



KEY MESSAGES

The Second Voluntary National Review Report on Progress of the Implementation of the SDGs in Timor-Leste, 2023 (VNR 2.0): People Centered Sustainable Development: Leaving no one behind

After 21 years since the restoration of independence, Timor-Leste's priority to achieve sustainable development is to invest in its people ensuring that 'no one is left behind'. In 2002, when the country restored independence, girls and boys across the country wrote their aspirations for the nation on postcards addressed to future leaders. The youth envisioned Timor-Leste to be a democratic nation with better living conditions for all and opportunities for young people. Timor-Leste's 2nd VNR attempts to assess if the government, in its quest towards the achievement of the SDGs, is on track to deliver on these young people's expectations.

Timor-Leste is committed to peace, inclusion, and state-building as the foundation for achieving the SDGs through a people-centered approach which promotes the well-being and potential for all citizens.

Timor-Leste implemented timely responses and recovery policies in face of multiple shocks including COVID-19, natural disasters, and political impasse and has maintained its promise to deliver on SDG 3, SDG 11 and SDG 13. The response of the Timor-Leste Government to the Covid-19 crisis has been commendable and was delivered through the Economic Recovery Plan. It aimed to safeguard living standards through universal cash transfers, preserving jobs for both formal and informal workers, and protecting businesses. The Government kept essential services operational and was responsive to COVID-19 spikes and protected people by implementing a mix of containment measures. As a result, death rates and serious cases of COVID-19 remained low.

***Priority 1.** It is vital that the international community continues to support the country's efforts to become more resilient to multiple shocks and to deliver the National Strategic Development Plan, in particular focusing on the human capital development area.*

The socio-economic impact of multiple shocks in Timor-Leste has been detrimental for gains in development, especially for rural households, people with disabilities and the poor slowing progress on SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 4 and SDG 6. Although the **nutrition** situation has continued to improve, prevalence of stunting, underweight and wasting remains high compared to the Asia-Pacific region. While **social protection programs** aimed at vulnerable parents and children are adopted, they are not yet adequate to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups. The net enrollment rates at secondary levels have been increasing yet preschool **education** enrollment is low, and the quality of education and use of digital resources remain a major challenge.



Priority 2. *Government continues reforms to strengthen public financing for social sectors by focusing on the accessibility and quality of education, health, social protection, and food security. International partners can play an important role in supporting these reforms.*

Identified as one of the four strategies for acceleration, economic diversification has stalled with further progress needed on SDG 7, SDG 8 and SDG 9. Timor-Leste's economy has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. The **employment** base of Timor-Leste remains small and fragile, with a low rate of female economic participation and a high number of youth not engaged in education, employment, or training. **The agriculture sector** remains the biggest employer but was hit hard by COVID-19 and natural disasters while connectivity and digital services are limited. Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN and WTO can help accelerating economic diversification and resilience.

Priority 3. *We seek partnerships to accelerate technology-driven transformation and to strengthen policies to promote a "blue-green economy" focusing on agriculture, fisheries, and tourism sectors.*

Commitment to democracy and social cohesion underpins the country's resilience in the face of multiple shocks making it champion in its achievement of SDG 16. Timor-Leste has showed yet again it is one of the strongest electoral democracies in Southeast Asia with 40 percent of parliament seats held by women. Amid Covid-19, the country conducted a successful presidential election, civil liberties are widely respected and the Government remains open and responsive to people's needs. Reforms are ongoing to address challenges in government effectiveness, public administration, decentralization, and financial management.

Priority 4. *To ensure that the aspirations of all its citizens at the outset of independence are met by 2030, Timor-Leste is ready to strengthen institutions using the existing strong social contract between citizens and state, its leaders commit to avoid future political impasses and continue working with other nations, private sector and partners to deliver for its people.*

