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Field visits

**Report of the field visit of the Executive Board of
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS to Timor-Leste,
1 to 8 December 2012**

I. Introduction

1. A delegation of eight representatives of Member States of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS undertook a field visit to Timor-Leste from 1 to 8 December 2012. The delegation was led by the President of the Executive Board (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations). The Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations served as rapporteur. The delegation was accompanied by the Secretary, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board; the Senior Adviser, Executive Board and External Relations Branch, UNFPA; and the Project Centre Manager, UNOPS. The list of participants is contained in the annex.

2. The purpose of the visit was to see how the United Nations country team (UNCT) is operating in Timor-Leste and how the United Nations supports government priorities in addressing development and humanitarian challenges. The delegation also looked at the interaction of the United Nations organizations with the Government and other development partners.

3. The delegation met with high-level authorities of the country, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament, sectoral ministers and vice-ministers of the Government of Timor-Leste, district authorities and officials, members of the UNCT, bilateral development partners and representatives of civil society and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs). The delegation also had the opportunity to visit project sites in the Baucau and Manatuto districts.

4. The delegation expresses its deep appreciation to the Government of Timor-Leste for the opportunity to carry out this mission and for facilitating the programme. Appreciation is likewise extended to the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the UNCT for organizing a comprehensive, well-prepared programme and for making all the necessary arrangements. In particular, the delegation wishes to thank all the country staff of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Timor-Leste.

II. Background

5. The United Nations has been present in Timor-Leste since 1999 and remains an important partner to the Government. Until now, the focus of the United Nations has been on stabilization and security, to which several United Nations peacekeeping missions have been devoted. The most recent, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), successfully concluded its drawdown on 31 December 2012. As a result, the focus of the United Nations partnership with Timor-Leste is now transitioning to institutional strengthening and development.

6. A joint mechanism, the High-Level Committee on Transition (HLC), was set up in order to ensure the smooth transition to the new phase. The HLC guided the work towards a Joint Transition Plan, signed by the Government and the United Nations in September 2011, outlining seven areas of transition aimed at ensuring a smooth drawdown of UNMIT. The plan highlights the strong links between UNMIT and the United Nations country team. The UNCT Transition Portfolio of Projects was endorsed by the Government and presented to Member States at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 22 February 2012. The portfolio contains UNCT proposals to implement 34 projects during the three-year period, 2012-2014, with total financial requirements of \$76 million.

III. General observations

7. Since independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has made strong progress in moving forward as a secure and stable nation and in laying down the foundations for good governance and effective civil institutions. In the last few years, the country has experienced high growth figures and important improvements in people's welfare. The national vision, as expressed in the Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, is to transit from a low-income to an upper middle-income country. To a large extent, this vision hinges on the country's ability to use wisely the revenue from its important, but finite petroleum resources for investments that can provide the basis for a more diversified economy able to provide sufficient and

sustainable growth, sustainable employment and sustainable state revenues. Key challenges in achieving such a transition are:

- (a) Developing the rural sector, where poverty remains widespread;
- (b) Raising the quality, equity and efficiency of the education system;
- (c) Creating the enabling environment for alternative sectors of the economy;
- (d) Building and sustaining accountable, transparent and efficient state institutions;
- (e) Empowering women to make their full contribution to development.

8. Strong collaboration has been the hallmark of the relationship between Timor-Leste and the United Nations. Since the United Nations-organized popular consultation in 1999 that gave birth to the independent nation of Timor-Leste in 2002, the country has hosted several peacekeeping and political operations as well as the steady presence of the UNCT, helping to build resilient state institutions and alleviate poverty. The provision of interim law enforcement and public security, as well as the training of the national police (PNTL), by UNMIT since 2006 is judged to have been quite successful.

9. The partnership between the Government and the UNCT remains close. The representatives of the Government expressed to the delegation their high appreciation for United Nations action in Timor-Leste and for the close cooperation with the UNCT.

10. All indications were that the Government considers the positioning of UNDP and UNFPA in Timor-Leste to be broadly the right one. There were several indications that the institution-building assistance by UNDP is highly important and needs to be sustained and/or expanded. The delegation noted the high percentage of population growth in Timor-Leste and supports the work of UNFPA to continue to address this concern through family planning and by improving the reproductive health of the people. The delegation also observed that UNOPS, with its long and successful experience of project and procurement management in programme countries, potentially has much to offer Timor-Leste, and that the pertinent Timorese authorities should be provided an opportunity to be thoroughly acquainted with UNOPS services.

IV. Thematic observations

Consolidation of the institutional framework

11. Timor-Leste has made significant strides in the development of governance institutions, such as the Parliament, justice system, electoral management bodies, the Civil Service Commission, Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice and the Anti-Corruption Commission. UNDP has placed significant levels of support in the

development and consolidation of these institutions. Among the most important programmes which can be mentioned are the UNDP Justice System Programme, the decentralization of legal services, the electoral programme, the provision of legal advisory support to the Members of Parliament, and the provision of capacity to the secretariat of Parliament, as well as the capacity development support to the Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice.

12. The indications which the delegation received were that the Parliament and the Government of Timor-Leste clearly consider that UNDP, as a provider of capacity support to governance, has a clear comparative advantage over other partners in terms of experience, neutrality and legitimacy. Furthermore, there is hope that the action of UNDP in these areas will be sustained or even expanded. Other areas mentioned for sustained or expanded activity include the justice sector, the national parliament programme, the capacity-building of Provedoria and capacity-building for decentralization.

13. More generally, the delegation was seized with the impression that the comparative advantage of UNDP is particularly pronounced with regard to the building up or consolidation of institutions charged with independent oversight and accountability, and that there is scope to offer more capacity-building support in those areas.

Population issues

14. The role of UNFPA is crucial in assisting the Government of Timor-Leste in effectively addressing critical population issues, including the key priority area of population growth. Timor-Leste has low life expectancy, and high rates of maternal and under-five mortality, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. UNFPA is actively involved in training health-care providers, promoting family planning, and raising public awareness of reproductive health issues. The Ministry of Health is committed to improving the health of the population by promoting primary health care. This is being done by the continued availability (though limited), accessibility and affordability of health services; regulating the health sector; and promoting broad-based community and stakeholder participation. The Executive Board, while visiting rural areas, observed that these areas are difficult to reach by health-care providers and social workers. The Catholic Church has been instrumental in the promotion of birth spacing and natural family planning methods, and reproductive health education in rural areas that are hard to reach by the Government. Meanwhile, midwives from the Government provide the modern methods of contraception. A good example of the UNFPA partnership with faith-based organizations in Timor-Leste is the collaborative work with Pastoral Da Criança in reducing maternal and child mortality through the provision of health education for pregnant women in order to strengthen their knowledge and skills on pregnancy and newborn care; and the provision of information to women about the advantages of

spacing their pregnancies. Community leaders and young people are all involved in this collaboration.

15. Another area in which UNFPA has been successfully involved in assisting the Government of Timor-Leste is in the implementation of the 2010 census. UNFPA provided technical and financial support to the National Statistics Office of the Ministry of Finance during the census. UNFPA and other partners (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, Irish Aid and AusAID) also supported the implementation of the Timor-Leste 2009-2010 Demographic Health Survey. Data collected from the census will assist the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the National Statistics Directorate and other ministries with the necessary information for policy and planning, as well as for establishing a database of households where public assistance is crucial.

Youth

16. Timor-Leste has a relatively young population with more than three quarters under the age of 30. The high proportion of youth represents an opportunity to harness the vast demographic dividend for nation-building. However, this group is particularly vulnerable to the current socioeconomic challenges and political transformations in the country.

17. The Executive Board observed that the Government of Timor-Leste has taken a number of important steps under the National Youth Policy towards promoting youth empowerment and inclusion in development by expanding the capacities of and opportunities for youth groups. Close multisectoral coordination between ministries, as well as their strong collaboration with the United Nations country team, has laid a sturdy foundation on which to build.

18. Adolescent reproductive health is a key area for UNFPA youth programming in Timor-Leste, focusing on the promotion of availability, quality and sustainability of sexual and reproductive health information and services. Key challenges include the unmet need for family planning and the relatively high rates of HIV infection among youth. To address the needs of young people, UNFPA has provided technical and financial support for the establishment of youth-friendly services. UNFPA assisted the Ministry of Education to finalize the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Module so that it can be incorporated in the pre-secondary and secondary school curricula. In partnership with the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, UNFPA delivered anger-management training for youth. The Executive Board observed field-level activities in this regard.

19. A joint programme of six United Nations organizations – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, UNFPA, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP) – seeks to protect extremely poor households,

with the major focus on unemployed youth in the country. However, youth unemployment, especially in rural areas, is relatively high and can be attributed not only to a lack of skills and quality employment opportunities, but also to low levels of education. The Government of Timor-Leste regards education as a high priority and a tool for the eradication of poverty. National capacity and results in this sphere are being enhanced under the traditional leadership of UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They play an important role in Timor-Leste in improving the quality of education, supporting the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy, Child-Friendly Schools initiative, curtailing high dropout and repetition. Their projects in Timor-Leste contribute to reaching a large cohort of out-of-school adolescents and youth through literacy classes and peer education, facilitating the acquisition of life skills, strengthening youth participation in politics and fostering democratic governance.

Domestic violence

20. The high prevalence of domestic violence, considered to be associated with alcohol and other factors, remains a major concern for development actors in Timor-Leste.

21. In fact, the issue has been repeatedly raised, including during the different meetings that the Executive Board held with various government officials, the national police in Baucau, NGOs, civil society, justice actors and the Bishop of Baucau. The Executive Board also attended a forum theatre, organized by the Ministry of Social Solidarity with the communities in Baucau, on the issue of domestic violence.

22. The authorities of Timor-Leste are trying their best to address the issue of domestic violence: in 2010, the country adopted a national Law Against Domestic Violence. However, gaps and challenges in implementing this law remain large; hundreds of cases are reported annually, and there is no comprehensive data collection on the issue of domestic violence.

23. Under the Joint Transition Plan for 2013-2014, UNFPA is leading the execution of two main activities, namely, contributing to the implementation of the national Law Against Domestic Violence; and increasing access to emergency medical, counselling and legal services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence. The UNDP contribution to fighting domestic violence is reflected in the implementation of the Justice System Programme, which supports the constitutional branches of the justice sector, including courts, prosecution and public defense. However, in a report published in January 2011 entitled *Customary Law and Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste*, UNDP pointed out the inconsistency of data collection and terminology across studies made by different individuals and organizations, as well as the fact that their definitions of domestic violence in

traditional communities are not in accordance with the Law Against Domestic Violence. The report concluded that in such a situation it remains impossible to map the incidence of the phenomenon of domestic violence, to track its evolution in an accurate way, and to identify the most vulnerable people.

Maternal and child health

24. Improving maternal and child health outcomes in Timor-Leste continues to pose enormous challenges for the government and development stakeholders, including the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies. High maternal and child mortality, and levels of malnutrition and stunting (close to 50 per cent nationally) are a result not only of supply-side issues (effective delivery of affordable services), but are also linked closely with cultural and societal norms and beliefs around health care. Overall, the assessment was that UNFPA played a crucial role in the procurement and distribution of reproductive health commodities, and the strengthening of maternal health care at both the central and district levels through the training of health-care workers. The supply of adequately trained and qualified health-care workers is integral to the functioning of the system and the overall improvement of health outcomes in Timor-Leste. The United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies should continue to support the efforts of the Government of Timor-Leste to improve the quality of care in the districts.

Sustainability of interventions

25. The sustainability of programmes in Timor-Leste remains a challenge, particularly where the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies are filling gaps rather than delivering programmes based on needs assessments and extensive planning. This has meant, for example, that hardware and vehicles provided under United Nations programmes have not been properly maintained, since the Government has not budgeted for associated recurrent costs. While the Executive Board is extremely happy with the results seen on the ground and the progress being made, it is clear that more can be done in the area of sustainability of interventions, which will allow for the effective and efficient allocation of scarce resources.

Co-financing

26. United Nations organizations continue to see a decrease in financial assistance and commitments from donor countries and the impact that the decrease makes on their operational activities. The Executive Board, while conducting field visits in Timor-Leste, met with government officials and stressed the importance of co-financing and partnership between United Nations organizations and the Government of Timor-Leste. This new approach to development assistance was well received by various government officials and ministries.

Collaboration, coordination and coherence

27. Cooperation and convergence among United Nations organizations present in the field are good. There is a strong sense of the ‘United Nations family’ in the country. This sets a good precedent and needs to be maintained, if not further strengthened. The Executive Board took note of different efforts led by the Resident Coordinator to enhance the collaboration and coordination among the organizations present in the country. The delegation observed positive collaboration and communication among United Nations organizations, civil society organizations, local communities, as well as national and local governments.

V. Recommendations

28. The Executive Board saw the tremendous work that UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS were doing on the ground in Timor-Leste, and was very satisfied with the impact that the organizations are making. The Government of Timor-Leste signalled its satisfaction with the work of the three organizations, and hopes to build and further collaborate where possible. The delegation’s concern, however, will be the results, if any, of the drawdown and subsequent departure of UNMIT. The Government has clearly expressed its desire for continued engagement with the United Nations system after the departure of UNMIT. In this regard, the UNCT, at the request of the Minister of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, prepared in October 2012 a matrix identifying areas of the Government’s five-year programme (2013-2017) where the UNCT has the expertise and capacity to support. The matrix was provided as a basis for further discussion related to the scope and content of collaboration between the Government and the United Nations over the coming two years (2013-2014). What is envisaged is thus a two-year transition phase 2013-2014, during which there will also be sufficient time to engage in a consultative process between the Government and the UNCT in order to develop the next United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2015-2019, and to discuss modalities for resource mobilization and possible cost-sharing with the Government in regard to the UNDAF. The matrix was still under review by the Government of Timor-Leste at the time of the field visit.

29. Meanwhile, the delegation is pleased to note that, subsequent to its discussion with government authorities on the need to designate a governmental focal point for liaison with the United Nations organizations, a collaboration between the Government of Timor-Leste and UNCT resulted in the appointment of a focal point in March 2013.

30. While awaiting a response by the Government of Timor-Leste on the above-mentioned matrix, the following recommendations should be taken into account in order to continue the important work currently being undertaken by UNDP, UNFPA

and UNOPS. The recommendations below are based on achieving efficiency, sustainability and effectiveness:

(a) Assist the Government of Timor-Leste with the incorporation of the data collected on the different dimensions of the population, gender, youth and reproductive health into strategies and actions at the national and subnational levels;

(b) Support the Government of Timor-Leste in further expanding and updating the National Youth Policy;

(c) Support further collaboration in addressing the issue of domestic violence; there needs to be synergy among United Nations organizations, government sector, NGOs and development partners. The laws against domestic violence must be consistent throughout Timor-Leste. Financial support in this area needs to be increased with greater accountability being placed on the NGOs which receive financial support to work effectively and consistently;

(d) Provide more financial and technical support for the National Nutrition Strategy. Although UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS do not have a mandated role in improving nutrition in Timor-Leste, opportunities for cooperation with the Government of Timor-Leste, donors, UNICEF and WFP should be explored, given the overwhelming prevalence of undernutrition in the country. UNFPA, with its focus on maternal and child health, and UNDP, with its poverty reduction mandate, may be positioned to play a greater role going forward;

(e) Support further improvement of the health-care system. Emphasis should be placed on building more medical outposts in rural areas and on providing training and refresher/continued training to medical personnel. The recruitment of midwives, nurses and doctors should be a priority for the Government of Timor-Leste and for the United Nations organizations that can provide support in this area;

(f) Support the Government in institutional capacity strengthening of the justice sector, human rights, anti-corruption, Parliament and decentralization, emphasizing more results on access by citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable;

(g) Support the Government in implementing climate change and sustainable development policies and strategies, with a strong link to poverty reduction;

(h) Continue to provide policy advice for inclusive and sustainable economic development in Timor-Leste;

(i) Support the sustainability of interventions by the United Nations organizations as a key priority. This will contribute to reducing organizations' costs

while improving the overall delivery of services that they provide. The organizations, in conjunction with the Government of Timor-Leste, should explore ways to ensure equipment maintenance and servicing. There needs to be a strong training component involving a partnership between the Government of Timor-Leste and civil society;

(j) Support a greater push for co-financing with the Government of Timor-Leste and the private sector, given the current and future difficult financial outlook for United Nations organizations. This will enable greater financial flexibility for the United Nations to do more, and create partnership, ownership and shared responsibilities;

(k) Encourage and promote South-South cooperation, where possible and allowable, in collaboration with the Government of Timor-Leste.

Annex**List of participants in the field visit by members of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS to Timor-Leste, 1 to 8 December 2012**

Regional group/Country	Name and title
Western Europe and other States	
Sweden	H.E. Mr. Mårten Grunditz Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative and President of the Executive Board (Team Leader of the field visit to Timor-Leste)
Australia	Ms. Meg Berryman Policy Manager Health Policy and Partnerships, AusAID
African States	
Burkina Faso	Mr. Der Laurent Dabire Second Counsellor Permanent Mission
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mr. Paul Losoko Efambe Empole First Counsellor Permanent Mission
Asian and Pacific States	
Indonesia	Ms. Yuliana Bahar First Secretary Permanent Mission
Eastern European States	
Belarus	Ms. Oksana Melnikovich Second Secretary Permanent Mission
Russian Federation	Ms. Yulia A. Plokhova Third Secretary Permanent Mission
Latin American and Caribbean States	
Antigua and Barbuda	Mr. Tumasie Blair Third Secretary Permanent Mission (Rapporteur for the field visit to Timor-Leste)

The mission was accompanied by:

Ms. Rekha Thapa, Secretary, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board

Ms. Ranjana Dikhit, Senior Adviser, Executive Board and External Relations Branch, UNFPA

Mr. Bryan Taylor, Project Centre Manager, UNOPS