

TIMOR - LESTE



Safe Motherhood
Annual Project Impact Report

Reporting Period:
July 2019 - June 2020



It starts with equal

Thank you for your support

In Timor-Leste, more mothers and babies are at risk of dying during pregnancy, childbirth or in the first days of life than almost anywhere else in the Asia-Pacific. It is estimated that for every maternal death, an additional twenty Timorese women are disabled following childbirth.

Since the project started in 2017, CARE's teams have worked in 47 hamlets (sub-villages) in Timor-Leste to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies; create a more effective and responsive health system; advance gender equality and empower women and girls.

This is done by supporting local government to deliver quality health services, and developing community trust in these services; building awareness of safer motherhood practices; improving gender relations within families and the community; and by giving women a voice in negotiating their own healthcare choices, including fertility management.

Thanks to your generous support, in the last 12 months 4,117 people have benefited from these life-changing activities.

In addition, the project has focused on improved engagement of people living with disabilities. CARE is collaborating with disability focused organisations to improve the involvement of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and this will be a focus in early 2021.

With your continued support, CARE will continue to work with the people of Timor-Leste for a more equitable and healthier future.

Quick facts



Timorese mothers have a 1 in 82 risk of dying during pregnancy – 60 times higher than mothers in Australia.



Timor-Leste has one of the highest fertility rates in Asia at four children per woman.



Seven in ten mothers give birth at home, or outside of healthcare facilities.

Impact of COVID-19

CARE Australia is monitoring and responding to COVID-19 around the world — pivoting projects to include teaching vulnerable people the best ways to protect themselves from disease, and taking extra precautions to reduce the risk of the spread of infection for, and from, our own staff and partners in all activities.

CARE's teams supported 2,314 during this state of emergency (a 52.7% increase from the intended number of project beneficiaries) by supporting local government to share vital prevention messaging, such as social distancing, hand washing practices and more in a short period of time. Highly vulnerable border communities in Covalima were also provided with 59 tippy taps; 200 hygiene and sanitation kits; 10,800 bars of soap; and 129 posters on gender-based violence.

Some project activities during March to May were unable to be completed because of the limits on physical contact with community members and health service providers. The team adapted, managing meetings, training and data collection using technology.

CARE is also working closely with local authorities on alternative strategies to deliver project goals in the changing landscape going forward.



What you've helped achieve this reporting period

July 2019 – June 2020

Supporting an effective and responsive local health system

Thanks to your support, 520 Mother Support Groups (MSG) and 320 Father Support Groups (FSG) have improved access to quality Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health (SRMH) services. MSGs and FSGs provide a supportive environment to learn about SRMH related topics, as well as encouraging men to talk about their roles and experiences in supporting their partners get the healthcare they need.

Supporting women to receive information about access to high quality services during pregnancy and childbirth

With your help, 1,977 members of the MSGs FSGs participated in community information sessions on Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health (SRMH), with 84% of attendees reporting that they were valuable.

SRMH topics covered included family planning, exclusive breastfeeding, danger signs during pregnancy and delivery, sexually transmitted infections and immunisation. These sessions also encourage men to talk about their roles and experiences in supporting their partners to get the healthcare they need.

More males are actively supporting their partners in maternal health and safe birthing practices, and as a result, more women gave birth with the help of a Skilled Birth Attendant, with a rise from 31% to 78% at mid-term.

This valuable education is being embraced by attendees, with 96% of women and 98% of men from 675 participants demonstrating a good understanding of pre and post-natal healthcare.

96% of the group members went on to share what they learnt in the SRMH sessions with other community members.

Giving women a voice in negotiating their own healthcare choices, including fertility management

In order to advance gender equality and empower females, CARE's team has worked with men, women, boys and girls to identify and challenge harmful social norms that prevent access to health information.

Thanks to you, 1,309 participants were involved in these discussions and established six Social Analysis and Action plans which aim to break these barriers to modern healthcare.

The project continued to support women in being more active in asking questions, sharing their opinion and taking part in making decisions (in both formal and non-formal spaces) with 899 women participating in monthly meetings.

The project has also created change in households, with 59% MSG and FSG members making joint decisions about their households and responsibilities, which shows a shift in the cultural expectations on gender.

There was a significant increase from 11% to 76% of MSG members (aged 15–49) making informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health. More community members know of at least one modern contraceptive, and the use of modern contraceptives increased from 37% to 47%.



CASE STUDY

Uniting couples

Life has changed for Domingas Gomes and her family of nine since she joined one of CARE's Mother Support Groups (MSG).

Domingas, her husband, and their seven children live in a remote area far from the nearest health centre and have faced many of the common challenges in accessing quality health services.

But, since attending monthly education sessions, Domingas and her husband have come to understand the importance of maternal health in pregnancy and post-birth, sharing household responsibilities, and the supporting role that her husband can play.

Armed with the knowledge they've gained from these sessions, Domingas and her husband have jointly made the decision to ensure that all their children receive regular immunisation. This is especially important for their newborn child.

"I believe that all pregnant women should deliver their baby with a skilled birth attendant at the health centre of the health post," Domingas says.

Apart from increasing the safety of both the mother and child during the birth, Domingas appreciates that it's important that "after the delivery, the baby can directly receive immunisation to ensure their baby's health and protection from illness".

Thanks to your support, CARE will continue to educate couples on the importance of sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights, as well as helping to create more equal and support roles at home for women like Domingas.





If you would like more information about this project and how you can be involved, please contact:

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care.org.au



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