End of project review
UNICEF/H & M Foundation
‘Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education Project’

An independent review commissioned by UNICEF Timor-Leste,
July 2017
An independent review of the UNICEF/H&M Foundation ‘Alternative Pre-schools and Parenting Education’ project, July 2017

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Our grateful thanks to all who have contributed to this report from government, partners and NGOs, the social welfare workforce, community-based facilitators and local leaders, as well as to UNICEF staff who supported this review throughout its different phases.

The statements in this report are the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF and H&M Foundation.

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List of acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFS</td>
<td>Child-Friendly Schools (approach)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOTL</td>
<td>Government of Timor-Leste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMI</td>
<td>Institutu Mata dalan Integradu (local NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/NGO</td>
<td>International Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAP</td>
<td>Knowledge, attitudes and practice (survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KDP</td>
<td>Kolega Da Paz (local NGO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key performance indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>MECAS</td>
<td>Ministry of State Coordination of Social Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMI</td>
<td>Mary McKillop International</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSS</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESP</td>
<td>National Education Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ MFAT</td>
<td>New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFPE</td>
<td>Policy Framework for Pre-school Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOM</td>
<td>Secretary of State for Social Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene (programs/projects)</td>
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Executive summary

‘Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education’ was a UNICEF Timor-Leste project taking place between 2014 and 2017, supported by H&M Foundation. This project has been integral to UNICEF’s broader strategy for early childhood development in Timor-Leste, responding to the need for holistic care for children at home, in schools and in the community.

The project delivered change for children in two intersecting ways:

- **Opportunities for children** to attend pre-school through alternative community-based models of early learning
- **Opportunities for their parents** to learn and discuss essential aspects of their parenting role, from protection and early stimulation through to adolescent issues

Project objectives

1) 1,000 children aged 3-5 years in one remote municipality benefit from quality early learning interventions; and
2) 12,000 parents and caregivers with improved care practices and abilities to stimulate a child’s early learning and prevent child neglect, abuse, harsh discipline and violence.

HOW IT WORKED

- **Alternative pre-schools**: Communities worked together under the leadership of the local chefe in one municipality (Viqueque) to identify a premises, a pre-school facilitator and children of the right age to attend pre-school. UNICEF provided materials similar to those used by the Ministry of Education in government pre-schools, as well as training the facilitators and school committees for long-term commitment and quality.

- **Parenting education**: Messages on good parenting, devised by the Ministry of Social Solidarity in collaboration with Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and UNICEF, formed the basis of learning modules for parents. In two municipalities (Viqueque and Ermera), community facilitators used the modules for interactive sessions with parents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Messages were reinforced by other government documents, and by local media including a 48-episode radio drama.

HOW IT CONNECTED (FIGURE 1 BELOW)

- Alternative pre-schools introduced after-school sessions for parents, guided by the themes and messages of the parenting education curriculum. In several cases, the pre-school facilitator was also the nominated facilitator for the parenting education sessions. Using the same geographic location for pre-school and parenting education underscored the visibility and principles of early childhood development as a community responsibility.

FIGURE 1: INTERCONNECTING APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
The situation: early childhood development in Timor-Leste

PROTECTION:
- Timor-Leste’s fertility rate is 5.6 live births for each woman, among the highest in the world.
- Over 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line.
- Physical discipline for children is common place, with a recent UNICEF study finding around 50 per cent of parents believed there was no other way to raise a child.
- Nearly 60 per cent of women report violence at the hands of their partner, and more than half of these are witnessed by their children.

NUTRITION:
- Around 50 per cent of children under five are stunted from poor nutrition.

EDUCATION:
- Only 14 per cent of children aged three to five are able to access pre-school education with significant geographic disparities across municipalities and Suco.
- Around 50 per cent of children commence primary school at the government’s recommended age of six. The highest dropout rates occur in Grade 1 and 2.
- A 2010 World Bank assessment found more than 70 per cent of students at the end of Year 1 could not read at all, and 20 per cent remained illiterate by the end of Year 3.

About the project review

As this phase of alternative pre-schools and family strengthening drew to a close, in May 2017, UNICEF commissioned a project review. The alternative pre-school project was into its second year in Viqueque. A previous project review specific to alternative pre-schools in March 2017 concluded there was strong potential for scaling of the model, in close partnership with the Ministry of Education’s own strategy to make pre-school available to every child in Timor-Leste by 2030. The focus of this second review was the parenting education components, the progress and results of their implementation, and analysis of their interconnections with alternative pre-schools.

THE PROJECT REVIEW FOUND:
- The ‘Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education Project’ supported nine important processes working simultaneously and interdependently (see Figure 2 below).
- Connections between parenting education and alternative pre-schools were slight, but growing. It is too soon to identify to what extent the two project branches support each other’s outcomes.
- Alternative pre-school components are in place, tested and found to be largely sustainable. The parenting education components are only now stabilising. Further time is needed to deliver on the original intent, as well as reflection on how communities have chosen to contextualise the implementation process.
- Mass media associated with this project was enabled through another donor, the Government of Norway, but supported project KPI achievements greatly.

### RESULTS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Strengthened capacity of duty bearers</th>
<th>Alternative pre-schools supported</th>
<th>Children at pre-school</th>
<th>Children positively influenced by family strengthening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>9,814 direct</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>19,018 direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met / exceeded?</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **25%**: Just beginning
- **50%**: Needs adjustment and followup
- **75%**: Progressing well: continue as planned
- **100%**: Maintain and monitor

**FIGURE 2: PROGRESS OF COMPONENTS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION TARGETS**

- Material support to community-based pre-schools
- Training and mentoring for volunteer pre-school facilitators
- Community engagement and mobilisation; school management committees
- Monitoring including # children progressing to school
- Training and mentoring for facilitators, ‘family support teams’
- Messages and products for parenting education sessions
- Integrated ministry messaging on age-appropriate parenting
- Recruiting parents to sessions: implementation
- Radio drama, public service announcements, youth theatre
Findings

IMPACT
It is too soon to measure impact of this project which should be considered a phase in a longer term strategy for early childhood development in Timor-Leste. Rather than concluding that there is no impact, however, the review suggested an early result for longer-term follow up in alternative pre-schools. Baseline data in 2016 showed that without pre-school, around 70 per cent of children could not recognise letters or numbers. Visits to pre-schools after one year (UNICEF 2017) and again four months into the 2017 teaching year showed most students, across age groups, were confidently counting and recognising letters. Some were writing their names.

EFFECTIVENESS:
Key performance indicators overall were met. While behaviour change results are not yet measurable, focus group discussions confirmed that participants could name in utero and infant stimulation as a key learning, while male-only focus groups talked about new reasons and methods for controlling anger and being kinder towards their wives and young children. Some of the most important work enabled through the project is not included in KPI targets as it sits with government policies and practices, for instance:

- Advocacy with the Ministry of Education on ways to incorporate alternative pre-school models
- Long-term planning with MSS for multi-channel support to parents to prioritise the best interests of their children.
- Inter-ministry collaboration on materials and messages for good parenting.
- The startup MECAS inter-ministry working group in 2017

EQUITY
Design of both branches shows good intent for equitable environments for children’s and adults’ participation. Gender considerations are a highlight feature of project results. Connecting to social themes such as child protection, alternative discipline and adolescent guidance, the focus on male inclusion in parenting sessions has potential to improve family and social cohesion across Timor-Leste. The project aimed to serve the needs of vulnerable families first, defined as Bolsa da Mãe cash transfer recipients. While this was evident to some degree, the intent may require refreshing, particularly for parenting education which has become a general community event rather than a targeted invitation. Disability is briefly covered in parenting education modules and pre-school facilitator training, but needs more depth; monitoring of children enrolled at pre-school does not include disability status.

RELEVANCE
The project is addressing key factors holding back children’s development in Timor-Leste, which long-term also has advantages for the nation’s development. Piloting of alternative community-based pre-schools has directly assisted over 1000 children, but has also provided evidence and learning contributing to the government’s goal of universal pre-school by 2030. Connecting these pre-schools with parental stimulation, care and nurture of individual needs, helps not only with education outcomes but also with protection, health, nutrition and participation for Timor-Leste’s children. Strong alignment of priority is evident between the Government of Timor-Leste (GOTL), UNICEF and the H&M global early childhood development strategy.

EFFICIENCY
Efficiency has been challenged by cycles of government consultation and the policy making process, and an election in 2017 has further slowed proceedings. The alternative pre-schools components stayed closer to schedule than those of the parenting education. Schools opened as planned in January 2016 and quickly stabilised as community assets. Family strengthening components, with stronger dependencies on government process, will not complete implementation within the project timeframe. Communities currently need UNICEF and MSS support to schedule, budget and facilitate parenting education events. Cost-efficiency in both branches of work is high, though no robust social return on investment study can done without stronger measures of impact.

SUSTAINABILITY
Alternative pre-schools have good likelihood of sustainability, both in existing community-owned facilities and in expansion of the model in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Reliance on a volunteer workforce comes with sustainability risks, but retention of volunteers over the last 18 months remains high. For parenting education, MSS leadership from the start reflects a strong ambition for sustainability. However, sustainability of actual results is challenged by slow progress of module implementation. The large gap of time between sessions has led to low recall among parents of the contents of modules. It is advisable at this stage to accelerate module rollout, with a suggestion to aim for a smaller number of success than 87 for this first-round implementation.

The review used a formative evaluation approach, including overview analysis using OECD-DAC criteria for program quality as agreed in the inception phase.
Issues for consideration

The following issues for consideration are intended as suggestions, based on the assumption that new phases for alternative pre-schools and for multi-modality parenting education are intended. For consideration of next steps on pre-school implementation and support, stakeholders should also be aware of specific suggestions from the NZ MFAT / UNICEF review of March 2017 (UNICEF 2017). For parenting education planning, with implementation at early stages, there are currently gaps in full understanding of the effectiveness of family support teams, including facilitators, in promoting the modules and their content. This set of considerations will be greatly enhanced by a cross-sector learning event some time in the next six months.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
This includes partners at local and national levels, who provided a range of services through the H&M-funded project and Government of Norway-supported mass media component.

1. Maintain morale and community support for alternative pre-schools in second and third years:
   1.1. Communicate more, and more regularly, with facilitators and school management committees on national level progress (or, for the sake of transparency, lack of progress) in accreditation and government ownership;
   1.2. Ensure volunteer rewards such as leadership training, exposure visits, mentoring, performance-based prizes and community recognition.

2. Ensure timely access for pre-schools to promised material support and basic supplies:
   2.1. Set accountable timeframes between ordering and delivery of standardised materials;
   2.2. Create more responsive procurement systems, and some flexibility of budget in hands of school committee, to meet demand for consumable items.

3. Ensure teaching continuity and decrease community anxiety about the long-term prospects of pre-schools:
   3.1. Return to the action plan for replacing pre-school facilitators, to be sure it is sufficiently responsive to short-term staffing shifts;
   3.2. Communicate the action plan clearly to School Management Committees (SMCs) including appropriate contacts for reporting changes.

4. Maximise opportunities for synergy between ECD and parenting education strategies:
   4.1. More purposeful connection of SMC members and pre-school facilitators with parenting education planning and ‘take home’ ECD messages, including brochures;
   4.2. Consider family-friendly parenting education sessions eg. an extended session of play in the pre-school while parents take part in parenting discussions.

5. Build two-way discussion on family strengthening using mass media:
   5.1. Refine quiz concepts (rules, questions, prizes, and how people can collect them) based on good practice from Viqueque;
   5.2. Continue promising connections between Hametin Familia (the radio, public service announcements and general messages) and Labarik Nia Lian;
   5.3. Where community radio is not available, provide offline audio files for pre-school, youth and community use as needed.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Due to the complexities of this project, several government ministries have played key roles in policy and implementation of policy supporting project goals. Main government partners have been the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Solidarity, but others (for instance, Ministry of Coordination of Social Affairs (MECAS), Ministry of Health, Social Secretary for Youth and Sports) may also consider these suggestions.

6. Take the next steps on alternative pre-schools in line with accountability to goals for 50 per cent pre-school enrolment by 2020:
   - Please see UNICEF’s 2017 review of alternative pre-schools for full considerations on expansion.

7. Develop and normalise cross-sector child-focused planning:
   7.1. MSS to continue to work closely with Ministry of Health, and to strengthen collaborative planning with Ministry of Education;
   7.2. MECAS working group to set time-based goals associated with family strengthening messages.

8. Integrate consistent messaging on parenting across Timor-Leste:
   8.1. Re-establish the interagency working group through MSS so that all NGO behaviour change initiatives produce consistent messaging;
   8.2. Create standard products (brochures, posters) with free copyright for all NGOs to use.
   8.3. Explore opportunities with national church bodies to contextualise agreed modules into church activities.

9. Maximise learning opportunity, and contextualise instructions and expectations for future implementation of course-based sessions:
   9.1. Examine whether ‘invitation only’ is user-friendly, and whether full-scale community events are a valid alternative;
   9.2. Consult with chefe suco on module topics, as there may be a need to change the order of implementation depending on local priorities;
   9.3. Introduce a simple feedback component to facilitator process for parenting sessions.
10. Ensure principles for reaching ‘high risk’ or the most vulnerable families are met:
   10.1. Return to the focus on Bolsa da Mãe recipients, with clear instructions that the implementation of modules must include these families;
   10.2. Begin planning for home visits under the Ministry for Health, to provide informal counselling and advice for parents of young children.
11. Accelerate progress in line with community demand:
   11.1. Address perceptions that modules are not yet released;
   11.2. Work with selected highly engaged sucos on schedules for the rest of the year;
   11.3. Remove the expectation that municipal MSS or partners (UNICEF, Ba Futuru) will be present at all events or cover budget.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR UNICEF

These suggestions are generated from the observations of the H&M-funded components of UNICEF’s ECD projects but are likely to be applicable to broader action plans and integrated activities between UNICEF departments and sectors.

12. Create more realistic schedules of support for MSS, UNICEF and partners:
   12.1. Consider best ways to support workload demands on social welfare workforce, who are implementing multiple policies for children’s welfare and development;
   12.2. Explore retention strategies for volunteer pre-school facilitators: community-based peer structures, exposure trips between villages, advisory roles for particularly strong facilitators.

13. Motivate communities to lead on demand for both pre-schools and parenting:
   13.1. Identify and support community ‘champions’ (both women and men) with information and exposure to other geographic areas of implementation;
   13.2. Clearer articulation of family support teams, their membership, role, structure and connections to other community initiatives.

14. Accelerate module rollout:
   14.1. Increase pressure on national and municipal MSS directors to set and meet schedules for monthly sessions.
   14.2. Closer collaboration with chefes suco to see all sucos receive information at similar times.

14.3. Continue to work on simplifying financial steps from national to sub-national, to avoid delays caused by budget processes.

15. Increase systemic collaboration between alternative pre-schools and the government:
   15.1. UNICEF to focus on strengthening municipal monitoring of pre-schools; in exchange government takes on monitoring of alternative pre-schools;
   15.2. Use pre-school monitoring data to inform refresher trainings based on facilitator gaps and challenges.

16. Realign activities with original behaviour change / communication for development principles:
   16.1. Further develop IEC materials and expand their availability to other outlets eg. primary schools, health centres, the church;
   16.2. Differentiate between child care practices and parenting practices in communication with parents; enhance themes of family and community harmony;
   16.3. Support government on cross-sector intensive planning to decide on best model/ministry for effective home visits and counselling, focusing on Bolsa da Mãe and other vulnerable families.

17. Continue to deliver effective media products with the contribution of children and youth:
   17.1. Support listeners’ groups to a greater degree on collating and sharing feedback;
   17.2. Continue to purchase community radio time in areas with parenting education or Labanik Nia Lian;
   17.3. Seek sustainable partnerships to expand youth drama, for instance, within MYSS youth clubs;
   17.4. Foster negotiations to expand drama into simple TV products, as this is more common than radio in many remote areas, and may be cost-effective given UNICEF’s partnerships.

18. Commence planning for the long-term vision of family strengthening in Timor-Leste:
   18.1. Organise a formal ‘lessons learned’ workshop between the two municipalities;
   18.2. Add a simple satisfaction monitoring tool to parenting education sessions, and use the data to identify quality and relevance of curriculum;
   18.3. Continue to refine materials with the clear expectation of repeat cycles in the same locations;
   18.4. Continue to work to increase the interest and will of national government stakeholders in cross-sector parenting skills, due to its potential for improving family and social cohesion and addressing all indicators of children’s development.

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1 Two donors supported UNICEF’s Alternative Community-based Pre-school project: H&M Foundation in Viqueque only and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Viqueque and Ermera.
2 http://data.unicef.org/resources/state-worlds-children-2016-statistical-tables/
3 https://www.adb.org/countries/timor-este/poverty
5 Asia Foundation (2016), Understanding Violence against Women and Children in Timor-Leste: Findings from the Nabilan Baseline Study – Main Report, The Asia Foundation; Dili
6 https://www.unicef.org/timor-leste/v2_2016_jdc_tt_Final_draft_At_a_Glance
7 https://www.unicef.org/timorleste/v2_2016_jdc_tt_Final_draft_At_a_Glance
Terminology notes

Municipality and administrative posts; governance terms

The government of Timor-Leste has made changes to the terms applied to the different administrative divisions in the country, which are reflected in the words used in this report, as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous term/name</th>
<th>New term</th>
<th>Amount across Timor-Leste</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-district</td>
<td>Administrative Post</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suco (village)</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldeia (sub-village)</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>2228</td>
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Local leaders, or *chefes*, play an important role in governance and systems for child-friendly policy at *suco* and *aldeia* levels.

Alternative Pre-school

The term ‘alternative pre-school’ in this report is used as a shortened version of the full term “Community-based alternative pre-schools.” It refers specifically to UNICEF’s pre-school models implemented in Ermera and Viqueque through parallel projects funded by New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and H&M Foundation. There is also reference in this report to community-based pre-schools operating through other organisations or donors. These may be using similar models but are not part of any UNICEF project.

Facilitator

Three types of facilitators are referred to in this report:

- MSS facilitators are government workers with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, also referred to as child protection officers or social animators. Working at municipal and sub-municipal levels, they have the mandate to implement and oversee a variety of child-friendly policy implementation, including the parenting education programs.

- Pre-school facilitators are community volunteers who are conducting classes in alternative pre-schools. These volunteers are not trained teachers. Selected by the chefe *suco/chefe aldeia*, they receive regular refresher training from local partners in early childhood development and Child-Friendly School (CFS) approaches.

- Community facilitators are working as part of a local team to implement the series of 10 parenting education modules. They were nominated by peer community representatives during the project’s initial parenting education orientation, and have since received weeklong training in facilitation techniques as well as initial and refresher training on the content of each module.
1. Background: The global imperative for early childhood development

“A critical time to shape productivity is from birth to age five, when the brain develops rapidly to build the foundation of cognitive and character skills necessary for success in school, health, career and life. Early childhood education fosters cognitive skills along with attentiveness, motivation, self-control and sociability—the character skills that turn knowledge into know-how and people into productive citizens.”

James J. Heckman, The Heckman Equation (Heckman 2012)
Prioritising early childhood development

It is widely recognised that a child’s early development (from gestation through to the age of eight) is pivotal to opportunity and productivity later in life (e.g. Heckman 2012). This development is dependent on a number of physical, social and cognitive elements. Where they are in place, a child is more likely to survive and thrive, building lifelong ‘cognitive capital’ (Samson et al. 2016).

Awareness and action on early childhood development has long been a goal for UNICEF, and the increased articulation of early childhood needs in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an indicator of shifting priorities for global actors. Because Millennium Development Goal targets on children’s development focused on mortality versus survival, they emphasised health and nutrition (Nonoyama-Tarumi and Ota 2011). The Sustainable Development Goals, on the other hand, bring visibility to children who will survive their fifth birthday but are unlikely to realise their full potential due to deprivation of early developmental needs. The number of children in this plight globally is estimated at over 200 million (UNICEF undated).

Driven largely by poverty, reasons for this include not only poor health and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, but also malnutrition, family and environmental stress, exposure to violence, neglect or exploitation, and inadequate learning opportunities (Beyond 2015, 2013). The interconnections of SDGs, along with their overarching agenda to ‘end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all’\(^1\), mean that progress against all goals will support greater equity of children’s access to early development needs (ARNEC 2016).

UNICEF sees these needs as falling into four broad categories: safety and protection, health and nutrition, early childhood education, and stimulation and care (UNICEF undated). Figure 3, next page, is a Yale University/UNICEF interpretation of the full range of programs assisting early childhood development needs in low to middle income nations. Note the inclusion of three age groups; recent discourse on early childhood development is moving away from discussing only under-fives (the focus of child survival indicators for the MDGs) to include a further stage of early life to the age of eight.

Responsibility for providing the framework of early childhood development needs described at Figure 3 does not lie solely with parents or caregivers, nor solely with governments and their multiple services. Ideally, a supportive environment for early childhood development will integrate effective practices of parents and other members of the household, community volunteers, teachers and other local authorities, working together for the best interests of the child (Samson 2016). Thus, the focus for governments, UN agencies and NGOs is on enabling every influencer in a child’s early development to be effective and consistent in their role.

\(^1\) http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/
Figure 3: Dominant Early Childhood Development program approaches, age-appropriate (information from Britto et al. ‘Quality of Early Childhood Development Programs in Global Contexts (Britto et al. 2011)’)

Note that the original graphic placed parenting programs only within 0-3 years; however, corresponding text from the paper and other work by Britto clarifies that learning parental techniques in line with child rights and early childhood development is not limited to this age group. Parenting programmes, under education, refer specifically to programmes targeting parents and caregivers as primary influencers on their children’s lifelong wellbeing, with pivotal responsibilities during early childhood. Adult education is a broader component that helps everyone in the community understand their role and responsibilities as a circle of care for the children living there.
Early Childhood Education, within Early Childhood Development

“Learning begins at birth. The early years, defined as from zero to age eight, are the foundation for lifelong learning. ECD programmes provide the essential base for the achievement of all EFA goals and contribute powerfully to reducing poverty, the overarching objective of the MDGs, and to achieving social justice.”

Global Meeting of the Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Beyond 2015, 2013)

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals specify targets for early childhood development and school readiness:

**Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.

**Target 4.2:** By 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

Advantages for children attending pre-primary education are not only academic. Pre-school classes complement home-based strategies for stimulation, learning, socialisation and play, and prepare children for the more rigorous structure of primary school learning (World Vision 2016). With the child interacting in the community, recognition of particular needs including challenges of learning or motor skills as well as protection, health and nutrition becomes easier. A further advantage is for parents of children five and under, who can use their child’s pre-school attendance as a connector to childcare knowledge and advice, from teachers and other families.

High-level meetings on child rights, Asia and Pacific (HLM3): One Billion Brains

Recognising a vital and urgent accountability to address inequities in the rights of children, the governments of Asian and Pacific nations have attended a series of high-level meetings on south-south cooperation and action. The first meeting in 2010 concluded with the signing of the Beijing Declaration on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific. At the second, in 2013, early childhood development was one of three focus areas for the delegation.

HLM3 took place in 2016 under the theme ‘A Billion Brains: smarter children, healthier economies’, reiterating the need for governments to invest in ‘cognitive capital’ (Samson et al. 2016) from early childhood onwards. More than 170 delegates from nearly 30 countries attended HLM3, committing to recommendations in children’s social protection, universal health coverage and eliminating violence against children.

UNICEF has been a consistent advisor and convenor to these government meetings. The Timor-Leste delegation to HLM3 included representatives from the Ministries of Health, Education and Justice, in line with respective accountabilities for the four categories of early childhood development, as well as Timor-Leste’s Commissioner on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF’s Country Representative for Timor-Leste.
Parenting Education, within Early Childhood Development

“Parenting can be understood as child-focused interactions, behaviours, emotions, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices associated with child health, development, learning, protection and well-being.”

Pia Britto and Patrice Engle (Britto and Engel, unpublished)

While engaging all in the community on early childhood development is important, the foundational adult-child influencers are parents or other caregivers. Helping parents to take up parenting practices that deliver children’s development needs is therefore a primary focus of many ECD programs. Britto describes parenting skills as falling within five domains: caregiving, stimulation, support and responsiveness, structure, and socialization, but also notes ‘Although these domains can be conceptualized individually, they are interdependent’ (Britto and Engle, unpublished p.2, also see Figure 4 below).

Achieving knowledge of good practice across the five domains can contribute greatly to children’s physical, social and cognitive development. On this basis, there is a global trend towards introducing parenting programs as a holistic approach to meeting children’s needs. A 2006 study of the 191 countries where UNICEF worked found that 88 already had a national program promoting good parenting. Of these, 80 per cent focused specifically on education – modules and sessions to teach parents about age-appropriate childcare (Incorvia et al. 2010).

Figure 4: Five interconnected domains of parenting (source: Ba Futuru/Rainbarrel Communications 2015)

Situation analysis: Timor-Leste’s early childhood development

The starting point for early childhood development is dire in Timor-Leste. According to the 2015 Population Census, 274,922 children are aged between zero and eight, the age when physical, social and cognitive development is crucial for fulfilling potential later in life. Among children of pre-school age, only 14 per cent were enrolled in pre-school in 2015, 36 percentage points lower than the 50 per cent target for 2015 set in the government’s National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2030.

Significant geographic disparities exist across municipalities and Sucos. At the same time, limited access to childcare knowledge affects parents’ ability to provide learning and stimulation opportunities at home, while the high number of children per household constrains the time that parents can spend with their children. A UNICEF needs assessment in 2014 reported over 50 per cent of children under five are stunted from poor nutrition; only around 50 per cent commence primary school at the usual age of six; and the highest dropout rates occur in Grades 1 and 2 (UNICEF 2014). For those that remain at school,

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3 Ministry of Education figures, 2015, based on net enrolment rate (NER) which includes children aged between three and five in that year.
4 In 2016, UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children reported Timor-Leste’s fertility rate at 5.6 live births for each woman, placing it among the highest in the world.
While health messages are beginning to take hold in communities in Timor-Leste, what is less understood are development needs of babies and young children that might assist them in the long term goals of learning, working and improving their quality of life. Communities are not aware of the advantages that could be derived from play, particularly adult-child play that increases reasoning, logic and language."

Child-rearing practices of parents and caregivers in Timor-Leste, Plan/UNICEF 2008

Home-based learning (stories and singing), early stimulation and ordered socialisation can contribute greatly to children’s cognitive development, as can a harmonious family and community setting where violence and neglect are not tolerated. While some families provide this level of nurture for their children, many others do not. The baseline Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey for the parenting aspects of this project (UNICEF 2016) reported gaps in parents’ knowledge of nutrition and hygiene for their children, with only around half receiving information on any topic about infant care. Nearly 50 per cent of parents surveyed thought it necessary to punish children physically for bad behaviour and only around 45 per cent had received information on alternative forms of discipline.

Sharing of the parenting role between mother and father is also limited. In a society where fathers traditionally have little to do with raising children, fathers are less likely than mothers to be given information on child care, and are not well equipped to help with the age-appropriate physical, social and cognitive needs of their children. The KAP survey found that fathers were around one-third less likely to read, draw, tell stories or play games with their children, and half as likely to sing to them. Many family settings are tense, with rates of family violence statistically very high; 59 per cent of women report violence at the hands of their partners, and more than half of these attacks are witnessed by children in the family (Asia Foundation 2016). This creates intergenerational problems; international research has found that men who witness family violence as children are 2.5 times more likely to be violent towards their family as adults (Levtov et al. 2015).

Responding to this challenged environment for children, the government of Timor-Leste has been working with UNICEF since the nation’s inception to develop effective child-focused policy across the full range of early childhood development needs.

Education results are weak. A 2010 World Bank assessment found more than 70 per cent of students at the end of Year 1 primary could not read at all, and 20 per cent remained illiterate by the end of Year 3. The report concluded: “The introduction of focused early reading programs in pre-schools and the training of pre-school teachers to promote the development of early reading skills could be one of the most important investments for Timor-Leste.” (World Bank 2010, p. 24)
A progression of positive policy for Timor-Leste's children is evident in the education sector, in particular:

- **For children of all ages:** The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011-2030
- **Specific to early childhood education:**
  - Establishment of the National Directorate of Pre-school Education in 2010
  - The 2014 Policy Framework for Pre-school Education (PFPE)

The NESP articulates an intention to provide quality pre-schools in each of Timor-Leste’s 442 Sucos by 2030. However, progress towards this goal is slower than expected. Acceleration of pre-school expansion in partnership with UNICEF and the NGO community is now seen as a priority for government. The number of government pre-schools increased from 57 in 2002 to 281 in 2014 (UNICEF 2017) but it is still well below what it needs to be if the universal coverage is to be achieved by 2030. Challenges to be overcome include:

- **Access,** particularly in remote areas: with young children unable to travel far distances to attend a government or private pre-school
- **Number and quality of teachers:** Timor-Leste does not have an accredited pre-school teaching qualification. Of the pre-school teaching workforce, over half are volunteers who generally have poor opportunities for training across the range of early childhood development topics.
- **Quality of learning materials:** Materials are limited in their supply and diversity, a particular concern in areas of Timor-Leste where local languages rather than Tetum are used.
- **Inconsistent standards:** Linked to limitations in teacher training, pre-schools across the country lack support to deliver a consistent curriculum. In 2016 efforts to rectify this were made, with the Ministry of Education introducing a pre-school accreditation requirement.
- **Inclusion and equity:** There are significant disparities in pre-school attendance between municipalities and Sucos within them. Children are also excluded due to their situation; for instance, children with disabilities are not expected to join pre-school, and if they do, there are no modified materials or specialist teaching methods integrated into classes.

Addressing the social protection elements of children's early development needs, the government of Timor-Leste introduced the Bolsa da Mãe cash transfer program for disadvantaged families in 2008/2009 (World Bank 2015). Transfers are conditional on children’s education and health attendance. As well as assisting financially, the program provides an opportunity for government social workers and facilitators to work more closely with these families on children’s care including early childhood development. In 2016, the UNICEF supported the government to develop the Child and Family Welfare Policy, which places family at the centre of children’s welfare. Support to parents and caregivers to take up this responsibility in new ways is an inherent and important aspect of the policy’s implementation phase, with a broader community scope than Bolsa da Mãe recipients; the policy applies to all families. However, at this stage the government of Timor-Leste lacks a mechanism for supporting families in this way. In line with international practices on parenting education (Incorvia et al. 2010), the government is actively seeking solutions to combat these practices and provide strengthened family and community knowledge on the needs of children.

The primary responsibility for child and family welfare sits with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, under the convening Ministry of State Coordination of Social
Affairs (MECAS). MSS administers Bolsa da Mãe and provides the workforce to support the Child and Family Welfare Policy. Recognising that a number of other government departments have strategies linking to early childhood development, and responding to UNICEF and Commission for the Rights of the Child advocacy, MECAS has committed to set up an inter-ministry working group in 2017 to work towards a cross-sector ECD policy.

Figure 5 below shows a theory of change for early childhood development through community, home and pre-school learning in a village or neighbourhood setting. It was prepared in 2014 as part of UNICEF’s broader strategy advising early childhood development at community level. It incorporates education, health, nutrition and child protection, and embeds responsibility and demand for these services in local communities, especially parents, teachers and community leaders. Pivotal to this theory is proximity (walking distance) of a facility that provides a full range of services and support to children and their parents. In this theory, the linkages between school and home learning, and between home influence and community interaction, are crucial. Other adults responsible for children are also connected to the centre to build child protection and advisory networks. In this way, the facility begins life as a pre-school but evolves into a hub of local expertise on children’s early development needs.

This is a complex model but it offers two strong attributes: firstly, a single source and location for children and their parents to access ECD programmes; secondly, efficient collaboration and increased outreach capacity between government ministries. The project under review, ‘Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education’, has enabled a phase of innovation and testing of parts of this theory, emphasising the potential of links between increased pre-school access and parents’ full engagement in their children’s development.
NAME: ‘Alternative Pre-schools and Parenting Education project’
DONOR: H&M Foundation (previously H&M Conscious Foundation)
DURATION: 3 years (May 2014 – July 2017)
COST: US$750,000

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1) 1,000 children aged 3-5 years in one remote municipality benefit from quality early learning interventions; and

2) 12,000 parents and caregivers with improved care practices and abilities to stimulate a child’s early learning and prevent child neglect, abuse, harsh discipline and violence.

The H&M Foundation project drew aspects of the theory of change shown at Figure 5 into an integrated model of community engagement for early childhood development. The project joined two branches of ECD together: the establishment of community-based pre-schools, and parenting education on early childhood development needs: physiological, cognitive and social. As with the broader framework of Figure 5, a geographic location – the pre-school – and embedding of responsibility and demand for early childhood development services at community level were core principles. The project operated from May 2014 to July 2017, a short timeframe for achieving the full extent of behaviour change and priority shifts envisaged, but long enough to build foundations − facilities, curriculum and community ‘champions’ − that would contribute longer term to goals for early childhood development in Timor-Leste.

Using the earlier Theory of Change for integrated early childhood development (Figure 5) as a starting point, a revised version specific to the scope and components of the H&M-funded project appears below as Figure 6.

Figure 6: Theory of Change, ‘Alternative Pre-schools and Parenting Education’ project
The project dovetailed with the UNICEF Pilot project “Alternative Community-Based Pre-Schools”, funded by NZ MFAT. The two donors supported different elements of UNICEF’s project based on the above Theory of Change. NZ MFAT funding covered alternative community-based pre-schools in Ermera and part of Viqueque (Ossu), while H&M funding covered elsewhere in Viqueque (Uatolari). H&M funding was also used for the complementary parenting education modules in selected sucos across the shared target municipalities, Viqueque and Ermera. The parenting education modules (funded mostly by H&M) were used by the alternative pre-schools in all areas and sites, and projects shared concepts and tools, including baseline and monitoring information, for their pre-school component.

In line with international practice (eg. Incovia et al. 2010), parenting education was designed and implemented in close partnership with the Timor-Leste government, including the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS) and Ministry of State Coordination of Social Affairs (MECAS), and took the form of regular, enrolled modules alongside mass media messaging.

Table 1 below clarifies what took place in each municipality under each donor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Viqueque</th>
<th>Ermera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-school gross enrolment rate (GER)</strong>$^5$</td>
<td>27.1 per cent</td>
<td>4.63 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ MFAT-funded alternative pre-schools</td>
<td>Yes: 25 schools</td>
<td>Yes: 64 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;M-funded alternative pre-schools</td>
<td>Yes: 34 schools</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children enrolled at pre-schools, 2016</td>
<td>1,470 (724 girls, 746 boys)</td>
<td>1,632 (831 girls, 801 boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local partner for pre-schools</td>
<td>Kolega Da Paz (KDP), with support from Alola Foundation</td>
<td>Institutu Mata dalan Integradu (IMI), with support from Alola Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;M-funded parenting education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: no local partner for parenting education; implementation was driven from the start by MSS child protection officers.*

Branch: Alternative Pre-Schools

The project worked with communities in Viqueque to design and establish pre-schools in villages where pre-school attendance had not previously been an option. The process for doing so included:

- Forming community school committees for planning and maintaining the pre-school facility.
- Identification of premises as one of two options: community-based, which used an existing community building, or, where no community building was available, home-based where a smaller number of children used somebody’s home to meet.

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$^5$ Ministry of Education (2016), Education Data Book 2015. Data does not include enrolment in alternative pre-schools.
- Identifying and training volunteer pre-school facilitators.
- Providing necessary materials for learning and play.
- Monitoring for quality and results.

UNICEF partnered with local NGO Alola Foundation to coordinate and design content for the project, and in municipalities supported field-based NGOs IMI and KDP on direct implementation. As previously mentioned, government at national and municipal levels were also crucial partners in the planning and implementation of the alternative pre-school models.

H&M funding enabled 34 alternative community-based pre-schools in remote villages of Viqueque municipality, with 1,110 children aged three to five taking part in 2016.

After one year of implementation, a review of the alternative pre-school models was commissioned by UNICEF through the NZ MFAT-funded project (UNICEF 2017). It concluded that the models used were cost-effective and met standards for facilitator-to-child ratio, relevance of curriculum and gender equity of access. The review also found that the project had been successful in developing commitment from communities including their leadership. At least five communities had begun processes for expansion by building dedicated premises for pre-school with community funds (for instance, Uaitame suco, as described in the case study section, Annex 1 p. 70). These were all promising signs for expansion of community-based models through the National Directorate for Pre-School Education in future years.

In Ermera, a third model was tested, parents educating their children directly through home schooling. This model was intended for very remote households where children could not safely travel to a community-based facility, and was not used in Viqueque. Mary McKillop International provided materials and support to this model, including elements of parental education, but it was not connected formally to the parenting education curriculum.

It should be noted that this is part of a broader action plan spanning several years of partnership between the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, which also includes supporting public pre-schools attached to primary school facilities, implementing child-friendly school (CFS) principles and advising on policy and budget pathways for sustainable efforts towards the 2030 goal.

The project’s approach to enhancing parental roles and responsibilities was based on a multi-modality information campaign, as envisioned in the Parenting Programme Phase 2 report (Ba Futuru/Rainbarrel Communications 2015). This document stressed the importance of different layers and reach for communication efforts: the broadest but least targeted channel of mass media, a middle range of parenting education sessions in communities, and the final piece as a household-level, personalised service through home visits to vulnerable families.

The document described:

*a multi-disciplinary approach where specialists from various areas (i.e., health, education, protection, WASH, nutrition and agriculture) work together at the community level on the same key messaging, with reinforcement by a local-to-mid-level communication campaign and follow-up support via existing aldeia-level networks. A ‘Family Support Team’ at the suco level will support a total of 10 key behaviour impact messages that show the importance and inter-*
relatedness of all sectors in getting improved development outcomes for the most disadvantaged children in Timor-Leste. The approach uses economies of scale to maximize opportunities to reach parents and caregivers with crucial information.

The proposed approach will provide parents and caregivers with new information and skills through monthly community sessions, which also provide a platform for parents to discuss and come up with local solutions. These sessions will be led by a community-based team comprised of already respected and effective community workers. Each team will decide how to deliver each message and organize the community sessions (or ‘Reuniaun Inan-Aman’) once every month. They will also determine how to best promote the key message through various channels in their community such as the local health post, pre-school and other education facilities, faith-based activities and any private groups... A communication campaign will reinforce messaging through a weekly radio show, listening groups, guided theatre for young people, billboards, posters and word-of-mouth communication.”

This multi-channel model was in line with international best practice on Communication for Development (C4D). In the Timor-Leste setting it was closely connected with the goals of the MSS Child and Family Welfare Policy, including concepts for networking community representatives with a clear role in children’s wellbeing.

The parenting programme sought outcomes of improved application of knowledge in the family: so, not only to communicate the information, but also to inspire its usage. It laid special emphasis on three cross-cutting themes: involvement of fathers as equal partners in parenting, results for both girls and boys in the home, and inclusion of children with disabilities along with a better understanding of every child’s individual needs.

The process included:

- Designing messages in close consultation with Ministries of Health, Education and Social Solidarity (see Table 2, next page)
- Training MSS facilitators in curriculum and role, with the view for cascading (‘train the trainer’) recruitment and training of parenting education convenors down to village level
- Engaging with local leaders to champion the parenting education modules
- Producing materials for coordinated rollout in both municipalities
- Monitoring and refining approaches to suit community needs and perspectives.

Parents were intended to connect with the parenting education programme through their involvement with the government’s cash transfer programme Bolsa da Mãe (see p.11), and, where the alternative community-based pre-schools were taking place, through their involvement with the pre-schools. The advantage of synchronised implementation with the NZ MFAT-funded alternative pre-schools project has been that, even though H&M did not fund schools in the municipality of Ermera, the schools have been included as target facilities for parents to gather and learn. This has been an effective way to recruit parents; a needs assessment from mid 2016 found ‘extreme enthusiasm’ for the concepts of pre-school learning for children and parents’ broader involvement in learning as adults.
Table 2 below describes the 10 modules of the curriculum, showing that parenting education has not been solely about the 0 – 8 age group. Though the recruitment of parents was often focused around their engagement with pre-schools, sessions were open to anyone who was interested. It was understood and anticipated that parents would have children of all ages, and would need advice on how to work with their children in positive, loving ways through all the cycles of childhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Behaviour change sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction:</strong> General parenting</td>
<td>Give every child unconditional love and emotional security through showing verbal and physical affection, and sensitivity to her/his needs and feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early stimulation</td>
<td>Interact with children from the time they are born—and even in the womb—through games and play, songs, rhymes, stories and reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>Protect children from all forms of violence and abuse, and ensure children are supervised by an adult or a child older than 10 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive discipline</td>
<td>Use non-violent discipline approaches with your child to reward positive behaviour, look for solutions together, and redirect unwanted behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>Ensure pregnant women eat a balanced and nutritious diet; start breastfeeding within one hour of birth, give only breastmilk for the first six months, and start complementary food at six months with continued breastfeeding until 24 months; feed young children six months and older daily nutritious foods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene</td>
<td>Wash hands with soap at important times of after using the toilet, after cleaning a baby’s bottom, before eating or feeding children, and before preparing food; Always use a latrine and do not defecate in the open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth registration</td>
<td>Register your child immediately after birth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health danger signs and care seeking</td>
<td>Take your child immediately to a health facility if they are showing signs of serious illness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for all children</td>
<td>Send your child to school from an early age and keep involved in your child’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent issues</td>
<td>Discuss risky behaviours and practices with your child in a supportive rather than punitive fashion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff have reported a particularly rewarding outcome in the increased participation of fathers in parenting decisions and interactions as a result of what they have learned. As well, communities have demanded more regular sessions than originally programmed, reflecting their eagerness to learn for the sake of their children.

The radio drama, which uses the life of a ‘normal’ extended family in a soap opera format to promote solutions to common child care dilemmas, has 48 episodes, enough to span an entire year of broadcasts. It first went to air in Viqueque on August 12 2016, and from February 2017 was broadcast through national channels. **Technically this component was not directly funded by the H&M Foundation**, but its implementation has been so closely aligned with the production of messages and modules for the Parenting Education project that it is considered part of the project.
Crossover components for more holistic ECD

With strong synergy of needs and outcomes between early childhood education and home/community-based early childhood development, this project has presented an opportunity to test integration and networked community involvement in good parenting practices including learning and stimulation. The two streams of implementation were intended to connect, in the following ways:

- Parents of children at alternative pre-schools were among those invited to take part in parenting education classes (including in alternative pre-schools funded by the NZ MFAT-funded partner project).
- Pre-school facilitators were nominated by their community to become parenting education facilitators in at least five locations.
- All pre-school facilitators received priority training in four modules of the parenting education curriculum.
- Key parenting messages were intended to be used by partners including other NGOs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

The approach was well timed to align with other elements of UNICEF’s child protection work, especially the strengthening and accreditation of the social welfare workforce at municipal and administrative post levels, and the expansion of child protection networks in sucos and aldeias. To date these initiatives are happening in different municipalities; Viqueque will be the first municipality to manage both.

The project also had initial connections through the parenting education curriculum to the Ministry of Health’s public messaging. These connections were managed at the national level but less evident at municipal or suco level.

Figure 7 below shows a timeline of implementation for the two branches, as well as relevant crossover with other government initiatives. Note that the branches were not designed concurrently, and so there are no specific timing dependencies. As discussed in the components section of this report, intersecting activities were more likely to slow down implementation than to support it.
### Figure 7: Timeline of implementation, ‘Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education’ project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Alternative pre-schools</th>
<th>Parenting education</th>
<th>Other relevant government initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>UNICEF and H&amp;M Foundation commence global partnership on early childhood development; project start date February 2014</td>
<td>UNICEF, MSS work on framework for caregiver support including rapid needs assessment of parenting practices</td>
<td>Social Welfare Workforce Development Framework and Policy Costing with the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Community, government consultation on alternative models of community-based pre-school</td>
<td>Local partner selected (Ba Futuru)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geographic mapping of pre-school coverage by Suco</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local partner selected (Alola)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum development for teacher training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communities for pre-schools identified; community engagement commences (through local partners KDP in Viqueque, IMI in Ermera)</td>
<td>Module topics and key messages developed in consultation with government, CSOs and parents' representatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School management committees begin to meet</td>
<td>Knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey conducted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>January: Pre-schools open (125)</td>
<td>January: Ba Futuru commences ‘train-the-trainer’ chain of knowledge for module content, purpose, facilitation skills</td>
<td>March: Child and Family Welfare Policy to final draft and endorsed along with the National Human Resources Strategy; child protection networks active in three municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March: Parenting education programmes commence in 15 pilot villages, supported by municipal MSS teams</td>
<td>National Competency Framework for Social Welfare Workforce and Appraisal system to final draft; Social Welfare Workforce Curriculum in place (15 module accreditation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>August: Radio drama airtime begins</td>
<td>June: MoH updates to national MNCH handbook; work between ministries to align messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parenting education programme rolls out to 87 villages, 1st module</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SECOM takes up radio drama nationally; national talk show to commence 2017</td>
<td>MECAS agrees to host inter-ministerial working group on ECD; drafting ECD policy commences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>January: Pre-schools reopen (123); over 1,000 children transition from pre-school to primary school Year 1.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Methodology

A focus group in Ermera, where parenting education was taking place through the local alternative pre-school. This group stressed the importance of having family friendly sessions and catchup materials for mothers and fathers who were not able to attend on the day.

Photo credit: UNICEF/ K Chalk, 2017
Rather than a full evaluation, this is a formative review of project components, process and early results\(^6\) for the H&M-funded project. Lines of enquiry were set by UNICEF with specific requirements for learning and adjustment based on that learning, before the next phase of alternative pre-schools and parenting education commences. The consultant has grouped these lines of enquiry, 10 in total, under the generic headings of the OECD- DAC principles of program quality\(^7\): impact, effectiveness, relevance, efficiency (including cost efficiency/value for money) and sustainability. UNICEF has also requested a further criterion of quality, that of ‘equity’. Thus, the review scope is as follows:

**IMPACT**
*(the project’s contribution to positive shifts in social indicators affecting children, their wellbeing and development)*

- What, if any, results can be seen from the project’s expansion of early learning opportunities for pre-school age children and parenting education programmes\(^8\)?

**EFFECTIVENESS**
*(the project’s achievements against its targets and objectives, and factors supporting these achievements)*

- To what extent have results been achieved against the project’s planned outputs and key performance indicators (KPIs)?
- What strategies and approaches of this project have been most effective in influencing improvements in access to, and quality of, pre-school education and parenting programmes in Timor-Leste?
- What are the innovative aspects of the project?

**RELEVANCE**
*(the project’s suitability to priorities and policies of country, target group, end users, partners and donors)*

- How relevant has this project been to Timor-Leste?
- Has the project aligned to the governments’ and partners’ priorities, policies and reform agendas, and to the global agenda for child rights?

**EFFICIENCY**
*(the project’s outputs in relation to its inputs, and whether a reasonable return on investment is evident)*

- What are key lessons to improve project implementation including coordination, monitoring and reporting mechanisms?
- Can a Return on Investment (including Social Return on Investment) be made or projected at this stage of the project? If so, do models indicate value for money?

**EQUITY**
*(the project’s performance against cross-cutting goals of UNICEF’s country programme to build landscapes of opportunity for all, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity or cultural background)*

- To what extent have the different vulnerabilities of boys and girls been taken into account by the project?

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\(^6\) “Review” is defined as “the periodic or ad hoc, often rapid assessment of an undertaking’s performance that does not apply the due process of evaluation. Review tends to emphasize operational issues” (p.30. Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNDG June 2016). This paper defines itself as a review due to limitations of impact measurement (see limitations section, p.33), but takes a broad scope of components into account – so, weightier than many reviews. However, conclusions on findings and considerations have a strong focus on operational issues.

\(^7\) [http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacprinciplesforevaluationdevelopmentassistance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacprinciplesforevaluationdevelopmentassistance.htm)

\(^8\) It is too early to expect measurable change for children at impact level. Acknowledging this, the question for impact has been rephrased by the consultant in consultation with UNICEF. It now allows the consideration of partial or anecdotal change indicating that the project is on track to achieve impact goals.
To what extent are children with disabilities benefiting from the project?

How has the project supported inclusive practices for gender and disability in planning and implementation of community-based initiatives?

**SUSTAINABILITY**

(*the likelihood that the project’s benefits will continue beyond the end of the project cycle*)

- Are the community-based pre-school models and parenting programme replicable for national scale-up in terms of the structure, costs, implementation modalities and other inputs? What can be recommended regarding the most cost-effective scale-up of the alternative pre-school model in the Timor-Leste context based on gathered information to now?

The final two questions form the basis of conclusions and issues to consider:

- What can be done to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and improve the quality of services provided in terms of the structure, costs, implementation modalities and other inputs?
- What is the suggested/adjusted Theory of Change for alternative pre-school and parenting education programme in future implementation?

The questions from the Terms of Reference, along with several documents in the literature provided, reflect an intent to scale up successful components of community-based early childhood education and parenting education. The government is already committed to do so and has particular interest in understanding from current ECD projects what is working (or not), and why.

To answer these questions with confidence, some complexities of inputs working in mechanism need to be highlighted. The relationship between ’Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education’ inputs and other UNICEF projects in ECD is inextricable. Projects are connecting, sharing strategies and resources (including human resources) and contributing to each other’s achievements. As well as community-based early childhood education and parenting education, this broad and complex change map includes policy improvements, mass media messaging, government coordination and community-based welfare networks.

Figure 8 (next page) shows the area of UNICEF’s strategy for early childhood development where this project fits. The map includes foundational and parallel pieces from other projects that have set the scene for project components to take place. The actual H&M-funded components are shown in green. This view shows that components are not delivered on their own but have dependencies and results, linking within and outside the project logic. With this in mind, review should also be component-based, with two viewpoints: firstly, components in isolation for their value and quality; secondly, components in mechanism to understand their contributions to Timor-Leste’s overall early childhood development strategy. Some of these components have already been evaluated as part of the NZ MFAT-funded ’Alternative community-based pre-schools’ project. Others are unique to the H&M-funded project and require full and triangulated analysis to draw conclusions on their overall effectiveness (see Figure 9, p. 28).
Particularly at the foundational level, strategies and partnerships already existed before the implementation of the H&M project. The project’s theory of change maximises these foundations, providing the inputs for an important phase within Timor-Leste’s long-term vision for children’s opportunity to survive and thrive.
As research into social change commences, decisions must be made on the most suitable way to measure and learn from this change. Quantitative, quasi-experimental (‘before and after’) random sample measures are usually unsuited to progress reviews because they seek to show outcome-level change rather than the changes building towards those outcomes (Bamberger 2012). Even when it is possible to measure change in people’s lives, the connection between data sets and programme inputs may be assumed rather than proven.

In the case of the Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education project, although a quality baseline report on knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) in childcare was conducted, only a year has passed since its completion. This limits relevance of baseline/endline comparison at this time, though stakeholders express strong intent to conduct a matched KAP survey at some stage in the future. In the meantime, the review questions indicate a need to understand the quality and value of the project’s process and practices, so that lessons can be applied to refine and improve community-based early childhood development.

This need is best met by theory-based review. It can also be comparative in nature, but compares theories rather than outcomes. Much of theory-based logic is founded on the unpredictability of social outcomes. Because no two social settings are alike, results will always differ from case to case. This is known as context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) theory, where mechanisms applied in context lead to outcomes and can be mapped accordingly (Befani 2012).

While there are many ways to construct and test a theory of social change, the consultant proposed two to be used for mapping social change from ‘Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education’:

- Case study (eg. Yin 2014) of certain complex components
- Process tracing (eg. Beach & Pedersen 2013) of causal theories (from case study and individual component analysis) to connect cause to effect with rigorous logic.

This was a project review using formative evaluation approaches. Process tracing focused on connections between operational components; it was too early to connect through to impact level. The information is likely to be of use in...
the future as a starting point for identifying contribution to change when it occurs. In this way, the qualitative review offered here supports baseline/endline survey as part of a full monitoring, evaluation and learning framework for UNICEF. The review is also intended to become part of UNICEF’s shared memory and evidence base for early childhood development, an increasingly in-demand element of UNICEF’s child-focused portfolio.

An imperative to create a product immediately relevant to stakeholders called for a final phase of consultation around consensus on results. This took the form of a workshop bringing together project implementers from national and municipal levels, with the specific goal to generate jointly written considerations for future implementation. The agenda for this workshop is attached as Annex 4.

Specifically, the consultant has worked through the following phases of analysis:

- Literature review; document review
- Theory of change analysis; identification of significant components of the H&M project
- Identifying areas of validation or learning within the theory of these components in mechanism, to guide the content of focus group and key informant discussions.
- Field-based consultation with beneficiaries and end users, facilitators and other relevant community figures, to validate and provide further insight on the theory of components in mechanism.
- Short case studies in two locations drawing on the consultations above as well as direct observation of project activities.
- At UNICEF’s request, though not part of research methodology, two human interest stories including images that can be used to communicate and promote the results of the project to date.
- Collation of results and perspectives into a face-to-face briefing for project implementers, followed by group work to co-write and endorse considerations for stakeholders (government, implementing partners and UNICEF).

A schedule for implementation and completion of this project appears at Annex 5.

The reviewer consulted with four main informant groups:

- End users of the ECD initiatives;
- Duty-bearers associated with implementation;
- Community representatives associated with (or with external insight into) implementation;
- Government and NGO partners.

Because a knowledge of the project was necessary for meaningful perspective, random sampling was not relevant, and informants participated by invitation, in a variety of ways. Table 3 below shows the participation methods and Figure 10 the breakdown by type of participants by the end of the review. An itemisation of scope of enquiry and relevant methods appears at Annex 6.
Table 3: informant type and participation methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant group; why?</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Participation method</th>
<th>Locations required</th>
<th>Numbers required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End users of the ECD initiatives To ensure targeted and quality programming is taking place</td>
<td>Parents, other caregivers, older siblings.</td>
<td>Focus groups (mixed and split by age / gender) Observation where possible (eg, classroom visits)</td>
<td>Viqueque Ermera</td>
<td>Focus group with mothers: 2 Focus group with fathers: 2 Focus group with other caregivers and/or family members: 1 Mixed focus group: 5 TOTAL FOCUS GROUPS: 10 TOTAL PARTICIPATION: 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty bearers associated with implementation To understand sustainability of programming, and the integration between project components</td>
<td>MSS national / municipal Preschool facilitators Community facilitators Other ‘family support team associates’ School management committee members</td>
<td>Key informant interviews, face-to-face</td>
<td>Viqueque Ermera</td>
<td>MSS: 8 Pre-school facilitators: 5 Community facilitators: 0 (but included in focus groups) SMC members: 3 TOTAL PARTICIPATION: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty bearers not associated with implementation To gain observer viewpoints of project components and their intended / unintended consequences for the community</td>
<td>Primary school teachers Local chefes suco/aldeia</td>
<td>Key informant interviews, face-to-face</td>
<td>Viqueque Ermera</td>
<td>Primary teachers: 1 Chefes suco: 2 Chefes aldeia: 0 (but included in focus groups) TOTAL PARTICIPATION: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project partners and observers To identify strengths and limitations of project to date and build suggestions and considerations for future phases.</td>
<td>Commission for the Rights of the Child SECOM Contracted partners UNICEF current and former staff</td>
<td>Key informant interviews, face-to-face / phone</td>
<td>Primarily Dili</td>
<td>NCRC: 1 (plus additional two in final workshop) SECOM: 0 (but included in final workshop) Alola Foundation: 1 Ba Futuru: 1 KDP: 3 UNICEF: 5 FINAL PARTICIPANT NUMBERS: 133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: proportional breakdown by participant type, location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type and location, key informant interviews</th>
<th>Type and location, focus group discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF staff</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSS national</td>
<td>Total, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCRC</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National partner, Dili</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school teachers</td>
<td>Women only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local partner, municipality</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSS, municipality</td>
<td>Men only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School mgt committee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school facilitators</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chefe Suco</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender breakdown, group discussions (n=104)

Men 43%  Women 57%
Ethical considerations

This methodology is dependent on the willing and informed participation of people, including children, as key informants and end users of the Alternative Pre-Schools and Parenting Education project. This participation is vital and in itself an ethical responsibility. At the same time, certain steps must be taken to ensure that individuals who provide personal information are protected from any risk associated with their participation, under principles of autonomy, benefit/‘do no harm’ and equity of treatment across the sample of participation. In this review, principles of informed consent, confidentiality and voluntarism were applied, including written information to each participant or focus group leader with the option to withdraw at any stage. A technical reference group comprising UNICEF and government partners provided a quality assurance mechanism including ethical review. More information on handling ethical considerations, as well as the written information (English/Tetum) is available at Annex 7.

Limitations of methodology

A number of limitations to full scope of enquiry are acknowledged, although the methodology selected goes some way to mitigating them. These are:

Limitations in design:

- **Insufficient time for impact**: The project has only one year of implementation to measure, and excellent data from the 2016 baseline of ECE and parenting knowledge cannot be used as a comparison reference so soon. This has meant a fully qualitative research base.

- **Sampling low numbers of sites**: The site visits were limited by time allowed and distance required to travel. This meant that, though 87 villages were conducting parenting education, very few participated in focus groups to inform the results of the review. The focus group methodology chosen aimed to achieve group consensus within that group. However, the results should not be taken as fully representative of all viewpoints across the project.

- **Crossover of funding and strategy**: UNICEF has been coordinating a broad framework for change in children’s early childhood development including a number of concurrent projects. This approach was advantageous to results because it allowed for seamless ongoing progress for community-based children’s care and protection, regardless of the expiration date of funding streams. However, it created a need to discuss projects and initiatives that were not directly funded by H&M. The review discussion has attempted to clarify these interdependencies between projects when explaining results.

- **No methodology for measuring mass media impact**: There is no intention to survey radio listeners to understand whether messages from the radio drama are resonating, so any results of this initiative are assumed or projected.
• Participation bias: In any focus group, it is likely that the majority taking part are people who have engaged with the project, enjoy it, and are comfortable taking up the opportunity to discuss it in detail. This can create a positive bias to results, as those who are less happy with the project are unlikely to hear about or attend the focus group session. The independence of the consultant was important to mitigate this bias, and UNICEF also assigned a national consultant rather than UNICEF staff for field trip coordination and translation.

• Translation bias: In most cases, key informant interviews and focus groups were held in local language with dependency on real-time translation for the consultant to take part and guide discussions. In these situations, the nuance of meaning can be lost. The consultant transcribed interviews directly from the translator in real time so that meaning could be checked and queried with the stakeholder, rather than post-interview translation and reliance on third-party transcript.

Limitations in implementation:

• Gender within the sample of key informants: While key informants in theory represented both men and women, the sampling leaned towards traditional gender assignment: so, for instance, only male chefes sucos/chefes aldeias, and only female pre-school facilitators. This does not affect the validity of any statement but it has limited the discussion on equity of gender participation. It is not clear whether male pre-school facilitators or female chefes have had the same experiences as their counterparts.

• Limited interaction with communities who have attended the parenting education sessions: Linked to the challenges of reviewing at this early stage of implementation, the reviewer spoke to people who had taken part in parenting education in only two out of the six locations visited. In other locations, because focus groups had limited knowledge of the programme, discussion was mainly theoretical.

• Adjustment of original enquiry methods for human interest / case study: Going into the review, there was enthusiasm from UNICEF to use Most Significant Change methodology to identify community priority results. However, as communities had only progressed to Module 2, with timing gaps between modules, it became apparent that any community change could not be assigned with confidence to the project at this stage. Case studies and human interest stories were identified by community leaders (see Annexes 1 to 3), but cannot be seen as representative of all local experiences.
3. Overview of findings

Mothers at a focus group session on parenting education. Ermelinda, left, said: “We were told about babies being able to hear in the womb. I was pregnant, so I went home and tried it. I got some music and put it on my stomach. And he started dancing. Really! It was exciting to find out it was true.”

Photo: UNICEF/ K Chalk, 2017
This section considers project results in light of criteria for quality development outcomes. It looks at the project as a whole, then, within this, the current position of both its branches: early childhood education outcomes and family strengthening outcomes. While some results belong clearly to one branch or another, others sit in the crossover section, which presents a third set of results to be considered. The discussion includes all results under a single heading but efforts have been made to clarify which area of outcome is relevant to observation.

**Impact**

*(the project’s contribution to positive shifts in social indicators affecting children, their wellbeing and development)*

- What, if any, results can be seen from the project’s expansion of early learning opportunities for pre-school age children and parenting education programmes?

'It am learning how to be a father now, working together with my wife. We take shifts. Sometimes she’s not well and I’ll do everything but sometimes it works the other way too. We give each other little breaks. Before I thought the role of the father was to look for the money to provide, but now I want to respond to the baby as well. I’m happy, my role is clearer.'

*Male respondent, focus group, Ermera*

It is premature to measure impact at this stage, and this review’s methodology was not intended to do so. Baseline data is in place for quasi-experimental comparison at some stage in the future: on children’s learning and socialisation to measure pre-school impact, and on parents’ knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) on parenting to measure positive shifts in children’s care and nurture. For parenting education, considering the number of modules still to be delivered, the need to refresh the strategy for parenting education through preschools, and the process of setup and stabilising for the MECAS inter-ministry working group, this review suggests leaving at least two years between baseline and endline data comparison.

Rather than conclude that there is no impact, however, the reviewer offers the following anecdotal results, as encouragement to continue and strengthen collaborative efforts. These results are based on interviews, focus group comments and direct observation during field visits. The first demonstrates steps towards a pathway of education for life, and is recommended as an area for more robust research in the future. The second is an early indicator of effectivenes rather than impact; the change, even if it were measurable, would not be at a level where outcomes for children can be tracked. It is highlighted here as an area for ongoing monitoring, making it possible to connect future change for children with the content and approach of UNICEF’s parenting education.

- **Pre-school and school readiness:** Baseline data of children’s pre-literacy and pre-numeracy levels\(^9\), sampled early in the school year of 2016, showed that without pre-school, around 70 per cent of children could not recognise letters or numbers. Visits to pre-schools in November 2016 (UNICEF 2017) and again four months into the teaching year (May 2017) showed most students, across the range of age groups, were confidently counting and recognising letters. Some were able to write their names. Interviews with school authorities (baseline, NZ MFAT-funded project review and this review) consistently collaborated a link between pre-school attendance and strong Year 1 results. Note that in 2017, 582 children in Viqueque\(^{10}\) started primary school with this head start of one year’s alternative pre-school education.

- **Parenting education and strengthened families:** Focus groups took place in four locations where the parenting education sessions had taken place at least twice. Of those who attended, many named messages of in

\(^9\) At their most basic definition, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy indicate the ability to recognise letters, numbers and short words, as a pre-cursor to reading and maths. However, a number of other skills also come into play for both areas of learning, including recognition of shapes, recognition of number of objects, matching phonetics to letters, oral communication and sentence formation. In Timor-Leste, this can be complicated by the number of different languages in use – primary school is taught in Tetum, an important second language is Portuguese, and at-home language may differ again.

\(^{10}\) This includes children from H&M project pre-schools as well as pre-schools funded by NZ MFAT in different locations across Viqueque.
uterore and infant stimulation as a key learning, and some said they had
talked about this with others. In a focus group consisting only of male
participants, discussion centred on new reasons and methods for
controlling anger and focusing on kindness towards their wives and young
children. This in itself does not prove behaviour change, but it is a
promising start.

Table 4 (next page) shows quantitative results for the H&M project, based on
UNICEF’s semi-annual monitoring reports, and considering numbers of adults
and children reached through different components of the project.

Figures for alternative pre-school access represent tangible benefits for
children who attended, in villages where this education facility had not
previously existed. Figures for parenting education are less certain, and
suggest the potential reach of education initiatives rather than the actual
participants. Audiences for the parenting education sessions were reported at
an average of 70 participants per suco, but do not reflect repeat participation
or completion of the course. With only two to three modules delivered to date,
it is too early to conduct a meaningful review of parents’ retention of new
knowledge or interest in applying it. Thus, while KPIs have been met in line
with project design and measures, behaviour change results are currently likely
to be much smaller in number than listed here. The anecdotal and self-reported
change in male participants’ attitudes to their partners and children, mentioned
also in the impact discussion above, is an early sign of effectiveness but scale
of measure is lacking.

Some of the most important work enabled through the H&M project is not
included within KPI measures: for instance, advocacy with the Ministry of
Education on ways to incorporate alternative pre-school models, or the long-
term planning with MSS for multi-channel support to parents to prioritise the
best interests of their children. Parenting messages developed in the first 18
months of the H&M project are already being used across different government
ministries and at times by other NGOs.

Table 5 (following page) shows parallel activities taking place through multiple
government ministries that will support the intentions of the H&M parenting
education project across Timor-Leste. All are supported by UNICEF technical
teams. The H&M project has provided opportunity for these teams and their
government contacts to reach inter-ministry on planning and review of positive
parenting practices, closely linked to early childhood but with relevance across
all stages of children’s development.
Table 4: Comparison KPI targets, design versus actual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Target by end of project</th>
<th>Actual to July 2016</th>
<th>Actual to March 2017</th>
<th>TOTAL ADULTS (duplicates removed)</th>
<th>TOTAL U8 CHILDREN (duplicates removed)</th>
<th>Project KPI met?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of duty-bearers with strengthened capacity (caretakers, parents, facilitators, committees, govt)</td>
<td>10,000 parents and care-givers through parenting programme</td>
<td>900 in 15 communities, plus 82 facilitators</td>
<td>9,814 in 87 communities, plus 200 facilitators; 9,000 radio drama, 400 youth drama</td>
<td>19,014</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pre-schools</td>
<td>Training and materials for 30 alternative centres</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1110 children included below</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children who enjoyed improved ECD (direct beneficiaries)</td>
<td>1,000 in pre-school (Viqueque)</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>2017 enrolment to be advised 300 in primary school</td>
<td>1110 children included below</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children age 0-8 through parenting programme</td>
<td>30,000 children age 0-8</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>37,018</td>
<td>37,018</td>
<td>Exceeded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children to be positively influenced by strengthened ECD systems, policies, plans (indirect beneficiaries)</td>
<td>280,000 0-8 or 100,000 3-5. NB: population aged under 8 in Timor-Leste is estimated at 274,922 (2015 figures); target unrealistic in timeframe.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>240,000 (based on radio reach – impact unlikely)</td>
<td>240,000</td>
<td>Not met</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Government ministry actions contributing to ECD targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Potential number children to benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Pre-school curriculum in place, 2016</td>
<td>All 13 municipalities</td>
<td>112,560 (aged 3 to 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to create legal framework for recognition of community-based pre-schools, 2017</td>
<td>At this stage, Viqueque and Ermera</td>
<td>3,102 (existing students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consideration of expansion of alternative pre-school model to other municipalities, in partnership with UNICEF and donors</td>
<td>Under discussion, but eventually contributing to goal “All children attend pre-school by 2030”</td>
<td>112,560 (aged 3 to 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Inclusion of early stimulation, child protection and positive discipline references in national maternal and child health handbook, received by every child at birth, 2016</td>
<td>All 13 municipalities</td>
<td>274,922 (aged 0 to 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parenting messages included in training for family health counsellors (volunteers), 2016</td>
<td>All 13 municipalities</td>
<td>274,922 (aged 0 to 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parenting messages included in facilitation of Mothers’ Support Groups, implementation to commence May/June 2017</td>
<td>Eventually, all 13 municipalities</td>
<td>274,922 (aged 0 to 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social Solidarity</td>
<td>Basic budget in Ermera/Viqueque for child protection officers (social welfare workforce) to complete parenting education, 2017</td>
<td>Two municipalities</td>
<td>52,657 Ermera, 30,923 Viqueque (aged 0 to 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation of expanded social welfare workforce using child protection networks for children’s and women’s protection, 2016 onwards</td>
<td>Eventually, all 13 municipalities</td>
<td>462,657 (aged 0 to 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of State for Social Communication (SECOM)</td>
<td>Broadcasting the Leste Art radio drama nationally from February 2017</td>
<td>All 13 municipalities, but particularly in Dili and surrounds.</td>
<td>240,000 (aged 0 to 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early childhood development talkback show, nationally, 24 episodes, 2017</td>
<td>All 13 municipalities, but particularly in Dili and surrounds.</td>
<td>240,000 (aged 0 to 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of State and Coordination of Social Affairs (MECAS)</td>
<td>Committed to set up an inter-ministerial ECD coordination Working Group, 2017 (draft ToR in place)</td>
<td>All 13 municipalities.</td>
<td>274,922 (aged 0 - 8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on 80% Timor-Leste radio listenership
Effectiveness (cont.)

- What strategies and approaches of this project have been most effective in influencing access to, and quality of, pre-school education and parenting programmes in Timor-Leste?
- What are the innovative aspects of the project?

Part 4: Component Review (p.45) looks in detail at the effectiveness of components as set out in the review framework. In summary, then:

- This review reiterates the findings of the NZ MFAT-funded project review (UNICEF 2017) that the implementation of alternative pre-schools in communities that previously lacked ECE opportunities has been highly effective. The idea resonates with parents because they are aware of risks of poor learning and school dropout for their children and are keen to give them a better start to schooling. Community structuring and administration of the school has been successful and people are proud of what they have achieved.

- Though school committees are making the most of home-based pre-schools, there is a clear preference for using a community facility rather than a home. This is voiced in focus groups and also demonstrated by the number of communities who are finding ways to create a purpose-built community facility (see case study, Annex 1).

- Training and support of pre-school facilitators as the schools opened has been of good quality, though some gaps to ongoing support and followup are now evident. The plan for addressing attrition of facilitators is not clear and is of major concern to communities.

- Basic records on attendance and progression to primary school show that the project has met its targets and supported its theory of change for children aged three to five. In all six aldeias visited by the NZ MFAT-funded project review, and in three out of the four visited by this review, all children of appropriate age were now enrolled in pre-school.

- UNICEF coordination of parenting education messages and curriculum has been effective in delivering high quality, integrated products, though at a slower pace than originally intended. Agreement between government ministries on good parenting practice, the adoption by the Ministry of Health of messages about cognitive and social development alongside physical care, and the startup MECA inter-ministry working group in 2017, are all outcomes contributing to the potential for nationwide strengthening of families in Timor-Leste.

- The messages themselves appear to be the right ones, delivered in a way that engages different groups, encourages participation and sharing of experiences, and stimulates personal reflection on current behaviour. They could be enhanced by alternative modalities to reiterate messages, for instance take-home brochures, or playing of the radio drama directly where radio is not available.

- The parenting education sessions do not yet demonstrate effectiveness. More work is needed on creating the ‘family support team’ including where relevant the integrated role of the pre-school facilitators. The modules are not yet seen as community property, to be used and contextualised in accordance with local systems and needs.

- UNICEF’s advocacy has led to a partnership with the Secretary of State for Social Communication (SECOM) to broadcast a 28-episode ECD Talk Show to be aired in early 2017 on top of the national of the 48-part parenting drama series currently broadcast on community radios and will be broadcast weekly on national radio from February 2017.
Relevance

(the project’s suitability to priorities and policies of country, target group, end users, partners and donors)

- How relevant has this project been to Timor-Leste?
- Has the project aligned to the governments’ and partners’ priorities, policies and reform agendas, and to the global agenda for child rights?

The project is addressing key factors holding back children’s development in Timor-Leste, which long-term also has advantages for the nation's development. Piloting of alternative community-based pre-schools has directly assisted over 1000 children, but has also provided evidence and learning contributing to the government’s goal of universal pre-school by 2030. Connecting these pre-schools with parental stimulation, care and nurture of individual needs, helps not only with education outcomes but also with protection, health, nutrition and participation for Timor-Leste’s children. The introduction to this report has already discussed the growing profile of early childhood development as a contributor to equality, rights and sustainability, relevant to the achievement of nearly all Sustainable Development Goals, while early childhood education through pre-school has its own specific targets to be achieved by 2030.

Strong alignment of priority is evident between the Government of Timor-Leste (GOTL), UNICEF and H&M. UNICEF has played a pivotal role in the GOTL strategy for children, under guidance and close collaboration from the Commission for the Rights of the Child. Across UNICEF’s country programme, projects demonstrate close alignment with national frameworks, policies and goals. This project has drawn together different models for enhancing early childhood development in line with UNICEF’s own priorities for children aged 0-8 and the H&M global ECD strategy.

As end users of project deliverables, community members found both branches of the project relevant to them. Enrolment of children in pre-school was consistently high across the aldeias visited, though national stakeholders acknowledged that more work needed to be done in other locations. Focus groups universally reiterated the relevance of parenting education sessions, even when attendees had not yet taken part in them.

All locations visited had not progressed beyond Module 2, early stimulation. This may be why a lot of focus group participants saw the content as most applicable to young parents having their first or second child, with more experienced parents as a secondary audience. The curriculum was not always personally compelling to respondents. Of 10 focus groups, 8 contained at least one participant commenting that they already knew how to raise children and had no need themselves for the information. Both men and women voiced this opinion. However, this did not affect their intention to join the sessions out of interest, or to attribute general value to the course for its potential in helping other families, particularly young parents or those without easy access to extended family (especially grandparents). When focus groups talked about loving and playing with children, reducing family tension and violence, or community-wide consistency of advice to parents, there was general agreement that all families should be receiving this information. These themes transcended the mechanics of child care to become something more transforming and motivating for parents. This observation is

“During the sessions there were a number of emotional moments, with some parents asking why nobody had shared this information about the vital role of parents and caregivers with them before.”

“I wish I could have this session earlier, my relationship with my children could have been different.”

Grandfather, Matahoi

UNICEF Mid-year report to H&M Foundation, Alternative Pre-schools and Parenting

11 Arguments for investment in early childhood education often connect to productivity and economic potential once children become adults. eg. Heckman 2016
Education Project, June 2016

in keeping with comments at the end of parenting sessions, as reported in UNICEF reports to donors (see left).

A strong take-away message so far has been in utero bonding, which is part of early stimulation. This is a new concept (although some mothers told the reviewers they had suspected it). The module encourages fathers as well as mothers to be part of the child’s life at this stage, by whispering to it or kissing their wives’ pregnant tummy. Focus groups in two locations confirmed that people are trying it at home. A focus group with only male participants also revealed that attendees of the sessions are working on anger management, more able to understand that crying from a baby is not bad behaviour, and more interested in working alongside the mother to pre-empt and meet the needs of infants and young children.

An original intent to take an exit survey for participants on the quality and relevance of the session was not followed through, due to timing constraints and perceived low literacy levels for a written survey. This type of data helps considerably with aggregating and implementing participant feedback. A simpler feedback system, for instance using counters and containers to collect ratings on quality of information, quality of facilitation, and likelihood of using messages, will enhance MSS and partner insight in this regard.

Efficiency

(the project’s outputs in relation to its inputs, and whether a reasonable return on investment is evident)

• What are key lessons to improve project implementation including coordination, monitoring and reporting mechanisms?

With such close ties to government process, projects of this nature may struggle to demonstrate efficiency. The agility that comes with internal decisions and actions is complicated by cycles of external consultation and the policy making process. Actors within government change, making it necessary to recommence engagement and orientation on priority issues for children. For Timor-Leste, 2017 has been an election year, where campaigning and subsequent transition of leadership have been the focus of government. Though working with these factors can be challenging, the ‘heavy lifting’ that has taken place seems likely to pay off in sustainability of efforts through the accountable long-term role of government ministries.

Of the two branches, the alternative pre-schools components have managed to stay closer to schedule than those of the parenting education. The design and agreement of pre-school models, identifying local partners and developing training tools, took longer than expected; however, the project was able to catch up. Schools opened to schedule in January 2016 and have stabilised as community assets in a relatively short amount of time.

The same may still be possible for the family strengthening components but not within the timeframe of this project. Partners are aware of this, and of a number of unavoidable factors – changes of leadership within ministries, the advantages of cross-ministry consultation, and the need to work towards sustainable ministerial support – that have caused delays compared to the original timeline. Intensive planning is now under way to regain the momentum needed.
A key challenge with efficiency of the parenting education initiative is the local expectation that partnership projects of this nature should be providing tangible services. Parenting education sessions address needs that are theoretically relevant to UNICEF, government and community, but in practice many stakeholders give it lesser priority than activities with more immediate benefits. Some stakeholders continued to describe this as ‘UNICEF’s project’. UNICEF did not appoint a local partner for parenting education in the same way as for alternative pre-schools, because MSS intended to play this role. This indicates a strong commitment for sustainability from the ministry. MSS has done what it promised, but at a slower pace than expected. There is a clear dependency from local communities on UNICEF and municipal MSS for scheduling, budgeting and facilitating the events, until government and community capacity is built to do so directly. Considering there are now 87 sites where the parenting programme is taking place, this is impractical in the short term. The cross-sector ‘family support teams’ originally envisaged could greatly reduce this dependency, and it is important to look at new ways to build these teams.

Cost-efficiency in both branches of work is high, though a robust social return on investment study cannot be done without stronger measures of impact. The consultant proposes two basic theories that project value for money results and could be used in years to come, as follows:

- **Pre-school social return on investment:** It is well recognised that investment in early years of learning pays off greatly in adult productivity (Heckman 2016). If current enrolment rates remain steady over five years, more than 5,000 children in Viqueque are likely to have greater opportunities to contribute to family, culture, community and nation. Using Heckman’s or similar cost analysis tools, it will be possible to project long term economic and social outcomes.

- **Parenting social return on investment:** An area with potential to become a primary legacy of the parenting education project is in reduction of family violence. Rates of family violence are high and their results intergenerational (Levtov et al. 2015). The curriculum contains a module specific to alternative discipline; as well, the emphasis on parents’ partnership in raising the child is intended to strengthen the role of the father and contribute to better understanding and reduced tension between family members. Future monitoring may incorporate a social return on investment analysis with a focus on societal benefits of strengthened family harmony.

UNICEF teams prepared costing estimates for both branches of the project, in preparation for transition of responsibility including budget to government. These appear, along with additional analytical comments from this review and the NZ MFAT / UNICEF project review, as Annex 8. Standout cost-effective practices include:

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12 The 2011 Universal Periodic Review on Timor-Leste’s corporal punishment status reported that 39 per cent of parents said it was acceptable to beat their children with a stick as punishment, but a much higher ratio (60 per cent) of children reported being punished in this way. A recent Asia Foundation survey found that 59 per cent of women had experienced violence at the hands of their spouse or partner; of these, 75 per cent of cases were severe, and 55 per cent happened in front of children (Asia Foundation/Nabilan 2016)
• Train-the-trainer, commencing with MSS (parenting education) and with locally present NGOs Alola and KDP (pre-schools), down to locally nominated facilitators.

• Cross-training, so that school committee members and pre-school facilitators could also present the parenting education modules.

• Selection of facilitators (in most cases) with complementary roles in community systems, for instance, chefes, religious leaders, women’s representatives, youth representatives.

• An emphasis on locally sourced materials including where possible parent contributions or community donations of furniture, toys or stationery (alternative pre-schools).

• After messages were approved (but noting that this was a lengthier phase than expected), integration into IEC materials in MoH, MoE, MSS.

• UNICEF’s own multi-faceted initiatives for children’s rights in Timor-Leste, which allowed projects from different donors to work in close collaboration on education and protection components.

**Equity**

*(the project’s performance against cross-cutting goals of UNICEF’s country programme to build landscapes of opportunity for all, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity or cultural background)*

- To what extent have the different vulnerabilities of boys and girls been taken into account by the project?
- To what extent are children with disabilities benefiting from the project?
- How has the project supported inclusive practices for gender and disability in planning and implementation of community-based initiatives?

The NZ MFAT-funded project review (UNICEF 2017) found good adherence to the principle of equal inclusion in alternative pre-schools implementation, from students through to staff and school committees. The basic premise of the project was to respond to geographical inequity of access to education. Mapping of existing pre-schools, both public and private, was the foundation for selection of aldeias to benefit from the alternative pre-school approach. The gender ratio among students is approximately 1:1, with a very slight bias towards girls. For teachers, while more women than men are volunteering, men are still well represented. Pre-schools are including, but not purposely selecting, children of Bolsa da Mãe recipients; it is not necessary where universal enrolment is taking place. Children with disability, particularly mobility disabilities, benefit from the proximity of the schools and the inclusive nature of learning for all abilities; however, the review noted that few pre-school facilitators (10 per cent) were designing materials and lessons with children’s special needs in mind. This is a new concept, including in government facilities, which calls for specific training.

The parenting programme articulates a commitment to inclusion through: "special emphasis on three cross-cutting themes: involvement of fathers, gender equality (ensuring that both girls and boys benefit equally from parents’ follow-up in regard to school, household chores etc.), and inclusion of people with disabilities (ensuring that parents who have children with disabilities are given the support they need)." (Ba Futuru/Rainbarrel 2015)

In parenting education, because the focus is on mothers, fathers and other caregivers, benefits in the family should apply equally to girls and boys. However, as those benefits are currently too slight to measure, it was not possible to test the theme of equal treatment in the home. Instead, the gender focus for parenting was on balance and equal participation of women and men in parenting sessions. An equal ratio of participation is an ambitious target considering that the topics centre around childcare, traditionally a female responsibility. Though at an early stage, the session-based approach is showing
good progress in connecting with men. If the programme continues to deliver similar inclusion results, a major outcome will be increased sharing of parenting responsibilities between men and women. Men are receptive to advice on their role in the family; even at baseline, it was found that fathers are participating more than mothers (66 per cent versus 52 per cent) in community sessions about children (UNICEF 2016/1).

Projecting further, and connecting to social themes such as child protection, alternative discipline and adolescent guidance, the focus on men in this project has potential to improve family and social cohesion broadly across Timor-Leste. The parenting education program was written with this outcome in mind. After testing of materials and messages, UNICEF deliberately redesigned the products so they had more appeal to men.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that both mothers and fathers use corporal punishment to discipline their children. To stem the intergenerational nature of violence against children, alternative discipline is not only about reaching men; it is a core cross-gender objective linking with UNICEF’s work on child protection and child-friendly schools.

Both branches of the project have an explicit intent to engage the most vulnerable families – which in Timor-Leste is usually defined as Bolsa da Mãe recipients due to their low income and limited opportunities for economic improvement – but use a model that includes all in the community. This does not appear to be at the expense of Bolsa da Mãe families, who are definitely engaging with both branches of the project.

The initial idea to make attendance at parenting sessions a condition of cash transfer was not found to be feasible. Instead, family support teams were instructed to engage Bolsa da Mãe parents through direct invitation and prioritise their attendance. It does not appear that this has happened consistently. In one location demonstrating higher than expected turnout, the technique for gathering participants was for the chefe suco to announce the event on Saturday morning for attendance later that day. While this helps to meet exposure targets, more work can be done on ensuring the ‘high-risk’ families attend: not only Bolsa da Mãe but also families experiencing high levels of tension, for instance, in caring for children with disabilities or where relationships are strained.

Disability as a theme is touched on in modules but is likely not to play much of a part in sessions unless raised by participants. Facilitators may need reminding to raise the topic of special needs for children of all abilities, and additional information so they can be ready to chair helpful and constructive discussions. These skills would be enhanced by specific disability sensitivity training for facilitators and other members of family support teams and school committees.

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13 Other conditions of cash transfer through the Bolsa de Mae project are schooling and health checkups with vaccinations. These are monitored annually. It was recognised that participation in parenting education could not be measured in the same way. It was also agreed between partners that for best success, families should have genuine interest in taking part, rather than participating to comply.
Sustainability

*(the likelihood that the project’s benefits will continue beyond the end of the project cycle)*

- Are the community-based pre-school models and parenting programme replicable for national scale-up in terms of the structure, costs, implementation modalities and other inputs? What can be recommended regarding the most cost-effective scale-up of the alternative pre-school model in the Timor-Leste context based on gathered information to now?

The NZ MFAT-funded project review (UNICEF 2017) found strong potential for sustainability of the alternative pre-schools, citing the low cost of the community pre-school model, evidence of community support (financial and in-kind), steady enrolment in the second year of pre-schools, and the ongoing efforts of UNICEF with the Ministry of Education on expansion and merging of alternative pre-schools under government standards and budget. While communities are concerned about the model’s dependency on unpaid volunteer facilitators, there are action plans in place for attrition, including an annual recruitment and training process; these need to be better understood in the community. Despite some dissatisfaction reported to the reviewer, the retention of volunteers 18 months into the implementation is very high, indicating personal rewards of taking part. For instance, one facilitator in Viqueque was subsequently elected as *chefe aldeia* reflecting improved community status as a result of his participation in the project.

This should not be taken for granted. Project teams are encouraged to expand their knowledge of good practice in managing and motivating volunteers, and to ensure rewards are ongoing. Suggestions for scale up of the model have already been made in the NZ MFAT / UNICEF project review (UNICEF 2017), and this section is included as Annex 9 to this report.

For the parenting education branch, MSS leadership from the start reflects a strong intent for sustainability, aiming to promote the program as a government initiative rather than a timebound input from the aid and development sector. However, sustainability of actual results is challenged by slow progress of module implementation.

Sustainability of products as a first step to results is strong. This also has implications for long-term cost efficiency of the family strengthening strategy, because the hard work of preparation is complete. The messages and modules for parenting education are in place, as is the radio drama, and both have an excellent shelf life. Revisions to modules are part of the long-term process, but are not nearly as intensive as the original drafting and review. Good integration of messages with the Ministry of Health is already evident.

Quarterly community sessions were intended to be aligned with mass media messaging and household visits, working together to ‘push four to five key messages on parenting each year’ (Ba Futuru/Rainbarrel 2015). This is not yet happening, though there is clear progress towards the vision. However, delays in releasing approved modules, followed by some miscommunication on scheduling responsibilities and budget, have affected the regularity of sessions in *sucos*. The large gap of time between sessions has led to low recall among parents of the contents of modules, with some focus group participants unable to remember whether they actually attended. Recovery from this is possible, but dependent on finding ways to accelerate the remaining community sessions, and to tap into clear community thirst for the information.
The project aimed to integrate parenting sessions where possible into pre-school interactions with parents. The precise instructions for doing so are not yet clear, and, for now, local partner KDP is leading the sessions. Pre-school facilitators will need retraining and greater connection with the community-based planning of parenting education modules to step with confidence into a parenting facilitator role. Based on experiences so far, it seems that contextual and locally led information sessions will work better than strict alignment with modules; more detail on this is given in the components section (p.45).

Repairing the disconnect between mass media and parenting education is also important if the C4D strategy remains relevant and resonant with stakeholders. However, it may be that multi-modality strategies are impractical in this first round of implementation. For instance, while the radio programme eventually covers all topics in the curriculum, it is not designed to cover the topics at the same time they are heard in the community. Broadcasting nationally means that many will hear these messages some years in advance of receiving the full curriculum in interactive sessions. Interviews with stakeholders revealed that the C4D component of the project was designed externally to Timor-Leste and may not have taken into consideration limited knowledge and confidence to drive an information campaign of this nature. It may be that the best way forward is to expand mass media and government literature as a separate project from the parenting education sessions.
4. Operational findings

KDP project staff host a parenting education session at a pre-school in Viqueque. An important crossover element between project components, this area of work started around March 2017.

Photo credit: UNICEF/ K Chalk, 2017
Material support to community-based pre-schools

This discussion includes the quantity and quality of supplies provided to pre-schools, both startup and ongoing; stationery, posters, books, hygiene kits, curriculum materials and other items needed to support the daily operation of the centres.

At a pre-school in Matahoi, Viqueque, young students practised counting to five using maize cobs.

“We use sticks and small stones for counting. We fill sand in plastic bottles and make paper balls. Children throw the ball on the bottles to see if they will topple.”
Pre-school facilitator (UNICEF 2017)

Overall the material support to pre-schools has been solid and well planned, and the following discussion focuses on filling small gaps that remain.

Original supplies were received in time to open schools for the 2016 school year. Since then, the process of needing to place orders through the local partner has seen some procurement delays. Often local communities have stepped in to help with top-up of paper, pens and textas. To a degree this is part of the design of community-based facilities, but it must be acknowledged that there is some anxiety about financial contributions compared to the government pre-school allocations. The original package of materials, which mirrored that of government, did not include soap and cleaning materials, and pre-school facilitators have reportedly paid for these supplies from their own funds. In 2017 UNICEF modified the package to include soap.

Documents regularly refer to ‘locally available learning materials’, not only to save costs but also to stimulate children’s creative play with objects around them every day. The NZ MFAT-funded review found that only 11 per cent of teachers reported using locally made materials, and there is some confusion over what the term actually means – a way to stimulate imagination, or a cost-cutting measure. Improvisation was evident, and went some way to filling a void in purchased toys and sports equipment. For instance, as suggested in the facilitator training, teachers made balls out of scrunched paper and tape. More creative examples were also observed: a ‘sea’ for paper boats made out of rocks and twigs, or dried maize cobs to assist with counting.

In interviews, pre-school facilitators and local partners commented that an absence of toys was noted by children and parents. It was difficult to come up with new items, unless they were donated. Again, decisions on equipment were based on what was provided to government pre-schools, so it is likely that all schools face the same challenge. The NZ MFAT-funded review found that play and sport (gross and fine motor skills) were less common than activities promoting literacy and numeracy, and visits as part of this review found very limited equipment available for creative play. The model also expects that communities find ways to provide chairs and tables so the children can sit off the ground; mats are provided, but in some instances where the pre-school facility has a dirt floor the communities’ ability to provide furniture has implications for children’s health and hygiene. While it has been important to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the alternative pre-school model, there is a case to be made for a more flexible budget overseen by the school management committees, so that decisions on equipment can fit in with the needs of each pre-school.

With disability in children taking many forms, the NZ MFAT-funded project review found that not enough information was available to teachers on how to identify or respond to disability. The under-five age group is a crucial time for doing so, because subtle forms of disability such as learning difficulties, poor eyesight or hearing can be mitigated with appropriate treatment. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that this is a highly complex and technical area, which is also not covered in government training at this stage.
Data on pre-school attendance was not disaggregable by disability. According to the NZ MFAT-funded project review, 10 per cent of teachers reported designing learning materials suitable for children with disabilities. It is unclear whether this is because children with disabilities were not in the class, or whether the teachers were not confident in designing according to their needs.

Training took place as intended for pre-school facilitators, mostly before the commencement of the 2016 school year. The quality of this training in the eyes of its participants was high, though some gaps may be filled for next time: in particular, disability awareness, motor skills, and supervised play.

Another indicator of quality is tenure of the volunteers. Considering that their small stipend is not in cash but in a small mobile phone credit, attrition of volunteers is surprisingly low. In Viqueque, of 62 pre-schools commencing in 2016, 59 remain operating in May 2017 with the same facilitators.

As asked why they took up the role and motivation for continuing, pre-school facilitators cited community interest and their personal commitment to the children in their care. They remained interested in previous students’ progress in primary school. Some, though not all, saw opportunities for career progression to a paid role in the future. These factors tie in with international experiences of reasons for volunteer workforce retention. However, some risks to retention are also evident when compared to best practice in this regard, particularly in two areas: support to achieve results; and material incentives for self and school.

- **Achieving results:** The NZ MFAT-funded project review found facilitators needed more technical support on the day-to-day operation of the centres, for instance, executing lesson plans and maintaining records. In Viqueque, the primary provider of this personal mentoring was the implementing partner Kolega da Paz (KDP), but KDP is not a specialist early childhood education provider, nor are there many such providers available in Timor-Leste. The review suggested that the local partners lacked necessary mentoring themselves in order to be able to pass on advice and motivational support to the pre-school facilitators. Ideally, the primary technical relationship for facilitators would be with the Ministry of Education, though a model for connecting alternative pre-school facilitators with curriculum advisors is not yet agreed.

- **Material incentives for self and school:** The 2014 needs assessment for the alternative pre-school project identified facilitator incentives as a key component to sustainability and even community cohesion. This need has only partially been met, with a US$10 phone credit per month for facilitators and, in Viqueque, T-shirts for the staff who started in 2016. Facilitators were also paying for school supplies, either from their own funds or by asking parents of their students for help, a need that had not been originally communicated as a
Community responsibility. Without needing to move to cash payment, there are other ways to reward volunteers, for instance small gifts for the school at each visit from partners, cross-exposure meetings and peer interaction with recognition of high achievers.

Crossover elements in ECE facilitator training and mentoring
Volunteer ECE facilitators were among the first batch of administrative post ‘train the trainer’ sessions for parenting education modules. Not all were trained to be community facilitators, but all pre-schools received their own flipchart and reference material, which has helped with integration of messages into discussions and sessions with parents.

From September 2016, national coordinating agency Alola Foundation set targets for parenting sessions to take place through pre-schools. However, due to limited training, pre-school facilitators are not yet expected to run these sessions unsupported. With Alola support, KDP is providing this support with four staff across 59 sites, which has made the original target of a session in each facility per month unrealistic. At the session attended by the reviewer, KDP led discussions and pre-school facilitators did not play a part. Rather than focusing on the set curriculum, the session moved to elements contained in the flipchart based on the interest of participants. This was an interesting contextualization of the materials, with clear merit, but it was not in line with original training.

Interestingly, in the KAP survey data collected in 2016, 46 per cent of parents reported attending parenting education sessions before any formal sessions had taken place. This implies that there may be existing programmes that pre-school facilitators can connect to, rather than needing to start from the beginning with the MSS curriculum.

Community engagement and mobilisation; school management committees
Establishing school management committees has proven vital to the success of the pre-school component of this project. Usually with two or three members, the committees were tasked with a clear role to increase community demand for pre-school education, and to lead decisions and negotiations on finding a school premises.

Interviews with school committee members highlighted the importance of chefe suco as a leader in the process. Where chefes were convinced of the value of pre-school, their selection and guidance of school committee members led to highly effective groups (see case study). Committee members came together for training from national partner Alola that further underscored the significance of early childhood education for child and community development. The expectation of this training was that committees would continue to champion behaviour change towards pre-school attendance long-term.

Asked whether their role was labour-intensive, school committee members interviewed for this review answered that it was not. Many aspects of planning, such as deciding on a venue or organizing work groups for cleaning and landscaping, fitted well with existing community roles and responsibilities.
‘We see the possibility of continuing (our school) if commitment from community and chefe suco also continues. If parents don’t want it, we must continue to tell them that it is working for the children who come. But is it possible to have more to show, giving the facilitators more support and confidence, and new materials and toys so the children tell their parents they want to come?’

Mother in focus group

Since schools commenced, their role has been minimal, though they hold occasional meetings to discuss upcoming needs. No turnover of school committee members was evident. Note though, that this is only a small sample of the total (four of 87).

As a measure of their success in engaging communities to support the preschool, the NZ MFAT-funded project review found that 78 per cent of alternative pre-schools were receiving some form of community contribution to support their goals. The most common were school meals (42 per cent), school cleaning (40 per cent), helping provide materials (40 per cent) and school uniforms (39 per cent). Community contribution of this nature appeared less likely to be happening in home-based centres. However, several communities took the lead in moving the pre-school from homes into more permanent community buildings (see case study).

Community enrolment in pre-school differed between sucos. The NZ MFAT-funded project review found that, in the six adeias visited, all children of preschool age were registered. This review visited four pre-school locations; of these, three claimed universal enrolment. At the fourth, the school committee estimated that less than half of the children were attending, because their parents did not yet see the value; when asked what might change this, they suggested stronger chefe support as well as more materials that would attract children.

More effective monitoring of pre-schools and their registration proportional to the community would help to recognise where take-up is low. In such settings, the school committee may benefit from another round of training, support and guidance specific to household level engagement. Acceleration of suco level parenting education is also intended to drive demand for education for children of all ages, and it seems relevant in contexts of low demand to introduce this module sooner rather than later.

Crossover elements of community engagement for alternative pre-schools

As with the pre-school facilitators, school committee members were invited to take part in parenting education training. Most made themselves available for this. It was not possible given the small window of community observation to determine to what degree school committee members have taken part in preschool or suco level parenting education sessions since that time. They were not among the participants receiving refresher training for module presentation in Ermera, May 2017. This indicates they are not currently seen as primary partners in implementation of the modules.
Monitoring, including number of children progressing to school Year 1 from alternative ECE

Monitoring for numbers, quality, results and learning outcomes in the public system is in the hands of the Ministry of Education. The alternative pre-schools project has needed to duplicate these systems in the short term. While the NZ MFAT-funded project review found this to be a current weakness, spending too much time in formalising monitoring structures that are intended to align, and eventually merge, with Ministry of Education may not be the answer. However, the proposed handover to government through a set-up that allows community leadership to continue has complexities. To some degree its likelihood depends on data evidence that the models are responding to demand, triggering sustained enrolment and delivering quality early childhood outcomes. According to the project’s Alternative Pre-Schools Needs Assessment, monitoring is intended “To provide data and progress towards the GOTL’s Five Year Costed Action Plan for expansion of the pre-school system… (and) to support improvements to the Ministry of Education’s own practices: capacity building is needed for coordination purposes as well as for data collection, management, and analysis at the district and central levels” (p.27). Monitoring data is also needed by the donor, who identified evidence as a global outcome of their partnership with UNICEF: ‘Key evidence on the effectiveness of the implementation of the alternative early learning opportunities gathered, analysed and disseminated widely’ (Collaboration Plan between UNICEF and H&M, 2014).

Records are available on the number of children progressing from alternative pre-schools to primary school, as shown in Figure 11 below. Beyond this, the NZ MFAT / UNICEF project review found that data was not collected or used systematically. Suggestions based on this have already been made to UNICEF and local partners, summarised as follows:

- Consistent tools used to collect data on children’s participation, number and duration of sessions/classes held per week
- UNICEF to focus on strengthening municipal monitoring of pre-schools; in exchange government takes on monitoring of alternative pre-schools
- Analysis of monitoring data used to inform refresher trainings based on gaps and challenges that facilitators are facing

![Figure 11: Children progressing to primary school, Viqueque (note: data includes H&M and NZ MFAT funded schools)](image-url)
Training and mentoring for community facilitators, ECE / CP facilitators, school committee members and other relevant community figures on parenting education

The Ministry for Social Solidarity (MSS) has been an implementing partner from the beginning, with their existing workforce pivotal to the training and mentoring component of the project. It was essential to strategy that the parenting education project was seen as a government program rather than a separate, timebound initiative from the aid and development sector. Municipal MSS child protection officers and gender focal points were assigned leadership of the project in Viqueque and Ermera, including responsibility for training and supporting nominated facilitators from sucos across the municipality. Implementing partner Ba Futuru spent six days on ‘master training’ for MSS delegates, who then co-hosted municipal and administrative post training before taking on mentoring and refresher training responsibilities during implementation.

After this, administrative post sessions drew community representatives together to plan for the events. This was intended to create a shared voice and responsibility for promotion of parenting messages. The community nominated facilitators for further training, usually people with existing community responsibilities such as women’s representatives, teachers or youth representatives. Figure 12, left, maps this chain of Train-the-Trainer and community representative engagement, while Figure 13 below itemises specific roles from the community at a representative training in Ermera, May 2017. From this sample, it seems the participation of local women’s representative massively outweighs other community duty bearers, but no reason was found for this in focus groups, where facilitators were balanced in terms of gender.

Quality of training according to participants was high. The facilitator’s handbook is a thorough reference not only of the content for sessions but also on effective facilitation techniques for group work and discussion. The quality of implementation depended entirely on the quality of the facilitator and, according to UNICEF staff, has been mixed for the first round. They suggest a tighter set of criteria for selecting, to find people with some previous teaching or public speaking skills; as well, it is worth noting the original design suggested a team be responsible for the sessions (Ba Futuru/Rainbarrel Communications 2015). The first few sessions have been attended and often co-facilitated by MSS and UNICEF, which has been intensive for labour and transport for the staff involved.
It may also inadvertently have led to community perceptions of the parenting education course as government-led, rather than the original intent of a community-owned learning process. Even though facilitators had been coached through to Module 5, they were not moving ahead without prompting, support and MSS budget (for refreshments). As of May 2017, more than 12 months after the first session in the first suco, only a handful of communities have delivered more than two modules.

Another difference in approach between original instructions and community-based implementation is the selection of participants. The parenting sessions were intended to be a course, attended by the same people throughout and with an emphasis on vulnerable families (defined loosely as Bolsa da Mãe recipients, though other vulnerabilities also exist in communities). Family support teams, with chefe support, were to recruit parents in advance, engaging their interest through description of the course and its advantages. In reality, it was more likely that the chefe suco announced the sessions in the community and anyone could come. This contextualisation is not necessarily a disadvantage, though it may have had greater effect if the other two components of behaviour change (mass media and home visits) had been more utilised in local communities. Though the sample of aldeias visited was small, it appears from these visits that the vision of a family support team has not been achieved, and that the different roles – facilitator, event planner, community mobiliser – are working in isolation of each other.

A ‘lessons learned’ event between the two implementing municipalities is strongly encouraged before expansion of the project to other areas. This will help to identify why communities have chosen to work in this way, benefits or limitations of doing so, and a refreshed process for future ToT and implementation.

**Crossover elements of parenting education training**

Considering the project’s emphasis on early childhood development integration opportunities, the parenting education implementation took place largely in the same sucos as alternative pre-schools. Pre-school facilitators and school committees were among the first to be trained in delivery of parenting education. Not all have attended, but as they are now expected to integrate the parenting education modules and messages as a function of the pre-school, facilitation training should be repeated. This could also help with some challenges around the retention and fair treatment of volunteers already mentioned, as there are personal rewards for pre-school facilitators in expanding their expertise, leadership skills and community recognition.
IEC materials on children’s age-appropriate care, direct and integrated

‘... international literature suggests that behaviour change requires messages to be repeated over time and delivered through more than a single channel... four to five key messages should be reinforced, repeated and supported over a period of several months by various ministries.’

Parenting Programme Phase 2 Inception Report (2015)

Parenting education was intended to have three components of increasing local relevance for at-risk families: mass media, two-way information sessions and home visits. Of these, the implementation focus for the H&M project has mainly been on information sessions. Home visits have not yet begun and there is some confusion over which government ministry (health or MSS and their child protection network) might take on this function. Mass media production targets have been met, through a radio drama as well as community-based youth drama troupes funded by the Government of Norway. However, most UNICEF resources (financial and human resource) have focused on getting the parenting education messages and modules in place.

For the parenting education sessions, collateral is of high quality, with the flipcharts built to last and full of engaging, clear, images and graphics as well as written messages. Focus groups across five locations were consistent in wanting a take-home version of what they had learned, so they had an easy reference when explaining new ideas to other members of the family or community. This need may be met to some degree by the parenting education handbook currently being printed, though its production has not been well aligned with the timeline for session rollout. Containing all modules in the same booklet is also not quite in line with what communities need; a simple, cheaply produced pamphlet on a single issue, available for pickup throughout the community at any time, is more in line with the multi-modality principles of communication for development (C4D).

The inception report for the Parenting Programme does not specifically mention printed collateral, which may be why ideas have not developed into an aligned set of IEC materials for public use. Billboards and posters were included among the list of deliverables for mass media. Posters aligned with modules were produced and circulated but were not seen on site visits. UNICEF chose not to proceed with billboards because of the expense associated, but less expensive durable options such as canvas posters were not explored. A canvas was produced to promote the radio drama.

Integration of messages between ministries is already apparent, for instance in inclusion of child protection and early stimulation messages in the Ministry of Health’s child health booklet, which every child in Timor-Leste receives at birth. It will receive a greater boost with the formation of an inter-ministerial ECD group under MECAS and development of an ECD policy, a commitment recently made in line with UNICEF’s advocacy to promote and implement holistic approaches to ECD in the country.

Integration between NGOs on messages for parents was also an early intent of the project, based on the observation in 2014 that NGO actors had widely disparate messages targeting communities, sometimes in direct contradiction of one another. An interagency working group was reportedly established connected to the NGO messaging target. It is not clear from interviews at which stage this working group became inactive, but this

Example of a poster accompanying the parenting education curriculum
review was unable to find out any more information about it than what is stated here. As this was a government-led group, UNICEF staff did not wish to set up a parallel initiative, and so it is also unclear to what extent the government achieved the goal of consistent messaging among NGOs.

Crossover elements of IEC materials

Most alternative pre-schools in Viqueque and Ermera have flipcharts and a facilitators’ manual in readiness for conducting parenting education. These sites have massive potential for sharing the messages with parents, both men and women, if lighter take-home brochures were to be made available. Though these sorts of IEC materials do not replace the benefits of two-way interaction on parenting topics, the resources have the advantage of being on call for parents picking up or dropping off their children. Other community outlets for basic information on the ten topics of child-care – for instance, churches and health centres – could also promote parenting messages this way.

10 module parenting education curriculum

This section considers the curriculum itself, while the following section focuses more on the way it has been implemented to date.

The concept of the parenting education curriculum, including its community-led interactive principles, shows great promise. IEC materials describe practices for children’s care, but have limited potential for the heightening of conscience and commitment that leads to consistent and holistic parenting. The parenting education course aims for personal transformation of priorities and at times shifting of family investment to benefit children’s healthy, happy development.

The modules, their content, and instructions for their expression of messages within community settings, have been time-consuming for UNICEF and government partners. All partners in the process have voiced some level of frustration with the delays of drafting, review and implementation compared to original timelines. This does not, however, detract from their sense of achievement. It is probable that the original timeline was impractical considering the heavy dependencies on government process. The process steps for completion of the modules is described below.

Process steps, parenting education curriculum building

- Agreement to work together on a government programme, led from MSS, to improve parenting practices came before the start date of the UNICEF/H&M project, in around 2013.
- The parenting education sessions were originally intended for ‘high risk’ families and there was suggestion that attendance should be a pre-requisite condition for recipients of Timor-Leste’s Bolsa da Mãe program.
- Under the H&M project, the scope broadened to become a universal program, still with an emphasis on disadvantaged families but with opportunity for every parent to attend.
- MSS worked with MoH, MoE and technical specialists to determine modules and messages; MSS-specific modules

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'I always suspected when I was pregnant that my child could hear and respond to me. I didn’t tell people because it sounds a bit crazy. But I definitely agree with what we were told in the parenting education about this.'

Mother, in focus group, Ermera

“I used to call my children and my wife all sorts of names when I was angry, but I’ve stopped doing that. I feel so ashamed about how I used to lose my temper, when my wife was not doing anything wrong. Sure, the child is crying, but it’s not being naughty, it needs something. Now if I get tense I try to calm down, go for a walk and come back.”

Father of two young children, in focus group, Ermera

The final product exhibits considerable strengths in context of the specific needs of Timorese families and communities as well as the model of engagement selected to share the messages. The concept itself is popular, especially once target audiences understand the nuance of purpose: that the information is already known to many, but acts as a refresher, motivator and reference for parents as they raise their children.

In fact, the KAP baseline survey shows limited knowledge of many aspects contained in the parenting education modules such as specifics of handwashing, recognising health danger signs or food group nutrition practices. Therefore, whether they choose to admit it or not, many parents are likely to find new content and ideas by attending the sessions. The modules represent a good balance between the known or instinctive – for instance, basic health messages, or the importance of playing with and socialising infants – and the unknown – for instance, stimulation of children still in the womb, or forms of alternative discipline.

Observing a parenting session, the reviewers noted strong interaction ranging from clarification questions through to direct argument: for instance, the question was raised, how to ensure children receive meat regularly when the family is poor? Facilitators were then able to list a variety of protein sources and how to source them, while other members of the group joined the debate with positive problem-solving comments or their own stories about choices they have made. This type of peer-led consensus is a key advantage over simply reading or hearing a parenting message in one-way communication. Participants liked the clear visual presentation of information through the flipchart, including its design and the logo which showed a family – mother, father and infant child – in silhouette. Focus group participants were asked whether any themes were more important to them than others. The top answers were child protection, early stimulation, health, nutrition and alternative discipline. Figure 14, next page, shows the trends in answers to this question.
It is important when considering this data to know that in all cases, the initial answer was that all were important, and participants chose only when pressed; therefore, there is no implication that any module should be discontinued. As well, it should be noted that early stimulation is currently the only themed module to implement – module 1 was an introductory session describing all upcoming topics. This explains its prevalent position in participants’ minds.

These findings are very preliminary, with feedback sought at a time when most of the curriculum was unfamiliar to participants in focus groups. It will be necessary to revisit assessment of the parenting education curriculum as it ends its first round, which, taking into consideration feedback on demand for the project (see next section), should happen under an accelerated timeline. MSS has budgeted for full rollout in the two municipalities in 2017. The reviewer encourages completion and learning for this phase before expansion elsewhere, not only for project refinement but also to demonstrate to other municipalities that there are strong advantages emerging for parents of children of all ages.

**Crossover components of parenting education modules**

A crucial principle of the modules is that they suit cross-sector requirements. All themes are relevant to strengthening families and promoting children’s development. At the same time, some modules are more relevant than others for parents whose children are attending pre-school. It is also understandable that pre-school facilitators would have the greatest interest in promoting Module 9, Education for Life. Implementation in pre-schools may see a smoother rollout if facilitators are encouraged to contextualise sessions to the needs and interests of their audience.
Recruitment of parents to community-led parenting education sessions

‘Many parents come to the sessions with their young children. This gave an idea to MSS and its facilitators to find ways on how they engage parents to engage with their children through the session. This at the same time is a challenge to facilitators who are still working on strengthening their facilitation skills.’

Annual report to H&M, December 2016

“I don’t really have the time to go and visit everyone, but I know that if I announce it in the morning, people will come in the afternoon.”

Chefe suco, Ermera

‘We already have the facilitators ready. It would be great if we could finally conduct the program. Please tell the local leaders we are waiting for this – all the aldeias here should have the same thing at the same time.’

Focus group participant, Viqueque

‘The parenting education is not being promoted in the community as much as needed, but once parents have the first session they become very interested. Then they ask the team to continue, but it stops and starts, delays by a couple of months each time. It’s not good when we say it will

The project has met its targets for numbers of adults attending parenting education sessions, but the outcomes of this target are low. This is due to delays in scheduling beyond Module 1, the introduction. The intention for quarterly sessions has not been met. Pressed for reasons, community level stakeholders said they needed to wait on MSS availability, municipal MSS said that they were not allowed to progress to the next module before full implementation of the previous, while national MSS said reports and budget requests were submitted late. UNICEF staff also suggested that the changes of staff at MSS nationally created some challenges, with the loss of internal ‘champions’ who might have taken charge to overcome small obstacles.

Limited human resources at MSS also affected the speed of implementation. Community facilitator skills were inconsistent and MSS was asked to support in person for the first few modules. As the parenting education format was best suited to weekends, this made it physically impossible for the two municipal level facilitators to get to each implementing suco in a quarterly cycle. Note that this mirrors challenges faced by the local partners assisting alternative pre-schools to conduct parenting education sessions; a target has been set for monthly sessions without considering the human resource and travel implications of the instruction.

Community engagement to attend parenting sessions has therefore been set back by the lack of parenting sessions taking place. The original vision of sessions ‘led by a community-based team comprised of already respected and effective community workers’ who ‘decide how to deliver each message and organize the community sessions’ is still a long way off. In the meantime, the engagement of the chefe suco is still the best strategy for getting people together, and she or he does this in ways that differ from the national level understanding of what is taking place.

At national level, stakeholders continued to describe the recruitment process as a personal invitation from chefe suco (or facilitator) to vulnerable families, including descriptions of the sessions and their relevance to all phases of children’s healthy, happy development. Based on the sample visits, however, it seems more likely to be the case that the chefe suco makes general announcements in the leadup to the event. Among participants, there is no real sense of committing to a course of information; people are reminded that the event is scheduled, and if they are free and interested, they attend. In one suco, anyone was welcome to attend, including young people who had no children yet. An enthusiastic audience of over 70 people at the first session dropped to around 30 at the second session because it was raining. These ebbs and flows of community interaction are to be expected but have not really been anticipated in implementation instructions. At the same time, skipping the details of participant recruitment instructions has been quantitatively advantageous for the project, with attendance numbers per suco exceeding expectations.
Rain, mud and transport are present as barriers to the uptake of any community initiative in Timor-Leste, but there are also a few small obstacles to attendance specific to this implementation. They are listed below, along with existing or potential actions taken to resolve them:

**Attendance by separate members of the family, which dilutes information:** When young children are at home, it is often not possible for couples to attend sessions together. Women said it was difficult to explain to their husbands about what they had learned, and wanted take-home brochures to help share the messages within the family.

**Scepticism that the information is needed:** The review tested opinions on the necessity of the project with each focus group. Among participants who had attended a session, a positive answer was more immediate than for those who had not. Some hesitation was noted about the idea of ‘education’ for adults, and being taught something they felt they already knew. It has been important for facilitators (and for MSS/UNICEF) to reassure parents that, indeed, they do know much of the information, and the parenting sessions are intended to refresh and remind, rather than dictate. All focus group participants who had attended a session were keen to go to the next one and said they would make the time to do so.

**Relevance for men:** UNICEF staff reported that some men felt ‘tricked’ at first when they discovered they were attending a session on child care. As strengthening the role of fathers is core to family wellbeing in Timor-Leste, it was important to convince them to stay and listen. The content of modules and the interactive discussions in the facilitation process have been solutions in themselves to this problem; men have enjoyed the opportunity to swap stories about their experiences. UNICEF also redesigned the flipchart to include more pictures of men interacting with their family.

**Missing the most vulnerable families:** The ‘invitation only’ approach, which originally intended to focus on Bolsa da Mãe recipients, has not taken place in reality. Further consultation with *chefes suco* and the community teams is required to understand whether this is to do with miscommunication or the practicalities of community engagement in context. Focus groups agreed that Bolsa da Mãe recipients would need this information more than others, because they are often single parents who lack family networks for support and advice when raising children. From an international perspective, parenting programs often see welfare recipients as ‘high risk’ priority audiences because of the increased stress associated with meeting children’s needs on an insufficient income (eg. Roberts 2014). Thus, the argument for involving Bolsa da Mãe recipients more closely than other families holds. A more upfront reiteration of this intent may be required as the remaining modules implement, including a return to the requirement for home visits to extend personal invitations and explain benefits of taking part.
Crossover components of recruitment of parents to parenting education sessions

Pre-school facilitators are among those trained to facilitate the community sessions. They are well placed to raise interest and demand for the sessions among parents whose children attend their pre-school. At the same time, they are under pressure to create opportunities for sessions to take place at their pre-school, with the support of KDP in the short term. This makes more sense under a registration-based rollout for community sessions, because pre-school sessions can expand participation to a broader audience. However, if the suco is applying general invitation rules to community sessions, the role of additional pre-school sessions is less clear. Pre-school facilitators may need closer involvement in session planning, as part of the family support team, to be sure that sessions are meeting complementary needs, and not competing for attention.

Mass media: radio drama and youth drama

About the radio drama
Hadomi Labarik Hametin Familia features Atoy and Marta, two children who have also appeared as cartoon characters in UNICEF’s previous child-friendly publications. Over 48 episodes, Atoy and Marta live the lives of a typical Timorese family, while their parents and neighbours make decisions on how best to care for them. Accompanying the drama, public service announcements (PSAs) used the title song and promoted short messages relevant to the themes in the parenting education.

As with the 10 modules of the parenting education sessions, the radio drama produced by UNICEF to accompany direct behaviour change messages is a finished product. The drama, Hadomi Labarik Hametin Familia, represents innovation and alignment with UNICEF’s goals for children’s wellbeing. With 48 episodes, the drama has a long shelf life. It will take some time before people have heard every episode, and by that time they are likely to enjoy repeats. Community radio has proven a very cost-effective outlet for prepaid media - for instance, costing just $60 per episode in Ermera with potential reach estimated at 6,000 to 7,000 listeners – and UNICEF has also negotiated for free national airtime of Hadomi Labarik Hametin Familia, as part of a child rights media partnership which also includes talk shows and event coverage. This has the potential to reach up to 80 per cent of Timor-Leste’s population.

The radio drama integrates with other UNICEF media activities, including a youth radio initiative called Labarik Nia Lian (Children’s Voices), or LNL. Through LNL, children and young people work with the local radio station to make their own current affairs reports, using voice recorders and the radio station’s editing suite. On the audience side, the radio stations mobilise youth ‘Listener Groups’ who check in with family, neighbours and friends to gather feedback on Labarik Nia Lian. The same listener groups were asked to track audience interest in Hadomi Labarik Hametin Familia. While this has taken place, the feedback data has not been collated in a way that can be used for this review.

Neither of the partner community radios had resources to monitor listener reach, and so the final number of 9,000 listeners used in this review is based on general population estimates. The radio stations had limitations of transmission including blackout areas in several sucos targeted for parenting education, in both Ermera and Viqueque. This has limited the likelihood of multi-modality; people hearing the radio play were not...

14 For instance, pre-schools could run ‘catchup classes’ for parents unable to attend the community session; could use the radio drama as the basis for weekly parenting discussions; could provide family-friendly sessions so that couples could attend together.
necessarily receiving other parenting messages, while those taking part in parenting sessions did not receive backup from the radio. A solution for this is to provide local versions of the drama to be played at community or pre-school meetings, for entertainment and engagement alongside more formal parenting sessions.

No data is available on opinions or responses to the radio drama. This is common for media initiatives where measuring results can require complex community survey. In lieu of this, the reviewer asked whether people had heard the drama. In cases where they had, people showed enthusiasm for it, able to name characters and favourite episodes. A quiz, where listeners texted their answers to the radio station, was also intended to provide basic monitoring information on knowledge retention. Unfortunately, in Ermera there was some confusion about whether the quiz had a prize, and just one response was received. Viqueque radio, on the other hand, promoted not only prizes but also a prize-giving ceremony, and received a stronger response. One of the four prize-winners was from a remote area of Viqueque, supporting the theory that community radio does have broad geographic reach and listenership.

The youth theatre has been extremely popular, again a first for Timor-Leste where stage dramas are unfamiliar. Community theatre as a form of mass media is common in other countries, recognised as a strong contributor to behaviour change. Information is shared directly with the chance for interaction and questions, so that the community takes away common knowledge of a challenge or issue. In Ermera and Viqueque, the actors used two types of theatre: a scripted drama and a technique known as forum theatre, where the audience dictates decisions taken by the characters onstage. Details of how the project came together appear as a case study in Annex 2, p.74.

Enthusiasm for the youth theatre component is clear from all sides: performers and their parents, audience, chefs, MSS and the production company Leste Art (who also produced the radio drama). It must be noted, however, that cost effectiveness is not among the advantages of this youth drama approach, with costs of training high considering the limited geographical reach of performances. Actors are now forming their own troupes in Ermera and Viqueque, and exploring funding and future performance opportunities, which will offset the initial investment in the medium to long term. There is also a strong desire from communities and their chefs to do more of this, for the benefit of out-of-school youth as well as the advantages of jointly experienced community messaging. Considering this, options for more affordable and streamlined drama schooling should be explored, for instance funded through SSYS youth club funds.
5. Conclusions

This girl, who has grown up with a cognitive disability, attends an alternative pre-school in Matahoi. Before it opened, she had little community interaction and no opportunity for learning. Though older than the other students, she clearly enjoys being part of the class and joins in with singing, dancing and drawing. The facilitator at the pre-school said that since she started coming she has learned to talk for the first time. Photo credit: UNICEF/ K Chalk, 2017
Next steps for alternative pre-schools and parenting education

- What can be done to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and improve the quality of services provided in terms of the structure, costs, implementation modalities and other inputs?
- What is the suggested/adjusted Theory of Change for alternative pre-school and parenting education programme in future implementation?

The introduction to this report touches on the context of Timor-Leste but does not necessarily articulate the vital role of local leadership in family and community life. Engaging the support of community, which has been pivotal to success in both branches of this project, depends on the support of the chefe suco. To do so, community development initiatives must either compete with, or complement, each other. The H&M Foundation project was designed in full recognition of this governance system, not only its challenges but also its opportunities and advantages when good integration of development efforts occurs.

Since then it has created strong foundations and assets for community engagement in line with Timorese social patterns and interactions. Overall results are positive and in line with key performance indicators set between H&M and UNICEF at commencement of the project. Reach into families has been enhanced greatly by UNICEF’s connected partnerships which enabled the mass media component necessary for multi-modality behaviour change. As a result, change for children is happening. However, both branches of the project represent phases in a longer-term strategy to strengthen families and their approach to early childhood development. More is needed to realise the potential of this promising start.

Alternative pre-schools have shown their worth and sustainability. There is a strong case to be made to government for their replication. UNICEF also continues to advocate and advise government on merging public and alternative pre-schools under a single accreditation, as part of accountability to the goal for 50 per cent pre-school enrolment by 2020. Until this time, ways must be found to continue providing basic material support, as well as regular refresher training and other non-financial incentives for volunteer teachers.

The parenting education modules showcase intensive efforts from UNICEF, government and local partners to bring holistic messaging into a single package. The resulting product is widely recognised as innovative, relevant and strong. Stakeholders regret that implementation has not moved further than the second or third module. Many reasons have been suggested for this, from the processes of national government departments through to confusion over responsibility for scheduling or release of modules. Training of trainers has taken longer, and in many cases been less effective, than project timelines allowed, making it difficult to break ties with external facilitation support at this early stage. Much of this has been unavoidable. UNICEF throughout has shown good collaboration principles as well as patience, negotiation and guidance in process between government and NGO partners. There is strong will to continue the implementation at an accelerated pace.

The original Theory of Change (p.17) remains sound. All components are working to some degree, though a phase of intensive support to community-based networks seems necessary to push through this accelerated implementation. It is worth considering a smaller subset of villages for this type of support, as human resources from MSS and UNICEF are limited in their reach. It is also worth comparing the H&M project scope and outputs with the broader vision of early childhood centres as an efficient geographic facility for
all parenting and early childhood services, shown in the background section to this document (Figure 5, p.16). While the health, nutrition and monitoring components of this diagram were not articulated in the H&M-funded project, they may be a catalyst for closer alignment with community-based health systems in future phases.

The crossover components of family strengthening and early childhood education make the H&M-funded project uniquely valuable but also add to its complexity. Future phases of family strengthening should consider lessons of cross-sector engagement from this phase, as there remain untapped outlets for connecting to local mechanisms supporting early childhood development, particularly community health systems and the church.

Issues to consider

The following considerations are intended as suggestions, based on the assumption that new phases for alternative pre-schools and for multi-modality parenting education are intended.

For consideration of next steps on pre-school implementation and support, stakeholders should also be aware of specific findings from the Project Review for Community-Based Alternative Pre-Schools in Timor-Leste (UNICEF 2017).

For parenting education planning, there are currently gaps in full understanding of the effectiveness of family support teams, including facilitators, in promoting the modules and their content. This set of considerations will be greatly enhanced by a cross-sector learning event some time in the next six months.

Considerations for implementing partners

This includes partners at local and national levels, who provided a range of services through the H&M project and Government of Norway-supported mass media component. Note that there were no CBOs/NGOs involved at local level for parenting education sessions, as this role was assigned to MSS.

1. **Maintain morale and community support for alternative pre-schools in their second and third years:**
   1.1. Communicate more, and more regularly, with facilitators and school management committees on national level progress (or, for the sake of transparency, lack of progress) in accreditation and government ownership;
   1.2. If cash incentives for facilitators are not practical, ensure other rewards such as leadership training, exposure visits, mentoring, performance-based prizes and community recognition are offered.

2. **To ensure timely access for pre-schools to promised material support and basic supplies:**
   2.1. Set accountable timeframes between ordering and delivery of standardised materials;
   2.2. Create more responsive procurement systems, and some flexibility of budget in hands of school committee, to meet demand for consumable items (pens and paper, soap and cleaning materials).

3. **Ensure continuity of teaching and decrease community anxiety about the long-term prospects of pre-schools:**
   3.1. Return to the action plan for replacing pre-school facilitators, to be sure it is sufficiently responsive to short-term staffing shifts;
3.2. Communicate the action plan clearly to school management committees including appropriate contacts for reporting such changes.

4. **Maximise opportunities for synergy between ECD and parenting education strategies:**

   4.1. More purposeful connection of SMC members and pre-school facilitators with parenting education sessions (including planning) and ‘take home’ ECD messages, including brochures;

   4.2. Consider family-friendly parenting education sessions eg. an extended session of play in the pre-school while parents take part in parenting discussions.

5. **Build two-way discussion on family strengthening using mass media:**

   5.1. Refine quiz concepts (rules, questions, prizes, and how people can collect them) based on good practice from Viqueque;

   5.2. Continue promising connections between Hametin Familia (the radio, PSAs and general messages) and Labarik Nia Lian;

   5.3. Where community radio is not available, provide offline audio files for pre-school, youth and community use as needed.

6. **Considerations for government**

   Due to the complexities of the H&M project, several government ministries have played key roles in policy and implementation of policy supporting project goals. Main government partners have been the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Solidarity, but others (for instance, MECAS, Ministry of Health, Social Secretary for Youth and Sports) may also consider these suggestions based on past, or future, interactions with the project and its goals.

   6. **Take the next steps on alternative pre-schools in line with accountability to goals for 50 per cent pre-school enrolment by 2020:**

      - Please see UNICEF’s 2017 review of alternative pre-schools for full considerations on expansion (also included as Annex 9).

7. **Develop and normalise cross-sector child-focused planning:**

   7.1. MSS to continue to work closely with Ministry of Health, and to strengthen collaborative planning with Ministry of Education;

   7.2. MECAS working group to set time-based goals associated with family strengthening messages.

8. **Integrate consistent messaging on parenting across Timor-Leste:**

   8.1. Re-establish the interagency working group through MSS so that all NGO behaviour change initiatives produce consistent messaging; integrate parenting education initiative into Child Protection Networks/ Redi Referral Network Working group for consistency among members of those groups.

   8.2. Create standard products (brochures, posters) with free copyright for all NGOs to use.

   8.3. Explore opportunities with national church bodies to contextualise agreed modules into church activities, especially counselling for newly married and first time parents.

9. **Maximise learning opportunity, and contextualise instructions and expectations for future implementation of course-based sessions:**

   9.1. Examine whether ‘invitation only’ is user-friendly, and whether full-scale community events are a valid alternative;
9.2. Consult with chefe suco on module topics, as there may be a need to change the order of implementation depending on local priorities;

9.3. Introduce a simple feedback component to facilitator process for parenting sessions.

10. **Ensure principles for reaching ‘high risk’ or the most vulnerable families are met:**

10.1. Return to the focus on Bolsa da Mãe recipients, with clear instructions to chefs suco that the implementation of modules must include these families;

10.2. Continue planning for practical and integrated home visits to provide informal counselling and advice for parents of young children.

11. **Accelerate progress in line with community demand:**

11.1. Address perceptions that modules are not yet released;

11.2. Work with selected highly engaged sucos on schedules for the rest of the year;

11.3. Remove the expectation that municipal MSS or partners (UNICEF, Ba Futuru) will be present at all; if event budget for refreshments is not available, negotiate with chefe suco to use local funds or combine with other community events.

11.4. Continue to work on simplifying financial steps from national to sub-national, to avoid delays caused by budget processes.

12. **Create more realistic schedules of support for MSS, UNICEF and partners:**

12.1. Consider best ways to support workload demands on social welfare workforce, who are implementing multiple policies for children’s welfare and development. Options may be short term expansion of teams specific to local facilitation support, stronger connections with child protection network members as facilitators or expanding participation of social welfare workforce training to parenting education facilitators for fast-tracked capacity.

12.2. For mentoring pre-school facilitators, explore retention strategies, and potential advantages in community-based peer structures, exposure trips between villages or advisory roles for particularly strong facilitators.

13. **Motivate communities to lead on demand for both pre-schools and parenting:**

13.1. Identify and support community ‘champions’ (both women and men) with information and exposure to other areas of implementation;

13.2. Clearer articulation of the vision for ‘family support teams’, their membership, role, structure and possible outputs, as well as their current and future connections to other community initiatives (eg. child protection committees, mothers’ support groups).

14. **Accelerate module rollout:**

14.1. Increase pressure on national and municipal MSS directors to set and meet schedules for monthly sessions, noting suggestion that this might be with a smaller subset of sucos than currently targeted;

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**Considerations for UNICEF**

The nature of UNICEF’s programme in Timor-Leste sees multiple projects and donors in action at all times. These considerations are generated from the observations of the H&M-funded components of UNICEF’s early childhood development program but are likely to be applicable to broader action plans and integrated activities between departments and sectors.
14.2. Closer collaboration with *chefes suco* to see all *sucos* receive information at similar times.

15. **Increase systemic collaboration between alternative pre-schools and the government:**

15.1. UNICEF to focus on strengthening municipal monitoring of pre-schools; in exchange government takes on monitoring of alternative pre-schools (NB: one municipality only, as this is complex);

15.2. Use pre-school monitoring data to inform refresher trainings based on gaps and challenges that facilitators are facing.

16. **Realign activities with original behaviour change / communication for development principles**¹⁵:

16.1. Further develop IEC materials and expand their availability to other outlets eg. primary schools, health centres, the church;

16.2. Ensure a differentiation between child care practices and parenting practices in communication with parents; enhance themes of family and community harmony;

16.3. Support government on cross-sector intensive planning for effective home visits and counselling, focusing on Bolsa da Mãe and other vulnerable families.

17. **Continue to deliver effective media products with the contribution of children and youth:**

17.1. Support listeners’ groups to a greater degree on collating and sharing feedback;

17.2. Continue to purchase media time on community radio in areas where parenting education or Labarik Nia Lian is taking place;

17.3. Seek sustainable partnerships for expansion of youth drama, for instance, within SSYS youth clubs;

17.4. Foster negotiations to expand drama into simple TV products, as this is more common than radio in many remote areas, and may be cost-effective given UNICEF’s partnerships

18. **Commence planning for the long-term vision of family strengthening in Timor-Leste:**

18.1. Organise a formal ‘lessons learned’ workshop between the two municipalities;

18.2. Add a simple satisfaction monitoring tool to parenting education sessions, and use the data to identify quality and relevance of curriculum;

18.3. Continue to refine materials with the clear expectation of repeat cycles in the same locations;

18.4. Continue to work to increase the interest and will of national government stakeholders in cross-sector parenting skills, due to its potential for improving family and social cohesion and addressing all indicators of children’s development.

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¹⁵ A crucial first step to this consideration is to revisit the relevance and practicality of C4D given limited experience with its concepts among local teams. If it is found to be relevant, then some work may also be required in mapping self and partner capacity to meet its principles.
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Annexes
The situation for early childhood development in Uatolari

One of five administrative posts in Viqueque municipality, Uatolari is around two hours south of the municipal capital (Viqueque). While populous, it is also remote, which affects availability of services and infrastructure for communities across the area. Despite comparatively high rates of pre-school enrolment in the municipality (27.1 percent, compared to the national average of 16.9), the administrative post of Uatolari has only five pre-schools for an under-five population of well over 1000.

The Government of Timor-Leste has a clear vision for universal pre-school, as articulated in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2014. It states:

“Children from the ages of three to five years will have access to early education in a Pre-School that is close to the place where they live. Here they will develop skills and knowledge in preparation for Basic Education.”

The plan also recognises the value of community engagement in pre-school as part of nurturing the potential of children in this age group:

“Families, communities and local governments will be involved in the decision-making process and, through collaborative efforts, schools will be established that meet all the requirements of quality Pre-School Education.”

Pre-school is just one part of early childhood education, which begins at birth and also includes the early years of primary school (UNICEF 2012). Low awareness of this continuity, and of the role of pre-school in enhancing school readiness, can act as a deterrent to the goal of universal pre-school attendance if parents and other community influencers are not convinced of the value to their children. On the other hand, where parents understand the importance of early childhood education, the model of community-based pre-school, supported by quality government curriculum, training and monitoring of standards, is more likely to take root for children’s access to pre-school long term.

This was the case in Uaitame suco. Only one pre-school existed in the area, a private facility too far away for children to walk to. Noting the gap in opportunities for the suco’s young children, the chefe suco began talking with members of the community about ways to provide better learning for children under school age. Parents of
children in primary school agreed that the first years were a struggle for ordered learning and socialisation, affecting academic outcomes for their children.

The concept of a community-based alternative pre-school, supported with materials and training from UNICEF and local partners, was first raised by the chefe suco of Uaitame at community meetings. Due to previous discussions noting the lack of access to pre-school, the idea was popular. The community decided to form two pre-schools servicing three aldeias, one of which had too few children between 3 and 5 to justify their own facility.

In this instance, the chefe suco nominated community members directly, with no criteria apart from capability to organise and mobilise. The nominated facilitators attended first round training in preparation for opening the school, while school committee members from the three aldeias in Uaitame began to talk to parents about registering their children for the school year 2016. They also started looking for the right premises for community-based pre-school.

The alternative pre-schools model offers two options for housing the pre-school, to be determined case by case depending on the situation of the community: in a community-owned building or in a part of someone’s home. As the community lacked its own facility, the home-based model was required here. However, in one aldeia, the school committee negotiated with an absent family to use their house. This allowed the advantage of leaving materials and posters set up rather than needing to install before each session. In the second aldeia, a room was cleared out to make space for the children, then used by the family at other times.

From startup onwards the local community has fully utilised the pre-school. All children aged between 3 and 5 are attending: 25 in 2016, 22 in 2017. The first batch of pre-school ‘graduates’ are now enrolled at the nearby primary school. According to the pre-school facilitators, primary teachers are very happy about the children’s advanced social skills, confidence and knowledge, particularly of letters and numbers, compared to children who have not had this head start.

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"We thought pre-school would prepare the children better and we were right. We soon noticed higher levels of confidence and readiness."

Pre-school facilitator

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16 A third option, for parents to deliver pre-school classes to their own children in their home, was promoted only in areas where families lived too far away from each other to make shared learning a practical option. It was not used in Viqueque.
Expanding to a community-owned premises

“...It doesn’t feel right just to use someone’s house for school, to put the materials up on their wall. Plus, if the family needs that space – for instance if someone dies – we cannot use the house and the school closes over that time. If we had to, we could have continued this way, and made it work somehow. But a community building will be much better.”

Pre-school facilitator

The home-based models had achieved desired results in terms of giving children an opportunity for pre-school learning. At the same time, it was recognised that a community building would provide a more consistent and sustainable setting, and that this should be the ultimate goal for a community-based pre-school.

As part of decentralisation of budget, villages (aldeia level) have access to the National Village Development Programme (Programa Nasional Dezenvolvimentu Suku/PNDS) for infrastructure projects to support their own development. Criteria include expansion, rather than startup, of a project known to be of benefit to the community, as well as full community support through vote on how funds are to be used.

Apart from the chefe suco, nobody in these aldeias had previous experience with accessing PNDS funding. To explore their options, the school committee members held a meeting with the chefe suco, the three chefe aldeias and a representative from the government’s PNDS program. They described the process as straightforward, made simpler by the clear community support for continuation of the pre-school and by the joint application between aldeias with where community vote was passed with no competition. A detailed itemisation of costs was not expected. Costs were also reduced substantially by donation of land from the chefe suco, so that the PNDS grant needed only to cover construction. The building project took place between January and May 2017, at a total cost of just over US$18,000.

The new building contains toilets, running water and storage space, and is lockable for additional security of materials. It is big enough to combine class needs from the three aldeias, currently around 40 students, with 4 trained facilitators sharing the workload. Because pre-school is currently held for three mornings a week, the building will be available at other times for community events and meetings. It is an ideal venue for ongoing parenting education or other child-focused activities.
As the community prepares to take over the new building, a new wave of enthusiasm for the facility is evident. Mothers have started to sew uniforms for their children, indicating pride in the centre, its purpose and identity. Discussions have also started about parents providing snacks or meals at the centre. According to the school committee members, this is related to the shift from home-based to community-based premises, which has enhanced visibility of the pre-school as a community asset and, as a result, increased parents’ interest in being involved.

Factors for success

“Our own families have asked us why we are doing this, and why we spend our own money on things like soap instead of getting paid for what we do. We tell them, we don’t get any income yet, but maybe we will in the future, and in the meantime the children need our support. We are happy our children can go to pre-school and be better prepared for primary school.”

Pre-school facilitator

Community members were asked what local factors contributed to the successful expansion of the pre-school into a community-owned premises. Their responses can be summarised as follows:

Community awareness: Due to strong connections between community and chefe suco on community development plans, people listened to the information he shared on the value of pre-school for their young children. Demand was already assured before the project began.

Ongoing visibility of community leaders: The socialisation phase of alternative pre-school introduction was greatly supported by high profile community spokespeople including chefe suco, participating from the beginning with a keen interest in progress.

Appointment of active and committed individuals for school committees, facilitators: While there were no criteria given for appointment of project leaders in the community, the chefe suco selected people directly who he thought would be best suited to drive the project. Interactive planning and progress reporting has remained strong as a result.

Close aldeia planning processes: The solution to combine pre-school services into one building for three aldeias is cost-effective and has been popular with all. The site chosen is ideally located at the junction between the three neighbourhoods.

PNDS as collaborative planner: A representative of PNDS attended the first meeting to discuss the possibility of a permanent community centre for pre-school. She has been closely involved ever since, helping with process and paperwork to smooth the process of application and approval.

Land availability: The chefe suco’s donation of personal land significantly reduced the costs associated with constructing the pre-school, fitting well within the scope of PNDS funding.
Annex 2: Case study/human interest: ‘Shy girls’ take the stage for child rights

Railaco, Ermera, Timor-Leste

Theater is almost unheard of in Timor-Leste. Stage shows are used for comedy skits and variety acts, or for musical performances, but not to tell a story. The few Timorese that focus on drama and acting as an art form have invariably learned in other countries and have few opportunities to expand their art at home. One of these people is Silvano Xavier, director of the youth drama company Leste Art, and a strong advocate for community theatre as a medium for information, enjoyment and community harmony.

In 2016, UNICEF with Timor-Leste’s Ministry of Social Solidarity asked Leste Art to produce the radio serial Hadomi Labarik Hametin Familia, a 48 episode drama that follows the lives of a typical Timorese family. From August that year, the drama aired on community radio in two municipalities; in March 2017, it was picked up for free airtime by Timor-Leste’s national radio.

The radio drama has two main characters, Atoy and Marte, familiar faces from previous UNICEF child rights campaigns. Their adventures each week place them, their parents and friends, in situations where they need to make decisions on what is best for children. Many of these situations are mirrored in the government’s new community-based parenting education program, as part of a combined approach to strengthen families’ skills in protecting and nurturing their children. The radio program was funded by the Government of Norway, while the parenting education sessions were part of a project from UNICEF/H&M to enhance early childhood development in Timor-Leste.

Silvano says that when finding actors to play the roles of the two children, he had a strong advantage. “It was easy because most of the actors in Timor-Leste are known to us; we have trained them at some stage. Working with them was easy too. They did a great job.”

Leste Art had worked with other NGOs previously but never with a UN agency or government. “I was a bit nervous at first, but I really enjoyed working with UNICEF. I also learned new ways of doing things, fitting in with the reviews of our scripts by government before going ahead with things. We usually work much faster. But the end product was really, really good.”
Leste Art was also asked to form youth theatre troupes for community performances in the two municipalities where parenting education sessions were taking place, Ermera and Viqueque. For him, this was a very exciting project, because it connected to his passion for increasing the profile of drama as an art form in Timor-Leste.

“When we talk about media, we usually think it’s journalism, radio, TV. People don’t understand yet that theatre is a perfect medium for communicating locally. We were able to teach these young actors to share information that will improve their own lives. Also, many young people have nothing to do after leaving school. They don’t continue studies or other activities that will continue their personal development. We provide training and the young people discover they have talent, confidence; they easily understand what it is to act, both scripted and unscripted.”

Unscripted work is key to the stage act in communities. Performances start with an approach known as forum theatre, where audiences decide at key moments what should happen next. The young people on stage are prepared with concepts, rather than specific words, so they can adapt to audience demands and, at times, steer the decisions towards the right messages for appropriate parenting. As with the radio drama, underlying topics include health, hygiene, nutrition, education and protection for children, all areas where parents play a significant role.

In total, 15 young people from each municipality took part in Leste Art’s theatre program. Nominated by their local leaders (chefes suco), the drama troupes were equally balanced by boys and girls, and ranged in age from mid teens through to 24. The participants began with three weeks of intensive training with a focus on physical and vocal expression as well as daily practice in ‘ad libbing’ on the messages to be shared.

Madalena, 24, and Natalia, 18, were among the participants lucky enough to be chosen in Ermera. However, when the chefe suco first asked them to attend, they had little idea of what it was they were signing up to do.

“There was no audition, and nobody checked whether we had talent for this,” explains Madalena. “We just turned up. None of us even knew theatre existed.”

The first two days were a little strange, especially for the younger Natalia, who describes herself as a shy person by nature. “We were the opposite of the team who came from Leste Art. They were so confident, fun. I felt awkward when I talked to them. Then we began taking part in their ‘icebreakers’, making everything funny, and when we started laughing we felt more comfortable.”

“On the first day, they also gave us a good background of Leste Art, so we could understand a bit more about theatre, why it’s important and what they do. After that, we divided into groups to perform short plays, so they could...
see if we got it yet. Each day that week was quite similar; the ice breakers, then the plays. We would swap groups around to work with other people. Right from the start, some of us were better at being funny and others better at being serious. And after two days we felt perfectly OK about all of it."

In the second week, they began to think about the messages. This included learning scripts, but with strong encouragement to develop their own ideas in parallel. “They told us, if you base your performance only on the script, you’ll get stuck,” says Madalena, “but if you improvise it is easier to get through on your own.”

The group in Ermera held their premiere performance in May, around three months after they first started working together. “We were excited, not nervous,” Madalena says. “My character was a child, who consumed too much fast food, while the other children got it right by eating local, nutritious food. I was proud to act up in that role, to show why one option is better than the other and to change my community’s mind.”

For Natalia, the highlight of becoming an actor has been personal, in what she has learned and the friends she has made. The two girls already knew each other, but are now close friends, and they have also met young people in their local area. “For someone we knew before, it’s a chance to know them better, and for people we didn’t know, we can now say we’ve made new friends.”

The girls say taking part in the youth theatre has transformed their confidence and changed their plans for the future, as they consolidate their theatre group and look for opportunities to perform again, in their own community and elsewhere. They are looking for a space where they can meet to practise their skills, and are already putting together a proposal for continuation, to present to local businesses and the government’s Secretary of State for Youth and Sports (SSYS).

Their parents are very proud of them.

“They say they are happy because they saw a change in us,” says Madalena. “Previously we were a bit shy, we wouldn’t say much in public. This has changed. And nobody’s children have performed on stage before, we were the first, so of course they were happy about that.”

“If we are sending these messages, and people are responding, we feel valued. As a young person, we can do something useful for our community.”
Annex 3: Human interest stories, pre-school as a head start

Pre-school gives Merdiana a head start for life

Uatolari, Viqueque, Timor-Leste

Merdiana is the second youngest of seven children, but the first to attend pre-school in her family. Previously, children in her village had no opportunity to do so, as there was no pre-school nearby.

“There is one, but it’s too far to walk, and it’s private, so families like ours can’t afford it,” says Merdiana’s mother Candida. “Then, last year, this alternative pre-school opened, three minutes’ walk away, and it is free. It just made sense.”

As well as the short distance, Candida had another good reason to send Merdiana to the alternative pre-school. Merdiana’s aunt Adelina is one of the pre-school teachers there. Part of her role has been to motivate families to use the facility, now that it is in place.

Despite efforts in recent years by the Government of Timor-Leste to increase young children’s enrolment in early childhood education, around 84 per cent of children nationally do not attend pre-school. With six the usual starting age for primary school, children who are not engaged in learning before that time start with a tangible disadvantage, not only in literacy and numeracy but also in other aspects of school readiness such as paying attention, socialising and confidence with children and adults outside the family. To address this, the government has set a goal for all children to have access by 2030, and UNICEF is closely involved in finding solutions towards that goal.

The pre-school is one of 34 in Viqueque funded through a UNICEF/H&M partnership on early childhood development in Timor-Leste, with a focus on education and good parenting practices. The pre-school component is also funded by New Zealand’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, bringing the total number of alternative pre-schools to 123 in two municipalities. There are plans to expand further in close collaboration with the national Ministry of Education.
The ‘alternative’ nature of the pre-schools is that, rather than using government funds for startup, they call on local resources: community buildings or homes, volunteer staff, parents’ participation in maintenance, equipment and services for the children. When the models for alternative schools were in design, careful attention was paid to their eventual integration into Timor-Leste’s public system, in line with the 2030 goal.

The UNICEF/H&M project has funded training for 68 pre-school facilitators like Adelina. In January 2016, she and another local facilitator started up the pre-school in Matahoi. A strong response from the community saw all children aged between three and five in the local area enrolled. At the pre-school, they learn basic academic skills such as recognition of letters and short words, counting and writing. There is also plenty of time for play, singing and dancing. Singing has been Merdiana’s favourite.

“Last year, whenever she came home, Merdiana would tell the story of what she’d learned that day,” says her mother. “Sometimes it would be counting, 1, 2, 3. She wanted to practise what she’d heard so she would remember it.”

“And then she always repeated what she’d learned to sing. She’d practise that over and over.”

“It helped that she was my niece, and that all the children knew each other already,” says Adelina. “She was a little shy on the first day but after that it felt normal for her.” Soon she was confident enough to sing in front of the class whenever she was asked. By the end of the first year, she could write letters and count, giving her a strong head start for school compared to her older brothers and sisters.

Merdiana started primary school this year and is doing well. First year primary is a short day for students, and she still dashes home to tell her family what she has learned. Her little brother has just started at the pre-school, and she loves to sit him on the floor and help him learn his letters too.

“She holds his hand for him and they trace shapes together. She really wants to teach him,” says Candida.

At six, Merdiana is more interested in playing with her brother than thinking about her future, but her mother says whatever she decides to do, her education will be needed. “Education is important for children, because they can make their own choices all their lives.”
Three generations of schooling in Viqueque, Timor-Leste

Uatolari, Viqueque, Timor-Leste

Zeferino is the grandfather of Rafael, aged 5, and Nafia, 2. At 60, he has lived through significant changes in Timor-Leste’s history. Growing up in the remote municipality of Viqueque, Timor-Leste, he started school when he was 10. His son Rogerio thinks he was about six or seven when he began.

The current generation, including Rafael, now have access to something unheard of in previous generations: a local pre-school, made possible through the UNICEF/H&M Foundation early childhood development project in Timor-Leste. In a country where less than one in five children currently attend pre-school, this represents the beginning of a concerted push by government to turn the statistic around.

“We know that pre-school is important,” says Zeferino. “We have been waiting for the government to open a school here, but then someone said we were last on the list for this area. We didn’t know what to do about it. Then when we heard that there was an alternative pre-school that the community could run directly, we got busy building our own.”

The pre-school, which can be seen from Zeferino’s house, was built from donations and labour from the whole community. They had initially donated the money to build a community office, but agreed without hesitation that it should be modified to suit the needs of early learning for children. From January 2016, it has operated three mornings a week with around 25 students. All children aged between three and five who live in the local area are now enrolled at the pre-school.

Rafael went to the pre-school last year. This year he has started school. He is a confident and well organised boy who enjoys learning new things. His father says it is because he already knew what it felt like to go to school.

This family values education, so much so that Rafael’s mother and father are studying at university in Dili and can’t be home with their children for much of the year. This situation is common in Viqueque, and the two are looking forward to finishing their final year and returning home for good. In the meantime,
Zeferino cares for the children. If Nafia is restless, he will often take her to pre-school to play with the other children. Already at two she is showing interest in letters and numbers, as the other students learn them more formally.

Rafael’s father Rogerio says he noticed differences in his son as soon as he started at pre-school. “Rafael was very happy. Most kids were from the same neighbourhood so he was comfortable with it. He really liked the singing. We found that when he came home he would sing all day. That was nice.”

Rafael also used to ask if he could walk to pre-school on his own, so Zeferino would let him, watching from his front porch. This year, though school is further away, Rafael still likes to make his own way there. He is the first up each morning, waking everyone else in the house to make sure they’re ready for their day, and then he will leave for school. He’s often a little early but that gives him more time to play with his friends.

Recently, parenting education sessions started at the pre-school. Zeferino attended, listening to advice and discussions on topics such as early stimulation of infants, health and nutrition. The sessions are also part of the UNICEF/H&M Partnership, with a long-term vision to have the same information available to parents across the country. Rogerio thinks this is a good idea, because not everyone is lucky enough to have the support and knowledge of grandparents like Zeferino.

“It is difficult to be away from the children. We are very lucky that we have our father to help us. Actually, Rafael calls him father, and calls us brother and sister.”

The most important thing now, according to Rogerio, is to make sure the pre-school and parenting sessions continue. “This needs to benefit more than my own child. Kids around here are ready to go to pre-school and we’re already seeing benefits. But we need to be sure that it’s connected with government, and that our teachers are recognised for what they do, otherwise they might stop teaching and the school will close.”

Sustainability of the schools is part of the plan for the UNICEF/H&M Foundation project, which has worked closely with the Ministry of Education in line with their goal to have all children at pre-school by 2030. The government is currently exploring ways to expand the alternative pre-schools and begin to absorb them into existing systems for accreditation, training and quality control. In the meantime, there are now 123 alternative community-led pre-schools operating across the municipalities of Viqueque and Ermera, 34 of them made possible through the H&M project.
Annex 4: Agenda for workshop, stakeholder results consultation

H&M Alternative Pre-schools and Parenting Education: Field debrief and results consultation
Agenda

Date: Tuesday May 16 2017, 9am – midday, UN Conference Room (to be confirmed)

Purpose:
- To draft consultative findings and next steps based on community and partner perspectives of the Parenting Education and Alternative Pre-Schools project, to be included in the report to donor (H&M Foundation) and to guide future direction of integrated parenting education in Timor-Leste

Method:
- Presentation to national stakeholders (government, UNICEF, NGO partners) on implementation progress of the Parenting Education and Alternative Pre-Schools project in Ermera and Viqueque.
- Jointly examine components of the Parenting Education and Alternative Pre-Schools project: what has been achieved and what remains to be done?

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| 9am     | Welcome and introductions | Ms. Maria Barreto, National Commissioner on the Rights of the Child, Timor-Leste
|         |                          | Scott Whoolley, Deputy Country Representative, UNICEF Timor-Leste |
| 9.15am  | Presentation: Project overview and results; community perspectives | Katie Chalk, consultant, H&M Foundation Review |
| 10am    | Discussion of components under review, including their integration with alternative pre-school startup: what worked, what could work better or needs revision | Katie Chalk |
| 10.30am | Break                     | |
| 10.45am | Jointly drafting suggestions and considerations for: Government; UNICEF; Partners; Donor | Possible group work depending on numbers in attendance |
| 11.45am | Conclusions, consensus and next steps | Katie Chalk |
| 12pm    | Conclude | |
## Annex 5: Schedule of implementation and completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1: Desk review and inception report</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collection and collation of relevant documents</td>
<td>March 20 - 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- External literature review on ECE/ECD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Document review of relevant project information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consultation via Skype with key country office UNICEF stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Draft inception report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNICEF review of inception report</strong></td>
<td>April 2 - 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finalising tools / structure for community and stakeholder consultation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review and approval of ethics and informed consent process</strong></td>
<td>(UNICEF Timor-Leste; April 12th &amp; HQs/RO April 20th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2: Field consultation and collection of case study and human interest data</strong></td>
<td>April 24 – May 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In-country planning with UNICEF team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews with national ministry, partner stakeholders, Dili</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews and focus groups, Viqueque</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews and focus groups, Ermera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3: Draft report</strong></td>
<td>May 16 – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary of findings; workshop with key national level stakeholders to capture considerations and next steps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Draft report, powerpoint and executive summary; human interest stories as annex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNICEF review of draft report, powerpoint and executive summary</strong></td>
<td>May 26 – June 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 4: Final report</strong></td>
<td>June 12 – 23, depending on UNICEF availability to approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incorporation of review comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Final layout and submission for UNICEF dissemination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 6: Scope of enquiry; methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation method</th>
<th>What is to be tested?</th>
<th>Relevant analysis / consensus methods?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focus group: Mothers | • Increased knowledge  
• Most valued knowledge  
• Side benefits or unexpected outcomes of participation  
• Gender empowerment aspects | “Top 5” consensus proposed but not used – insufficient exposure to parenting education modules.  
Deviation analysis of transcripted comments, gender focus |
| Focus group: Fathers | • Increased knowledge  
• Most valued knowledge  
• Increased participation in parenting  
• Side benefits or unexpected outcomes of participation | “Top 5” consensus, as above  
Deviation analysis of transcripted comments, gender focus |
| Focus group: Other caregivers and family members | • Observations of improved parenting applied  
• Increased knowledge passed on from parenting education participants | Grouped qualitative findings |
| Focus group: Mixed (mothers, fathers, other caregivers, possibly adolescent siblings) | • Differing results from that of target group conversations – and if so, why? (Triangulation or ‘control’) | Most Significant Change proposed but not used  
Grouped qualitative findings  
Chefe / facilitator nomination of human interest stories, case studies |
| Key informant interviews: | • Quality and relevance  
• What worked?  
• What could have been better?  
• Specific questions based on known perspective (eg. MoE, MSS, project staff) | Interview questions flexible to need  
Grouped qualitative findings |

Focus group enquiry

Rationale: Participants are family members associated with Parenting Education attendees. They are able to give perspective on the extent to which lessons have been used in the home.

Time required: 1 hour
Ideal participation: 8 people
Maximum participation: 12 people
Minimum participation: 6 people

Agenda:

1. Participants are asked to identify any changed behaviour in the home as a result of a family member attending Parenting Education. If needed, prompts are:
   a. Change to how parents, including fathers, love, listen and show affection to their children (Module 1)
   b. Change to how parents play with and stimulate their infant children from gestation and birth onwards (Module 2)
2. Participants are asked to identify any other changed behaviour in the home, from any family member, since the Parenting Education project began.
3. As a cross-check, examples given are repeated to find out if other households have experienced similar changed behaviour.
4. **Final remarks: what are they most proud of? What needs to happen next?**

**Key informant interviews:**

**Rationale:** Participants bring unique perspectives that must be considered individually. Consensus is not required; however, more than one perspective from each stakeholder group is required to identify common observations. Perspectives are sought from:

- *Suco chefses* – because they can observe changed behaviours and pressures in their community
- MSS facilitators – because they provide invaluable perspective on the practicalities of further government commitment to the Parenting Education ‘Train-the-Trainer’ long-term strategy
- Teachers, including alternative community pre-school and early primary – because they can observe child care changes, protection changes and give insight on the links between the pre-school program and the Parenting Education program
- Health care workers (if Module 5 has been delivered) – because they can identify the relevance of Parenting Education Curriculum to their own knowledge and mandate
- Youth drama participants – because they can report on the uptake, as well as the benefits for them, of Parenting Education community dramas

**Time required:** 1 hour – note, these interviews can be done in isolation or in small groups depending on the convenience and confidence of participants

**Questions** (note, questions change depending on the informant, their exposure and interest, as the interview develops)

- What has been your association with the project?
- What aspects worked? (What are you most proud of, personally?)
- What aspects require revision? (What challenges did you face, personally?)
- What do you think needs to happen next?
- What advice do you have for government?
- What advice do you have for UNICEF?
Annex 7: Ethical considerations

Enquiry that focuses on human behaviour is always considered to contain an element of risk; however, the consultant proposes that this risk is negligible when mitigated by the following conditions of confidentiality, voluntarism and informed consent.

- **Ethical considerations for consulting children (under 18)**

Children are not the primary subject of outcome-focused interviews; as in, are not asked directly about the care they have received and whether it has changed. Children interviewed as the subjects of human interest stories will be consulted, informed and respected in line with UNICEF’s protocols for child-centred communications, including name changes where a child is considered to be vulnerable. At all times a trusted adult (teacher, parent or other caregiver) will be present when children are telling their stories. For in-depth interview, for instance, human interest stories, informed consent will be obtained from parents or caregivers before the interview commences.

Children and youth (15 – 25) interviewed about their facilitation of project activities through the youth street drama program in Viqueque will be provided with child-friendly verbal and written briefing on the research purpose and end use. Interviews with participants in the street dramas may be individual or group, depending on the preference of the participants. Questions and themes for interviews are to be reviewed in advance by the Technical Reference Group including UNICEF and Government of Timor-Leste (see Annex 3).

- **Ethical considerations for consulting community members**

Parents and other caregivers of children are contributing up to 25 per cent of the qualitative data in this review. Questions and themes for focus group discussions are to be reviewed in advance by UNICEF and MSS (municipality-level) under ‘do no harm’ principles. The names of participants in focus groups remain confidential to the consultant and translator (UNICEF national consultant) who will accompany consultant. All participants will be verbally briefed. In focus groups, consent to participate as well as group consensus to use results will be sought. Key informants will be asked for signed consent on their participation including information on how to opt out at a later date, using the form shown at Annex 4.

- **Ethical considerations for consulting duty bearers**

People who hold responsible positions associated with the project, such as teachers, parental education facilitators, suco (village) traditional leaders, government and NGO partners, will be largely purposively selected for their knowledge of the project. This reduces full confidentiality of participation. However, as with all other participants, comments will remain confidential to the consultant and will not be shared or used in a way that identifies the source. Key informants will be asked for signed consent on their participation including information on how to opt out at a later date.

At all times, the consultant will be guided by UNICEF protocols for ethical research involving children\(^{17}\), and by decisions and input from the Technical Reference Group.

**Use, storage and confidentiality of human data**

Transcripts of interviews and other ‘raw’ data are to be stored securely with the consultant for a period of at least two years. Transcripts that do not identify participants can be made available to UNICEF for accountability and cross-check on request. Data may not be used for any other purpose than that stated to the participant during data collection.

Consent form - English

About this interview
Thank you for agreeing to take part.

The interview is about UNICEF’s project ‘Alternative community pre-schools and parenting education in Timor-Leste.’ We are interested in the period 2014-2017. Other people taking part are:

- Ministry staff and officials (MoE, MECAS)
- Local implementers, trainers and duty bearers (Viqueque, Ermera)
- Parenting Education module participants (Viqueque, Ermera)
- Teachers and parents, alternative pre-schools (Viqueque)
- Youth drama participants (Viqueque, Ermera)

What you tell us will be used to improve this project and other projects in the future for early childhood development in Timor-Leste. UNICEF will take results to governments and other NGOs so that good ideas and positive experiences can be repeated in other municipalities, and any mistakes or challenges avoided.

About the researcher
Katie Chalk (Chalk It Up) and Jose Cabral are both independent consultants, contracted by UNICEF to conduct the program review. They are not associated with the project or with UNICEF in Timor-Leste. Katie’s job is to report on project activities and results, including unexpected results, while Jose is supporting on coordination, document review and translation. The consultants will hand over the report to UNICEF for final release in early July.

Participation, privacy and confidentiality
All participants in this review were selected for their knowledge of the UNICEF project. We need you to be honest, speak openly and raise issues or concerns. Your words remain confidential to the consultants. Katie will keep a record of your conversation for her future reference only, and will only use it for the purpose described above. UNICEF and partners will not read anything you say in a way that identifies you.

Your participation in this review is voluntary and you are entitled to withdraw at any time. We ask that you sign below to acknowledge your ‘informed consent’ to take part in this interview. However, if you change your mind at any time for any reason, you can contact Katie on the details below, and she will delete your information.

Should you have any queries or concerns about the review, you can also contact Katie on the details below.

Katie Chalk / Chalk It Up
Email: katie@projectchalk.com.au
Mob: +61425 801 137
Consent form - Tetum

Kona-ba entrevista ida ne’e
Obrigadu tanba ita bo’ot hakarak atu hola parte. Entrevista ida ne’e konaba projetu UNICEF ba ‘Pre-escola alternativa baze komunitária no edukasaun inan-aman iha Timor-Leste.’ Ami interese iha períodu 2014-2017. Ema seluk ne’ebé partisipa mak hanesan:

- Funşionáriu no ofisiál husi ministériu (ME, MECAS)
- Implementadór lokál, instrutór no responsáveisira (Viqueque, Ermera)
- Partisipante sira husi módolu Edukasaun Inan-aman (Viqueque, Ermera)
- Profesór no inan-aman sira, pre-escola alternativa (Viqueque)
- Partisipante sira husi teatru juvenil (Viqueque, Ermera)

Saída mak ita bo’ot hatete mai ami ba oin sei uza atu hadi’ak liu tan projetu ida ne’e no projetu sira seluk ba dezenvolvementu labarik sedu iha Timor-Leste. UNICEF sei lori rezultadu hirak ne’e ba governu, ONG sira atu nune’e hanoine ne’ebé d’ak no esperiênsia positivu sira bele repete mos iha munisípiu sira seluk, no bele evita buat ne’ebé la loos no dezafiu sira.

Konaba investigadór
Katie Chalk (Chalk It Up) no José Cabral mak nu’udar konsultór independente sira, kontratadu husi UNICEF atu hala’o revizaun ba programa. Sira la iha afiliasau ho projetu ne’e ou UNICEF iha Timor-Leste. Katie sei servisu hodi halo relatóriu ba actividades no rezultadu sira husi projetu, inklui rezultadu ne’ebé la tuir hakarak, iha parte seluk José Cabral sei suporta iha koordenasaun, revizaun no tradusan ba dokumentu. Konsultór sira sei hato’o relatóriu ba UNICEF ne’ebé lansamentu final sei hala’o iha inísiiu fulan Jullu nia laran.

Partisipasaun, privasaun no konfiabilidade
Partisipante sira hotu husi revizaun ida ne’e hili tuir sira nia kuñesimentu iha projeto UNICEF ne’e. Ami presija ita bo’ot nia onestidade, ko’alia ho laran kma’an no hato’o problema ou preokupasaun ruma. Konsultór sira sei rai metin ita bo’ot nia liafuan. Katie sei rai gravasaun husi ita bo’ot nia konversa hanesan ninia referénsia deit ba futuru, no sei utiliza informasaun hirak ne’e tuir buat ne’ebé temi tih a ona iha leten. UNICEF no parseiru sira sei la lee buat hirak ne’ebé ita bo’ot hatete ho meiu ne’ebé bele identifika ita bo’ot nia an.

Ita bo’ot nia partisipasaun iha revizaun ida ne’e sei halo ho voluntáriu no ita bo’ot bele dada an iha tempu ne’ebé deit tuir ita bo’ot nia hakarak. Ami husu atu ita bo’ot bele asina iha kraik atu rekuñesaun ita bo’ot nian ‘formuláriu konsentimentu’ atu hola parte iha entrevista ida ne’e. Maske nune’e, karik ba oin ita bo’ot iha hanoin seluk iha tempu ne’ebé deit ho razaun saída deit, ita bo’ot bele kontaktu Katie ho detalle hanesan iha kraik ne’e, i nia sei la uza ita bo’ot nia informasaun .

Karie ita bo’ot iha dúvida ou preokupasaun ruma konaba revizaun ne’e, ita bo’ot bele kontaktu Katie ho detalle hanesan iha kraik.

Katie Chalk / Chalk It Up
Email: katie@projectchalk.com.au
Tel: +61425 801 137
Annex 8: Costing estimates with consultant narrative analysis

**Parenting education – low cost?**

It is difficult at this early stage to generate strong conclusions on the return on investment for Timor-Leste’s parenting education, as results must be projected. The total cost of the project over three years has been $750,000 from H&M, with a further $64,580 from the Government of Norway to cover radio drama production. The potential reach of the initiative in Viqueque and Ermera is upwards of 37,000 children, based on positive parenting behaviour change as a result of either attending the Parenting Education modules or listening to the radio drama.

There is also a case to be made for national level saturation of positive parenting messages, now that SECOM has commenced Timor-wide broadcast of the radio drama, with potential to benefit upwards of 140,000 children. There is certainly a good chance that of the 48 episodes, at least one will be heard at some stage in the next few years by every parent in Timor-Leste. Realistically, though, for the radio drama to prove its worth, parents would need not only to adopt practices that are promoted in the radio drama, but also to attribute this change to a mass media trigger. A result of this nature is very difficult to prove with empirical data (Mikton and Butchart 2009, in Superu 2014), and would be barely perceptible at this early stage in any case. It is more logical to see the radio drama as a support modality to suco level parenting practices influenced by the MSS modules and other integrated messaging.

In preparation for negotiations to scale up the Parenting Education program to other municipalities, UNICEF drafted a cost estimate for reaching suco level based on the actual costs of program in Viqueque and Ermera (following). This aspect of the program was valued at $401,949, or, using the above calculation of children likely to benefit, around $11 per child. If in future years an impact evaluation of the project finds positive parenting practices are more common and accepted in communities, the cost per child becomes so low it loses relevance as a measure; the benefits are for multiple generations of children.

This is still some way off. In the meantime, economies of scale are now appearing. These savings are due to the outputs of the H&M project. Messages, modules and associated IEC materials are ready and require only printing, and many core contacts in the training cascade are fully on board.

This budget does not include home visits. It is not clear how the Ministry of Education intends to cover the costs of these, as they are not integrated with other programs. However, community-based health interventions such as the Mothers’ Support Groups (due to commence in May/June 2017) and volunteer family health counsellors are well placed to absorb parenting practices into their toolkit of advice and support. This may have further training cost implications, both for first time train-the-trainer phasing in, and for ongoing refresher.
### UNICEF Costing, local implementation of parenting education programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount for Community-Based Alternative Pre-schools (center- and home-based)</th>
<th>Price per unit</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community session resources (per suco)</td>
<td>Program flipcharts</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large program posters, set of 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$192.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program banners and booklets</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$115</td>
<td>Brochures x 50 per community were not printed in time to be trialled prior to this review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manual for facilitators</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refreshments, all 10 sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other sundries</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$50</td>
<td>Flipcharts, markers, tape etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of trainers, administrative post</td>
<td>Facilitator cost</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$3000</td>
<td>2 facilitators @ $300 per day x 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level (per administrative post)</td>
<td>Facilitator transport, per diem</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$1300</td>
<td>2 facilitators @ $130 per day x 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant cost inc. transport</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$425</td>
<td>Based on av. participation of 25 per administrative post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refresher training, administrative post</td>
<td>Facilitator cost</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$3000</td>
<td>2 facilitators @ $300 per day x 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ suco (per administrative post)</td>
<td>Facilitator transport, per diem</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$1300</td>
<td>2 facilitators @ $130 per day x 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant cost inc. transport</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$425</td>
<td>Based on av. participation of 25 per administrative post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training, Year 2/3 (per administrative</td>
<td>Repeat of year 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$17,650</td>
<td>Sum of year 1 training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child / youth participation</td>
<td>Youth drama training</td>
<td>US$33,000</td>
<td>This sum is largely facilitator training; 3 facilitators 30 days @$500 per day, plus per diem and transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level costs</td>
<td>Training of trainers, master</td>
<td>Facilitator cost</td>
<td>US$8100</td>
<td>3 facilitators @$450 per day x 6 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>level (Dili)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost divided by sucos to benefit – the more sucos participating, the more cost effective the training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level costs</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Launch costs</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings, workshops and working</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$36,000</td>
<td>National level planning over three years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL COST TO SUCO</td>
<td>Approximately</td>
<td></td>
<td>$4,620</td>
<td>Based on implementation cost over 87 sucos, Ermera/Viqueque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL COST AT NATIONAL</td>
<td>Approximately</td>
<td></td>
<td>$104,000</td>
<td>Does not include messaging, materials and curriculum design, already in place as a result of H&amp;M project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alternative pre-schools – cost effective?

Costing of the alternative pre-school model compared to the cost of setting up government pre-schools from the ground up is shown on the following page (source, NZ MFAT Alternative Pre-schools Review, UNICEF 2017). The alternative pre-schools have clear cost advantages over government models because they tap into local and community-based resources, including human resources. The cost of setting up school governance – a Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) in public pre-schools and a small volunteer committee in the community-based model – heavily favours the alternative pre-schools. Teacher salaries also represent a significant saving. Costs of materials have so far been borne by UNICEF, but it is important to note that they are not free, and are costed per child at roughly equivalent to that incurred by public pre-schools. The cost of training teachers is also around the same between public and community-based models.

If the Ministry of Education were to adopt community-based pre-schools from the H&M or NZ MFAT projects in Ermera and Viqueque, some implications for the costing model would need to be considered.

- It may not be advisable to continue stipended rather than salaried positions, as this would create an inequity of opportunity for volunteers, and is likely to force greater attrition.
- Quality assurance and accreditation for pre-schools would also have greater human resource costs as there are more pre-schools to consider. Monitoring and at times funding staff capacity, cleanliness and hygiene, and basic equipment such as mats or chairs for students, would become the responsibility of the government.

With regard to the observation on salaried teachers, it is useful to note that the Ministry of Education’s pre-school system is already heavily reliant on volunteers. In 2014, a UNICEF study found that nearly two-thirds of government pre-school teachers were volunteers (352 volunteer, 203 paid)\(^\text{18}\). The government is gradually professionalising this workforce, suggesting an existing pathway for community-based facilitators to achieve a salaried role in the future.

One significant saving for government is the self-sourcing of premises for pre-school activities. Stakeholders noted a preference for the community centre rather than home-based premises for the school, as it gave parents and their children a permanent focal point for early childhood development. In several cases, parents with the support of the school committee and chefe suco found funding to build a new community centre for this purpose. The cost of construction of a government primary school is given at $54,000 in the table below. In the case of Uaotolori (Annex 1), the new centre constructed with PNDS funds cost $18,000, paid by of a pre-committed community development fund rather than the Ministry of Education. Thus, the piloting of alternative pre-schools in Viqueque alone has already saved the Ministry of Education approximately US$1.7 million (33 community centres at $54,000; home-based pre-schools are not included). This should be recognised as a promising contribution to the government’s strategy to provide universal early childhood education by 2020.

### UNICEF Costing of Alternative Pre-schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount Allocated for Formal Pre-school as per Timor-Leste Costed Action Plan</th>
<th>Amount for Community-Based Alternative Pre-schools (center- and home-based)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Estimates</td>
<td>Per Person Estimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of the pre-school System</td>
<td>Teacher Salary</td>
<td>US$166 per month for 25 children</td>
<td>US$ 6.64 per child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Grant</td>
<td>US$ 37,125 for 5,500 children</td>
<td>US$ 0.75 per child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{18}\) UNICEF Timor-Leste; Rapid Need Assessment Report: ALTERNATIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED PRE-SCHOOLS IN VIQUEQUE & ERMERA DISTRICTS, TIMOR-LESTE: August 2014; Timor-Leste
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Area</th>
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<th>Total Estimates</th>
<th>Per Person Estimates</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Meal per child per day for 180 days</td>
<td>US$ 27,500 per month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 0.25 per child</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Few community initiatives on school feeding, more individual driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-school Inspector Salaries (2 per municipality)</td>
<td>US$ 159,120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 510 per person per month</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Still required, may require increased staffing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of one new pre-school building for 50 children (two classrooms) (investment)</td>
<td>US$ 54,500 for 1 pre-school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 1,090 per child</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Functions in community centres and home settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Core Package of Materials (annual)</td>
<td>US$ 1,758 for 50 children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 35.16 per child</td>
<td>US$ 37.4 per child</td>
<td>Pre-school also uses locally available materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Furniture (for 5 years)</td>
<td>US$ 5,792 for 50 children x 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$23 per child</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Through Community Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>In-service Training annual basis per teacher</td>
<td>US$ 69,667</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 1,140 per teacher</td>
<td>US$ 870.5 per facilitator</td>
<td>US $668 per teacher for 1 orientation training; and US $ 67.5 per facilitator per refresher training (3 per year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Community Involvement</td>
<td>Training of PTA members: 5 per school; 10 days; members leave after 3 years (annual)</td>
<td>US$ 70,000 per annum</td>
<td>Not Available in Costed Action Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 251 per SMC member</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Orientation training (2 trainings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of PTA Guidelines (investment one time)</td>
<td>US$ 20,000</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
<td>This cost is accounted for in the HR and Management Costs as discussed below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>Startup (standards based) monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>US$ 211,860</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US$ 284,684</td>
<td></td>
<td>Programme monitoring costs (US$ 96,093)+ HR and Management Costs (US$ 188,591)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subsequent annual system</td>
<td>US$13,260</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provided by government. May have staffing implications; see also pre-school inspector salary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 9: Recommendations on alternative pre-schools, March 2017

(UNICEF 2017)

While the objective of providing equitable access to pre-school education has been achieved through the community-based alternative pre-school model, there are key steps for different stakeholders which would need to be undertaken. The suggestions from the NZ MFAT/UNICEF end-of-project review of community-based alternative pre-school, arranged for different stakeholders, are listed below. They were presented to the New Zealand Embassy in Timor-Leste on March 27, 2017 and to the Government of Timor-Leste (Ministry of Education) on March 31.

Ministry of Education (in collaboration with UNICEF and other Development Partners)

- The MOE with the support of UNICEF, New Zealand and other Development Partners may consider to continue to institutionalize mechanisms to absorb community-based alternative pre-schools (low cost model) in the public pre-school system. This can be initiated by bringing the community-based alternative pre-schools under the monitoring of the MOE through the municipal government and the same could be supported by UNICEF in collaboration with MOE.

- It may be considered to develop a roadmap for sustainability of the community-based alternative pre-school programme.

- UNICEF till now has been supporting the costs of monitoring for the alternative pre-schools through filed level implementing organizations. This is an opportunity for UNICEF and MOE to collaborate, where UNICEF can enable strengthen the monitoring component at municipal level and the alternative pre-schools can thus be covered under the monitoring of municipal government.

- In context of decentralization in the country, Ministry of Education may consider defining clear roles and responsibilities for the municipal government in terms of managing and supporting pre-school education in the municipalities (including community-based alternative pre-school)

- The Ministry of Education may consider supporting select components of community-based alternative pre-schools in a phased approach (training of facilitators, school grants, school meals, etc.) as discussed in the financing option

- The MOE may consider pilot testing and gather evidence/experiences on the proposed accreditation framework across different pre-school models (including alternative pre-schools) and review and finalize the framework and integration process. Considering UNICEF has committed funding support to community-based alternative pre-school programme till end of 2019, the period from 2017-2019 could be utilized for pilot testing. Piloting would provide inputs for further planning (how the standards are working in different pre-school models including alternative pre-school in different settings).

- Develop a progressive pathway for pre-schools to adopt accreditation standards. Community-based alternative pre-schools are in remote areas and therefore would benefit if clear guidelines and support is provided in terms of achieving the standards of the accreditation framework when it would be implemented. For example, set of indicators may be provided under each standard of accreditation and once the pre-school meets those indicators, it would have attained that specific standard. Then the pre-school may move to the next level. The Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) used in the Head Start programme in United States may be reviewed as a reference.

- Develop incentive based financing option to encourage community driven initiatives. For example, if a community has built the pre-school building through community funding or through securing PNDS funding, incentives may be provided to the pre-school to encourage such initiatives. Clear criteria for incentivizing community initiatives may be developed in details.

- Develop early learning and development standards (ELDS) which would be contextually relevant and linked to the pre-school curriculum. The ELDS would enable identification of age appropriate competencies of young children based on which assessment tools and training of facilitators can be developed.

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- UNICEF may consider developing supportive supervision guidelines which would enable the field level implementing organizations to adopt a method for providing constructive feedback and technical support to facilitators during onsite visits. This may also be included in the training of the field level implementers.
• Develop appropriate strategies for advocacy with communities and local government to seek support through PNDS. This would involve the local leadership like chief of Suco, chief of Aldeia, School Management Committee (SMC) member, PNDS facilitator at suco and municipal government officers.

• UNICEF may consider continuing the parenting education initiative which has been recently initiated. However, it may be considered to include and involve multiple sectors which are working for young children like, nutrition, health, WASH and hygiene and other relevant sectors.

• An area that would need to be addressed further is children with special needs. There would need to be focused training for implementers and facilitators on identifying children with special needs and refer the family to the appropriate services. The training could focus on building the capacities of facilitators and implementers on developmental milestones. This would require developing appropriate training materials, frameworks and strategy for training facilitators on early identification of special needs.

• UNICEF may consider to track the cohort (1,225 children) who attended the alternative pre-schools and are now enrolled in Grade 1 for school year 2017. The tracking may include following up these children and studying their retention and performance levels through primary (up to 8 years).

**Alola Foundation- National Level Implementing Partner**

• Encourage current community initiatives of supporting community-based alternative pre-schools and promote cross learning across communities about these initiatives so more communities benefit from these experiences. This could be facilitated by organizing common meetings of facilitators and SMC members from different villages, planning field visits for facilitators and SMC members, etc.

• As MOE is preparing to implement the licensing and accreditation for pre-schools, it would be important to conduct capacity building sessions for field level implementing partners (KDP and IMI), facilitators and SMC members, so that (1) they can start preparing for licensing process; and (2) they have complete information on steps to be followed. This would need to be closely monitored.

• The training component needs to be strengthened by (1) introducing field-based practices; (2) introducing focused training on developing lesson plans and conducting age-appropriate assessments; and (3) by further strengthening capacities of implementers (KDP and IMI) for them to provide day to day onsite technical support/mentoring to community-based pre-school facilitators.

• Analysis of monitoring data must be used to inform refresher trainings as this would enable the trainer to identify the potential gaps and challenges that facilitators are facing.

• The lesson plans must include age appropriate activities for 3-to 4-year-olds focusing on pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, socio-emotional and creative development. One facilitator may separately be attached to this group. For children 4-years-old and above, a range of activities on socio-emotional, logic and reasoning may be planned. They should gradually move from concept formation to literacy related activities. Facilitators need support in organizing play corners and small group activities using these play corners.

• Given a high proportion of 3- to 4-year-old children, strategies may be worked out to ensure one facilitator for the 3- to 4-year-old children. This would mean providing specific training to the facilitator on age and developmentally appropriate practices for 3 to 4-year-olds.

• Monitoring should include data collection on children’s participation (number of hours child spends in pre-school) and number of sessions/classes held per week and duration. Attendance data may be collected both through head count and checking last month’s attendance record and the same should be available for all pre-schools. Individual child’s participation may be recorded by the facilitator (recording time of coming to pre-school and leaving) on a day to day basis.
Annex 10: TORs for Review, Reference Group

**TOR Reference Group**
Project Review of the Alternative Pre-schools and Parenting Programme
funded by the H&M Foundation

**Composition of Reference Group**

**Chair:** Commission for the Rights of the Child, GOTL
Chief of PME/SP, UNICEF Timor-Leste

**Members:**
Government of Timor-Leste: MSS, MOE, SECOM
UNICEF Timor-Leste (PME/SP Section, Education Section, Child Protection Section, Communication Section)

*Note: Chairs will coordinate with other stakeholders for any technical input during the process (e.g. MOJ, UNICEF Regional Office/ HQs/UNICEF Timor-Leste Representative/Deputy Representative)*

**Role:**
- To provide technical guidance and inputs at key milestones (inception report, presentation of the findings, final report)
- To raise any ethical consideration in advance related to methodology and overall implementation of project review process to ensure full compliance of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

**Schedule:**
- Inception Report: April 1st to 21st, 2017
- Stakeholder interview (Dili): April 24th to 28th, 2017
- Field data collection (Ermera & Viqueque): May 1st to 12th, 2017
- Workshop: May 16th, 2017
- Final Report: May 26th to June 23rd

**Consultant:** Katie Chalk (international) with support of Jose Cabral (National)

**Scope of the Project Review:**

This review will focus on below two components of the project interventions supported by H&M.

Parenting Education component:
- Parenting Education Sessions at community level for parents and other primary caregivers; Radio Serial & Youth Theatre Groups
- Target: 10,000 parents or other primary caregivers in 52 villages in Ermera and 35 villages in Viqueque; 30,000 children 0-8 in 52 villages in Ermera and 35 villages in Viqueque; 280,000 children (nationwide) through nationwide radio-serial

Community-based alternative pre-schools component:
- Target: 1,000 children of 3 – 5 years old of 32 villages in Viqueque municipality

*Note: UNICEF supports the alternative pre-schools in Ermera and Viqueque. The project in Ermera and parts of Viqueque (Ossu sub-district) are funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).*
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