes without the express, written consent of ADB.

**Government of Timor-Leste:** The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Timor-Leste.

**UN Women:** The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

#### Notes:

In this publication, “\$” refers to US dollars.  
Cover photos by: UN Women and ADB.

6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City  
1550 Metro Manila, Philippines  
Tel +63 2 632 4444  
Fax +63 2 636 2444  
[www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)

For orders, please contact:  
Public Information Center  
Fax +63 2 636 2584  
[adbpub@adb.org](mailto:adbpub@adb.org)

# Contents

FIGURES, TABLES, AND BOXES	v
FOREWORD	vii
ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION	viii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	x
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Social and Political Characteristics	2
1.2 Economic Characteristics	3
1.3 Development Challenges	4
1.4 Gender and Development	6
2 EDUCATION	9
2.1 Overview of the Education System	10
2.2 Analysis of Gender Issues	13
2.3 Taking Action	28
2.4 Recommendations	29
3 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	31
3.1 Overview of the Health System	32
3.2 Analysis of Gender Issues	32
3.3 Taking Action	48
3.4 Recommendations	50
4 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE	52
4.1 Overview of the Criminal Justice System	52
4.2 Analysis of Gender Issues	55
4.3 Taking Action	61
4.4 Recommendations	64
5 WORK AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	65
5.1 Categorization of Work and Labor Force Participation	66
5.2 Analysis of Gender Issues	67
5.3 Taking Action	84
5.4 Recommendations	86

6	GOVERNANCE, INFLUENCE, AND DECISION MAKING	88
6.1	Overview of the Political System	88
6.2	Key Gender Issues	91
6.3	Taking Action	97
6.4	Recommendations	97
7	GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK	99
7.1	Overview	99
7.2	Timor-Leste's Commitment to Gender Equality	100
7.3	Mechanisms for Achieving Gender Equality	101
7.4	Recommendations	107
8	CONCLUSION	108

# Figures, Tables, and Boxes

## FIGURES

1.1	Map of Timor-Leste	1
1.2	Industries Contributing to Non-Oil Gross Domestic Product, 2011	4
1.3	Gender Inequality Index: A Comparison of Countries, 2011–2012	7
2.1	Trends in Net Enrollment Rates by Level of Schooling and Sex, 2008–2009 and 2010	12
2.2	Proportion of Students Who Drop Out of School by Sex and Grade, 2010	14
2.3	Causes of Dropout Given by Girls and Boys Who Dropped Out of Grade 4, 5, or 6, 2011	16
2.4	Repetition Rate (Proportion of Students Who Repeat a Grade) by Sex and Grade, 2010	17
2.5	School Attendance of Children Age 10–14 by Sex and Vulnerable Groups, 2009–2010	18
2.6	Literacy Rate by 5-Year Age Groups and Sex, 2010	20
2.7	Number of Teachers by Level of Education and Sex, 2010	28
3.1	Proportion of Women Receiving Care Before, During, and After Delivery, 2003–2010	33
3.2	Number of Health Professionals and Other Workers by Sex, 2010	36
3.3	Trends in Child Mortality	37
3.4	Household Food Consumption over the Last 12 Months, 2007	39
3.5	Adolescent Women (Aged 15–19) Who Have Given Birth by Urban and Rural Areas, 2010	41
3.6	Use of Modern Contraceptive Methods by Currently Married Women (Aged 15–49) by Urban and Rural Areas, 2009–2010	43
3.7	Disabled Population by Severity of Disability and Sex, 2010	48
4.1	Reported Cases of Domestic Violence, 2009–2012	56
4.2	Perception of Triggers for Domestic Violence, 2013	57
5.1	Labor Force Participation Rate in Urban and Rural Areas by Age and Sex, 2010	68
5.2	Proportion of Employed Persons in Vulnerable Employment by Sex, Sector of Economic Activity and Urban/Rural Location, 2010	71
5.3	Share of Wage Employment by Sector and Sex, 2010	73
5.4	Share of Men and Women by Occupation, 2010	75
5.5	Women's Labor Force Participation Rate by Number of Children, 2010	78
5.6	Estimated Share of Population Aged 15–64 in Receipt of Loans from Microfinance Institutions and BNCTL by District, 2008–2011	80
6.1	Women in National Parliament, 2002–2012	89
6.2	Number of Women Elected as <i>Suco</i> or <i>Aldeia</i> Chiefs, 2004–2009	93

6.3	Proportion of Public Service Staff Who are Women by Agency, 2012	94
7.1	Main Actors Working Toward Gender Equality	103

## TABLES

2.1	Number of Schools and Students by Level of Schooling, 2010	11
2.2	Status of Participation in Education by Sex and Age Group, 2010	14
2.3	Comparison of Adult and Youth Literacy Rates by Sex and District, 2010	22
2.4	Number of Students Enrolled in Courses Offered by Accredited Institutions by Sex and Industry Sector, 2012	24
2.5	Number of Graduates by Tertiary Institution and Sex, 2000–2011	25
2.6	Total and Female Share of Graduates from UNDIL, UNPAZ, and UNTL by Faculty, 2003–2010	26
2.7	Overseas Scholarships Allocated to Timorese Citizens through the Ministry of Education, 2009–2013	27
3.1	Extent of Care Before, During, and After Delivery by Urban and Rural Areas, 2009–2010	34
3.2	Prevalence of Child Malnutrition by Sex, 2009–2010	38
3.3	Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19) in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, 2008–2011	42
3.4	Proportion of Households with Access to Improved Water and Sanitation by Urban and Rural Areas, 2010	45
5.1	Number of Women and Men Aged 15 and Above by Labor Force Participation, 2010	68
5.2	Reasons for Economic Inactivity, Urban and Rural Population Aged 10 and Above by Sex, 2010	69
5.3	Distribution of Employed Women and Men by Industry, 2010	74
5.4	Perceived Distribution of Labor Between Women and Men in Crop Farming, 2011	77
5.5	Major Features of Current Social Protection Programs	82

## BOXES

1.1	How Has Conflict Shaped Gender Relations?	8
5.1	How Is Employment Measured?	66
5.2	Understanding the Different Types of Employment	70
6.1	Traditional Power Structures	91



# Foreword

Addressing gender concerns is a priority for Timor-Leste and has been so since our independence. This involves looking at each sector to identify issues and understand how development impacts differently on women and men, girls and boys. As Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI), it is my goal and mandate to see that gender is always taken into consideration in the development and implementation of policies and programs. This assessment provides important evidence to prioritize and monitor our efforts in this regard.

This is the second country gender assessment (CGA) conducted in Timor-Leste. I am particularly proud that this time it was done under the leadership of SEPI and I commend my staff for their contribution. The process of completing the assessment and the content of this report demonstrates how far we have come in building our capacity in gender analysis. It has also alerted us to the challenges we continue to face in effectively monitoring gender concerns. This CGA has been an important learning experience and will be used to inform our ongoing capacity development.

This CGA shows the gender gap is narrowing in education, employment, and political influence. In some areas we still have a long way to go, but it is clear we are making progress and we should be proud of that. As we focus on achieving the goals in our national development plan, we must continue to emphasize that gender is not just a social issue but relevant to all sectors. For sustainable development of our country, we need active participation of women and men in our economy, in politics, in managing the environment, and in all areas of our society.

We have made significant progress during the last decade toward establishing a framework for achieving gender equality. The recent strengthening of the SEPI budget is recognition of the importance of promoting equality. Our work is ongoing and this assessment makes a number of important recommendations to focus our efforts. It is a timely benchmark of our achievements and challenges. We must now ensure the findings are widely disseminated, understood, and used by policy makers.

The assessment could not have been completed without the assistance of colleagues from other ministries and secretariats. The contributions from experts in nongovernment and development partner organizations has also been crucial. I thank the many people who responded promptly to our requests for information, contributed to consultative discussions, and reviewed earlier drafts of this report. The production of this report has been a collaborative process and we can all be proud of the achievement.



**Idelta Maria Rodrigues**

Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality  
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste



# About This Publication

It has been many years since the first country gender assessment (CGA) of Timor-Leste was completed in 2005. Since then, the nation has made substantial progress in state building and strengthening its economy, governance, and infrastructure. This assessment analyzes progress toward achieving gender equality across different socioeconomic sectors, by bringing together existing gender-related research, data, and policy documents. The aim of the CGA is to

- report on current disparities between women and men, girls and boys;
- identify gender-related barriers to achieving national goals in each sector; and
- recommend specific strategies for the future.

The CGA does not end with the printing and dissemination of this report. The findings and information will be used to raise awareness and develop capacity for gender mainstreaming across government. As the lead agency, the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) will take responsibility for ensuring that the CGA findings are widely communicated and that its recommendations are implemented through relevant mechanisms.

The primary audience for this report is the government of Timor-Leste—the elected representatives and government officials involved in developing and implementing policies. The intention is to inform them of gender differences and guide them in mainstreaming gender in their work. The CGA is also to inform development partners and practitioners, researchers, and the media about gender and development issues in Timor-Leste. In order to reach these target audiences, training materials and products that summarize the key findings will accompany this report.

## Assessment Process

The SEPI led this assessment with the financial support and guidance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UN Women. A CGA team was formed in February 2013 to work on the assessment. Based in SEPI's office during the initial stages, the team used desk research and consultation to prepare the report. SEPI staff were actively involved in gathering data, reviewing and enhancing the assessment, and facilitating consultations with stakeholders.

The assessment was conducted in partnership with other government agencies, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), donors, and development partners. Valuable feedback and suggestions were received from a number of people contributing to the final document. A 1-day CGA workshop was held in late July 2013, which was attended by almost 100 people representing government, international, and civil society organizations. The workshop played a crucial role in raising awareness of the CGA, discussing the findings to date, and gathering inputs, which were incorporated in the final report. A series of additional consultations with government agencies were conducted for discussion and finalization of this report.

## Acknowledgments

The preparation of this assessment was managed by Armando Da Costa, director of policy, gender and development, SEPI. It was prepared under the guidance and support of Sunhwa Lee and Elsty Davidz-Morato from ADB, and Janet Wong, Anastasia Divinskaya, and Santina Soares from UN Women. The CGA team comprised Jessica Gardner, CGA team leader; Flora Brytes Ximenes, national CGA consultant; Herminio Xavier, chief of the SEPI Research Unit; Christine Chan, SEPI gender advisor; and Yann Franc de Ferrière, SEPI gender advisor. Other key contributors from SEPI's staff include Aquelina Savio, Joao Lino Gueterres, Henrique Da Silva, Ubalda Maria Felipe, Filomena Babo, Paula Maia, and Jenny Bourne.

Representatives of government ministries and secretariats gave data and information freely to assist in the preparation of this report. They contributed ideas at a consultative workshop in July 2013 and helped to validate information by reviewing the draft. Work began on the CGA as the preparation of the *Combined Second and Third Report to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* was being finalized. The information gathered through the CEDAW consultation process was extremely useful in preparing the CGA.

A number of people reviewed earlier versions of the assessment: Marilia Alves (Fokupers), Kimberly Bostwick (United States Agency for International Development [USAID]), Kerry Brogan (The Asia Foundation), Carol Stewart Chan (ADB), Silvia Cormaci (International Labor Organization [ILO]), Carlo Crudeli and the team at Paz y Desarrollo, Louise Donovan (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]), Melissa Francis (USAID), Takaho Fukami (United Nations Children's Fund), Chandani Galwaduge (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA]), Charlemagne Gomez (UNDP), Ana Guterres (USAID), Andrew Harrington (UNDP), Nasrin Khan (UNDP), Jonna Naumanen (ILO), Kathryn Robertson (Hametin Consultancy Group), Penny Schoeffel (National University of Samoa), Kai Spratt (USAID), and Susana Camacho Vivar (UNFPA). Their inputs were a valuable contribution to this document and their assistance was greatly appreciated.

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALFeLa	Asistencia Legal ba Feto no Labarik
CAVR	Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Timor-Leste
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CGA	country gender assessment
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations
CSC	Civil Service Commission
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
F-FDTL	Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (Defense Force of Timor-Leste)
Fokupers	Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Lorosae (East Timorese Women's Communications Forum)
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GDS	General Directorate for Statistics
GII	gender inequality index
GMPTL	Grupu Mulheres Parlamentar de Timor-Leste (Group of Women Parliamentarians in Timor-Leste)
GRB	gender-responsive budgeting
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
INDMO	National Institute for Labor Force Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MSS	Ministry of Social Solidarity
NAAAA	National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation
NAP-GBV	National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence

NGO	nongovernment organization
OPMT	Organização da Popular da Mulher Timorese (Popular Organization of East Timorese Women)
PNTL	Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (National Police of Timor-Leste)
PRADET	Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor
SDP	Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030
SEPFOPE	Secretária de Estado para a Política de Formação Profissional e Emprego (Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy)
SEPI	Secretaria do Estado para Promoção da Igualdade (Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality)
SISCa	Servisu Integradu da Saúde Comunitária (Integrated Community Health Services)
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women (Now UN Women)
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VPU	Vulnerable Persons Unit
WHO	World Health Organization

# Executive Summary

## About Timor-Leste

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is one of the world's newest nations, having restored independence in 2002. It is home to 1.06 million people. Most live in rural areas (70%) and there is a significant geographical divide, with rural women and men having lower education, less employment, higher poverty, and worse living conditions. The population is growing rapidly at about 2% per year due to a persistently high fertility rate, currently around six children per woman. Rapid population growth means increasing demand for food, water, sanitation, and health and education services, which requires urgent attention and strategic planning.

The economy has been growing with the support of a strong oil sector, which has contributed almost 80% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and is the source of more than 90% of government revenues. The growth of the non-oil economy has averaged more than 10% per year since 2007, mainly driven by government spending on capital expenditures. Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011–2030 aims to sustain its strong economic growth, with a vision of building a modern, diversified economy. This vision for the economy focuses on investing in core infrastructure, while identifying the agriculture and tourism sectors as key for future development.

Timor-Leste continues to face enormous development challenges in rebuilding national systems and infrastructure destroyed in the conflicts of 1999. Central to this challenge is reducing poverty and improving living conditions. A review of progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shows that things have been improving in many areas: reducing mortality rates of infants and children under age 5, increasing antenatal care, and detecting tuberculosis. However, high rates of poverty, poor school completion rates, maternal mortality, the prevalence of malnutrition, and inadequate water and sanitation continue to pose major challenges.

The welfare of households, especially the majority in rural areas, remains a major concern. Recent data on household income and expenditure in 2011 show that around 37% of the Timorese population spends less than \$1 per person per day, and about half of the population was receiving less than the recommended daily food calorie intake. Poverty and hunger are evident in health survey results that found 45% of children under age 5 malnourished (46% of boys and 44% of girls), 58% were stunted (60% of boys and 56% of girls), and 19% were wasted (20% of boys and 17% of girls).

## Gender Equality in Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is a patriarchal society in which social norms and cultural values influence gender roles. Men are expected to be responsible for decision making in the household and are the major income earners in the formal economy. In the majority of rural households, women also share the role of providing for their families through their contributions to agriculture, fisheries, and raising livestock.

Religious and cultural values reinforce male authority and restrict the choices available to women and girls. Cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality have included polygamy and bride price, as well as customary principles relating to property rights, inheritance, and succession to traditional offices. Catholicism contributes to conservative attitudes about gender roles and reproductive health, including the use of contraceptive methods. Rapid development and modernization are leading these social norms to be examined and questioned.

Since the country's independence in 2002, gender equality has been emphasized as an important goal in national development. Considerable progress has already been made in addressing inequalities through legislation, policy development, institutional mechanisms, and raised public awareness. The national development plan recognizes that much more remains to be done and establishes a series of priorities. For effective implementation of policies, further strengthening the capacity of the national women's machinery and various ministries is crucial, as emphasized throughout this report.

There are a number of urgent gender concerns for Timor-Leste. Domestic violence is pervasive, maternal mortality remains high, and significant gender gaps continue in labor market and local governance participation. This assessment provides evidence and analysis of the issues in each sector. The key findings follow.

### Education

- School enrollments have rapidly increased, with girls' rate exceeding boys' at each level of schooling. In 2010, 94% of primary school age girls and 92% of boys were enrolled in school. Net enrollments in presecondary school were 34% for girls and 27% for boys. Net enrollments in secondary school are still low at 21% for girls and 17% for boys.
- Despite increased enrollment rates, repetition and dropout rates remain high. In the first year of primary school, more than one-quarter of students (31% of boys and 28% of girls) are repeating a year. The dropout problem is serious during the initial years of primary schooling (grades 1 through 4, known as Cycle 1), when nearly 5% of students drop out each year. These problems are more common among boys than girls.
- The most likely reasons for early dropout are a lack of school readiness (few children go to preschool) and language barriers, since many children do not speak Tetun or Portuguese, the languages of instruction. During the later stages of primary and early secondary school, reasons for early dropout are primarily economic, as many leave school to earn money or help with work on a family farm or business.
- Sexual harassment and violence in schools remains an issue. The number of reported cases fell from 46 in 2010–2011 (including 10 of sexual violence) to 27 in 2011–2012 (9 of sexual violence). A zero tolerance policy exists but is yet to be effectively implemented. Most cases are settled outside of the formal system through traditional mediation methods.

- Among adults, women are much more likely to have missed out on schooling and less likely to have a secondary or tertiary education. More than half (58%) of women aged 25 and above have never been to school, compared with 43% of men. Only 16% of women aged 25 and over have completed secondary or tertiary education, compared with 25% of men.
- Despite higher net enrollment for girls in secondary school, fewer girls than boys make the transition to attend or complete tertiary studies. Women make up 41% of the 27,010 tertiary students who have enrolled since 2000, but only 37% of the 8,000 students who graduated from Timorese tertiary institutions over the last decade.
- Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) plays an important role in developing the capacity of adults to meet the demands of a growing economy and providing specific career opportunities. Relatively few women attend training in the TVET sector, and for those who do receive training, large gender disparities exist in the type of training received, which in turn channels women and men into different jobs.
- There are fewer women than men working as teachers—36% in 2010. The Ministry of Education employs more men than women, particularly in decision-making positions: women hold only 15% of the 60 director positions and 17% of the 123 department chief positions.

## Health and Well-Being

- Maternal and child mortality are key issues for women, and have been identified as the top public health priorities by the Ministry of Health (MoH). Traditional attitudes and limited economic opportunities encourage women to marry and begin childbearing at a relatively young age, leading to high fertility rates. Along with high fertility, limited access to health services, safe water, and improved sanitation facilities increase the risk of maternal and child mortality.
- The ratio of maternal deaths has decreased from 660 per 100,000 live births in 2003 to 557 in 2009–2010, but it remains one of the world's highest. The infant mortality rate has decreased from 60 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 45 in 2009–2010, and under-five mortality fell from 83 deaths per 1,000 live births to 64.
- The proportion of women receiving antenatal care from a skilled provider has increased from 61% in 2003 to 86% in 2009–2010. Women delivering with assistance from a skilled birth attendant have also grown from 19% to 30% during the same period, although the rate is still low.
- Access to antenatal care varies significantly between urban and rural residents: 93% of pregnant women in urban areas versus 84% of those in rural areas received antenatal care from a skilled health provider. The mother's education level is closely related to uptake of health services: 93% of women with a secondary education accessed antenatal care, compared with 76% of women with no education.
- Hunger and poor nutrition is a serious public health concern, with 27% of women aged 15–49 being malnourished. Malnourished women have a greater risk of obstructed labor, of dying from postpartum hemorrhage, and of experiencing illness. In 2009–2010, more than half of Timorese children (58%) suffered from chronic malnutrition. There is no significant difference in malnutrition between girls and boys, but malnutrition is much higher among children in rural than urban areas.
- The total fertility rate has decreased from 7.8 children per woman in 2003 to 5.7 in 2009–2010, but it is the second-highest in Asia and the Pacific after Afghanistan. Total fertility is lower among women with higher levels of education.



- Six percent of teenage girls (age 15–19) are already mothers, and those in rural areas are twice as likely to be mothers as their urban counterparts (8% vs. 4%).
- Only one out of five currently married women (aged 15–49) uses some form of contraceptive, but usage increases significantly with women's education level and the family's economic status.
- Lack of access to clean drinking water and appropriate sanitation remains a health risk, especially in rural areas: 75% of rural households have poor or no sanitation facilities and 43% continue to rely on unimproved sources of water.
- Risking poor health through smoking is common among the male population. Policies to reduce smoking must be implemented to prevent increasing demands on the health system in the future.

## Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice

- The 2009–2010 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) report shows that more than a third (38%) of women have experienced physical violence during their adult lives.
- Gender-based violence is a major issue exacerbated by traditional views on marriage and gender roles, as well as by limited capacity of the formal criminal justice system.
- Cases of domestic violence are typically resolved at the family level and only escalated to community, religious, and state authorities if solutions are not found.
- Enactments of the Penal Code (2009) and the Law Against Domestic Violence (2010) have been significant milestones. But this legislation has only been in effect a short time and more efforts are needed to effectively implement the law through the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.
- The general legal framework, including the criminal and civil justice systems, is still under development. It is hampered by limited resources and a heavy backlog of cases.
- Barriers to accessing justice, especially for women, include the limited outreach of police, the low number of and long distances to courts, coexistence of customary and formal justice systems, language and literacy (both legal and general literacy), and insufficient resources and long delays in the legal process.

## Work and Economic Empowerment

- Work to produce food for household consumption and unpaid care work in the home—the types of work typically done by women—are not counted as employment. Excluding these forms of work, gender gaps in labor force participation are significant: 56% of men are classified as being in the labor force (or economically active) compared with only 27% of women.
- The proportion of wage-earning jobs has tripled over the last decade, but this has benefited men more than women. In 2010, 31% of employed men were in wage-earning jobs, an increase of 17 percentage points since 2001. In contrast, only 19% of employed women were in wage-earning jobs, up 10 percentage points since 2001.
- Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment, which tends to lack stable income and benefits. This is particularly so for rural women: 87% of working rural women are in vulnerable jobs compared with 54% of urban women. The rate is also high among rural men (78%) compared with urban men (37%).
- The distribution of employed women and men by industry indicates that other than the primary industry, women are concentrated in wholesale and retail trades (25% of employed women) and in education, health, arts, and others (12%). Compared with women, men are engaged in a broader variety of industries, along with the primary industry.

- Gender segregation is also found in technical and vocational training programs attended by women and men. The majority of women (56%) tend to enroll in administration, finance, and information technology training programs, whereas men are enrolled in more technical programs such as construction and auto-mechanical skills training.
- Access to financial services is crucial for economic empowerment, especially for women, who tend to have less access and control over significant assets. Improving banking services and microfinance programs, as well as cash transfers, can play an important role in helping women generate income and manage financial resources while contributing to economic development.
- Land legislation remains unresolved, but new laws have been drafted that intend to promote gender equality in land ownership.

## Governance, Influence, and Decision Making

- Women have played an active role in the struggle for independence, peace building, and politics. Their participation and influence are notable at the national level; however, women's lower levels of education and literacy, as well as a male-dominated culture, have limited their ability to contribute to local governance.
- Timor-Leste has one of the highest proportions of women parliamentarians in the world and the highest in Asia and the Pacific. Women hold a 38% share of the 65 parliamentary seats. Women's representation has been high since the first elections in 2002, before introducing a quota system in 2006.
- The Law on the Election of the National Parliament ensures women's representation in politics with a requirement that one in every three candidates elected to Parliament be a woman. However, this does not guarantee their political influence. Women's share of decision-making roles at the highest levels of government—as ministers, vice ministers, and secretaries of state—has risen narrowly from 13% in 2007 to 18% in 2012.
- While women are achieving great equity at the national level, they have almost no voice at the local level, where decisions of the greatest relevance to rural women are made. Almost all of the 442 *suco* (village) and 2,336 *aldeia* (hamlet) chiefs are men (98%) and there has been little change over the last decade.
- Progress in increasing women's share of jobs in the public sector has been slow over the last 12 years. Women held 26% of civil service positions in 2001 and this proportion increased to only 29% in 2013, despite the fact that public sector jobs have tripled during this period.
- Women's share of managerial jobs across both the public and private sectors is low. Only 16% of public service directors and chiefs are women (2013), while in the private sector 29% of chief executives and directors are women.

## Gender Equality Framework

- The government has established mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and coordination. These are in the early stages of development and require more strengthening to be fully effective.
- The voice of Timorese women is represented through a national women's congress held every 4–5 years. These produce a platform for action with suggested activities to address gender issues.
- There are a number of civil society organizations running short-, medium-, and long-term projects that support the achievement of national gender equality goals.
- SEPI supports the implementation of gender mainstreaming across government through gender working groups at district and inter-ministerial levels.

- Monitoring and evaluation tends to be ad hoc rather than systematic. Although a large amount of data and research has been produced, it needs to be organized and made more accessible.
- Competing priorities and limited tools and skills impede government capacity to learn and apply technical skills in gender mainstreaming.

## Recommendations

Achieving gender equality is a long-term process and progress is gradual. An important achievement is that the government has identified gender equality among its priorities for realizing national development goals. Frameworks have been put in place through parliamentary representation, legislation, national women's machinery, and coordination mechanisms. The challenge lies in their effective implementation.

Developing the capacity of the national women's machinery (SEPI) and other government agencies remains a priority. This is apparent in SEPI's primary strategic goal: to develop the necessary capacity and resources to effectively undertake its role. Coordination and information sharing is lacking within and between sectors, making it difficult to monitor progress and build on lessons learned. Efforts to achieve gender equality also require investment as well as effective production and use of data and research.

This report makes 28 recommendations, summarized below, with more details in the recommendations section of the relevant chapter:

### Education

1. Ensure policies and programs to increase school attendance are gender sensitive.
2. Increase the representation of women in the education workforce.
3. Increase the participation of women in higher education.
4. Implement the Zero Tolerance policy and conduct further research into violence in and around schools.

### Health and Well-Being

5. Improve delivery and uptake of maternal and reproductive health services.
6. Scale up efforts to improve water and sanitation.
7. Increase health sector capacity to respond to gender-based violence.
8. Improve health by reducing risky behaviors.
9. Strengthen health sector data collection and monitoring and evaluation.

### Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice

10. Increase the effectiveness of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.
11. Implement Law on Witness Protection.
12. Review gender mainstreaming approaches by police and armed forces.
13. Improve the quality of crime statistics.

## Work and Economic Empowerment

14. Increase women's participation in the labor market by improving training opportunities.
15. Implement the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy's gender mainstreaming strategy.
16. Expand microfinance schemes for women.
17. Review if mechanisms for ensuring agriculture sector reform are gender sensitive.
18. Support implementation of the Timor-Leste National Strategy and Action Plan for Gender and Private Sector 2014–2017.
19. Increase the value and coverage of conditional cash transfer.
20. Increase the availability and gender analysis of work-related statistics.

## Governance, Influence, and Decision Making

21. Strengthen the capacity of Parliament and the executive to mainstream gender.
22. Increase women's representation in the public sector.
23. Boost women's influence and role in decision making.
24. Ensure gender mainstreaming of sectoral plans and policies.

## Gender Equality Framework

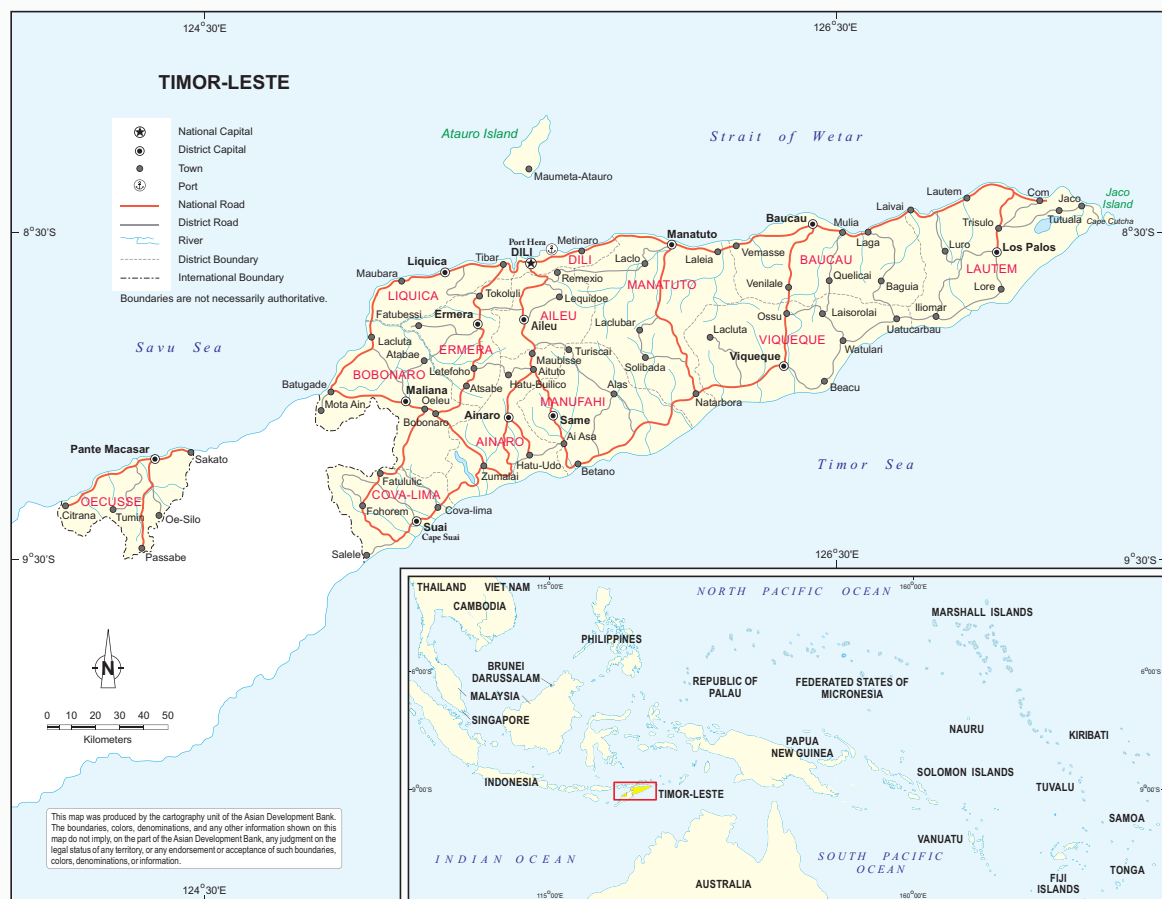
25. Strengthen mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and policy implementation.
26. Produce practical definitions, guides, and ongoing support for government officials and other stakeholders to mainstream gender.
27. Take urgent action to address data quality issues.
28. Establish learning and development plans for all SEPI staff that incorporate both technical and general skills, consistent with capacity development projects.

In conclusion, this report highlights issues in each sector, together with contextual information for better understanding of the gender disparities and concerns in the sector. The relationships among sectors must also be acknowledged and maximized, such as the impact of education on health and economic empowerment. Achieving Timor-Leste's gender equality goals involves overcoming considerable challenges, which will take time and effort. This CGA has revealed much progress since the last country gender assessment in 2005 and emphasizes great focus on implementation in going forward.

# Introduction

Timor-Leste occupies the eastern part of the island of Timor, nearby islands Atauro and Jaco, and the district of Oecussi, an exclave in Indonesian West Timor (Figure 1.1). Timor-Leste shares a western land border with Indonesia and is a short distance across the Timor Sea from Australia. The country covers an area close to 15,000 square kilometers, which makes it larger than Vanuatu and smaller than Fiji. The climate is tropical, with hot and humid weather and distinct dry and rainy seasons. Floods and landslides are common and the terrain is mountainous, with the highest peak, Foho Tatamailau, standing at 2,963 meters.

**Figure 1.1** Map of Timor-Leste



Source: Asian Development Bank.

## 1.1 Social and Political Characteristics

One of the world's newest countries, Timor-Leste achieved its independence after a long history of colonialism. Independence was formally celebrated in 2002 when the United Nations handed over administration to a newly established national government. The country is home to 1.06 million people (51% male and 49% female) with most of the population living in rural areas (70%). There are about six people per household on average, and 16% of households are headed by women.<sup>1</sup> The country is divided into 13 administrative districts, 65 subdistricts, 442 *sucos* (villages), and 2,225 *aldeias* (hamlets).<sup>2</sup> Nearly 22% of the total population live in Dili, the capital city, and the two largest districts are Ermera and Baucau, where another 21% of the population reside.

There are 104 males for every 100 females, with the sex ratio being much higher in urban areas (110 males for every 100 females), suggesting higher urban migration rates for men. The majority of the population is Catholic (97%), making Timor-Leste one of the few predominantly Catholic countries in Southeast Asia, together with the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of distinct ethnolinguistic groups in Timor-Leste; around 16 languages are spoken across the country.<sup>4</sup> Tetun is the most widely spoken, with 90% of the population speaking this language; Tetun and Portuguese are the two official languages. Bahasa Indonesia and English are also used as working languages.<sup>5</sup> The diversity of language in Timor-Leste is a significant factor that limits access to education, justice, and other public services among certain segments of the population.

The 2010 census shows that Timor-Leste has a large young population, with more than 40% under age 15. The dependency ratio—comparing the number of children and elderly against the working age population—is the highest in Southeast Asia and one of the highest in the world.<sup>6</sup> For every 100 people of working age, there are 78 children (under age 15) and 9 elderly people (aged 65 and above). This indicates high demand for education, health care, and social protection, some of the most costly services provided by government.

The population is still growing rapidly at about 2% per year due to a persistently high fertility rate.<sup>7</sup> On average, each Timorese woman has six children in her lifetime, which is well above the replacement level of 2.1. It is estimated that the population of Timor-Leste will be tripled to reach 3 million by 2050.<sup>8</sup> Even if the fertility rate declines over the coming decades, population growth will begin to moderate only after 2020 given previously high fertility rates.

The rapidly growing population poses great challenges as well as opportunities. Demands for food, water, sanitation, health, and education services will also triple and any scarcity of these resources needs to be urgently addressed. If fertility declines, this will modify the age structure of the population, with a smaller young

<sup>1</sup> General Directorate for Statistics (GDS). 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>2</sup> The 13 districts are Ainaro, Alieu, Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, Dili, Ermera, Lautem, Liquiçá, Manatuto, Manufahi, Oecussi, and Viqueque.

<sup>3</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor-Leech, K. 2009. The language situation in Timor-Leste. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 10 (1).

<sup>5</sup> The 2010 population and housing census gathered information on people's ability to speak, read, and write in these four main languages. The data show that 58% of people aged 10 and above can speak, read, and write in Tetun, 42% in Bahasa Indonesia, 26% in Portuguese, and 13% in English.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank. World Development Indicators. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/timor-leste> (accessed 12 October 2013).

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Population Division. (n.d.). *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, Volume II: Demographic Profiles, Timor-Leste*.

<sup>8</sup> GDS. 2004. *Population Projections 2004–2050: Analysis of Census Results, Report 1, General Population Census of Timor-Leste 2004*. Dili.

population and a large working-age population. This “demographic bonus” is what is being experienced in other Asian countries as an important engine for development. Today’s young people in Timor-Leste, if equipped with quality education, productive skills, and good health, can present a strong workforce as a major driver for the country’s development.

Timor-Leste’s political system is a unicameral national parliament of 65 seats.<sup>9</sup> Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 2001/2002, 2007, and 2012. Timor-Leste is well known for the high representation of women in the national Parliament (currently 38%); however, challenges remain in increasing women’s participation in politics at the local level. The system of government at the subnational level consists of elected *suco* and *aldeia* chiefs, which form a council at the *suco* level. Representation of women and youth on these councils is ensured through a quota system. Women currently comprise 28% of *suco* council members, but their influence is often limited and only 2% of *suco* chiefs are women.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2 Economic Characteristics

Timor-Leste has grown rapidly, with its non-oil economy growing more than 10% per year from 2007 to 2012. The growth rate has slowed since 2012, but is expected to continue around 8.5% through 2015.<sup>11</sup> The strong growth has been supported by government spending, largely funded from offshore petroleum production revenues, and an expansion of the private sector. The Petroleum Fund of Timor-Leste was established by the government in 2005 to ensure revenues from offshore oil production are managed effectively. The fund has grown from an opening balance of \$205 million in 2005 to \$14.6 billion as of September 2013.<sup>12</sup>

Government spending, particularly capital expenditures, along with private sector activity have contributed to the country’s growth.<sup>13</sup> As shown in Figure 1.2, the main economic sectors contributing to non-oil GDP as of 2011 are public administration (21%); construction (21%); trade, transport, accommodation, and food (19%); and agriculture (15%). In particular, the construction sector, spurred by government spending, has become a major contributor to the growth of the non-oil economy, whereas agriculture production has been declining. (The labor force characteristics are discussed in Chapter 5)

Currently a lower-middle-income country, Timor-Leste aims to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030.<sup>14</sup> Timor-Leste’s Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011–2030 aims to sustain its strong economic growth, with a vision of building a modern, diversified economy.<sup>15</sup> This vision for the economy focuses on investing in core infrastructure (seaports, airports, roads, bridges, water, sanitation, electricity, telecommunications); reform of the agriculture sector (replacing subsistence farming with commercial

<sup>9</sup> Article 93 of the Constitution states that the Parliament is between 52 and 65 members. However, it is the electoral law that determines the amount, currently set at 65.

<sup>10</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>11</sup> Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2013. *Asian Development Outlook*. Manila; and International Monetary Fund. 2013. *Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste: 2013 Article IV Consultation*. Washington, DC.

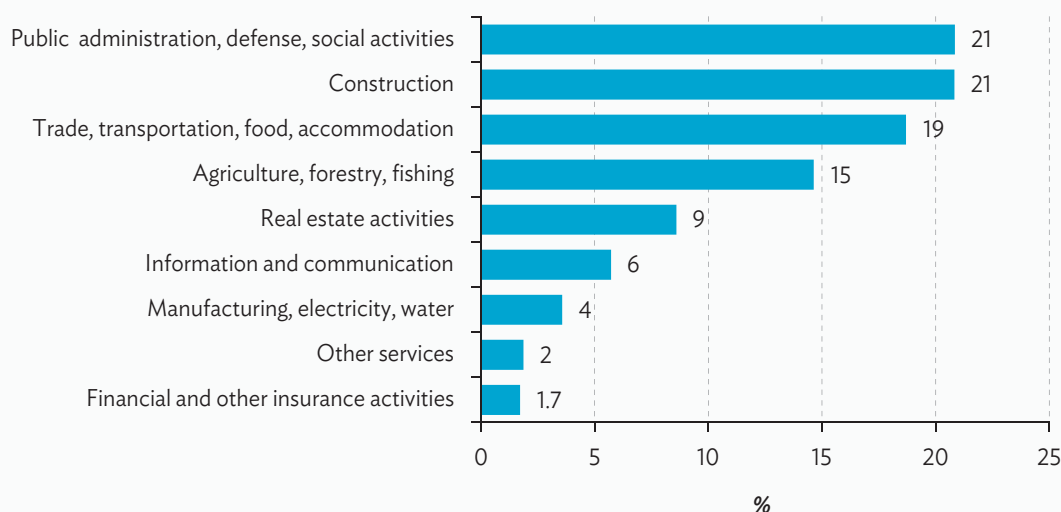
<sup>12</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili; and Central Bank of Timor-Leste. 2013. *Petroleum Fund Quarterly Report*. No. 33, 30 September. Dili.

<sup>13</sup> ADB. 2013. *Pacific Economic Monitor*. March. Manila.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank. World Development Indicators. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/timor-leste> (accessed 12 October 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.



**Figure 1.2** Industries Contributing to Non-Oil Gross Domestic Product, 2011 (%)

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2013. *Timor-Leste's National Accounts 2000–2011: Statistics and Analysis*. Dili.

smallholder agriculture); achieving self-sufficiency in food production; developing an industrial base anchored by the petroleum sector; creating a thriving tourism and hospitality industry; growth in light industries such as food processing, apparel manufacturing, handicrafts, and furniture making; and expanding services in health care, education, trade, entertainment, and public administration.

### 1.3 Development Challenges

Faced with rebuilding national systems and infrastructure destroyed by the conflicts of 1999, Timor-Leste continues to be confronted with enormous development challenges. Central to this is alleviating poverty and improving people's living conditions. The majority of the population live in inadequate housing, without clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, and with limited access to roads, communications, and power.<sup>16</sup> High fertility rates increase demand on limited resources and generate further pressure on infrastructure. Stunting and wasting in children are widespread, almost 20% of young children have never been to school, and the rates of maternal mortality are very high (557 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births). Employment opportunities are limited and there is a large gender gap in labor force participation (56% of men versus 27% of women).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>17</sup> GDS and Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment (SEPFOPE). 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili. The definition of "labor force participation" in Timor-Leste is discussed in Chapter 4.

The human development index (HDI) for Timor-Leste was 0.576 in 2012, ranked 134 out of 186 countries.<sup>18</sup> Tracking progress against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shows that the situation in Timor-Leste has been improving in many areas. Targets have been achieved for reducing infant and under-five mortality, increasing antenatal care, and detecting tuberculosis. The country is on track to reach MDGs for net enrollments in primary education, proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, contraceptive prevalence rate, incidence of tuberculosis, and proportion of population with access to an improved drinking water source. However, reducing poverty and the prevalence of underweight children continue to pose major challenges. These and the goals related to children reaching fifth grade, immunization against measles, maternal mortality, knowledge of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and improving sanitation are unlikely to be met by 2015.<sup>19</sup>

The welfare of households, particularly those in rural areas, continues to be a significant concern for the government. In 2001, 36% of the population was estimated to live in poverty.<sup>20</sup> The 2007 national survey of living standards estimated that poverty had increased since 2001, with half the population living below the basic needs poverty line (estimated at \$0.88 per person per day) and one-third in extreme poverty.<sup>21</sup> In 2009, the World Bank's estimate indicated a poverty rate of around 41%, a significant decline from the 2007 estimate. The improvement was attributed to the fact that poverty had spiked in 2007 (due to the combined effects of civil unrest and lower agricultural production) while the economy grew fast during the post-2007 period.<sup>22</sup> The latest data from the 2011 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) show that poverty levels are improving, likely due to increases in wage-earning jobs and the impact of social assistance programs. The initial HIES report indicates a poverty rate of around 37% in 2011.<sup>23</sup> Taken together, despite some improvement in recent years, no substantial progress is seen in poverty alleviation between 2001 and 2011. Poverty and hunger are evident in the 2009–2010 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), which found that 45% of children under age 5 are malnourished (46% of boys and 44% of girls).<sup>24</sup> The 2013 global hunger index also rates the situation in Timor-Leste as “alarming,” with a hunger index of 29.6 in 2013 (up from 26.0 in 2005)—worse than any other country in Asia.<sup>25</sup>

Poverty tends to disadvantage some groups more than others, such as rural residents, women and young children, the elderly, and people with a disability.<sup>26</sup> The vast majority of the poor (76%) live in rural areas, and extreme poverty affects 37% of rural households compared with 22% of urban households. The poor participate in the labor force as much as the nonpoor and do not have higher rates of unemployment. Most are engaged in low-productivity farming; nearly 80% of the poor overall and 90% of the poor in rural areas depend on farming for their livelihoods. Female-headed households appear to be less poor on average, but controlling for the household size they are poorer than male-headed households.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. New York.

<sup>19</sup> UNDP. 2011. *Timor-Leste Human Development Report 2011: Managing Natural Resources for Human Development—Developing the Non-Oil Economy to Achieve the MDGs*. Dili.

<sup>20</sup> World Bank. 2008. *Timor-Leste—Poverty in a Young Nation*. Washington, DC.

<sup>21</sup> GDS. 2008. *Final Statistical Abstract: Timor-Leste Survey of Living Standards 2007*. Dili.

<sup>22</sup> World Bank. 2009. *A 2009 Update of Poverty Incidence in Timor-Leste Using the Survey-to-Survey Imputation Method*. Washington, DC.

<sup>23</sup> GDS. 2013. *Timor-Leste Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2011*. Dili. At the time of this report, only preliminary results have been released and no detailed poverty analysis has been undertaken.

<sup>24</sup> Stunting is when height measurements show children are too short for their age. Wasting is when height and weight measurements show children are too thin for their height. GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

<sup>25</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. 2013 Global Hunger Index. <http://www.ifpri.org/ghi/2013>

<sup>26</sup> World Bank. 2008. *Timor-Leste—Poverty in a Young Nation*. Washington, DC.

## 1.4 Gender and Development

Timor-Leste is a patriarchal society in which social norms and cultural values influence gender roles. Men are expected to be responsible for decision making in the household and are the major income earners in the formal economy. For the majority of rural households, women share the role of providing for their families through their contributions to agriculture, fisheries, and raising livestock. Religious and cultural values reinforce male authority and restrict the choices available to women and girls. Cultural practices perpetuating gender inequality have included polygamy and bride price, as well as customary principles relating to property rights, inheritance, and succession to traditional offices. Catholicism also plays a role in shaping social norms and contributes to conservative attitudes about gender roles and reproductive health, including the use of contraceptive methods. Rapid development and modernization are leading these social norms to be examined and questioned.

Early marriage is a gender issue that continues to be of concern. Marrying at a young age leads to poor outcomes for women, such as less education and more childbearing. Laws have been changed to increase the legal age of marriage to 17 (16 with permission from parents), and increased access to schooling encourages young couples to delay marriage. However, Timorese still marry relatively early. Among women aged 25–29, 24% were married by age 18 and 42% by age 20, whereas men marry much later. Even though the proportion of women marrying before age 15 is declining, the average age at which women first marry has dropped in recent years—a contrast to what is typically seen in countries undergoing social change, especially with increased access to schooling. The median age of first marriage for women dropped from 21.4 years in 2003 to 20.6 years in 2009–2010 (the median age of first marriage for men was 25.3 in 2009–2010).<sup>27</sup> The tendency to marry relatively early may be due to a lack of other life opportunities, especially career options, combined with a low use of contraception and pressures arising when women fall pregnant.

Timor-Leste currently ranks around 118 out of 149 countries on the gender inequality index (GII), developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the *Human Development Report* (HDR).<sup>28</sup> The GII was not calculated in the 2013 HDR for Timor-Leste due to lack of data. The GII for 2009–2010 based on the latest national statistics is 0.547, ranking Timor-Leste around 118th in the 2013 report, close to the level seen in Indonesia (Figure 1.3). Significant achievements are needed to reach the level of gender equality in countries with very high human development. Timor-Leste's high GII results from high maternal mortality (557 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) and the large gender gap in labor force participation rates. If it were not for high representation of women in Parliament (38% of parliamentarians are women), the GII for Timor-Leste would have been even higher, close to countries such as Papua New Guinea and Afghanistan.

Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030 (SDP) sets out an ambitious agenda for the nation's future, with emphasis on social capital, infrastructure development, and economic development.<sup>29</sup> Commitment to gender equality is highlighted throughout the SDP, envisaging that by 2030 Timor-Leste will be a “gender-

<sup>27</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

<sup>28</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. New York. The GII uses data on reproductive health, political participation, education attainment, and labor force participation to calculate an index between zero and one. A result close to zero is the aim, with a number close to one indicating high gender inequality.

<sup>29</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

fair society where human dignity and women's rights are valued, protected and promoted.” This echoes SEPI's vision of a gender-fair society where human dignity and women's rights are valued, protected, and promoted by laws and culture.

To date, the government's efforts to address gender inequalities have included policy reform, legislation, the introduction of institutional mechanisms, and raising public awareness. The SDP recognizes that much more remains to be done and it establishes the following priorities:

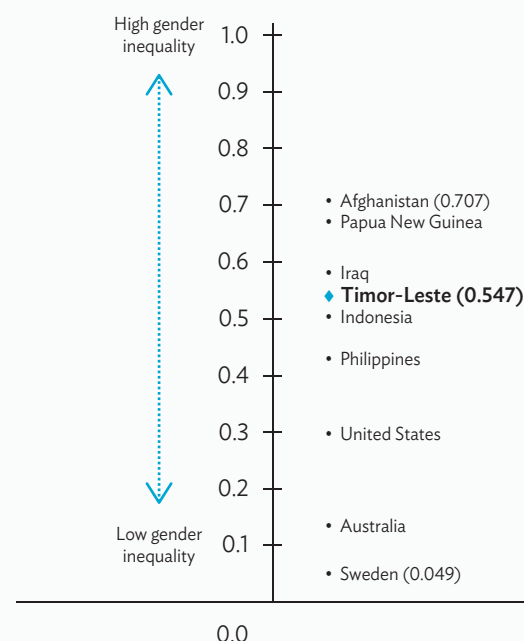
- i. **Combating domestic violence**—the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sets out the framework for implementing legislation, developing partnerships across government and civil society, and monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives to eradicate GBV.
- ii. **Gender mainstreaming** remains a priority with more resources and capacity development planned to achieve sustainable improvements in gender-sensitive policies and programs.
- iii. **Increase women's economic empowerment and influence** through better education, improved livelihood support, and greater gender equality in the civil service.
- iv. **Raise public awareness** and change behaviors and attitudes to a more gender-equitable society.

A development policy coordination mechanism is being formed to oversee implementation of the SDP and the current government's program.<sup>30</sup> The mechanism is divided into four strategic sectors that will meet at least quarterly: social, infrastructure development, economic, and governance and institutional development. Gender equality is relevant to each of these sectors and mainstreaming gender issues in each sector will be a challenge.

The Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) is the overarching national machinery for gender equality. First established in 2002 as the Office of the Advisor on the Promotion of Equality, it was transformed into SEPI in 2008 as a legal agency and central government body.<sup>31</sup> SEPI is the government's principal entity responsible for planning, executing, coordinating, and evaluating policies in the field of the promotion and defense of gender equality, as has been defined by the Council of Ministers. SEPI reports to the vice prime

**Figure 1.3 Gender Inequality Index: A Comparison of Countries, 2011–2012**

**United Nations Gender Inequality Index (GII)**  
Various countries, 2011–2012



Sources: United Nations Development Programme. 2013. *Human Development Report 2013* (for all countries except Timor-Leste); gender inequality index for Timor-Leste is based on author's own calculations using data from 2009–2010 demographic and health survey, 2010 population and housing census, and SEPI records on women in Parliament.

<sup>30</sup> Government of Timor-Leste, Presidency of the Council of Ministers. 2012. *Program of the Fifth Constitutional Government, 2012–2017*. Dili.

<sup>31</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2008. Decree Law No. 16/2008, *Organic Law of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality*. Dili.

minister. The main function of SEPI is to carry out coordination and monitoring, while the implementation of laws, policies, and programs is the responsibility of the relevant ministries. Chapter 7 on the gender equality framework provides more information on SEPI and other systems established to implement and monitor gender equality goals across the sectors.

### Box 1.1 How Has Conflict Shaped Gender Relations?

Timor-Leste has a long history of colonialism. In 1975, when 400 years of Portuguese colonization ended, Timor-Leste came under Indonesian rule. Independence was formally achieved in 2002. Every village was affected by many years of conflicts, which had an overwhelming influence on the lives of all Timorese people. The conflict affected women and men differently, with men being at the forefront of armed conflicts, both as victims and perpetrators, and women suffering disproportionately from violence and discrimination.<sup>a</sup>

Women played an important role during the resistance, both as clandestine officers (clandestinos) providing intelligence and for logistical support such as producing food, clothing, and health services. A few women held mid-level decision-making positions across different resistance fronts—armed, diplomatic, and clandestine fronts.<sup>a</sup> They played an active role in campaigning for independence and comprised 50% of those who voted in the 1999 referendum.<sup>b</sup>

Acknowledging veterans of the resistance has been a fundamental element of nation building. Despite their active involvement, many women feel their contribution has not been sufficiently recognized. In 2003, the government established a veterans' benefit scheme and began to register former combatants and members of the clandestine and diplomatic fronts.<sup>c</sup> Women were initially advised they could only be recognized as civil cadres: of 39,000 civilians on this register, around one-third were women.<sup>d</sup> Between 2008 and 2013, there have been over 31,000 people receiving one-off or ongoing veteran's pensions, of which 26% are women.<sup>e</sup>

The long history of conflict has influenced gender roles in Timor-Leste. Violence and aggression are expected masculine traits, and this has been reinforced by a focus on martial arts in youth and sports programs. Large numbers of disaffected youth and a lack of gender perspective in security sector reform hamper attempts to address gender-based violence.<sup>f</sup> Violence used to be a socially acceptable way to resolve disputes and gender-based violence remains prevalent. This highlights the need to focus on changing social norms that surround what is acceptable masculine and feminine behavior.

<sup>a</sup> Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR). 2005. *Chegal Report*. Dili.

<sup>b</sup> Ospina, S. 2006. *Participation of Women in Politics and Decision Making in Timor-Leste: A Recent History*. Dili: United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

<sup>c</sup> Separate commissions were established to register original members of the armed front (1975–1979), those who served later in the armed front, and those in the clandestine and diplomatic fronts. International Crisis Front. 2011. *Timor-Leste's Veterans: An Unfinished Struggle?* Crisis Group Asia Briefing No. 129.

<sup>d</sup> Ospina, S. 2006. *Participation of Women in Politics and Decision Making in Timor-Leste: A Recent History*. Dili: UNIFEM.

<sup>e</sup> Ministry of Social Solidarity. 2013. Data provided to SEPI on request.

<sup>f</sup> Myrntinen, H. 2009. *Poster Boys No More: Gender and Security Reform in Timor-Leste*. Policy Paper No. 31. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

This chapter examines participation of girls and boys in all levels of education, along with the barriers to school participation such as poor infrastructure, adolescent fertility, distance to school, and family obligations. It also discusses potential gender differences in education outcomes and gender dimensions of school-related violence.

## Key Findings

- School enrollments have rapidly increased, with girls' rate exceeding boys' at each level of schooling. In 2010, 94% of primary school age girls and 92% of boys were enrolled in school. Net enrollments in presecondary school were 34% for girls and 27% for boys. Net enrollments in secondary school are still low at 21% for girls and 17% for boys.
- Despite increased enrollment rates, repetition and dropout rates remain high. In the first year of primary school, more than one-quarter of students (31% of boys and 28% of girls) are repeating a year. The problem of dropout is serious during the initial years of primary schooling (grades 1 through 4, known as Cycle 1), when nearly 5% of students drop out each year. These problems are more common among boys than girls.
- Reasons for early dropouts are most likely due to a lack of school readiness (few children go to preschool) and language barriers, since many children do not speak Tetun or Portuguese, the languages of instruction. During later stages of primary and early secondary school, reasons for early dropout are primarily economic, as many leave school to earn money or help with work on family farms or businesses.
- Sexual harassment and violence in schools remains an issue. The number of reported cases fell from 46 in 2010–2011 (including 10 of sexual violence) to 27 in 2011–2012 (9 of sexual violence). A zero tolerance policy exists but is yet to be effectively implemented. Most cases are settled outside of the formal system through traditional mediation methods.
- Among adults, women are much more likely to have missed out on schooling and less likely to have a secondary or tertiary education. More than half (58%) of women aged 25 and above have never been to school, compared with 43% of men. Only 16% of women aged 25 and over have completed secondary or tertiary education, compared with 25% of men.
- Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) plays an important role in developing the capacity of adults to meet the demands of a growing economy and providing specific career opportunities. Relatively few women (and men) are attending training in the TVET sector, and for those who do receive training, large gender disparities exist in the type of training received, which in turn channels women and men into different jobs.
- Despite higher net enrollment for girls in secondary school, fewer girls than boys make the transition to attend or complete tertiary studies. Women comprise 41% of the 27,010 tertiary students who have enrolled since 2000, but only 37% of the 8,000 students who graduated from Timorese tertiary institutions over the last decade.
- There are fewer women than men working as teachers—36% in 2010. The Ministry of Education employs more men than women, particularly in decision-making positions: women hold only 15% of the 60 director positions and 17% of the 123 chiefs of department positions.



## 2.1 Overview of the Education System

Education has been a major priority for Timor-Leste since independence. The country's development plans provide a clear mandate for investing in primary and secondary education, vocational training, and higher education, guaranteeing education for all without discrimination.<sup>32</sup> The Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for developing and implementing education policy at all levels of formal education, and for providing public school infrastructure and teaching.<sup>33</sup> In 2013, the government allocated \$103 million to education, 12.8% of the total state budget. An additional \$9 million was allocated for education infrastructure costs with the plan to build 250 new preschools, 5 new technical and vocational schools, and 4 polytechnic institutes.<sup>34</sup>

Since 2008, Timor-Leste's formal education system has consisted of five levels (Table 2.1). Primary and presecondary schools are compulsory, referred to as "basic education."<sup>35</sup> Secondary education consists of general high schools and technical high schools. Tertiary or higher education is also divided into two streams: university and technical higher education. University education includes baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree courses as well as postgraduate diplomas. Technical higher education is provided at several institutes that offer short-term courses (1–2 years) in specialized and technological areas. There are currently 11 higher education institutions operating in the country.

Education from preschool to secondary level is free of charge at public schools; private school fees are \$5–\$10 per month.<sup>36</sup> Yet there are other costs associated with sending a child to school, such as books and clothes. In 2011, households in both urban and rural areas spent around 30% of their total expenditure on education-related costs.<sup>37</sup>

The primary languages of teaching are Tetun and Portuguese. Many children do not speak these languages as their mother tongue, which has a significant bearing on their learning achievements. MoE recently began to promote the use of the mother tongue during the early years of primary school. Donors are supporting the translation of materials and rollout of the program in three of the major languages, with plans to expand the program further in the future.<sup>38</sup>

Education curricula are currently outdated and teachers continue to use antiquated methods of teaching that demotivate students.<sup>39</sup> Much has been invested in improving the curriculum for grades 1–6, but transitioning from the old system and developing materials with local references pose significant challenges.<sup>40</sup> Not much information is available on the extent of gender bias in textbooks and teaching materials. Nonetheless, removing gender bias from teaching practices, curricula, and learning materials is essential for eliminating unwanted

<sup>32</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili; and MoE. National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2015, Second draft. Unpublished. Dili.

<sup>33</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2008. *Education System Framework Law*. Law No. 14/2008. Dili.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Finance. 2013. *State Budget 2013 Budget Overview: Book 1*. Dili.

<sup>35</sup> Basic education is split into three cycles: Cycle 1 covering grades 1–4, Cycle 2 covering grades 5–6, and Cycle 3 covering grades 7–9.

<sup>36</sup> MoE. Information provided on request to UNICEF.

<sup>37</sup> GDS. 2013. *Timor-Leste Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2011*. Dili.

<sup>38</sup> MoE. 2013. Timor-Leste Country Paper—8 September 2013. Prepared for Learning for All Ministerial Meeting, New York, September 2013.

<sup>39</sup> MoE. 2013. Timor-Leste Country Paper—8 September 2013. Prepared for Learning for All Ministerial Meeting, New York, September 2013.

<sup>40</sup> MoE. 2011. *Timor-Leste National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.



**Table 2.1** Number of Schools and Students by Level of Schooling, 2010

Level of Schooling	Official Age Range	Number of Schools	Private School Share (%)	Number of Students			Share of Female Students (%)	Net Enrollment Ratio (%)	
				Male	Female	Total		Male	Female
<b>Preprimary</b>	4–5	142 <sup>a</sup>	37 <sup>a</sup>	7,902	7,718	15,620	49	30 <sup>b</sup>	32 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Primary</b> (Grades 1–6)	6–11	1,008	17	102,549	93,303	195,852	48	92	94
<b>Presecondary</b> (Grades 7–9)	12–14	57	40	30,487	28,865	59,352	49	27	34
Escola basica clusters (Grades 1–9)	6–14	200	0						
<b>Secondary</b> (Grades 10–12)				25,411	23,164	48,575	48	17	21
General	15–17	74	42						
Technical	15–17	17	29						
<b>Tertiary</b>	18–22	11		10,419	7,332	17,751	41	6	6

<sup>a</sup> Data relate to the year 2009.

<sup>b</sup> This is the net attendance ratio based on attendance data from the 2010 population and housing census.

Sources: Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education (MoE). National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2015, Second draft. Unpublished (data on number of preprimary schools); MoE. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished (data on number of primary, presecondary, escola basica clusters, and secondary schools); General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili (data on number of students and the net attendance ratios for preprimary and tertiary students); and National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation. 2011. *Publication of Higher Education Statistical Data* (data on number of tertiary institutions).

gender stereotypes and potential discrimination.<sup>41</sup> The government has rightly prioritized the development of appropriate and gender-neutral curricula at all levels of education in the SDP and sector strategic plan.

Nonformal education programs include a national literacy campaign (focusing on Tetun and Portuguese) and recurrent education targeted at people aged 14 and older. Since the education attainment of adults is relatively low, vocational training plays an important role in providing adults with specific skills that can respond to demands from the growing economy. The TVET sector is undergoing reform and efforts are being made to address gender disparities in employment and occupations through TVET opportunities. At the secondary level, vocational or technical education is managed through the Ministry of Education; postsecondary technical and vocational training is managed and coordinated through the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE).

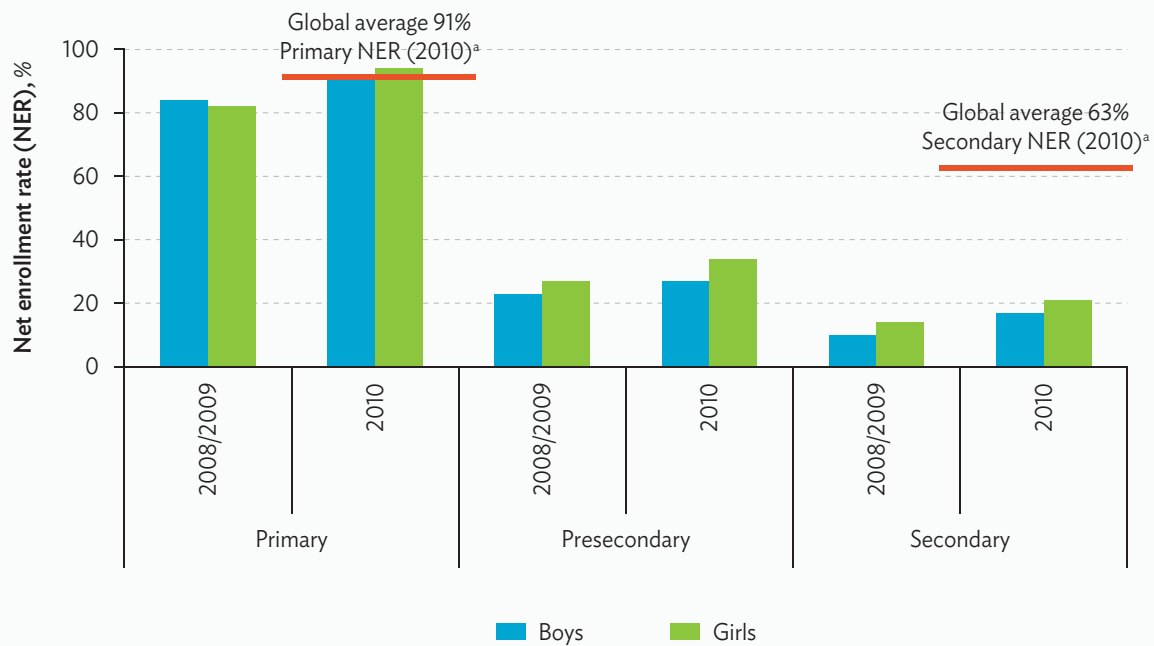
## Recent Progress

School enrollment has been increasing rapidly for both girls and boys, with girls' enrollment rate exceeding boys' at each level of schooling (Figure 2.1). In 2010, 93% of primary school age children were enrolled—a net ratio of

<sup>41</sup> UNESCO and UNICEF. 2012. *Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Goal 5 Gender Equality*. Bangkok.

94% for girls and 92% for boys.<sup>42</sup> This represents a 10% increase since 2008–2009 when only 82% of girls and 84% of boys were enrolled.<sup>43</sup> In 2001, the overall net enrollment rate was only 67%.<sup>44</sup> Although basic education is compulsory, a quarter of children either never attended school or have withdrawn before completing the required 9 years.<sup>45</sup> Net enrollment rates in presecondary and secondary schools are low, although some progress has been made in recent years. The proportion of children aged 12–14 years enrolled in presecondary school rose to 34% for girls and 27% for boys in 2010, from 27% and 23% in 2008–2009, respectively. Net enrollment of children in secondary school increased to 21% for girls and 17% for boys in 2010, from 14% and 10% in 2008–2009, respectively. Low net enrollment rates at presecondary and secondary levels reflect the fact that many children are at a lower level of schooling than expected for their age. In 2010, 69% of presecondary and 76% of secondary students were older than the official age range.<sup>46</sup> This is due to late entry and high rates of repetition during primary school.

**Figure 2.1** Trends in Net Enrollment Rates by Level of Schooling and Sex, 2008–2009 and 2010



<sup>a</sup> Data from UNESCO. 2012. *Global Education Digest 2012—Opportunities lost: The impact of grade repetition and early school leaving*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Sources: Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education (MoE). 2010. *Education Statistical Yearbook 2008/2009*. Dili; and MoE. *Statistical Yearbook 2010*. Unpublished.

<sup>42</sup> All enrollment data for 2010 are from MoE. *Statistical Yearbook 2010*. Unpublished.

<sup>43</sup> All enrollment data for 2008/2009 are from MoE. 2010. *Education Statistical Yearbook 2008/2009*. Dili.

<sup>44</sup> ADB and UNIFEM. 2005. *Gender and Nation Building in Timor-Leste: Country Gender Assessment*. Manila.

<sup>45</sup> According to the 2010 population and housing census, 22.6% of boys aged 5–17 years and 22.1% of girls have never attended school and another 3.0% of boys and 3.0% of girls left school before completing their basic education. (GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili)

<sup>46</sup> GDS. 2013. *Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2010: Analytical Report on Education*. Volume 9. Dili.

Progress in educational attainment can also be illustrated by the level of schooling completed among different age groups. Around one-third of those aged 25–29—35% of men and 32% of women—have a secondary education, compared with only 6% of men and 3% of women aged 50 and older. Urban areas also show a higher proportion of people with secondary education (45% of men and 50% of women). Despite these improvements, reasons for relatively low participation in secondary education include the following:<sup>47</sup>

- limited number of secondary schools and poor facilities (e.g., only one-third of schools have good drinking water and working toilets);
- costs (e.g., a large proportion [40%] of presecondary and secondary schools are private, requiring school fees);
- quality of teaching (e.g., class sizes average 41 students per class in public schools); and
- pressure on young people to work or help around the home.

Secondary education is divided into general and technical high schools. Very few girls and boys attend technical schools: in 2010, only 15% of secondary school graduates attended technical schools.<sup>48</sup> While the overall secondary enrollment rate is higher for girls than boys, girls make up only around 41% of enrollment in technical schools in the 2013–2014 academic year.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, girls tend to be concentrated in schools for administration, tourism, and hospitality, whereas boys are predominant in schools focusing on construction and other technical skills. (Gender segregation in technical and other skills training is further discussed in the section *Postsecondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training*.)

Gender differences become apparent at university, where males are far more likely to attend than females, and gender gaps are more pronounced in rural areas.<sup>50</sup> Traditional attitudes toward young women often require them to remain in or near the home, and discourage them from traveling long distances to attend school or university.<sup>51</sup> As discussed later on, teenage pregnancy also plays a role in prematurely ending the education of young women. When the costs of education are difficult to meet, families may also consider higher education for boys a better investment than for girls.

## 2.2 Analysis of Gender Issues

It is often observed that there are now few gender disparities in basic education in Timor-Leste. School attendance rates, measured by the population census, are similar for girls and boys of compulsory school age (6–14 years): 78% and 77%, respectively (Table 2.2).<sup>52</sup> A large proportion of children of both sexes—around 19%—have never attended school, indicating a serious issue faced by policy makers in achieving universal education. By adolescence, a higher proportion of girls than boys have never attended school or have left school. This suggests that the education retention rate overall is better for males.

<sup>47</sup> MoE. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

<sup>48</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>49</sup> Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education. 2014. *A Summary of Number of Graduates from Technical High Schools (2013–2014)*. Dili.

<sup>50</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>51</sup> The average time taken to travel to secondary school was 70 minutes one way in rural areas and 34 minutes in urban areas in 2007. GDS. 2008. *Final Statistical Abstract: Timor-Leste Survey of Living Standards 2007*. Dili.

<sup>52</sup> Attendance data are from the Population and Housing Census 2010 (GDS 2011) and differ from enrollment rates for a range of reasons. Students may enroll in school but not attend (and vice versa), and data are collected using different sources (household questionnaire for attendance versus school records for enrollment).

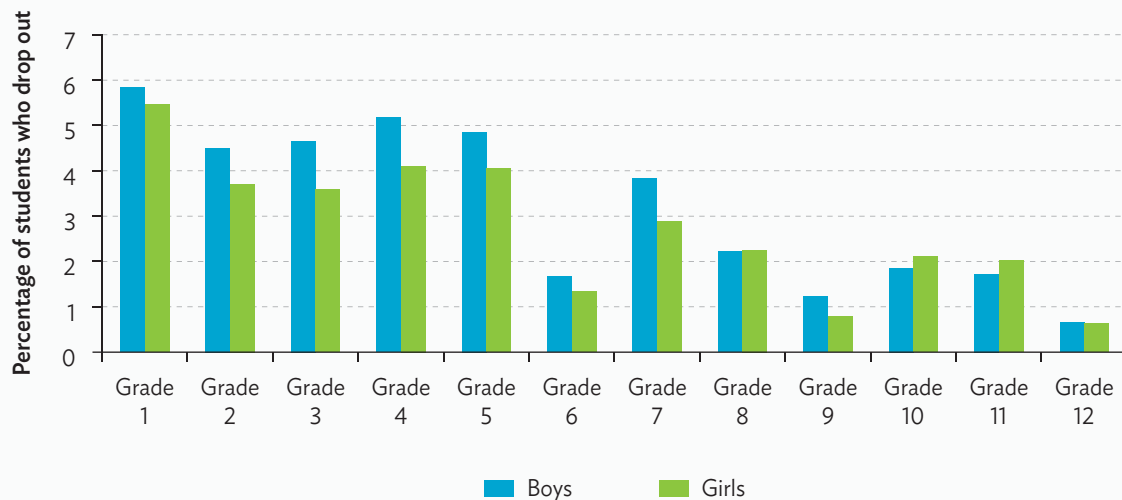
**Table 2.2** Status of Participation in Education by Sex and Age Group, 2010

	Population Aged 6–14 (%)		Population Aged 15–19 (%)		Population Aged 20–25 (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
At school	77.0	77.9	73.7	71.1	39.7	28.0
Left school	2.5	2.4	11.3	12.8	42.5	50.0
Never attended school	19.8	19.1	14.5	15.6	17.2	21.4
Don't know	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

## Early School Leavers

Timor-Leste's education system is disrupted by high dropout rates during the years of compulsory basic education, although the situation is steadily improving. Gender analysis reveals that more boys than girls drop out at every grade level, except in grades 8, 10, and 11 (Figure 2.2). Dropout rates have improved significantly in recent years, falling from around 12% for the earliest grades (1–5) in 2008–2009 to around 5% in 2010.<sup>53</sup> There is a substantial opportunity cost in high repetition and dropout rates. If the education system is successful in getting children to start school but fails to keep them in school, it will be difficult to achieve the national goal for developing human capital to support the country's long-term development process.

**Figure 2.2** Proportion of Students Who Drop Out of School by Sex and Grade, 2010

Source: Government of Timor-Leste. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

<sup>53</sup> MoE. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

The national education plan explains that high dropout rates are due to difficulties in accessing schools; parents not appreciating the importance of education; financial difficulties among parents; inadequacy of school buildings (especially lack of water and bathrooms); violence in schools; and lack of adequate programs for vulnerable groups, such as teenage mothers and children with a disability. A study of 350 students in grades 4–6 found that reasons for dropping out were mainly economic.<sup>54</sup> Exploring the issue from the perspective of students, parents, educators, and the community, the study also found a strong appreciation for the value of education. Despite having limited schooling themselves (60% of parents interviewed never went to school), almost all the parents (95%) expected their children to finish secondary school. Almost all students also showed positive attitudes toward education, acknowledging that education is important to find a job, earn more money, be respected, and enjoy a higher standard of living. No significant gender differences were observed in the study.

Given the apparent support for education, what causes children to drop out? First of all, preschool attendance is very limited: 32% of girls aged 5 years attend preschool and 30% of boys.<sup>55</sup> This lack of school readiness is likely to translate into high dropout and repetition rates seen in the earliest grades of primary schooling. Language is also a significant barrier among many, since the languages of instruction—Tetun and Portuguese—are not commonly spoken in many Timorese homes.<sup>56</sup> An inability to meet the costs of supplies, uniforms, etc., and the need to work to earn money, push some children to end their education before completing primary school.<sup>57</sup> Distance to school is a contributing factor as well, with 60% of students spending more than one hour to commute each way.<sup>58</sup>

Exploring the causes of dropout by gender (Figure 2.3), more girls gave the primary reason of needing to help with family chores or business than boys. While the top three reasons were all economic-related for both girls and boys, boys were more likely than girls to cite poor academic performance as a reason for drop out.

The above study covers only a small proportion of students in certain grades and districts, and hence may not represent the full extent of the issues surrounding high dropout rates. Nevertheless, it does reveal some interesting findings about gender differences about school attendance and performance. Where absenteeism was high, more boys (15%) were like to give the reason as “do not want to go to school” than girls (5%). Boys were also more likely to have broken school rules than girls (39% versus 18%). Nearly 60% of both girls and boys who dropped out had failed subjects, and around 14% of boys and 11% of girls had been suspended or expelled by the school. Importantly, of those students who had dropped out, 96% of girls and 77% of boys reported household chores (cook, clean, fetch water/firewood) as a major competing activity to school attendance. For 49% of girls and 68% of boys, helping parents with farming, herding, and fishing was also taking up their time. These gender disparities illustrate the roles that Timorese girls and boys are expected to play around the home, often hindering their school attendance.

<sup>54</sup> Creative Associates International, Inc. 2013. *School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program: Timor-Leste Situational Analysis*. Washington, DC: USAID. The study was conducted in 2011 in 35 schools across five districts: Bobonaro, Ermera, Liquica, Manatuto, and Viqueque. It involved interviews of at-risk students in grades 4, 5, and 6 (n = 358; even representation of girls and boys); parents of at-risk-students (n = 358); dropouts from grades 4, 5, or 6 (n = 300); parents of dropouts (n = 318); teachers (n = 158); school administrators (n = 35); education officers (n = 3); and community members (n = 30).

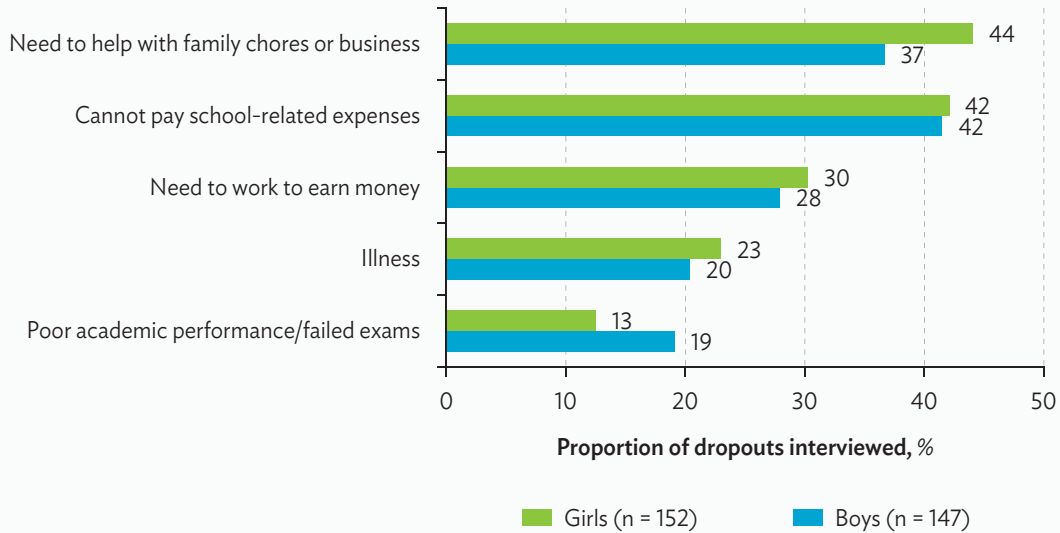
<sup>55</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>56</sup> World Bank. n.d. *Timor-Leste: An Analysis of Early Grade Reading Acquisition*. Washington, DC.

<sup>57</sup> Creative Associates International, Inc. 2013. *School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program: Timor-Leste Situational Analysis*. Washington, DC: USAID.

<sup>58</sup> According to the last living standards survey in 2007, the average distance to secondary school was 4.5 kilometers/69.6 minutes in rural areas and 2.1 kilometers/34.4 minutes in urban areas. (GDS. 2008. *Final Statistical Abstract: Timor-Leste Survey of Living Standards 2007*. Dili)

**Figure 2.3** Causes of Dropout Given by Girls and Boys Who Dropped Out of Grade 4, 5, or 6, 2011 (%)



Source: Creative Associates International, Inc. 2013. *School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program: Timor-Leste Situational Analysis*. United States Agency for International Development: Washington, DC.

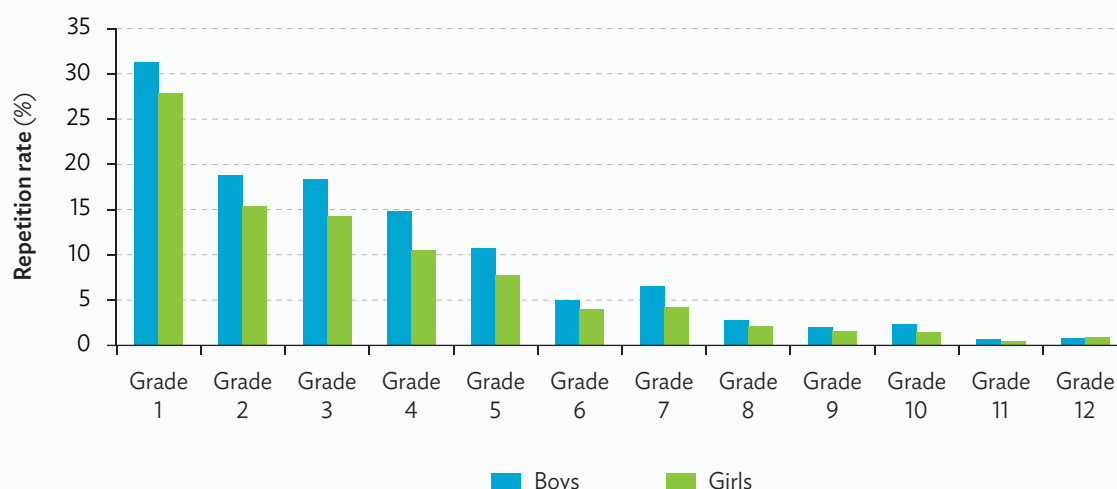
The study also collected data on girls' perception of gender disparities in education that raise a concern. About one-quarter of girls perceive that teachers treat boys better than girls and believe that boys are smarter. Prevailing gender attitudes are also evident among girls, with 30% expressing that boys should stay longer in school. Additional findings from the study also point out barriers to learning such as distance to school, safety in and around schools, and hunger.

## Repetition Rates

Repetition rates—the proportion of students who are required to repeat a grade—are extremely high during the earliest years of schooling (Figure 2.4). In 2010, more than a quarter of students in grade 1 (27% of girls and 31% of boys) were repeating the year. Although rates fall to around 15% for girls and 19% for boys by grade 2, they remain high through to grade 5. Overall, 15% of girls and 19% of boys in primary school are repeating a year. This puts Timor-Leste among the highest rates of primary school repetition in the world, in comparison with a global average of 5% for both girls and boys. Repetition rates in secondary school are much lower, with only 2% of Timorese girls and 3% of boys repeating a year against global averages of 4% and 6%, respectively.<sup>59</sup> This is likely due to the fact that a relatively lower percentage of girls and boys—only those who tend to be committed to schooling—advance to secondary school.

<sup>59</sup> UNESCO. 2012. *Global Education Digest 2012—Opportunities Lost: The Impact of Grade Repetition and Early School Leaving*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

**Figure 2.4** Repetition Rate (Proportion of Students Who Repeat a Grade) by Sex and Grade, 2010



Source: Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

Boys are more likely than girls to repeat at every grade through primary and secondary education, except in grade 12 where the difference is negligible.<sup>60</sup> Higher rates of repetition and dropouts among boys are consistent with global trends.<sup>61</sup> Research in several Asian countries examining boys' underperformance in primary and secondary education illustrates potential reasons such as the following:

- gender stereotypes that
  - » limit expectations and undervalue education for boys as they are considered more independent and able to gain employment without a high level of schooling,
  - » consider being studious and hardworking to be more feminine traits, and
  - » put pressure on boys to be “tough” and masculine, which increases their tendency to misbehave in the classroom;
- violence and corporal punishment, which create a negative learning environment, particularly for boys, who are more likely to experience physical violence from their peers and teachers; and
- poor male role models and a lack of male teachers at the primary level.<sup>62</sup>

The extent to which these factors undermine boys' performance in Timor-Leste is not well known. Except for the proportion of male teachers (60% of primary school teachers and 71% of secondary school teachers are male), it is possible that gender stereotypes and the use of corporal punishment play a role in boys' underperformance in primary school.<sup>63</sup> Also, the fact that grade 1 teachers are “the youngest, least experienced and least qualified,

<sup>60</sup> MoE. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

<sup>61</sup> UNESCO. 2012. *Global Education Digest 2012—Opportunities Lost: The Impact of Grade Repetition and Early School Leaving*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. 2006. *Why are Boys Under-performing in Education? Gender Analysis of Four Asia-Pacific Countries*. New York: UNICEF.

<sup>63</sup> MoE. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

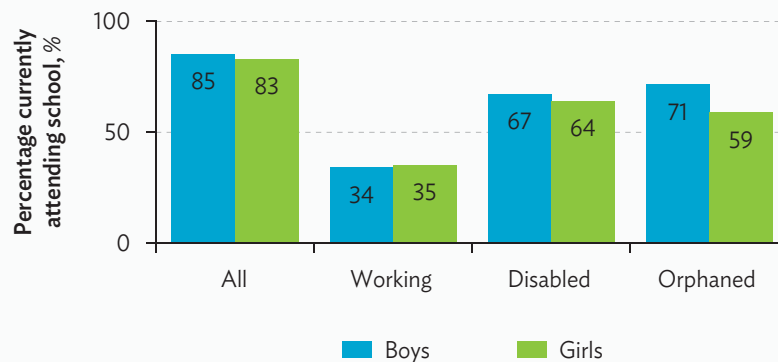


and teaching in the most crowded classrooms” would make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized attention to young students.<sup>64</sup> It is clear that gender mainstreaming in education policies must address the needs of both girls and boys, as well as the role of teachers and the education environment in reinforcing gender stereotypes.

## Vulnerable Groups

Vulnerable groups, such as orphans (both parents deceased), children with a disability, and children who work, are less likely to attend school. Gender differences also exist for some of these groups (Figure 2.5).<sup>65</sup> Girls with a disability are less likely to be in school than boys with a disability, and orphaned girls are also less likely than their male counterparts. This suggests that vulnerabilities, such as disability or being orphaned, are significantly more likely to disadvantage girls in their school attendance.

**Figure 2.5** School Attendance of Children Age 10–14 by Sex and Vulnerable Groups, 2009–2010 (%)



Note: Total number of boys aged 10–14 = 70,226 and girls = 66,304; working boys aged 10–14 = 4,858 and girls = 3,466; disabled boys aged 10–14 = 839 and girls = 582; orphaned boys aged 10–14 = 50 and girls = 40.

Sources: General Directorate for Statistics (GDS). 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili: ICF Macro (for data on attendance of orphaned children); and GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili (for all other data).

Teenage mothers are often forced to leave school and find it difficult to return after having their child. Data show they are far less likely to remain in school (only 25%) than teenage girls overall (71%).<sup>66</sup> In 2010, the ministries of education, health, and social solidarity, in collaboration with SEPI, conducted a study on the impacts of teenage pregnancy on education outcomes.<sup>67</sup> Of the 76 teenage mothers who participated in the study, most (72%) left

<sup>64</sup> MoE. 2011. *National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>65</sup> GDS. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili: ICF Macro; and GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>66</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>67</sup> MoE and SEPI. Final Report: Dropout of teenagers from school due to pregnancy (February 2011). Unpublished. The study involved interviews of 76 teenagers who became pregnant while attending school, 102 teachers from the schools they attended, 60 family members of the teenagers interviewed (67% mothers; 16% fathers; 17% siblings, aunts, or uncles), 28 health center workers, 11 church authorities, 51 local authorities, and 14 people working in nongovernment organizations. Data were collected in 2010 in three districts: Ainaro, Ermera, and Liquiçá.

school soon after they became pregnant, before any signs were visible and because of feeling afraid, ashamed, and discriminated against. Nearly half (45%) wished to return to school after giving birth, while 40% expected to become full-time homemakers. Of the 102 teachers who participated in the study, only half agreed that teenage mothers should go back to school, indicating teachers' lack of sensitivity to the continuing education of young mothers. While the adolescent birth rate has fallen—from 78 births per 1,000 teenage girls in 2001 to 51 births in 2009–2010<sup>68</sup>—policies encouraging young mothers to continue their education should remain an essential aspect of gender mainstreaming in education, including teacher training. The MoE has developed such a policy, but the policy has not yet been sufficiently implemented.

## Disparities in Education Outcomes

### *Reading and Mathematical Ability of Early Grade Students*

An assessment of reading ability of 900 students in grades 1–3 was conducted across 40 randomly selected schools in 2009.<sup>69</sup> It revealed that “70% of students at the end of grade 1 could not read a single word of the simple text passage they were asked to read.” Performance did improve for the higher grades, suggesting that progress is made as students continue their education. However, neither the student's gender nor the relative wealth of their family (measured through ownership of various household assets) had an impact on their reading results. Parents' reading ability also was not related to the child's reading ability. Children who were read stories at home or in school, those who knew of the school library, and those with teachers who spoke both Tetun and Portuguese showed better reading ability. Preschool attendance had little bearing on reading ability in early grades.

Similarly, a study on mathematical skills, which tested 1,200 students in grades 1–3 across all 13 districts, showed numeracy was poor.<sup>70</sup> No gender difference was found among grade 1 students, but boys in grades 2–3 obtained better average scores than the girls (around 5–6 percentage points higher). The disparity in higher grades suggested that girls were likely marginalized from the mathematics learning process, possibly due to girls' reluctance to participate in front of boys or teachers' bias against girls. The report recommended that teachers pay particular attention to girls' learning to prevent gender disparities in higher grades. The employment of female teachers is a policy that has proven successful in some countries in improving girls' mathematical performance. Timorese students with a female teacher were also found to perform better in the early grade mathematics assessment. In addition, the availability of textbooks, daily mathematics lessons, and homework had a positive bearing on mathematical ability. The study pointed out language as a barrier to learning and expressed support for the policy of using the child's first language during the earliest grades to improve learning outcomes.

### *Adult Education Attainment*

While the gender gap among children's education has been narrowing, educational attainment among adults (aged 15 and above) illustrates substantial gender gaps. According to the 2010 census, 49% of males aged 15 and older have at least completed primary school, compared with 42% of females. For secondary education,

<sup>68</sup> GDS. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili: ICF Macro; and United Nations. Millennium Development Goal Indicators Database. <http://mdgs.un.org> (accessed 19 October 2013).

<sup>69</sup> World Bank. n.d. *Timor-Leste: An Analysis of Early Grade Reading Acquisition*. Washington, DC.

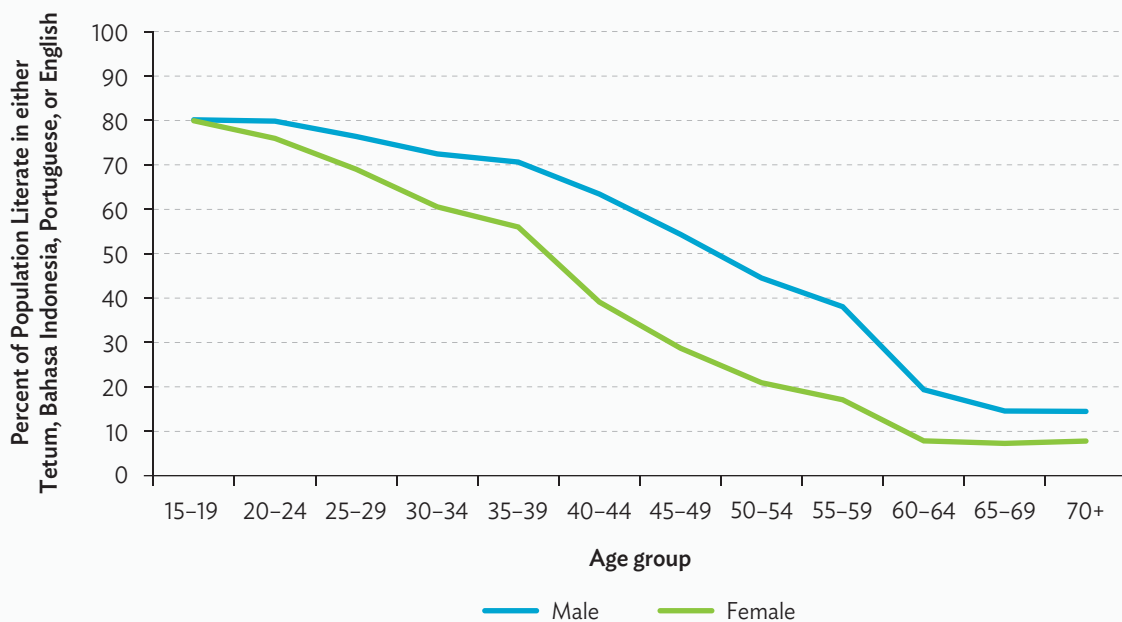
<sup>70</sup> MoE and World Bank. 2012. *Timor-Leste 2011 Early Grade Mathematics Assessment: Results Analysis and Recommendation Report*. Dili and Washington, DC.

27% of men aged 18 and older have completed secondary school, compared with 21% of women. The proportion of Timorese with a tertiary education is relatively low: about 8% of men aged 25 and older versus 4% of women have completed some level of tertiary studies.<sup>71</sup> Aside from this gender disparity, Dili residents are much more likely to have tertiary qualifications (22% of men and 15% of women) than those in other districts, reflecting the likelihood of better quality and more easily accessible colleges in the capital, as well as the concentration of jobs requiring tertiary education. Gender differences in tertiary education are discussed further in the section on tertiary education.

### Adult and Youth Literacy

Adult literacy in Timor-Leste is low, with only 63% of men and 52% of women aged 15 years or older being literate.<sup>72</sup> Poor literacy and significant gender differences in Timor-Leste are more apparent in the older population; the gender gap is the largest for those aged 40–59 (Figure 2.6). With improvement in school enrollment, the gender gap has been narrowing for the younger generation: for those aged 15–24, 80% of men and 78% of women are literate.<sup>73</sup>

**Figure 2.6** Literacy Rate by 5-Year Age Groups and Sex, 2010



Note: Some population surveys and censuses attempt to measure literacy through self-assessment (i.e., asking the respondent if they can speak, read, and write in a certain language) or by testing (e.g., read and write a simple sentence). The 2010 population and housing census included self-assessment of literacy in the four commonly used languages in Timor-Leste: Tetun and Portuguese (the two official languages), Bahasa Indonesia, and English.

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>71</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>72</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili. Literacy is measured by asking about each household member's ability to read, speak and write in at least one of four national languages. There are two official languages (Tetun and Portuguese) and two working languages (English and Bahasa Indonesia). In 2012, the global average for adult literacy was 89% for men and 80% for women.

<sup>73</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

The government is implementing a national campaign for adult literacy. While the last CGA found these programs had been largely unsuccessful in attracting and retaining women, the situation seems to be improving.<sup>74</sup> The MoE, under the directorate of national adult and nonformal education, has developed a national literacy campaign that includes

- “Sim eu posso” (Yes, I Can) program for the duration of 3 months,
- “Passo em frente” (Step Forward) program for the duration of 6 months, and
- “A caminho” (On the Way) program for the duration of 6 months.

As of December 2012, there were 204,463 participants in the Sim eu posso program across the 13 districts, with an estimated 65% of them being women.<sup>75</sup> Based on an audiovisual method developed in Cuba, this national literacy program commenced in 2007 and aims to eradicate illiteracy by 2015. Instruction was initially in Portuguese, but the majority of classes are now held in Tetun after translating the course.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to gender differences, literacy levels vary significantly between urban and rural areas and across districts (Table 2.3).<sup>77</sup> For adults (aged 15 and over) in rural areas, only half of men and 40% of women are literate, whereas more than 80% of urban men and women are. Youth literacy in rural areas is around 70%, while it exceeds 90% in urban areas. As noted above, the gender gap in youth literacy is much smaller or negligible in urban areas. Gender gaps in adult literacy are highest in the districts of Lautem, Liquica, Viqueque, and Ermera, where men are significantly more literate than women.

## Violence and Sexual Harassment in Schools

Gender-based violence against women and girls is a significant issue in Timor-Leste (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). Ensuring the safety of children, both while they are at school and when traveling to and from school, is an important factor in achieving education and gender equality goals. In 2009, the CEDAW Committee called for action to address high rates of sexual harassment and violence experienced by girls at school by providing safe transportation and educational environments, as well as promoting mechanisms to report and deal with cases.<sup>78</sup>

The USAID study on causes of dropouts found that a third (35%) of girls in grades 4–6 feel unsafe going to and from school and 26% do not feel safe at school. Around 10% of female at-risk and dropout students said that boys harass girls in schools.<sup>79</sup> In 2011, MoE implemented a “zero tolerance” policy against malpractices including sexual violence, corporal punishment by teachers and parents, and other forms of violence in schools. The policy prohibits corporal punishment by teachers in all settings and aims to provide safe educational environments free from discrimination and violence. The Office of the General Inspector for Education is

<sup>74</sup> The report states that of those who participated in the 5,310 classes offered through the government program, 70% were men, except in Dili where the numbers were equal. ADB and UNIFEM. 2005. *Gender and Nation Building in Timor-Leste: Country Gender Assessment*. Manila.

<sup>75</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>76</sup> Broughton, B. 2009. Los! Hau Bele. Yo! Si Puedo comes to Timor-Leste. Paper for the Australian Caribbean Studies Association Conference, Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Brisbane. 11–13 February.

<sup>77</sup> According to definitions used by the General Directorate for Statistics for the 2010 population and housing census, all district capitals are considered as urban areas. Areas with the following characteristics are also classified as urban: (i) have a population of about 2,000 people or more; (ii) have less than 50% of its population employed in agricultural or fishing activities and the remaining people employed in the modern sector; (iii) have electricity and piped water; and (iv) have access to schools, medical care, and recreational facilities.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations. 2009. *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: Timor-Leste*. New York.

<sup>79</sup> Creative Associates International. 2013. *School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program: Timor-Leste Situational Analysis*. Washington, DC: USAID.

**Table 2.3** Comparison of Adult and Youth Literacy Rates by Sex and District, 2010 (%)

	Youth Literacy (aged 15–24)				Adult Literacy (aged 15+)			
	Total	Male	Female	Gender Gap	Total	Male	Female	Gender Gap
<b>Timor-Leste</b>	<b>79.1</b>	<b>80.0</b>	<b>78.1</b>	1.9	<b>57.8</b>	<b>63.1</b>	<b>52.5</b>	10.6
Urban	92.3	92.2	92.4	(0.2)	83.2	86.1	80.0	6.1
Rural	70.5	71.9	69.2	2.7	45.9	51.6	40.4	11.2
Aileu	80.0	80.6	79.3	1.3	55.4	60.0	50.6	9.3
Ainaro	67.8	68.4	67.1	1.3	44.0	48.5	39.4	9.1
Baucau	82.2	82.3	82.1	0.2	55.1	59.3	51.0	8.3
Bobonaro	69.5	69.9	69.2	0.7	44.7	50.4	39.3	11.0
Covalima	81.1	80.3	81.9	(1.6)	55.0	60.4	49.8	10.6
Dili	93.2	93.1	93.3	(0.2)	85.5	88.1	82.6	5.6
Ermera	58.4	62.2	54.6	7.6	38.7	44.7	32.6	12.1
Lautem	82.9	83.3	82.5	0.9	57.3	66.0	49.5	16.4
Liquica	73.8	76.5	71.2	5.4	50.8	57.4	44.0	13.4
Manufahi	82.4	81.7	83.2	(1.6)	57.2	61.2	53.1	8.0
Manututo	74.8	75.5	73.9	1.6	52.0	56.4	47.6	8.8
Oecussi	58.6	59.4	57.8	1.7	37.8	42.4	33.5	8.9
Viqueque	81.3	82.8	79.8	3.1	51.1	58.0	44.7	13.3

Note: The gender gap is calculated by subtracting the female literacy rate from the male literacy rate (i.e., male literacy rate – female literacy rate = literacy gender gap).

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

responsible for monitoring its implementation. Activities have included media publications, talk shows, and training and workshops at the national and district levels.<sup>80</sup> However, discussion with officials and development practitioners suggest that this policy is not widely known and more efforts are needed for its implementation.

According to a report from the General Inspector of Education, girls continue to face violence and insecurity in school. There were 10 cases of sexual violence reported in 2010–2011 and nine reported in 2011–2012.<sup>81</sup> Characteristics of the victims in 2010–2011 are not available, but it is known that the victims of the nine cases in 2011–12 included nine girls in basic education, two girls in secondary school, and one female basic education teacher.<sup>82</sup> In addition to the incidents of sexual violence, there were 36 cases of physical violence, including corporal punishment reported in 2010–2011 and 18 in 2011–2012. How these reported cases of violence are dealt with is a crucial policy area for MoE. Where the teacher is the perpetrator, cases can be referred to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which is responsible for initiating disciplinary procedures and action. Of the

<sup>80</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished. SEPI. 2011.

<sup>81</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

<sup>82</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished. The number of victims (12) exceeds the number of cases (9), which is possible as cases can have multiple victims.

nine cases of sexual violence reported in 2011–2012, four were brought to court, and five were resolved through traditional mediation mechanisms. Of the 46 cases of physical (36) and sexual (10) violence reported in 2010–2011, 38 were resolved by traditional mechanisms, facilitated either by the community or district school inspectors. Three were referred to and dealt with by the police and five were sent to the CSC Tribunal. The CSC has a range of options for disciplinary action, including dismissal, fines, and suspension. However, transfers to another school or office are typically applied.<sup>83</sup>

## Recurrent Education

Providing youth and adults with a pathway to rejoin the education system is an important mechanism to increase the education level and quality of life for Timorese citizens. The recurrent education system is aimed at new students who are beyond the official age for basic education, or people aged 16–18 who have completed their basic education but are currently working and wish to return to secondary school. It also provides a mechanism for women who suspended their studies due to pregnancy to rejoin the education system. It bridges the gap in adult education by providing access to basic and secondary education for adults and offering diplomas and certificates. The National Equivalence Program provides accelerated learning courses to achieve these goals. The coverage of this program is to be enhanced through new education community centers in all subdistricts, an initiative that will be part of the “New School Concept.” These community centers will not only provide basic education, but also other life skills.<sup>84</sup>

The government has not yet adopted an official policy for those that wish to reenter the public school system. However, MoE implements temporary mechanisms, such as helping young mothers to transfer to other schools after their deliveries (due to social and cultural issues, these students often request transfer to other schools) and providing special arrangements for pregnant girls to sit for their final exams. For those who have failed in the final exam, recurrent education can be used as another channel to entering university.<sup>85</sup>

## Postsecondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is central to addressing skills shortages and providing skills development opportunities for those seeking employment. In a country where the education attainment of adults is relatively low, TVET plays a critical role in developing the capacity of adults to meet the demands of a growing economy. It is anticipated that skills shortages will become more acute as the government expands health, education, petroleum, and agriculture programs, and as private sector investment increases. To respond to these needs, the TVET sector has recently been transformed from a predominantly nonformal system to a formal, regulated system under the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE) and its associated agencies. A national qualifications framework, established in 2011, links all postsecondary and tertiary qualifications and includes 32 national qualifications and 8 certificates across 8 industry sectors.<sup>86</sup> Additional 14 qualifications have recently been added for mid-level technical skills in construction and automotive trades.

<sup>83</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

<sup>84</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

<sup>85</sup> SEPI. 2013. *CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report*. Unpublished.

<sup>86</sup> SEPFOPE. 2013. *INDMO: The First Five Years 2008–2013*. Dili. Qualifications are available in administration, finance, and ICT (6 qualifications); agriculture (3); automotive (2); education, training, and assessment (4); construction (7); public safety (3); public sector (1); health (2); and tourism and hospitality (4).

While the MoE is responsible for secondary technical schools, SEPFOPE is responsible for developing government policy and programs related to postsecondary TVET. The National Institute for Labor Force Development (INDMO) is the regulatory body for the vocational training system that operates under SEPFOPE. A national TVET plan, approved by the Council of Ministers in 2012, supports the national strategic development plan by guiding the skills development strategies for the workforce and investment in training that is responsive to market demands. Gender equity in participation is one of the priorities in the national TVET plan.<sup>87</sup>

**Table 2.4** Number of Students Enrolled in Courses Offered by Accredited Institutions by Sex and Industry Sector, 2012

	Men	Women	Total	% Women
Administration, finance, and ICT	216	381	597	64
Agriculture	–	–	–	–
Automotive	–	–	–	–
Construction	459	178	637	28
Education, training, and assessment	213	172	385	45
Health	–	–	–	–
Oil and gas	–	–	–	–
Public security	37	10	47	21
Public sector	18	11	29	38
Tourism and hospitality	85	202	287	70
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,028</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>1,982</b>	<b>48</b>

– = None, ICT = information and communication technology.

Source: Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy. 2013. *INDMO: The First Five Years 2008–2013*. Dili.

According to the 2013 INDMO report, there are 21 accredited training providers across eight districts, with two-thirds being based in Dili. The aim is to have accredited providers in all districts by the end of 2014. As shown in Table 2.4, there were 1,982 students enrolled in accredited institutions in 2012 (48% women) and enrollments as of mid-2013 suggest that women's participation has increased further (56%). This illustrates a marked increase since 2009, when women comprised 40% of the 1,650 technical training students.<sup>88</sup> Yet enrollment across different programs shows that nearly two-thirds of women are concentrated in training programs for administration, finance, tourism, and hospitality, whereas close to half of men are enrolled in construction skills programs.

<sup>87</sup> SEPFOPE. 2012. *Timor-Leste Technical and Vocational Education and Training Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>88</sup> SEPFOPE. Review of 2009 TVET Training Outcomes. Unpublished.



Women's representation in construction skills programs rose from 6% in 2009 to 28% in 2012, but mainly due to training related to specific development programs in village water systems and small-scale solar power systems. SEPFOPE is currently implementing a mid-level skills training project with the aim of producing skilled technicians in construction and automotive trades to meet skills shortages in these sectors. This project intends to train at least 20% women in these trades so that women can access nontraditional employment opportunities and develop careers in areas of high demand.

## Tertiary Education

Compared with much progress in girls' enrollment at lower levels of schooling, gender disparities at the tertiary level persist, although the gap is narrowing for younger age groups. Among adults aged 25 and older, 8% of men and only 4% of women completed some level of tertiary studies. For those aged 20–25, overall 9% are currently studying at university or polytechnic institution and the gap is narrower—10% of men compared with 8% of women.<sup>89</sup>

There are 11 institutions offering higher education degrees and programs (Table 2.5), all located in Dili, except for the Instituto Católico para Formação de Professores in Baucau and the East Timor Coffee Academy in Ermera. Across these 11 institutions, a total of 7,995 students (37% women) graduated between 2000 and 2011.<sup>90</sup>

**Table 2.5** Number of Graduates by Tertiary Institution and Sex, 2000–2011

Timorese Tertiary Institution	Graduates (2000–2011)			
	Men	Women	Total	% Women
Universidade Nacional de Timor-Lorosa'e (UNTL)	3,529	1,872	5,401	35
Universidade da Paz	510	351	861	41
Institute of Business	101	97	198	49
Dili Institute of Technology	68	47	115	41
Universidade Oriental	147	64	211	30
Universidade Dili	321	236	557	42
Instituto Superior Cristal	167	81	248	33
East Timor Coffee Academy (ETICA)	38	11	49	22
Instituto de Ciências Religiosas “São Tomas de Aquino”	34	43	77	56
Instituto Profissional de Canossa	49	0	49	0
Instituto Católico para Formação de Professores (ICFP)	79	150	229	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,043</b>	<b>2,952</b>	<b>7,995</b>	<b>37</b>

*Note:* All institutions are located in Dili, except for ICFP (Baucau) and ETICA (Ermera).

*Source:* National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation. 2011. *Publication of Higher Education Statistical Data*. [www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico](http://www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico)

<sup>89</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>90</sup> National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (NAAAA). 2011. *Publication of Higher Education Statistical Data*. [www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico](http://www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico)

The number of students enrolled in higher education has increased significantly, from 801 in 2004–2005 (43% women) to 8,457 in 2011 (42% women).<sup>91</sup> The Universidade da Paz currently has the largest enrollment with 2,645 students (36% women), followed by the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) with 1,843 students (45% women) and the Institute of Business with 1,116 students (48% women). Since 2001 women have consistently comprised around 40% of total student enrollments at UNTL. Women are not quite as well represented at Universidade da Paz, with about 36% of enrollees being female.

**Table 2.6** Total and Female Share of Graduates from UNDIL, UNPAZ, and UNTL by Faculty, 2003–2010

Faculty		2003	2007	2008	2009	2010
Agriculture	Number	105	178	11	184	195
	% women	13	22	55	27	38
Economics	Number	–	358	277	455	423
	% women	–	35	47	45	54
Educational Sciences	Number	99	274	38	735	996
	% women	17	37	37	44	41
Engineering	Number	70	201	–	162	206
	% women	9	14	–	23	21
Health Sciences	Number	–	–	24	13	45
	% women	–	–	12	0	47
Law	Number	–	24	88	59	112
	% women	–	25	42	42	29
Social Science and Politics (including public administration)	Number	113	242	48	604	329
	% women	27	22	21	34	31
Total	Number	387	1,277	486	2,212	2,306
	% women	17	28	41	38	39

– = Not available, UNDIL = Universidade Dili, UNPAZ = Universidade da Paz, UNTL = Universidade Nacional de Timor-Lorosa'e.

Source: National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation. 2011. *Publication of Higher Education Statistical Data*. [www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico](http://www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico)

As for fields of study at tertiary institutions (Table 2.6), most women get their qualifications in areas such as economics and management (54% of graduates in 2010 were women) or teaching (41%). Educational science has the largest share of graduates in 2010 and 2011, which is a popular field for both women and men. In 2010, fewer women graduated from the fields of engineering (21% of graduates were women), law (29%), public administration (31%), and agriculture (38%). There has been an increase in the proportion of women studying economics and public administration, whereas their representation has fallen in law and agriculture.

<sup>91</sup> NAAAA. 2011. *Publication of Higher Education Statistical Data*. [www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico](http://www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico)

More detailed analysis will be needed to better understand trends in tertiary enrollments and its outcomes, including the role of tertiary education in job prospects between women and men, and the role of different fields of studies by gender.

The MoE has provided scholarships for female students from presecondary school to higher education since 2009. Around 300–400 scholarships are provided for girls every year. In addition, a number of overseas scholarships have been allocated to support students in their tertiary studies (Table 2.7). Yet the majority of these opportunities have been allocated to male students, with women receiving just over one-third of the scholarships (37%). It will be important to further examine reasons for such gender differences—whether traditional gender attitudes tend to limit women’s opportunities to travel abroad to pursue a tertiary education, or whether women’s limited career opportunities tend to discourage them to take on overseas education.

**Table 2.7 Overseas Scholarships Allocated to Timorese Citizens through the Ministry of Education, 2009–2013**

	Total	Men	Women	% Women
Brazil	150	98	52	35
Cuba	13	9	4	31
Indonesia	16	14	2	13
Malaysia	1	0	1	100
Philippines	136	88	48	35
Portugal	191	103	88	46
Thailand	150	102	48	32
United States of America	1	0	1	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>37</b>

*Note:* These data exclude scholarships granted through donor programs.

*Source:* MoE. 2013. Data provided to SEPI on request. Unpublished.

## Gender Balance in the Education System

The MoE comprises around 13,000 staff (36% women), including primary, presecondary, and secondary school teachers, as well as management and administration staff. Women are underrepresented both as teachers and senior managers.<sup>92</sup> Across the entire public and private school system (basic and secondary), there were 11,270 teachers (35% women) in 2012.<sup>93</sup> The female share of teaching positions is the highest at primary level (40%), while it is the lowest at the tertiary level (18%) (Figure 2.7).

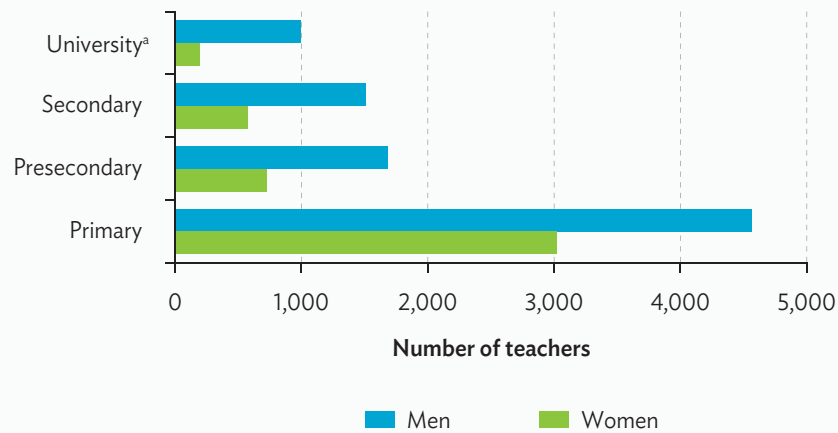
Women occupy less than a quarter (21%) of overall senior positions in MoE. While the number of senior managers has grown considerably since 2008, women represent only 15% of the 60 director positions and 17% of the 123

<sup>92</sup> United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste. 2012. *List of High State Officials and Senior Civil Servants of Timor-Leste*. [www.laohamutuk.org/DVD/2013/UNMITRDTLOfficialsDec2012.pdf](http://www.laohamutuk.org/DVD/2013/UNMITRDTLOfficialsDec2012.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> MoE. 2010. *Education Statistical Yearbook 2008/2009*. Dili.

chiefs of department positions.<sup>94</sup> In 2008, women were better represented in these roles, holding 23% of the 39 positions.<sup>95</sup> The low participation of women at senior levels suggests that their influence on education policies and decision making is limited. The World Bank, through the Global Partnership for Education, is supporting the MoE to strengthen its management capacity and the project is considering a range of recommendations to increase women's representation and their role in the ministry. These include establishing a minimum quota for women in the ministry (30% of senior management positions), developing strategies to recruit and retain more women, providing access to child care, and training and supporting women so they can attain middle and senior level management posts.<sup>96</sup>

**Figure 2.7** Number of Teachers by Level of Education and Sex, 2010<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Data for university teaching staff are from National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation. 2011. *Publication of Higher Education Statistical Data*. [www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico](http://www.anaaa.gov.tl/publicacoes-1/relatorio-estatistico)

Note: Data include teachers employed by the Ministry of Education as well as those in private education institutions.

Source: Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Education. Statistical Yearbook 2010. Unpublished.

## 2.3 Taking Action

Timorese education policy supports “Education for All,” with special emphasis on removing barriers to participation and learning for girls and women, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and out-of-school children. Inclusive education also aims to meet different learning needs and styles. Rather than focusing on integrating all learners in mainstream education, inclusive education aims to transform the education system so that it better responds to the diversity of learners.

<sup>94</sup> UNMIT. 2012. *List of High State Officials and Senior Civil Servants of Timor-Leste*. Dili. [www.laohamutuk.org/DVD/2013/UNMITRDTLofficialsDec2012.pdf](http://www.laohamutuk.org/DVD/2013/UNMITRDTLofficialsDec2012.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> SEPI, MoE, and UNIFEM. 2009. *Are Girls and Boys Equally Represented in Education? A Gender Assessment*. Dili.

<sup>96</sup> World Bank. 2012. Project Appraisal Document on a Global Partnership for Education Fund Grant in the Amount of \$2.8 million to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste for a Management Strengthening Project.

The MoE has incorporated gender-related goals into the national education strategic plan. A comprehensive plan for gender equality has been developed, but more efforts are needed for its successful implementation. Key components are to promote girls' participation in secondary and higher education, as well as to substantially increase the number of women teachers. The MoE aims to use scholarships and other incentives to attract women from rural areas to attend preservice teacher training in urban centers.<sup>97</sup> Other gender-related initiatives include

- increasing gender awareness of staff,
- establishing procedures to eliminate gender-based violence in schools,
- developing a scholarship program to increase the number of girls in secondary and tertiary education,
- reviewing curricula at all levels to ensure “gender friendliness,” and
- increasing the number of women who benefit from scholarships to study abroad.

As in many policy areas, implementation of gender mainstreaming in education is proving challenging in practice. Sustained support from the international community may help to build skills in this area. It is imperative that national staff are involved in developing policies to ensure these policies are relevant to the national context and build strong ownership among those tasked with implementation.

Gender-responsive budgeting aims to assess how government expenditure could be better targeted to meet the educational needs of girls and boys and reduce gender gaps in school attendance. The MoE compared the population shares of rural and urban boys, their school attendance, and budgetary data to identify the share of educational expenditure on different groups of children. It was found that government spending on rural girls at presecondary and secondary school levels was particularly low in relation to their population share. To address these gaps, the MoE plans to develop and implement a social inclusion policy by 2015. This is intended to provide an implementation framework for existing and future initiatives that promote the right to education for marginalized groups, including girls, children in rural areas, and children with a disability. It will direct more funding toward outcomes for rural girls with interventions that can monitor and eliminate violence in schools, increase scholarships for girls in secondary and tertiary education, increase the number of female teachers, train teachers in inclusive education, and review the “gender friendliness” of curricula.<sup>98</sup>

## 2.4 Recommendations

### ***Ensure policies and programs to increase school attendance are gender sensitive***

School enrollment and attendance policies need to target the special needs of boys during early years of education and those of girls during secondary school years. SEPI and the MoE, with guidance from development partners, should review policies on school enrollment and repetition to ensure they address the gender issues discussed in this assessment. Improving school attendance and reducing gender disparities may involve the following measures:

- Examine the effectiveness of preschool programs in preparing children for primary school and identify the reasons for low attendance.
- Provide appropriate school facilities, including separate toilets for girls and boys.

<sup>97</sup> MoE. 2011. *National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>98</sup> MoE. 2011. *National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

- Improve the quality of teaching and the learning environment so that girls and boys achieve the minimum standards for progression in all subjects.
- Introduce gender-sensitive methods for early detection of students who are falling behind, and develop interventions to reduce their risk of repetition or dropout.
- Establish a regular monitoring system of gender disparities in school attendance and performance.
- Develop measures, including re-entry policies, which enable and facilitate young women's return to school after pregnancy.

### ***Increase the representation of women in the education workforce***

Increasing the representation of women among teachers, as well as administrators and managers of the education system, is essential for developing more gender-sensitive policies, presenting role models for children, and improving education outcomes. With technical support from SEPI, the MoE should review progress in recruiting more women into teaching, particularly from rural areas, and develop strategies to address potential constraints to their recruitment.

### ***Increase the participation of women in higher education***

Efforts should be made to increase the participation of women in higher education by offering more scholarships to women, particularly those in rural areas. Providing or arranging appropriate accommodation for female students at or near tertiary institutions can also facilitate women's participation for many who will come from other districts or rural areas.

### ***Implement the zero tolerance policy and conduct research into violence in and around schools***

A "zero tolerance" policy has been developed but remains to be implemented effectively. The MoE should identify the barriers to its implementation and address them. Its effective implementation should involve

- developing and disseminating standard operating procedures for reporting, investigating, and prosecuting cases of violence to all schools, education facilities, teaching staff, students, and community;
- provision of safe transportation and a safe school environment;
- ensuring the reported cases are adequately investigated and perpetrators are appropriately reprimanded (not just moved to another school);
- more in-depth analysis on the types, extent, and underlying causes of violence in and around schools; and
- monitoring and evaluating progress in policy implementation.

UN Women should report to the MoE gender working group on the outcomes of an ongoing study that uses school-based advocacy to prevent violence against women and girls. The study would provide more information required for developing effective implementation strategies and monitoring mechanisms.

This chapter explores the main issues surrounding gender and health in Timor-Leste. It includes an overview of the health system, an analysis of key health indicators and relevant policies, a summary of initiatives, and recommendations for the future.

## Key Findings

- Maternal and child mortality are key issues for women, which have been identified as the top public health priorities by the Ministry of Health (MoH). Traditional attitudes and limited economic opportunities encourage women to marry and begin childbearing at a relatively young age, leading to high fertility rates. Along with high fertility, limited access to health services, safe water, and improved sanitation facilities increase the risk of maternal and child mortality.
- The ratio of maternal deaths has decreased from 660 per 100,000 live births in 2003 to 557 in 2009–2010, but it remains one of the world’s highest. The infant mortality rate has decreased from 60 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 45 in 2009–2010, and under-five mortality fell from 83 deaths per 1,000 live births to 64.
- The proportion of women receiving antenatal care from a skilled provider has increased from 61% in 2003 to 86% in 2009–2010. The number of those delivering with assistance from a skilled birth attendant has also grown from 19% to 30% during the same period, although this rate is still low.
- Access to antenatal care varies significantly between urban and rural residents: 93% of pregnant women in urban areas versus 84% of those in rural areas received antenatal care from a skilled health provider. The mother’s education level is related to uptake of health services: 93% of women with a secondary education accessed antenatal care, compared with 76% of women with no education. Higher levels of women’s education and economic status are closely associated with better outcomes in various health indicators.
- Hunger and poor nutrition is a serious public health concern, with 27% of women aged 15–49 being malnourished. Malnourished women have a greater risk of obstructed labor, of dying from postpartum hemorrhage, and of experiencing illness. In 2009–2010, more than half of Timorese children (58%) suffered from chronic malnutrition. There is no significant difference in malnutrition between girls and boys, but malnutrition is much higher among children in rural than urban areas.
- Total fertility rate has decreased from 7.8 children per woman in 2003 to 5.7 in 2009–2010, but it is the second highest in Asia and the Pacific after Afghanistan. Total fertility rate is lower among women with higher levels of education.
- Six percent of teenage women (age 15–19) are already mothers. Rural teenage girls are twice as likely to be mothers as their urban counterparts (8% vs. 4%).
- Only one out of five currently married women (age 15–49) use some form of contraceptive, but its usage increases significantly with women’s education level and their family’s economic status.
- Limited access to clean drinking water and appropriate sanitation remains a health risk, especially in rural areas: 75% of rural households have poor or no sanitation facilities and 43% continue to rely on unimproved sources of water.
- Risking poor health through smoking is common among the male population. Policies to reduce smoking must be implemented to prevent increasing demands on the health system in the future.



### 3.1 Overview of the Health System

The health system in Timor-Leste includes public and private organizations involved in funding and implementing health services. The primary government agency, the Ministry of Health (MoH), employs about 3,300 staff (39% women) including medical specialists, doctors, nurses, midwives, lab technicians, public health officers, and health managers and administrators.<sup>99</sup> The number of private health care providers has increased from 26 in 2010 to 41 in 2012, which includes nonprofit organizations such as faith-based institutions, coffee cooperatives, international and national nongovernment organizations, and for-profit organizations.<sup>100</sup> The private sector provides approximately 25% of basic medical service delivery.<sup>101</sup>

The health sector strategic plan identifies maternal and child mortality as the top public health priorities and the national strategic plan calls for health service delivery to focus on the needs of children, women, and other vulnerable groups.<sup>102</sup> Primary health care delivers basic services and national programs for immunization, maternal and child health, malaria, nutrition, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, health promotion, and education. These services are provided free of charge by MoH, mostly through a network of community health centers (CHC), health posts, and outreach activities. Currently, there are 66 CHCs, 212 health posts and 477 Integrated Community Health Initiative (SISCa) posts operating throughout the country.<sup>103</sup> Secondary health care is provided by five district referral hospitals with staff including general practitioners and specialists in surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and internal medicine.<sup>104</sup> Tertiary care is provided at the national hospital based in Dili. For tertiary services not available in the country, the national hospital refers patients to facilities in Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Ambulance services are available to transport referral cases.

### 3.2 Analysis of Gender Issues

#### Maternal Health

Timorese women have an average of almost six children in their lifetime, putting the country's fertility rate among the highest in the world. This high fertility underlies high maternal mortality. The ratio of maternal deaths has decreased slightly in recent years, from 660 per 100,000 live births in 2003 to 557 in 2009–2010, but is still one of the world's highest.<sup>105</sup> The national target is to reduce maternal deaths by half, to 252 by 2015.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>99</sup> UNMIT. 2012. *List of High State Officials and Senior Civil Servants of Timor-Leste*. [www.laohamutuk.org/DVD/2013/UNMITRDTLofficialsDec2012.pdf](http://www.laohamutuk.org/DVD/2013/UNMITRDTLofficialsDec2012.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> MoH. *Annual Health Statistics for 2010 and 2012*. Dili.

<sup>101</sup> MoH. *Human Resources for Health Country Profile Timor-Leste*. Dili. [www.searo.who.int/entity/human\\_resources/data/tls\\_profile.pdf](http://www.searo.who.int/entity/human_resources/data/tls_profile.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> MoH. 2007. *Health Sector Strategic Plan 2008–2012*. Dili; and Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>103</sup> MoH. 2013. *Annual Health Statistics for 2012 (Relatorio Estatística Saúde, Período Janeiro–Dezembro 2012)*. Dili. SISCa is an MoH-operated, community-based initiative that aims to increase access to primary health care. Launched in 2008, it provides services at the village level, such as treatment and prevention of infectious diseases, family planning, nutrition, and child and maternal health. Community members, including *suco* and *aldeia* chiefs, are involved by encouraging people to access the services. MoH. *Strengthen Communities in the Areas of Health through SISCa Serviço Integrado da Saúde Comunitária (Integrated Community Health Services): Implementation Guide*.

<sup>104</sup> District hospitals are located in Ainaro, Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, and Oecussi and provide services free of charge (MoH Annual Health Statistics for 2012).

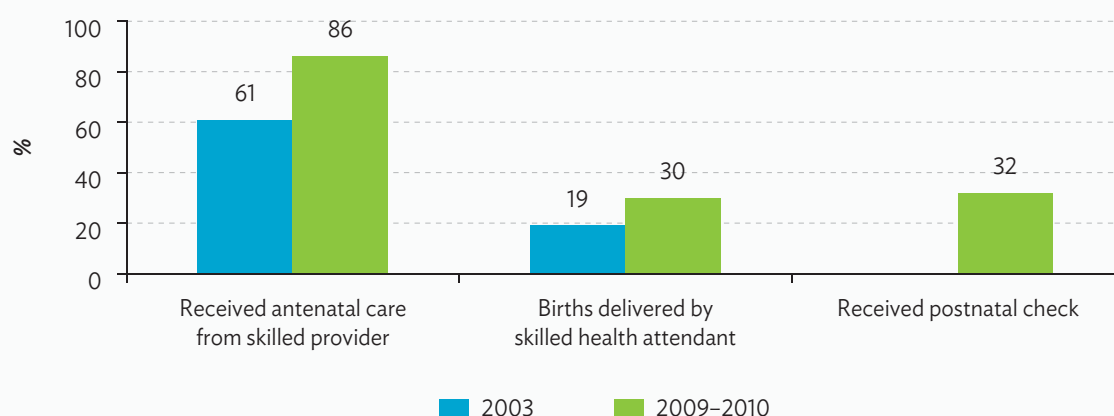
<sup>105</sup> Data are from the Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance, National Directorate for Statistics (GDS), and University of Newcastle, the Australian National University. 2004. *Timor-Leste 2003 Demographic and Health Survey*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle; and GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili. Internationally comparable rates of maternal mortality usually differ from national estimates due to the calculation methods used. Based on data published in the United Nations MDG database, countries in Asia and the Pacific with higher rates of maternal mortality include the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Afghanistan.

<sup>106</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

Globally, the main direct causes of maternal death are severe bleeding (hemorrhage), infection, high blood pressure (eclampsia), unsafe abortion, and obstructed labor. Indirect causes include disease, anemia, congenital heart or kidney problems, and trauma from violence.<sup>107</sup> For Timorese women, little is known about specific types of complications as no accurate information is kept by hospitals. Nevertheless, high maternal mortality is thought to be associated with high fertility, limited access to and use of maternal health care, few births attended by skilled health personnel, underweight among women (27% of women), and the high prevalence of anemia (21%).<sup>108</sup>

To improve maternal health, the national strategic plan aims to increase the coverage of four antenatal care visits to 70% of pregnant women by 2015, and for 65% of births to be assisted.<sup>109</sup> The percentage of pregnant women and new mothers receiving the recommended levels of care has been increasing (Figure 3.1), particularly in antenatal care. Yet improvements in assistance during delivery and postnatal care have been slow.

**Figure 3.1** Proportion of Women Receiving Care Before, During, and After Delivery, 2003–2010 (%)



Sources: Ministry of Health, General Directorate for Statistics (GDS), and University of Newcastle. 2004. *Timor-Leste 2003 Demographic and Health Survey*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle; and GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

### Antenatal Care

Regular health care checks during pregnancy—antenatal care—are essential for good maternal health. They enable the identification and treatment of health issues that might cause complications during or after delivery. It also provides an opportunity to educate mothers in good health practices for themselves and their children. The proportion of Timorese women who receive antenatal care from a skilled provider has improved significantly in recent years, from 61% in 2003 to 86% in 2009–2010. The number and timing of antenatal care visits are important factors in assessing the adequacy of care (antenatal care is more beneficial when sought early in the pregnancy and at least four visits are advised before delivery). In 2009–2010, more than half of mothers had four or more antenatal visits, but there is a significant gap between urban areas (63%) and rural areas (53%; Table 3.1). Substantial improvement is needed to achieve the national goal of 70% by 2015.

<sup>107</sup> WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA/World Bank. 2012. *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010*. Geneva: WHO.

<sup>108</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

<sup>109</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

**Table 3.1** Extent of Care Before, During, and After Delivery by Urban and Rural Areas, 2009–2010

	Urban	Rural	Total
<b>Number of antenatal care visits (%)</b>			
None	4.9	15.0	12.5
1	2.2	3.5	3.2
2–3	29.1	28.6	28.7
4+	62.8	52.5	55.1
Don't know/missing	1.0	0.4	0.6
<b>Place of delivery (%)</b>			
Health facility	62.8	2.4	22.4
Home	46.7	87.5	77.8
Missing	0.3	0.1	0.1
<b>Assistance during delivery (%)</b>			
Doctor	7.6	1.4	2.9
Nurse/midwife	50.9	18.8	26.4
Assistant nurse	0.6	0.6	0.6
Traditional birth assistant	16.5	18.4	17.9
Relative/other	22.8	57.1	48.9
No one	1.5	3.7	3.2
Don't know/missing	0.1	0.0	0.0
Percentage delivered by a skilled birth attendant	59.1	20.7	29.9
Percentage delivered by caesarean section	4.0	1.0	1.7
<b>Postnatal checkup (%)</b>	57.0	23.7	32.2
Highest wealth quintile			65.5
Lowest wealth quintile			13.6

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

### Care During Delivery

The presence of a skilled person during the birth is essential for prevention, detection and management of any complications. The Reproductive Health Strategy identifies the provision of skilled birth attendants, together with the equipment, drugs and other essential supplies, as the “most important factors in preventing maternal deaths.”<sup>110</sup> Figure 3.1 shows that less than one-third (30%) of births were delivered by a skilled birth attendant (i.e., doctor, nurse, midwife, or assistant nurse).<sup>111</sup> Although this number is low, it is a significant increase from 19%

<sup>110</sup> MoH, et al. 2004. *National Reproductive Health Strategy 2005–2015*. Dili.

<sup>111</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

in 2003 and a sign that initiatives to improve maternal health are having some effect.<sup>112</sup> The majority of births are still delivered at home (78%), usually assisted by a relative. Rural women are nearly twice as likely as urban women to give birth at home, while urban women are more likely to give birth in a health facility (Table 3.1). The proportion of births delivered by a skilled attendant in Timor-Leste is much lower than neighboring countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, such as Papua New Guinea (53.0%), the Philippines (62.0%), Indonesia (79.4%), and Thailand (99.5%).<sup>113</sup>

### *Postnatal Care*

Globally, a large proportion of maternal deaths occur in the first 24 hours after delivery. In Timor-Leste, only one-third of women receive a postnatal check (32%) and there is a considerable gap between urban and rural women. Rural women (24%) are less than half as likely as urban women (57%) to receive a postnatal check (Table 3.1). Household wealth is also associated with women's health care: 65% of women in the highest wealth quintile receive a postnatal check, compared with only 14% of women in the poorest quintile.

### *Barriers to Accessing Health Care*

There are many reasons why women may not seek health care during pregnancy and delivery. Identifying and understanding these barriers are crucial for developing policies and targeted measures to improve access to reproductive health care. One of the critical issues in Timor-Leste is the lack of facilities and skilled health attendants during delivery.<sup>114</sup> Efforts have been made for improvements in infrastructure, operational procedures and management, and development of human resources. In addition, mobile phones are being used to address service gaps in the rural districts of Manufahi and Ainaro. Implemented by MoH, Health Alliance International, and Catalpa International, the Liga Inan (Mobile Mums) project uses mobile phones to improve the connection between pregnant women and their midwives. The service sends reminders and messages to promote maternal health and the possibility to request the midwife to call to answer questions or concerns. If successful, it will be expanded to other districts.<sup>115</sup>

General experiences with the health system may also influence decisions to seek maternal health care. Most women aged 15–49 report having problems in accessing care when they are sick (96%), with the most common concern including “no drugs available” (87% identified this as a problem), or “no provider is available” (82%). Another often-cited reason relates to a lack of female health provider (63%).<sup>116</sup> According to the 2010 census, there is an approximate gender balance within the cadre of general health practitioners in the country (47% women to 53% men). However, with the exception of midwives, who are mainly women (67%), most doctors, nurses, and other health professionals and workers are men (Figure 3.2).

### *Anemia*

Anemia can be an indirect cause of maternal mortality, miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight. Often a result of poor diet, disease (e.g., malaria), and intestinal worms, anemia is common: 28% of pregnant

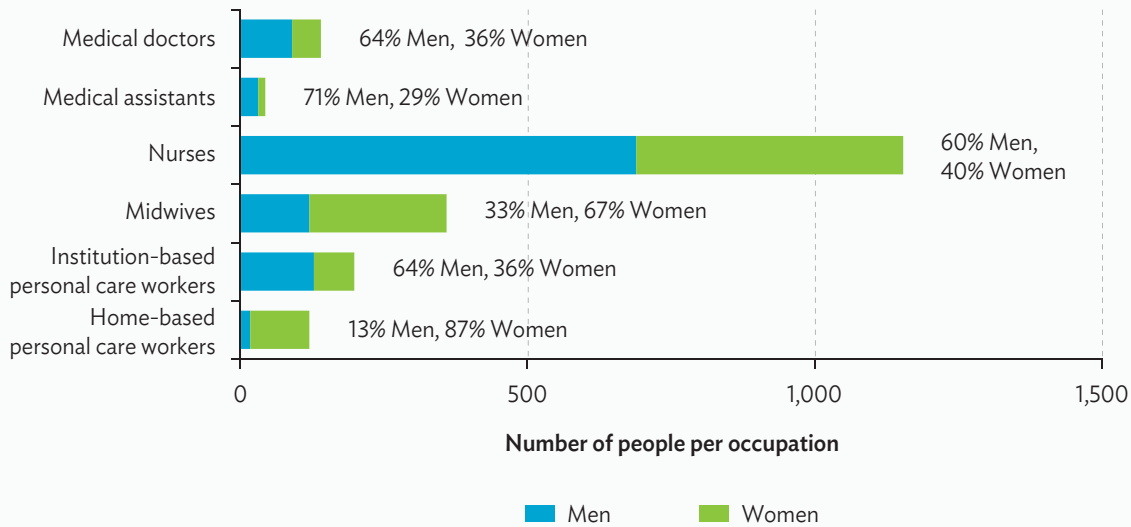
<sup>112</sup> MoH/GDS/University of Newcastle. 2004. *Timor-Leste 2003 Demographic and Health Survey*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle.

<sup>113</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. MDG Database. [mdgs.un.org](http://mdgs.un.org)

<sup>114</sup> UNFPA. 2011. *Report of the National Conference on Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Sex Education, 11–13 July 2010*. Dili.

<sup>115</sup> Liga Inan. <http://www.ligainan.org>

<sup>116</sup> This relates to general health-seeking behaviors, not just those associated with pregnancy or childbirth. There were a total of 13,137 respondents who could report one or more problems. GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

**Figure 3.2** Number of Health Professionals and Other Workers by Sex, 2010

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

women were found to be anemic in 2009–2010. Anemia is more common for women in rural areas and also among the poor. To address this situation, iron and folic acid tablets are provided through SISCa and the public health system. Treatment for intestinal worms is provided to those with the symptoms, but screening is not automatically done as part of antenatal health care services.<sup>117</sup> The 2009–2010 DHS shows that 61% of pregnant women took iron supplements (up from 43% in 2003) and 13% received deworming medication during pregnancy.

### Unsafe Abortion

Low contraceptive use can lead to unwanted pregnancy and the possibility that some mothers will turn to unsafe abortions. Abortion and assisting abortion are criminalized under the Penal Code (Article 141) and attempts to exclude incest have not been successful to date. According to the law, an abortion is allowed only when terminating the pregnancy is the only means to prevent the death of the mother. This needs to be authorized by a medical certificate signed by three doctors.<sup>118</sup> Recent reports show that the number of abortions performed in hospitals or health centers was 1,035 in 2011 and 972 in 2012.<sup>119</sup> A study conducted in 2009 by the ALOLA Foundation, Charles Darwin University, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) showed that abortions are practiced in Timor-Leste and performed in clandestine ways, increasing the risk to health.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>117</sup> MoH. *Strengthen Communities in the Areas of Health through SISCa Servisu Integradu da Saúde Comunitária (Integrated Community Health Services): Implementation Guide*. [www.moh.gov.tl/sites/default/files/SISCa%20Guideline%20-%20English%20version.pdf](http://www.moh.gov.tl/sites/default/files/SISCa%20Guideline%20-%20English%20version.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

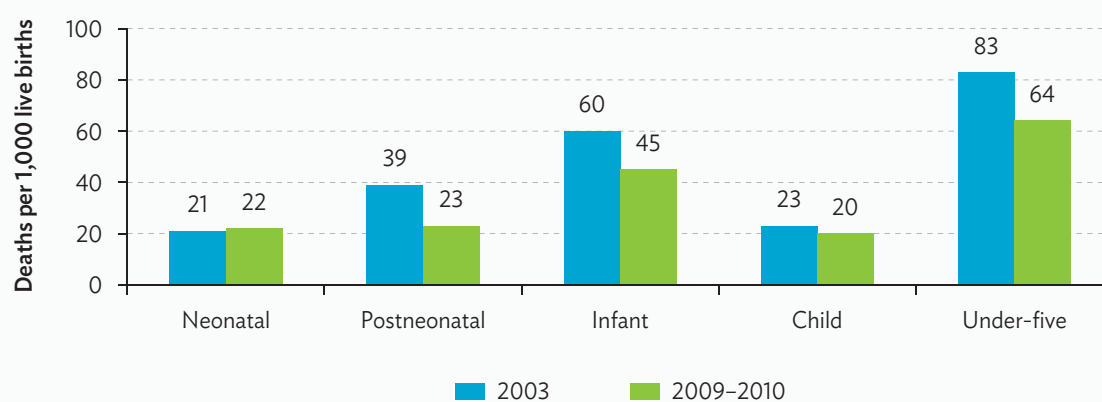
<sup>119</sup> SEPI. 2013. *CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report*. Unpublished.

<sup>120</sup> Belton, S., Whittaker, A., and L. Barclay. 2009. *Maternal Mortality, Unplanned Pregnancy and Unsafe Abortion in Timor-Leste, A Situation Analysis*. Dili: UNFPA.

## Child Health

Although rates remain high, both infant and under-five mortality in Timor-Leste have decreased steadily during recent years. DHS data show that infant mortality has decreased from 60 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 45 in 2009–2010. Under-five mortality has also fallen from 83 deaths per 1,000 live births to 64. Different measures of mortality show that improvement in child mortality was mainly due to a decrease in child deaths between the first month of birth and age 1 (Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3 Trends in Child Mortality**



Note: Data for neonatal mortality and postneonatal mortality rates for the 2003 Demographic and Health Survey are unadjusted. Neonatal mortality refers to deaths within the first month of birth; infant mortality refers to deaths between birth and age 1; postneonatal mortality is the difference between infant and neonatal mortality; child mortality refers to deaths between age 1 and age 4; and under-five mortality refers to deaths between birth and age 5 (therefore, neonatal + postneonatal mortality = infant mortality; and infant + child mortality = under-five mortality).

Source: General Directorate for Statistics and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

Child survival is a key indicator of socioeconomic development and is closely related to maternal health. The two leading causes of infant and child mortality in Timor-Leste—lower respiratory infection and diarrheal disease—are directly related to a lack of clean water supply, poor sanitation, and hygiene.<sup>121</sup> Other factors associated with infant mortality include sex of the child, age of the mother at birth, and the interval since the preceding birth. Mortality rates are higher for boys than girls (86 and 76 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively), mostly due to natural biology of boys putting them at higher risk during the first month of life. Under-five mortality is higher among children born to mothers aged less than 20 years (103 deaths per 1,000 live births). Birth intervals of less than 2 years put children at a higher risk, with mortality rates being two and a half times higher than for children born after an interval of 4 years or longer. This illustrates the importance of family planning programs encouraging appropriate birth spacing as well as the prevention of teenage pregnancy.

Adequate care for women, before, during and after delivery, is an important factor in child survival and health. Children's poor health leads to diminished quality of life, poor educational performance, and low productivity during adult life. And the burden of care tends to fall on women. Recommendations to increase child survival

<sup>121</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

include improvements in access to and use of family planning methods, assuring the availability of skilled birth attendants, increasing health screening of newborn children, and improving access to emergency care.<sup>122</sup>

## Nutrition

Hunger and poor nutrition is a serious public health concern in Timor-Leste. The DHS shows that in 2009–2010, 27% of women aged 15–49 were malnourished, an improvement from 38% reported in 2003.<sup>123</sup> Women with poor nutritional status have a greater risk of experiencing major illnesses, obstructed labor, and dying from postpartum hemorrhage.

Malnutrition among children is extremely high, with 58% suffering from chronic malnutrition in 2009–2010, up from 54% in 2007. The measures of malnutrition in children—stunting (too short for age), wasting (too thin for height), and being underweight (too thin for age)—are all highly prevalent (Table 3.2). There is no significant difference between girls and boys; however, malnutrition is much higher among children in rural than urban areas. Preliminary results from a national nutrition survey in 2013 suggest that the overall nutritional status of children under age 5 has improved since 2009–2010: stunting has fallen to 51.92%, wasting to 11%, and underweight to 38%.<sup>124</sup>

**Table 3.2** Prevalence of Child Malnutrition by Sex, 2009–2010

	2009–2010						2013 <sup>a</sup> (%)
	2007 (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)	
Any malnutrition							
Stunted	54.0	60.3	56.0	49.2	60.6	58.1	51.9
Wasted	25.0	20.3	17.0	14.9	19.7	18.6	10.8
Underweight	49.0	45.5	43.8	34.9	47.4	44.7	38.1
Severely malnourished							
Severely stunted	24.0	34.5	31.2	21.5	36.1	32.9	–
Severely wasted	8.0	7.8	6.2	4.5	7.7	7.0	–
Severely underweight	15.0	16.3	14.5	9.7	17.0	15.4	–

– = Not available.

<sup>a</sup> Preliminary results of the Ministry of Health 2013 National Nutrition Survey.

Source: GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

<sup>122</sup> Singh, C. I. 2009. *Perinatal Mortality in Timor-Leste: Reported Perinatal and Neonatal Deaths in Health Alliance International (HAI) Program Districts*. Dili: USAID/HAI/MoH.

<sup>123</sup> MoH/GDS/University of Newcastle. 2004. *Timor-Leste 2003 Demographic and Health Survey*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle.

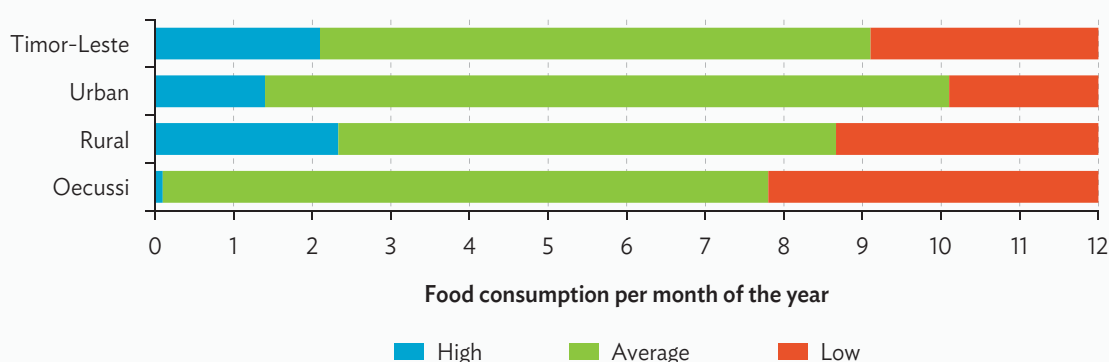
<sup>124</sup> MoH. 2013. Information Note: Preliminary Findings of the National Nutrition Survey in Timor-Leste. Unpublished.



Most Timorese children (97%) are breastfed but only 52% of children less than 6 months are being exclusively breastfed. There are no major differences in the rates of breastfeeding by the sex of the child or urban–rural location.<sup>125</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that infants receive nothing but breast milk (exclusive breastfeeding) for the first 6 months of life. Complementary foods should be introduced from 6 months of age as exclusive breastfeeding is no longer sufficient for child’s optimal growth from that point on.

Food shortages are a reality for most Timorese households: 72% of households had at least 1 month of low food consumption in 2007.<sup>126</sup> The seasonal nature of food availability is reflected in the consumption patterns throughout the year (Figure 3.4). On average, households experience low consumption for almost 3 months of the year, and fluctuations in food availability is higher in rural areas. Food security is a particular issue for the district of Oecussi, where consumption was well below national averages.

**Figure 3.4** Household Food Consumption over the Last 12 Months, 2007



Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2007. *Timor-Leste Livings Standards Survey 2007*. Dili.

The MoH, through the Department of Nutrition, has developed the National Nutrition Strategy, which provides comprehensive information on the country’s goals. Implementation of this strategy started in 2012.<sup>127</sup> The government has also drafted a breastfeeding policy, a national salt law, and infant and young child feeding strategies. Many stakeholders, both national and international, are assisting in addressing malnutrition: WHO, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Program, USAID, CARE International, Oxfam, World Vision, Medico do Mundo, and Timor-Leste Asistencia Integrada Saude. Initiatives include reforming the agriculture sector with the aim of achieving food self-sufficiency, improved mother and child nutrition care practices, nutrition services through health facilities, and school feeding and behavior change programs.<sup>128</sup> Progress has been slow, hampered by limited human resources in the nutrition sector. Results from a national survey in 2013 suggest that policies and programs are beginning to have a positive impact, and the prioritization of nutrition among development goals should translate into more achievements.

<sup>125</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

<sup>126</sup> GDS. 2007. *Timor-Leste Livings Standards Survey 2007*. Dili.

<sup>127</sup> MoH. 2011. *National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>128</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

## Reproductive Health

The fertility rate in Timor-Leste has decreased from 7.8 children per woman in 2003 to 5.7 in 2009–2010, but is still the third highest in the world and the second highest in Asia and the Pacific after Afghanistan.<sup>129</sup> Importantly, fertility patterns are closely associated with women's education and family assets. The fertility rate is substantially lower as women's educational attainment increases, from 6.1 births among women with no education to 2.9 births among women with more than secondary education. Similarly, fertility is also inversely associated with wealth. Women in the lowest wealth quintile have an average of 7.3 births compared with only 4.2 births for women in the highest quintile.<sup>130</sup> As commonly found in other developing countries, women's education and improved family income seem to have an important fertility-reducing effect in Timor-Leste.

High fertility rates put pressure on economic and environmental resources, and the burden of care mainly falls on women, reducing their time to be engaged in other productive activities. Impacts include increased poverty and difficulty keeping up with demands for infrastructure, food, health, and education services. High fertility also leads to higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. In 2004, the government of Timor-Leste established the National Reproductive Health Strategy, providing a road map for action during 2004–2015 and ensuring the integration of all reproductive health in basic service delivery.<sup>131</sup> In particular, the objectives are to increase the level of knowledge about sexuality and reproductive health across the population, promote family planning, ensure all women and men have access to reproductive health care services and information, reduce the level of maternal and child mortality and morbidity, and reduce the burden of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.

Progress is being made slowly in reducing fertility but critical issues remain in reaching wide rural populations. A regional consultation conducted in 2010 found major gaps exist in information and service delivery, a shortage of health professionals, poor transport and infrastructure, and lack of information on reproductive health.<sup>132</sup>

### *Adolescent Reproductive Health*

Six percent of women age 15–19 are already mothers. Within this age group, the percentage of women who have children increases with age, from 2% of women aged 15 up to 14% of women aged 19 (Figure 3.5). Rural adolescents (8%) are twice as likely to have begun childbearing as their urban counterparts (4%). Adolescent childbearing is lowest in the capital (4%) and highest in Oecussi (9%).<sup>133</sup> Teen pregnancy is also closely associated with education and family's economic status. Nearly 15% of young women with primary education or less have begun childbearing during their teens, compared with less than 4% of women with secondary or higher education. The percentage of women who have begun childbearing at age 15–19 is also higher among those in the lowest wealth quintile (9%) compared to those in the highest quintile (3%).<sup>134</sup>

Teenage pregnancy is an important health issue, as child mortality tends to be higher among young mothers. DHS data show that under-five mortality is higher among mothers aged less than 20 years (103 deaths per

<sup>129</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili; and United Nations Statistics Division. MDG Database. [mdgs.un.org](http://mdgs.un.org)

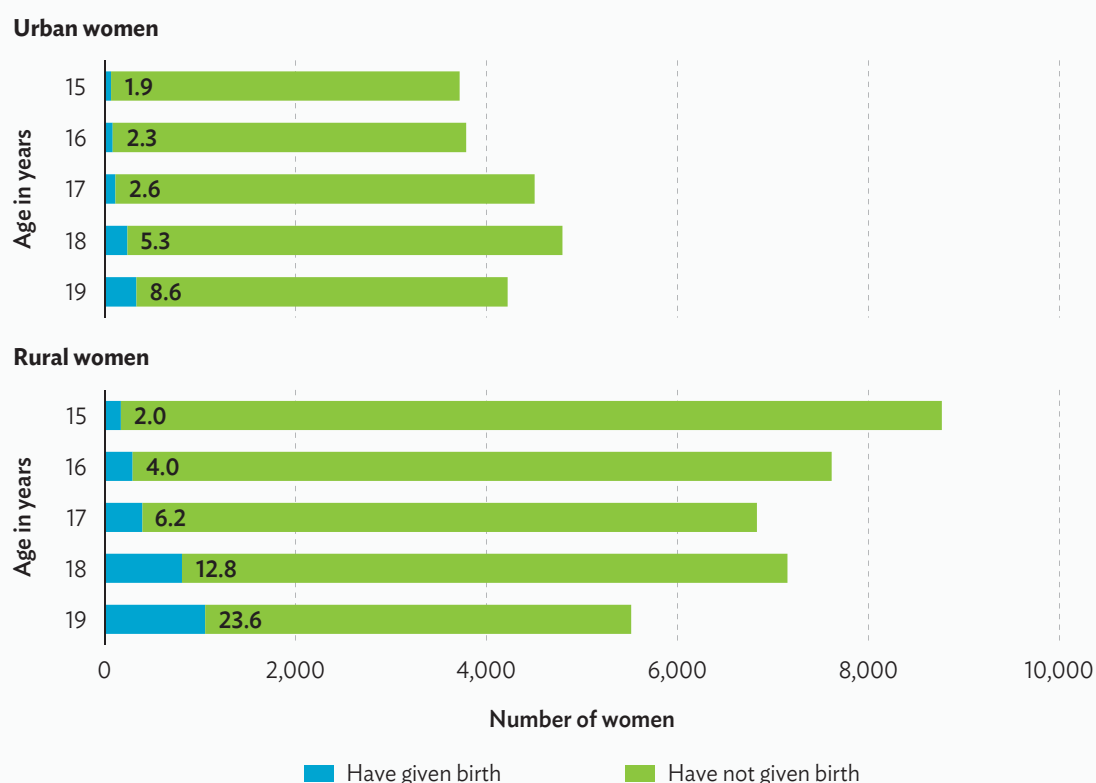
<sup>130</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

<sup>131</sup> MoH, et al. 2004. *National Reproductive Health Strategy 2005–2015*. Dili.

<sup>132</sup> UNFPA. 2011. *Report of the National Conference on Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Sex Education, 11–13 July 2010*. Dili.

<sup>133</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>134</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

**Figure 3.5** Adolescent Women (Aged 15–19) Who Have Given Birth by Urban and Rural Areas, 2010 (%)

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

1,000 live births), while it decreases for mothers aged 20–29 (83 deaths) and those aged 30–39 (75 deaths). Timor-Leste's adolescent fertility rate remains high in comparison to its neighbors in Southeast Asia and the Pacific (Table 3.3).

The important role sex education plays in adolescent reproductive health was emphasized at a national conference in 2010.<sup>135</sup> The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Secretary of State for Youth and Sports developed an action plan in 2010 to provide sexual and reproductive health services and information to youth in school, out of school, and particularly those that are hard to reach. Little information is available on the extent and impact of implementation of this action plan, however. The CEDAW report states that an adolescent reproductive health curriculum for children in grades 7–12 has been developed and piloted in 10 schools across 8 districts.<sup>136</sup> UNFPA reports on a national consultative workshop held in 2012 also state that a new reproductive health curriculum has been rolled out in 10 schools in the Dili district during 2012.<sup>137</sup> Given the early stage of this initiative, measurable impacts are not available yet.

<sup>135</sup> UNFPA. 2011. *Report of the National Conference on Reproductive Health, Family Planning and Sex Education, 11–13 July 2010*. Dili.

<sup>136</sup> SEPI. 2011. *CEDAW Specific Report on Education and Health Sectors*. Dili.

<sup>137</sup> UNFPA Timor-Leste. *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Curriculum for Timor-Leste*. [http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/timor-leste/2012/03/23/4725/adolescent\\_sexual\\_and\\_reproductive\\_health\\_curriculum\\_for\\_timor\\_leste](http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/timor-leste/2012/03/23/4725/adolescent_sexual_and_reproductive_health_curriculum_for_timor_leste)

**Table 3.3** Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19) in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, 2008–2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Papua New Guinea	66	65	64	63
<b>Timor-Leste</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>55</b>
Philippines	53	51	50	48
Fiji	45	44	44	43
Indonesia	45	44	43	43
Cambodia	40	38	36	35
Lao People's Democratic Republic	37	35	34	32

Source: World Bank. World Development Indicators. <http://data.worldbank.org> (accessed 12 October 2013).

## Family Planning

Family planning services are central to reducing high fertility, improving health outcomes, and alleviating poverty. An increase in the unmet need for family planning indicates that more investment is needed to increase knowledge and access to services. Contraceptives are currently provided free of charge as part of primary health care. This includes advice on natural methods as well as the provision of condoms, pills, and injectables. Implant and IUDs are available at CHCs with beds (CHC-2), and sterilization is available at referral hospitals and higher-level health centers. Family planning services are offered through SISCa posts on a monthly basis in almost every *suco* in the country; however, uptake has been limited to date.

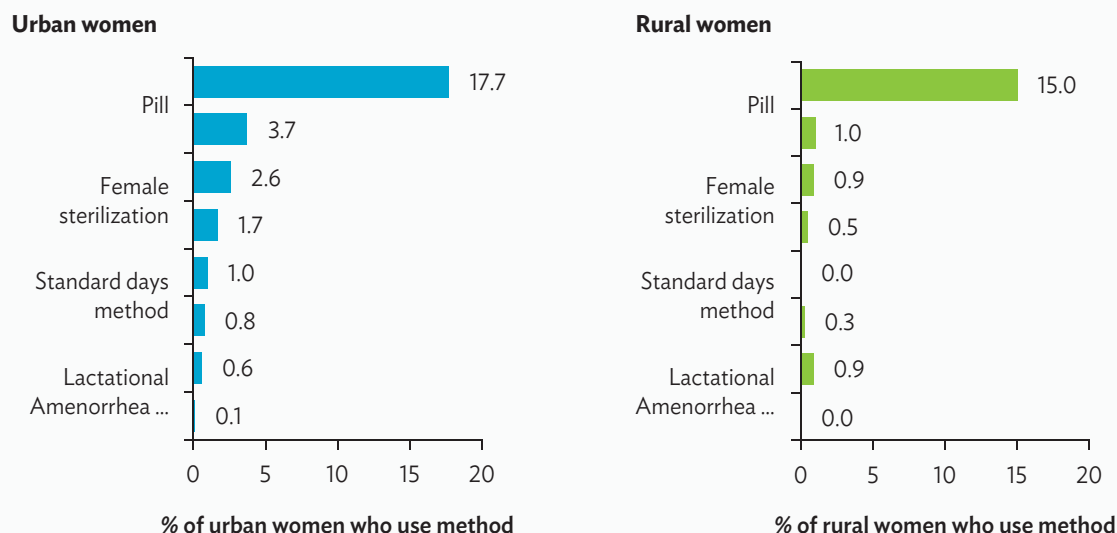
### Contraceptive Use

The use of contraceptives is low in Timor-Leste. The 2009–2010 DHS data show that only one out of five currently married women aged 15–49 (22%) use some form of contraceptives. Yet its use is somewhat higher for women in urban areas (28%) than in rural areas (19%). Modern methods, such as injectables, oral contraceptives (“the pill”), and IUDs, are more commonly used (21% of currently married women) than traditional methods, such as the withdrawal, rhythm, and folk methods (used by 1% of currently married women).<sup>138</sup> Figure 3.6 shows the use of different methods between urban and rural areas.

Contraceptive use increases significantly with women’s education level and family’s economic status. Women with a tertiary education are twice as likely to use contraceptives as women with no education (32% and 16%, respectively). Use is also higher for women with a secondary education (26%) than for those with no education. By wealth quintile, 34% of currently married women in the highest quintile use contraceptives, compared with only 15% of those in the lowest quintile.

<sup>138</sup> Modern contraceptive methods include female sterilization, oral contraceptives (“the pill”), IUD, injectables, implants, male condoms, lactational amenorrhea method, and standard days method. Traditional methods include the rhythm, withdrawal, and folk methods.

**Figure 3.6** Use of Modern Contraceptive Methods by Currently Married Women (Aged 15–49) by Urban and Rural Areas, 2009–2010



Source: General Directorate for Statistics and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

Despite this low use, knowledge of contraception is reasonably high. The 2009–2010 DHS shows that 78% of currently married women and 66% of currently married men in Timor-Leste know of at least one modern method of family planning. This is a considerable increase from the levels found in 2003—around 38% for women and 30% for men—which were among the lowest in East Asia and the Pacific.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, information on planned contraceptive use from the 2009–2010 DHS shows that the majority of women have no intention to use contraceptives (54%). The common reasons being cited include personal or partner's opposition to their use (46%), fear of side effects (10%), opposition by husband or partner (9%); and health concerns (8%).

Unmet need for family planning relates to the degree to which women are able to space or limit the births of their children and is one of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators.<sup>140</sup> The 2009–2010 DHS shows a considerable increase in the unmet need for family planning services in Timor-Leste. Almost one in every three currently married women (31%) had unmet needs for family planning, up from 4% in 2003. This suggests that awareness-raising campaigns are having an impact, but social norms and service availability may prevent the use of family planning methods. Data on the ideal family size show little difference between women and men in the number of children they would like to have. Both expressed a desire for five children on average, but the ideal family size increases to six for those currently married. No significant change is seen between 2003 and 2010 in the ideal number of children families want.

<sup>139</sup> Kennedy, E. et al. 2011. Adolescent fertility and family planning in East Asia and the Pacific: A review of DHS reports. *Reproductive Health Journal*. Volume 8. [www.reproductive-health-journal.com/content/8/1/11](http://www.reproductive-health-journal.com/content/8/1/11)

<sup>140</sup> Unmet need for family planning is measured using a combination of information about a woman's last and next birth, whether the pregnancy was unwanted or mistimed, whether they use a contraceptive method, and their current state of health.

In 2005, the government approved the National Family Planning Policy, which promotes responsible parenthood as the guiding principle to planning a family.<sup>141</sup> The Ministry of Health plans to review and update this policy in 2014. The community, including Catholic Church leaders, have expressed support for the implementation of a family planning program. The Maternal and Child Health Department of the Ministry of Health has overall responsibility for the national family planning program and oversees the delivery of services in the districts. This is done in conjunction with district health management teams, district family planning coordinators, and logistical and pharmacy staff.

The provision of family planning services at the community level through SISCa is yet to be realized. An assessment in 2011 cited shortcomings at the community level, such as “lack of privacy and time, stock-outs of methods, lack of consistent transport for staff and materials, unsatisfactory sanitary conditions to perform more complex procedures, lack of coordination between the CHC, the Promotors Saude Familia, the chefe de suco, and the pro-natalist influence of the Catholic church.” Recommendations include piloting different models of delivery, such as home visits and take-home materials that women can refer to when discussing family planning with their husbands.<sup>142</sup>

## Health and Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV)—discussed in Chapter 4—is a public health issue that primarily impacts women. The health sector plays a crucial role in the prevention and elimination of GBV. Research shows that women exposed to violence tend to visit health services more often than nonabused women. This allows health care providers a crucial opportunity to detect and care for women living with violence. In recognition of this, the establishment of “safe spaces” (*fatin hakmatek*) in national and regional hospitals began in 2002. The hospital staff receive training in how to deal with GBV cases and some are trained in conducting forensic examinations and documenting evidence for the purpose of investigation and prosecution.<sup>143</sup>

## Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Access to clean water and improved sanitation, along with safe hygiene practices, plays a fundamental role in preventative health measures. They are associated with poor health outcomes, such as maternal and child mortality, particularly in rural areas. In Timor-Leste, the two most significant causes of infant and child mortality—lower respiratory infection and diarrheal disease—are directly related to poor sanitation and hygiene. Gender is a key factor in water, sanitation, and hygiene, as women are the ones who primarily collect water, cook, clean, farm, and provide health care and hygiene for their households. In addition to water quality, the distance to water is an issue for many communities: almost 40% of the population is at least 30 minutes from the nearest water source and women spend around 3 hours per day collecting water.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>141</sup> MoH. 2005. *National Family Planning Policy*. Dili.

<sup>142</sup> Berthiaume, J. et al. 2011. *An Assessment of Community-Based Delivery of Family Planning Services in Timor-Leste*. <http://aid.dfat.gov.au/countries/eastasia/timor-leste/Documents/hai-assess-sisca-hai-eng.pdf>

<sup>143</sup> UNFPA. 2010. *Health Sector Response to Gender-Based Violence: An Assessment of the Asia Pacific Region*. Bangkok.

<sup>144</sup> Information provided by Bee Saneamentu no Igene (BESIK) based on time use studies and government data for 2012 from Sistema Informasaun Bee no Saneamentu.

**Table 3.4** Proportion of Households with Access to Improved Water and Sanitation by Urban and Rural Areas, 2010

	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
<b>Source of drinking water</b>			
Improved	89	57	65
Unimproved	11	43	35
<b>Sanitation facility</b>			
Improved	81	25	39
Unimproved	19	75	61

*Note:* Improved drinking water sources include piped water, public taps, tube well or borehole, protected wells and springs, and rainwater collection. Unimproved sources include rivers, lakes, or streams; bottled water; or unprotected wells and springs. Improved sanitation facilities include flush/pour flush to a pit latrine or septic tank, ventilated improved pit latrine, and pit latrine with slab. Unimproved sanitation includes flush/pour flush to elsewhere, pit latrine without slab or open pit, bucket, hanging toilet or hanging latrine, and no facilities or bush or field. The classification is based on the World Health Organization and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation definitions. [www.wssinfo.org/definitions-methods/watsan-categories](http://www.wssinfo.org/definitions-methods/watsan-categories)

*Source:* General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

As shown in Table 3.4, about two-thirds of Timorese households (65%) now have access to improved sources of drinking water, up from 48% in 2001.<sup>145</sup> Yet, there is a large urban–rural gap: more than 40% of rural households still rely on unimproved sources such as an unprotected well or spring, compared with only 11% of urban households. Using water from these sources increases the risk of spread of waterborne disease. A study conducted in 2010 in four districts revealed that 70% of the water tested was microbiologically contaminated.<sup>146</sup>

Similarly, a substantial urban–rural gap exists in access to proper sanitation facilities. Only 25% of rural households have access to improved facilities such as a flush toilet or septic tank, compared with 81% of urban households. Overall, 28% of households reported “no facility or the bush” (37% in rural and 7% in urban areas) and one-quarter of households reported using toilet facilities that are shared between several households, increasing the likelihood of spreading disease.

Efforts have been made by the government, both through *suco* MDGs and national strategic development programs. Since 2010 when the access to clean water project was established through the Ministry of Infrastructure, about 780 community water management groups—*grupu maneja facilidade*—have been set up in *aldeias*. Given women’s role in collecting and using water, their active participation in these groups have been essential, allowing them to inform and influence decisions on the location and use of piped water. Data from an initiative to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene show that women make up about one-third (33%) of the members, and for those *aldeias* with a higher representation of women in these groups, water is more likely to be continually available with a shorter distance from homes.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Government of Timor–Leste. 2011. *Timor–Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>146</sup> MoH and WHO. 2010. *Water Quality Study*. WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia.

<sup>147</sup> Bee Saneamentu no Igene (BESIK). 2013. Data provided to SEPI on request.



## Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS

Data on the type and rate of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Timor-Leste are limited. According to the 2009–10 DHS, which gathered STI data based on self-assessment, the prevalence of STIs is relatively low with only 1% of women and men being affected. No difference by sex is noticeable, given a very low prevalence rate. Self-reporting in the DHS may produce an underestimate of the prevalence rate, as many symptoms are not easily recognized.

The estimated national prevalence of HIV is approximately 0.1845%, considered a low-level epidemic; however, there is evidence that the incidence of HIV is increasing.<sup>148</sup> The first case was recorded in 2003 and by the end of 2012, there have been a total of 281 people confirmed HIV positive (52% women), 36 deaths (33% women), and 84 people on antiretroviral treatment (40% women). According to the government's progress report in 2012, HIV infection is concentrated in the urban areas of Dili and Maliana. Half of the infections occur in those aged 25–44 years and 34% were aged 15–24.<sup>149</sup>

Available information from DHS data suggests that while prevalence is currently low (estimated at 0.6% in 2003), there is a high risk due to limited knowledge of how the virus is transmitted or prevented: only 44% of women and 61% of men have heard of HIV/AIDS. Many Timorese have misconceptions about the virus, with only one-third (33%) of women and 46% of men knowing that a healthy-looking person can have HIV, and fewer knowing that HIV cannot be transmitted by mosquito bites (25% of women and 42% of men). Knowledge of condoms and their role in preventing the transmission of AIDS is low among men (45%) and women (30%); only 35% of men and 17% of women age 15–49 know where to get an HIV test.

Voluntary counseling and testing services are provided through 17 locations: 1 national hospital in Dili, 5 referral hospitals, 9 CHC's, 1 private clinic, and 3 mobile clinics.<sup>150</sup> Development of a prevention of mother-to-child transmission began in 2010 and antenatal testing was made available through 6 hospitals in 2011. During that year, uptake of antenatal testing was highest in Dili (2,154 women), while 587 women tested in Baucau, 346 in Maliana, and none in Covalima, Ainaro, and Oecussi. Of all those tested, 7 women were confirmed HIV positive and given treatment.

Timor-Leste adopted the first national HIV/AIDS strategy (2006–2010) in 2006. It identified priorities in education and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, targeting the groups considered most at risk: female sex workers and their clients, men who have sex with men, and uniformed services personnel. In 2011, the second national HIV/AIDS and STI Strategic Plan (2011–2016) was developed to serve as a framework for action for the next 5 years.<sup>151</sup> It focuses on prevention, behavioral change through awareness and treatment, and care and support to all HIV infected and affected persons. The government reported significant achievements in 2010–2011, such as strengthening of voluntary counseling and testing services, producing guidelines, training clinicians, and providing treatment. Gaps in policy implementation have included a lack of specific targeting in prevention programs (e.g., youth most at risk, people with multiple sexual partners), difficulties in maintaining supplies of certain drugs, providing appropriate training for clinicians, safeguarding the rights of HIV positive people, cross-sectoral coordination, and a lack of data for monitoring and evaluation. The government identified gender as an

<sup>148</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2012. *Global AIDS Progress Report: January 2010–December 2011*. UNAIDS.

<sup>149</sup> MoH. 2013. *Annual Health Statistics for 2012*.

<sup>150</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2012. *Global AIDS Progress Report: January 2010–December 2011*. Dili.

<sup>151</sup> Government of Timor-Leste (n.d.) *Timor-Leste National HIV and STI Strategy 2011–2016*. Dili.

important factor in vulnerability and risk of HIV to be taken into account in subsequent situation analysis and strategy design.

## Mental Health

Certain groups within society, such as those living in poverty, people with chronic health conditions, and people exposed to conflict, may have a higher risk of experiencing mental health problems.<sup>152</sup> A national survey conducted in 2000 found that 97% of respondents had suffered at least one traumatic event and 34% had post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>153</sup> In 2005, the Ministry of Health (MoH) adopted its first National Mental Health Strategy to finance mental health service delivery, staff development, training, promotion of mental health awareness, and pharmaceuticals. MoH data show that in 2009, the total mental health caseload was 3,743 (48% women). Among these, the most common diagnosis was psychosis with more than 1,000 cases recorded, followed by almost 800 cases of epilepsy. In both cases, slightly more men than women suffered from these disorders. Gender differences are most notable in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (approximately 260 men versus less than 90 women) and depression (approximately 100 men and 200 women).<sup>154</sup> The national strategy was revised in 2010, recognizing the need for operational guidelines to facilitate gender equity and providing data on existing caseload by sex. The strategy, however, does not specify gender differences in mental health care needs or how the MoH should address these differences in implementing the policy.

## Men's Health

Women and men are susceptible to different health issues and outcomes throughout their lifetimes. Overall, men tend to live fewer years than women. In Timor-Leste the life expectancy at birth is 58.6 years for men and 60.2 for women (2010).<sup>155</sup>

Gender disparities are apparent in the types of risks to health. Men tend to take greater risks than women, through tobacco use and the consumption of alcohol. The DHS data show that around 70% of men smoke, compared with only 5% of women. In addition, men smoke quite heavily, with 40% of men aged 15–49 consuming 10 or more cigarettes a day. By comparison, women who smoke typically consume 1–2 cigarettes a day. Tobacco use is also more prevalent among men in rural areas (72%) than those in urban areas (64%). Smoking is slightly more common among the poorest and the least educated men as well.

## Disability

Almost 50,000 people live with disabilities (4.5% of the total population), of which 47% are women and 53% are men.<sup>156</sup> Half of all persons with disabilities are aged over 60 years. As shown in Figure 3.7, disabilities are classified based on severity from “some difficulty” to “a lot of difficulty” to “cannot do at all.” Those who have a lot of difficulty with seeing, hearing, walking, or mental/intellectual tasks, or cannot do one of them at all, are considered to have a severe disability. Of those with any disability, the rate of severe disability is similar between women (18%) and men (17%).

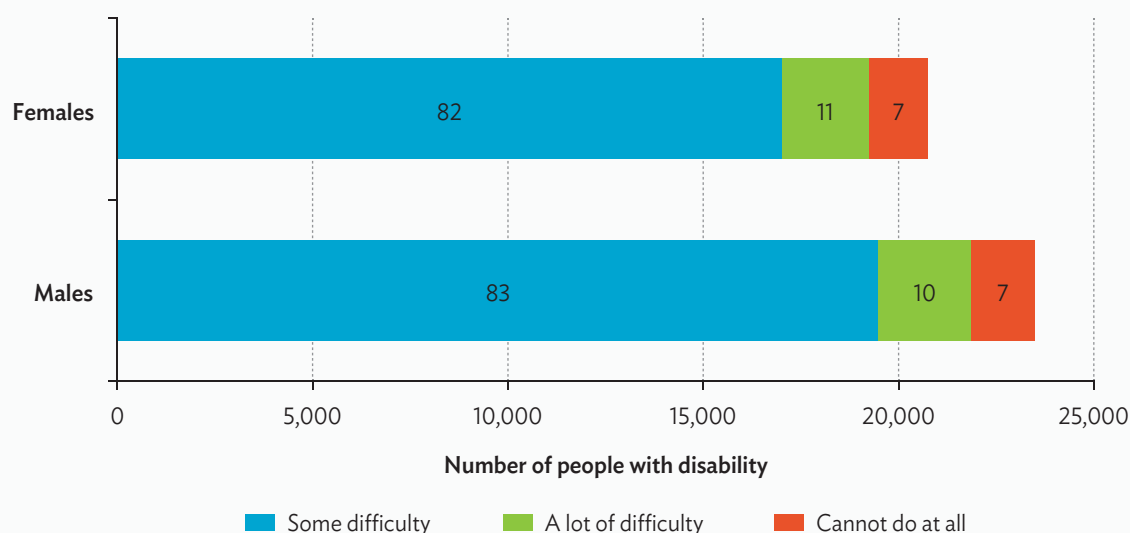
<sup>152</sup> WHO. 2013. *Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020*. Geneva.

<sup>153</sup> Modvig, J. et al. 2000. Torture and trauma in post-conflict East Timor. *The Lancet*. Volume 356, No. 9243.

<sup>154</sup> MoH. 2010. *National Mental Health Care Strategy*. Dili.

<sup>155</sup> MoH. 2011. *National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>156</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

**Figure 3.7** Disabled Population by Severity of Disability and Sex, 2010 (%)

Source: General Directorate for Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

Among people with any disability, aging is likely to be a primary cause for 37%; a long-term or short-term health condition for 20%; congenital (from birth) condition for 12%; and occupational injuries for 3%. About 1,000 people with a disability (2%) also reported that conflict was the major cause of their severe disability; for these people, difficulty in walking was the main problem.<sup>157</sup>

Legislation to protect and support the elderly and disabled populations was enacted in 2008.<sup>158</sup> The Ministry of Social Security is responsible for policy development and implementation in this area. Around 5,500 people with a disability were receiving benefits (\$360 per annum) in 2012. Sex-disaggregated data are not available, but estimates indicate that 44% of beneficiaries receiving disability benefits from the ministry in 2011 were women.<sup>159</sup> An assessment of social assistance programs suggests that coverage of this disability program is poor and the vast majority (85%) of eligible recipients is not reached.<sup>160</sup>

### 3.3 Taking Action

Despite steady improvements in health outcomes, indicators show that women's health remains poor. There are a number of barriers facing women in accessing health care information and services, including long distances to health facilities, poor roads and transport, and expectations they remain at home. The health sector strategic plan lacks specific discussions around the impact of gender on health-seeking behavior, the types of health

<sup>157</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>158</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2008. Decree-Law No. 19/2008: Support Allowances for the Aged and the Disabled.

<sup>159</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>160</sup> World Bank. 2013. *Timor-Leste Social Assistance Public Expenditure and Program Performance Report*. Washington, DC.

issues faced by women and men, and policy development and implementation. A gender and health policy was drafted by MoH in 2009, including a firm basis for developing a policy that outlines key gender concerns and how the strategic plan should incorporate such gender concerns. Unfortunately, the draft policy was never formally adopted.

The MoH faces enormous challenges in ensuring health services are delivered effectively. The advantages of a decentralized system and a solid policy framework have not yet been realized, with implementation hampered by inadequate funding and limited institutional capacity. In 2014, the health sector's share of total budget allocation was around 5% (\$72 million); government expenditure on health as a proportion of GDP fell from 6.9% in 2009 to 5.1% in 2011.<sup>161</sup> The MoH plan states these levels of funding are inadequate. It is common for health facilities to lack basic utilities like water and electricity, and health equipment has reached the stage where urgent repairs and replacements are needed. Transport services—both ambulances to carry patients and vehicles to transport health care workers, equipment, and supplies—have not been adequately funded and maintained. A weak information management, monitoring, and evaluation system makes it a challenge to plan and supervise operations effectively, and there is a limited capacity to absorb donor funding. All these have a major impact on implementing policies and delivering basic health services, such as SISCa and other outreach activities.<sup>162</sup>

Partnerships are essential in achieving national goals and government plans. Initiatives such as the MoH/Health Alliance International maternal and newborn health project have generated a significant impact on health outcomes. The project, conducted in seven districts from 2004–2008, combined community-level health promotion and health system strengthening components to improve maternal and newborn health. Different levels of interventions involved the MoH setting the direction and pace of activities even if this risked slowing implementation, and the use of videos and photography to transmit health messages.<sup>163</sup>

Another important intervention for improvement in health outcomes involves changing attitudes and behavior through public awareness campaigns. The Behavior Change Communication initiative uses culturally sensitive and rights-based information, as well as awareness-raising campaigns, that target men, women, and young people of reproductive age (15–49 years old) with the aim of creating demand for all family planning services and information. A variety of communication strategies are used, including “edutainment” (entertainment education) through radio soap operas or theatre drama; community mobilization and advocacy through radio; televised public service announcements; and overall interpersonal communication, which remains the primary form of communication in Timor-Leste.

The large disparities in health outcomes between urban and rural areas highlight the importance of outreach to rural areas and using appropriate communication to inform women, most of whom are illiterate and have limited or no education. Also, the fact that health outcomes are closely associated with income status and women's education suggests the importance of investing in education to improve health outcomes. Health also influences economic status—healthy people can be more productive and have better employment outcomes,

<sup>161</sup> Ministry of Finance. 2013. *State Budget 2014: Book 1*; World Bank data on health expenditure as a % of GDP from [data.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>162</sup> MoH. 2011. *National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>163</sup> Mize, L. 2008. *Improving Maternal and Newborn Health in Timor-Leste—Final Evaluation Report*. Seattle: Health Alliance International. The districts included in the project were Aileu, Ermera, Manatuto, Liquica, Manufahi, Ainaro, and Dili.

as well as raising more healthy children. Similarly, wealthier families can afford better nutrition and better quality health services. The relationships among education, health and economic empowerment, and the primary role that women play in these areas should influence policy makers to direct more funding to these critical areas and promote gender mainstreaming.

The MoH is the main actor in addressing gender concerns in health; however, the sector strategic plan includes few gender-sensitive strategies.<sup>164</sup> It notes the need to respond to “different situations and requirements of men and women” and commits to developing guidelines for mainstreaming gender issues in health sector planning. The plan mentions affirmative action to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and people with a disability, but the specifics are not outlined. A recent gender and health assessment found that the health policy framework provides a strong foundation, but that “efforts to tackle inequalities have been inconsistent.” It determined that the National Policy for Family Planning, the Health Workforce Plan, and the SISCa guidelines fail to analyze the underlying causes of gender concerns and give specific remedies for action.<sup>165</sup>

### 3.4 Recommendations

#### ***Improve delivery and uptake of maternal and reproductive health services***

To improve maternal and child health outcomes, the primary health care system needs to be strengthened by addressing barriers to service delivery, which include underfunding, limited human resource capacity, poor transport infrastructure, and inadequate supplies and equipment. Women, especially rural women, need to be better informed of maternal care needs and available services through awareness raising and outreach of health services. The MoH should identify support areas that SEPI can advocate for to achieve more equitable outcomes in service delivery, and its annual action plans should reflect such support needs. SEPI should examine the new national strategy on maternal and child health to ensure that it is gender sensitive and support its implementation through the gender equality framework.

#### ***Scale up efforts to improve water and sanitation***

To improve health outcomes, especially in rural areas, access to safe water and improved sanitation facilities needs to be scaled up. SEPI should consult with lead agencies in this area to ensure that projects involving the construction and management of water and sanitation facilities include consultation with women and engage them as active participants. Given women’s role in managing household resources, their inputs to the provision of basic utilities are essential for achieving improved health outcomes.

<sup>164</sup> MoH. 2011. *National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2011–2030*. The first version of this plan covered the period 2008–2012 and was then revised for 2011–2030.

<sup>165</sup> Pappa, S., Rottach, E., and H. Vaziri. 2013. *Family Planning and Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health in Timor-Leste: Assessing Gender Constraints and Opportunities, Improving Outcomes*. Washington, DC: Futures Group, Health Policy Project.

***Increase health sector capacity to respond to gender-based violence***

Health care workers at district health posts, CHCs, and SISCa need training in GBV case identification and management, issues surrounding gender and power relations, ethics, and counseling skills. Health administrators and hospital staff should be sensitized to the health sector's response to GBV in order to ensure program implementation is accepted and supported. SEPI should follow up with the MoH, the Rede Referral Network, and development partners to contribute to and monitor the rollout of this training.

***Improve health by reducing risky behaviors***

The MoH should develop and implement an antismoking policy to reduce high levels of smoking among men. Interventions can include taxation, banning cigarette advertising, and raising public awareness of its serious risks to health. Unless action is taken early, high levels of smoking will place significant burden on Timor-Leste's limited health services. Timor-Leste has ratified the Convention on Anti-Tobacco but has not yet implemented any of its policy recommendations.

***Strengthen health sector data collection and monitoring and evaluation***

Improving data collection and monitoring and evaluation is one of the priorities of the health sector strategic plan. More rigorous efforts should be directed to collecting sex-disaggregated data that reflect women's health care needs, analyzing and disseminating such information, and regular monitoring to assess progress. These data should be incorporated into policy planning and decision-making in the health sector. SEPI can support by raising awareness in the MoH of the CGA findings, obtaining top management support, and developing methods to fully integrate gender issues in the review and development of the new Health Management Information System.

# 4

## Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice

This chapter examines the prevalence of gender-based violence in Timor-Leste and its underlying causes. It also explores the role of customary law and the challenges in accessing the criminal justice system, particularly among women.

### Key Findings

- The 2009–2010 DHS report shows that more than a third (38%) of women have experienced physical violence during their adult lives.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) is a major issue exacerbated by traditional views on marriage and gender roles, as well as by limited capacity of the formal criminal justice system.
- Cases of domestic violence are typically resolved at the family level and only escalated to community, religious, and state authorities if solutions are not found.
- Enactments of the Penal Code (2009) and the Law Against Domestic Violence (2010) have been significant milestones, but this legislation has only been in effect a short time and more efforts are needed to effectively implement the law through the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (NAP-GBV).
- The general legal framework, including the criminal and civil justice systems, is still under development. It is hampered by limited resources and a heavy backlog of cases.
- Barriers to accessing justice, especially for women, include the limited outreach of police, the low number and long distances to courts, coexistence of customary and formal justice systems, language and literacy (both legal and general literacy), and insufficient resources and long delays in the legal process.

### 4.1 Overview of the Criminal Justice System

#### Legislation

According to its Constitution, Timor-Leste's legal framework follows the civil system. Legislation is enacted by Parliament and other laws are decreed or issued by the government. There has been significant progress in passing legislation over the decade since independence. New laws particularly relevant to crime and violence include the following:

- **Law Against Domestic Violence** (Law No. 7/2010)

Women and children are most often the victims of domestic violence. This law ensures sexual, physical, psychological, and economic abuse within the home is seen as a crime and provides the basis for protection, prosecution, and rehabilitation. The law deems domestic violence as a public crime; anyone can report the crime and a victim's complaint is not required to proceed with investigation and prosecution.



- **Penal Code** (Law No. 19/2009)

Both the Penal Code and the Law Against Domestic Violence recognize violence that occurs within the home and/or family as public crimes with heavy penalties. Even though the Law Against Domestic Violence theoretically supersedes the Penal Code regarding all cases of domestic violence, there are some inconsistencies between the two pieces of legislation, in terms of definitions, processes, and sentencing provisions, which may lead to undesirable interpretations and outcomes. For example, committing acts of domestic violence that lead to the death of the victim carries a much lighter sentence than committing homicide.<sup>166</sup>

- **Civil Code** (Law No 10/2011)

The Civil Code ensures equality and the protection of women in marriage, divorce, maintenance, land and property, and inheritance. The passing of the Civil Code is a major milestone in that there is no longer a need to rely upon the Indonesian Civil Code.

- **Law on Protection of Witnesses** (Law No. 2/2009)

Protecting the safety and security of witnesses in criminal or civil proceedings enables them to testify without fear of repercussions. The enactment of this law is an important element in protecting witnesses to public crimes such as domestic violence.

## Judicial System

The judicial system is comprised of a national court of appeal and four district courts in Dili, Baucau, Oecussi, and Suai. In 2013, there were 17 national judges overseeing these courts (30% women).<sup>167</sup> Serious cases require a panel of three judges. To support national justice institutions and address the current lack of qualified judges, national judges have been assisted in their task by international judges. There are currently seven international judges (one female and six male).<sup>168</sup>

The Office of the Prosecutor-General and the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) constitute the two main branches of law enforcement in Timor-Leste. In 2013, the office of the general prosecutor comprises 28 prosecutors divided between the Dili office and district offices: 6 women and 22 men, including nationals and internationals, as well as student prosecutors already practicing.

Legal representation is provided by private lawyers; the Office of the Public Defender, which has 22 public defenders; and nongovernment legal aid organizations, including Alfela.<sup>169</sup> According to the Timorese Lawyer's Association, there are around 50 private lawyers currently practicing. The proportion of women among these lawyers was not available. There are currently around 260 trainees—30% of which are women—undertaking courses at the Legal Training Center. The number and sex participants by the area of study are

- magistrates and public defenders (38 trainees, 21% women);
- private lawyers (35 trainees, 29% women);
- officers of criminal investigation police (47 trainees, 23% women);

<sup>166</sup> Judicial System Monitoring Program, Fokupers, and Royal Norwegian Embassy. 2011. *Facing the Challenge of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Can the New Law Deliver?* Dili.

<sup>167</sup> Ministry of Justice, Court of Appeals. April 2013. Data provided to SEPI upon request.

<sup>168</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*. Justice System Program, UNDP Timor-Leste. Draft.

<sup>169</sup> Judicial System Monitoring Programme. 2012. *Overview of the Justice Sector: JSMP Annual Report*. Dili.

- laboratory technicians to the scientific police (31 trainees, 29% women);
- law officers of the public prosecutor (50 trainees, 26% women);
- Court of Audit course (15 trainees, 33% women); and
- Portuguese language course (43 trainees, 42% women).

## Security and Police Forces

National security forces comprise PNTL and the Defense Force of Timor-Leste (F-FDTL). Both had to be completely reestablished after restoration of independence in 1999, formally coming into effect in 2001.<sup>170</sup> They have employed women from the outset: around 17% of PNTL and 6% of F-FDTL officers are women as of 2013. Despite their participation, women tend to occupy lower-level positions within the hierarchy.

The Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) was created under the National Investigations Department of PNTL in 2001. It has jurisdiction over crimes of rape, attempted rape, domestic violence, child abuse, child neglect, abandonment, missing persons, abortion, and sexual harassment.<sup>171</sup> In 2012, the VPU comprised 102 officers (82% female), an average of 6–7 officers for each district.<sup>172</sup> The VPU is considered an important and successful initiative as part of the efforts to address GBV.<sup>173</sup> It provides a clear entry point for handling cases and coordinating support services, as well as a mechanism for building expertise within PNTL to handle domestic violence and other forms of GBV. However, some issues still need to be solved, especially its legal status and the capacity of its officers, who are subject to regular rotation in and out of the unit and work without standard operational procedures. Strengthening the VPU is part of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.

## Customary Law

Community leaders and elders, rather than police, tend to be responsible for maintaining law and order. They are tasked with resolving disputes swiftly with a view to maintaining harmony in the material as well as spiritual world. Existing literature identifies three central figures regarding local dispute resolution: the *chefe de suco* (elected head of the village), *chefe de aldeia* (elected head of the hamlet), and *lian nain* (customary authority who makes decisions based on customary rules and norms). In addition, a number of other local authorities, such as church representatives and village elders, are also identified as conducting local judicial processes.<sup>174</sup>

Customary justice mechanisms are the only way of accessing justice for many people. For example, cases of domestic violence are typically resolved at the family level and only escalated to other authorities if a solution cannot be found.<sup>175</sup> Currently unregulated, customary justice systems pose a significant risk if they promulgate practices that clash with national and international law and human rights. This may be so particularly for women's

<sup>170</sup> Haider, H. 2012. *Helpdesk Research Report: Violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste*. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. Dili.

<sup>171</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*. Justice System Program, UNDP Timor-Leste. Draft.

<sup>172</sup> Vulnerable Persons Unit and National Police of Timor-Leste. 2012. Data provided to SEPI on request.

<sup>173</sup> Haider, H. 2012. *Helpdesk Research Report: Violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste*. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

<sup>174</sup> Kovar, A. 2012. *Approaches to Domestic Violence against Women in Timor-Leste: A Review and Critique*. Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific. Volume 3. Osaka: Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center.

<sup>175</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*. Justice System Program, UNDP Timor-Leste. Draft.

and children's rights, forced marriage, marriage with minors, marriage of victims and rapists, and discrimination against women in property rights.. A new law that is intended to harmonize local and formal justice systems is currently being drafted. Such a law is urgently needed to clarify the links between state and customary laws and to reduce confusion. In preparing the draft, the Ministry of Justice has conducted community consultations around the country, but the results have not been released at the time of this CGA report. The preamble of the draft law on traditional justice states that the aim is to create a clear connection between customary law and the formal state justice system, while respecting the paramount role and status of the state justice system, as indicated in the Constitution.<sup>176</sup>

## 4.2 Analysis of Gender Issues

### High Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence

A recent national study of the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence, was conducted as part of the 2009–10 DHS.<sup>177</sup> It revealed that 38% of women had experienced physical or sexual violence since age 15. Of the married women who had experienced physical violence, 74% reported that the perpetrator was their husband.

GBV, domestic violence in particular, is a persistent and pervasive issue. The NAP-GBV defines GBV as “violence against a woman, man or child based on her/his subordinate status in society resulting from (or caused by) his/her gender.” GBV includes acts of domestic violence; sexual abuse; dowry-related violence; rape, gender-specific traditional practices; nonspousal violence; sexual violence related to exploitation; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, school and elsewhere; and trafficking and forced prostitution.<sup>178</sup>

The VPU maintains data on the number of cases of violence it receives. Police records provide an important indicator of the extent to which cases are reported. Yet this cannot be taken as an indicator of the true levels and trends of GBV, but only the tendency to report it. Very few women report their experiences of violence to the police. The DHS found that only one in five women (24%) who experienced violence sought help; for those seeking help, most went to their family (82%) or in-laws (27%), while only 4% went to the police. Reluctance to report cases of violence to the police occur for several reasons, which include fear of repercussions, lack of trust in police, pressure from family to make the marriage work, lack of confidence, and self-blame. Poor handling of conflicts of interest, such as the police officer being a family member or a suspected perpetrator, have been found as a barrier to trusting police.<sup>179</sup> Economic dependence may also be a factor.<sup>180</sup> A woman in a study of bride price and domestic violence reports,<sup>181</sup>

*“I’m dependent on my husband. Many times he beats me until I am bleeding, and I will not report him. If he goes to prison who will feed me and my children?”*

<sup>176</sup> UNDP. 2013. Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism. Justice System Program, UNDP Timor-Leste. Draft.

<sup>177</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10*. Dili.

<sup>178</sup> SEPI. 2012. *National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence*. Dili.

<sup>179</sup> The Asia Foundation and USAID. 2012. “*Ami Sei Vitima Beibeik*”: Looking to the needs of domestic violence victims. Dili.

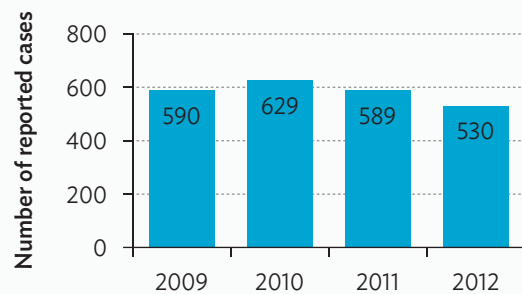
<sup>180</sup> The Asia Foundation has plans to undertake extensive research to determine the economic dimensions of domestic violence.

<sup>181</sup> Khan, N. and S. Hyati. 2012. *Bride-Price and Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: A Comparative Study of Married-in and Married-out Cultures in Four Districts*. <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/timor-leste/drive/Bride-PriceandDomesticViolenceinTimor-Leste.pdf>

Government has worked responsively to develop an appropriate legislative framework to provide the foundation for the elimination of GBV. The enactment of the Penal Code (2009), the Law Against Domestic Violence (2010), and the Civil Code (2011) are significant milestones. Prior to these laws, domestic violence was not considered a public crime and police had discretion over whether to prosecute or not. Now anyone can report known cases to the police and it is compulsory for them to make an investigation. Local leaders continue to have no legal authority to resolve cases of GBV. They do, however, play a key role in prevention in their community under the Decree Law on the Authority of Communities (No. 5 of 2004); their role is reinforced in 2009 by the Law on Community Leaders and their Elections (Law No. 3/2009).<sup>182</sup>

VPU records show that the number of cases being reported has decreased since the Law Against Domestic Violence was enacted in 2010 (Figure 4.1), although increased reporting would be expected if the law were being effectively applied. Unfortunately, the VPU did not have data on the prosecution of reported cases, because the VPU has limited authority to track cases through the justice system. Data from the Judicial System Monitoring Program in 2012 show that out of 430 cases monitored in that year, 161 involved domestic violence (37%).

**Figure 4.1** Reported Cases of Domestic Violence, 2009–2012



Source: Vulnerable Persons Unit, National Policy of Timor-Leste, 2013.

## Underlying Causes and Factors Related to Gender-Based Violence

Imbalance in the power held by women and men, along with an abuse of that power, has led to high levels of domestic violence in many countries. Much research has been conducted to provide insight into the underlying causes of GBV in Timor-Leste and the barriers to its eradication. They point to the following key factors:<sup>183</sup>

- social norms and attitudes that accept and condone violence;
- traditional beliefs and customs surrounding marriage and gender roles;
- authority of informal (customary) and formal legal justice systems;
- limited capacity of the police and courts to respond, investigate, and hear cases; and
- lack of awareness of legal rights and ability to access the criminal justice system.

Domestic violence is the most common form of GBV in Timor-Leste: across all districts between 2000 and 2009, domestic violence was the most frequently reported crime to the VPU, exceeding all other gender-based

<sup>182</sup> The Law 3/2009 requires *suco* chiefs to

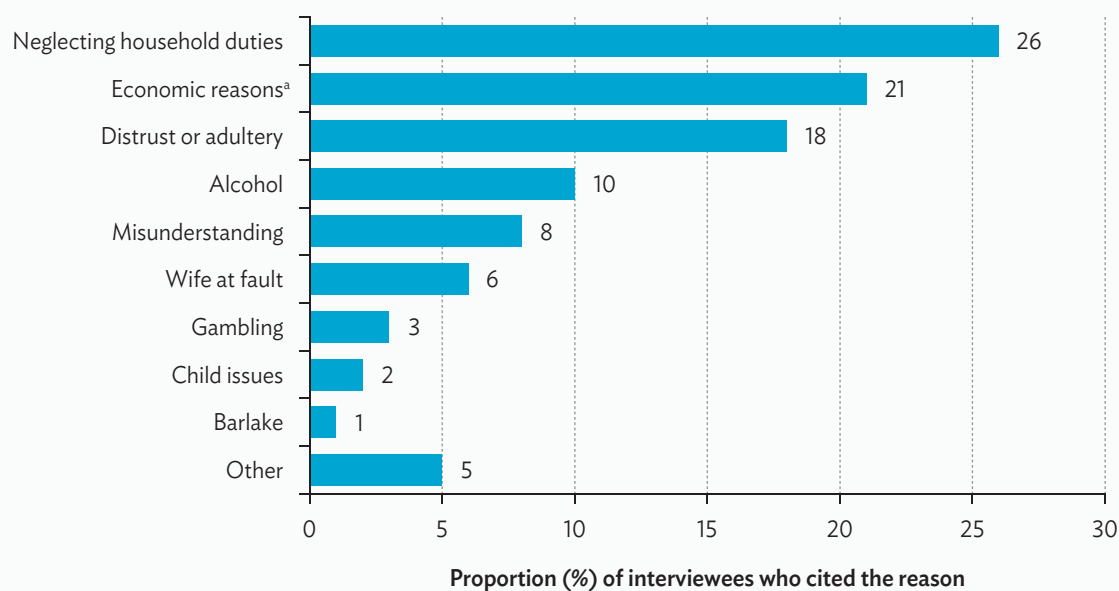
- promote the creation of mechanisms for preventing domestic violence (Article 11[2][c]);
- support initiatives directed at monitoring and protecting the victims of domestic violence and dealing with and punishing the aggressor (Article 11 [2][d]); and
- request the intervention of the security forces in the event of disputes which cannot be settled at local level, and whenever crimes are committed or disturbances occur (Article 11[2][e]).

<sup>183</sup> A consolidated list of existing research as of 2012 is provided in Haider, H. 2012. *Helpdesk Research Report: Violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste*. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre; and in the UNDP *Human Development Report 2013*.

crimes within its mandate.<sup>184</sup> However, domestic violence is a sensitive subject loaded with societal taboos. There is a perception that such violence is a private matter that should not be discussed in public, and it will take time to change these social norms. It is important to recognize that since restoration of independence, there has been a vocal and broad coalition of women calling for an end to GBV in Timor-Leste. Despite this, there is a degree of acceptance by some women and men that GBV is a typical part of life. The 2009–2010 DHS revealed that the majority (86%) of women aged 15–49 believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for a range of reasons. The most widely accepted reason was neglecting children (76%), followed by cases such as an argument between the spouses, when the wife goes out without telling him, burns the food, or denies the husband sexual intercourse.

Another recent study on domestic violence interviewed around 370 people (24% women) representing community authorities, traditional and spiritual authorities, women's groups, members of local nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and community members about their perception of the causes that trigger domestic violence.<sup>185</sup> The most commonly cited reasons included neglecting household duties and economic reasons (Figure 4.2).<sup>186</sup>

**Figure 4.2** Perception of Triggers for Domestic Violence, 2013 (%)



<sup>a</sup> Economic reasons are a lack of money or food.

Note: The category “wife at fault” excludes cases involving neglect of household duties.

Source: UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste*.

<sup>184</sup> Muggah, R. et al. 2010. *Timor-Leste Armed Violence Assessment Final Report*. Small Arms Survey. Geneva.

<sup>185</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*. Justice System Program. UNDP Timor-Leste (Draft). The research did not specifically target victims of domestic violence, but a number of victims were encountered during the course of the study.

<sup>186</sup> Of the total interviewees, 260 respondents answered about reasons for domestic violence.

Studies of domestic violence often notice the analogy of a spoon hitting a plate being used to describe the “normal” nature of domestic violence in Timor-Leste.<sup>187</sup> There is a distinction made between “big” and “small” cases of violence; only “big” cases, such as when blood is spilled, a weapon used, or the violence is frequently repeated, are considered unacceptable and possibly viewed as a crime.<sup>188</sup> Because GBV is often socially accepted, cases are likely to go unreported. Legislation deeming domestic violence as a public crime is an important development, but until the criminal justice system is capable of adequately supporting victims, women may be reluctant to report domestic violence as a crime.

Even sexual violence is considered acceptable to some extent among women. The 2009–2010 DHS show that around 3% of women reported experiences of sexual violence and almost half (47%) of Timorese women believe a man cannot control his sexual behavior. This suggests an accompanying belief that unwanted sexual advances from men can be justified by their inability to control themselves. The DHS also indicates that more than one in four (29%) women consider marital rape as permissible. While marital rape is a punishable crime under the Law Against Domestic Violence and the Penal Code, it is a relatively new concept for the Timorese people and became a topic for public discussion only with promulgation of these laws. PNTL and the Office of the Prosecutor General advise that no cases of marital rape have been reported to date.<sup>189</sup>

Bride price—*barlake*—can be a potential factor in the subordination of women and hence subjecting women to violence, because women are likely to be seen as commodities, especially with increasing monetization of the rural economy. A study on the link between bride price and domestic violence, undertaken by the NGO Fokupers between 2009 and 2012, shows that although the traditional practice of *barlake* is not a trigger in itself, it increases the risk of domestic violence. The transactional element of exchanging assets for marriage causes men to “see their wives as property.” In cases where the *barlake* paid for the wife was large, it also diminished the authority of her family to protect her. The study was based on a rather small sample of women in four districts (177 women participated in focus groups and 30 women were interviewed), along with a literature review.<sup>190</sup> A recent study by UNDP, which was based on a larger sample, revealed that only 7 out of 264 interviewees named the payment of the bride price (*barlake*) as a reason for domestic violence.<sup>191</sup> While statistical evidence is not strong in linking *barlake* as a cause of domestic violence, qualitative findings suggest that men believe paying bride price gives them the right to physically discipline their wives. Some clans have now abandoned the tradition of *barlake*; in districts like Manututo, where *barlake* is frequently being rejected, the levels of domestic violence or physical violence (17%) are relatively low.<sup>192</sup> Given limited existing evidence on this issue, more in-depth research is needed to better understand the potential impact of *barlake* on GBV and gender relations in general.

<sup>187</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*; and A. Swaine. 2003. *Traditional Justice and Gender Based Violence in Timor-Leste*. International Rescue Committee. Dili.

<sup>188</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*, Justice System Program, UNDP Timor-Leste (Draft).

<sup>189</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>190</sup> Khan, N. and S. Hyati. 2012. *Bride-Price and Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: A Comparative Study of Married-in and Married-out Cultures in Four Districts*. The four districts studied include Bobonaro, Covalima, Manututo, and Manufahi.

<sup>191</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*, Justice System Program, UNDP Timor-Leste. Draft.

<sup>192</sup> Khan, N. and S. Hyati. 2012. *Bride-Price and Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: A Comparative Study of Married-in and Married-out Cultures in Four Districts*. The 2009–2019 DHS shows that the rate of physical violence experienced by women in their lifetime ranges from 11% in Ainaro to 75% in Manufahi. Rates exceed 50% in the districts of Dili, Covalima, Lautem, and Oecussi.



## National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence

As required by the Law Against Domestic Violence, the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence (NAP-GBV) for 2012–2014 has been adopted, representing Timor-Leste’s first multisectoral approach to addressing GBV. The plan identifies short- and long-term goals, outlining how agencies will work together in the education, social services, justice, security, and health sectors to reach these goals. The NAP-GBV determined indicative costs of each activity, with more than \$7 million being budgeted by key ministries over the 3-year period. Most of the budget is allocated to the provision of services to victims. The plan identifies four priority areas:

- **prevention** through awareness raising, education, political and economic empowerment;
- **services** to address the needs of victims that are easily accessible and confidential and supported by trained professionals;
- **justice** through a judicial system that effectively protects victims and investigates, prosecutes, and punishes perpetrators of GBV and domestic violence crimes; and
- **coordination and monitoring** that will ensure effective implementation of the NAP-GBV.

## Access to Justice

The formal justice system is in the early stages of development and is punctuated by limited resources, inefficient procedures, and a growing backlog of cases.<sup>193</sup> Women and men face similar challenges in the justice system: limited knowledge of their legal rights and how the justice system works, distance from courts, language barriers, and a preference for the known traditions of customary law. Yet women tend to face greater barriers than men in accessing justice, because women are less likely to have their own sources of income, have less input into local-level decision making, and are subject to more restriction on their movement. The report by UNMIT notes that:<sup>194</sup>

*While the Constitution provides for guaranteed access to justice for all citizens of Timor-Leste, certain groups, such as women, experience particular hardship in receiving fair, affordable and timely justice.*

Weaknesses in the formal system, as well as traditional beliefs, sustain the ongoing relevance of customary law processes that do “not always respect victim’s interests and rights and frequently blame female victims for violence committed against them.”<sup>195</sup> While only the formal system has the legal mandate to deal with cases of GBV, the elimination of GBV will depend on making both systems more effective. International experiences have shown that ignoring the importance of customary practices tends to shift practices underground. This leads to a precarious separation between law and actual practices, undermining the authority of the state and making it more difficult to change attitudes.<sup>196</sup> In particular, customary practices tend to be most energetically defended when these favor men. How traditions evolve and interact with the formal justice system is a key factor in changing attitudes and reducing the prevalence of GBV.

<sup>193</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers, and Decision Making Processes in the Context of Legal Pluralism*.

<sup>194</sup> UNMIT. 2009. *The Justice System of Timor-Leste: An Independent Comprehensive Needs Assessment*. Dili.

<sup>195</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste*.

<sup>196</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste*.



Although detailed data are not available on the number of cases effectively transmitted to the formal justice system, UNDP's research on domestic violence suggests that few cases reach the system, with high rates of attrition occurring at every step of the process. An integrated case management system, currently being established by the Ministry of Justice, will be a welcome development in monitoring the effectiveness of the system to deal with GBV cases. Some studies already note improvements: in the Suai district court, the prosecutor has been working closely with VPU officers, resulting in improved turnaround of cases.<sup>197</sup>

The poor record of prosecuting and punishing perpetrators has been attributed to the police failing to file charges in response to complaints, as well as victims withdrawing at various stages of the criminal proceedings. Despite the introduction of new laws, victims are pressured to withdraw cases, whether overtly or through social pressure from their spouse, family, or local authorities.<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, police officers' awareness of their responsibilities under the new law to investigate cases and refer victims to support services is growing; some victims who reported cases before and after the new law have noticed changes in police attitudes.<sup>199</sup> It is still common, however, for victims to experience lengthy delays or no follow-up by the police, putting them in a dangerous situation when they take a risk of reporting the crime.

The Asia Foundation conducted a national law and justice survey in 2004 and 2008 to assess people's knowledge and perceptions of informal and formal justice.<sup>200</sup> It found that attitudes toward gender have taken a turn for the worse: 75% of respondents in 2004 said it was categorically wrong for a man to hit his wife, whereas only 35% responded the same in 2008. Disapproval of women's participation in customary mediation processes also increased: more than half (58%) the respondents were against women speaking on their own behalf during local dispute resolution, up from 25% in 2004. Rural women are at a particular disadvantage in accessing justice, with a limited knowledge of formal mechanisms. The results of the next survey, conducted in 2012, should further inform whether GBV legislation and awareness-raising programs are having any significant impact, especially in reaching women in rural areas.

The availability of information about legal processes and support services is a crucial part of a well-functioning justice system for GBV. In rural Timor-Leste awareness is particularly low, with only 34% of women having heard about public prosecutors, 41% about lawyers, and 59% about formal courts. The vast majority (92%) are more comfortable with local justice processes than the formal system.<sup>201</sup> Although currently limited in their outreach and capacity, counseling and psychosocial support, medical services, and free legal advice and representation are provided through a number of government, international, and nongovernment organizations.<sup>202</sup> These are outlined in section 4.3, Taking Action.

<sup>197</sup> The Asia Foundation and USAID. 2012. "Ami Sei Vitima Beibeik": Looking to the needs of domestic violence victims. Dili.

<sup>198</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste*.

<sup>199</sup> The Asia Foundation and USAID, "Ami Sei Vitima Beibeik": Looking to the needs of domestic violence victims. Dili.

<sup>200</sup> The Asia Foundation. 2009. *Law and Justice in Timor-Leste: A Survey of Citizen Awareness and Attitudes Regarding Law and Justice 2008*. Dili. A total of 1,120 respondents (50% women) were interviewed across all 13 districts.

<sup>201</sup> The Asia Foundation. 2004. *Law and Justice in East Timor: A Survey of Citizen Awareness and Attitudes regarding Law and Justice in East Timor*. Dili; and Kovar. 2011. *Customary Law and Domestic Violence in Timor Leste. Approaches to Domestic Violence in Timor Leste: A Review and Critique*. Dili: UNDP Justice System Programme.

<sup>202</sup> Haider, H. 2012. *Helpdesk Research Report: Violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste*. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

UNMIT conducted an assessment of the formal justice system in 2009, which indicated progress in improving the system.<sup>203</sup> It made a number of recommendations to address resource constraints and increase effectiveness, including the following:

- Appoint more judges as soon as possible (the number increased from 13 in 2009 to 17 in 2013), establish a case management system (currently being implemented), and expand of the role of the Legal Training Centre.
- Improve resourcing of the Public Prosecution Service and PNTL, as well as the Office of the Public Defender, and support to strengthen the cadre of private lawyers.
- Address the lack of specific prison facilities for women and young offenders and improve rehabilitation of prisoners to help them reenter society with vocational skills.
- Enhance coordination across the justice system.
- Bring justice closer to the people through the creation of additional district courts and mobile services to reach isolated areas.

In its concluding observations on the first state report reviewed in 2009, the CEDAW Committee called for the government to ensure the judiciary is aware of the CEDAW Convention and the legal obligations it carries. Awareness raising and training have been occurring since 2008 to strengthen knowledge and application of the convention in the local legal system.

The Ministry of Justice, assisted by UNDP, is seeking to increase the level of legal awareness among citizens by carrying out information campaigns and public education, focusing on the rights of vulnerable groups like women and children. These initiatives use mass media communications (TV, radio, newspapers) and other means, such as community meetings, seminars, and cultural activities. Many legal awareness-raising initiatives are also undertaken by civil society organizations (Judicial System Monitoring Program, Asia Foundation, Paz y Desarrollo, Alfela, PRADET, Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia, etc.), often in coordination with the public authorities mentioned above.

## 4.3 Taking Action

SEPI is responsible for leading implementation of the NAP-GBV through the specially created Inter-Ministerial Commission.<sup>204</sup> Key stakeholders in this group include the ministries of health, education, justice, social solidarity, and the Secretary of State for Security. Also involved is the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice, and three civil society organizations. Actions undertaken to implement the NAP-GBV under the four priority areas are as follows:

### i. Prevention

- » Raise awareness of the Law Against Domestic Violence through training, the media, and community events (SEPI and UNFPA).
- » Conduct anger management training for prisoners (SEPI and UNFPA).
- » Raise awareness of the Anti-Trafficking Law (SEPI and the International Organization for Migration).

<sup>203</sup> UNMIT. 2009. *The Justice System of Timor-Leste: An Independent Comprehensive Needs Assessment*. Dili.

<sup>204</sup> Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Council of Ministers Resolution No. 21/2012.

## ii. Services

- » Establish and provide resources for the Fatin Hakmetek program, which provides safe and secure locations within hospitals and clinics in Covalima, Bobonaro, Baucau, Oecussi, and Dili that offer care, temporary accommodations, and access to specialized services for victims (MoH and various NGOs). In 2012, PRADET provided assistance to victims of 108 cases through the Fatin Hakmetek program.<sup>205</sup>
- » Establish and provide resources for uma mahon, which are shelters offering care, long-term accommodation, and access to specialized services for victims in various districts (MSS and various NGOs). SEPI reports that a model safe house was established in Maliana in 2012 and one will be constructed in Los Palos in 2014.
- » Support economic independence of victims of domestic violence from their abusers (MSS and legal aid organizations).
- » Developed policies and practices to support child victims and families (MSS and UNICEF).
- » Developed standard operating procedures for violence against women program (MSS and UNFPA).
- » Provided modest financial support to vulnerable families through the Bolsa da Mãe program (MSS and UNDP).

## iii. Justice

- » Developed a GBV investigations manual for police (SEPI and UNFPA).
- » Developed a GBV Manual for legal aid lawyers (SEPI and The Asia Foundation).

## iv. Coordination and monitoring

- » Established the Inter-Ministerial Commission on NAP-GBV (SEPI).

**Rede Referál** is a network of service providers who support and refer victims of GBV, including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. Through this network, practitioners advocate against GBV in all forms; monitor the protection of women, girls, and other at-risk groups; and ensure timely access to appropriate support and care services (legal, health, social, and psychosocial) for victims of violence. Rede Referál is composed of two working groups:

- i. *Service Provider Coordination Meeting*, chaired by the MSS, which is responsible for ensuring coordinated responses to cases of GBV; and
- ii. *Strategy and Advocacy Meeting*, chaired by SEPI, which advocates for changes to policies and laws, partly based on recommendations from the Service Providers Coordination Meeting.<sup>206</sup>

There are many initiatives to strengthen justice systems and equip individuals with knowledge and skills to access the system. Organizations specializing in such service provision include the following:

### **Asistencia Legal ba Feto no Labarik (ALFeLa)**

Formerly known as Victim Support Service under the Judicial System Monitoring Program, ALFeLa is the leading provider of independent and free legal services to support victims by prosecuting crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. This service is funded by the Justice Facility (AusAid) and UNFPA.

<sup>205</sup> SEPI. 2013. *Report to the National Parliament on the Implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence*. Dili.

<sup>206</sup> SEPI. 2012. *National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence*. Dili.

### **Fórum Komunikasi Perempuan Lorosa'e/East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (Fokupers)**

Established in 1997, Fokupers provides services to survivors of GBV and their families, including counseling, legal advice, court accompaniment, and shelter. The shelter is one of the few crisis accommodations in Timor-Leste. Fokupers also provides training on GBV to officials, police officers, and local chiefs.<sup>207</sup>

### **Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor (PRADET)**

As an NGO specializing in mental health counseling and psychosocial support, PRADET works with the Vulnerable Persons Unit at PNTL and other organizations to support clients suffering from trauma stemming from violence. It also works directly with the Ministry of Health in training nurses and obstetricians on recovery from trauma and medical forensic examinations of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.<sup>208</sup> PRADET also runs the *fatin hakmatek*, where women and children victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other types of abuse can receive immediate assistance, including forensic evidence needed for prosecution.

### **ALOLA Foundation**

Founded in 2001 by the then First Lady Ms. Kirsty Sword Gusmão, the foundation operates to improve the lives of women and children by cultivating female leaders and advocating for women's rights. The foundation was originally created to raise awareness of the widespread sexual violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste during the militia attacks of September 1999.

### **Casa Vida**

A national NGO that opened in 2008, Casa Vida is a special support home providing assistance for young girls from birth to 18 years old who come from a situation of sexual violence and have been referred by the Ministry of Social Solidarity or similar bodies. Casa Vida also provides training to these victims to help them become healthy, happy, well adjusted, educated, and skilled.

### **Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia (Men's Organization Against Violence)**

This is a national NGO established in 2002 by Timorese activists with the objective of promoting gender equality through advocacy, especially toward men, to prevent violence against women and children.

### **Rede Feto (Timor-Leste Women's Network)**

Rede Feto Timor-Leste is a national network encompassing 24 women's organizations. It aims to connect, inform, and support people and organizations to improve the lives of women and girls, and advance gender equality and women's rights for sustainable development in Timor-Leste.

### **Asosiasaun HAK (HAK Association)**

This NGO works to realize a Timorese society that is self-sufficient, open and democratic based on popular sovereignty. HAK stands for "Hukum, Hak Asasi dan Keadilan" which translates from Indonesian into English as Association for Law, Human Rights and Justice. The organization began as a legal aid office in August 1996 and has carried out a number of activities, working at three levels: national police formation, enforcement of human rights, and people's empowerment. The organization currently focuses on human rights advocacy, monitoring, and education across three key areas:

- rights to justice (including justice for past crimes and women's access to justice),

<sup>207</sup> Haider, H. 2012. *Helpdesk Research Report: Violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste*. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. Dili.

<sup>208</sup> Haider, Helpdesk Research Report.

- economic and social rights (principally land rights), and
- strengthening the state system (with particular focus on monitoring the security sector and prisons).

There are many development partners also working to improve access to justice, including The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Asia Foundation, Caritas, Oxfam, UNDP Justice System Programme, UNFPA, UN Women, USAID, and others.

## 4.4 Recommendations

### ***Increase the effectiveness of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence***

The NAP-GBV represents a good practice in bringing together key stakeholders around a common vision and strategy. The national report on the NAP-GBV summarizes the activities conducted under each priority area, but does not evaluate the effectiveness of the activities, identify any implementation issues, or provide information on budget allocations or expenditures by different government agencies. SEPI should conduct a detailed evaluation to identify significant gaps in implementation and to ensure the greatest possible benefits from activities investing in GBV eradication.

### ***Implement Law on Witness Protection***

SEPI should urge the Ministry of Justice to socialize Law No. 2/2009 for Witness Protection to the community. As stipulated in the law, implementation involves establishing a national institution for witness protection; the lack of its implementation remains a barrier to the effectiveness of the Law on Domestic Violence.

### ***Review gender mainstreaming approaches by PNTL and the Defense Force of Timor-Leste***

The gender mainstreaming practices of the police and armed forces organizations should be evaluated and enhanced where necessary. SEPI should advocate for an assessment of how PNTL and the Defense Force of Timor-Leste incorporate gender concerns into their planning, policies, and allocation of resources. This would identify areas for improvement, especially regarding enforcement of the laws on GBV; inform future policy development; and suggest specific gender mainstreaming approaches for annual action plans.

### ***Improve the quality of crime statistics***

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice should enhance the accuracy, availability, and use of crime statistics. One initiative would be to conduct a dedicated crime victimization survey, using standards developed by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, to measure people's experiences in a range of crimes including GBV, as well as public perceptions of the police, court system, victim support services, and their impacts on people's lives. This would provide valuable benchmark data on the extent of reported and unreported crimes, along with experiences of interacting with the criminal justice system.



# Work and Economic Empowerment

This chapter provides an overview of gender situations in the labor market, including various dimensions of labor force participation, working conditions, the informal sector, wages, and gender segregation in occupations and industry. It also examines unpaid work, constraints on economic empowerment such as family responsibilities, access to finance, and land and property ownership. Factors impacting work and the labor market—social protection, migration, and human trafficking—are also covered.

## Key Findings

- Work to produce food for household consumption and unpaid care work in the home—the types of work typically done by women—are not counted as employment. Excluding these forms of work, gender gaps in labor force participation are significant: 56% of men are classified as in the labor force (or economically active) compared with only 27% of women. Changes to international definitions of work and employment in 2013 call for own-use production work to be separately measured and reported on in the future.
- The proportion of wage-earning jobs has tripled over the last decade, but this has benefited men more than women. In 2010, 31% of employed men were in wage-earning jobs, an increase of 17 percentage points since 2001. By contrast, only 19% of employed women were in wage-earning jobs, up 10 percentage points since 2001.
- Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment, which tends to lack stable income and benefits. This is particularly so for rural women: 87% of working rural women are in vulnerable jobs compared with 54% of urban women. The rate is also high among rural men (78%) compared with urban men (37%).
- The distribution of employed women and men by industry indicates that other than the primary industry, women are concentrated in wholesale and retail trades (25% of employed women) and in education, health, arts, and others (12%). Compared with women, men are engaged in a broader variety of industries, along with the primary industry.
- Gender segregation is also found in technical and vocational training programs. The majority of women (56%) are enrolled in administration, finance, and information technology training programs, whereas more men are enrolled in technical programs such as construction and auto mechanics.
- Access to financial services is crucial for economic empowerment, especially for women, who tend to have less access and control over significant assets. Improving banking services and microfinance programs, as well as cash transfers, can play an important role in helping women generate income and manage financial resources, while contributing to economic development.
- Land legislation remains unresolved, but new laws have been drafted that intend to promote gender equality in land ownership.



## 5.1 Categorization of Work and Labor Force Participation

There are many types of work, both paid and unpaid, and those performed within the household and those outside. Understanding gender in the economy requires understanding how the concepts of labor force and employment are defined and measured (Box 5.1). The Timor-Leste government uses the definition largely based on international standards of the ILO and the United Nations System of National Accounts. The international definition recognizes different types of work, especially between household activities performed to produce own consumption and those activities done to produce for sale. However, for the definition of employment (or labor force) adopted in most labor force surveys, people engaged in work solely for household consumption are not counted as “employed” in order to capture primarily market-oriented jobs and track trends in the labor market.<sup>209</sup> This definition of employment excludes many activities typically done by women, such as food production for household consumption or unpaid care work. Therefore, in a country where the population still largely relies on subsistence agriculture, as in Timor-Leste, the majority of women are not counted as in the labor force or employed, even if they are engaged in household production activities.

### Box 5.1 How Is Employment Measured?

Based on international standards established by the International Labor Organization (ILO), all populations aged 15 and older in Timor-Leste are classified under three categories: employed, unemployed, or economically inactive. Both employed and unemployed make up the population in the labor force, as described below.

#### 1. In the labor force

##### (a) Employed

Persons who have undertaken work for pay, profit, or family gain for at least 1 hour during the week (7 days) immediately prior to the date of data collection (e.g., survey or census). This includes unpaid work in a family business, farm, or subsistence agriculture, provided some of the goods are sold or bartered. Work to produce food exclusively for consumption within the household or unpaid care work in the home—the types of work typically done by women—are not counted in the definition of employment.

##### (b) Unemployed (looking for work)

Persons who did not have a job or business or were otherwise not employed (as per the definition above), but looked for work or were available to work during the 4 weeks prior to the survey. The international definition of unemployment calls for persons to be actively seeking work. But in countries such as Timor-Leste, where many people may not actively look for work because of limited or seasonal work opportunities, this restriction is relaxed to include those “who were available to work” even if they were not actively searching for work.

#### 2. Not in the labor force (economically inactive)

People who are not employed or unemployed. There are a variety of reasons why someone may be economically inactive, such as being a student, homemaker, retired, or too young to work; having an illness or disability that prevents them from being able to work; or choosing not to work.

A legislative framework for gender equality in the labor force is being established. The Council of Ministers has recommended ratification of the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111), which is expected in 2014. The labor code that came into effect in 2012 is in line with ILO standards and provides enhanced legal protection to women and men.

<sup>209</sup> ILO. 2013. *Statistics of Work, Employment, and Labor Underutilization (Report 2)*. 19th International Conference of Labour Statistics. Geneva. Available at [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_220535.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_220535.pdf)



It includes prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination and prohibition of sexual harassment. It also establishes a framework for maternity protection, and for the right to equal pay for equal work.

Women are considered economically empowered when they have the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions.<sup>210</sup> Creating income-generating opportunities for women and men, and ensuring both have the ability to access and control resources, will have significant benefits for Timor-Leste. Gender inequality in the labor market results in significant opportunity costs for developing economies. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) estimated that economies in Asia and the Pacific are losing almost \$80 billion a year due to restrictions in women's access to employment and education alone.<sup>211</sup>

## 5.2 Analysis of Gender Issues

Much of this chapter is based on findings from the labor force survey (LFS) conducted in 2010, which gathered information on the primary and secondary activities of people in a nationally representative sample of households.<sup>212</sup> Yet, when appropriate data are not available from the LFS, the chapter draws information from other sources including the 2010 census. Using different data sources may produce different estimates of employment or labor-market-related indicators; therefore, comparison across different data sources needs to be interpreted with caution.

### Labor Force Participation

According to the 2010 LFS, about 42% of the population aged 15 and older participate in the labor force, including both employed and unemployed. Yet, women are only half as likely as men to be in the labor force—27% of women versus 56% of men (Table 5.1). The unemployment rate is 3.6% overall, but it is higher for women (4.6%) than men (3.1%). The unemployment rate seems relatively low because the survey counts those who were engaged in work for at least an hour during the reference period as employed.

Labor force participation varies significantly by age (Figure 5.1). Among men, the participation rate is above 80% for those aged 30–49, and it is also higher for those in urban areas than those in rural areas. Among women, on the other hand, the participation rate is higher for relatively older age groups: those aged 55–59 in urban areas and those aged 45–49 and 55–59 in rural areas. Compared with men, labor participation among women aged 30–34 and 35–39 (in rural areas) is low, showing the largest gender gap in these age groups. Although a more detailed examination will be necessary, this large gender gap suggests that women of prime childbearing and childrearing ages are less likely to be in the labor force. In other words, women's household responsibilities, especially child care, are likely to constrain their engagement in the labor market.

<sup>210</sup> Golla, A. M. et al. 2011. *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators*. International Research Center for Women. [www.icrw.org/publications/understanding-and-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment](http://www.icrw.org/publications/understanding-and-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment)

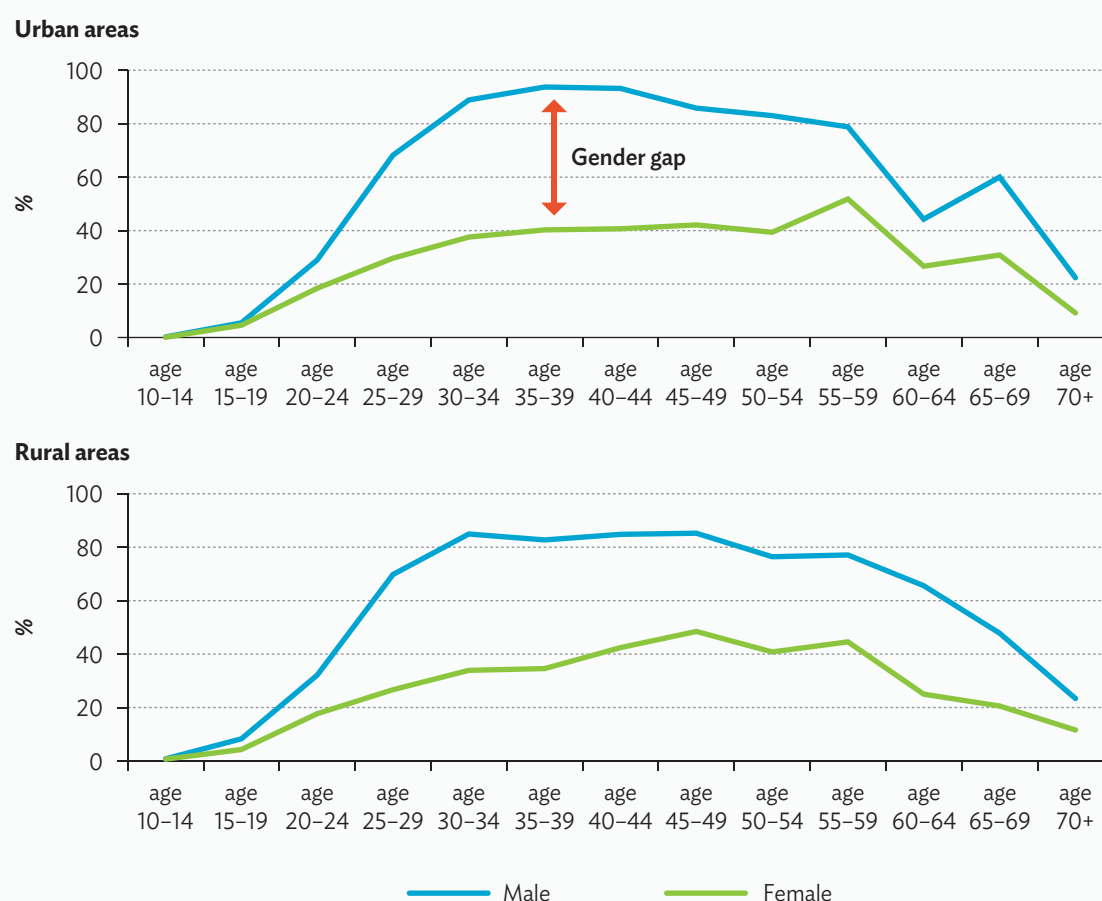
<sup>211</sup> ESCAP. 2007. *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007: Surging Ahead in Uncertain Times*. New York: United Nations.

<sup>212</sup> A new round of the labor force survey was conducted in 2013, but its full results were not available at the time of the final CGA report.

**Table 5.1** Number of Women and Men Aged 15 and Above by Labor Force Participation, 2010

	Men (aged 15+)	% of male 15+ population	Women (aged 15+)	% of female 15+ population
<b>In the labor force</b>	<b>178,000</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>27.0</b>
Employed	173,000	54.0	80,000	26.0
Unemployed	5,000		4,000	
% unemployed in the labor force		3.1		4.6
<b>Not in the labor force (economically inactive)</b>	<b>139,000</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>227,000</b>	<b>73.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>318,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>311,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: General Directorate for Statistics and Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

**Figure 5.1** Labor Force Participation Rate in Urban and Rural Areas by Age and Sex, 2010

Source: General Directorate for Statistics and Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

## Economic Inactivity

Table 5.2 also illustrates that family duties are a major constraint to women's participation in the labor force. These family duties may include subsistence agriculture activities where women are producing foods for the family, which is not counted as being in the labor force. Importantly, the percentage of women citing family duties as a reason does not vary much between urban and rural areas, implying that family responsibilities, including child care, pose a similar barrier to both urban and rural women's labor force participation. In contrast, very few men are likely to mention family duties as a reason for economic inactivity, although the percentage is slightly higher for rural men than for urban men.

**Table 5.2** Reasons for Economic Inactivity, Urban and Rural Population Aged 10 and Above by Sex, 2010 (%)

Reason for Inactivity	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
In school/training	75.6	52.2	69.1	45.2
Family duties	4.9	34.0	7.3	36.9
Pregnancy, illness, disability	3.1	3.3	4.0	4.3
Retired or too old to work	7.3	5.5	9.1	8.5
Too young to work	2.1	1.2	0.9	0.7
No desire to work	2.4	1.2	2.0	0.8
Off season	2.1	0.4	0.8	0.0
Other reason	2.5	2.2	6.8	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: General Directorate for Statistics and Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

Schooling or training is the main reason among both women and men, especially the younger age groups, for not being in the labor force. The percentage of those citing schooling and training is higher for men than women, and it is also higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

## Unpaid Care Work

In both urban and rural settings, men continue to be the main income providers, with women primarily responsible for producing food for the household, child care, and other unpaid domestic work. This disadvantages women as they are unable to earn an income or control assets or resources. Reliance on a man's income makes women more vulnerable to poverty, especially in cases of separation, abandonment, divorce, or widowhood. The value of unpaid care work in the home must be acknowledged. Preparing food, keeping the home and clothes clean, and caring for children and the elderly makes a significant indirect contribution to the economy. It provides the environment for children to be nourished and educated as well as support to others that work outside the home. As new technologies are introduced, domestic work will become more efficient, freeing up time for economically productive activities.

Studies on time use would be particularly useful at this stage of Timor-Leste's development. Some information on time spent on certain tasks was gathered through the 2001 and 2007 living standards surveys, but it is not detailed enough for gender analysis as only a limited range of tasks were measured. Incorporating a time use survey into the regular data collection program would enable the impact of change on gender roles to be monitored.

## Vulnerable Employment

As shown in Table 5.1, the unemployment rate is low for women and men. This is in large part because many Timorese are engaged in vulnerable or informal employment. Timor-Leste's definition of vulnerable employment is in line with the ILO's, which considers *own account workers* and *contributing family workers* as the most vulnerable employed persons. This is because they are more at risk of being affected by economic cycles and unlikely to have formal work arrangements or access to social protection or benefits (Box 5.2).<sup>213</sup>

### Box 5.2 Understanding the Different Types of Employment

The ILO maintains the international classification for status in employment (ICSE 1993). Depending on the contractual arrangements under which a person works, they are classified as an employee, employer, own account worker, contributing family worker, or a member of a producers' cooperative.

<b>Employee</b>	<b>Working for someone else for pay in cash or in kind</b> Persons who work for wages, salaries, commissions, tips, contracts, and payment in kind (especially in rural areas where people who have rendered services may be paid using food or clothing).
<b>Employer</b>	<b>Self-employed with one or more employees</b> Persons who work in their own business, which also employs other persons. The people employed can either be paid in cash or kind.
<b>Own account worker</b>	<b>Self-employed with no employees</b> Self-employed persons who worked on their own account, or with one or more partners, and have not engaged any employees on a continuous basis.
<b>Contributing family worker</b>	<b>Self-employed in family business but not paid</b> Persons who work without pay in the business or farm of another family member or household.
<b>Member of a producers' cooperative<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Self-employed in a cooperative</b> Person who holds a self-employment job in an establishment organized as a cooperative, in which each member is equal in determining the organization of the work, investments, and the distribution of proceeds among the members.

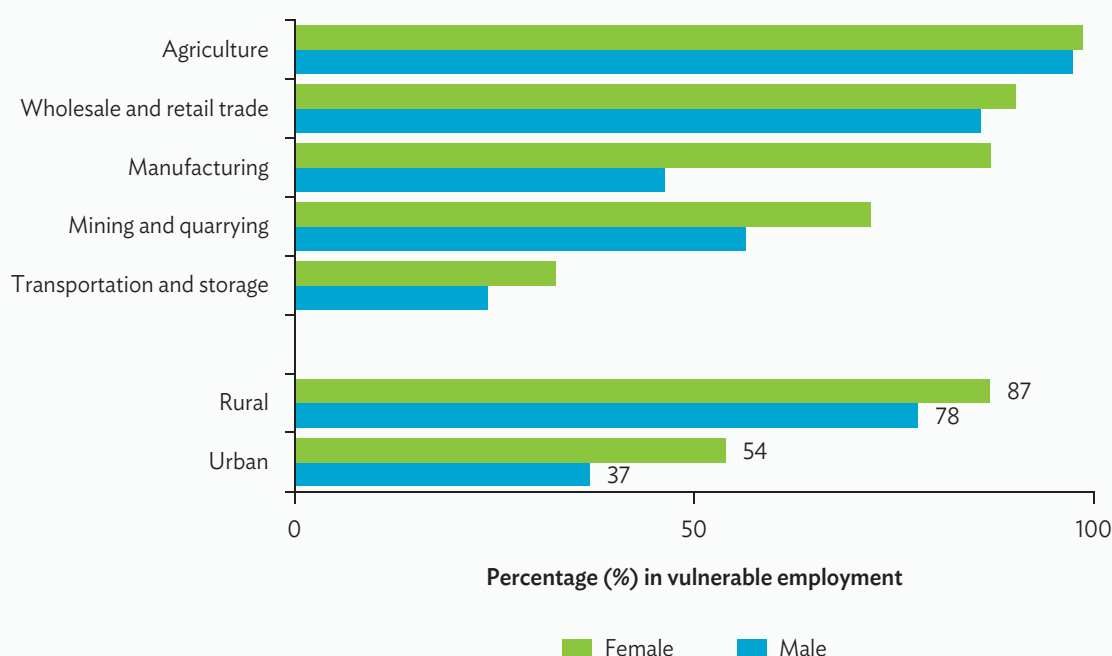
The main distinction in this classification is between paid employees and self-employed. Self-employment is considered less secure than paid employment, particularly for own account and contributing family workers, as any remuneration is dependent on profits derived from the goods or services produced. This is important for gender analysis, as women in many countries, including Timor-Leste, are more likely to occupy these vulnerable positions.

<sup>a</sup> As there are less than 500 members of producers' cooperatives in Timor-Leste, this classification is omitted from data analysis of the 2010 Labor Force Survey.

<sup>213</sup> GDS and SEPFOPE. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

The 2010 LFS shows that the majority (70%) of people in the Timorese labor force are classified as being in vulnerable employment, which is well above the global average of 50%.<sup>214</sup> Women are also more likely to be in vulnerable employment (79%) compared to men (66%). And those in rural areas (80% overall) are nearly twice as likely as their urban counterparts (42% overall) to hold vulnerable employment. Consequently, rural women are at the greatest disadvantage, whereas the lowest rate of vulnerable employment is seen among urban men (Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2** Proportion of Employed Persons in Vulnerable Employment by Sex, Sector of Economic Activity and Urban/Rural Location, 2010 (%)



Source: General Directorate for Statistics and Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

Vulnerable employment is highest in those sectors where women are most concentrated. As Figure 5.2 shows, almost all people working in the agriculture sector are in vulnerable employment (85,000 men and 39,000 women). The wholesale and retail trade sector is also dominated by vulnerable jobs (21,000 men and 18,000 women). Although employing far less people overall, there is a high proportion of vulnerable jobs in the manufacturing sector as well, particularly for women (2,000 men [46%] and 4,000 women [87%]).

<sup>214</sup> ILO. 2011. *Global Employment Trends 2011: The challenge of a jobs recovery*. Geneva.

## Informal Sector and Informal Employment

As in many developing countries, informal sector activities account for a significant proportion of total employment and income generation in Timor-Leste. Informal employment differs from vulnerable employment, although there is some overlap. In Timor-Leste it is defined as people who work in the informal sector, as well as those who produce goods or services for the household's own use and do not have paid annual or sick leave (mainly domestic servants).<sup>215</sup>

By this definition, about 45,000 Timorese (23,000 men and 22,000 women) were in informal employment in 2010, which represents around 18% of the labor force. However, given the vast differences in labor force participation, the proportion of women in informal employment (28%) is much higher than for men (13%). Most informal jobs were concentrated in the retail and wholesale trade industry (about 75%), followed by manufacturing.

Working in the informal sector often means poor employment conditions and is associated with increasing poverty. Some characteristics of informal employment are

- lack of protection in the event of nonpayment of wages;
- compulsory overtime or extra shifts;
- layoffs without notice or compensation;
- unsafe working conditions; and
- absence of social benefits such as pensions, sick pay, and health insurance.<sup>216</sup>

Most of the work available to women in Timor-Leste is characterized by “informal” workplace arrangements.<sup>217</sup> Jobs are paid cash in hand, without negotiation on fair wages or conditions, such as working hours and basic leave entitlements. In addition, women in informal work are unable to access existing or proposed Timorese social security schemes; in the absence of standards and legal protection, some women may be experiencing violence, harassment, and other forms of coercion without clear avenues for taking action against it. Impoverished women and men, migrants, and other vulnerable groups of workers who are excluded from other opportunities have little choice but to take informal low-quality jobs. This is something that should be addressed through labor and social protection policies.

<sup>215</sup> The informal sector comprises those organizations with less than 5 employees and that have either employed the respondent as a contributing family worker or, if the person has some other employment status, where their work is not registered with the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry. Informal sector workers refer to people who work in the sector as their main activity, their secondary activity, or both. Due to difficulties in defining informal activities in the agriculture sector, agricultural work—the main activity for most (64%) Timorese workers—is excluded. (GDS and SEPFOPE. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili)

<sup>216</sup> ILO. 2011. *Global Employment Trends 2011: The challenge of a jobs recovery*. Geneva.

<sup>217</sup> Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA. [www.apheda.org.au](http://www.apheda.org.au)

## Wages

The proportion of people employed in more secure wage-paying jobs (in cash or in kind) has tripled between 2001 and 2010, from around 10% to 30%.<sup>218</sup> However, it is men who have benefited much more from this growth than women. In 2010, around 30% of working men were wage earners, compared with only 19% of working women; the corresponding rates in 2001 were 13% for men and 9% for women. The MDG indicator of “women’s share of wage employment in the nonagriculture sector” provides an internationally comparable measure. As Figure 5.3 shows, women’s share of wage employment in the nonagriculture sector (i.e., industry and services) was 32% in 2010. Compared with other countries, Timorese women are below the global average of 40% share in nonagriculture waged employment, and the Southeast Asian average of 38%. In developed economies, women’s average share is 48%, close to equal between women and men.<sup>219</sup>

**Figure 5.3** Share of Wage Employment by Sector and Sex, 2010 (%)



Source: General Directorate of Statistics. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

## Gender Segregation in Industry and Occupation

The industry or occupation where workers are engaged illustrates the extent of gender segregation in jobs, which can be an indicator of social norms around what is considered appropriate work for women and men. Gender segregation by industry or occupation also indicates potential differential opportunities or constraints that women may face in accessing certain jobs, whether that may be due to training, financial resources, or possible discrimination against women. Monitoring trends of industry or occupational segregation can highlight where policy interventions, such as education schemes or employer incentives, are needed to ensure women and men have equal opportunities.

<sup>218</sup> GDS. 2001. *Timor-Leste Living Standards Survey 2001*. Dili; and GDS and SEFPOPE. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

<sup>219</sup> United Nations. MDG Database. <http://mdgs.un.org> (accessed 10 October 2013).



The distribution of employed women and men by industry in the 2010 LFS (Table 5.3) shows that other than the primary industry, women are concentrated in wholesale and retail trades (25% of employed women) and in education, health, arts, and others (12%). The majority of men are also in the primary industry, and wholesale and retail trades are a key sector where they find employment (14% of employed men). Compared with women, however, men are engaged in a broader variety of industries.

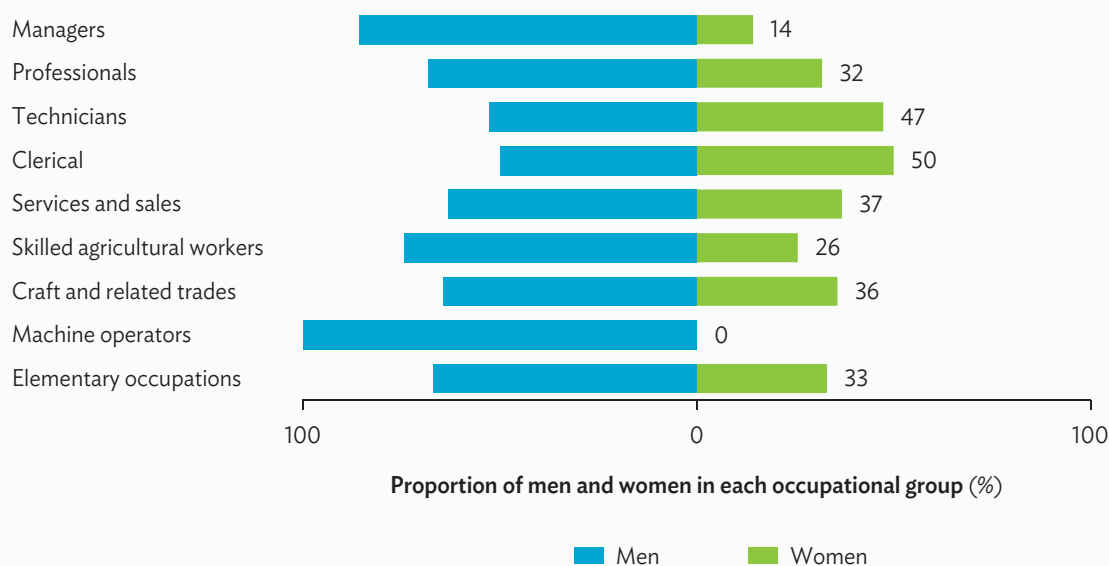
**Table 5.3** Distribution of Employed Women and Men by Industry, 2010 (%)

Industry	Men	Women	% Share of Women
<b>Primary</b>			
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining	52.0	50.0	31.0
<b>Secondary</b>			
Manufacturing, construction	9.4	7.5	27.3
<b>Tertiary</b>			
Wholesale and retail trades	14.0	25.0	45.5
Transportation, storage	4.7	0.0	0.0
Accommodation and food services	0.6	1.3	50.0
Information, financial, insurance, real estate	1.8	1.3	25.0
Administrative and support services	3.5	0.0	0.0
Public administration	3.5	1.3	14.3
Education, health, arts, others	9.9	12.5	37.0
Households as employers	0.6	1.3	50.0
	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>31.9</b>

Source: General Directorate for Statistics and Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

When looking at gender balance within each occupation group (Figure 5.4), all are male dominated given that more men work than women overall. The most gender-balanced occupational groups are technicians and clerical jobs, where half of the workers are women. Women are not well represented especially as managers (14%) or skilled agricultural workers; almost no women are found as machine operators.

More detailed information on occupations is available from the 2010 population census. Growing field crops and vegetables was the main occupation for nearly half (42%) of both women and men; tree and shrub growing was the next most common occupation. Together, 56% of employed women and 59% of employed men undertake these agriculture-related occupations. For the nonagriculture sector, men are more concentrated in occupations such as protective service workers, builders, and drivers, while women were more often working as housekeepers, weavers, and gardeners.

**Figure 5.4** Share of Men and Women by Occupation, 2010 (%)

Source: General Directorate for Statistics and Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili.

## Women in Business

Women are estimated to own 40% of microenterprises in Timor-Leste and around 16% of formalized businesses in 2010.<sup>220</sup> Although they are underrepresented in the formal sector, they are highly active in agricultural businesses, particularly in selling their produce at market and managing kiosks. Women in business face a number of constraints: they are often held back by lower education attainment, and given a male-dominated cultural environment, women function in a legal and operating framework that is not yet sensitive to the needs of balancing business with social and domestic responsibilities.

The Better Business Initiative, established in 2008, is the main mechanism for dialogue between the business community and the government. It has seen a strong representation of women on its working groups, but issues surrounding women in business have not featured prominently. Furthermore, although a women's business association has been established and comprises about 15 women who head medium-sized businesses in Dili, a formal organization is lacking to represent the varying interests of women involved in agricultural production, from petty traders to those running bigger business. Recommendations from a recent assessment of gender and private sector development include reforms to improve the legal framework for women in business, ensure business registration is gender sensitive, and raise awareness of women's rights, including in property and commercial law.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Hedditch, S. and C. Manuel. 2010. *Timor-Leste: Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessment*. Washington, DC: International Finance Corporation.

<sup>221</sup> Hedditch, S. and C. Manuel. 2010. *Timor-Leste: Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessment*. Washington, DC: International Finance Corporation.

The Institute for Business Support is an autonomous institution under the State Secretary for Support and Promotion of the Private Sector. The institute promotes the professionalism of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises based on the principles of quality and sustainability. It provides training, information, and counseling in addition to promoting entrepreneurship. In 2012, almost half (49%) of the Institute for Business Support's 953 clients were women.<sup>222</sup>

## Training and Development

As discussed in Chapter 2, few young people attend technical high schools and the postsecondary TVET sector has only recently begun to provide more formal and accredited training. Given the relatively poor performance of formal schooling in preparing women and men with a specific set of job-related skills, TVET will play an increasingly important role in developing the productive capacity of individuals and their qualifications for employment in the formal sector.

According to the 2010 LFS, the majority of employed women and men—including technicians and those in crafts and related trades—reported teaching themselves the skills needed for their vocation (52% of women, 46% of men). A relatively large proportion also reported learning from a parent, relative, or friend (19% of women, 23% of men) and a few mentioned on-the-job training by their employer (7% of women, 8% of men). Only about 15% of employed men and 10% of women reported gaining their skills through vocational training programs. The high rates of self-teaching and learning outside of a formal setting are reflected in the low skill levels of employed workers, as well as serious skills shortages in key economic sectors. This highlights the importance of expanding quality training programs to meet the growing need for a skilled workforce and to improve employment opportunities in the formal sector.

The majority of women seeking skills training in TVET, however, tend to focus on traditional female skills areas such as administration, finance, and information technology (Chapter 2) while avoiding nontraditional technical areas where more high-paying employment opportunities exist. For example, as of mid-2013, women exceeded men in terms of enrollment in accredited training programs (56% women), which are overseen by the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE).<sup>223</sup> Yet more than half of these women were attending administration and finance skills training programs, and another one-quarter were concentrated in programs for tourism and hospitality. Considering the strong labor market demand for skilled workers in technical areas (e.g., auto mechanics, electricians, plumbers), more women need to be encouraged to seek quality training in high-demand careers that traditionally have been dominated by men.

## Gender and Agriculture

The agriculture sector in Timor-Leste is currently shaped by a predominance of small subsistence farms with low levels of production and productivity.<sup>224</sup> Key challenges include a lack of road and power infrastructure to get produce to markets, as well as limited access to finance and skills to develop more commercial operations.

<sup>222</sup> SEPI. 2013. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>223</sup> SEPFOPE. 2013. *INDMO: The First Five Years 2008–2013*. Dili.

<sup>224</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

Although significant reform is needed for Timor-Leste to become self-sufficient in food production, progress is evident. The use of technologies such as tractors (from 13 in 2007 to 315 in 2009), rice milling units, irrigation schemes, and silos is increasing. Policies are being developed to address issues in water security, seed and fertilizer use, land use and land management, and the use of pesticides.<sup>225</sup>

The agriculture sector employs 127,000 people—88,000 men and 40,000 women—and generated 21% of Timor-Leste's non-oil GDP in 2010.<sup>226</sup> Mainstreaming gender issues in the development of this sector is essential to achieving national gender equality goals. One priority is ensuring that women are represented in the development and implementation of policies. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries employs 1,800 staff members, of which only 280 are women (15%). Of the 412 *suco* extension officers working across Timor-Leste, 48 are women (12%).<sup>227</sup>

Many of the government's proposed strategies for agricultural reform are modeled on the "Green Revolution" initiative in India and other parts of Asia. This initiative involved the introduction of high-yielding seed varieties and increased use of fertilizers and irrigation from 1965 onward, which led to India becoming self-sufficient in grain production. Lessons were learned from these experiences about inequitable gender outcomes, with men benefiting more from technological change than women. Introducing high-yield crops and labor-saving machines tends to show negative impacts on rural women in other countries. Growing needs for technological inputs require cash income, increasing economic pressure on families. Also, when mechanization reduces the need for labor, women are more likely than men to lose wage-earning opportunities.<sup>228</sup>

A study of gender and agriculture, conducted in five districts in 2011, exposes patterns in the distribution of farming tasks between women, men, and children.<sup>229</sup> Examining these trends can help to anticipate the different impacts that particular technologies might have on women versus men (Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4 Perceived Distribution of Labor Between Women and Men in Crop Farming, 2011**

Crop	Tasks Mainly Done by Women	Tasks Mainly Done by Men
Maize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection and preparation of seeds</li> <li>• Planting</li> <li>• Harvesting</li> <li>• Storage, processing, and marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tilling the soil</li> <li>• Irrigation</li> <li>• Tending to the crops</li> </ul>
Coffee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washing and drying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of seeds</li> <li>• Planting</li> <li>• Pest control</li> <li>• Grinding</li> </ul>

Source: Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, Ministry of Agriculture, and Fisheries and National University of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Studies About Gender in Five Districts of Timor-Leste*. Dili.

<sup>225</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030*. Dili.

<sup>226</sup> GDS and SEPFOPE. 2010. *Timor-Leste Labor Force Survey 2010*. Dili. This includes people in formal and informal jobs, regardless of their employment status (i.e., own account worker, contributing family worker, paid employee, or employer), provided they worked for at least 1 hour in the week prior to the labor force survey and, if they are an own account worker or contributing family worker, they produced goods for sale or barter (not exclusively for own household consumption); and GDS. 2012. *Timor-Leste's National Accounts 2004–2010, Volume I: Statistics and Analysis*. Dili.

<sup>227</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>228</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization. 1997. *Women: The Key to Food Security*. Rome.

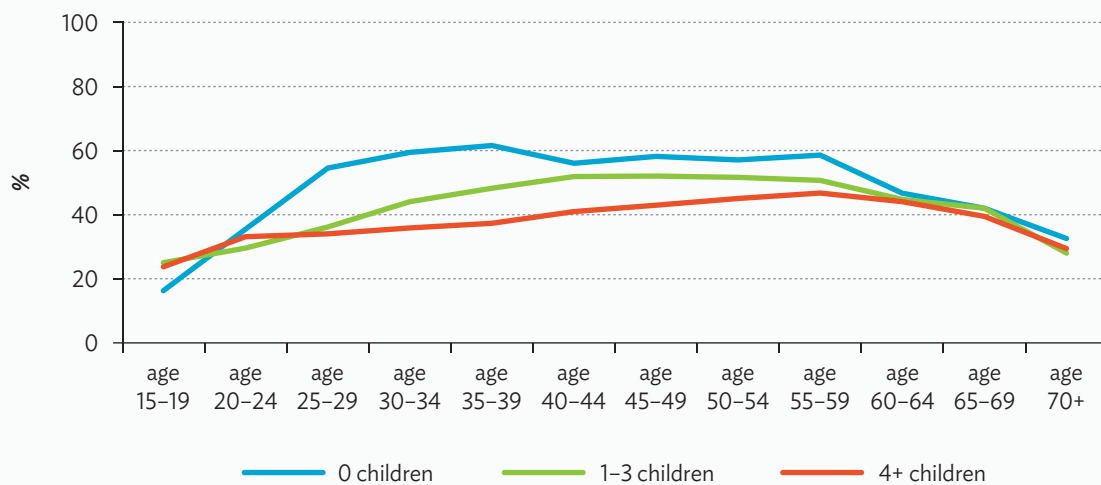
<sup>229</sup> SEPI, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and National University of Timor-Leste. 2011. *Studies About Gender in Five Districts of Timor-Leste*. Dili.

## Constraints on Economic Empowerment

### *Impact of family responsibilities*

The more children a woman has, the less likely she is to be active in the labor force. As discussed previously, family responsibilities, especially child care, are likely to constrain women's labor force participation. Figure 5.5 shows that women with no children are more economically active than those who have children. However, their participation rate is still well below men's, indicating that motherhood is not the only barrier to women's economic participation. Social norms on gender and associated institutional barriers (e.g., education and training opportunities, recruitment practices in certain jobs) may also hinder women's economic participation, more so than men. More in-depth research will be useful in this area to better understand various constraints faced by different groups of women.

**Figure 5.5** Women's Labor Force Participation Rate by Number of Children, 2010



Source: General Directorate for Statistics. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

### *Access to finance*

Financial services in Timor-Leste are underdeveloped, with a lack of collateral and poor enforcement of contracts resulting in limited borrowing. This is evident in the low level of credit extended to the private sector—13% of non-oil GDP (2012)—although this is on the increase after a period of stagnation.<sup>230</sup> Strengthening the credit culture is seen as essential for private sector growth. Options for accessing credit include borrowing from major banks or microfinance institutions (MFIs). The finance sector comprises three foreign commercial banks (ANZ [Australian], Banco Mandiri [Indonesian], and Banco Nacional Ultramarino [Portuguese]); one state-owned commercial bank (Banco Nacional de Comércio de Timor-Leste [BNCTL]); and two microfinance institutions (Moris Rasik and Tuba Rai Metin). The sector is supervised by BNCTL.

<sup>230</sup> International Monetary Fund. 2012. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste: 2011 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report; International Annex; Debt Sustainability Analysis; and Public Information Notice. Washington, DC. [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2012/cr1224.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2012/cr1224.pdf)

For a developing country such as Timor-Leste, microfinance provides an opportunity for the poor, especially rural people, to borrow small amounts of capital at reasonable interest as they may not have access to traditional lending sources such as banks. The main providers of microfinance services are BNCTL, three specialized NGOs, several credit unions, and two MFIs: Moris Rasik and Tuba Rai Metin. Established in 2000, Moris Rasik is the largest rural MFI in the country; as of 2012, it had an active client base of 9,300 borrowers (87% women) and a gross loan portfolio of \$4.8 million. The average loan balance per borrower was \$510.<sup>231</sup> Tuba Rai Metin was established in 2001 to provide microfinance for people in rural and urban locations. As of 2012, it had a client base of 7,500 active borrowers (91% women) and a gross loan portfolio of \$2.8 million. The average loan per borrower was \$370.<sup>232</sup> Together these MFIs lend money to almost 17,000 people, of which 93% are women. As of June 2013, BNCTL also had a microfinance portfolio<sup>233</sup> of approximately \$450,000 to 1,700 clients, 98% of them women, with an average loan per borrower of \$270.<sup>234</sup>

Microfinance loans are mainly used to support income generation (e.g., buying stock or investing in machinery), but also to supplement consumption (e.g., pay for house repairs or education costs). Overall, it is estimated that microfinance services reach around 5% of the population aged 15–64 (3% of men and 7% of women in this age group), although the uptake of services varies by district (Figure 5.6). As several MFIs specifically target women entrepreneurs, more women than men benefit from microfinance loans in all districts. Outreach of MFIs is highest in Aileu, where women borrowers represent 11.7% of the total female working-age population in the district. This uneven coverage across districts is the result of varying resources to manage fieldwork and outreach of microfinance services, as well as ease of access to communities.<sup>235</sup>

At present, small business development is restricted, since a lack of capital remains one of the main obstacles to starting or improving a business. The government estimates that 275,300 people aged 15–64 are in need of microfinance services.<sup>236</sup> A conservative estimate of individual borrowers (correcting for likelihood of multiple loans per person) shows that around 21,700 people (6,700 men and 15,000 women) are currently receiving loans. To address the gaps in supply, sector experts recommend diversifying the range of microfinance products being offered (e.g., gear products to sectors other than trade, such as agriculture); providing more financial literacy and business development training; and conducting further research to determine how best to reach more borrowers.<sup>237</sup>

### *Land and property ownership*

Certainty of land tenure and ownership is important for the stability of any country. Overlaying customary, Portuguese, and Indonesian land tenure systems has made the issue of land rights complex and potentially divisive in Timor-Leste, exacerbated by a lack of land law and the destruction of records in 1999. Most land is community owned but usage rights are allocated to individuals, which are then passed on through inheritance

<sup>231</sup> MixMarket. MFI Report: Tuba Rai Metin. [www.mixmarket.org/mfi/trm/report](http://www.mixmarket.org/mfi/trm/report) (accessed 10 October 2013).

<sup>232</sup> MixMarket. MFI Report: Mori Rasik. [www.mixmarket.org/mfi/moris-rasik](http://www.mixmarket.org/mfi/moris-rasik) (accessed 10 October 2013).

<sup>233</sup> Including both group loans and market vendor loans. BNCTL also offers seasonal crop loans, payroll loans, and business loans which are not included in this number.

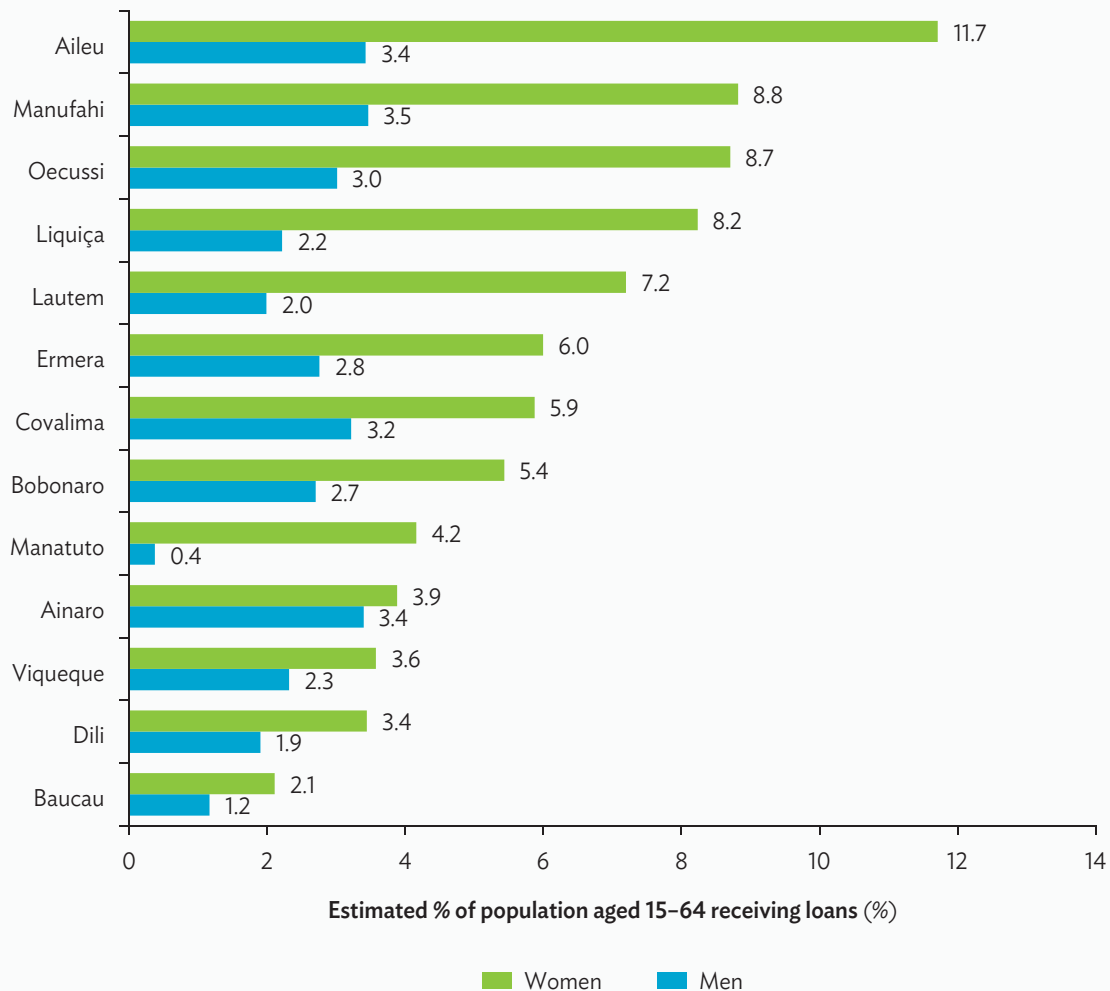
<sup>234</sup> BNCTL. June 2013 Financial Report. Unpublished.

<sup>235</sup> INFUSE. 2012. Stock Taking Exercise—Analysis of Results. Unpublished.

<sup>236</sup> Government of Timor-Leste and UNDP. *Mobilize Social Business to Accelerate Achievement of Timor-Leste MDGs (2012–2015)*. Project document. Dili. [www.undp.org/content/dam/timorleste/docs/reports/TL\\_PRE\\_SocialBusinessProdoc.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/timorleste/docs/reports/TL_PRE_SocialBusinessProdoc.pdf)

<sup>237</sup> INFUSE. 2012. Stock Taking Exercise—Analysis of Results. Unpublished.

**Figure 5.6** Estimated Share of Population Aged 15–64 in Receipt of Loans from Microfinance Institutions and BNCTL by District, 2008–2011 (%)



BNCTL = Banco Nacional de Comércio de Timor-Leste.

Notes: Figures include BNCTL's full loan portfolio, not only microfinance. The number of borrowers has been reduced by 20% to correct for cases of multiple loans per borrower.

Source: Data from microfinance institutions is based on the microinsurance register maintained by National Insurance Timor-Leste (NITL) as of June 2013. This register likely underestimates the total number of loans by microfinance institutions as NITL started in mid-2012 and only insures borrowers up to the age of 60, so older borrowers and borrowers who initiated loans prior to July 2012 would not be counted. Data from BNCTL is based on the BNCTL financial report from June 2013.

to family members.<sup>238</sup> These rights are usually given to men and passed through the male line, with women only acquiring the use of land through marriage but not holding rights to that land.<sup>239</sup>

<sup>238</sup> International Crisis Group. 2010. Managing Land Conflict in Timor-Leste: Asia Briefing No. 110.

<sup>239</sup> Except in the matrilineal communities that exist in Bobonaro, Manufahi, and Covalima districts, where land is passed through the female line. ADB and UNIFEM. 2005. *Gender and Nation Building in Timor-Leste: Country Gender Assessment*. Manila.



The Ministry of Justice has initiated a cadastral survey program (Ita Nia Rai) that has identified 50,000 parcels of land across the country. By March 2012, the ministry had received 55,000 claims on this land, with 40% of claimants being men, 20% women, 11% married couples, 23% by the state, and the remainder “other groups.” The ministry estimates around 10% of land to be in dispute.<sup>240</sup> The government has been trying to develop legislation to resolve the uncertainty, but clear land laws are yet to be enacted. After 2 years of debate, Parliament passed three laws in February 2012 (Land Law, Expropriation Law, and Real Estate Fund Law), but the President subsequently rejected them until particular changes were made.

In November 2012, the Government of Timor-Leste released three new draft laws: one to determine who owns land across the country, one regarding the powers of the state to expropriate land in the public interest, and a law on the real estate financial fund. These new land laws are of particular importance to women. They propose recognition of human and constitutional rights for women and men to be treated equally in law with respect to land ownership and inheritance rights. SEPI worked with the Ministry of Justice to ensure women’s rights and gender perspectives are properly considered and that there are no unintended consequences when the laws come into force.<sup>241</sup>

## Social Protection

The Timorese Constitution affirms the right of all citizens to social security and assistance. It provides specific guarantees for the special protection of the elderly and citizens with disabilities. The government is still to finalize a comprehensive policy for social and humanitarian assistance. In the meantime, it has introduced a number of programs to assist vulnerable people (Table 5.5). Commencing in 2008, social assistance has been provided through a range of pension and cash transfer schemes to

- former combatants and martyrs of the national liberation (veterans),
- elderly people (aged over 60 years),
- people with a disability that prevents them from working, and
- vulnerable households with children (Bolsa da Mãe scheme).<sup>242</sup>

Social assistance programs play a key role in alleviating poverty. To what extent this is achieved depends on whether the schemes reach those most in need and whether they provide sufficient amounts to support the costs of living. In 2012, social assistance spending was around 10% of the overall government budget (approximately \$100 million). Despite the significant budget allocation, a recent study shows that social assistance schemes are not effectively reaching the poorest households.<sup>243</sup> A disproportionate amount of the social assistance budget is spent on adults rather than on children, even though households with children are among the poorest groups in Timorese society. The majority (60%) of social assistance funding is allocated to veteran’s pensions. Annual payments to veterans are significant, ranging between \$2,760 to \$9,000 per annum, which represents 152%

<sup>240</sup> Ministry of Justice. 2012. Ita Nia Rai: Data and Statistics. <http://itaniarai.mj.gov.tl/eng/data.html> (accessed June 2013).

<sup>241</sup> Ministry of Justice and SEPI. 2011. *Report of Gender Equity and Customary Land Use Seminar*. Dili.

<sup>242</sup> Decree Law No. 15/2008: Pensions for Combatants and Martyrs of Struggle for National Liberation (amended by 25/2008). In 2013, the government budgeted \$84.8 million for veterans’ pensions (State Budget Book 5, 2013); Decree Law No. 19/2008: Support Allowance for the Aged and the Disabled. In 2013, the government budgeted \$38.3 million for the elderly and disability allowance scheme (State Budget Book 5, 2013); Decree Law No. 18/2012: Subsidy Pension Conditional of Mother.

<sup>243</sup> World Bank. 2013. *Timor-Leste Social Assistance Public Expenditure and Program Performance Report*. Washington, DC.

**Table 5.5 Major Features of Current Social Protection Programs**

	Target Population	Benefit Amount (per year)	Total Number of Recipients in 2012 <sup>a</sup>	Implementing Agency
Veteran	Veterans and survivor families	Ranges from \$1,380 to \$9,000	37,704 (approx. 26% women)	Secretary of State for Veterans' Affairs (MSS)
Elderly	Elderly (aged 60+)	\$360	84,569	National Directorate of Social Security (MSS)
Disabled	18+ with severe disabilities (Class III or IV per WHO)	\$360	5,558	National Directorate of Social Security (MSS)
Bolsa da Mãe	Schoolgoing children who are orphans living in single-parent households or in large families	Primary students: \$40/year; presecondary and secondary: \$80/year; university: domestic, \$160/year, international, \$240 per year	15,150	National Directorate of Social Reinsertion (MSS)

MSS = Ministry of Social Solidarity.

<sup>a</sup> Total number of recipients is based on the number of households, except the veteran's scheme, which is the number of individuals. This reflects the data collection method rather than method of payment. Sex-disaggregated data are not currently available unless indicated.

Sources: World Bank. 2013. *Timor-Leste Social Assistance Public Expenditure and Program Performance Report*. Washington, DC; and MSS data on beneficiaries of veterans' pensions (2008–2013) provided to SEPI on request.

of the total household budget and more than twice (241%) the average wage.<sup>244</sup> About 26% of those receiving veterans' pensions are women.

Pensions for the elderly and disabled are the second-biggest program, accounting for about 20% of the social assistance budget. It pays a benefit of \$30 per month, paid in lump sums of \$180 twice per year (June and December). Women and men are equal in terms of eligibility and the amount of allowance paid. The assistance for elderly people is well publicized and has good coverage, reaching almost 90% of the eligible population aged 60 years or older. However, the same is not the case for the disability pension scheme: 85% of people with a disability are not receiving the disability pension.<sup>245</sup> The amount of the elderly pension is most in line with international experience, with the benefit being close to 30% of the average wage. This is an important safety net, particularly for elderly women, who tend to be more vulnerable to poverty. A much higher proportion of older women are widowed (74%) than men (26%).

Among the other social assistance schemes, one of chief importance to women and children is the Bolsa da Mãe (Mother's Purse) program, which was established through the Ministry of Social Solidarity in 2008. Set up to support the many widows and orphans left by years of conflict, this conditional cash transfer scheme consumes less than 2% of the annual social assistance budget. It is the only social assistance scheme that currently uses poverty as part of the eligibility criteria and most (90%) beneficiaries are female-headed households.<sup>246</sup> The program has gone through various stages of development. A lack of clarity, accountability,

<sup>244</sup> World Bank. 2013. *Timor-Leste Social Assistance Public Expenditure and Program Performance Report*.

<sup>245</sup> World Bank. 2013. *Timor-Leste Social Assistance Public Expenditure and Program Performance Report*.

<sup>246</sup> Bolsa da Mãe database, 2011–2012.

and transparency in past procedures was addressed through changes to eligibility criteria and benefit amounts in 2012. Rather than targeting individual children, the scheme now uses a vulnerability scoring system (based on indicators related to household size, health and disability, education level of household members, income, land ownership, and distance to services) to identify the households most in need. The amount of benefit paid depends on the number of children in the household, ranging from \$5 per month for one child to \$15 per month for three or more children. The scheme could have an important bearing on the financial security of women; however, it is not reaching the poorest households and the amount paid is too low to have much of an impact. For the poorest recipients, the Bolsa da Mãe benefit represents less than 3% of the total household budget and about 6% of the average wage.<sup>247</sup>

## Migration

Gender is an important dimension in migration, impacting decisions to migrate, amounts to remit and how remittance income will be spent. However, data on migration are limited and sex-disaggregated information is not readily available. According to the International Organization for Migration, at the global level, women migrants send the same amount of remittances as men, but as women generally earn less than men, this represents a higher proportion of their income. Women migrants are often relegated to low-skilled jobs in particular industries that are characterized by low pay, poor working conditions, high risk of sexual harassment and exploitation.

Most migration in Timor-Leste is internal, with movements mainly occurring from rural to urban areas, particularly to the capital, Dili, where better education and employment opportunities are to be found.<sup>248</sup> Emigration is an option for gaining employment for those willing to move abroad. Rights to Portuguese citizenship opens up the European job market and opportunities also exist via work programs in Asia and the Pacific. This provides a potentially important source of income for households. In 2012, inward remittances to Timor-Leste were estimated to be around \$82 million per annum, representing 2% of GDP, up from 1.2% in 2006.<sup>249</sup> The main destination countries for Timorese migrant workers have been Ireland and the United Kingdom, where they mainly work in poultry farms and fish factories. Since 2006, a government program has sent construction workers to the Republic of Korea, and there are also nominal numbers of migrants in Indonesia and Australia. Data on the female share of migrant workers is not available, unfortunately.

There are a significant number of foreign workers in Timor-Leste: in 2012 there were close to 13,800.<sup>250</sup> The 2010 census showed that Indonesia, the Philippines, and Portugal were the main countries of origin for immigrants and that there are more men and fewer children, suggesting that job and other opportunities are less likely to be taken up by women or families.<sup>251</sup> Foreign workers can play an essential role in addressing skill shortages, but this must be balanced with long-term strategies to develop the skills of Timorese workers.

<sup>247</sup> World Bank. 2013. *Timor-Leste Social Assistance Public Expenditure and Program Performance Report*.

<sup>248</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

<sup>249</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank. 2013. *Sending Money Home to Asia: Trends and opportunities in the world's largest remittance market place*. Rome. Although increasing, remittances to Timor-Leste are relatively low compared with countries such as Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji, where inward remittances are around 26%, 42%, and 7% of GDP, respectively.

<sup>250</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank. 2013. *Sending Money Home to Asia: Trends and opportunities in the world's largest remittance market place*. Rome.

<sup>251</sup> GDS. 2011. *Population and Housing Census 2010*. Dili.

The government should monitor the extent to which foreign workers are employed in skilled and low-skilled jobs and whether these opportunities could be used to train and provide jobs for Timorese workers.

## Human Trafficking

Reports indicate that Timor-Leste is a destination country for women (most likely girls) trafficked for prostitution, but also for men for forced labor, mainly in the fishing industry.<sup>252</sup> Human trafficking within the country is also an issue, but tends to be smaller in scope and more opportunistic than that occurring across international borders. Victims of trafficking are reportedly exploited as commercial sex workers in the capital Dili, as domestic workers, or as workers on fishing boats. To date, relatively few cases of human trafficking have been detected. Between 2008 and 2011, the International Organization for Migration assisted 33 victims of trafficking. People trafficked to Timor-Leste have included victims from Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines and were aged between 17 and 39. The Alola Foundation reported that 50 victims of human trafficking were identified in Timor-Leste during the same period.<sup>253</sup>

Timor-Leste has a draft action plan on human trafficking with the objective of protecting Timorese people from trafficking, to provide protection and assistance to all victims, and to strengthen investigation and prosecution processes for traffickers. A framework to protect persons against human trafficking was created with the enactment of the Immigration and Asylum Act in 2003. The Vulnerable Persons Unit of the National Police of Timor-Leste investigates cases of human trafficking, as well as gender-based violence and other crimes against people less able to defend themselves.

## 5.3 Taking Action

Key to achieving employment and economic empowerment goals is the creation of an environment that supports a high number of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the development of an inclusive and increasingly skilled and educated workforce. Success involves growth in the private sector, industries, and services, and a more productive agriculture sector. During this high-growth period, it is important to ensure that economic policy is gender sensitive and inclusive of vulnerable groups. This requires careful consideration of the different needs of women and men, as well as actively involving them in policy development through effective consultation mechanisms. Temporary special measures that discriminate in favor of women can also help to speed up progress toward gender equality goals.

Empowering women and girls also involves addressing the underlying causes of inequity, as social norms and formal institutions often dictate economic opportunities for women and men. To be empowered, people need to have access to resources such as education and training, credit and financial capital, land and equipment, and social networks. Therefore, action can focus on three levels: enhancing the resources available to women and girls, redefining norms and institutions, and on building women's influence and involvement.<sup>254</sup>

<sup>252</sup> Data provided to SEPI by the International Organization for Migration.

<sup>253</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>254</sup> Golla, A. M. et al. 2011. *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators*. International Research Center for Women. [www.icrw.org/publications/understanding-and-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment](http://www.icrw.org/publications/understanding-and-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment)

**SEPFOPE's gender mainstreaming strategy for 2010–2013** outlines initiatives being undertaken to ensure work opportunities are tailored and made available to women and men.<sup>255</sup> These include

- ensuring equal participation of women and men in planning, implementation, and development of its programs;
- training its staff in how to mainstream gender issues in their work;
- promoting workplaces that are free of violence and harassment; and
- ensuring gender issues are a regular part of management and resource allocation practices.

Earlier reports on SEPFOPE's gender mainstreaming practices are positive. Achievements to date include the recruitment of additional staff to support the promotion of gender equality in the agency's policies and programs, and an emphasis on the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data for monitoring program participation.<sup>256</sup>

The **Mid-Level Skills Training Project (2012–2016)**, being implemented by SEPFOPE with financial support from the Asian Development Bank, focuses on accredited training in construction and auto mechanics. While these are traditionally male-dominated skills areas, SEPFOPE aims to enroll at least 20% women among trainees in the programs. Special incentives are provided to training providers for recruiting, retaining, and advancing women trainees into mid-level qualification programs, which include transport support schemes and scholarships for women trainees. The project's gender action plan also requires training providers to ensure on-the-job training programs for all female trainees to enhance their marketability and job placement.

The **Decent Work Country Programme (2008–2013)** presents a strategic framework defining the joint 5-year program priorities of the Government of Timor-Leste, employers' organizations, workers' organizations, and the ILO and its development partners.<sup>257</sup> It specifically addresses the primary concerns of Timorese institutions: employability of Timorese women and men and employment creation. Gender disparity in employment represented one of the four core areas of the program, and the promotion of gender equality is also implemented as a crosscutting theme.

The **ILO Business Opportunities and Support Services Project** is aimed at boosting local economic development, enhancing government service delivery, and creating quality employment in rural areas. This is done by expanding market access for small businesses, strengthening local contractors, and providing better business development services including training and information on public tenders.

A **national strategy and action plan for gender and the private sector** is being developed by the State Secretary for Support and Promotion of the Private Sector. The main objective is to enhance collaboration among key stakeholders for the development of a gender-sensitive private sector that responds to the needs of potential and existing entrepreneurs, both women and men, at district and at national levels.

<sup>255</sup> SEPFOPE. 2009. Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2010–2013. Draft. Unpublished.

<sup>256</sup> Australian Government Aid Program (AusAID), Government of Timor-Leste, and the ILO. *Youth Employment Promotion Programme: Progress Report October 2009–March 2010*. [www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/eastasia/timor-leste/Documents/youth-program-update-oct-2009-mar-2010.pdf](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/eastasia/timor-leste/Documents/youth-program-update-oct-2009-mar-2010.pdf)

<sup>257</sup> Government of Timor-Leste and the ILO. Timor-Leste: Decent Work Country Programme 2008–2013. [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/timorleste.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/timorleste.pdf)

In 2008, SEPI initiated the **Women's Economic Empowerment Program** to provide training and cash transfers to assist women's groups in rural areas to start and grow small businesses. In its early stages, the program focused on sponsoring startups of new businesses by selecting groups of women who demonstrated well-organized and promising project ideas to receive cash and training on how to develop a small business. The focus is now on providing ongoing support to those groups and identifying other existing groups that aim to grow their business into a small or medium-sized enterprise. The program has transferred just under \$350,000 between 2008 and 2011 to 162 groups of women over 13 districts, 48 subdistricts, and 103 sucos. The average grant per group of women was around \$2,160. Monitoring reports show that about three-quarters (77%) of the groups receiving assistance have successfully continued to operate their business. The main operational challenges found relate to getting goods to market, with better transport and roads needed, and help for the groups to find distribution channels for their products.

The Roads for Development Program, implemented by the Ministry of Public Works, is the leading national rural roads program. The goal of the program for women and men in rural Timor-Leste is to derive social and economic benefits from improved and year-round road access. The program is increasing capacity of both the government and contractors while promoting the use of labor-based methods. The program involves the local communities in rehabilitation and maintenance works, providing rural people with short-term work opportunities. In 2013, 30% of the unskilled workers from the communities were women. The program is closely monitoring the impacts on women and men and intends to increase women's participation in construction work in the future through application of gender-sensitive approaches, such as gender awareness raising at the community level, and allowing women to work only part time.<sup>258</sup>

## 5.4 Recommendations

### ***Increase women's participation in the labor market by improving training opportunities***

SEPI should work with SEPFOPE to increase training opportunities for women and ensure TVET programs are designed to meet anticipated skills shortages in the labor market for women and men. Specific strategies should include promoting nontraditional skills training for women and linking training to employment, particularly entrepreneurship training combined with access to financial resources. To increase training opportunities for women, especially those from rural areas, SEPI should work with training providers to provide appropriate accommodation facilities for women. SEPI, together with SEPFOPE, should also conduct gender awareness training to training providers and trainers, so that female and male trainees have equal opportunities for different types of training programs, including nontraditional sectors for women.

### ***Implement the SEPFOPE gender mainstreaming strategy***

The draft strategy for 2010–2013 should be updated, formally adopted, and implemented to ensure the policies and programs of SEPFOPE related to TVET are gender sensitive. The draft shows a commitment to developing gender-related tools and manuals for staff, as well as the systematic collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data. These initiatives should be implemented in collaboration with SEPI and the Inter-Ministerial Gender Working Group to ensure it is aligned with other gender-related goals.

<sup>258</sup> Information provided by the ILO office in Timor-Leste.



### ***Expand microfinance schemes for women with further research***

Microfinance schemes can create economic opportunities for women and men and boost private sector development; therefore, special measures aimed at increasing access to microcredit facilities should be explored. It is recommended to build on existing work by conducting research into gaps in outreach and diversity of microfinance products so they can have a greater and more sustainable impact. Further studies should identify both successes and negative potential effects of microfinance on women's economic empowerment to ensure its positive outcomes.

### ***Review mechanisms for ensuring agriculture sector reform is gender sensitive***

Given the importance of the agriculture sector for Timor-Leste and the plans for its development, it is essential that women, particularly rural women, are actively participating in setting the path for the future. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries should work in consultation with SEPI, women's groups, and NGOs to review existing mechanisms for developing the agriculture sector (sector strategy, coordination bodies, reporting) and ensure they are gender-inclusive. Ensuring women have access to productive land and wage employment opportunities in the agriculture sector will help make substantial progress toward national gender equality goals.

### ***Support implementation of the Timor-Leste National Strategy and Action Plan for Gender and Private Sector 2014–2017***

Implementing this strategy, which was adopted 5 December 2013, is a key element in achieving gender-related goals related to work and employment. SEPI should work with the State Secretary for Support and Promotion of the Private Sector to support its implementation through appropriate mechanisms, such as national and district gender working groups.

### ***Increase the value and coverage of conditional cash transfer***

To ensure social protection schemes, such as Bolsa da Mãe, have an impact on alleviating poverty and assisting vulnerable women and children, the amount of the benefit should be increased and the reach of the scheme should be widened to include the poorest households. SEPI should advocate for the implementation of recommendations provided by the World Bank study on social protection.

### ***Increase the availability and gender analysis of work-related statistics***

More gender analysis of existing and future data sets is needed to better understand potential constraints to women's labor force participation, causes of gender segregation in jobs, and challenges of women entrepreneurs. For this purpose, GDS should make the microdata for the 2010 and 2013 LFS available for more in-depth analysis of work-related statistics from a gender perspective. A time use survey should also be explored to examine women's unpaid work, particularly household responsibilities and their impacts on other economic activities, vis-à-vis men's. SEPI should work with the relevant ministries to ensure gender analysis of national data collections is conducted on a systematic basis.



# 6

## Governance, Influence, and Decision Making

This chapter explores women's representation in national and local governance. It also looks at gender disparities in the civil service and in managerial positions overall. Women's role in decision making is explored, as well as the role of the women's movement.

### Key Findings

- Women have played an active role in the struggle for independence, peace building, and politics. Their participation and influence is notable at the national level; however, women's lower levels of education and literacy, as well as a male-dominated culture, have limited their ability to contribute to local governance.
- Timor-Leste has one of the highest proportions of women parliamentarians in the world and the highest in Asia and the Pacific. Women hold a 38% share of the 65 parliamentary seats. Women's representation has been high since the first elections in 2002, before introducing a quota system in 2006.
- The Law on the Election of the National Parliament ensures women's representation in politics with a requirement that one in every three candidates elected to Parliament be a woman. However, this does not guarantee their political influence. Women's share of decision-making roles at the highest levels of government—as ministers, vice ministers, and secretaries of state—has risen narrowly, from 13% in 2007 to 18% in 2012.
- While women are achieving great equity at the national level, they have almost no voice at the local level, where decisions of the greatest relevance to rural women are made. Almost all of the 442 *suco* and 2,336 *aldeia* chiefs are men (98%) and there has been little change over the last decade.
- Progress in increasing women's share of jobs in the public sector has been slow over the last 12 years. Women held 26% of civil service positions in 2001 and this proportion increased to only 29% in 2013, despite the fact that public sector jobs tripled during this period.
- Women's share of managerial jobs across both public and private sectors is low relative to men's. Only 16% of public service directors and chiefs are women (2013), while in the private sector 29% of chief executives and directors are women.

### 6.1 Overview of the Political System

Timor-Leste's constitution was proclaimed on 28 November 1975 by Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN), and was internationally recognized on 20 May 2002.<sup>259</sup> The Constitution describes the political system and gives every citizen aged over 17 years the obligation to register (Article 65) and the

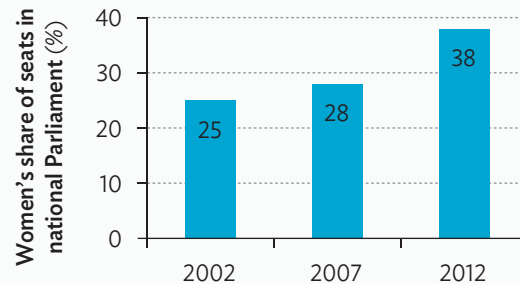
<sup>259</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2002. *Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste* (Article 16). [http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Constitution\\_RDTL\\_ENG.pdf](http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Constitution_RDTL_ENG.pdf)

right to vote in elections (Article 43). It defines equal rights for women and men in Articles 16 and 17, and equal participation in political life is guaranteed under articles 46, 47, and 63 as a fundamental instrument for consolidating democracy in the country. Besides the Constitution, Article 8 of the Law on Political Parties specifies a quota for women as political candidates to ensure reasonable female representation.<sup>260</sup>

## Parliament

Timor-Leste has a unicameral (single house) national parliament of 65 seats. It has one of the highest proportions of women parliamentarians in the world and the highest in Asia and the Pacific. The nation took the opportunity to engage women in state politics from the outset. Even though a quota for women parliamentarians was originally rejected, the first government election in 2002 saw women occupy 25% of the then 88 seats of Parliament. Since then, women's share of seats has increased with every election, further facilitated by special measures in legislation. The 2006 Law on the Election of the National Parliament (Law No. 6/2006) introduced a quota that requires one in every four candidates be a woman. Following lobbying by women's groups and recommendations by the CEDAW Committee, this was amended in 2011 to increase women's representation to one woman for every three (Law No. 7/2011).<sup>261</sup> The 2012 elections saw 25 women elected to Parliament, a share of 38% (Figure 6.1).<sup>262</sup> Despite these impressive results, it is too soon for complacency. Women's representation is linked to parties' compliance with the law that requires every third candidate on the election list to be a woman. During the last elections in 2012, no party went beyond this minimum to include more women on the list.<sup>263</sup>

**Figure 6.1 Women in National Parliament, 2002–2012 (%)**



Source: Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality records.

Women's representation in the executive body has increased. Currently 2 of the 18 ministers are female: the minister of finance and the minister of social solidarity. This is one less than in the previous government, which also had a female minister of justice. It is a great achievement that a woman serves as head of the finance ministry, which is central to planning and policy implementation. Furthermore, out of the 12 vice ministers, 4 are women: finance; ethics and service delivery; management, support, and services; and basic and primary education. Combined with the four female state secretariats, there are a total of 10 women holding top positions in the government structure. This represents an 18% share and is an increase from 13% under the last government in 2007.<sup>264</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2004. Parliamentary Law No. 3/2004: Political Parties.

<sup>261</sup> This saw 671 women candidates representing 21 political parties, a significant increase from the 242 women candidates from 14 political parties in 2007. (SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.)

<sup>262</sup> Only 20 women were elected, but as women candidates were promoted to government posts, women candidates next on the list were able to take seats after careful and thoughtful negotiations by the different parties.

<sup>263</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission. 2012. *Final Report: Parliamentary Election 2012*. Dili.

<sup>264</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

Standing committees (also known as specialized commissions) are responsible for the bulk of the work of Parliament. There are seven committees, with Committee F being the primary mechanism for addressing gender equality priorities.<sup>265</sup> Two subgroups have recently been established under Committee F: one on violence against women and the other on reproductive health. These groups met for the first time in June 2013.

## Head of State and Government

The head of state is a popularly elected president who serves a 5-year term. The role is largely symbolic, although the President is able to veto legislation and is the head of the defense forces. Following elections, the President appoints the political party or coalition that was elected with a majority of votes to form government. The party or coalition then appoints the Prime Minister (head of government). Since its independence, Timor-Leste has had different elected presidents from each of the three elections, held in 2001, 2007, and 2012. They are Xanana Gusmão (inaugural President), José Ramos-Horta, and Taur Matan Ruak (current President). The fact that 2 women were among the 13 candidates running for President in 2012 indicates women aspire to hold the office, although they only received less than 0.5% of the vote and were eliminated in the first round.<sup>266</sup>

## Elections

Parliamentary elections are held following presidential elections every 5 years. Members of Parliament are drawn from party lists based on a popular vote for that party. Parliamentarians do not represent specific geographical areas and their constituents are the entire population.

It is compulsory and an individual responsibility to register as a voter. There were a total of 645,500 registered voters at the time of the 2012 elections—51% male and 49% female (as per the overall gender balance of the population). Gender audit of the 2007 elections shows that 80% of registered voters turned out to vote on polling day.<sup>267</sup> Of all those who did vote, 53% were men and 47% women. For the 2012 parliamentary elections, of the 648,000 registered voters, 49% were women.<sup>268</sup>

## Subnational Governance

At the subnational level, the country is organized into 13 administrative districts, which are divided into 65 *postos* (subdistricts), 442 *sucos* (villages), and 2,225 *aldeias* (hamlets). The Prime Minister appoints district administrators and their deputies. Staff from government agencies are posted at the district level to manage public services in each of the main sectors. The government's decentralization policy will see the introduction of municipal elections in 2015 that will replace the political appointees with elected representatives—a mayor and deputy mayor. A quota will ensure one in every three candidates for these positions are women.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Ospina, S. 2006. *Participation of Women in Politics and Decision Making in Timor-Leste: A Recent History*. Dili: UNIFEM. Current committees are Committee A—Constitutional Affairs, Justice, Public Administration, Local Power and Anti-Corruption; Committee B—Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security; Committee C—Public Finances; Committee D—Economy and Development; Committee E—Infrastructure, Transport and Communications; Committee F—Health, Education, Culture, Veterans and Gender Equality; and Committee G—Ethics.

<sup>266</sup> UNMIT and UNDP. 2012. *Compendium of the 2012 Elections in Timor-Leste*. [www.laohamutuk.org/misc/eleisaun2012/UNMITCompendium19Jun2012.pdf](http://www.laohamutuk.org/misc/eleisaun2012/UNMITCompendium19Jun2012.pdf)

<sup>267</sup> Chinaud, J. 2007. *A Gender Perspective of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections of Timor-Leste*. Dili: UNMIT.

<sup>268</sup> UNMIT and UNDP. 2012. *Compendium of the 2012 Elections in Timor-Leste*. [www.laohamutuk.org/misc/eleisaun2012/UNMITCompendium19Jun2012.pdf](http://www.laohamutuk.org/misc/eleisaun2012/UNMITCompendium19Jun2012.pdf)

<sup>269</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2008. *Policy Orientation Guidelines for Decentralization and Local Government in Timor-Leste*. [www.estatal.gov.tl/Documents/DNDLOT/LGSP/BriefingNoteDecen2011.pdf](http://www.estatal.gov.tl/Documents/DNDLOT/LGSP/BriefingNoteDecen2011.pdf)

*Suco* councils provide local governance and have evolved from traditional and cultural institutions. *Suco* councils usually comprise 10 positions, including women and youth representatives, the *aldeia* chiefs, a *lian nain* (or “elder”), and the *suco* chief.<sup>270</sup> They are charged with delivering services such as local land management, resolving conflicts, referring cases to the justice system, and imposing fines. They are an important governance mechanism, but are usually limited in resources and authority to act beyond settling local disputes and gathering and voicing local concerns.<sup>271</sup>

## 6.2 Key Gender Issues

Traditional power structures that have existed for hundreds of years shape the governance, influence, and decision-making systems that exist today (Box 6.1). The quota system has served to ensure women are represented, but it does not ensure they are influential. It is a positive development that a caucus of women parliamentarians now exists and there are mechanisms, such as the Center for Capacity Building and Information on Gender Equality, to better mainstream gender concerns in Parliament.

### Box 6.1 Traditional Power Structures

Traditional Timorese culture has dictated gender roles and the status of women and men within the community. It sets out clear responsibilities for people within the village, with ancestral lineage (house) determining the place that each person occupies in the hierarchy. Village leaders are customarily chosen from the highest-ranking house. Even after the Indonesians introduced democratic elections in 1982, in practice, most leaders continued to be of “royal” descent.

This model has seen an almost complete absence of women in roles of influence and decision making. Village and subdistrict leaders have traditionally been male, with women occupying those positions only when there are no men left in the “right” house. This traditional system of local governance survived largely intact during Portuguese and Indonesian rule. The influence of long-held traditions is strong and it will take time for change to occur. When conducting their research in 2002, Ospina and Hohe noted that advocates for a modern system of democracy were emerging:<sup>a</sup>

People with higher education, or people in urban areas, have started to ... advocate a modern system of democracy, in which leaders should be elected in accordance with their capacities. In opposition to this, the majority of the population continues to adhere to the traditional power system.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Ospina, S. and Howe, T. 2002. *Traditional Power Structures and Local Governance in East Timor: A Case Study of the Community Empowerment Project*. Geneva: Graduate Institute of Development Studies.

A significant step in centralizing gender issues in policy debate was the adoption of the Women’s Charter of Rights in 2001, which provided a platform for activism on women’s political participation and resulted in 30% women candidates in the 2001 Constituent Assembly election.<sup>272</sup> During the 2007 election campaign, thanks to the lobbying of the national women’s machinery (the then OPE, Rede Feto, and UNIFEM), the women’s platform outlined a commitment to action in seven areas: education, economy, health, politics, justice and security, culture, and the media. It included an agreement to approve the domestic violence bill and penal code, which the newly elected government achieved in 2009–2010. The platform was important in increasing awareness of

<sup>270</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>271</sup> USAID and TAF. 2012. TreGDS of Local Governance in Timor-Leste: Suco Governance Performance Scale (SGPS). Dili: USAID and TAF.

<sup>272</sup> Hill, H. 2012. Gender Issues in Timor-Leste and the Pacific Islands: ‘Practical Needs’ and ‘Strategic Issues’ revisited. In M. Leach et al., eds. *New Research on Timor-Leste*. Hawthorn: Swinburne University Press.

the democratic value of gender equality and its integration in party policy.<sup>273</sup> This process was repeated during the 2012 elections, when all 23 political parties involved in the election endorsed a common platform agreeing to incorporate gender issues into the policies of the new government.<sup>274</sup>

## Women in Parliament

A major achievement is the formation of a caucus of female members of Parliament to provide a united front on gender equality issues. This provides an important mechanism for generating support for further reforms to benefit women. The Group of Women Parliamentarians in Timor-Leste (GMPTL) brings together all women in Parliament, regardless of their political party affiliation, to work on maximizing women's participation and eliminating all forms of discrimination.<sup>275</sup> Together with Parliamentary Standing Committee F, the group promotes gender issues and strengthens the influence of women in national planning and policy making.

GMPTL is a key partner for SEPI in reducing gender inequality. It has played a role in introducing new laws and mechanisms, including

- adoption of a new law against domestic violence (Law No. 7/2010);
- amendment of the parliamentary electoral law to increase women's participation in Parliament (Art.12 [3] Law No. 6/2006);
- adoption of the parliamentary resolution on gender-responsive budgeting (National Parliament Resolution No. 12/2010);
- approval of the new Penal Code and Civil Code, including articles addressing the needs of women and protecting women; and;
- conducting a national conference on family planning, sexual education, and reproductive health (July 2010).

The Center for Capacity Building and Information on Gender Equality has been established to assist national parliamentarians to mainstream gender equality issues in their work. The center provides information services and training for elected officials and their staff to help them understand and address gender-related issues in policy making. Support to women in Parliament requires continued strengthening to ensure that representation remains high and that women are influential in politics. Working through existing mechanisms, such as the GMPTL and parliamentary committees, women should be encouraged to enter political life and play a significant role in setting and monitoring the national development agenda. It is encouraging to note there are two women with significant ministerial portfolios and also that a small number have put their names forward as candidates in the 2012 presidential elections. Although those women who have stood for President have fallen well short of the necessary votes to be seen as serious contenders, it is important that women continue to put their names forward.

## Women's Role in Postconflict Reconstruction

The UN Security Council resolution to increase women's role in peace building (UNSC 1325) was particularly important for Timor-Leste as it required parties in a conflict to respect women's rights and to support their

<sup>273</sup> Chinaud, J. 2007. *A Gender Perspective of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections of Timor-Leste*. Dili: UNMIT.

<sup>274</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>275</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

participation in peace negotiations and in postconflict reconstruction. SEPI has been working with government to implement the resolution, including raising awareness and working with security forces to facilitate women's involvement. Peace-building processes following the crisis of 2006, which displaced up to 150,000 people, provide an example of achievements in this area. A woman was appointed minister of social solidarity after the 2007 elections, who led the program to return internally displaced people (IDP) to their homes. A women's committee and other mechanisms were established to respond to the issues and concerns of displaced women in the IDP camps.

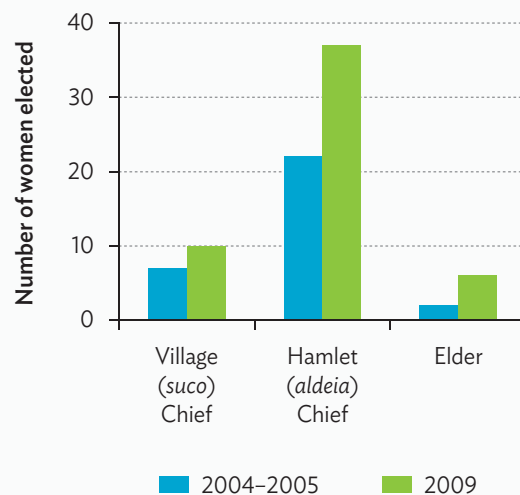
Timor-Leste has now shifted from postconflict reconstruction to the development phase. On 31 December 2012, the UN peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste ended its operations, in line with the expiration of its mandate. Although significant progress has been made in establishing peace and security in the country, maintaining stability remains a challenge.

## Local Politics

Despite achievements in women's representation at the national level, very few women are leaders at the local level. Elections are held every 5 years, and there is no requirement regarding women's participation as candidates. Following local elections in 2009, the vast majority of *suco* or *aldeia* chiefs are men (98%) and this has hardly changed in the last decade.<sup>276</sup> Although small, women's representation as chiefs is increasing. In 2009, there were 47 women elected as *suco* or *aldeia* chiefs, up from 29 in 2004–2005 (Figure 6.2). Overall, women's combined share of *suco* and *aldeia* chief positions has increased from 1.1% in 2004–2005 to 1.8% in 2009.<sup>277</sup>

Women's influence on *suco* councils needs to be increased. As the majority of the population lives in rural areas, women's participation at the local level should be increased to foster faster progress toward gender equality. Government recognized the need to improve women's representation on *suco* councils and legislated parity provisions in 2004 that guarantee women at least three places on these councils.<sup>278</sup> Important now is going beyond representation to ensure that women play an active, influential role. This involves empowering them with the skills needed for political life and good governance, as well as educating the community about the value of including both women and men in local decision making.

**Figure 6.2** Number of Women Elected as *Suco* or *Aldeia* Chiefs, 2004–2009



Source: Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality records.

<sup>276</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>277</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

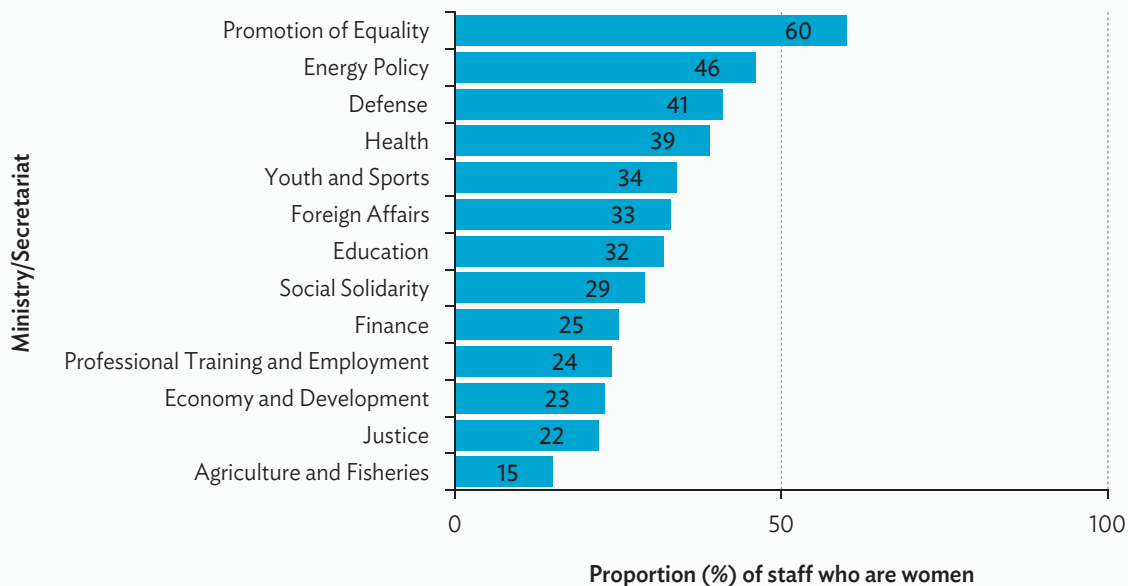
<sup>278</sup> Government of Timor-Leste. 2004. Law No. 2/2004: Election of Suco Chiefs and Suco Councils.

## Public Sector

The public sector—the largest employer in Timor-Leste—is an important area of influence and decision making. Increasing the representation of women in public sector leadership leads to more equitable policies targeting areas such as health, education, families, and entrepreneurship.<sup>279</sup> Civil service jobs provide an opportunity to be involved in national policy development and service delivery, as well as providing economic security through a secure wage (the government currently provides more than 50% of all wage income in Timor-Leste).<sup>280</sup>

Despite significant growth in the number of public sector jobs over the last decade, women remain underrepresented. In 2001, women held 26% of the 8,600 public service jobs; by 2013, very little progress had been made.<sup>281</sup> Women still hold less than one-third (29%) of the positions, a disappointing finding given that the public sector now employs 26,500 people.<sup>282</sup> As shown in Figure 6.3, the share of women in government jobs varies across ministries and secretariats. SEPI has the highest proportion of female staff at 60%. The agencies responsible for energy policy, defense, health, youth and sports, foreign affairs, and education all have a share of women employees that is above the national average. Representation of women among the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is low (15%) and this raises a question on how effectively gender issues can be incorporated in reform of the agriculture sector.

**Figure 6.3** Proportion of Public Service Staff Who are Women by Agency, 2012 (%)



Source: Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality records, 2013.

<sup>279</sup> Davidson, M. J. and R. J. Burke. 2011. *Women in Management Worldwide: Progress and Prospects*, Second edition. Gower Publishing.

<sup>280</sup> GDS. 2013. *Timor-Leste Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2011*. Dili.

<sup>281</sup> ADB and UNIFEM. 2005. *Gender and Nation Building in Timor-Leste: Country Gender Assessment*. Manila.

<sup>282</sup> CSC. 2013. Data provided to SEPI on request.



Women's share of the top public service jobs (i.e., directors and chiefs) is 16%.<sup>283</sup> Census data suggest that the overall women's share of "senior official" positions is increasing: 35% of senior officials were women in 2010, a significant improvement from the 13% reported in 2004.<sup>284</sup> This is evidence of the remarkable progress of a government committed to improving the status of women. One of the barriers limiting the number of women in senior roles could be that a university degree is required for positions above a certain level (level 4) and far fewer women than men have a tertiary education.<sup>285</sup> It is possible to waive this criterion and recruit an individual based on experience, but this requires willingness on the part of the particular ministry or department. The government clearly has an opportunity to increase women's share of senior roles in the public service. This could be done through a combination of affirmative action, which provides a preference for qualified women to be selected for appointment or promotion, and training and development to support women in taking up leadership positions.

Another opportunity lies in rural areas, where there are currently significantly fewer government jobs. As a result, residents have few chances to join the public service and the contribution of paid wages to rural household income is comparatively small.<sup>286</sup> The government's new decentralization policy aims to address this rural disadvantage by creating more public sector jobs outside the capital. Preparation for decentralization has included capacity development to establish the skills needed to provide effective local governance. Gender mainstreaming has also been one of the priorities.<sup>287</sup>

## Household Decision Making

More research is needed on gender and household decision making, as well as on patterns of access to and control of resources. Employment statistics suggest that women's economic dependence on men is significant, and high levels of domestic violence suggest that men expect to exercise economic and social control in households (gender-based violence is explored in Chapter 4). For example, a study on domestic violence found that 26% of the 260 people stated that neglecting household duties was a trigger for domestic violence (Figure 4.2).

Nevertheless, women appear to be active participants in decisions about the household.<sup>288</sup> Almost two-thirds (63%) of married women make the final decision about daily household purchases. This has increased significantly since 2003, when only 44% said the same. Women usually decide jointly with their husbands about visiting family or relatives, making major household purchases, and about their own health care. Almost 80% of married men believe that a wife should independently or jointly decide about what to do with the money she earns or how many children to have. This suggests that most Timorese expect women to participate in household decision making.

<sup>283</sup> CSC. 2013. Data provided to SEPI on request.

<sup>284</sup> Data on occupation gathered through the census is classified in accordance with the International Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-08), adapted to meet the particular requirements of Timor-Leste. Senior officials is a category of occupations that includes "senior government officials" and senior officials of political party organizations; employers, workers, and other economic-interest organizations; and humanitarian and other special interest organizations.

<sup>285</sup> Ospina, S. 2006. *Participation of Women in Politics and Decision Making in Timor-Leste: A Recent History*. Dili: UNIFEM.

<sup>286</sup> GDS. 2013. *Timor-Leste Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2011*. Dili.

<sup>287</sup> UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund. 2011. *Briefing Note on the Decentralization Process in Timor-Leste*. Dili.

<sup>288</sup> GDS and ICF Macro. 2010. *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009-10*. Dili.

## Role of the Women's Movement and Civil Society

The women's movement dates back to the early days of independence. In 1975, at the beginning of the movement for independence from Indonesia, Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN) created the Organização Popular de Mulheres Timorenses (OPMT) as a national women's organization. Its purpose was to bring all the women together, promote women's rights, and raise political awareness of independence. In 1985, the Organização de Mulheres Timorenses was created by the resistance movement as a nonpartisan movement. Similar to OPMT, it served to organize women, prepare them to work in the resistance, and provide support to Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (FALINTIL) fighters. These groups were active at the village level and all women were included as members.<sup>289</sup>

At the time of the 2012 elections, there were 23 active political parties in Timor-Leste.<sup>290</sup> Men head all the major parties and there are four minor parties led by women: National Unity Party, Democratic Timorese Party, Timorese Labor Party, and Timor National Unity Better Growing Party. None of these parties currently has seats in Parliament.

Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Lorosae (Fokupers)—an NGO working on the empowerment of women from a human rights perspective—was established in 1997.<sup>291</sup> It investigates human rights violations and provides support, including counseling, to women political prisoners, wives of political prisoners, war widows, and survivors of violence against women. Other significant women's NGO's established around this time include the Grupo Feto Foinsae Timor Lorosae (Women's Wing of the Student Solidarity Organisation) and the East Timorese Movement Against Violence Towards Women and Children.

Timor-Leste conducted its first national women's congress in 2000 and established Rede Feto Timor-Leste, an umbrella organization for women's groups in Timor-Leste. The main role of Rede Feto is to facilitate, coordinate, and strengthen its members' ability or capacity to achieve their goals in order to upgrade women's status in Timor-Leste. The fourth women's congress was held in July 2013.

In 2007, a detailed overview of the NGOs and international development partners active in working on gender-related issues in Timor-Leste was prepared.<sup>292</sup> This included profiles of 27 organizations working in this area at that time. Many of these programs are still active and focus on a wide range of gender issues such as gender-based violence, literacy, maternal and child health, access to justice, rural development, women in politics and leadership, nutrition, livelihoods and women in business, and microfinance. Women receive direct support through the provision of goods and services, and the NGOs play a key role in networking, knowledge sharing, and advocacy for women's rights. A continually updated version of this document would provide a valuable resource to gender and development practitioners.

<sup>289</sup> Ospina, S. and T. Hohe. 2002. *Traditional Power Structures and Local Governance in East Timor: A Case Study of the Community Empowerment Project*. Geneva: Graduate Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>290</sup> SEPI. 2013. CEDAW: Draft Combined Second and Third Periodic CEDAW Report. Unpublished.

<sup>291</sup> Cristalis, I and C. Scott. 2005. *Independent Women: The story of women's activism in East Timor*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR).

<sup>292</sup> Trembath, A. and D. Grenfell. 2007. *Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste*. Melbourne: RMIT University.

## 6.3 Taking Action

In preparation for the 2012 national elections, government, NGOs, and international agencies worked together to establish a strategic framework for women's participation, comprising seven areas of priority:

- i. capacity building and training,
- ii. political parties' gender equality reform,
- iii. infrastructure and logistics,
- iv. security for female candidates and voters,
- v. media and communication,
- vi. gender-responsive budgeting for women in political life, and
- vii. enhancing a culture of gender equality.

This kind of approach is essential for activities to complement each other and encourage women's participation. An evaluation of this initiative would clarify the successes and challenges and allow future work to build on the lessons learned. Current initiatives to increase women's participation in politics and decision making include the 3-year Women's Local Governance Program funded by the Norwegian Government and implemented by The Asia Foundation. It focuses on women representatives on *suco* councils and accountability for *suco* councils to respond to women's needs. Although legislation ensures women attend meetings, their contributions are often ignored and their lower education level makes it a challenge to gain credibility among council peers.<sup>293</sup>

Paz y Desarrollo has a regional program to promote equality in political participation in Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam. Based on implementing CEDAW, it aims to support national and regional forums for debate and analysis among women in politics, and to promote women's participation in public administration. The project commenced in 2010 and will run until the end of 2014. One of the outcomes has been annual regional congresses that provide a means of sharing experiences and models of good practice in women's political participation in the countries involved in the program. A mid-term evaluation was conducted during 2013 and the results are still to be published.<sup>294</sup>

## 6.4 Recommendations

### ***Strengthen the capacity of Parliament and the executive to mainstream gender***

A lack of staff in the Center for Capacity Building and Information on Gender Equality prevents it from fulfilling its role in research of key gender issues and in analyzing laws, policies, and the state budget from a gender perspective. It is recommended to address this and build on the strong commitment to gender mainstreaming by

- i. establishing internal systems and mechanisms for gender-responsive parliamentary oversight;
- ii. strengthening the capacity of the Group of Women Parliamentarians in Timor-Leste, Committee F, and other committees in gender analysis of laws and budgets;

<sup>293</sup> The Asia Foundation and Irish Aid. 2012. *Community Experiences of Decentralized Development in Timor-Leste*. Dili.

<sup>294</sup> Paz y Desarrollo. *Promoting Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Philippines, Timor-Leste and Vietnam*. <http://pydasia.org/240>

- iii. advocating to the executive branch for implementation of commitments to gender equality and women's rights; and
- iv. increasing coordination with SEPI and women's groups.

### ***Increase women's representation in the public sector***

Clear and ambitious strategies are needed to recruit, retain, mentor, and promote women to decision-making levels in the public sector. SEPI should work with the Civil Service Commission to revisit current targets and develop policies for achieving greater equality in the public sector. Affirmative action mechanisms, such as quotas for recruiting women at entry-level positions in the judiciary and civil service (including the foreign service), should be considered.

### ***Boost women's influence and role in decision making***

The Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy and MoE should work together, with guidance from SEPI, to provide education opportunities for women that will prepare them for leadership roles. This may include literacy, numeracy, public speaking, financial and legal literacy, communication, and management. Such programs can increase the number of skilled and capable women who can play a role in politics, the public sector, media, and management.

### ***Ensure gender mainstreaming of sector plans and policies***

Gender mainstreaming should be applied by government agencies in their annual plans and supported by allocation of funds through the state general budget. Ministries should ensure their planning process is based on analysis of sectoral gender-disaggregated data, supported by application of gender tools, such as checklists, and continuous capacity development programs for staff in charge of planning and budgeting and gender working groups.



# Gender Equality Framework

This chapter outlines the formal institutions that exist in Timor-Leste to promote gender equality. This includes the international commitments made, the main actors and stakeholders, and a summary of the national strategy and mechanisms. It makes specific recommendations to further develop institutional mechanisms for clearer strategies and monitoring mechanisms, as well as for strengthening SEPI as the lead government agency.

## Key Findings

- The government has established mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and coordination. These are in the early stages of development and require more strengthening to be fully effective.
- The voice of Timorese women is represented through the national women's congress held every 4–5 years. These produce a platform for action with suggested activities to address gender issues.
- There are a number of civil society organizations running short-, medium-, and long-term projects that contribute toward achieving national gender equality goals.
- SEPI supports the implementation of gender mainstreaming across government through gender working groups at district and inter-ministerial levels.
- Monitoring and evaluation tends to be ad hoc rather than systematic. Although much data and research has been produced, it needs to be organized and made more accessible.
- Technical assistance, such as through the appointment of gender advisers, has helped to mainstream gender in government practices. However, this is a long-term process that requires the active participation of civil servants and ongoing support by decision makers and development partners.
- Competing priorities and limited tools and skills impede government capacity to learn and apply technical skills in gender mainstreaming.

## 7.1 Overview

SEPI is the overarching national machinery for gender equality. First established in 2002 as the Office of the Advisor on the Promotion of Equality, it transformed into SEPI in 2008 as a legal agency and central government body with a renewed mandate and status.<sup>295</sup> SEPI is the government's principal entity responsible for planning, executing, coordinating, and evaluating policies in the field of the promotion and defense of gender equality, as has been defined by the Council of Ministers.

SEPI reports to the vice prime minister and consists of the following directorates: Director General; National Directorate for Administration and Finance; National Directorate for Policy and Gender Development; and the

---

<sup>295</sup> Decree Law No. 16/2008, Organic Law of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, 4 June 2008.

Office of Inspection and Audit. Decree Law No. 16/2008 allows for an advisory council—a consultative body for SEPI—to guide the strategic direction of SEPI; however, to date, this consultative body has not been successfully established.

The main function of SEPI is to carry out coordination and monitoring, but it is not an implementation agency. The implementation of laws, policies, and programs is the responsibility of the relevant ministries. SEPI functions as a catalyst for the promotion of gender equality. Its principal service is to champion gender in the government and to advocate for gender to be included in the policies, programs, and budgets of government organizations and instruments.

SEPI has established mechanisms to fulfill its mandate, such as gender working groups. It is also responsible for national monitoring of gender equality and reporting on international commitments. According to SEPI's strategic plan (2012–2017), its main areas of work are

- i. building SEPI's institutional capacity;
- ii. advocating for gender-sensitive policies and laws at national and local levels;
- iii. making institutions more gender sensitive by incorporating gender mainstreaming in policies, programs, processes, and budgets;
- iv. raising awareness of stakeholders and the general public on the importance of gender equality; and
- v. empowering women through cash transfers to women's groups.

NGOs, associations, and other civil society organizations play a key role in achieving gender equality in Timor-Leste. They are essential partners in gathering knowledge about gender issues, providing services, and advocating for action. Civil society includes academic institutions, women's organizations, youth, media, religious organizations, and the private sector.<sup>296</sup> UN agencies are important partners in achieving gender equality goals, particularly UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF. They assist by mobilizing resources from donors and providing guidance to help strengthen national capacity to understand and address gender issues.

## 7.2 Timor-Leste's Commitment to Gender Equality

The Constitution provides the mandate for action on gender issues across all sectors. It calls not only for equality between women and men in all areas of family, political, economic, social, and cultural life (Article 17), but also for nondiscrimination on various grounds, including gender (Article 16).

The importance of gender equality for the country's future is emphasized in the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030. This plan focuses on achieving gender equality goals through

- gender mainstreaming systems and mechanisms,
- raising awareness of gender disparities and issues,
- empowering women through livelihood support,

<sup>296</sup> A report commissioned by SEPI in 2007 provides a profile of active civil society organizations, but this document requires updating. Trembath, A. and D. Grenfell. 2007. *Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste*. Melbourne: RMIT University.

- employing more women in the civil service,
- increasing women's participation in decision making,
- reproductive health programs, and
- zero tolerance to violence in schools and homes.

To commemorate International Women's Day on 8 March 2008, government ministries signed the Dili Commitment (Kompromisu Dili Nian) as an expression of their commitment to addressing gender disparities. The declaration focused on a pledge to action, such as introducing gender budgeting, eliminating violence against women and girls, promoting equal access to land and resources, and developing gender-sensitive policies in key areas such as health and education.

## International Commitments

A significant step in Timor-Leste's commitment to gender equality was the ratification of CEDAW and its Optional Protocol by the Parliament on 16 April 2003. These require the government to be accountable for its actions in addressing gender issues across the full spectrum of social, economic, and environmental sectors through regular reporting. It also enables individuals or groups of individuals to submit complaints to the committee where issues with the implementation of CEDAW are perceived.

Timor-Leste's commitment to UNSC 1325 is particularly important, as it recognizes the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. SEPI has been working with the government to ensure women play an active role in postconflict reconstruction. This has involved raising awareness of UNSC 1325 and working with security forces to facilitate women's involvement.

Timor-Leste's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 is a pledge to achieve gender equality. Gender priorities are evident throughout the MDG framework, both in gender-specific goals—MDG 3 on gender equality and MDG 5 on maternal health—as well as implicit in other goals relating to education, employment, and child survival. The 2013 government report on MDGs acknowledges that Timor-Leste is unlikely to fully meet any of the eight goals by 2015. As such, the post-2015 development agenda is extremely important for the people of Timor-Leste and is a priority of the government.

Despite not fully achieving the MDGs, there has been significant progress. The gender equality goals are among the closest to reaching the target, with the ratio of girls to boys in education close to parity at primary and secondary levels, and the highest proportion of seats held by women in national parliament in Southeast Asia. However, meeting the targets in maternal health and women's employment remains a challenge, as discussed in chapters 3 and 5.

## 7.3 Mechanisms for Achieving Gender Equality

### Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Timor-Leste's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires progress toward eliminating discrimination against women to be monitored closely, with reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee every 4 years. The process to prepare these reports involves the whole



of government. Civil society and the Ombudsman for Human Rights are invited to take part in the process, even though they submit their own reports to the committee. Since 2003, the Government of Timor-Leste has submitted three official reports for the CEDAW Committee:

- i. Initial Periodic Report (2008) covering the period from 2002–2006;
- ii. CEDAW Specific Report on Health and Education Sectors (2011); and
- iii. Combined Second and Third Periodic Report (2013) covering the period 2007 to the first quarter of 2013.

Two shadow reports were also submitted to the CEDAW Committee during the initial round of reporting in 2008–2010: Report of the Ombudsman 2009/2010 and NGOs Alternative Report (March 2009).

After reviewing the initial reports in 2009, the CEDAW Committee gave its concluding observations, commending the state for its ratification of CEDAW and its achievements to date, such as the establishment of SEPI.<sup>297</sup> The committee outlined several areas of concern and urged the state to promote and protect women's human rights and ensure gender equality as central development goals. In addition to ensuring the legislature and judiciary are aware of obligations under CEDAW, specific requests for action were related to the following areas: gender-based violence, women in politics and decision making, increasing the retention of girls in the education system, eradicating illiteracy especially among rural women, providing safe transportation, prohibition of corporal punishment, reviewing abortion legislation, improving maternal and child health, rural development, and strengthening data collection and reporting. As the combined second and third state report shows, progress has been made in many of these areas since 2009. This will be discussed by the CEDAW Committee during 2014–2015 and the next round of observations will provide a valuable external assessment of progress and priorities for the future.

## Women's Congresses

The first national women's congress was held in 2000 and subsequent congresses in 2004, 2008, and 2013. These are a key mechanism for the gender and development community to engage with Timorese women and establish priorities for the future. The objectives of the congresses are to

- promote gender equality,
- strengthen national capacity to address gender-based violence,
- promote women's participation in politics and decision making,
- reduce maternal and child mortality, and
- increase the literacy of women and children and their participation in both formal and informal education.

A major outcome of the first assembly in 2000 was the establishment of Rede Feto, the umbrella network for civil society organizations with a focus on gender. These events also produce a platform for action, which sets out the priorities and actions to lobby government and its partners. The most recent action plan, covering the period 2013–2017, establishes priorities across the following areas: family values and harmony within family, human trafficking, land and asset ownership, re-entry policy to school after teenage pregnancy, climate change and environment, empowerment and strengthening family economy through agricultural production and

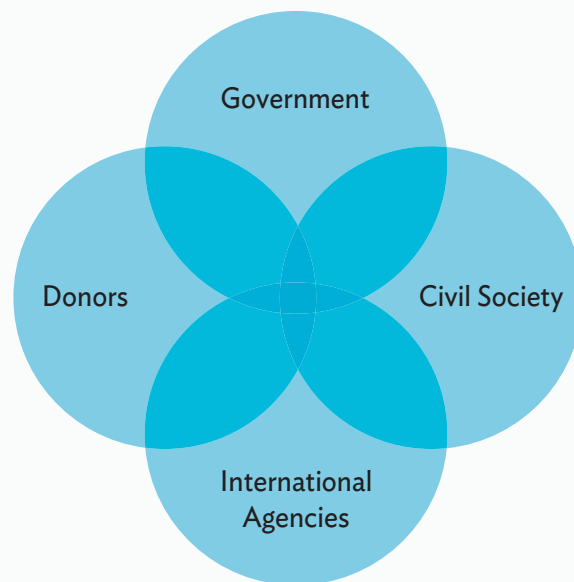
<sup>297</sup> United Nations. 2009. *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Timor-Leste*. CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/1.

development of private sector, work conditions of women, and women's health. Despite their contribution to clarifying gender-related issues, the congress and resulting platforms for action are infrequently referred to in research and documentation on gender equality in Timor-Leste. More awareness raising and advocacy could help to realize the potential of the congress.

## Coordination Mechanisms

Coordination is essential to ensure gender-related activities are consistent, comprehensive, and build on the lessons and successes of the past. The crosscutting nature of gender and a large number of active organizations in the field make coordination an ongoing challenge (Figure 7.1). The mechanisms need to be well designed and participatory to be effective.

**Figure 7.1** Main Actors Working Toward Gender Equality



There are several layers of coordination that occur. At the macro level, synchronization among civil society organizations happens through the women's congress and preparation of a shadow CEDAW report. Government agencies coordinate their gender mainstreaming efforts through the new development policy coordination mechanism and the Inter-Ministerial Gender Working Group. UN agencies coordinate their support to government through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. All the main actors—government, civil society, and international agencies—come together with donors at annual development partner meetings to reflect on successes and challenges and to consider ways to strengthen and align future development initiatives. This mechanism draws on the philosophy of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to build more effective and inclusive partnerships between government and development partners, which in turn will have a greater impact on reducing poverty and achieving gender equality.

At the micro level, steering groups and other mechanisms are established around particular programs and projects. For example, conduct of the population census is overseen by three management and technical committees. These ensure key stakeholders are involved in directing and influencing activities and that they can use the experience to inform future initiatives and shape priorities identified at the macro level. These multiple layers of strategic planning, communication, and coordination are needed, but they are complex. It makes gender-related programming a real challenge, particularly in light of limited resources and capacities.

The government's new development policy coordination mechanism should include a focus on gender equality priorities. Accountability for meeting gender equality goals and commitments set out in the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030 is facilitated through SEPI's presence on the social strategic sector committee. It will be important for SEPI to take an active role to make sure gender issues are considered across all sectors (e.g., infrastructure, economy), rather than being reflected only as a social development issue.

## Gender Working Groups

Gender-related coordination mechanisms have been established in every government ministry and agency. This was done initially through gender focal points, created in 2008.<sup>298</sup> Since focal points lacked the authority, resources, and expertise to carry out their responsibilities, this approach had minimal impact on gender mainstreaming. To increase the importance of gender across government, focal points were replaced in 2011 by gender working groups in each ministry and in each district.<sup>299</sup> These groups are responsible for ensuring gender issues are given attention in their agencies' work by developing a gender strategy and/or incorporating gender issues in work plans. So far, gender working groups have been established in all 13 districts of the country. Another 15 groups have been established in various national government agencies, including the ministries of health, education, security, and social solidarity. However, only a few of the ministries have developed gender strategies and none have made it past the draft stage. More support and commitment from senior government officials is needed to build the capacities of these working groups and to ensure the application of a gender focus to policies and programs.

A high-level gender working group combines senior representatives from each agency to coordinate work on gender mainstreaming and discuss common issues. Led by SEPI, the Inter-Ministerial Gender Working Group is intended to meet at least four times per year. It aims to achieve intersectoral cooperation and coordination and to "ensure concerted action on the promotion of gender equality and affirmation of women's role in Timor-Leste society."<sup>300</sup> The group has been operating for a short time and mainly serves as an information-sharing mechanism between SEPI and the line ministries. Members have requested capacity development in understanding national and sectoral gender issues, for which this CGA will be used.

## Government Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming

Appointing long-term gender advisers in key ministries had been a strategy for bringing in expertise, increasing gender awareness, and ensuring public administration is gender sensitive. These advisers bring experience in how

<sup>298</sup> Government Resolution No. 11/2008.

<sup>299</sup> Government Resolution No. 27/2011.

<sup>300</sup> Government Resolution No. 27/2011.

to incorporate gender issues into planning, budgeting, and policy and program development, addressing skills shortages in these areas and building the capacity of others. In 2009, an assessment of gender mainstreaming in SEPI and the ministries of agriculture and fisheries, health, and education found that progress is being made, such as the appointment of focal points, drafting of gender strategies, and raising awareness and capacity of staff. However, challenges remain in the implementation and commitment from top management to take gender mainstreaming seriously. The assessment highlighted the important role of gender advisers in filling capacity gaps and providing personal and technical assistance to government staff.<sup>301</sup>

Mainstreaming gender in the work of government is a long and slow process. Some estimate it will take around 5–10 years to integrate a gender-sensitive approach into public sector management.<sup>302</sup> Institutional strengthening and staff capacity development is the first priority of SEPI's strategic plan. These efforts need to be aligned with other civil service development initiatives. It is important to ensure the fundamental skills, management practices, and systems are put in place so that technical capacity can be developed and applied in practice. Despite challenges, some progress is being made. SEPI collects information on how government agencies are making their policies, procedures, and programs gender sensitive. To recognize the efforts and encourage further progress, gender awards are now given to coincide with the celebration of National Women's Day in November.

## Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) aims to integrate gender equality into the budget process, ensuring gender equality commitments are translated into action in the annual plans and budgets of the government and state-funded institutions. The Timorese government introduced GRB on 14 July 2009 through a parliamentary resolution.<sup>303</sup> This called on all parliamentary committees to use and promote gender budgeting instruments and methods, and established a parliamentary process, assigning roles to government, nongovernment organizations, and donors. Since then, activities to implement GRB have included preparing and training on a GRB toolkit, including a checklist to review budgets and facilitate gender mainstreaming.

An assessment commissioned by SEPI in 2011 found that much progress had been made by SEPI and partners to establish mechanisms for GRB, raise awareness of its value, and train stakeholders. It also identified more than 15 challenges and gaps in capacity. These relate to the structure of the budget system, confusion about roles and responsibilities, a lack of coordination, and limited resources and capacity of the organizations involved. For example, the structure of the state budget and the ability to transfer allocations between different line items makes it difficult to track whether spending was gender-related. Also, there has been confusion about the role of SEPI versus the Ministry of Finance in implementing GRB.

The assessment made a number of recommendations to streamline processes and improve the effectiveness of GRB. These are being addressed by SEPI in its ongoing work. For example, a recent achievement was the clarification of SEPI's role and its inclusion on the Budget Review Committee for the first time in 2012. SEPI's

<sup>301</sup> UNIFEM. 2009. *Gender Mainstreaming in the Line Ministries: Evaluation Report*. Dili.

<sup>302</sup> UNIFEM. 2009. *Gender Mainstreaming in the Line Ministries: Evaluation Report*. Dili.

<sup>303</sup> Government Resolution of 14 July 2009.

involvement allowed detailed inquiry from a gender perspective and elevated SEPI's interventions to have equal weight with other crosscutting institutions on the Budget Review Committee.

The Parliament also has an important role to play. The mandate of the Group of Women Parliamentarians in Timor-Leste (GMPTL) includes the close monitoring of the state budget from a gender perspective. In the review of the 2013 budget, GMPTL, in collaboration with Committee F, presented a comprehensive report with over 100 recommendations on how each ministry should ensure a more engendered budget. For the upcoming review of the 2014 budget, Committee F, with GMPTL and other interested parliamentarians, has established two subcommittees to specifically look at the government's annual plans and budgets. Their concern is particularly regarding the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence and other related gender-based violence laws and policies, and those on reproductive health, especially maternal health and the related MDGs.

## Monitoring, Analysis, and Evaluation

Collecting data, monitoring, and evaluating the impact of initiatives is an essential feature of achieving gender equality. The need for quality data and information has been emphasized in numerous reports and as a strategy for the future. Limited resources and capacity in data management and analysis make it difficult for agencies such as SEPI to meet the requirements for gender-related monitoring and evaluation. This is an area where ongoing capacity development is needed to build the skills and systems to efficiently produce and use data.

Government agencies are required to report statistical information on a regular basis. For example, the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence has an associated monitoring and evaluation framework that sets out specific indicators to be monitored. Under the leadership of SEPI, agencies involved in implementing the plan are required to report annually to Parliament on progress. Statistics from the health and education systems are published regularly, as well as being made available to agencies like SEPI upon written request. These data are essential for gender analysis and monitoring, and we need to make sure these data are sex-disaggregated.

The General Directorate for Statistics (GDS)—the lead agency for official statistics—is responsible for coordinating the national statistical system in its efforts to improve data quality. There is currently no clear mechanism for organizing activities related to gender statistics and gender analysis. The GDS is planning to establish an overarching statistical coordination body, which should determine how a subcommittee on gender statistics should operate.

Strong leadership and coordination needs to be established so that monitoring, analysis, and evaluation can be more efficient and effective in informing policy and program development. Developing monitoring and evaluation capacity is a feature of the SEPI strategic plan. Action to be taken should include the following:

- Consider expanding existing mechanisms to create a gender study center or observatory that can maintain data and support gender analysis.
- Identify indicators to monitor the impact of policies and progress toward gender equality goals.
- Create monitoring and evaluation guidelines, incorporating the agreed-upon indicators.
- Establish reporting requirements and train gender working groups to ensure regular reporting to SEPI.

## 7.4 Recommendations

### ***Strengthen mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and policy implementation***

The government should capitalize on existing mechanisms, such as the development policy coordination mechanism and Inter-Ministerial Gender Working Group, to increase cohesiveness between sectors, clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure greater accountability for policy implementation. One priority is for SEPI to assure gender issues are a consideration in all four strategic sectors of the development policy coordination mechanism, emphasizing the crosscutting nature of gender concerns.

### ***Produce practical definitions, guides, and ongoing support for government officials and other stakeholders to mainstream gender***

Feedback from SEPI staff and participants of the Inter-Ministerial Gender Working Group show that while awareness of gender equality issues is increasing among those directly involved, many are not clear about how to mainstream gender and what it means in practice. Practical guidance in local languages and suitable to the national context are needed to support officials in effectively mainstreaming gender in their work.

### ***Take urgent action to address data quality issues***

Conducting this CGA assessment has confirmed that many gaps in data quality remain. Obtaining administrative data is time consuming and the statistics provided are often not sufficiently sex-disaggregated. Information held in SEPI needs to be catalogued, organized, and maintained in a form that makes it easy to use. Furthermore, data producers in the General Directorate for Statistics and other ministries should work together to ensure that gender-related statistics are produced, disseminated, and used effectively.

### ***Establish learning and development plans for all SEPI staff that incorporate both technical and general skills and are consistent with capacity development projects***

SEPI's staff and its institutional capacity are fundamental to fulfilling its mandate. Leadership and management training should be ongoing, with top- and middle-level managers given the opportunity to learn new skills on a regular basis. All staff should have an annual learning and development plan that identifies which activities to participate in during the course of a year, such as capacity development projects, training seminars, self-paced learning, mentoring, job shadowing, and other methods. Providing these opportunities not only improves the skills of individuals but also increases motivation and productivity.

This assessment has compiled and analyzed information on gender issues in Timor-Leste. The report highlights issues in each sector and provides contextual information for better understanding of gender disparities and concerns. To conclude, some key points should be emphasized:

### ***Examine relationships between each sector***

Examining gender issues by sector is a logical approach and the structure of this report should prove useful to those working in specific areas. However, the relationship between sectors is significant and must be a key consideration when identifying gender issues in policy and program design and implementation. For example, increasing education has significant impacts on health outcomes and economic empowerment of both women and men, the health system plays a key role in eliminating GBV, and boosting women's participation in local governance can change gender attitudes and lead to more equal opportunities for all.

### ***Considerable achievements have been made***

Progress is being made toward eliminating discrimination against women and achieving gender equality goals. Results are evident in areas such as women's representation in national politics and gender parity in primary education. The government has established a strong framework for action, with gender-related priorities clearly articulated, and legislation, policies, and coordination mechanisms in place.

### ***Focus must shift to implementation***

Disparities between women and men remain significant, while limited capacity and resources across the sectors hamper effective implementation of policies. The evidence gathered through this assessment illustrates the great need to focus efforts on implementation. Much has already been done to develop strategies and a framework for action. Resources now need to focus on taking that action and monitoring the impact.

Gender equality is widely acknowledged as a prerequisite for development. The nation's vision for the future depends on the equal participation of women and men and it is essential that gender be a consideration in every initiative that aims to improve the lives of the Timorese people. Achieving Timor-Leste's gender equality goals involves overcoming considerable challenges, which will take time and effort. This CGA has revealed much progress since the last assessment in 2005. If the recommendations made in this report are implemented successfully, the next CGA should demonstrate further advancement.



## Timor-Leste Country Gender Assessment

Over the last decade, Timor-Leste has made substantial progress in state building and strengthening the economy, governance, and infrastructure. Gender equality has been a fundamental principle in these efforts and remains key to achieving sustainable development into the future. This assessment examines gender issues across the different socioeconomic sectors of Timor-Leste, such as health, education, work, and political participation. It brings together existing research and data for a comprehensive overview of gender disparities in Timor-Leste and presents a valuable benchmark of progress toward gender equality goals.

### About the Asian Development Bank

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to approximately two-thirds of the world's poor: 1.6 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day, with 733 million struggling on less than \$1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

### About UN Women

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



**ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City

1550 Metro Manila, Philippines

[www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)