

WaterAid Timor-Leste Country Program Strategy Development: Context Report 2022

Introduction

WaterAid has been working in Timor-Leste since 2005, collaborating with diverse actors to improve access to WASH. WaterAid holds a strong reputation and deep relationships with government and civil society built through combining long-term hands-on commitment to strengthening WASH systems in Manufahi and Liquica with advice and advocacy to national level government in Dili.

As the current country strategy ends, the country context has shifted significantly, especially noting the creation of Timor-Leste's first water utility. WATL has prioritised a detailed context analysis process to inform development of the new Country Strategy. This report documents the most significant insights from stakeholder interviews, literature reviews, and reflection on WaterAid's own learning and evidence.

Political, Social, Economic

Timor-Leste was formerly colonised by Portuguese for 500 years and was under Indonesian rule for 24 years. In 2002, the country eventually became a new independent nation through 30 August referendum which was held with auspices of the United Nations.

Timor-Leste adapted semi-presidential system where, the Head of the State is the President of the Republic, who is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. The President guarantees the respect for the Constitution and for State Institutions. He can also exercise the right to veto legislation put forth by the government and approved by the National Parliament. Following legislative elections, the president appoints the Prime Minister as the leader of the majority party or majority coalition to form a government. As Head of State the President also presides over the Council of State and the Superior Council of Defense and Security. Moreover, politics of East Timor take place in a framework of a unitary semi-presidential representative democratic republic, whereby the Prime Minister of East Timor is the head of government and the President of Timor-Leste exercises the functions as the head of the State. Moreover, executive power is exercised by the president and the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the National Parliament. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislative.

Since independence in 2002, Timor-Leste's government underlines the immediate needs of established social and economic policies focusing on alleviating poverty and addressing the immediate needs of the people. Moreover, the government has been working to consolidate the security and stability to encourage investment in every sector and focus on strengthening the foundation for nationhood through building

institutions of the state. This ongoing process of peace building and state building has been necessary to create a foundation for Timor-Leste government to address people's health and education needs and work towards the elimination of extreme poverty.

Furthermore, the country continues underline the strengthening of justice institutions along with its system, security institutions and government institutions that uphold good governance that could respond to necessities of the people. Improving access in education, health services, agriculture production, roads infrastructure linking various places are happening despite facing enormous challenges. Nevertheless, the country is heading towards positive path through the introduction of the National Strategic Plans 2015-2030 which is very vital to determine the nation future development pathways. Moreover, as one of the international community member, Timor-Leste have tremendous bilateral and multilateral relations with various nations, hence, the country had established relationship with neighbouring countries through adherence to ASEAN to expand collaboration in economy, politic and security as well as part of the Portuguese country's speaking CPLP.

Water, Sanitation, Hygiene

The latest 2020 JMP data show that Timor-Leste has positive/improvement trends in basic water and sanitation access, with 85% and 56%, respectively. Furthermore, the remaining ODF population is 18%, decreased from 30% in 2010, just before the national adoption of CLTS in 2011. Handwashing has significantly increased attention and massive campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, no study showed this impact on the longer term of hand hygiene behaviour just yet as per SDGs service level indicators and the practices themselves.

However, the WASH sector in Timor-Leste lacks actual data on progress mainly due to inactive sector monitoring and information system since 2017/2018 and the delay of the 2020 national population census. Therefore, the recent progress reports and data, including JMP, mainly come from projections of several years' trends and using other sector data like the DHS data. Other than that, the lack of sector monitoring aligned with the SDGs indicators and service levels made the government have no actual situation and the strategy needed for achieving the SDGs. The sector knowledge management gap is another significant gap impacted by the WASH government institution reformation result mandated by the recent sector national policies.

Regarding water supply, the two new institutions, ANAS and BTL, with the Ministry of Public Works supervision, hold the mandates as the regulator and service delivery, respectively. Besides, the PNDS (National Program for Village Development) under the Ministry of State Administration, supported by DFAT's PARTISIPA program, has a significant investment in rural water supply projects with over 40% of their infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, on sanitation, depending on the ladders and hygiene Ministry of Health is the lead or heavily involved. Moreover, with the ongoing decentralisation process, the municipality governments, who already hold the

leadership and management of cross-sectoral departments, will also have the financial delegation. Given the country's history and development processes, civil society organisations and movements always have a place and say. As a result, national CSOs in the sector have a potential role beyond the service delivery, for instance, social audit, advocacy and influencing, knowledge management, cross-sectoral learning, and technical support.

Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, and Rights

At the last election in 2018, 25 women were elected to sit in the National Parliament which equates to 38%. The quota mechanism policy requiring 1 out of every group of 3 candidates on electoral lists must be a woman resulted in this outcome. After the policy was approved in 2011, this result was the third election with at least 35% of women in Parliament.

There is strong representation of women in the parliament and policy and decision making. The women in parliament have the women caucus where they are able to communicate and coordinate between them on the women critical issues and needs regardless the party. This caucus is often calling on the voice of various womens groups, community members, and organisations for consultation and hearing their concerns, voices and aspirations. However, there is concern remain on whether this number will be stagnant in coming elections as the political parties are only willing to comply with the minimum requirement instead of promoting and practicing the gender equality and women leadership by increasing the number in their list.

There is also significant space for civil society organisations to inform, advise, and advocate to government. Since creating the strategic advocacy partnership with DPOs, women groups, human right organisation, and sector networks. WaterAid has extended the reach and networks for influencing beyond the traditional WASH actors/networks and gender coordination mechanisms. These groups and organisations have successfully brought the WASH and rural women issues into various national high-level meetings and key forums, including Ministers meetings, Parliament's hearings and consultations, and municipality planning process. Therefore, to continue the support to these partnerships is one of the key elements and strategy for WASH being relevant in ranging of national discussions and decision-making processes.

On the other hand, these WASH actors are also supporting various GEDSI advocacy agenda. The latest example of this is when PNBESITL and WaterAid were supporting and being present in DPOs audience with National Parliament and President on UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratification push. After the ratification, predicted in September 2022, there will be many actions needed as a result of that. Key to this will be promoting the understanding of the ratification impact to the relevant ministries responsible for WASH and the integration to sectoral policies and guidelines.

Besides advocacy and influencing works, it is important to keep these groups and organisations, particularly the women groups, linking with the WASH service delivery and community works. The reason is because many of their influencing agenda and concerns are coming directly from the community and sub-national government and sector actors. Moreover, by having this they are increasing their awareness and relevancy on the latest WASH situation and issues and developing their sector knowledge at the same time.

On the LGBTQTI+ issue, Timor-Leste is considered quite open and progressive in compare to the other countries in SEA and Pacific. The Prime Minister made official support for LGBTQTI+ community getting their rights in his official public speech. The other examples from the past several years are the pride walk/parade and SGM groups sharing their story openly, regardless still some resistance given the country is predominantly Catholic and strong patrilineal/conservative culture. However, there remain significant gaps in legal protection and discrimination in term of WASH facilities access. Consequently, various sectors support on these issues and gaps is needed. There are efforts that WASH actors potentially able to support by doing the joint advocacy opportunities with other GEDSI organisations, building evidences, and integrating in the programming.

Climate Change and Environment

Timor-Leste's tropical climate is heavily influenced by West Pacific Monsoon and its mountainous climate. Its wet season occurs between December and May and the dry season between June and November, with the southern parts of the country experiencing a bi-modal wet season of seven to nine months. Rainfall is variable across the country, with the northern areas receiving on average about 1,000mm / year and the south coast receiving over 2,000mm / year. The highest altitudes are located in the country's centre, where rainfall ranges between 2,500mm to nearly 3,000mm per year. Like many other countries with a tropical climate, there is a slight seasonal variation in temperature. Timor-Leste's climate is strongly impacted by the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and can vary the inter-annual extent and timing of rainfall by up to 50%.

The IPCC has not explicitly reported on the impact of climate change on Timor-Leste; however, there are regional summaries that provide a relevant overview. One of the challenges for Timor-Leste is that measured data at a local scale is not available to contribute to the global climate models used by the IPCC. This results in limited downscaling of climate modelling to give an accurate picture of Timor-Leste under future climate scenarios. It is clear, however, that recent wet weather extremes illustrate that the monsoonal wet-dry tropical climate of Timor-Leste is impacted by climate change through the intensification of the dry and wet seasons. The impacts can be extreme when this is overlaid with strong El Niño and La Niña weather events.

As mentioned above, one of the challenges for Timor-Leste is that there are limited hydro-meteorological data available for the country. The available data is disparate,

ad-hoc and difficult to access through the various Ministries and government agencies. As a result, no hydro-meteorological records from Timor-Leste can illustrate any climate change over time.

In Timor-Leste, there is already some evidence that climate change impacts the WASH sector in urban and rural areas. This is evident in the flash flood events in Timor-Leste in 2020 and 2021. These events caused significant damage to the water supply and sanitation infrastructure in Dili and the rest of the country. However, the impact of these more extreme events is evident, while the smaller, incremental implications of climate change on the WASH sector are less noticeable. These may go unnoticed as the country currently has no systematic monitoring programs on the water resource, water supply, or sanitation infrastructure.

Furthermore, there are no recent quantitative studies assessing the impact of climate change in Timor-Leste. Nevertheless, growing anecdotal evidence supports the notion that extreme weather events associated with the El Niño and La Niña have intensified due to climate change. For example, prolonged droughts that impact water supply and crops and heavy rain that cause inundation and flash flooding are already affecting communities across the country. The strong La Niña during 2021/22 has increased in intensity due to climate change and has resulted in frequent and extreme rain events, causing devastating flash flooding, landslides, inundation and strong winds.

Climate change has already affected most rural communities dependent on the rainy season for agriculture, particularly those who still practice the traditional slash and burn farming techniques which lead to increased erosion and landslides and high deforestation rates. With prolonged droughts decreasing groundwater recharge and rising sea levels, Timor-Leste's freshwater coastal zones are at risk of saline intrusion, impacting the quality and quantity of valuable water supplies of coastal communities

Climate change is a key issue for the government and many large development partners. The National Adaptation Plan is in place and the National Climate Change Policy was approved in December 2021. The Ministry of Environment and the Climate Change Working Group are the main points of responsibility however there are actions and interest across ministries. Timor-Leste has Green Climate Funding through UNDP which includes additionality actions for water supply.

Health

WASH in healthcare facilities are essential to providing quality health services. WASH services provide the necessary means for health workers, patients and community to access water, hand hygiene, sanitation, safely managed waste and maintain clean environments in the HCF. There is limited nationally available data on WASH in HCF in Timor Leste. In the UN Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water report, Timor Leste has a low coverage than most of

the South East Asian countries¹. The Ministry of Health has a lead role in hygiene promotion and in water and sanitation². However, there is currently no national guidelines or standards for WASH in HCF. Since gaining independence in 2002, there has been shifts to decentralise many government functions including health management and services. However, decentralisation has been especially challenging at municipality level, where management capacity is limited, financial flows are not timely, accountability and citizens' engagement in governance is low³. Access to WASH and health services poses a major concern as 70% of the population live in rural areas in small, dispersed villages isolated by mountainous terrain and poor road conditions. The health system is fragmented with significant gaps in WASH infrastructures, operation and maintenance and capacity of the health workforce. This undermines health facility readiness, resilience and health security during disease outbreaks and compromises quality of health service delivery⁴.

Maternal mortality rate in Timor-Leste has slowly improved over the years with maternal mortality at 142 per 100,000 live births in 2017 which is a 6.58% decline from 2016. Infant mortality rate for children under 5 years of age is 42 per 1000 live births in 2020 which is a decline from 48 per 100 live births in 2016⁵. According to the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey, nearly half (49%) of births occur in healthcare facilities⁶. Adequate WASH services have been linked to minimise risks of healthcare acquired infections especially during labour and delivery of newborns.

Timor Leste has one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world with 47% of children under five years of age suffering the highest levels of stunting and wasting in the region. Malnutrition among women also remains a serious concern with 23% of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) being anaemic⁷. There is some evidence to show an association between inadequate access to clean water and sanitation and poor hygiene behaviour with increased risk of diarrhoea among children under five years. Combined with health promotion and behaviour change, the provision of WASH in HCF can minimise risk of healthcare associated infections, malnutrition and other WASH-related health concerns for mothers and newborns.

The World Risk Index in 2021 ranked Timor 16th with disasters such as landslides, flash floods, tropical cyclones and earthquakes threatening livelihoods, health security and wellbeing⁸. The impact of climate change on the frequency and intensity of these disasters affect access to clean water and basic sanitation, which

¹ https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wash-documents/glaas/glaas-2013-14/glaas-2013-14-country-highlights/timor-leste.pdf?sfvrsn=bc4277d0_8

² https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/searo/timor-leste/national-health-sector-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=70870918_2

³ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/timor-leste-health-review-report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/timor-leste-health-review-report.pdf>

⁵ <https://data.unicef.org/country/tls/>

⁶ <https://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr329-dhs-final-reports.cfm>

⁷ https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/136890/1/ccsbrief_tls_en.pdf

⁸ http://www.wfp.org/countries/timor-leste

contributes to the spread of communicable disease such as malaria, dengue and other waterborne illnesses.

Sector Financing

The recent WaterAid study on fiscal decentralisation found some contrasts between expectations as it is set out in the regulations and the actual practices in the WASH sector. These differences between de jure and de facto practices hinder the progress towards the planned decentralisation. This is because most of these differences make the municipalities largely depend on the national for the implementation of its responsibilities. Furthermore, this study identifies some bottlenecks that contribute to the mismatching between de jure and de facto practice include the unclear assignment of responsibilities for municipalities; insufficient budget to fulfil mandate; the partial delegation of responsibility; the unfunded mandates, and it is also partially caused by the newly established WASH institutions and regulations, therefore, are still not fully implemented.

The current sector investments mainly come from bilateral and multilateral such as Australian DFAT, ADB, World Bank, and MCC. Most of them focus to the urban area and infrastructure aspect. Other sectors investments include WASH, namely climate change (Green Climate Fund and EU), health, and education sectors. Therefore, there is a need to clarify how the government will address the rural area, monitoring system, sanitation, GEDSI, climate resilience, and operation and maintenance issues.

WaterAid Capacity

WaterAid Timor-Leste currently focuses its programming on three municipalities, Liquica, Manufahi and Dili. Two formers are field offices with the implementation of activities down from sub-national to community levels. Meanwhile, the latter focuses on national-level advocacy and influencing. The organisation's current main themes are municipality- or area-wide approach to sanitation, WASH in HCFs, WASH in Schools, GEDSI integration, strategic advocacy partnership, and climate resilient integration (community sessions and IoT). In the current strategy, the team and partners were also involved in various research and studies, as well as leading studies including the district-wide assessments of WASH in HCF and the costing analysis of WASH in HCF. These efforts have both developed methodologies and processes that are new to the context as well as data and insights that have been previously available, placing WaterAid in a strategic position across these thematic areas. As a result, WaterAid and its partners' staff are trained and experienced in facilitating, managing, and implementing various activities and deliverables of these themes. In addition, the WaterAid and partners' support to municipality government for sectoral area-wide programming seems more relevant than before with the recently approved decentralisation law.

With our main partners gaining more experience on WASH and area-wide approaches, it is evident that the partnership is more relevant and strategic than

before. The latest example is the fruitful and productive partnership with the right groups that elevate the WASH issue to the surface of the other sectors' high-level events. WaterAid's partnership approach, management and experience are something the team gains. Beyond that, WaterAid is also supporting the partners' organisational development, particularly in administration, finance management, grant management and compliance, policy and guideline, strategic plan, and others. These partnerships range from three to fourteen years of partnership.

Given these gaps, there are some areas that the team will be benefited from gaining skills and experiences in the programming and grant management aspects, such as urban WASH, research and technical writings, managing more complex funding (like MCC, EU, USAID, ADB, and World Bank). The organisation shape and way of work are equally important for enabling and supporting the staff and partners in these kind complex donors and projects.

Conclusion

WATL is continuing to define the barriers, challenges, and opportunities in their operating context. At this point in the process, based on the above alongside WATL's capacity, relationships, and reputation, the following Aims are being considered for the new Country Strategy. WATL appreciates all comments and feedback on the structure and selection of these aims:

1. **Universal WASH access**, Ensuring equitable access to WASH in community, schools and healthcare facilities.
2. **Securing financial resources** for WASH, Climate Change and GEDSI
3. **Climate Resilience** Leveraging community knowledge and government system to tackle climate change risks to water, sanitation and hygiene.
4. **GEDSI**, Realising women, girls, people with disabilities and minority groups access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene.
5. **Health**, Building stronger collaboration with the Health System for improved WASH in HCF and hand hygiene behaviours.

The key drivers of change identified that will be leveraged through these aims are:

1. The alignment of decision makers towards WASH as an enabling factor to support the WASH and investment agenda.
2. Giving power to local governments to make their own decisions, including program planning and budgeting, which is a realization of the decentralization process, where WASH multiyear planning that has been supported by the local government of Manufahi and Liquiçá can be a reference for local government budget investments.
3. Active participation of the community to support the WASH program because of the experience of prevention against COVID-19 and the experience of handling climate change and disaster that have occurred.
4. Donors have a very strong role as supporters of change, therefore results based drive development and effective management are the key drivers to make broader changes

5. The national government is conducting consultations to revise the Government Strategy Development Plans, and this needs to be monitored so that the WATL strategy does not conflict with the revised results.
6. Internal factors are also very decisive in supporting change, strong advocacy from civil society, need advocacy based on facts and need to define the form and stages of the transition from service delivery to a clear system strengthening.