

Harvest Ceremony—Reaping the First Sheath

Each year a special ceremony is held in a number of districts in Timor-Leste to celebrate the first harvest of rice. This year, FAO joined the celebrations held in Bahamori Suco, in the sub-district of Venilale (Baucau). In this area FAO has implemented a large training programme on improved rice production through Farmer Field Schools (FFS), in the framework of the food security and livelihoods programme funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

The rain held off for long enough on that hot and rainy 17 May, for the Secretary of State of Agriculture and Arboriculture, H.E. Marcos da Cruz to reap the first sheath of rice. The harvest ceremony was followed by community lunch and the discussion on the challenges the farmers face.

The Suco was chosen for the harvest ceremony due to having some of the best farming practices and the highest rice productivity of Baucau District. At this ceremony, the success of the first FAO FFS programme was also celebrated.

The FFS approach is a group-based learning process helping participant farmers develop skills through direct involvement in trials of new farming practices. FFS accompanies the farmers through the agricultural season and provides demonstration of best practice in every step of the agricultural cycle. Such “learning by doing” has proved to be an effective approach to agricultural extension, capable of overcoming the common reluctance of farmers to adopt innovation.

Quality seeds of improved varieties, mostly developed by the Seeds of Life programme, were distributed to farmers in Baucau District: 30 tonnes of rice seed (Nakroman), 18 tonnes of maize seed and 2 tonnes of peanuts.

The first FFS programme produced very positive outcomes. Yield figures reached up to 5.5 tonnes paddy per hectare, which equates to about 3.3 tonnes of milled rice. This year rice production has increased by 30% in the project area in Baucau. There has been a visible improvement of farming activities, such as land preparation, transplant techniques, weeding, water control, and distribution of fertilizers.

The AECID has recently approved funding for Phase III of the Project. The additional 600,000 Euro will be used to expand activities in Baucau until 2011. With this further contribution, Spain has become the major donor supporting the FAO programme in Timor-Leste.



H.E. Marcos da Cruz, Secretary of State for Agriculture and Arboriculture, reaping the first sheath of rice

UN Joint Programme in Timor Leste for Poverty Alleviation



In Timor-Leste, poverty is still widespread and it worsened in the first years of independence. The income gap between rich and poor is widening. The latest Timor-Leste Survey of Living Standards released in November 2008, showed that poverty has risen from 36 % to 49 % between 2001 and 2007. Preliminary data from more recent surveys not yet published, seem to indicate an encouraging reversal of the trend between 2008 and 2010, with the poverty figure dropping back to 41%.

Nevertheless, about 20% of the population is still food-insecure with a further 23% being highly vulnerable to becoming so. Agriculture is predominantly based on subsistence farming and the manufacturing industry is almost non-existent.

The majority of the rural population faces a multitude of threats, such as food and nutrition insecurity, water

shortages, and disaster-prone environment. Additionally, the livelihoods of rural communities are constantly at risk due to their dependence on fast degrading environmental resources. The cumulative effect of all these factors is the heightened vulnerability of the average Timorese person living in rural areas.

The Community Mobilization for Poverty Alleviation and Social Inclusion in Service Delivery (COMPASIS), funded by the Japan-sponsored United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), is a UN joint project that seeks to protect extremely poor households in Timor-Leste. The focus will be on women farmers, war widows, unemployed youth, returning internally displaced people, children, and food insecure people. The project will be implemented in the districts of Ermera (Letefoho and Atsabe sub-districts) and Oecusse (Passabe and Nitibe sub-districts). This unique partnership of collaboration includes FAO, UNDP, WFP, ILO, UNICEF, and UNFPA.

The project has two main objectives: 1) to reduce extreme poverty among vulnerable groups through community mobilization, promotion of agro-based micro-enterprises, skills training and post-training support; and 2) to promote social inclusion in the service delivery system.

As part of this project, FAO will be working on the promotion of agricultural-based livelihoods skills, including training on best farming practices, setting-up of home gardens, horticulture and food processing activities and nutrition education. In addition, FAO will provide technical support in post harvest handling techniques and equipment, including silos for grain storage, and promote the diversification and integration of farming systems through the training in Farmer Field Schools and the provision of farming inputs with the aim of increasing staple crop production and expanding small-scale pig and poultry production.

Grass Roots Training for Community Leaders

From the misty mountains to the hot plains of Timor-Leste, the FAO carried out Animal Health Communication Training Workshops to strengthen the communication skills of extension workers, village animal health workers, and community leaders.

Thanks to the support of USAID and AUSAID, over 200 participants have been trained in ten high risk districts, namely: Oecusse, Bobonaro, Dili, Baucau, Viqueque, Ermera, Liquisa, Covalima, Lautem, and Ainaro. These successful workshops have built on the existing knowledge about animal diseases such as Avian Influenza, Classical Swine Fever, Newcastle Disease and Hemorrhagic Septicaemia. They aimed at promoting the development of important skills, such as facilitation, listening, transparency, trust and other vital components for effective communications.

The feedback from all the workshops has been very positive, the main "criticism" being that the workshops should have been longer than the one day. The most interesting aspect highlighted and recommended during question time was the need for a country-wide, comprehensive communication & awareness campaign in conjunction with MAF livestock vaccination programmes. FAO is in discussion with MAF on how to design and implement such a campaign.



Participants at the Communication Training Workshop in Atauro, Dili District

Bio-Security Project to be extended until December 2011



MAF staff at the completed Bio-Safety Level 2 Diagnostic Laboratory — Dili, Timor Leste

Thanks to AusAID approval of the extension of and additional contribution to the Biosecurity Strengthening Project (BSP), FAO will be able to continue the assistance to strengthen the animal health and quarantine services in Timor-Leste, until the end of 2011. The main focus of the extension will be to support the capacity development and operations of the Bio-Safety Level 2 Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, established under the BSP Project and transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF). BSP will also extend its technical and material support to the newly established, national animal disease investigation and surveillance systems.

We are one step closer to a fully functioning Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for Timor-Leste. Works have been completed; equipment has been bought and set up; and arrangements are currently being carried out by MAF to ensure continuous supply of electricity. The first round of training for the staff from MAF National Directorate of Livestock and Veterinary Services was held in Bogor Agricultural Institute in Indonesia earlier in the year. The training lasted eight weeks, and focused on laboratory techniques. Further training for staff from the National Directorate for Quarantine and Biosecurity will take place in September. The next phase will consist in "on-the-bench" training provided by the Bogor Institute directly in the laboratory in Dili. Complementary training activities will be also provided by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Integration of gender analysis in water and land tenure management

A national workshop entitled "Capacity development on the integration of gender analysis in water and land tenure management", focussing on gender mainstreaming in the access.



management, legislation and ownership of natural resources, was held in Dili, Timor-Leste, from 11 to 14 May 2010.

Such workshops were carried out in the framework of an inter-regional project funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), which included four member countries of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), namely: Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Timor-Leste. The project aims to improve gender indicators in land tenure security and water access and management. This is achieved by integrating a gender approach in legislation, policies and programmes on land and water. The ultimate objective is to improve the livelihoods of rural women



and men, and to positively impact on their food security, nutrition and health. The expected outcome of the project is the enhanced local capacity for participatory management of water resources and land tenure. This enhanced capacity will support gender equality and the participation of local communities in the planning, development and management of productive resources.

As part of the project's activities, the training workshop was organized in Dili, with the attendance of thirty-five participants, including extension workers and officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), civil servants from other government departments, UN and NGOs. In four days, participatory socio-economic and gender methodologies focusing on water and land management and ownership were presented and discussed.

The main objective of the training was to enhance the capacities of participants on gender mainstreaming in projects, programmes and policies related to agricultural and rural development. The workshop was organized by the FAO Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW), with the assistance of the FAO Land and Water Division and the FAO Legal Office. The workshop was facilitated by Ilaria Sisto and Valerio Tranchida from ESW.

During the workshop, participants reviewed a series of tools for socio-economic and gender analysis and participatory management of land and water resources. Active discussion took place on how to better address gender issues and women's empowerment in the finalization of the new land law currently being prepared in Timor-Leste. The latter discussion was facilitated by the UN Senior Gender Adviser, Ms Rita Reddy.

In the framework of the same AECID-funded inter-regional project, a final conference was organized in Lisbon from 2 to 4 June 2010, where results of the project and next steps were discussed and agreed upon amongst the different governments, with the participation of one MAF representative from Timor-Leste.

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