

[Tetum below]

## **Silent Emergency! Half of the next generation of Timor-Leste at the risk of being disabled if stunting in children is not addressed today!**

4 May 2022

UNICEF's Country Representative to Timor-Leste, Bilal Durrani, talked to Tatoli at the launch of the government's Food and Nutrition Survey, and the National Health Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan for 2021–25.

### **Question: What is stunting in children, and what is its impact on the overall development of Timor-Leste?**

Stunting results from chronic undernutrition. It is the impaired growth and development that children experience in the first 1,000 days (conception until a child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday). Stunting comes from:

- Not exclusive breastfeeding, and poor feeding practices,
- intake of formula milk and imported ultra-processed foods,
- frequent illnesses such as diarrhea and intestinal worms due to poor water, sanitation and hygiene,
- inadequate intake of nutritious affordable nutritious local foods, and
- lack of access to health and other essential services

The brains of stunted children do not grow to their full potential. They are more likely to suffer poor health and be at risk from disease and diet related conditions. But stunting doesn't only affect a child's health – it also inhibits their future development. Children suffering from stunting may never grow to their full height or develop their full cognitive potential. They are at greater risk of dropping out of school, earning less, diabetes and cancer, and premature death.

Labarik sira ho ra'es badak nia kakutak sei la dezenvolve to'o masimu. Sira baibain sei sai hanesan moras-atan no iha risku a'as ba kondisaun moras sira relata ba konsumu ai-

haan nian. Ra'es badak laos deit afeita labarik sira nia saude—maibe impede mos sira nia dezvoltimentu iha futuru. Labarik sira ne'ebé sofre ho ra'es badak sei nunca dezvoltolve nakonu ou sei nunca dezvoltolve sira nia potensia matenek nian. Sira iha risku aas atu sai husi eskola, hetan rendimentu ki'ik, moras ho diabetiku no kankru, no mos mate sedu.

Stunting is often physically invisible. It is therefore referred to as 'silent emergency'. Almost half of Timorese children are born stunted RIGHT NOW. This means that half of the population of Timor-Leste will not have fully grown brains to contribute to the economic development of the country. According to the World Bank, undernutrition depresses Timor-Leste's economy by \$41 million annually. This loss amounts to 1% of GDP, 2% of non-petroleum GDP, and a quarter of the projected 8% annual growth in non-petroleum sectors.

### **Question: What are the causes of stunting in Timor-Leste?**

The Ministry of Health has just released the Timor-Leste Food and Nutrition Survey. The Survey identifies the following four alarming facts that lead to stunting in Timor-Leste:

- 53% of Timorese mothers do not “initiate” breastfeeding their children when a child is born. Early breastfeeding is especially important because the first feeds contain colostrum, a special milk often referred to as “liquid gold” because of its immune properties. This colostrum serves as the baby's first “immunisation,” and is rich in vitamin A and helps to ensure that the baby's intestines and body grow and develop properly.
- It is extremely dangerous to give any water or food to a child in the first six months, but 22% of Timorese parents start feeding their children with solid foods even before they turn 6 months old.
- 86% of Timorese parents do not give their children healthy complementary affordable nutritious local foods when they turn six months old.
- 94% of Timorese do not wash their hands after disposing child's faeces and the same percentage of people do not wash their hands before breastfeeding/feeding children. This leads to deadly diseases such as diarrhea and intestinal worms.

## **Question: What is the role of formula milk in promoting stunting among Timorese children?**

Sometimes, mothers wrongly think that formula milk is better than breastmilk. The manufacturers of infant formula spend billions of dollars on predatory marketing to try and falsely convince families, everyone from mothers, fathers, mothers-in-law and community members, that their artificial products contain the same nutrients as breastmilk. This is not true. It can never be the same.

It is deeply concerning and alarming that in the last two decades, percentage of Timorese children that do not initiate early breastfeeding has increased to 53% in 2020! Because of this, a significant portion of Timorese children miss out on breastmilk which is rich in essential vitamins and nutrients.

The national prevalence of bottle feeding is 32%, with as high as 53% in Dili. Mothers often cannot read the instructions to adequately use formula milk, often giving the wrong formula milk to a child which is not adequate for the child's age. Lack of hygiene to properly clean milk bottles leads to diarrhoeal infection which can adversely affect a child's ability to eat and absorb nutritious diet. Furthermore, undernutrition can predispose a child at risk of diarrhoeal infection, pneumonia or other diseases.

Compared with breast-fed infants, non-breast-fed infants are more likely to die from acute respiratory infection (ARI) and diarrhea. Formula also makes children more prone to acute infections, asthma, meningitis, obesity and diabetes. Breastfeeding on the other hand protects children against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), allergies, ARI, and ear infections.

Science shows that every mother can breastfeed successfully. Skin-to-skin contact and correct positioning of the baby helps. Frequently breastfeeding the baby causes production of more milk. Mothers should **never** use formula milk even if she is having challenges to produce breastmilk, which is extremely rare. Instead, mothers can express breastmilk and feed with a cup, or breastmilk/breastfeed from a wet nurse.

Breastfeeding benefits mothers too. Exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months helps women lose the weight they gained during pregnancy. International studies have found a connection between exclusive breastfeeding and decreased incidents of breast cancer. Breastfeeding soon after giving birth can also help mothers stop bleeding after birth and also helps the uterus to recover.

**Question: What are the top three ways to stop stunting in Timorese children?**

47% of Timorese children are born stunted. Stunting is almost impossible to reverse after a child turns two years old. Nearly 80% of a human's brain develops by the age of two. We have only 24 months before it is too late to stop a child from being stunted for life.

Through UNICEF's experience in more than 190 countries and territories, we propose the following four evidence-based interventions. These are some of the world's best existing tools to ensure that the next generation of Timor-Leste is protected from the lifelong consequences of stunting:

1. Breastfeeding prevents malnutrition in all its forms. All babies should be breastfed early (within the first hour after birth), and exclusively (for the first 6 months of life, with no other food or water).
2. Complementary affordable nutritious local foods should be included alongside breastfeeding in a child's diet at the age of six months – an important growth period during which they are more vulnerable to undernutrition. Micronutrient powders, available free at Timorese health facilities, should be introduced from 6 months of age, together with complementary foods.
3. Handwashing by mothers/caregivers with soap helps to prevent and control the spread of infectious diseases such as diarrhoea. There are five critical times when mothers/caregivers need to wash their hands: before preparing food, before cooking, before feeding the baby (including breastfeeding), after changing baby's diapers or washing baby's bottom, and after using the toilet. Proper management of human waste through toilets is also critical.

**Question: What would be your advice to the government of Timor-Leste, including the new President and the Prime Minister, to address stunting among Timorese children?**

In Timor-Leste's Consolidated National Action Plan for Nutrition and Food Security (CNAP), the goal of the government is to reduce stunting in Timorese children by 22% (from 47% to 25%) by 2030. According to the researchers, if the government has a

razor-sharp focus on only 10 critical health interventions (reaching 90% of population), this goal of reducing stunting by 22% could be achieved.

On 5 May 2022, the government is launching the National Health Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2026 to reach the CNAP goal of reducing stunting by 22%. If the leaders of this beautiful nation want to reduce stunting among Timorese children and ensure a prosperous future for this country, the top priority of the government should be to ensure that sustainable and adequate budget is allocated to implement the Health Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan.

In addition, the government should expedite and approve the draft Decree Law for regulating the inappropriate marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (BMS), which is pending since the first draft was prepared in 2010.Page Break

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## **Emerjensia Silensioza! Metade husi jersaun Timor-Leste tuir mai iha risku ho defisiensia se karik ita la hataan lalais ba asuntu ra'es badak entre labarik sira**

**5 Maiu 2022**

Reprezentante UNICEF nian iha Timor-Leste, Sr. Bilal Durrani, koalia ho MEDIA durante lansamentu ba programa governu “Pesquisa ba Ai-haan no Nutrisaun”, no mós Planu Estratéjiku Nasional Nutrisaun Setor Saúde (PENNSS) 2022-2026.

**Pergunta: Saida mak ra'es badak iha labarik sira, no oinsa mak moras ne'e nia impaktu ba Timor-Leste nia dezvoltimentu?**

Ra'es badak ne'e rezulta husi malnutrisaun krónika. Ne'e hanesan defisiensia iha kresimentu no dezvoltimentu labarik nian durante loron 1000 dahuluk iha sira moris komesa husi sira nia konsepsaun to'o sira halo tinan 2. Ra'es badak ne'e rezulta husi:

- La fó deit susu-been inan eskuzivu, no pratika ladun saudavel durante fo ha'an oan sira.
- utiliza susu-been formula (uut ka kalen), no ai-haan importasaun sira,
- moras beibeik ho diareia no lumbriga kabun nian tanba kualidade bee, sanitasaun no ijiene ne'ebe ladiak.
- la konsumu ai-ha'an ho nutrisaun ho naton,
- la iha asesu ba servisu saude no servisu esensial sira seluk.

Labarik sira ho ra'es badak nia kakutak sei la dezentolve ho masimu. Sira baibain sei sai hetan moras beibeik no iha risku boot ba kondisaun moras sira relasiona ho konsumu ai-haan nian. Ra'es badak laos afeta deit ba labarik sira nia saude—maibe impede mós sira nia dezentolvimentu iha futuru. Labarik sira ne'ebé sofre ho ra'es badak nia kresimentu la maximu ka pontensia kognitiva sei la dezentovle. Sira iha risku aas atu sai husi eskola, hetan rendimentu ki'ik, moras diabete no kankru, no mós mate sedu.

Ra'es badak ne'e dala barak ita la hare'e fízikamente. Tanba ne'e ita bolu hanesan “Emerjensia Silensiozu”. Kuaze metade husi labarik Timor-oan sira moris ho ra'es badak AGORA DAUDAUN. Ne'e katak metade husi populasau Timor-Leste ni kakutak sei la dezentolve ho maximu atu bele kontribui ba dezentolvimentu ekonomia rai laran. Tuir Banku Mundial, subnutrisaun (la naton) reduz ekonomia Timor-Leste nian dollar amerikanu millaun 41 kada tinan. Lakon sira ne'e konta porsentu ida (1%) husi PIB, ka porsentu rua (2%) husi PIB naun petroleo nian, no ida baluk haat (25%) husi kresimentu anual porsentu ualu (8%) ne'ebe mak projeta ona iha setor naun petroleo nian

### **Pergunta: Saida mak kauza ra'es badak iha Timor-Leste?**

Ministeriu Saúde foin lansa tiha ona relatoriu “Peskiza Ai-haan no Nutrisaun Timor-Leste” nian. Peskiza ne'e identifika ona faktu grave haat ne'ebé mak rezulta ba ra'es badak iha Timor-Leste:

- 53% husi inan Timor-oan mak la “hahú” uza susu-been inan atu fó haan sira nia oan bainhira sira moris mai. Fó oan sira susubeen inan ne'e importante teb-tebes tanba susubeen inan nian ne'e riku ho Kolostrum, susubeen espesial ne'ebé dala barak refere hanesan “Osan mean liquidu” tanba sira iha konteudu esensial ba labarik sira nia imunidade. Kolostrum ne'e serve hanesan bebe nia “imunizasaun” dahuluk nian no riku ho vitamina A no ajuda atu aseguara katak bebe nian intestinu no isin sei iha kresimentu no dezentolvimentu ne'ebé própriu.
- Perigu tebes atu fo be'e no ai-haan saida deit ba labarik sira durante periodu fulan ne'en dahuluk, maibe 22% parente Timoroan sira mak komesa fo haan sira nia bebe ho ai-haan to'os maske sira foin mak fulan ne'en deit.
- 86% husi parente Timoroan sira mak la fo sira nia oan ai-haan komplimentariu ne'ebé saudavel no ai-haan lokal ho nutrisaun bainhira sira to'o ona fulan ne'e.
- 94% husi Timoroan sira mak la fase sira nia liman hafoin hamos labarik nia foer sira no porsentu hanesan ba ema sira ne'ebé mak la fase sira nia liman molok fo susu ka fo haan oan sira. Ne'e sei rezulta iha moras perigu sira hanesan diarea no mos lumbriga kabun laran.

## **Pergunta: Saida mak papel husi susubeen formula (uut no kaleng) hodi promote ra'es badak entre labarik Timoroan sira?**

Dala barak, inan sira hanoin sala katak susubeen formula mak diak liu fali susubeen inan nian. Sira ne'ebé produs susubeen formula gasta osan billaun barak atu kria merkadu ne'ebé visiu atu bele tenta ho informasaun falsu no konvense inan sira katak sira nia produktu artifisial (feitu) mos iha nutrisaun ne'ebé hanesan susubeen inan. Ne'e la los. Sira nunka iha nutrisaun hanesan.

Triste no perigu tebes katak iha dekada rua nia kotuk, porsentajen husi labarik Timoroan sira ne'ebé la konsume susubeen inan husi inisiu sae ba 53% iha 2020! Tanba ida ne'e, porsaun boot husi labarik Timoroan sira mak la hetan susubeen inan ne'ebé riku ho vitamina no nutrisaun esensial sira.

Prevalensia nasional ba fo-haan uza susubeen uza bibiron mak 32%, iha Dili deit nivel aas to iha 53%. Inan sira dala barak labele le'e didiak instrusaun sira atu bele uza susubeen formula nian, dala barak fo formula sala bao an sira ne'ebé la adekua (naton) ba sira oan nia idade. Bainhira ita la mantein ijiene husi bibiron sira mak sei rezulta iha infeisaun diarea ne'ebé bele afeita maka'as labarik sira nia abilidade atu ha'an no bele inkorpora nutrisaun sira. Liu-liu, subnutrisaun bele impoen labarik sira ba infeisaun diarea liu husi hafraku sira nia sistema imunidade.

Kompara ho labarik sira ne'ebé mak fo haan ho susubeen inan, labarik sira ne'ebé mak la fo haan ho susubeen inan iha risku aas liu atu mate husi moras infeisaun respiratoriu nian no mos diarea. Formula mos halo labarik sira atu sai atan ba moras infeisaun sira, asma, meningitis, obesidade, no mos diabetiku. Fo susubeen inan fali, sei proteze oan sira husi Sindroma Mate Derepentu ba Labarik (SMDL), alerjia sira, moras respiratoriu no mos infeisaun tilun nian

Siensia prova ona katak inan sira hotu bele fo susubeen inan ho susesu. Uzi aprosimasaun kulit ho kulit rabat malu no pozisiona bebe sira ho dalan loos sei bele ajuda. Fo susubeen inan ho beibeik sei ajuda inan sira bele produz barak liu tan susubeen. Inan sira tuir los nunka uza susubeen formula maske sira hasoru difikuldade atu produs susubeen inan rasik. Ne'e mos hanesan situasaun ne'ebé raru tebes. Envesde uza susubeen formula, inan sira bele halo susubeen inan ekpress no fo susu uza kopu ka fo susubeen husi inan-seluk

Fo susubeen inan nian sei benefisia inan sira mos. Fo susubeen inan eskluzivamente durante pelu menus fulan ne'en sei ajuda inan sira atu hatu'un todan ne'ebé akumulada durante gravida nian. Estudu internasional nian hetan ligasaun entre fo susubeen inan

eskluzivamente ho redusaun iha risku kankru mamá. Fo susubeen inan nian imediamente husi bebe nia moris sei ajuda mos inan sira atu hapara hemorajia hafoin partu no mos ajuda inan sira rekupera sira nia oan fatin ho lalais.

### **Pergunta: Saida mak maneira tolu diak liu atu hapara ra'es badak entre labarik Timoroan sira?**

47% husi labarik Timoroan sira mak moris mai ho ra'es badak. Ra'e badak ne'e kuaze imposivel atu muda fali sitasaun halo diak, bainhira labarik sira to'o idade tinan rua. Kuaze 80% husi ema sira nia kakutak ne'e dezenvolve ona bainhira ita to'o tinan rua. Ita iha fulan 24 molok ita tarde liu atu salva labarik ida husi ra'es badak iha nia moris tomak.

Liu husi UNICEF ninia esperiensa iha nasaun no teritoriu liu husi 190, ami propoin intervensaun bazeia ba evidensia tuir mai. Intervensaun hirak ne'e hanesan pratika ne'ebé diak liu iha mundu tomak atu asegura katak jersaun Timor-Leste nian ne'ebé tuir mai sei hetan protesaun ba konsekuansia moris tomak mai husi ra'es badak:

1. Fo susubeen inan nia prevene malnutrisaun iha forma oi-oin. Bebé oan sira tenki hetan susubeen inan nian sedu kedas (komesa husi oras dahuluk sira moris mai), no sei kontinua eskluzivamente durante fulan ne'en nia laran, sein uza aihan ka hemu sira seluk).
2. Ai-haan local ne'ebé komplementariu sei inklui mos hamutuk ho fo susubeen inan nian iha labarik nia dieta husi fulan ne'en—ne'ebé sai nuudar periodu importante iha kresimentu, iha tempu ne'ebé sira vulneravel tebes ba subnutrisaun. Mikronutriente uut, ne'ebé disponivel ho gratis iha fasilidade saude sira iha Timor-Leste, tenki introdus ona husi idade fulan ne'e, hamutuk mos ho ai-han komplementariu sira.
3. Inan sira ne'ebé fase liman ho sabaun sei ajuda atu prevene no kontrola moras infeisaun sira hanesan diarea atu haberan ba ema hotu. Iha periodu kritiku lima (5) bainhira inan ka kuidador sira presiza atu fase sira nia liman: molok prepara ai-han sira, molok tein, molok fo haan beé sira (inklui fo susubeen inan), hafoin troka bebe nia fralda sira ka hamoos bebe nia kidung, no hafoin uza haris fatin. Jestaun propriu ba ema nia foer sira, liu husi uza sintina mos kritiku tebes.



**Pergunta: Saida mak ita sei akonsella Governu Timor-Leste, inklui Prezidente foun no Primeiru Ministru, hodi bele hataan ba asuntu ra'es badak entre labarik Timoroan sira?**

Iha Planu Asaun Nasional Konsolidada na Nutrisaun no Segunransa Ai-han (PANKNSA), tarjetu ba Governu nian atu reduz ra'es badak entre labarik Timoroan sira to'o 22% (tuun husi 47%, to 25%) molok tinan 2030. Bazeia ba peskizador sira, se karik Governu bele foka ba deit intervensaun saude kritiku 10 (atinji 90% husi populasau), tarjetu ida atu redus ra'es badak tuun ba 22% sei bele atinji.

Iha loron 5 Maiu 2022, Governu lansa PENNS 2022-2026 atu atinji PANKNSA nia tarjetu atu redus ra'es badak tuun ba 22%. Se karik ulun nain sira iha rai furak ida ne'e hakarak atu redus ra'es badak entre labarik Timoroan sira no asegura futuru ida ne'ebé prosperu, entaun prioridade aas liu husi Governu nian mak atu bele asegura katak orsamentu ne'ebé sustentavel no adekuaudu sei aloka ba implementa PENNS 2022-2026

Adisionalmente, Governu tenki halais no aprova mos esbosu ba Lei Dekretu hodi regula mos merkadoria la propriu husi subsitutu susubbeen inan, ne'ebé mak sei pendente hela dezde esbosu ne'e prepara iha tinan 2010.