

ChildFund
Timor Leste

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR



To our dear donors, supporters and friends,

I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 ChildFund Timor-Leste Annual Report, which showcases the results we achieved in FY24.

ChildFund Timor-Leste was established with a strong commitment to promote and protect the rights of children and young people. After six months as Country Director, I can testify to the strength of our programs in delivering maximum impact for children and young people.

In 2023-2024, ChildFund Timor-Leste (CFTL) achieved several significant milestones in our journey to support children and youth through our community-led programs. Notably, we signed a memorandum of understanding with three government entities including the Ministry of Education, Instituto para a Defesa dos Direitos da Criança – INDDICA, I.P and the National Institute of Public Health Timor-Leste (Portuguese acronym INSP-TL). These agreements strengthened our collaboration in early childhood education, maternal and child health, child protection, and youth skills development.

Our education programs continue to provide space and opportunity for early childhood education. We have strengthened literacy programs in primary schools and community-based pre-schools (CBPS) by building the capacity of facilitators, volunteer tutors and School Management Committee (SMC) members through refresher training on preschool curriculum, child-friendly teaching methodology, and school management in Liquiça, Manatuto and Lautem. In addition, to promote a child-friendly learning environment, we supported 15 CBPS in Lautem and Liquiça.

Our maternal and child health project continues to expand reaching more communities. This year, we established 21 Mother Support Groups (MSG), conducted male engagement forums and provided training for community health volunteers in partnership with the Alola Foundation and community health centres. We continue to equip communities including pregnant women, lactating mothers, young children and adolescents with

essential knowledge and skills on key health and nutrition practices, focusing on primary health care, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health.

CFTL empowered Timorese youth throughout 2023 with life skills development interventions. We promoted sport and theatre for development as a means for young people to advocate for youth issues, build healthy relationships, create peace, and make decisions for themselves and others. We also resourced youth organisations supporting them to play a meaningful role in their community and strengthen their capacity to design and source funding for youth led programs. During the commemoration of International Safe Internet Day, our Swipe Safe team engaged in advocacy at the national level through the establishment of a joint action plan between civil society and government institutions, including INDDICA.IP, TIC Timor.IP and the Ministry of Education. This set the groundwork to effectively work together to improve child protection mechanisms for young people in online and offline environments.

As climate change and disasters continue to impact the livelihoods of parents and families, our disaster risk reduction project supported communities to update and implement their action plans to prepare for disasters such as drought and flooding. This included supporting the rehabilitation of water sources and systems, tree planting and promoting climate-smart agriculture.

I wish to acknowledge the dedication and support of Erine Dijkstra, former Country Director of ChildFund Timor-Leste. I also extend a heartfelt thank you to our ever-generous donors and the collaboration of our partners, including national and local civil society organisations, government partners, youth organisations, and community volunteers.

Your continued support is crucial as we strive to make a lasting impact in the lives of the children, youth and communities we serve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alzira Reis'.

ALZIRA REIS
Country Director



6,722

PEOPLE REACHED



7,979

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REACHED



5

IMPLEMENTING
PARTNERS

1

DISASTER RISK
REDUCTION

2

EDUCATION
PROJECTS

1

CHILD
PROTECTION

1

HEALTH
PROJECTS

2

SOCIAL &
EMOTIONAL
LEARNING

OUR

IMPACT



DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Women are planting seeds for change in Timor-Leste

In a rural community, nestled in a remote and mountainous region of Lautem Municipality, Sidonia, a mother of six, is at the forefront of a transformative sustainable farming movement. As part of an initiative led by women, Sidonia is not only cultivating nutritious crops to safeguard her family's health but is also empowering other women in her community to do the same.

"I want to encourage more women to join our farming group and start growing their own food," Sidonia emphasised. "Our land is very fertile, and we should reduce our reliance on imported products that often contain harmful chemicals."

Sidonia's community is particularly vulnerable to climate change and disasters with droughts, earthquakes, flash floods, and storms posing a constant threat to livelihoods.

ChildFund Timor-Leste, in collaboration with partners, is supporting Sidonia and her peers in cultivating nutritious vegetable farms that can withstand the impacts of climate change. We've provided essential training, tools, and resources –including vegetable seeds, water tanks, ladders, and plastic tunnels – enabling women like Sidonia to thrive as farmers. Through this initiative, Sidonia has gained skills in growing a variety of vegetables, including green mustard, cabbage, onions, lettuces, eggplant, and spinach.

Beyond enhancing her family's nutrition, Sidonia's farm has become a vital source of income. The surplus she produces not only meets her family's daily needs but also contributes to educational expenses for her children. *"I primarily plant vegetables for our own consumption, but we sell the excess to earn extra money," she shared. "The yields have been excellent, and we have harvested many times. When we sell our vegetables, even to our neighbours, it supports local commerce."*

As an inspiring leader and passionate farmer, Sidonia is driving sustainable change in her community. She is dedicated to encouraging other women to form collective farming groups and to recognise the benefits of cultivating nutritious food.



“

Women play a crucial role in our families, especially when it comes to preparing food.”

Sidonia

EDUCATION



A Path to a Better Life for Children

Agostinha is a dedicated preschool teacher in rural Timor-Leste, inspiring young minds to reach their full potential. Each morning, before the school bell rings, she meticulously prepares her classroom and lessons.

Preschool provides an opportunity for children aged three to six to establish a strong foundation for life. With four years of experience teaching at her preschool in Liquiça, 30-year-old Agostinha knows all too well the profound impact of early education.

“It can lay the foundation for a child’s future success and how they interact with their friends, family, and community,” she shared.

For many children and young people, education can serve as a pathway out of poverty. Yet, financial constraints, gender inequality, and a lack of resources like sufficient classrooms and learning materials impact children’s access to quality early childhood education.

“We lack many school materials, and the ones we do have are often damaged. The children use them constantly, and over time, books, equipment, and toys become broken.”

After participating in ChildFund’s teacher training program, Agostinha and her colleagues begun implementing innovative ways to teach and motivate their students, even when resources are limited.

“

My wish is that preschools continue to receive support from not-for-profit organisations, including teacher training and better facilities, so we can give children a head start in life.”

Agostinha

“In our training, we were taught how to repurpose local materials for lessons,” she explained. “We’ve used wooden blocks found in the community to teach math.”

Rain, hail, or shine, Agostinha’s dedication to teaching is unwavering. *“I decided to participate in ChildFund’s teacher training program because I wanted to help children in my community have a better future,” she reflected. “I love watching them grow, learn, and discover new skills.”*

Looking ahead, Agostinha dreams of reaching even more children and aspires for early education to become a fundamental aspect of every child’s life in her community.

EDUCATION



1,707

INDIVIDUALS REACHED THROUGH
OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Championing Literacy: Joana's Story

Low literacy rates, teacher shortages and limited access to quality educational resources, particularly in rural areas, are creating barrier to children's education and learning. To combat this, we collaborated with ten primary schools in Manatuto to facilitate community-led reading sessions for primary school students.

Driven by the desire to help children learn to read, Joana became one of 50 volunteers trained by ChildFund to support students struggling with reading. At the training, Joana learnt how to effectively facilitate reading sessions, focusing on reading comprehension and teaching methodologies.

"I want to help children understand and learn what they read. So, when ChildFund needed volunteers, I offered myself so I could learn something and implement it at home too," Joana explained.

Joana's approach is both nurturing and engaging. She uses visual cues, games, and hands-on activities to make learning fun and accessible. From identifying letters to building words with card puzzles, she sparks curiosity and builds confidence in her students.

"My method for assisting struggling readers often involves asking them to locate a specific letter in the text. I might say, 'Can you point out which one is the letter B?' and they will find it."

In the reading sessions, every achievement, big or small, is celebrated helping to build children's confidence and motivation.

"When a child reads a word or sentence independently, I clap for them and say, 'well done, very smart!' to encourage them. It's essential to keep smiles and cheers in our sessions to make them feel less intimidated. Many children become scared without that reassurance," Joana shared.

So far, Joana's efforts are yielding impressive results, *"In the beginning, they struggled considerably, but now they can identify words quickly,"* she said with pride.

“

*it's wonderful to see
their progress.”*

Joana



“

I would like to thank everyone, especially the parents, for all the hard work in rehabilitating the school. This is our community school, and we built it together.”

Paulo da Costa

Community Partnership Rebuilds Soiquili Pre-School

The Soiquili community celebrated the reopening of their Community-Based Pre-School (CBPS) on November 21st 2023, following the destruction of the previous building by heavy rains in 2021. This momentous event was attended by over 50 participants, including 37 students from the CBPS, dedicated volunteer teachers, parents, community members, local authorities, and the Municipal Director of Education.

The re-inauguration marked a significant milestone for the community, made possible through the collaborative efforts of parents, the School Management Committee (SMC), and ChildFund Timor-Leste.

Paulo da Costa, representative of the local Village Chief and member of the SMC, acknowledged the challenges faced by the rural community, including limited access to essential services. He emphasised the importance of community ownership and urged the local government to support the maintenance of the school.

Rui Branco, Municipal Director of Education in Lautem Municipality, expressed his gratitude to all involved in the project. He highlighted the commitment of the Ministry of Education to supporting the CBPS and stressed the importance of continued collaboration between ChildFund, the SMC, and the Ministry of Education to ensure uninterrupted learning for all children.

“Children in this community have the same rights as children in other countries. It is a great privilege to re-inaugurate this pre-school. The Ministry of Education is committed to offering support in whatever ways it can to the CBPS, dependent on its resources and capabilities,” said Rui Branco.

Erine Dijkstra, the former Country Director of ChildFund Timor-Leste, commended the partnership between ChildFund, parents, and the local community. She emphasised the significance of the project and the positive impact it will have on the children’s lives.

“In the absence of government-supported pre-schools, the community came together to rebuild this vital establishment, allowing children to learn once more. Thanks to the commitment of facilitators who have been teaching in the town hall, they can now continue their work in this renovated building. The parents prioritised their children’s education, showcasing what can be achieved when a community collaborates with passion and determination,” added Erine Dijkstra.

The celebration was filled with joy and creativity, featuring children singing, a drawing competition, poem recitations from CBPS students, and a memorable photo session.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING



Youth-led Development: Writing the Future

Deonildo, 28, is on a mission to create change for young people in his village of Lospalos. As an aspiring youth leader, Deonildo recently joined forces with friends to establish a new youth centre in his village. Eager to see the centre grow, he jumped at the opportunity to attend a five-day training course for youth groups run by ChildFund.

“We created this youth centre with the main objective of helping young people, especially those who do not have the opportunity to attend or finish school. I wanted to attend this training because to better develop our youth centre, we needed to learn how to manage it and collaborate with other civil society organisations and local leaders,” he explained.

At the training, Deonildo learnt about proposal writing. This was his favourite topic because he learnt how to seek funding for programs that would address the issues young people in his community face.

“For years, we didn’t know how to write proposals. Whenever we wanted to organise an event, we would ask someone who knew how to write proposals for help. They would only provide us with the final product without teaching us the process. Now, we know how to write our own proposals. I enjoy proposal writing the most because it allows us to seek funds or assistance from agencies to support our communities,” he said.

During the training, he and his team identified various issues faced by young people, including high school dropout rates, alcohol consumption and early pregnancy among young women.

Equipped with the skills to write structured and organised proposals, Deonildo felt empowered to create real change in his community. A few months later, he and his team submitted a proposal to ChildFund Timor-Leste, to support their youth centre’s first training on leadership.

“Community members are aware of our involvement in ChildFund activities, including the training modules on leadership skills. They expressed a desire to enhance their leadership skills, and we are eager to share our skills with them,” he shared.

As first-time proposal writers, he and his team faced numerous challenges, but their hard work paid off when they received a \$500 grant to fund a one-day training for 30 young people on leadership skills.

“

We need to persist in our efforts so that we can contribute further to our nation’s peace and development.”

Deonildo

HEALTH

4,654

INDIVIDUALS REACHED
THROUGH OUR HEALTH
PROGRAM

“

*I've learned so much
about caring for my
baby.”*

Linda

The Impact of Educational Sessions on Maternal and Child Health

In a rural village nestled in Manatuto Municipality, two young mothers, Evalina and Linda, are embracing motherhood with newfound confidence. Evalina, seven months pregnant with her first child, and Linda, with her three-month-old baby, have found invaluable support through ChildFund Timor-Leste's maternal and child health program.

“I've learned so much about caring for my baby,” shared Linda, a seasoned participant in the sessions. *“I have learnt the importance of breastfeeding and seeking timely healthcare.”*

Evalina, a first-time attendee and mother-to-be, was equally eager to learn. *“I want to gain knowledge about healthy living for myself and my child.”* During her first session, a community health volunteer measured her mid upper arm circumference, which indicated Evalina was under-weight.

“They measured my arm and told me to eat more, rest more, and drink lots of water, because my measurement was low. I received some medication and vitamins for my pregnancy, and a mosquito net,” shared Evalina.

Before attending the sessions, both Evalina and Linda's diets consisted mainly of homegrown vegetables. Now, after taking part in community cooking demonstrations at the Mother Support Group, they understand the importance of incorporating a variety of nutritious foods, including rice, chicken, vegetables, moringa and coconut oil into their diet.

“The health volunteers explained the types of healthy food we should eat,” Linda explained. *“We also learned about exclusive breastfeeding and proper hygiene.”*

Linda witnessed the positive impact of incorporating these practices on her baby's health. *“The health volunteers are surprised by how healthy he is,”* she proudly reported.

Despite the progress, challenges remain. Water scarcity requires daily treks to the river, and limited transportation options can hinder access to vital health services, especially during the rainy season. *“We must go to the river to fetch water, which is a 30-minute walk from my house. I usually carry around three to four jerry cans on that trip,”* Evalina explained.

CHILD PROTECTION

Pilaria's Journey to Online Safety with Swipe Safe

Pilaria, a 15-year-old student from Dili, uses the internet daily but like many young people she was not fully aware of online dangers or how to protect herself while online.

She experienced an incident that left her feeling vulnerable. She received inappropriate messages through social media. Reflecting on this, she recalled, *"Someone used a fake social media account and sent me inappropriate messages. I didn't know how to block that person. I turned to my brother for help, asking him to block the fake account."*

Through a Swipe Safe training conducted at her school, she learned how to identify and crosscheck information for credibility and how to avoid online dangers. The training covered the six core concepts of Swipe Safe: Public, Permanent, Connection, Anonymity, Source of Information, and Respect.

After participating in the Swipe Safe training, Pilaria felt a newfound sense of empowerment and control over her online presence.



"The training has had a huge impact on my daily life. Now I have the knowledge to use the internet properly, especially as a student. I need to use social media responsibly. I also now know how to keep my information private, including making my photos private so others can't access them or use them to create fake accounts that could harm me or others," said Pilaria.

She added, *"After the training, one change I made was learning how to block people. Whenever my friends share information online, I always try to cross-check whether it is from a true and reliable source."*

Following the training, she was eager to share what she had learned with her parents and peers, ensuring that her friends were also equipped with the same knowledge to stay safe online.



THANK YOU AND FINANCIALS

Thank you to the following organisations and individuals whose generous support and assistance is vital to the work of ChildFund Timor-Leste:

ChildFund Timor-Leste would also like to thank the Timor-Leste Government for its support.



- Alola Foundation
- Alumni Parlamentu Foinsa'e Timor-Leste (APFTL)
- Ba Futuru
- BELUN
- FRATERNA
- Institute for the Defence of the Rights of the Child (INDDICA)

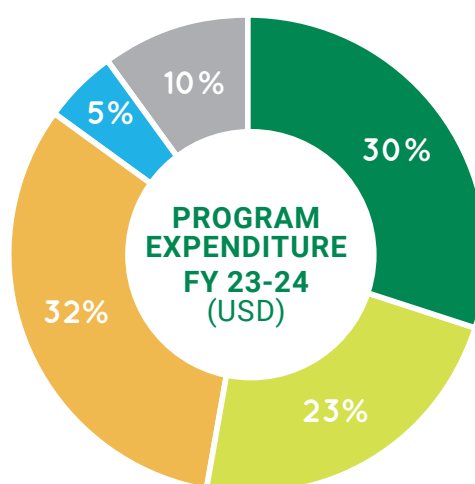
- INFORDEPE (Natl Training Institute for Teachers and Educ Prof Timor-Leste)
- Ministry of Education, Timor-Leste
- Ministry of Health, Timor-Leste
- Ministry of Youth, Sport, Art and Culture, Timor-Leste
- National Institute of Public Health of Timor-Leste
- Plan International Timor-Leste

FINANCIAL REPORT

FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

REVENUE	FY 22-23 (USD)	FY 23-24 (USD)
Donations	281,402	254,041
Grants	1,120,119	1,129,049
Other Income	21,847	0
Total Income	1,423,368	1,383,090

REVENUE	FY 22-23 (USD)	FY 23-24 (USD)
Programs and Projects	1,198,716	1,300,373
Program Support	46,291	13,517
Accountability and Administration	244,815	260,354
Total Expenditure	1,489,822	1,574,244



- Education
- Health
- Social Emotional Learning
- Disaster Ready
- Child Protection

ChildFund Timor-Leste is the representative office of ChildFund Australia – an independent international development organisation that works to reduce poverty for children in developing communities. ChildFund Australia is a member of the ChildFund Alliance – a global network of 11 organisations that assists almost 36 million children and families in 70 countries.

ChildFund Australia is a registered charity, a member of the Australian Council for International Development, and fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which manages the Australian Government's overseas aid program.

ChildFund began work in Timor-Leste in 1990, originally under the management of ChildFund International. Since October 2017 it has operated as an office of ChildFund Australia and works in partnership to create community and systems change which enables vulnerable children and young people, in all their diversity, to assert and realise their rights.

ChildFund Timor-Leste is working with rural communities to build a new, stable, and prosperous future for what is one of the world's youngest nations.

ChildFund Timor-Leste

Street address: No.6 Rua do Loriku Colmera, Dili, Timor Leste
Postal address: P.O Box 222, Dili, Timor-Leste
Phone: +670 332 3828

ChildFund Australia

Address: Level 8, 162 Goulburn St, Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: 1800 023 600
Email: info@childfund.org.au
Website: www.childfund.org.au

Author: Fidel da Conceicao Guterres

Editor: Milly Atkinson Handley

Graphic Designer: Minnie Milan

Photography: ChildFund Timor-Leste staff

**BECAUSE
EVERY CHILD
NEEDS A
CHILDHOOD**

www.childfund.org.au

