



WALKING WITH TIMOR-LESTE ON THE LONG ROAD TO PEACE AND PROSPERITY

HOW GLOBAL GOALS AND A PARTNERSHIP WITH
AUSTRALIA ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

September 2015



OXFAM



As the world looks back over the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and leaders ready themselves to gather at the United Nations headquarters in New York to pledge support for the new global goals, Oxfam examines the partnership between Australia and Timor-Leste. Global goals have helped to shape this partnership and the new sustainable development agenda offers a sound framework for Australia and Timor-Leste to keep making positive change, together.

2015: YEAR OF GLOBAL GOALS

In 2000, member countries of the United Nations (UN) set the target of halving global poverty by 2015. To achieve this, they established eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹ and set targets to achieve each one.

The MDGs aimed to galvanise global efforts to address poverty by 2015 as the world entered a new century and a new millennium. Taking stock in 2015, there is much we can all be proud of:

- The number of people living in extreme poverty (living on less than US \$1.25 per day) has more than halved since 1990, with the majority of the progress occurring since 2000.
- The under-five mortality rate has decreased by more than half and the rate of mothers who survive childbirth has almost doubled in the same period, with progress accelerating after 2000.
- The percentage of children enrolled in primary school has reached 91%, up from 83% in 2000.
- The number of people who have access to piped drinking water has almost doubled in the 1990–2015 period, with progress accelerating after 2000.²

Given all this, it is no surprise that the UN has said “the MDGs have saved the lives of millions and improved conditions for many more,”³ and has called them “the most successful anti-poverty movement in history”.⁴

As 2015 comes to a close, world leaders are being called on to support a new set of global goals. Developed over years of consultation between the UN, governments, business, civil society, institutions, academics and individuals, the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁵ set out a contemporary agenda to further human development and safeguard the planet by 2030. These new goals aim to finish the unfinished business of the MDGs by eradicating extreme poverty globally by 2030. They are ambitious, covering more ground than the MDGs and calling for action on some of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, including rising inequality and dangerous climate change.

The SDGs will be adopted at the United Nations headquarters in New York at a special summit from 25 to 27 September, with heads of state from around the globe pledging their support.

AUSTRALIA AND TIMOR-LESTE TO 2015

It wasn't until two years after the MDGs were created that East Timor became the independent nation of Timor-Leste. This young nation sits just 650 km north of Darwin. It has a population of around 1.2 million and currently ranks 128th out of the 187 countries on the UN's Human Development Index — in comparison, Australia ranks second.⁶

Following decades of occupation, a 1999 vote on the future of East Timor showed that 78% of people wanted independence from Indonesia. But what arrived first was violence. At the time of Indonesia's withdrawal, 70% of the country's infrastructure had been destroyed, 95% of schools had been damaged and the entire existing electrical grid had been demolished.⁷

Australia entered East Timor as the head of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) peacekeeping taskforce in September 1999. Together with the people of East Timor, the transitional United Nations administration and global partners including New Zealand, the Australian Government worked on vital emergency response, recovery programs and support for the new government to progress towards the declaration of full independence for Timor-Leste in 2002.

And in 2000, when then Australian Prime Minister John Howard stepped to the podium in New York to sign on to the new UN Millennium Declaration, Australia's role in East Timor was front and centre in his mind. After speaking about the value we place as a nation on fairness for all, he called on all states to help Timor-Leste on its long journey to peace and prosperity:

"In Australia, it is said that all men and women, and by extension all nations, are entitled to a 'fair go'. For Australians, those two short words carry within them the universal right to freedom, for the peaceful pursuit of prosperity and for the attainment of self reliance and self respect.

... And in claiming our rights as a sovereign nation, we freely acknowledge the contribution we must make to others. We know that for nations, as with individuals, no rights come without responsibility, no prosperity comes without price.

... The road to true peace and prosperity for East Timor will be long and it will be hard ... Your continuing support will be vital if East Timor is to complete the journey begun by the UN a year ago towards true independence and autonomy for the East Timorese people."⁸

— Former PM John Howard, UN Millennium Summit, 2000

In many ways, the road so far has been long and hard. Progress towards peace and prosperity was interrupted by violence and upheaval in the new nation between 2006 and 2008 when some gains against poverty were lost. However, Timor-Leste has enjoyed relative stability since this time and much ground has been made in improving people's lives. Timor-Leste has implemented social safety nets for poor and vulnerable people and achieved strong economic growth since 2007.⁹ The nation aligned its national development program to the MDGs from 2002 onwards and has made significant progress towards achieving the goals, including in increasing primary school attendance and reducing infant mortality rates.¹⁰

Much more remains to be done to tackle poverty in Timor-Leste, but there has been tangible progress. In part, this is

due to the nation's partnership with Australia. The partnership between Australia and Timor-Leste extends from official development assistance (aid), through to the work of civil society and non-government organisations (NGOs), to academics, the private sector and to the people themselves. The Australian public continue to show their support for sustainable development in Timor-Leste, with community and local council groups all over Australia supporting friendship relationships and school partnerships, as well as providing support for local organisations and governments, and donating to the work of organisations like Oxfam.

Helping to achieve progress towards the MDGs

In 2009, Australia agreed to align its aid and development support to help Timor-Leste achieve the MDGs.¹¹ A brief examination of Australia's national support to Timor-Leste through development assistance since this time shows that it has helped significantly along the road to progress. However, a number of challenges still remain.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2000–2015



MDG GOAL 1

COMBATING POVERTY AND HUNGER

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- More than 80% of the Timorese population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods,¹² farming to feed themselves and to survive. Australian Aid will have reached more than 65,000 farming households across Timor-Leste with strong new seed and crop varieties by the end of 2016.¹³

TIMOR-LESTE'S RESULTS

- While the rate of extreme poverty increased between 2000 and 2007, it is now decreasing.
- In 2001, about 46% of children under five were underweight. In 2013, this figure had fallen to 37.7%, with the fastest progress occurring after 2009.¹⁴

MDG GOAL 2

ACCESS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- Australian support has built and rehabilitated more than 770 schools and classrooms since 2009.
- Australia has helped to train more than 5,000 teachers, helped more than 14,000 students to enrol in school and provided more than 120 schools with child-friendly learning materials.¹⁵

TIMOR-LESTE'S RESULTS

- Primary school enrolment increased significantly between 2007 and 2011, from 65.6% to 97.1%.¹⁶
- There have been strong gains in the number of children who reach the 5th grade, up from 47% in 2001 to 66% in 2007.¹⁷
- Youth literacy has also increased significantly, from only 50% literacy for young adults between 15 and 24 years of age in 2001 to 85.1% in 2007.¹⁸

MDG GOAL 3

GENDER EQUALITY

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- As well as targeting women and girls across all areas of investment in Timor-Leste, Australia helped to establish the Timorese Parliament's Gender Resource Centre to support female members of parliament and to encourage gender-sensitive law-making.
- Australia supported Timor-Leste to pass its national *Law Against Domestic Violence* in 2010.
- The Australian Federal Police has helped the National Police of Timor-Leste to respond to cases of gender-based violence by providing training and resource materials.¹⁹

TIMOR-LESTE'S RESULTS

- Timor-Leste has achieved strong female representation across its parliament, currently at 38.5%. This is the 15th highest proportion of female parliamentarians worldwide (Australia sits at 26.7%, the 44th highest female representation).²⁰ However, there remains a lack of female representation at local levels of decision-making.²¹
- Timor-Leste has achieved its MDG targets for gender equality in secondary education, however, in primary school there are still slightly more boys than girls (although this is improving).²²
- More than half the male population still believes violence against women is acceptable, however, there is evidence of changing attitudes in areas such as how household decisions are made.²³



MDG GOAL 4-6

IMPROVING CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH AND COMBATING DISEASE

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- Since 2009, Australian-supported rural mobile health clinics have reached more than 900,000 people, mostly women and children.
- Australia has trained more than 100 ambulance drivers and more than 250 midwives, nurses and doctors.
- Australia trained Timor-Leste's first nurse anaesthetists who have now been stationed in remote and rural areas and can perform basic procedures as well as emergency caesarean sections.
- Australia has helped to provide essential family planning services to more than 240,000 people, including providing advice about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- A measles outbreak in 2011 demonstrated that immunisation coverage was inadequate. Australia responded quickly, together with the Timorese Ministry of Health and UNICEF, ensuring 85% of all Timorese children aged between 6 months and 14 years were vaccinated.²⁴

TIMOR-LESTE'S RESULTS

- The under-five mortality and infant mortality rates have both reduced significantly and Timor-Leste has achieved its MDG targets in this area.²⁵
- Immunisation rates against measles increased significantly, rising from only 39% in 2001 to 69.4% in 2013.²⁶
- Maternal mortality has fallen significantly, but it is still alarmingly high at 557 deaths out of every 100,000 births. Mothers are getting more care, with 86% of women seeing a skilled healthcare provider before labour.²⁷ However, only three in every ten pregnant women will have a trained birth attendant with them during labour.²⁸
- Use of contraception is steadily increasing, with a sharp increase from only 8% in 2001 to 27% in 2013.²⁹
- The percentage of the youth population that has correct knowledge of HIV and AIDs has also increased sharply, from only 3% in 2001 to around 40% in 2012. This is strong progress, but not enough to reach the target of 80% having correct knowledge of the disease by the end of 2015.³⁰

MDG GOAL 7

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- A key target in this goal was to increase the proportion of people with access to clean drinking water and sanitation.
- Australia invested strongly in this area, helping Timor-Leste to reach more than 580,000 people since 2009 with a mix of access to improved water and sanitation, as well as knowledge of healthy hygiene practices.³¹

TIMOR-LESTE'S RESULTS

- While the proportion of the population with access to clean water has been steadily increasing (rising from under 50% in 2001 to around 68% in 2012), Timor-Leste is unlikely to reach its goal of 78% of people with access to clean water by the end of 2015.³²

MDG GOAL 8

PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

- Australia has had a strong presence in Timor-Leste both through peacekeeping and aid and development since 1999. It has consistently been among Timor-Leste's largest aid and development partners. Australian aid to Timor-Leste increased steadily from 2002 to 2013, however, recent cuts to overall Australian aid levels have seen its contribution fall by around 24%.³³
- In 2013, Australia and Timor-Leste became one of the only partnerships worldwide to pilot support for the groundbreaking *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*, which enables Timor-Leste to drive priorities for development and recognises that peace-building and state-building are the necessary foundations for development.³⁴

TIMOR-LESTE'S RESULTS

- The broadly stable flows of official development assistance (aid) by partners including Australia has shown the commitment of the international community to helping Timor-Leste flourish.³⁵ However, in the context of the post-global financial crisis, Timor-Leste is calling on wealthier nations (including Australia) to ensure their commitments to increase aid to the least developed countries and to small island developing states — both groups to which Timor-Leste belongs — are fulfilled.³⁶
- Timor-Leste has taken steps to coordinate and manage aid flows coming in to the country, establishing an Aid Effectiveness Unit in its Ministry of Finance, as well as a Development Policy Coordination Mechanism in 2013.
- Timor-Leste has taken on a leadership role in international affairs and global development policy, working with the Group of 7+ (g7+), a group of conflict-affected and fragile states, to broker new global agreements on development partnerships, including the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*.

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A PROMISING NEW FRAMEWORK TO CHALLENGE POVERTY

Timor-Leste hasn't reached all of the goals and targets set under the MDGs. But there have been some great strides forward. It's been globally acknowledged that recovery and stable development can take 20 to 40 years for a nation coming out of a conflict such as Timor-Leste has experienced.³⁷ National development, particularly in the stable period from 2009–2015, indicates that Timor-Leste is ahead of this trend. The partnership with Australia, while not always smooth, has played a strong role in achieving these positive outcomes.

By examining Timor-Leste's progress against the MDGs, two things become clear: firstly, there is much that still needs to be done in each of the MDG areas; and secondly, in 2015 there are new and clearer global challenges that the MDGs simply didn't cover. The new Sustainable Development Goals offer a chance to keep making progress where it is needed and to tackle poverty in new ways.

Peace and justice

Summarising the progress Timor-Leste made to 2015, former Timorese Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão highlighted the worthiness of the MDGs. But he has also noted "peace must precede development" and "[the MDGs] cannot be achieved by nations that are riddled with conflict and insecurity".³⁸ Few conflict-affected and fragile states have achieved strong progress against the MDGs across the board, and in consultations with the Timorese population, peace and security has been highlighted as a top priority.³⁹ This experience led Timor-Leste to drive a new agenda in the global negotiations on the new Sustainable Development Goals: the importance of peace, security and good governance.⁴⁰

Timor-Leste worked with others towards an agreement that peace, security and good governance must feature as a stand-alone issue in the SDGs. This has been achieved by its work with the g7+ and through the leadership of former Timorese Minister for Finance Emilia Pires, as a representative on the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel advising on the post-2015 development agenda. This idea might seem obvious — for human progress there must be peace and security — however, the proposed new goal did face opposition.⁴¹ The agreed goal on peaceful and inclusive societies focuses on the importance of transparent and accountable institutions and the rule of law.⁴² It is an important signpost about the building blocks for peace in a world that is now facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in history in Syria — fuelled by violence and conflict.⁴³

Tackling inequality

The SDGs offer other opportunities to catalyse change in Timor-Leste. Even though Timor-Leste has been experiencing strong growth, a high proportion of its people are still living in extreme poverty, so the new focus on inclusive growth in the SDGs is positive. The goal on reducing inequality in the SDGs gives Timor-Leste the opportunity to focus on this issue, tracking the benefits that flow to the poorest 40% of the population in their growing economy. Similarly, the SDGs encourage positive action by the private sector to tackle poverty — something that was missing in the MDGs. By developing an effective, responsible private sector that respects human rights, pays fair levels of tax to add to government revenues and stimulates inclusive growth, Timor-Leste can make even further inroads into tackling poverty and inequality.

Addressing climate change

Timor-Leste is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and as climate volatility intensifies this could have serious consequences for existing poverty levels and food insecurity. Recent Oxfam-supported research⁴⁴ found that while many communities across Timor-Leste recognise that climate change is an issue, few are aware of actions they can take to adapt and mitigate the impacts. The SDGs recognise and call for urgent action on climate change, including strengthening resilience and adaptation measures, and calling on measures to be adopted at national and local levels on climate impacts.

Highlighting new challenges such as economic inequality, peace-building in fragile states and climate change does not ensure Timor-Leste will solve these problems by 2030. However, the experience of the MDGs shows that focusing on ambitious goals and publicly measuring progress towards each one can achieve positive change. The SDGs offer a renewed pathway for nations to move out of poverty, and an opportunity for partners like Australia to support their neighbours further on this journey.

LEARN MORE

Want to learn more about Oxfam's work on the Sustainable Development Goals?

Visit www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/aid-and-development, or Contact Joy Kyriacou, Finance for Development Advocacy Manager at Oxfam Australia:

Email: joykyriacou@oxfam.org.au

Phone: (02) 8204 3942.

SDG GLOBAL GOALS 2015–2030



ENDNOTES

1. United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, 8 September 2000, <<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>>.
2. United Nations, The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, July 2015, pp.4–7, <<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>>.
3. United Nations, op. cit., p. 4.
4. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Press Release, 6 July 2015, <<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/07/06/mdg-s-produced-most-successful-anti-poverty-movement-in-history-un-report.html>>.
5. United Nations, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, text for adoption by UN Member States, <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891Transforming%20Our%20World.pdf>>.
6. UNDP Human Development Index 2014, <<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/events/2014/july/HDR2014.html>>.
7. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Millennium Development Goals 2010, Where are we now? Where do we want to be in 2015?, 2010.
8. The Hon. John Howard MP, Prime Minister of Australia, Millennium Summit Address, UN Headquarters, New York, 6 September 2000, <<http://pmtranscripts.dpmc.gov.au/browse.php?did=11722>>.
9. UNDP, The MDGs in Timor-Leste, accessed 6 August 2015, <http://www.tl.undp.org/content/timor_leste/en/home/mdgoverview/>.
10. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, <<https://www.mof.gov.tl/about-the-ministry/statistics-indicators/millennium-development-goals-indicators/>>.
11. Australian Government, AusAID, Australia – Timor-Leste Country Strategy 2009–2014, 2009.
12. UNDP, The MDGs in Timor-Leste, op. cit.
13. Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Aid Program Performance Report 2013–14 Timor-Leste, September 2014.
14. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, Timor-Leste, The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, 2014.
15. Data drawn from Aid Program Performance Reports for Timor-Leste, from 2009–10 to 2013–14 (latest available), <<http://dfat.gov.au/geo/timor-leste/development-assistance/Pages/development-assistance-in-timor-leste.aspx>>.
16. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
17. UNDP, The MDGs in Timor-Leste, op. cit.
18. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
19. Data drawn from Aid Program Performance Reports, op. cit.
20. International Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments, accessed 23 August 2015, online ranking available at <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>>.
21. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
22. *ibid.*
23. *ibid.*
24. Data drawn from Aid Program Performance Reports, op. cit.
25. UNDP, The MDGs in Timor-Leste, op. cit.
26. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
27. UNDP, The MDGs in Timor-Leste, op. cit.
28. *ibid.*
29. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
30. UNDP, The MDGs in Timor-Leste, op. cit.; and Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
31. Data drawn from Aid Program Performance Reports, op. cit.
32. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
33. A calculation of 24% is the result of averaging the 2014–15 and 2015–16 budget allocations for Australian Overseas Development Assistance to Timor-Leste, and calculating the percentage reduction based on the 2013–14 allocation of \$125.7 million. Data drawn from Australian Government Official Development Assistance Budget Statements, 2001–02 to 2015–16, <<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/corporate/portfolio-budget-statements/Pages/budget-highlights-2015-16.aspx>>.
34. Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Aid Program Performance Report 2013–14 Timor-Leste, September 2014; and further information on the New Deal available at <<http://www.g7plus.org/new-deal-document/>>.
35. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
36. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Millennium Development Goals 2010, Where are we now? Where do we want to be in 2015?, 2010.
37. A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, Agreed at the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, 29 November to 1 December 2011, Busan, Korea, <<http://www.g7plus.org/new-deal-document/>>.
38. Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão in Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
39. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Finance and the United Nations, Summary Report, Consultation on the Post 2015-MDG in Timor-Leste, 2013.
40. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Department of Finance, op. cit.
41. L R Pereira, What's Peace Got To Do With It? Advocating Peace in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung "Dialogue on Globalization" series, September 2014.
42. United Nations, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, text for adoption by UN Member States. <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891Transforming%20Our%20World.pdf>>.
43. António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in UNCHR statement: UNHCR warns of bleaker future for refugees as Syrian conflict enters 5th year, 12 March 2015, accessed 24 August 2015, <<http://www.unhcr.org/55016fff6.html>>.
44. Publication 2013, Haburas Foundation, Dili; Editor: Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho



Image left: Natercia Sequeira De Deus, 22yrs, Lepo village. Natercia is part of the community group that has identified and mapped out areas in the community at risk due to changes in climate. The community has experienced heavy rains that cause landslides as well as long drought. They have drawn up a plan to help prevent future impacts on their livelihoods, including tree planting to prevent landslides and growing alternative crops to supplement regular crops that might be damaged by changes in weather. The new SDGs call for strong action on climate change at every level. Photo: Timothy Herber/OxfamAUS.



OXFAM