



Irish Aid Programme in Timor Leste 2010-2013

# Timor Leste

## Background Note

Timor-Leste is situated in South East Asia at the eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago. It is one of the world's youngest nations, having attained formal independence in May 2002, after over four hundred years as a Portuguese colony, twenty four years of Indonesian occupation and two years of administration by the United Nations.

Timor-Leste has already made good progress in its short history but remains a fragile post-conflict state and the least developed country in Asia. It still faces significant development challenges: extreme poverty, high population growth, low skills and education levels, lack of capacity in the public sector, low levels of service delivery in health and education and a weak judicial system. Unemployment is widespread, infrastructure is poor and private investment is minimal.

Growing petroleum revenues, if managed effectively, could fast-track Timor-Leste's development. Poverty has increased significantly since independence with about 40% of the Timorese population living below the basic needs poverty line of less than a dollar a day. Nearly 80% of the poor, nationally, depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihood.

Since independence, Timor-Leste, with international support, has made considerable progress in putting government structures in place. An improved climate of stability and security has brought in the recent years a burst of economic growth and optimism in the capital Dili in 2010. The International Stabilisation Force, currently made up of troops from Australia and New Zealand and supported by UN Police, is expected to fully draw down by the end of 2012.

Irish Aid's engagement with Timor-Leste arose from the active role played by Ireland in the lead-up to its independence. After an initial period of humanitarian assistance from Irish Aid, Timor-Leste became a priority country in March 2003. The focus of Irish Aid's assistance has been on state building. Irish Aid assistance, which totalled €28.59 million over the period 2003-2009 focused on supporting the Government and civil society in reducing poverty by delivering essential social services; strengthening governance and human rights and building the capacity of the public service.

Ireland's current Country Strategy Paper 2010-2013 is an integrated strategy covering both Irish Aid and the Conflict Resolution Unit's activities in Timor-Leste. For example, Irish Aid's activities aim to provide employment and reduce people's vulnerabilities thus addressing drivers of conflict. The Conflict Resolution Unit programme, in parallel, aims at reducing conflict and creating a more stable environment which makes it easier to generate jobs, provide basic services (such as roads, clean water and sanitation) and reduce vulnerabilities.

This CSP aims at creating a coherent and highly inter-linked programme, with areas of support mutually reinforcing each other. There are three themes – service delivery (building mechanisms for service delivery at the local levels), voice and accountability, and conflict reduction. The promotion of gender equality and conflict sensitivity are cross-cutting issues across the programme. Particularly in the area of gender equality, Irish Aid continues its significant support to programmes as part of the voice and accountability pillar.



# SERVICE DELIVERY

## Private Sector Capacity Development

Irish Aid's engagement in the area of private sector development stems from the recognition that the implementation of service delivery infrastructure at the local level depends on competent and inclusive local governments as well as a capable private sector. To this end, Irish Aid supports the Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Development and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Project supports the Institute for Business Support and the National Directorate for Rural Development in 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. The Project includes an emphasis on the economic empowerment of women.

Irish Aid's support to the Labour Market Information Project since 2006 has successfully built the capacity of this department to provide essential IT systems support to all the employment projects that have been run by the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment. It also provides analysis of the Labour Market such as the 2010 Labour Force Survey which will feed into activities of the Institute for Business Support. The final year of support to this project is 2011.

## Support to Local Governance and Decentralisation

Ireland supports the Government of Timor-Leste's plans for decentralisation through the UNCDF's Local Governance Support Programme in partnership with the Ministry of State Administration. Irish Aid's ongoing commitment to local governance has helped make this a reality, starting with the Irish Aid funded Local Government Options Study in 2003. Increasing the capacity of local and central governments for planning, budgeting and implementation of infrastructure and service delivery is of critical importance to reducing vulnerability and improving the lives of people in rural areas.

In order to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the decentralisation process work is required to finalise the legislative and administrative planning and financial management framework, extend advice and assistance to line ministries, and ensure that necessary skills, systems and processes are in place at the sub-national level. Irish Aid will support the Ministry of Finance through the World Bank's PFMCBP in accomplishing this.

With increased focus on development at the *Suco* (village) level, Irish Aid is engaging in a programme to strengthen Suco representation in district-wide inter-agency planning and to enable Suco Councils to engage more in local development from the bottom up to ensure improved downward accountability of local and central governments.

<sup>1</sup>United Nations Capital Development Fund



Credit : Eoghan Walsh

## VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Civil Society

Irish Aid recognises the importance of supporting civil society in rural areas in order to enable them to participate and engage in a constructive manner with local and central governments. To this end, Irish Aid is supporting the implementation of a programme that builds the capacities of civil society organisations in the districts, and strengthens the District Development Networks.

Irish Aid works with civil society partners to engage with the Government in feeding back information from the ground into the policy dialogue around local government. As such, Irish Aid will support the creation of political space for genuine involvement of civil society organisations to hold local governments to account.

To improve community feedback of local and community based development programmes such as the MSATM/UNCDF Local Development Programme, Irish Aid engages with the World Bank's Justice for the Poor programme through funding for civic education and capacity building in supporting MSTAM in piloting a community feedback/complaints handling mechanism involving civil society.

### Elections

Participation in the coordination of electoral support and elections observation by the mission in Timor-Leste aims at free and fair National Parliament and Presidential elections, as well as local elections in the coming years. Ongoing Support to the Electoral Cycle Programme (UNDP) has greatly strengthened the capacity of Timorese institutions to effectively manage the electoral process.



Suco Council Elections Oct 2009. Credit Karen Kelleher

### Women in Politics and Decision-Making

Irish Aid has been working with UNIFEM since 2007 to promote women's participation in politics and decision making at local and national levels. This successful partnership will continue for the duration of this CSP. Irish Aid will work to ensure cooperation among relevant stakeholders with regards to promoting women's participation in politics and decision making at the national and local level, and to raise awareness of gender equality issues. Support in this area includes cooperation with media organisations to give women a stronger voice and to sensitise media on gender equality issues.

### Gender Mainstreaming in Line Ministries

Building on past experience of working with UNIFEM to place Gender and Development Advisors in line ministries, Irish Aid continues to engage in supporting the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) through UNIFEM/UN Women in its task of strengthening gender mainstreaming in line ministries and promoting gender responsive budgeting by both line ministries and the Whole-of-Government. This process aims to develop the capacity of a cadre of Timorese experts on Gender Equality to promote gender sensitive policies. In addition, Irish Aid funds the placement of gender equality experts through ILO and UNCDF in the Ministry of State Administration to ensure gender mainstreaming at local levels, and the Ministry of Economy and Development to further women's economic empowerment.

### Referral Network for Victims of Gender-Based Violence

A referral network is being established jointly by the Ministry of Social Services, The Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI), the National Police/Vulnerable Person Unit (VPU) and Civil Society Organisations. Irish Aid will work with civil society partners to strengthen and increase both the coverage and the effectiveness of the referral network for Gender Based Violence victims.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations Development Fund for Women.

## Conflict Reduction

The overall emphasis of the objective is to work in partnership, with the Government and people of Timor-Leste to build and strengthen the country's peace-building, reconciliation and security provision mechanisms. Ireland's work on conflict resolution will seek to address a number of underlying causes of conflict in Timor-Leste and will be undertaken in close coordination with the other pillars of Ireland's programme.

There will be a focus on enabling remembrance and reconciliation; enhancing conflict early warning mechanisms; and supporting security sector transformation. The objective will be informed by the cross-cutting priorities of implementing Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and building the capacity and skills of the Mission in conflict-sensitive programming.

## Remembrance and Reconciliation

The Conflict Resolution is currently funding a three year programme (2008-2011) on Peace, Remembrance and Reconciliation, managed by Trócaire and implemented by local Timorese civil society organisations. The programme supports five local partners: the Post-Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) Secretariat; the Max Stahl Audiovisual Archives, the Peace and Conflict Studies Centre in the National University of Timor-Leste; Pradet, a trauma counselling service for women; and HAK Association.

## Early Warning and Early Response

Ireland also supports BELUN, a Timorese organisation working on an Early Warning and Response System in cooperation with Columbia University's Centre for International Conflict Resolution. The system maps patterns of violent conflict at community level to identify trends, and then develop early preventative responses. It also aims to provide policy recommendations to state institutions and international actors aimed at reducing the likelihood of tensions. Identifying and dealing with conflict issues locally will assist the development of regions and thus add value to Ireland's overall programme.

## Aid Effectiveness

Irish Aid is committed to the Aid Effectiveness Agenda as outlined in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. The programme in Timor-Leste aims, to the greatest extent possible, to align with the Government's Strategic Development Plan, as well as the National Priorities process. We will work with our partners to report to the Aid Effectiveness Unit in the data format they request. We will continue to work with other donors to increase donor harmonisation. In the area of promoting Gender Equality Irish Aid is committed to improve the coordination both among development partners and with government to maximise our collective impact in this area.



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