

YOUR ANNUAL UPDATE FROM TIMOR-LESTE

We wanted to share some exciting progress made possible in Timor-Leste thanks to support from you!

Agriculture is the main economic activity for approximately 80% of the population in Timor-Leste. Unfortunately, climate change has severe impacts on farming, result in lower food production and poor health. Children, especially girls, face many challenges in this country. Girls often travel long distances to collect water, exposing them to the risk of violence. Limited education, teaching materials and low school enrolment rate are popular in Timor-Leste. One study finds 40% of children are not able to read at the end of grade two.

Throughout fiscal year 2020, with the help of your sponsorship, we were able to establish mobile libraries. Over 1,000 children and youth participated in the library activities. Besides, monthly parenting and teacher training sessions were organized, in order to prioritise education and provide a quality education for children of all ages.

We are grateful to you for making these changes possible. We know you will enjoy reading on to see how your generosity is changing the lives of children, like your sponsored child, across this region.



OUR IMPACT

3,917 CHILDREN
PARTICIPATED IN MOBILE
LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

10,000 CHILDREN TRAINED
IN DISASTER RESPONSE

8 HAND-WASHING STATIONS
INSTALLED IN AINARO
PUBLIC SPACES

3 NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT CENTRES
COMPLETED IN AILEU

PLAN INTERNATIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE



COVID-19 is having devastating impacts all over the world. It is not only a health emergency, it is an education and protection emergency. Since girls are often worse affected during a crisis, Plan International is putting them at the heart of our response and long-term outlook. We have scaled up healthcare systems, food security, access to clean water, handwashing and awareness campaigns, and keep education in children's lives via radio broadcasts.

THE POWER OF BOOKS

Good reading skills are foundational to educational success. A love of reading can inspire, educate and entertain children as they grow and learn.



CHILDREN USE THE MOBILE LIBRARIES TO ACCESS READING MATERIALS, MEET FRIENDS AND BORROW BOOKS

An assessment of reading skills in Timor-Leste's primary schools showed a substantial deficiency in children's reading ability. Our programme was developed to help children in Ainaro learn to read, and become strong, engaged readers.

We developed mobile libraries in 15 communities in Ainaro, serving 2,784 boys and girls. Adults also benefitted, with 128 parents participating in the programme. Fathers became involved in bringing their children to the libraries. The love of reading continued in homes, as parents read with their children and told stories at home.

Plan International also developed five storybooks this year and printed 500 books to distribute to eight communities. Access to these resources enables children to develop their reading skills and strengthens their ability to do well in school.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic has a devastating impact on vulnerable communities like Ainaro, whose fragile healthcare system was easily overwhelmed by demands of the virus. Lack of information and limited health care services put an additional strain on the community. Unsafe water and poor hygiene habits made families in the region especially susceptible to the virus.

Because knowledge is key, we distributed 5,000 pieces of educational literature to 21 villages. This informed the community on COVID-19 prevention and awareness, as well as gender equality and child protection. Disinfection and hygiene materials were distributed to 76 primary schools, helping over 18,000 children and their teachers prevent the transmission of the virus.

"I was so happy to have received a hygiene kit and regular information from Plan on how to prevent COVID-19 as it is hard to get these materials during lockdown. Plan's support is helping provide a healthy life for myself, my family and community."

**Litania, 14-years-old,
Sponsored Child**



PROMOTING GIRLS RIGHTS WITH TECHNOLOGY

Conservative attitudes to gender roles often perpetuates gender inequality in Aileu. Knowledge about sexual and reproductive health is limited as well as a taboo that prohibit addressing this important subject among young people. Therefore, adolescents cannot make decisions on their health.

Last year, we developed a child-friendly reproductive health mobile application for girls and boys. This ensures they have accessed to quality information, which further reduced teenage pregnancies and early child marriages. The youth will be empowered with information to make better decisions on their sexuality.

We also worked with the Ministry of Education and a women's rights organisation to train boys and girls in leadership, public speaking and advocacy. Plan International trained youth to lead in developing the reproductive health application. This training gave young people self-confidence they need to participate in interactive sessions in the mobile application, and become the ambassadors in their communities for spreading knowledge.

To counter taboos surrounding the discussion of sexual health, we are also raising awareness among parents and teachers on the importance of sexual and reproductive health.



72 WOMEN TOOK PART IN A LEADERSHIP TRAINING WHICH EMPOWERS THEM TO STAND UP FOR GENDER EQUALITY

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

In Aileu, many families have limited access to early childhood development resources. Many rural families live far away from pre-schools. Often, parents have limited education themselves. In order to help providing resources for families, we conducted community meetings to discuss the importance of early childhood education with parents, and monthly parenting discussion sessions to support

families with information on topics like child development milestones and child protection. As a result, over 100 children accessed early childhood development with pre-school and informal play groups. Children developed skills in painting, colouring, simple math and reading. With access to quality early learning, these children gain fundamental skills for success.

"I am very happy that I joined the ECCD center. Now I can play together with my friends and learn a lot. We play, sing and we have good teacher who teaches us reading, writing, counting, and takes care of us."

Cerlia, 6, sponsored child



YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES

With your support, we will continue to protect children's rights so they are able to thrive.



In the coming year, we will continue to work with the children, families and partners across Timor-Leste:

- Continuing to empower girls and young women. We will enable them to participate in official decision-making processes and strengthen their confidence.
- Helping parents to develop good parenting skills to care for and protect their children. We will focus on helping families with nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Increasing awareness and resilience so families are able to prevent and respond to risks from natural hazards, including those caused by climate change.
- Advocating for children's rights at the national level, through a continued partnership with the First Lady of Timor-Leste. Initiatives will focus on ending child marriage, increasing youth employment and providing information.

These are just some of the many ways your kindness will continue to touch the life of your sponsored child and other children. We wouldn't be able to do this without supporters like you!



MESSAGE FROM RAMALHO BARRETO
Programme Area Manager, Aileu

"We are so thankful to all of you for your support to Aileu! With your help, children can benefit now from access to such things as early childhood education, mobile library activities and children's rights advocacy campaigns. Thank you for all you do!"



MESSAGE FROM VALENTIM SPINOLA P.M SOARES
Programme Area Manager, Ainaro

"We appreciate the sponsors who have supported children of Timor-Leste. We've seen many positive changes in children's health and education. Many things still need to be done to provide more opportunities for children to fully realise and enjoy all their rights. Therefore, we hope you continue your support in the future."

