

Achieving an Equal Future 2021

International Women’s Day (IWD) is celebrated globally on 8 March every year. In 2021, with the theme of “*Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world*,” IWD celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls across the globe and in Timor-Leste in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The IWD 2021’s theme is aligned with the priority theme of the [65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW65\)](#), “*Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*,” and the flagship [Generation Equality campaign](#), which calls for women’s right to decision-making in all areas of life, equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end all forms of violence against women and girls, and health-care services that respond to their needs.

Part of the IWD celebration, in Timor-Leste the State Secretary for Equality and Inclusion organized a one-hour television talk show inviting all women candidates (4 from three municipalities including: Dili, Ainaro and Ermera) for the positions in the Municipal Authorities to promote equal participation of women and men in leadership and decision-making areas. UN Women provided technical support in developing the talk show questions and designed the social media campaign promoting these women candidates’ leadership and showcasing discourse around women’s potential in the decision-making arena. Let’s hear what these leaders have to say:



"Our law says that women are entitled to participate in leadership level and can compete for decision-making positions, as we can see in article 16 and 17. Despite this, regionally, there is still small percentage of women in leadership level and this is what motivates me to compete. Women should know they are able to do anything!"

Ivete de Fatima Sarmento
Candidate for President of Authority for Dili Municipality



"Competing with our fellow men does not bring down my spirit but rather motivates to compete. I compete because I want progress and contribute to the development of our country and also Ainaro municipality"

Aguida Judit Mendonca
Candidate for Administrator of Ainaro Municipality



"To compete in the leadership position is an invitation to me to show that a women from Ermera has the ability and competence. I have experience as a leader for many years, and with this skill I am able to compete at any level"

Odete Barros Florinda
Candidate for President of Authority for Ermera Municipality



"When we look at leaders, it is mostly male-dominated. Women are key to the development of our country and this is what motivates me to compete in the leadership level. Women are capable to achieve anything, we need to be entrusted by the society"

Guilhermina Ribeiro
Candidate for President of Authority for Dili Municipality





Together for Equality: Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence in Timor-Leste to enhance efforts for all women and girls in Timor-Leste to enjoy their right to live free from gender-based violence, and access quality essential services.

Highlighting Women’s Contribution to COVID-19 Response and Recovery



"COVID-19 disrupts harmony within the family as it tends to invoke violence within households during the lockdown period. My duty is to calm down the situation through providing nutritious food, increase women's income and disseminate information on COVID-19 and violence prevention during this period.

Ramilla Fatima da Costa
 Director of MANEO



"COVID-19 really limited people's activities which resulted in many losing their jobs and the decrease of salary which might possibly increase domestic violence and gender-based violence. My role is to continue to share messages through legal education to students and communities so that they can prevent violence from happening and continue to disseminate information on COVID-19 prevention".

Leticia Assis
 Intern at ALFELA (UNDP Programa Internship)



"Our work is to support women and girls who are survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and gender-based violence. We ensure that the survivors can have improved access to justice. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we share information with the community on preventing the virus, and using our masks and hand sanitizers to keep the virus from spreading".

Teresa Ligia Martins
 Intern at ALFELA (UNDP Internship Program)



"During COVID-19, women and girls are affected the most. As a leader of a women's organization in Baucau, I work with national NGOs and international agencies to provide support to meet basic needs of the community. In my work, radio has been an essential medium to disseminate key information to the community to minimize the spread of COVID-19".



Regina de Sousa
 Chief of Department of Civil Society Relationship Support from Municipal Authority Baucau



"As we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, I want to recognise and congratulate women's contribution in the development of our nation! We have to realize that women and men need to work together for Timor-Leste's progressive development as a nation. For that to happen we must also stop the violence against women.."

Andreas A. Roy N. de Apolongi
 Medic at MDS and currently Coordinator at quarantine facilities combating COVID-19



WHY GENDER AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES MATTER IN TIMOR-LESTE'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The majority of people left out from the COVID-19 responses are rural and young women, people with disabilities and LGBTI persons. Why are these groups often left behind?



Esmenia Laura Ximenes, the Executive Director for Timor-Leste Young Women's Group (GFFTL). Photo: UN Women_Helio Miguel

“The socio-economic support didn’t equally benefit everyone. Many widows, people with disabilities, abandoned women, vendors and LGBTI persons are excluded from the beneficiary list, even though these people are independent or might be abandoned by their family and community,” said Esmenia Laura Ximenes, the Executive Director for Timor-Leste Young Women’s Group (GFFTL). Esmenia is part of a team of 14 women’s organizations who conducted research led by the umbrella women’s network Rede Feto to monitor the reach of the Government’s socio-economic cash transfer support to women from marginalized groups. She interviewed over 100 people from 3 administrative posts in Liquiça (of Timor-Leste’s 65).

Between August and October 2020, 13 Rede Feto organization members and partner organization Arcoiris came together and led qualitative research measuring the Government’s socio-economic support in 12 municipalities and the Special Administrative Region of Oe-cusse Ambeno. The research was part of the UN in Timor-Leste’s support to the Government’s COVID-19 response, facilitated through UN Women with funding from the UN Secretary General’s COVID-19 Fund.

A total of 1,418 women from diverse groups with high-risk to vulnerability were interviewed, including 26 focus group discussions with 325 women, 93 male authorities from villages, administrative posts and municipal levels. As COVID-19 and the extended state of emergency created situations of difficulty for individuals already facing barriers to meeting their basic needs, respondents shared mixed emotions of fear, anger, sadness as well as gratitude on their experience with the Government’s response. Many people were fortunate to receive the cash transfer, with 96% of those interviewed receiving the cash transfer either directly or indirectly (where another family member received the cash for the household).

At the same time, the findings from the research also highlighted that around 40% of the sample consisted of women with multiple disadvantages and higher likelihood of not being able to access or receive the cash transfer. Esmenia hopes the findings can support future recovery efforts to build equal opportunities for people to access their rights, regardless of their gender or ability.

As an advocate for gender equality and inclusion, Esmenia shared her recommendations to the government. “The Ministry of State Administration must develop a definition for the family and household, and the Ministry of Social and Solidarity and Inclusion also must consider engaging civil society organizations who work with women, people with disabilities and the LGBTI community in designing the response program to ensure no one is left behind.”

During the research, the team encountered an unmarried 50-year-old woman from Bobonaro with a physical disability who only learned about the support when she saw and heard neighbours coming back home and talking about the subsidy they received. “I was never aware of the support, and I’m not entitle to have ‘ficha familia’ (family card) because I’m single. I can’t help myself to go out to seek information. Only if there is support made available to us, then I would have received the subsidy.”

According to Esmenia, while the advantage from the socio-economic support is to ensure that households can sustain their basic needs during the pandemic, one of the biggest gaps was that the [read more here](#)



65th Commission on the Status of Women

The sixty-fifth session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) took place from 15 to 26 March 2021, under the theme “*Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*”.

The CSW is instrumental in promoting women’s rights, documenting the reality of women’s lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

During the Commission’s annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+25), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Part of the effort to efforts to raise intergenerational voice on women’s meaningful participation and decision-making roles in all aspects of society, UN Women Timor-Leste invited 3 of their National Youth Generation Equality activists who participated to share their views on the matter.



“Our Government supports fundamental principles such as Gender Equality. This is why it’s important to give platforms to women to lead, so they are able to promote their right”

Cipriano da Costa Pereira
Timor-Leste Generation Equality Activist



“It is in women’s nature to be organized, detailed-oriented and open for change. These characteristics will bring success if they lead.”

Ana da Costa Xavier
Timor-Leste Generation Equality Activist



“Give time to women to express their ideas without feeling pressure from anyone, we need to break the barrier that only men can lead .”

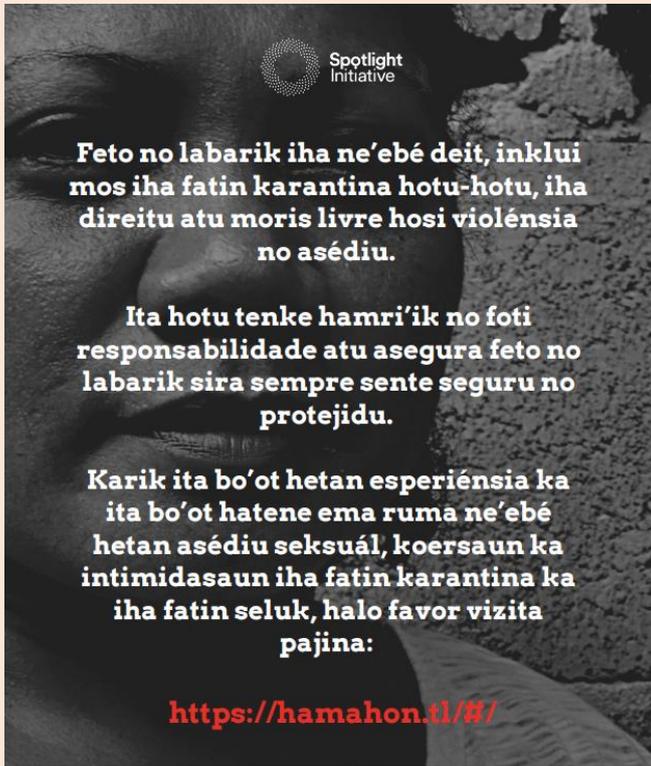
Fidelia Fatima Mendonça
Timor-Leste Generation Equality Activist



EU-UN Spotlight Timor-Leste: UN Women Photo Gallery



Spotlight Initiative
 To eliminate violence against women and girls



PNTL VPU Unidade Ema Vulneravel: 7818 6551 hamahon.tl/



A EU-UN Spotlight Initiative poster to end violence against women at the quarantine facilities in the amid of Covi-19 pandemic. Poster UNICEF Timor-Leste



UN Women's EU-UN Spotlight Initiative meeting with partners on adjusting Spotlight Initiative's intervention to the flood response recovery.



EU-UN Voice Against Violence training to the 20 youth scout members in Ermera to become agent of change to end violence. Photo_UNE-TL



Scout Timor-Leste through the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative live in the Café Dader TV Talkshow Program on youth's voice in ending violence against women during IWD 2021 celebration. Photo_Sylvio Fonseca UN Women Timor-Leste



UN Women's EU-UN Spotlight Initiative workshop with partners in the efforts of leaving no one behind. Photo_UN Women Timor-Leste

Get to Know: Ramaaya Salgado

UN Women Timor-Leste Interim Head of Office



Ramaaya Salgado joined UN Women Timor-Leste in April 2020, taking the role of interim Head of Office. Equipped with expertise and experience in the field of international development and certainly a no stranger to the UN system, she is eager to support UN Women TL achieve their goals this year.

Ramaaya shares her previous assignments, her passion for women's empowerment and gender equality and her excitement in working and being in Timor-Leste for the first time.

“ Before taking up my assignment in Timor Leste, I was heading UN Women's Programme Presence in Sri Lanka. I established that office in 2014 as the sole staff member and have been a part of a growing team ever since. Prior to working for UN Women, I have also worked for the UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo and with UNOPS Sri Lanka. I have over 14 years of experience in the field of international development, having also worked for development partners and civil society organisations at different points in my career.

As a woman from the global south, I have experienced systemic inequalities all my life because of growing up in a society that is heavily patriarchal in nature. I am fortunate not to have been constrained by oppressive practices and beliefs in my private life as I was brought up by liberal parents.

However, having been a part of the lived experiences of my friends and peers coming from different backgrounds and watching them struggle with the weight of expectation of what it means to be a woman, motivated me to want to be part of the pushback against this status-quo, a status-quo that automatically relegates women, by virtue of their sex, as second-class citizens in their own country and within their own families.

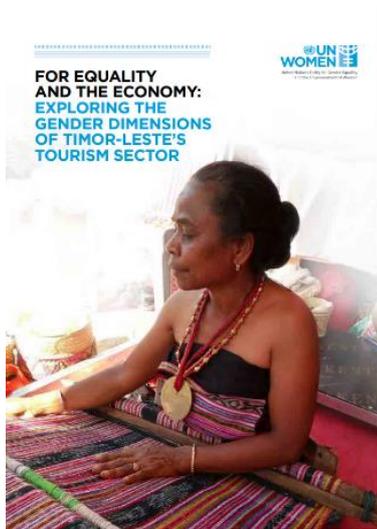
One that continues to exclude them from decision making regarding their well-being including bodily autonomy and one that continues to turn a blind eye to the physical, emotional, and economic violence and discrimination women face every day. Whilst globally there have been many steps in the right direction towards gender equality, not a single country can claim that they have reached gender parity and as long as there is room for improvement in that space, I believe my motivation to work in this field will always remain.

As someone coming from South Asia, I was certainly aware of Timor-Leste, as one of the newest nation-states in the world, and had occasionally heard of the work of the TLCO via UN Women's Regional Office. However, I only read up about the country's unique history and culture prior to arriving in Dili a few months back and was struck by some of the similarities between my country of origin (Sri Lanka) and Timor-Leste such as both being islands with beautiful and differing landscapes, shared colonial history, the influence of the Portuguese on our culture and the resilience of its people despite the adversity faced over the years. In many ways this is familiar ground but at the same time I am excited at the prospect of getting to know the country and its people over the next few months.

As a fellow islander myself, I have to say the beaches in Timor-Leste are extremely appealing and health regulations permitting, I would love the opportunity to explore them. I am also a big foodie and would like to experience authentic Timorese cuisine.

My assignment with the UN Women Timor-Leste Country Office is to support the transition period between the previous and incoming Head of Office. As such, my priority is to ensure that the office delivers on the commitments we had made on behalf of the women and girls of Timor-Leste and to ensure that the momentum gained over the last few years is not stemmed. Having come from a Programme Presence office and a different country context, I believe I bring a different perspective and skill set to the table which can hopefully support the team to meet their planned targets/goals for the year.”

RESOURCES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



For Equality and the Economy: Exploring the Gender Dimensions of Timor-Leste's Tourism Sector

This report explores Timor-Leste's tourism industry from a gender perspective, analysing the links between the global findings and the emerging tourism industry in Timor-Leste, as well as examining the local context and challenges. It makes recommendations to empower women in the areas of Representation and Leadership, Education and Training, Institutional Gender Mainstreaming, and Gender-responsive Policies and Environment within the industry. [Read more here](#)



Scouts through EU-UN Spotlight Initiative on Café Dader

To kick-start the IWD celebration in 2021, UN Women organized a talk show commencing on the 8th of March, that aired on the national television channel RTTL, which was also broadcasted in the RTTL radio with the support of funding from the European Union under EU-UN Spotlight Initiative. [Click here to watch Scouts on Café Dader](#)



UN Women Weekly Media Monitoring

Read UN Women weekly news round-up, catch all gender equality and women's empowerment news from government, civil society, development partners and others covered by the media during the period from January-April 2021. [Click here to access](#)

UN Women's weekly news round-up covers all gender news in relation to our programmatic areas.

Read the latest news related to women and girls' empowerment and gender equality in Timor-Leste, from the week 15 to 19 March 2021.



Responsible Social Media Use

Last year, UN Women Timor-Leste conducted Digital Literacy training to 44 participants with funding from Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. To continue with the efforts of eliminating hate speech, misinformation and negative contents online, UN Women collaborated with Unicef Timor-Leste to highlight positive and responsible use of social media. [Click here to watch](#)