

COUNTRY PROFILE ON NUTRITION 01/2021

TIMOR-LESTE



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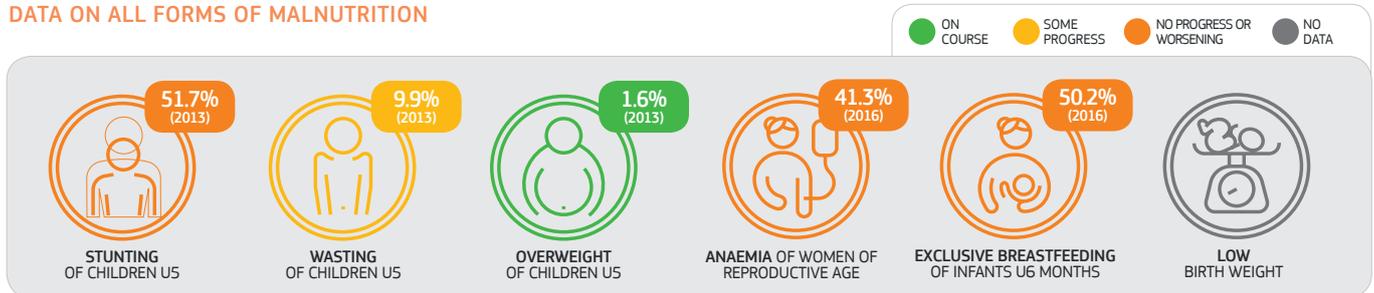
Nutrition situation in Timor-Leste

AT A GLANCE

The population of Timor-Leste currently stands at around 1.3 million¹, with two thirds located in rural areas. Timor-Leste is among the countries with the highest stunting prevalence in the world and prevalence of wasting is also high. Fewer than one in five Timorese children (6-23 months) eats a minimally acceptable diet. Children of malnourished mothers are at greater risk of low birth weight, anaemia and growth faltering, highlighting the need to break the inter-generational cycle of malnutrition. More than 60% of children under five and over 40% of women are anaemic, while other micronutrient deficiencies are significant public health problems due to low intake of

folic acid, iodine and zinc. The causes of undernutrition in Timor-Leste include low income (only 15-37% of households can afford a nutritious diet), inadequate child care and infant feeding practices, poor hygiene, weak demand for and access to quality health services and underlying gender inequalities². Malnutrition is the single greatest risk factor for premature death and disability in the Timorese population, resulting in massive—yet preventable—health and economic consequences. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis has exposed serious weaknesses in the country's food supply chain, with considerable implications for the population's nutrition status.

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

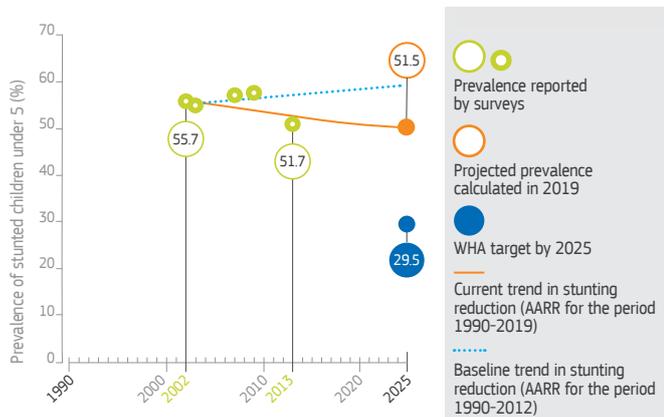
- Timor-Leste has not yet joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.
- The country launched the Zero Hunger Challenge in 2013. In addition to the Ministry of Health, ministries representing agriculture, social protection, education and commerce are critical partners for addressing malnutrition.
- The national food and nutrition security policy 2014-2020 (NFNSP) provides an overarching framework for multisector actions addressing the underlying and immediate causes of food and nutrition insecurity.
- The National Council for Food Security Sovereignty and Nutrition (KONSSANTIL) was established to coordinate implementation of the NFNSP as well as the national action plan for a hunger and malnutrition-free Timor-Leste. However, the role of KONSSANTIL remains weak; it is only partially operational at technical level and has not been ratified as an official body by the Parliament.
- The national nutrition strategy (TLNNS, 2014-2019) defines an approach to improve nutrition through nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and enabling environment interventions. The focus of TLNNS is primarily on pregnant women and children under 2 to use the 'window of opportunity of 1000 days from pregnancy to 24 months' to reduce the burden of malnutrition.
- Institutional capacity development is a priority for effective implementation, while increased domestic financing remains a challenge in the face of tightening fiscal space as oil revenues decline.

Example of EU support

The sector reform contract 'Partnership for Improving Nutrition in Timor-Leste' (PINTL, 2018-2023) aims to support the Government's implementation of the TLNNS to improve the quality and coverage of integrated nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. Key challenges for the health sector include lack of human resources, inadequate distribution of nutrition supplies and insufficient knowledge of nutrition among both health staff and communities. PINTL (of which EUR 10 million is for budget support and EUR 4.8 million for complementary measures implemented by UNICEF) aims to strengthen the integration and quality of nutrition interventions delivered through health sector programmes. In addition to improving family nutrition and childcare practices along with community hygiene and sanitation, the programme also strengthens existing multi-sectoral coordination systems and initiatives at national and sub-national levels. A monitoring mission in 2019 found that the Ministry of Health was making progress in implementing the Special Package for Nutrition Interventions. Variable Tranche indicators relate to treatment of severe acute malnutrition, micronutrient supplementation, provision of iron and folic acid to pregnant women, oral rehydration salts/zinc supplements and increased annual national budget allocation for nutrition.

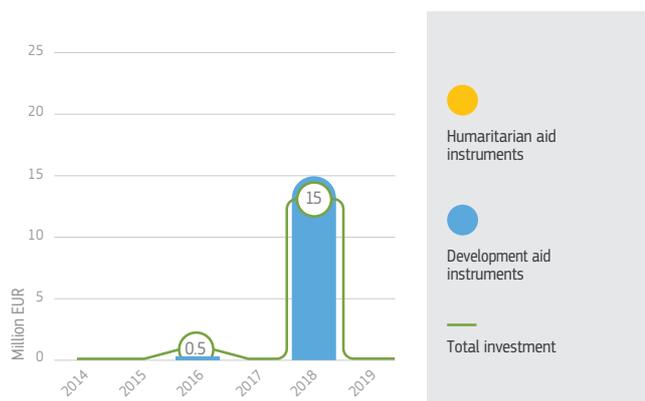
Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition

TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED



Timor-Leste has experienced a nominal decline in the prevalence of stunting since 2000. However, the accompanying population growth has meant no significant change in the number of children stunted. Recent projections anticipate that Timor-Leste will fall short of meeting the government's own target of 40% by 2020 as well as the World Health Assembly target by 2025. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted has accelerated from -0.63% in 2012 to 0.40% in 2019; if this is maintained, then approximately 95 500 children are expected to be stunted in 2025, higher than it has been recently, despite the decrease in prevalence of stunting.

EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019 – TOTAL OF EUR 15.5 MILLION



EU support has included a EUR 0.5 million nutrition commitment with a focus on enhancing resilience in 2016. However, the most significant EU programme has been the EUR 15 million sector reform contract 'Partnership for Improving Nutrition in Timor-Leste' (PINTL) (see example above). Ongoing capacity building support has also been provided to the KONSSANTIL through a global project, 'Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation' (FIRST, 2015-2019), which is supported by the EU and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

¹ World Population Prospects <https://population.un.org/wpp/>
² Gender Inequality Index not calculated due to a lack of available data.
³ Child Wasting and Stunting: Time to Overcome the Separation, Emergency Nutrition Network, 2018.
⁴ Fill the nutrient gap – Timor-Leste Final Report, WFP, 2019.
⁵ https://bpi.harvestplus.org/country_charts.html