

Talking points delivered by Emmanuelle Collet, Acting Representative of UNICEF, Timor-Leste



**At the ceremony of handover of billboard vehicles to Ministry of Health – Health Promotion Department
Ainaro, 21 July 2022**

Your Excellency, dr. Odete Maria Freitas Belo, Minister of Health

Your Excellency, Sr. Bonifacio Maucoli dos Reis, Vice Minister of Health

Your Excellency, Administrator of Ainaro Municipality

Dr Odete da Silva Viegas, Director General of Health Services

Sr Marcelo Amaral, DG for Corporate Services

Sr Narciso Fernandes, Director of Cabinet for Policy, Planning and Cooperation

MOH Directors, Directors from Municipalities, Heads of Departments and other staff from the MOH

Colleagues from Development Partners and UN Agencies

Administrator of Administrative Posts

Xefe Suku and Xefe Aldeia

Representatives from the media,

Children of Ainaro,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am proud to represent UNICEF today as we mark an important milestone in our partnership with the Ministry of Health.
2. Over the past two years, we have, together, contributed to the significant progress made in keeping COVID-19 at bay and keeping people safe from the disease, including by promoting vaccinations for every eligible person above 12 years old as decided by the Government of Timor-Leste.

3. Within a month of setting up coordination mechanisms and beginning awareness work to empower people with information on COVID-19 prevention, together with WHO and other partners, we had close to 95% of the population of Timor-Leste indicating they knew about COVID-19 and how to protect themselves.

4. When COVID-19 vaccinations were being rolled out, there was a massive uptake. Today, Timor-Leste has managed to vaccinate 86% of the eligible population against COVID-19 – amongst the highest rates in the region.

5. This is, in no small measure, thanks to our joint work on developing messaging and multi-media material, in poster, song, braille, sign language, animation, video and audio formats. We also developed messaging in six languages, peer to peer messaging from children or youth and from national, community and religious leaders.

6. Our advocacy actions with key leaders, teachers and students also helped reinforce messaging.

7. All of these helped in getting information to people on how they could protect themselves from COVID-19 and get vaccinated- in formats and

languages they understood, and through television, community radio and social media to their homes.

8. Together, we continue to empower children, youth and families with the right information. We are proud to be partnering with the Ministry of Health and others in this effort.

9. As we know, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet. More than 500,000 new and re-infected cases are being identified globally every day. And while we have progress well in COVID-19 vaccination, to date around 13% of adult population have not received their first vaccine dose, and many have also not received their second dose of vaccines in Timor-Leste.

10. We therefore need to continue supporting community mobilization and demand generation for vaccines, to ensure people are safe from COVID-19.

11. To support continued awareness raising in markets, communities, and across the country, we are today handing over two billboard vehicles equipped with ICT material, including laptops, sound systems, projectors and megaphones to the health promotion department of the Ministry of Health. These are for use in raising awareness on COVID-19 prevention,

including vaccine uptake, as well as promoting other critical interventions that will keep babies, children and mothers safe from many diseases – be it promoting exclusive breastfeeding, proper nutrition for children and mothers, or immunization of children.

12.I believe that these vehicles will be used with care, maintained, and be utilized for years to come.

13.UNICEF looks forward to continued close collaboration with the Ministry of Health in our joint objective of making sure every child is protected from COVID-19, from vaccine preventable diseases, is well nourished, including having early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, and is able to survive and thrive.

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