

Investing in Timor-Leste's children through the *Bolsa da Mae - Jerasaun Foun* cash transfer program



Image caption: image features an East Timorese man and his young daughter, holding a pen next to a note book, both smiling.

The Government of Timor-Leste is expanding its child-focused social protection scheme *Bolsa da Mae* to give the next generation of Timorese children a stronger start in life.



Bolsa da Mae was introduced in 2008 to support poor and vulnerable households with children. However, most registered beneficiaries are over the age of seven, missing early childhood, the most critical period of development that shapes children's long-term health, nutrition and education outcomes. Recognising these issues, in 2021, the Government of Timor-Leste committed to improve *Bolsa da Mae*'s coverage and investment levels.



In June 2022, the Government of Timor-Leste launched *Bolsa da Mae - Jerasaun Foun* (new generation) to reach pregnant women (for the first time) and children. Under *Jerasaun Foun*, pregnant women receive USD15 per month, and caregivers receive USD20 per month for children. An additional USD10 per month is provided if a child has a disability. People register at health clinics, encouraging them to seek maternal and child health care. The program is also expanding women's access to financial services.



Jerasaun Foun is being implemented first in Ainaro, Bobonaro and the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno in 2022; the three municipalities with the highest rates of stunting and poverty in the country. It will gradually scale-up to cover all of Timor-Leste. Over time, eligibility will also extend to cover children aged up to six years, with the goal of eventually reaching all children.

Funding provided as budget support through Australia's Pacific COVID-19 Response Package is supporting the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion to implement the first phase of *Jerasaun Foun*. The Australia-Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development is providing ongoing technical support, including partnering with Catalpa to build an electronic registration system to replace inefficient paper-based systems and improve program monitoring and reporting.

Partnerships for Social Protection (P4SP) is providing additional support to the roll-out of *Jerasaun Foun*. A P4SP-funded specialist is working alongside the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion and the Partnership for Human Development to ensure this expanded cash transfer program is rolled out efficiently and supports pregnant women and young children to access the nutrition and services they need to live healthy, long lives.



For more information visit:

- The Australia-Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development: <http://.phd.tl>
- Catalpa: <https://catalpa.io/>
- Partnerships for Social Protection (P4SP): <http://p4sp.org>



The Pacific COVID-19 Response Package provided \$304.7 million across FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22 to assist Pacific countries and Timor-Leste to weather the economic shocks of COVID-19 and position the region for economic recovery. For more information on the Pacific COVID-19 Response Package visit: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/development-assistance/pacific-regional-covid-19-response-packages>