

Shortly after gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, Timor-Leste (East Timor) was invaded by Indonesia. After over a quarter of a century of occupation and conflict, and three years of UN-administered transition, independence was finally granted in 2002. The country was born with little infrastructure, widespread unemployment, poverty and political instability.

### Key individuals, Groups & Places

**Xanana Gusmão: First President**

**Francisco Guterres: Current President**

**Mari Alkatiri: Current Prime Minister**

**5 political parties currently in government:**

Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN), National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT), People's Liberation Party (PLP), Democratic Party (PD), Kmanek Haburas Unidade Nasional Timor Oan (KHUNTO)

**Dili: Capital city**

### Key dates

**1975: Gained independence from Portugal**

**1975: 9 days after independence, invaded by Indonesia**

**1991: Dili massacre (250 deaths)**

**1999: Indonesia relinquished control and Timor Leste was taken over by the UN**

**2001: First elections to appoint Constituent Assembly**

**2002: Timor Leste became a sovereign state and is admitted as a member state of the United Nations**

**2017: First parliamentary elections without UN supervision**



### Political Progress

Timor-Leste has made significant democratic progress and recently held its first parliamentary elections without any UN supervision.

Timor-Leste has also been successfully negotiating maritime boundaries with Australia, and is hopeful about its ascension to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

### Humanitarian Situation

Timor-Leste began its life in 2002 as the poorest country in Southeast Asia and was one of the 3 most malnourished countries in the world. 64% of people consumed less energy than the minimum level required by international standards, and 45% of children under the age of 5 were underweight. Thanks to concentrated efforts by the government's national development programme, the prevalence of malnutrition began to fall after 2007.

## Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the greatest threat to Timor Leste's continuing progress. 50.2% of all children under the age of 5 were classified as stunted in 2013 and 63.2% of children and 39.5% of women aged 14-60 were anaemic.

Seasonal changes are a large factor in disruptions to food supply - there is a 4 month long hungry season before harvest.

A lack of farming equipment and skills around food along with cultural taboos and fatalism make the situation much more complex. According to the World Bank, 'A lack of clear, factual information on what makes a healthy diet, combined with taboos regarding what pregnant women should or should not eat, makes it difficult for mothers to know what is best for their families' health.'

## Other Issues

Amnesty International reported in 2016 that torture, ill treatment and excessive use of force continued to occur at the hands of security forces.

There has been little progress in addressing the crimes committed by Indonesian security forces from 1975-1999.

There are still significant barriers affecting women leading safe and equal lives, and they are disproportionately affected by violence.

# HART's Partner in Timor Leste

## HIAM Health

HIAM Health is a local community-based NGO founded in 2003, with a focus on empowering women and rehabilitating malnourished children. They have developed a unique, integrated approach to tackling malnutrition, combining residential rehabilitation for malnourished children with training and education for accompanying parents and carers.

HIAM is trying to introduce the incredibly nutritious Moringa plant to Timor-Leste in the hope of further reducing malnutrition.

## Some useful links for more information:

UN Mission - [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmit/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmit/index.shtml)

World Bank - [www.worldbank.org/en/country/timor-leste](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/timor-leste)

Oxfam - [www.oxfam.org.au/country/timor-leste](http://www.oxfam.org.au/country/timor-leste)

Amnesty - [www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/timor-leste](http://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/timor-leste)

HART's partners and visit reports - [www.hart-uk.org/locations/timor-leste](http://www.hart-uk.org/locations/timor-leste)

HART's blog - [www.hart-uk.org/blog/moringa-tree-malnutrition-timor-leste](http://www.hart-uk.org/blog/moringa-tree-malnutrition-timor-leste)

HIAM Health - <http://hiamhealth.org>

If you have any queries, please visit [www.hart-uk.org](http://www.hart-uk.org) or contact [office@hart-uk.org](mailto:office@hart-uk.org)