



- Farmers participating in USAID's horticulture project have increased their incomes by up to 400 percent, enabling them to improve their families' nutrition and send their children to school.
- USAID helped boost the measles vaccination rate among children in Timor-Leste from 62 percent to 80 percent between 2011 and 2013.
- Thanks to USAID training, community police officers are stationed in all 442 villages for the first time since Timor-Leste's 2002 independence, contributing to post-independence stability.

Photo credit: Lisa Rogers, USAID

Country Profile

Located between Indonesia and Australia, Timor-Leste is one of the world's newest countries, having gained independence in 2002 after decades of conflict. Its population is one of the world's poorest, and the country is working to build its new democracy with still-nascent institutions and limited human capital. The United States is committed to helping Timor-Leste realize its development goals and emerge as a strong, regional partner.

USAID supports Timor-Leste in its efforts to build a more prosperous, healthy and democratic nation through programs that foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth, especially in the agriculture sector; improve the health of the Timorese people, particularly women and children; and strengthen the foundations of good governance.

OUR WORK

A small nation occupying half of an island in Maritime Southeast Asia, Timor-Leste is home to a young and culturally diverse population of about 1.2 million people. USAID's strong history of partnership with Timor-Leste began even prior to the country's independence in 2002. Since independence, USAID has supported Timor-Leste's efforts to establish strong, democratic institutions and a viable economy.

Timor-Leste's economic growth over the past decade has been fueled by its petroleum resources. However, nascent state institutions, limited human and organizational capacity, and poor infrastructure constrain broad-based economic growth. Roughly half of Timor-Leste's people live in extreme poverty, due in large part to a lack of non-farm employment opportunities. Widespread poverty contributes to poor health and chronic malnutrition — both key drivers of stunted growth, where children have truncated height and weight for their age. Timor-Leste has one of the world's worst rates of stunting for children under 5 years old, at 58 percent.

In support of accelerated, inclusive economic growth, USAID works closely with the government and people of Timor-Leste to improve agricultural productivity; encourage private-sector competitiveness; tackle serious health challenges, particularly those affecting women and children; strengthen sub-national, democratic institutions and good governance mechanisms, including anti-corruption systems; protect the environment; and help at-risk populations adapt to climate change.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TRADE

Since 80 percent of Timor-Leste's population relies on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods, USAID focuses on accelerating inclusive economic growth for farm households in the country's rural areas. Our partnerships, including with the Government of New Zealand and ConocoPhillips, support activities aimed at boosting output above subsistence levels and improving incomes by increasing farm productivity and establishing links to markets. Additionally, we provide training and information to rural households to increase household consumption of nutritious foods.

GLOBAL HEALTH

Health indicators in Timor-Leste are still among the worst in the Asia-Pacific region, especially for women and children. According to Timor-Leste's Demographic and Health Survey 2009-10, Timor-Leste has the highest maternal and under-5 mortality rates in Southeast Asia (557 deaths per 100,000 live births and 64 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively). The country's poor health statistics are driven by low immunization coverage, neonatal complications and prevalence of pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria, which is compounded by high malnutrition rates. However, the country is making progress. Between 1990 and 2010, Timor-Leste achieved the largest reduction in under-5 mortality rates in the world. Between 2011 and 2013, USAID helped increase DPT3 (diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus), measles and polio vaccination coverage for infants by more than 10 percent in targeted areas, contributing to the country's successful eradication of polio in 2014. With funding from the Government of Australia, USAID trains health workers to strengthen maternal, neonatal, child and reproductive health services, particularly in rural areas.

DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

Since independence, Timor-Leste has faced daunting challenges to establishing a viable state and a representative democracy. Nonetheless, progress has been made with Timor-Leste conducting multiple free and fair elections, most recently in 2012. Yet the country still lacks the fundamental democratic and governance systems essential to adequately respond to persistently high rates of poverty, unemployment, growing socioeconomic inequality and unresolved conflict. The country faces challenges upholding human rights, reducing impunity and increasing access to basic public services. USAID partners with the Government of Timor-Leste to build the resiliency of democratic institutions and further consolidate good governance practices. USAID also partners with the judiciary in Timor-Leste to facilitate access to justice for rural populations.

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Since 2006, USAID has trained more than 10,000 health workers. Photo credit: Cristovão Guterres, USAID



At-risk youth gain new skills for finding cooperative solutions with USAID's Youth Engagement for Stability project. Photo credit: USAID YEPS project