

WORLD VISION TIMOR-LESTE: AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

World Vision Timor-Leste Overview

World Vision Timor-Leste (WVTL) brings over 25 years of investment in reducing poverty and improving the health and economic well-being of small-scale producers and rural families through sustainable agricultural market systems development across its country program. WVTL has contextualized World Vision's global evidence-based food security and livelihoods project models covering inclusive market systems development, gender and social inclusion, nutrition-sensitive and nature-positive agriculture, health, and economic development. We collaborate and advocate with governments, partner with private enterprise (local and international), and collaborate with global and local research institutions to create more competitive, resilient, and sustainable food and agriculture systems.



Why partner with World Vision?

World Vision is one of the largest international non-governmental organisations, operating in Timor-Leste since 1995, with a national office in Dili and field offices in Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, and Covalima. World Vision has a long history of bilateral and multilateral engagement in Timor-Leste, managing grants from USAID, DFAT Australia, MFAT New Zealand, EC, and UNICEF. With an average annual budget of US\$4-5 million, World Vision has the managerial, financial, and legal capacity to provide financial oversight and administration for complex grants; WVTL's current program portfolio totals US\$20 million.

Agriculture is the prime source of livelihood for approximately 80% of the population of Timor-Leste; however, most farmers have limited access to the technologies and techniques required for sustainable growth and increased returns to make agricultural production more effective in reducing poverty. Both subsistence and commercial producers face significant constraints, including limited access to quality inputs, low yields, high post-harvest losses, and limited access to markets. WVTL brings extensive and proven system approaches finely tuned to address rural smallholder market actors in Timor-Leste, including the **inclusive Market Systems Development (iMSD)** approach. The iMSD approach was designed through technical collaboration with the World Vision Australia and the portfolio now spans over 15 different projects across the globe with a total value approaching US\$50 million. As an approach, WV's iMSD is recognized globally for its track record of raising the incomes of target households and small and medium enterprises (SME), by attaining sustained inclusive economic growth as part of a sector or economy-wide intervention. Standard market systems approaches work well in strengthening value chains and market access, but they can leave out marginal groups or unintentionally worsen their ability to participate in growing markets. Building on decades of work supporting women and marginalised groups to improve their living standards, our **Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI)** approach has become an integral part of iMSD. It helps position women in critical leadership and decision-making roles from project start, with intervention support through evidence-based social and behavior change designed to shift social norms in favor of women's economic empowerment. WV's iMSD intentionally operates through the lens of GESI from co-creation to ensure social inclusion is at the core of its transformative impacts. The iMSD approach is unique to the industry by adding our proven poverty reduction intervention models (e.g. Savings for Transformation, Ultra-Poor Graduation, and LVCD) developed from our long-term work of improving the well-being of extremely poor smallholders.

WORLD VISION TIMOR-LESTE: AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

What sets us apart from the others?

WVTL has a proven capacity and track record in **commercial agricultural development and enterprise development** in Timor-Leste, leading food and agriculture programs to scale smallholder enterprise growth along with catalysing inclusion and resiliency across entire market systems. This is accomplished through a set of intervention approaches that are designed to bring suitable innovations to the smallholder level that improve competitiveness and business skillsets of scale-small food producers who have been incentivised to produce nutrient-sensitive products as assessed and confirmed by iMSD market analysis.

WV's local value chain development (LVCD) approach is intentionally designed to sustain self-directed smallholder networks to higher-value markets. LVCD is integrated with WV's evidence-based pro-poor models such as Savings for Transformation, Microfinance, and Building Secure Livelihoods that produce sustainable social and economic impacts. These project models are uniquely designed to stimulate self-grouping of savings groups, strengthen links to microfinance, and guide behavioral change to prepare and bridge not-ready-for-market small food producers to activities within iMSD and higher profit margin markets. These integrated programs are implemented through the lens of our **Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)** and **Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)** programs to address gender and **climate-smart agriculture** as a part of our overall strengthening of individual and community resilience.

WVTL is aware food productivity is low, nutrition knowledge is limited, and dietary diversity is lacking in Timor-Leste. Anemia is a significant concern: World Vision's Baseline Study for the Better Food, Better Health Program (2017) found that 64 percent of women and children in one target district had anemia. In addition to its market-led approaches, WVTL can utilize its **Better Foods Better Health (nutrition-sensitive agriculture) program experience** of increasing production and sales of superfoods (orange sweet potato, soybeans, mung beans, moringa and red kidney bean) to increase commercial market sales while enhancing household nutrition through improved knowledge and nutrition practices.

Having long-term experience both in-country and across the region enables WV to partner and program at the right level for scale and impact. With many years evolving our programming and development approaches, our strengths as a partner include:

- Local presence, reach, and operational stability in Timor-Leste for over 25 years
- Long-term commitment to communities in which we operate (Aileu, Baucau, Bobonaro, Covalima, etc.)
- Best practice community engagement principles, approaches, and program models
- Evidence of effectiveness and impact (previous and ongoing programs)
- History of engagement with value chain actors and ongoing success in creating markets for producers (i.e. over 10 years of engagement with Dili-based supermarkets), and establishing community-based enterprises
- Access to regional and global technical resources
- Robust local security monitoring and risk reduction

WORLD VISION TIMOR-LESTE: AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The following are some examples of our activities in agriculture and nutrition development in Timor-Leste:

Better Food Better Health (BFBH)

Duration: 2017 - ongoing

Donor: DFAT (Australia)

Budget: USD 6,772,995

Target areas: Aileu, Bobonaro, Baucau, Covalima

2020 monitoring data:

- 136 farmer groups established
- 83 savings and loans groups established
- 64 food processing groups established (exceeded program target by 300% in Year 3)
- 84 FMNR groups established
- 59% of children meeting dietary diversity requirements (Baseline figure: 13%)
- Total income of US\$ 151,669 earned through sales of 'superfoods' (2019-2020)
- Signed MoUs with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAFF), Secretary of State for Cooperatives (SECOOP) and a local company (Saminga Litarau, Unp. Lda)

Bobonaro Food Security and Economic Development (BFSED)

Duration: 2013-2016

Donor: New Zealand Aid

Budget: USD 1,069,524

Target area: Bobonaro

- Established MoU with DiliMart and Leader supermarket
- 20 savings groups established
- 2 market collectives established
- 8 food processing groups established (Tofu, chips, tempeh)
- Regular, weekly access to local and Dili-based markets
- Local market facilitators recruited and trained
- 3 green house manuals established (Rock melon product)

Building Resilience to Climate Change +Environment (BRACCE)

Duration: 2011-2016

Donor: DFAT (Australia)

Budget: USD 1,600,000

Target area: Aileu

- Established 46 FMNR (farmer managed natural regeneration) plots
- Established 50 nurseries in target communities
- Operated in 18 villages across all four administrative posts
- 11,200 beneficiaries participated in project activities
- 24 farmer groups entered into contracts with buyers (CCT, Timor Global)
- 1,561 farmers reported increased knowledge on marketing of agroforestry products

- 1,537 households (HHs) reported increased production of coffee and cloves
- 2,599 HH with increased knowledge of energy efficiency and how it relates to climate change
- 220 HH with increased sources of income from agroforestry
- 230 HHs received high value tree seedlings
- 175 households trained on tree crops for their livelihood
- 1 coffee production company began operating in Aileu as a legally registered business

Livelihood Improvement through Farmer Enterprises (LIFE) Project

Duration: 2011-2016

Donor: World Vision Australia (WVA) – Private Donors

Budget: USD 1,218,750

Target area: Aileu

- MoUs with 3 supermarkets in Dili, including Kmanek, Leader, and DiliMart
- 25 savings groups established
- 3 credit unions registered as legal businesses
- 49 market collectives were established
- 6 food processing groups established (tofu, chips, tempeh and coffee powder processing)
- Regular, weekly access to consumer markets
- 8 local market facilitators (LMF) recruited and trained
- 943 farmers are practiced used plastic tunnels for grow vegetable
- 1 collector supplying to 5 new supermarkets in Dili
- 1 coffee production company has been operating in Aileu as legally registered business, through support from WVTL's LIFE and BRACCE project
- 6 greenhouse manuals produced (tomato, broccoli, cauliflower, capsicum, etc.)

Community Economic Development (CED)

Duration: 2011-2017

Donor: DFAT (Australia)

Budget: USD 1,775,000

Target area: Baucau

- MoU with Dilimart supermarket
- 17 savings groups established
- 1 market collective established
- 4 food processing groups (Tofu, chips, tempeh chips) established
- Weekly, regular access to consumer markets
- 4 local market facilitators recruited and trained

WORLD VISION TIMOR-LESTE: AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Private Sector Engagement

World Vision believes that businesses are essential contributors to achieving a sustainable end to poverty. **Private Sector Engagement (PSE)**, local and regional, can play a positive role in helping address the underlying causes of low agriculture productivity and gaps in healthy nutrition. Likewise, PSE can be instrumental in delivering on business objectives to help smallholders scale to earn higher incomes that in turn increase options for higher nutrition. WV is applying innovative market-driven and consumer responsive ways to create shared value through strategic agribusiness, smallholder actors, and government partnerships in Timor-Leste and surrounding region, producing commercial and socially sustainable business and economic growth. Examples from the Indo-Pacific region include:

- WV’s Better Food Better Health (BFBH) program in Timor-Leste utilised the Local Value Chain Development (LVCD) model to link superfood producers to markets. In 2021, the project signed a MoU with SaMinga Litarau Unipessoal Lda. to export a minimum of 20 tonnes of mung beans produced by BFBH farmers to Malaysia.
- WV household market systems development in North Central Timor, Indonesia, successfully facilitated the development of nutrient-rich food businesses, tempeh, predominantly led by women, which enabled families to send their children to schools and increase household incomes. [Tempeh sends our children to school | Indonesia | World Vision International \(wvi.org\)](https://www.wvi.org/tempeh-sends-our-children-to-school-indonesia)
- WV used its market systems approach to lead self-organizing joint marketing groups that complemented its local value chain intervention in East Flores, Nusa Tenggara Timur province, Indonesia. There small producers of cashew nut, cacao, candlenut, copra, and tamarind, organised to managed savings and lending, accessed market prices that led to significant income increases and improved group resilience. [Marketing Group Improves Farmers’ Lives | Indonesia | World Vision International \(wvi.org\)](https://www.wvi.org/marketing-group-improves-farmers-lives-indonesia)
- WV in PNG, through our LVCD model, savings groups, self-grouping, and financial literacy training approaches, has helped turn around a once depressed cocoa sector that is now producing significantly higher incomes to provide well-being for families, especially children.

Our Partners:



Our Project Models

- Local Value Chain Development (LVCD)
- Resilient and Inclusive Social Enterprise (RISE)
- Savings for Transformation (S4Ts)
- Credit Union (CU)
- Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA)
- Chicken Production and Chicken Feed Production
- Superfood Production
- Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)
- Agriculture Innovation for Community (AI-COM) Research Project model
- Parents Club

WORLD VISION TIMOR-LESTE: AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

A Case Study

Cooking competition launches Alda's business

In many rural areas of Timor-Leste, people have land, but they have no knowledge or skills to develop it. Farmers only plant one or two types of crops each season, and without variety they get a low price at the market. Some move to the capital, Dili, to find a job rather than continue their farming business. Like many others in her community, Alda, a 35-year-old farmer from Aileu, used to have difficulties developing her farm and her business.

"Before World Vision came to my village, I only planted mustard green[s] and cabbage in my farm. However, World Vision's presence in my village motivated me to plant various crops. I attended the superfood training on how to produce local foods and received seeds for planting," she said.

Through the Better Food Better Health project, World Vision Timor-Leste is helping farmers like Alda to grow, eat and sell nutritious 'superfoods' to improve family nutrition and income. Parents learn how to cook meals for their children using local foods – meals that are not only nutritious but taste good too.

"When I heard World Vision was running a superfood cooking competition, I organized a women's group in my community to enter," Alda said. "My team won this competition. I was happy as I couldn't believe that we made it with our own local products that we have in our farms. We cooked with six types of foods, including red kidney beans, soybeans, mung beans, moringa, eggs and orange sweet potatoes. We used these ingredients to make all kinds of food, like cookies, cakes, puddings, porridges, teas and satays," she said happily.

After success in the competition, Alda started an event catering business and selling her cookies and cakes at the market. Now she is growing a variety of crops and her business is doing well.

Alda's husband, Bernardo (age 46), works as a security guard, but he always makes time to help Alda in the farm and supports her in her business.

"When I come home from work, I help my wife in the farm and take care of the kids," he said. "My wife won the cooking competition held by World Vision," he added proudly.

Their daughter, 12-year-old Octaviana, is happy with her mother's business. Now she eats the local food prepared by her mother, rather than buying all imported food. "Now I can eat various foods and bring the rest to school as well," she said.

Octaviana also helps her mother raise chickens, which provide nutritious eggs to eat every day. "We raise a lot of chickens at home. Every morning I like to feed them and watch those chickens try to take food from each other," Octaviana said.

However recently, COVID-19 has presented some challenges for the family. "It's been two or three months, and I can't sell my food collection at the market due to the lockdown. We have no customers to buy our food," Alda explained. While she has been able to continue to grow her vegetables, there has been a rice shortage, so Alda has been forced to exchange her local crops for rice.

"During lockdown, I didn't go to school because the virus has begun to spread, so my teacher announced all the students have to just study at home," said Octaviana. "Even we don't have enough food, but we still run the farm to survive until the virus is gone. In the afternoon, my parents and I go to the farm; I help my parents watering vegetables and cleaning the grass. I love to spend time in the farm as it has a lot of big trees, has shade everywhere, is green and I listen to the birds' sounds. I like to listen as the birds are singing while we take a rest in the farm," she said.

But the family is looking to the future. "I hope that after COVID-19 is gone, World Vision can run this cooking competition event again in order to promote our local products and show my wife's creativity and talent," said Bernardo.



Alda (middle) with her winning team in the superfood cooking competition.
Photo: Jaime dos Reis /World Vision

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World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.