

TIMOR-LESTE

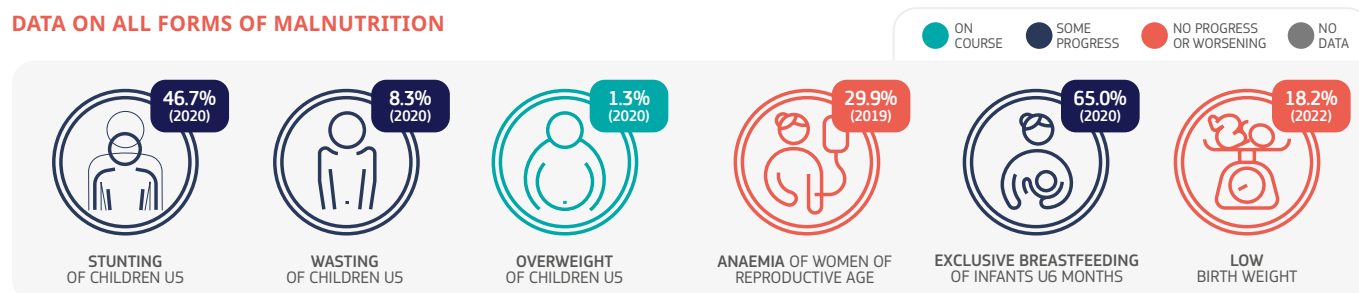
Nutrition situation in Timor-Leste

AT A GLANCE

The population of Timor-Leste currently stands at around 1.35 million people¹, 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. Only one in four Timorese children (6-23 months) eats a minimally acceptable diet². 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. Almost 30% of women of reproductive age are anaemic³, while other micronutrient deficiencies are significant public health problems due to low intake of folic

acid, iodine and zinc. The main causes of undernutrition in Timor-Leste include low income (only 15-37% of households can afford a nutritious diet)⁴, inadequate child care and infant feeding practices, poor hygiene, weak demand for and access to quality health services and underlying gender inequalities⁵. 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



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

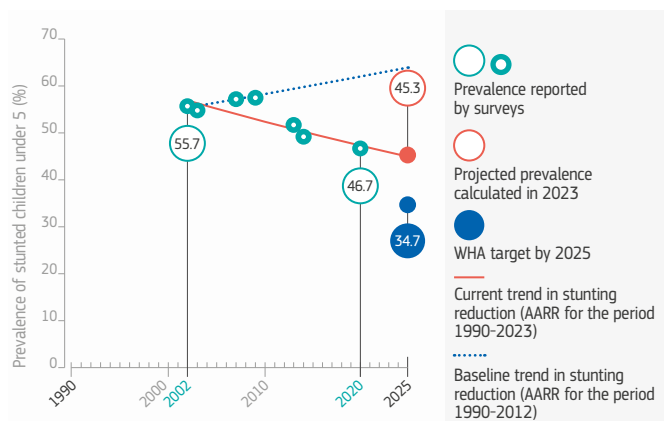
NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- Timor-Leste joined the SUN movement in 2020 and is in the process of establishing SUN networks.
- The National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2014-2020 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) is mandated to coordinate implementation, but its influence remains weak due to limited internal capacities and the fact that it has not been ratified as an official body by Parliament.
- The National Nutrition Strategy (TLNNS 2014-2019) defines an approach to improve nutrition through nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and enabling environment interventions with a special focus on pregnant women and children under 2.
- The National Health Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan 2022-2026 was approved and provides an overarching framework guiding health operators in their programmatic efforts to contribute to national and health sector nutrition goals.
- The Consolidated National Action Plan for Nutrition and Food Security 2020-2030 was developed, and the process was approved by the Council of Ministers in November 2020. The document outlines a set of 18 priorities across seven sectors⁶, as requested by the Prime Minister and aligned with existing policies. The costing and the design of the M&E framework is underway.

Example of EU support

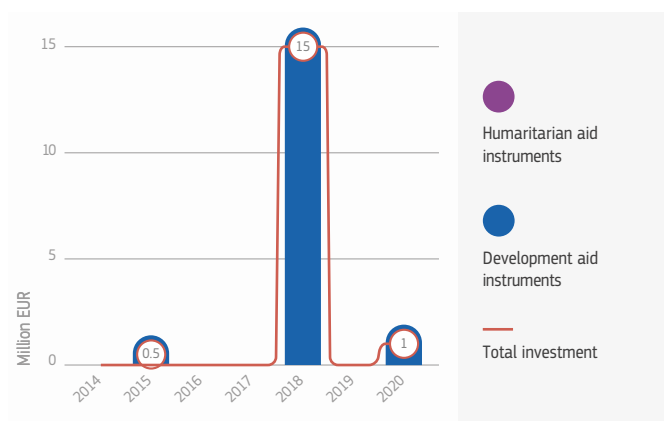
The sector reform contract 'Partnership for Improving Nutrition in Timor-Leste' (PINTL, 2018-2023) aimed to support the Government's implementation of the TLNNS to improve the quality and coverage of integrated nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. Key challenges for the health sector 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) aimed 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 strengthened 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 decline in the prevalence of stunting since 2000; however, due to population growth there is 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 34% by 2025 as well as the World Health Assembly target also for 2025. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted has accelerated from -0.63% in 2012 to 1.04 in 2022; if this is maintained, then approximately 72 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025.



EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – TOTAL OF EUR 16.3 MILLION

EU support has included a EUR 0.5 million nutrition commitment with a focus on enhancing resilience in 2016. However, the most significant nutrition 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.

A new programme, titled 'Strengthen Social Inclusion and Nutrition' with an envelope of EUR 12 million is at design stages. It will aim at supporting the capacity of the Government to deliver effective social inclusion and nutrition services⁷.

Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

At the [N4G Summit in Tokyo \(2021\)](#), the Government made a number of commitments relevant to nutrition (c.f. [N4G Compact](#) and its [annex](#)), including to reduce the prevalence of low birthweight to 7% by 2025. At the [UNFSS summit \(2021\)](#), the [national pathway](#) sets the objective of creating sustainable and resilient food systems by 2030 to ensure food and nutrition security for all.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. In order to respond to the challenges of malnutrition in all its forms, the EU developed a Multi-Annual Indicative Plan (MIP) which is by essence multi-sectoral and which intends to tackle the root causes of poor diet quality, inequalities and poverty. The Team Europe initiative 'A New Green Deal for Timor-Leste' provides a platform that will facilitate the identification of synergies between EU-funded programmes and initiatives implemented by Member States operating in-country.

In the framework of Priority Area 2 of the MIP, the EU supports the strengthening of institutional mechanisms designed to coordinate the formulation and the implementation of national policies relevant to nutrition. In that framework, support will be provided to increase the credibility and the influence of the National Council for Food Security Sovereignty and Nutrition and the capacities of line ministries and decentralised structures of government in charge of the delivery of services relevant to nutrition - including social protection and health care. Furthermore, the reform of the national public finance system will aim at increasing tax revenues and creating the fiscal space required to fund these policies and services, but also to facilitate financial transfers to the different levels of government in charge of their implementation.

Other sectors of interventions include support to smallholder farmers and fisheries to increase productivity and the availability and access of healthy food products; in that context farming techniques associated with reduced use of pesticide will be promoted and resources will be invested to fight illegal, unreported and traps unregulated fishing. Also, the EU intends to develop education and vocational services with a strong focus on girls, which is critical to breaking the intergenerational cycle that traps women in girls in poverty and malnutrition.

1 - UNDESA [World Population Prospects 2022](#), January 2023 estimate

2 - [Global nutrition report](#)

3 - [Global nutrition report](#)

4 - [Fill the Nutrient Gap Timor-Leste](#) - December 2019

5 - Timor-Leste ranks at the 103rd place out of 166 countries assessed in the 2022 Gender Inequality Index.

6 - Including health; agriculture and fisheries; social solidarity; education, youth and sports; tourism, trade and industry; public works; and equality and inclusion

7 - Data in this section excludes some regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. The European Commission applied the methodology of the SUN Donor Network for nutrition resource tracking 2014-2020 and the OECD DAC's nutrition policy marker from 2021 onwards.