



PHOTO ESSAY TOOLKIT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Acknowledgements

Photo Essay Toolkit for Young People

We acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts, and Culture, and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment for their coordination and guidance.

With contributions from:

Adolescents and young people, including students, youth leaders, environmental youth groups, girls and young women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth from Dili, Viqueque, and Lautém municipalities, who participated in the consultations and field testing and shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights during the development of this guide.

These include Amigo de Jesus, São Pedro, Sagrado Coração de Jesus, CAFÉ, An-Nur, Colegio São João Paulo II, KAY-RALA, Colegio Santo Inácio de Loyola, ESTV – ETI, UNTL, DIT, UCT, ESG CALIXA, Cristal, ICS, ESGP 4 de Setembro, ESG LERE, ESG KONIS, ESG CAFÉ, Vocational no.1, Laudato Si' Movement de Timor-Leste, Alumni LCOY Timor-Leste, APFTL, SOA-TL, RYLA-TL, KHS, AJAR, UC-TL, BERNABAD, SBHMDU.

Their meaningful contributions helped shape the content, language, and tools to ensure they are relevant, inclusive, culturally appropriate, and youth-friendly.

Disclaimer:

This guide is an educational resource intended to support learning and youth engagement in climate action. It simplifies climate change, advocacy, and policy concepts for educational purposes and does not replace official government policies or United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) documents.

The Development of Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Climate Change Module and Toolkit Series was funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

How to Use this Resource?

The **Youth-Friendly Climate Change Module and Toolkit Series** were developed to empower adolescents and young people in Timor-Leste, especially those aged 15 to 28, by providing climate change learning resources that support informed, inclusive, and locally driven climate action.

These resources are:

- 1 Youth Climate Change Module
- 2 Youth Climate Action Guideline
- 3 Climate Action Tool
- 4 International Climate Agreements Guide
- 5 Climate Governance Guide
- 6 Photo Essay Toolkit
- 7 Climate Glossary Toolkit

This Photo Essay Toolkit is **the sixth resource of the Youth-Friendly Climate Change Module and Toolkit Series**. It is designed to help young people in Timor-Leste explore, understand, and share climate stories through photography and creative expression. This resource is available in two languages: **English and Tetun**. Both versions are intended to ensure broader accessibility and understanding.

How to Use this Guide?

1 Look closely at each photo

This photo essay is for you to explore, reflect, and share ideas about climate change in your community.

2 Connect to the categories

Use the five sections, ***Climate Impact, Youth in Action, Nature & Biodiversity, Climate Solutions & Adaptation, and Culture, Faith & Climate*** to guide your thoughts. Ask yourself: “Which category does this photo belong to? What story does it tell?”

3 Discuss and share

Gather in a circle or small group, talk about what you see, share your ideas, and listen to others.

4 Add your own stories

You can take your own photos, write captions, draw, or role-play what’s happening in the photo to explore the story more deeply.

5 Exchange ideas

Use the photos as a starting point to think about actions, solutions, or experiences in your community. There is no “right” answer every idea helps build understanding and inspires others.



Use this **photo essay** to see your community, reflect on **real experiences**, and **spark conversations and have fun sharing** and learning with friends!

Table Of Content

2	Acknowledgement
3	How to use this resource?
4	How to use this guide?
5	Table Of Content
6	Introduction
7	Nature and Biodiversity
15	Culture, Faith and Identity
24	Vulnerability
30	Climate Impact
36	Climate Solution and Adaptation
44	Youth In Action



INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges today, and young people are both the most affected and the ones who can make a real difference. They are leading actions, inspiring their communities, and creating a better future one small step at a time.

In Timor-Leste, youth feel the effects of climate change every day from weird weather and damaged nature to problems with jobs, culture, and daily life. But they are also taking action, leading local projects, and finding solutions that help their communities.

The Photo Essay Toolkit is here to help youth capture and share stories about climate change through photos and short captions. It has five fun categories: **Nature & Biodiversity, Culture, Faith and Identity, Vulnerability, Climate Impact, Climate Solutions & Adaptation, Youth in Action**, and guides young people to take cool photos, tell simple stories, and show real experiences. It also teaches ethical storytelling, so everyone is respected.

This toolkit isn't just for learning it's a fun source of inspiration. Keep it on your desk, flip through it when bored, get ideas, and see how your small actions can make a big difference. By sharing their stories, youth can inspire others, raise awareness, and help build a stronger, greener, and hopeful Timor-Leste one photo at a time.



NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY

*For
Bliss*



On the coast of Akrema in Ataúro Island, a single tree stood by a blue sea lagoon, becoming a symbol of the place. Its shape against the water was so familiar that anyone seeing its photo knew it was Akrema. Over time, the changing shoreline weakened its roots. Eventually, the tree fell and disappeared. Now, it lives only in memories and photos. ***How many more trees will we lose before we see how fragile the beauty around us really is?***



This photo captures the dense forest of Tutuala, part of Nino Konis Santana National Park in Tutuala. The thick green canopy, rich biodiversity, and untouched landscape show the natural beauty that still exists in Timor-Leste. As the country's only national park, this place is home to many unique plants and animals and plays an important role in protecting ecosystems for future generations. It reminds us how precious our forests are—and why protecting them matters more than ever.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Hera/2022

Along the main road in Hera, near the mangrove forests, a monkey sits quietly in the early morning light. These monkeys are known to be friendly, and many travelers passing by often stop to watch them, play with them, or offer them food. For many people, this moment is a simple and joyful connection with wildlife. Yet in other places, monkeys are sometimes hunted and killed for food. Seeing them here reminds us how important it is to protect wildlife and the habitats they call home.



Mariano/SOA-TL/Vatuvou/2023

This is a community-based protected area along Timor-Leste's coast, where local people come together to care for their land and waters. Trees, shelters, and shared spaces create a living landscape where nature and humans thrive side by side. Through their collective effort, the coast becomes stronger, wildlife finds safe habitats, and local traditions are preserved. Every action here reflects the community's commitment to resilience, wellbeing, and a sustainable future, showing that protecting the environment is also about safeguarding a way of life for generations to come.



Mariano/SOA-TL/Tibar/2023

Along Timor-Leste's coasts, this tiny mangrove seedling stands as a symbol of resilience and hope. Its roots will not only protect our shores from tides and storms but also absorb carbon, helping our islands fight climate change. Its branches reach toward the sky, offering shelter and nursery grounds for countless fish that sustain local communities. Nurtured by people who care deeply for their land and waters, it reminds us that even the smallest life can grow into a powerful guardian of our islands, oceans, and future generations.



Octavio Araujo/Metinaro/2024

There is not only life on land, beneath Timor-Leste's waters lies another whole world, vibrant and full of wonder.

Have you ever wondered what the underwater world here looks like?

In Metinaro, schools of fish glide through colorful corals, a hidden treasure that sustains local communities and inspires traditions. Protecting these marine ecosystems means preserving livelihoods, nurturing biodiversity, and honoring the deep connection between Timorese people and their seas—a reminder that the beauty of our islands extends far below the surface.



From the clear blue ocean to the green mountains, Timor-Leste is full of amazing beauty. People gather here to swim, play, and enjoy time with friends and family, making memories by the sea. The ocean and mountains show how land and water are connected, full of life and energy.

Protecting these places is important so that future generations can keep enjoying the waves, the trails, and all the fun moments. Every visit reminds us how special our islands are and why we must care for them.



Looking across the blue lagoon, Jaco Island stands untouched and full of mystery. Its white sands and clear waters feel like a world apart, where nature stays wild and free. Just seeing it makes you appreciate the beauty of Timor-Leste's islands and how lucky we are to have such places nearby.

It's a spot to explore, dream, and remember that protecting these pure corners of our country helps keep them amazing for everyone, now and for the generations to come.



Look at colourful Nemo fish swimming among the sea grass and corals!

It's amazing to see all this life right here in our frontyard. Timor-Leste's waters are full of surprises, and every dive shows a world that's bright, lively, and worth protecting. From tiny fish to vibrant corals, there's so much to explore.

Moments like this remind us that nature's wonders aren't far away, they're right in our communities, waiting for us to discover and take care of them.



Have you watched Moana?

Here in Adara, on Atauro Island, you can feel the same magic and connection between people and the ocean. The sandy beach stretches gently, with pigs, roosters, and chickens wandering freely, adding life and charm to the scene. The water is so calm, you can see straight through to the forests and mountains beyond. A small community boat floats quietly, moving with the rhythm of the sea.

On Atauro, the ocean is part of daily life, a friend, and a guide.



Looking up at this huge tree, its branches stretch out like the veins in our own bodies, reaching for the sky. It's strong, alive, and full of stories, with roots deep in Timor-Leste's land. Standing under it, you can feel how nature connects everything—past, present, and future. Trees like this remind us that we're part of something bigger, and taking care of them is taking care of ourselves, our communities, and our islands. They're not just trees—they're life and family all in one.



At Adara, the sun sets behind a traditional house by the beach, with coconut trees all around. The colors are amazing, like a real-life painting.

When we look at this place, it feels like the perfect getaway—no stress, no distractions, just you, the ocean, and nature. It's a spot to relax, hang out, and enjoy the simple beauty of Timor-Leste.

Moments like this remind us how cool it is to slow down, feel free, and just enjoy the world around us.



From the top of Paichau Mountain, you can see Iralalaru Lake stretching below, surrounded by the lush beauty of Timor-Leste's natural park. The mountains, water, and sky come together in a breathtaking view, like nature's own masterpiece. Standing here makes you feel alive, part of something bigger, and connected to the land. This natural park is full of life, colors, and peaceful moments, showing how amazing our islands are. Exploring it reminds us to protect these special places so everyone can enjoy their beauty for years to come.



Somewhere in Nino Konis Santana National Park stands a giant tree—we don't even know how old it is! Its huge roots spread wide, just like the massive trees you usually see in the Amazon. It's amazing to realize that Timor-Leste also has these giants. Seeing it makes you stop and think about how long life has been growing here and how important it is to protect these living legends. Nature still hides incredible surprises, and our islands are full of giants waiting to be discovered.



2

**CULTURE, FAITH NO
IDENTITY**

*For
Blair*



Yoga/BVI/Iliknamu/2024

In Iliknamu, Biqueli, Atauro, a fisherman throws a buoy to mark the *Tara Bandu* zone in the sea. This is part of community-based coastal management in Timor-Leste, where local people work together to protect marine life. The buoy shows where fishing should stop for a while, giving fish and the ocean time to recover. It's a simple but powerful action, guided by tradition and community rules. *Tara Bandu* reminds us that caring for the ocean is everyone's responsibility, helping ensure the sea continues to support families and livelihoods for generations.



Ricardo/BVTL/Ainaro/2025

A handwoven leaf tray, and colorful plates of betel leaves and betel nuts may look simple, but they carry deep meaning. In our culture, they symbolize respect, unity, and honesty, bringing people together in ceremonies and in *Tara Bandu*, our traditional environmental law that sets community rules to protect nature. More than tradition, they represent our shared commitment to culture, harmony, and safeguarding the environment.



Ricardo/BVTL/Selihasan/2024

One of the ways Timorese communities protect the land and sea is through our strong customary law, **Tara Bandu**. In this ritual, people offer roosters, betel leaves, and nuts, joining their voices with the wisdom of the elders to honor those who came before us. Tara Bandu is more than tradition—it's a promise to care for the environment and all living things.

It reminds us that our identity is rooted in respect and that together, people and nature can keep our islands thriving for generations.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Ostico/2026

Corn has always been part of Timorese life, feeding families and shaping traditions. Most communities rely on the rain to grow it, and when the rains arrive, it's time to plant with hope and care. When the corn grows and is ready to harvest, we celebrate with the **sau-batar** ritual, blessing the crops and giving thanks to the land. Every ear of corn tells a story of life, culture, and resilience, showing how deeply Timorese people are connected to nature and the traditions that guide them.



Me. Julia/LSM-TL/Metinaro/2023

A religious sister plants a tree, showing that we are all part of God's creation. ***Laudato Si'*** reminds us that everything is connected—land, water, people, and all living things. As daughters and sons of God, we believe it's our responsibility to care for the world around us. Every tree planted is a small act of love for creation, helping nature thrive and protecting the home God gave us. It shows that faith and action go hand in hand when we nurture and protect our islands.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Liquica/2022

In some parts of Timor-Leste, before using a newly constructed well, communities perform a sacred ritual to ask permission from nature and the ancestors. People gather to seek their blessings and guidance, showing respect for the life-giving springs that sustain them. This ceremony reminds us that our identity and survival are deeply connected to the land and water. By honoring these spirits and traditions, we learn to care for our environment, ensuring that clean water continues to flow for our communities now and for generations to come.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Bebonuk/2026

Under the shade of an old tree, Timorese fishermen patiently weave their nets—a skill passed down through generations. This craft isn't just work; it's a cornerstone of their identity, connecting them to family, community, and the sea.

They fish not to get rich, but to catch enough to support their families and sustain their livelihood.

Every knot and loop carries stories, lessons, and traditions, showing how culture and nature are intertwined.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Liquica/2018

Timor-Leste's traditional houses are built in harmony with nature, using palm leaves or palm fiber for the roof and wood for the structure. Each house is a symbol of culture and sustainability, designed to be strong, cool, and eco-friendly.

They show how communities make the most of what nature provides while respecting it.

Living in these homes reminds us that caring for the environment isn't just about protecting forests or rivers—it's also about creating a life that works together with the world around us.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Maubisse/2018

In Maubisse, communities grow cabbage on a small scale, carefully planting and tending it to sell at local markets. Though the farms are small, they play a big role in supporting families and keeping local life thriving. Maubisse is famous for its cabbage, and every harvest carries the farmers' care, effort, and pride. Growing cabbage connects people to the land, the seasons, and the rhythms of nature. It shows how working with the environment provides food, income, and a sustainable way of life while keeping Timorese traditions alive.



Maria Dias/Metinara/2024

Swimming through Timor-Leste's underwater world, you can feel the beauty of life all around. Huge coral reefs stand tall like houses, giving shelter to countless fish and other creatures.

It's a vibrant, living community under the sea, full of color and energy.

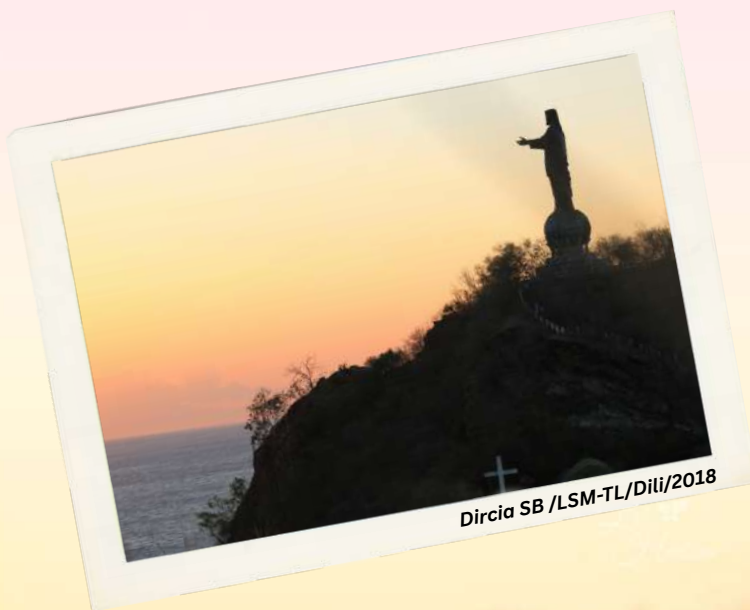
For an island nation like ours, this underwater life is part of our identity, showing how connected we are to the ocean.



Azelio da Cruz/Tutuuala/2025

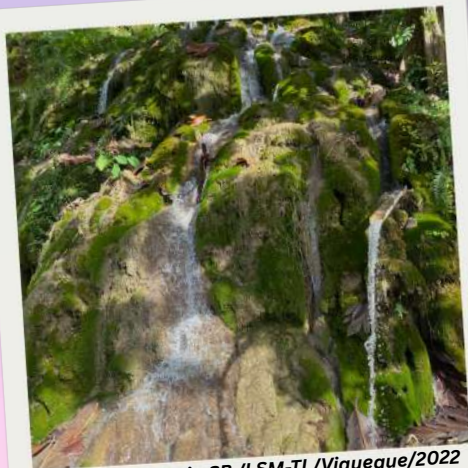
From a distance, we can see a small island off the coast called **Jaco**, in Timor-Leste. Though small in size, it is rich in natural beauty. Surrounded by clear, calm blue waters and white sandy beaches, Jaco is a hidden and special treasure—just like our identity and heritage.

Nature and culture together shape the story of Timor-Leste, and we should be proud to share it with the world. That is why we must protect and preserve this beautiful island.



Dircia SB /LSM-TL/Dili/2018

The **Cristo Rei** statue stands tall on the cliffs of Fatucama, a landmark that instantly tells the world it's in Timor-Leste. Watching over Dili, land, and sea as the sun paints the sky in gold, it's more than a statue—it's a symbol of our identity, faith, and resilience. Seeing Cristo Rei reminds us how deeply our communities are connected to the earth and to each other. It inspires us to care for our land and seas, showing that culture, religion, and nature are all part of who we are.



Dircia SB /LSM-TL/Viqueque/2022

Loi-Huno Waterfall is a special spot that shows the identity of Ossu and the natural beauty of Timor-Leste. When traveling to Viqueque, people often stop here to freshen their faces or wash their hands and feet, enjoying the cool water and connecting with nature.

It's a simple way to refresh, feel alive, and appreciate the scenery along the journey.



Aga Moniz/TYIFD/Baucau/2023

Ricefields are alive with farmers planting seedlings in the muddy water, preparing for the staple food that sustains the nation. Like many parts of Asia, Timorese depend on rice for daily meals—from morning to night, it's a part of almost every dish. Walking through the fields, you can see the hard work, patience, and connection to the land that make every grain possible. Rice isn't just food—it's culture, tradition, and a symbol of life, showing how communities work with nature to feed themselves and preserve their heritage.



Zita Auxiliadora/Lospalos/2023

In Lospalos, the traditional houses are unique and full of character, showing the identity of Lautem. Standing tall against the sky, this sacred house connects us to our ancestors while looking toward the future. It's a place where culture, stories, and community come alive. Every part of the house—the wood, the roof, the carvings—tells a story.



Azelio da Cruz/Atabae/2025

Sandalwood is native to Timor-Leste, a tree that carries history, culture, and the scent of our islands. Sadly, much of it was lost during colonization, but today it still grows in some parts of the country, reminding us of our roots and resilience.

Sandalwood isn't just valuable for its fragrance—it's part of our identity, traditions, and connection to the land.

Protecting it shows how Timorese people care for their natural heritage, ensuring that this iconic tree continues to thrive for future generations and keeps our islands' story alive.



LSM-TL/Dili/2021

Learning isn't always inside a classroom. Guided by a religious sister, young people spend time outdoors, exploring nature and discovering lessons from the land, trees, and water.

Faith and curiosity come together here, showing that understanding the world goes beyond books.

These moments teach respect for creation, teamwork, and the importance of caring for the environment.

3

VULNERABILITY

Let
them





Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Ossu/2022

The road that connects the community to the town is nothing more than soil, fragile against the weight of the rains.

When the wet season arrives, the path that once carried people, harvests, and hope can quickly dissolve into mud and water. What should be a simple journey to sell crops, seek medicine, or attend school becomes uncertain, sometimes impossible. In places like this, vulnerability is not an abstract concept—it is the daily reality of communities whose lifelines can disappear with every storm.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Manatuto/2026

Goats roam across the dry land, searching for grass to survive. During the rainy season, food is easier to find. But when the dry season comes, the grass disappears and animals struggle to eat. For many families in Timor-Leste, goats are more than livestock—they are their savings and their livelihood. When the land can no longer feed them, families lose an important source of income and security. On these plains, even small changes in weather can decide whether both animals and families can survive.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Maubisse/2018

In many parts of Timor-Leste, rivers are the only path people must cross to reach their homes. During the rainy season, heavy rains can turn these rivers into strong and dangerous floods. Crossing becomes risky, and sometimes lives are lost. But in the dry season, the same river can become almost empty, leaving communities with little water for farming and daily needs. These changing rivers show how climate change is making life harder for people who already depend so closely on nature.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Viqueque/2026

This gabion is meant to protect the community from flash floods, but even strong structures can be vulnerable to climate change. Heavy storms, moving soil, and strong floods could still damage it. Building protection takes time, and in a least-developed country like Timor-Leste, limited funds and low priority make people even more at risk. For many families, a single storm could wash away their home, school, or farm.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Baucau/2026

In many communities in Timor-Leste, rice can only be planted during the rainy season. Farmers depend completely on rainwater because irrigation is limited. When the rains come, the fields become full of life and hope. But when the rain is late or too little, the fields remain dry and empty. The harvest, and the community's food security, depend on the uncertain rhythm of the sky.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Viqueque/2026

In lots of places, kids and families walk to the river to get clean water. They place stones around the water to keep it safe and clean for drinking—something we see everywhere, but it's not easy. Long walks, heavy loads, and unsafe water affect health and make life harder, especially for girls. ***Do you have enough water at home? Or do we waste it or use it carelessly?*** Imagine if this was your daily routine.



Many communities in that area rely on makeshift solutions when proper infrastructure takes too long. This wooden bridge lets people cross to town, but it's fragile and risky. Heavy rains or floods could wash it away, and anyone crossing could fall.

It shows how communities survive with what they have, but also how vulnerable they are to climate change and extreme weather.



This fragile concrete well is more than just a water source—it's a lifeline for the community. During the dry season, water levels drop, making access difficult and forcing long walks to other sources.

Poor sanitation and lack of maintenance increase health risks, especially for children and girls who often carry water. Extreme weather like heatwaves or heavy rains can damage the well or dry it up entirely.

Limited infrastructure, low funding, and climate change combine to make something as simple as drinking water a daily struggle in Timor-Leste.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Ermera/2024

A family lives near the river where flash floods are slowly eating away the land. Their home and farm are at risk because the protective walls are damaged and haven't been rebuilt. During the rainy season, all they can do is hope and pray their house survives. Like the big tree nearby holding strong with deep roots, this family clings to their land and livelihood, showing resilience despite the climate risks that threaten their home every year.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Ermera/2024

In many villages, people don't have pipes or taps at home. They make a small channel from the waterway using bamboo so the water can flow to a place where it's easier to collect. Families, especially children and girls, carry the water back home for cooking, drinking, and washing.

It's a simple local solution, but it shows how daily life depends on rivers and streams, and how lack of proper infrastructure makes getting water hard and risky for communities.

4

CLIMATE IMPACT

For
Bliss



In Timor-Leste, heavy rains and climate change often erode roads and make them collapse. Fragile infrastructure and limited funding mean these problems happen over and over. When roads fail, communities struggle to reach schools, markets, and health services. Farmers can't transport crops, and emergency help takes longer to arrive.

These recurring events show how climate change doesn't just affect the environment—it disrupts daily life, livelihoods, and opportunities.



In many parts of Timor-Leste, landslides are a common threat, especially for families living close to unstable slopes. Homes built near hillsides face extreme danger, as heavy rains can suddenly sweep away the ground beneath them.

Communities here live with constant uncertainty, knowing that each storm could destroy houses, farms, and livelihoods. Those most vulnerable are often the people who have no choice but to settle near risky areas, showing how climate change and limited infrastructure put lives at stake every rainy season.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Viqueque/2026

The escalating climate crisis has made river currents in Viqueque stronger, eroding the riverbanks faster each year. The constant flow of water slowly wears away the land, threatening ecosystems and nearby communities. This is not just happening in Viqueque—similar impacts occur across Timor-Leste, where rivers continue to expand and reshape the land every year. Families, farms, and homes near these waterways face growing risks, showing how climate change affects both the environment and people's daily lives in the country.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Viqueque/2026

Not everyone has a way to get around. As the water crisis worsens with climate change, women and children must walk long distances, sometimes alongside horses, to reach clean water.

Every trip is a reminder of how hard daily life can be when basic resources are scarce and climate impacts make access to water even more difficult.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Manatuto/2024

The river wall in Manatuto is already cracking, showing the impact of strong water flow and extreme weather. If it breaks, the nearby rice fields—vital to local families—will be destroyed. Communities remember losing crops during Cyclone Seroja in 2021, and climate change is making these events more frequent. ***How would it feel to risk losing your food and livelihood every rainy season?*** This shows how climate change threatens not just the land but also people's lives in Timor-Leste.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Manatuto/2024

In a community in Manatuto, water is shared among families, and collecting it takes hours every day. Children and women spend most of their time walking, waiting, and filling their jerry cans—time that could be used for studying, playing, or doing something productive. This shows how climate change and limited water access affect daily life, forcing communities to adapt in ways that take a heavy toll on education, opportunities, and childhood.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Camea/2023

In some communities in Camea, Dili, clean water is hard to access. Families live up on the hills and must walk down to reach the well. Carefully, they refill their jerry cans drop by drop, then place them in woven baskets to carry on their heads or backs.

Each trip takes time and effort, showing how daily life is shaped by the struggle for water. ***How would it feel to spend hours every day just to get what we need to survive?***



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Uatulari/2022

The river in Uatulari, Viqueque, is widening, slowly eating away the land and threatening the rice fields the community depends on.

This area used to be well-known for producing local rice, but flash floods are now washing parts of the land away.

With limited or fragile infrastructure, the risk is even higher, putting families' food and livelihoods in danger.



Have you ever wondered how climate change affects life under the sea? The ocean gives us more oxygen than any forest on land and is home to countless creatures, many still undiscovered. But rising temperatures are bleaching coral reefs, destroying the homes of these animals. Like other Pacific countries, Timor-Leste is feeling these impacts too.

If the reefs disappear, it's not just the ocean that suffers—our communities that rely on the sea are at risk as well.



Look closely! does this place look familiar?

Yes, it's Pantai Kelapa in Dili. This beach used to have sand and space for swimming, playing football, and hanging out. But climate change has taken that away.

Rising sea levels are affecting Timor-Leste just like other islands. Even with barriers, the tide still reaches the shore, destroying pathways and making it unsafe. ***How much will it cost to rebuild? And how many childhood memories will be washed away?***



5

CLIMATE SOLUTION & ADAPTATION

Low
Carbon



Bartolomeo Belo/Aileu/2018

On the road from Dili to Aileu, heavy rains can cause landslides and wash away soil, making travel dangerous. To stop this, people are building gabion walls – wire baskets filled with stones – along the slopes. These walls hold the soil in place, protect the road, and keep communities connected. It's a simple but smart way to adapt to climate change, showing how this solution can make life safer and stronger in Timor-Leste's hilly areas.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Liquica/2018

In the rural areas of Liquiçá, clean water is precious for daily life. Here, community members are building small concrete barriers around a water well to protect it from dirt, sediment, and contamination. This simple, community-led action keeps drinking water safe and healthy for families. By caring for their wells, people are adapting to changing weather, preserving water for everyone, and showing how small solutions can make a big difference in keeping rural communities strong and resilient in Timor-Leste.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Ossu/2026

This information board in Ossu helps the community learn about strong wind risks and how to stay safe. With weather becoming more unpredictable due to climate change, knowing what to do **before**, **during**, and **after** storms is important. Simple tools like this board teach everyone how to be prepared, protecting homes, schools, and families, and showing how sharing knowledge is a key part of building resilience in Timor-Leste's communities.



Mariano/SOA-TL/Tibar/2023

Youths are planting mangroves as part of Timor-Leste's nature-based climate adaptation efforts, helping rebuild coastal forests that stabilize the shoreline and protect against erosion and rising seas.

Mangrove restoration in Tibar Bay has been supported through partnerships with local organisations and Timor Port's conservation zone, where thousands of trees are planted to conserve biodiversity and coastal resilience. Healthy mangrove areas also draw visitors for nature walks and birdwatching, opening new opportunities for eco-tourism and youth-led livelihood activities.



Dircia SB/LSM-TL/Dili/2023

At the Caltech Group recycling centre in Beduku, a bright yellow container invites people to bring their used plastic bottles instead of throwing them in the streets or open dumps. In Timor-Leste, where plastic waste clogs waterways and beaches and contributes to pollution, this drop-off point helps turn rubbish into a resource.

Collected plastics are sent to be recycled into building boards, pavers, and other useful products, reducing waste, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and supporting a circular economy that benefits communities and nature alike.



Elton/AFoCO-026/Balak-Manatuto/2024

In Balak Hill, Manatuto, people are digging holes in the mountain to capture rainwater – a traditional way of storing water that helps the land stay alive during dry months. This harvested water is used to water young trees planted on degraded slopes as part of a reforestation effort supported by the AFoCO project and the General Directorate of Forestry to restore land damaged by deforestation and drought.



Azelio da Cruz/Tutuala/2025

This scene shows deer coming out to drink fresh water in Jaco Island, part of Nino Konis Santana National Park in eastern Timor-Leste. Jaco normally has no fresh water sources, so wildlife like these deer can struggle – especially in long dry seasons when natural water dries up. To help them survive, the government and partners installed a system that converts seawater into fresh water for deer and other wildlife. It's a simple but important way to support nature, protect biodiversity, and help animals adapt to changing climates.



Isaura/LSM-TL/Aileu/2025

In parts of Timor-Leste, farmers are using greenhouses to grow vegetables like peppers, tomatoes, and leafy greens even when weather outside is too hot, too rainy, or unpredictable. Traditionally, farmers relied on outdoor planting, but climate change brings heat stress, drought, and heavy rains that can damage crops. Greenhouses create a controlled space that protects plants from intense sun and weather, helps produce fresh food year-round, and strengthens local food systems. These climate-smart farming techniques are helping farmers improve yields, earn income, and build more resilient agriculture in Timor-Leste.



JosueAlwyn/LSM-TL/Viqueque/2026

Along the new road from Ossu to Viqueque, people are planting trees like casuarina and other local species along the highway to anchor the soil and prevent erosion. In Timor-Leste's rainy season, bare slopes easily wash away, causing landslides that damage roads and block access to schools, markets, and homes. By planting trees, communities naturally protect the soil, secure the road, and build long-term resilience to climate change. These green barriers also help reduce carbon, improve the landscape, and support local livelihoods.



The group Botir Matak is turning old glass bottles into useful items like vases, pen holders, and decorations. By carefully carving and transforming trash into something new, they are reducing waste, protecting the environment, and creating value from things that would otherwise be thrown away. This creative work shows how communities can practice recycling and upcycling, inspiring youth to care for nature and find smart ways to reuse everyday materials.



Have you checked out the hydroponic system in Kios Matenek? Here, vegetables grow indoors without soil, using water and nutrients instead. In many parts of Timor-Leste, fresh vegetables are hard to access during the rainy season or in urban areas with little soil. Hydroponics offers a smart solution: small farmers can form groups, build their own systems, and grow fresh produce all year round. This is a great example of climate-smart agriculture, bringing simple technology to communities and helping people eat healthy while adapting to changing weather.



Check out these solar panels on the rooftop of Escola SGP Kay Rala in Manatuto! Installed under the Pacific Green Transformation Project with support from the Government of Japan, they help bring clean, reliable energy to the school. Before, power cuts made it hard to run computers and digital classes. Now, students can use the ICT lab, computers, and internet consistently — even when the grid goes down. It's a climate-smart solution that uses renewable energy to reduce emissions and improve learning opportunities for youth in Timor-Leste.



Have you ever seen these big concrete blocks along Pantai Kelapa road and wondered what they're for or if they change the beach's look? In Timor-Leste, rising seas and stronger waves — made worse by climate change — are eating away at coastal roads and land, so these barriers help protect the ground and pathways from being washed away. Building them is a form of climate adaptation, helping keep people connected and safe even when the ocean becomes stronger.



In Ermera, the youth group EAMO (Ermera Ai-Kulat Mutin Orgániku) grows white mushrooms indoors using simple farming techniques. Started by local youth in 2018, this small enterprise shows how innovation can create food and jobs in Timor-Leste. Mushrooms grow in controlled spaces using agricultural materials like sawdust, making them suitable even where land is limited. These mushrooms are rich in protein and nutrients, helping improve children's nutrition while supporting local income. It's a smart example of indoor food production and climate-smart agriculture, turning local knowledge into healthy food for communities.



This photo shows an important lesson from reforestation in Timor-Leste. Inside the fence, the grass is healthy and growing well. Outside the fence, the land looks dry because animals roam freely and eat the young plants. Free grazing by cattle and goats is common in many rural areas and often damages new trees and vegetation. By protecting restoration areas with fences, communities give plants time to grow and the land time to recover.



6

YOUTH IN ACTION

*Let's
Grow*



Underwater Cinema/Dili/2024

At Cristo Rei, the youth group Underwater Cinema (UC) guides fellow young people to explore the ocean and discover the beauty of Timor-Leste's marine life. Through snorkeling activities, beach clean-ups, and ocean education, UC helps youth see coral reefs, fish, and the hidden world beneath the sea. The group was created to inspire more Timorese to understand and protect their ocean, because many people have never seen what lies underwater. By experiencing it together, young people learn to love the sea and take action to protect it.



LSM-TL/Dili/2025

During Laudato Si' Week, and to celebrate 10 years of Laudato Si', young people in Timor-Leste took to the streets to raise awareness about caring for the Earth. Walking together from Areia Branca to Cristo Rei, they carried posters and messages calling on people to protect nature and our environment. Inspired by the message of "care for our common home" by Pope Francis, this peaceful march shows how youth are using their voices to encourage communities to take action for the planet and build a more sustainable future.



Mariano/SOA-TL/Liquica/2023

Excitement fills the beach as young people carefully release baby sea turtles back into the ocean. This activity is guided by the youth conservation group Lenuk Tasi, which works to protect sea turtles in Timor-Leste. Volunteers help rescue turtle eggs from beaches, protect them until they hatch, and release the baby turtles safely into the sea, giving them a better chance to survive. These events also teach young people and communities about marine conservation.



Mariano/SOA-TL/Liquica/2023

Students and young people stand together, holding hands in a circle around their camp during the SOA Timor-Leste Ocean Heroes Bootcamp. This three-day camp brings high school students closer to the sea so they can learn about marine life, ocean conservation, and the importance of protecting Timor-Leste's rich marine ecosystems. Through activities like workshops, mangrove restoration, and sea turtle conservation, participants gain knowledge and inspiration to become "Ocean Heroes" in their own communities.



Dircia SB/Dili/2025

This activity is called a Human Library, where people share their personal experiences face-to-face with young people. Instead of reading books, participants listen to real stories and learn from each other heart to heart. It creates a safe space for dialogue, understanding, and new ideas. In conversations like these, young people can talk openly about challenges such as climate change and community solutions. By sharing stories and listening to different perspectives, youth become more aware, inspired, and ready to take action for a better future.



Dircia SB/TYIFD/Dili/2019

In this pantomime performance, a fisherman goes out to sea hoping to catch fish – but instead pulls up plastic waste. This powerful scene shows the growing problem of marine pollution in Timor-Leste's waters. The performance was organized by the Timorese Youth Initiative for Development (TYIFD), using art and theatre to raise awareness about environmental protection. Through creative storytelling, young people help communities reflect on how plastic pollution harms the ocean and livelihoods. It reminds us that protecting the sea starts with changing our everyday habits.



LSM-TL/Dili/2024

Youth can influence climate policy too. Through the Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) Timor-Leste, young people come together to learn about climate change, share ideas, and discuss solutions for their country. Organized every year by the Laudato Si' Movement Timor-Leste, the event educates and empowers youth to speak up. Together, participants develop a National Youth Climate Statement, which contributes to the Global Youth Statement presented at the UN Climate Conference (COP). This shows that young voices from Timor-Leste can help shape global climate discussions and inspire action at home.

Published by UNICEF Timor-Leste
In partnership with the Government of Timor-Leste
Dili

timorleste@unicef.org
www.unicef.org/timorleste/

©United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), June 2026

