



# Timor Leste Universal Health Coverage

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# Timor-Leste

- The youngest nations in Southeast Asia, has made significant strides toward achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), although the country still faces numerous challenges.
- The experience of Timor-Leste in promoting UHC and preparing to address these challenges involves a mix of policy development, international support, and community-based efforts

# Government Commitment to UHC

- The government of Timor-Leste has shown strong commitment to the principles of UHC, emphasizing the need for health services that are accessible, affordable, and of high quality for all citizens.
- UHC is viewed as a critical goal for the country, which is still recovering from a history of conflict and instability.
- Timor-Leste's Constitution protects the right to health (article 57), and this has been the foundation of various health reforms.
- The government has also adopted the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) with the aim of achieving UHC by improving the quality of health services and ensuring that they reach all parts of the population.

# Key Achievements in Health System Strengthening

Despite facing considerable challenges, several achievements have been made in health system strengthening, including:

- **Expansion of Health Infrastructure:** The government has invested in building and upgrading health facilities, particularly in rural and remote areas. As of recent years, nearly every district in the country has at least one public health center, and efforts have been made to ensure that even the most remote communities have access to basic health services.
- **Improved Health Coverage:** The Timorese government, with support from international partners, has made significant progress in expanding health insurance coverage. The introduction of the Community Health Insurance Scheme (also known as the Saúde 2020 program) aims to reduce financial barriers to accessing health care, especially for vulnerable populations
- **Maternal and Child Health:** Timor-Leste has made strides in improving maternal and child health outcomes. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, there have been improvements in the number of skilled birth attendants and prenatal care, resulting in reduced maternal mortality rates. The country has also made progress in immunization campaigns.
- **Health Workforce Development:** The government has worked on increasing the number of trained health professionals, particularly doctors, nurses, and community health workers. Partnerships with countries like Australia , China and Cuba have been essential in training and capacity building.

# Enhancing Critical Care in Timor-Leste



- ❑ HDU establishments at 5 districts referral Hospitals
- ❑ Human Capacity Building Training
- ❑ Microbiology labs establishments

# TIMOR-LESTE TAKES TB DIAGNOSTICS CLOSER TO PATIENTS WITH MOBILE VAN AND PORTABLE X-RAYS



- ❑ portable, AI-enabled X-ray machines and glucometers for bidirectional TB-diabetes screening.
- ❑ By enhancing TB diagnostics and accessibility, Timor-Leste is making significant strides in its fight against TB.



# Improving Women's Health Through a Cervical Cancer Screening Facility



- Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA), a simple naked-eye examination of the cervix conducted by a her within a few minutes, was negative for any precancerous lesions or cancer.

# TIMOR-LESTE COMBINES COVID-19 AND ROUTINE VACCINATION EFFORTS TO OVERCOME PANDEMIC DISRUPTIONS



- In Timor-Leste, integrating COVID-19 vaccination with routine immunization has been a crucial strategy to address pandemic-related disruptions.
- Supported by Australian DFAT and aided by WHO and other
- partners, dedicated health workers are conducting outreach activities and
- door-to-door visits.
- They ensure that children under 5 years receive routine
- immunizations, while high risk individuals above 12 years are vaccinated against COVID-19.
- This two-pronged approach optimizes resources and expands the coverage of both COVID-19 vaccination and routine immunization in the country.



# Improving quality of life of lymphatic filariasis patients through follow-up



- Eighty-one-year-old Fernando Ximenes, a lymphatic filariasis (LF) patient, went about his daily chores without sensing any pain. (was diagnosed with LF when he was 39-year-old)
- In the last week of October, the farmer based in Viqueque district of Timor-Leste, had a visit from a health team following up
- known LF patients for Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP)
- The WHO country office in Timor-Leste has been providing the required technical support to the Ministry of Health to strengthen
- their measures to eliminate LF as well as all other NTDs in the country

# COMBATING NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS) IN TIMOR-LESTE



Key efforts include

- establishing tobacco cessation centers, & implementing pro-health taxes on tobacco products,
- These interventions have reduced
- tobacco use, improved early detection & management of NCDs, & protected public health.
- Tobacco cessation centers for provision of counseling and prescription of nicotine replacement therapies which have successfully helped thousands of individuals quit smoking.
- Increased tobacco taxes have made tobacco products less affordable, contributing to reduced smoking rates.

- Establishment and provision of free open air gymnasiums which are accessible for regular exercise to promote physical activity and combat NCDs in



- introducing the Package of Essential Noncommunicable Diseases (PEN) in primary care settings. Another important initiative is the implementation of PEN in primary care settings



- PEN offers cost-effective interventions for early detection, management, & prevention of
- NCDs, which account for 45% of deaths in Timor-Leste.

# Challenges to UHC in Timor-Leste

*Timor-Leste's path to achieving UHC is not without its challenges:*

- **Geographical Barriers:**

Timor-Leste is an archipelago with rugged terrain, making access to healthcare services especially difficult in rural and remote areas. Many communities are geographically isolated, and the lack of transportation infrastructure often hinders people from reaching health facilities.

- **Financial Constraints**

Despite substantial support from international donors, Timor-Leste remains a low-income country, and the government faces financial constraints in funding its health programs. There are also concerns about the sustainability of health financing as the country continues to develop its oil and gas sector, which has been a significant source of revenue.

- **Human Resources for Health:**

While there has been an increase in the number of health professionals, there is still a shortage of skilled workers, particularly in specialized fields. The migration of health professionals to other countries in search of better opportunities is also a concern.

- **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):**

Like many other countries in the region, Timor-Leste is seeing an increase in the burden of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. The health system is primarily focused on maternal and child health, communicable diseases, and emergency care, and may need to shift focus to adequately address the growing challenge of NCDs.

- **Cultural and Social Barriers:**

In some areas, traditional beliefs and practices may impede people's willingness to seek modern medical care. Public health education and outreach programs are crucial in overcoming these barriers and ensuring that the population is aware of the benefits of utilizing the health system.

# Preparedness and Measures to Address Challenges

In response to these challenges, the government and its partners have taken several measures to prepare for the future and improve the health system's resilience:

- **Strengthening Primary Health Care (PHC):** A strong focus has been placed on strengthening PHC, which is seen as the cornerstone of achieving UHC. This involves not just providing essential services but also creating a system that is capable of delivering comprehensive care in communities.
- **Health Financing:** The government is working to improve health financing mechanisms, including the expansion of insurance schemes and developing innovative financing models. The aim is to ensure that no one is excluded from necessary health services due to financial barriers.
- **Leveraging Technology:** There has been an increasing focus on using technology to improve health service delivery, such as the use of electronic health records (EHRs), mobile health (mHealth) solutions, and telemedicine, especially in remote areas. These tools can help overcome some of the geographical and logistical challenges.
- **International Collaboration:** Timor-Leste has partnered with various international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to receive technical assistance, financial support, and capacity-building for health system improvements.
- **Health Education and Public Awareness:** The government, in collaboration with community organizations, has been investing in health education programs to address cultural beliefs, promote healthy lifestyles, and encourage the use of health services. These efforts aim to increase demand for services, especially preventive care.

# Future Directions for UHC in Timor-Leste

As Timor-Leste moves forward with the goal of achieving UHC, several key areas will require ongoing attention:

- **Investing in Health Workforce Development:**

Timor-Leste needs to continue its efforts to expand and retain its health workforce. This includes increasing training opportunities for local health professionals and creating incentives to retain talent within the country.

- **Strengthening Governance and Accountability**

Effective governance and accountability in the health sector will be essential to ensure that UHC policies are implemented efficiently and that resources are used appropriately.

- **Integration of UHC into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Timor-Leste must continue to align its health policies with the broader SDG agenda, particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), to ensure that UHC is pursued in an equitable and sustainable way.

- **Adapting to Emerging Health Threats**

As Timor-Leste faces an evolving landscape of health challenges—ranging from the increasing prevalence of NCDs to the potential threat of future pandemics—it must be prepared to adapt its health system to meet emerging health threats and continue to improve access and quality of care.



# Conclusion

- Timor-Leste's journey toward achieving Universal Health Coverage reflects a combination of government commitment, international partnerships, and ongoing efforts to overcome significant challenges.
- While there are many hurdles to achieving UHC in the country, the progress made so far demonstrates the potential for success.
- With continued investments in health systems, infrastructure, and workforce development, Timor-Leste can achieve its goal of providing accessible and quality health services to all its citizens.

Thank You!!