

# Timor-Leste: El Niño Impact

UN Resident Coordinator's Office Situation Report No. 1  
As of 18 March 2016



This report is prepared by the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Timor-Leste in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 1 October 2015 to 18 March 2016.

## Highlights

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- The 2015/2016 El Niño has peaked with a return to neutral conditions expected during the second quarter of 2016. The after-effects on people and their livelihood are critical.
- In some areas, it has rained up to 68 per cent less between October 2015 and January 2016, compared to last year. Livelihoods in the eastern and northern parts are severely affected, with large numbers of livestock dying in Lautém and Baucau sub-districts.
- According to the preliminary results of a livelihood resilience analysis, about 400,000 people are estimated to be severely or highly affected. Coastal areas are worst affected, with delayed or stressed crop planting, reduced water access and lack of food.
- The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment (MCIE) has procured 9, 000 tons of rice to respond to increasing market prices due to food shortage. The Ministry of Interior (Mol) is coordinating plans for drilling water pumps in Suai municipality, as well as the construction of five additional warehouses (location is to be determined).
- The Minister of Interior coordinates the in-country response and facilitates exchange of information. On 23 February, the Minister last updated the Council of Ministers (CoM) on the impacts caused by the climatic phenomenon, and the measures which are being developed.
- The Minister of Interior and Minister of Social Solidarity have recently discussed the current situation with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Development Partners (DPs) on 26 February.

## Situation Overview

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El Niño has now begun to weaken to moderate levels. It is likely that the El Niño will break down during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016 which is typical of the cycle. The dry season (May to October) is expected to come early although this depends on whether this El Niño is followed by La Niña. Neutral conditions are only slightly more likely than a La Niña event. (*Seeds of Life (SoL) report 29 Feb*)

The overall delayed and reduced rainfall during this rainy season (November to April) has severe implications on water, food and nutrition security, as well as livelihoods and agricultural production. In mid-February, the estimated number of severely or highly affected people was 400,000. (*CLEAR Assessment, preliminary results in mid-February*).

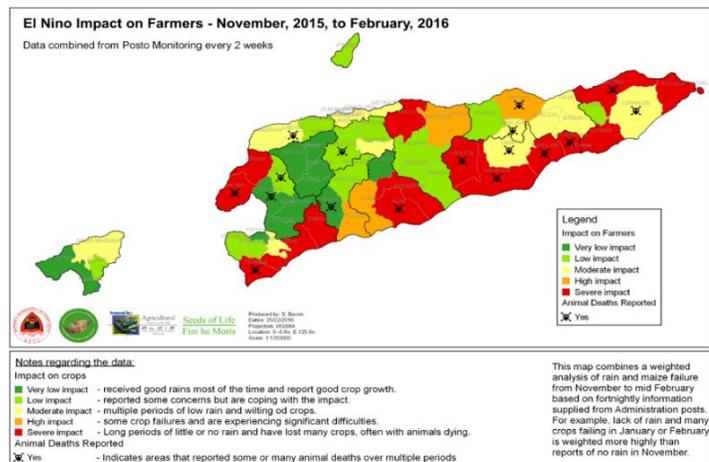
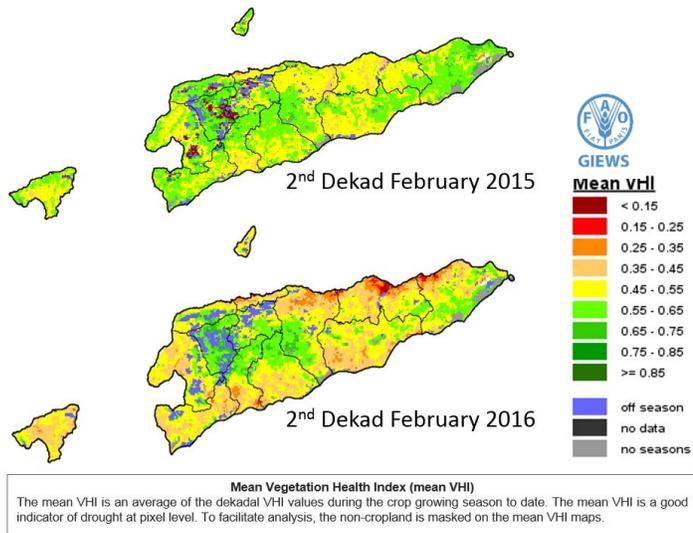
While rainfall has increased across the mountains of Timor-Leste since January, coastal areas are still experiencing lower than average rainfall. Furthermore, rainfall is not steady and reliable; in February, precipitation in most areas was beyond average in the 1<sup>st</sup> Dekad, with lower than average precipitation in nearly all areas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dekad (*FAO satellite monitoring, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dekad Feb*)

The lack of sustained rainfall has severely impacted sustainable water sources of local communities. Women and children are particularly vulnerable as they have to travel increased distances to access water. Nearly 50% of the HPA Assessment respondents said they are accessing water from open, unprotected sources. In some places, for example Ainaro, water sources are drying up and people have to collect water

at the river. (*HPA Assessment, preliminary results in mid-February*)

According to data from FAO, most crop land areas in Timor-Leste have very poor vegetation condition due to a sustained stress caused by drought (VHI between 0.35 and 0.45). Rice field preparation is delayed across the country, and in February the general planting progress status on rice was between 40% and 50%. (*FAO satellite monitoring, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dekad Feb*) An early end to the rainy season could worsen the situation since farmers that plant now might not get enough rain for a good crop. (*SoL report 29 Feb*)

Timor-Leste has a population of 1.1 million, with 70% living in rural areas ([Census 2015 preliminary results](#)). While the rural population usually uses coping mechanisms to respond to livelihood impacts, preliminary assessment results showed that this year they had to activate these much earlier than in a normal year. This includes eating less, changing primary water sources, selling assets and/or borrowing money. The use of these coping strategies is not sustainable in the longer run and may lead to further health and nutrition problems as well as accelerated depletion of livelihoods. (*CLEAR and HPA Assessments, preliminary results in mid-February*)



## Humanitarian Preparedness & Response

El Niño 2015/2016 impacts on Timor-Leste were first discussed at the HCT meeting on 22 September 2015. Several Ministries are involved in the implementation of preparedness and response measures. ([CoM press release 12 Jan](#))

In October 2015, with support from the National Council on Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition in Timor-Leste (KONSSANTIL), the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) developed 14 key messages which are used to advice farmers through the MAF municipal offices on how to mitigate the effects of late and reduced rainfall. ([Govt press release 7 Jan](#)) Since December 2015, the Prime Minister's Office, with UN agencies and humanitarian partners, is carrying out a nation-wide public information campaign. Posters, radio programs and TV talk shows are used to convey the key messages and raise awareness about El Niño, with recommendations for families and farmers on the pre-cautionary measures that can be taken, such as not to plant seeds all at once, waiting for steady rain, and harvesting water where possible.

In the area of food security, MCIE has procured 9,000 tons of rice. The Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) plans to procure more rice in the coming months, pending further estimates of needs (*HCT 26 Feb*) In the Municipality of Suai, drilling of water pumps is coordinated by Mol Civil Protection Unit, Water and Sanitation Department and Bombeiros. (*HCT 17 Feb*)

Humanitarian Clusters, while not formally activated, have been reviewing their contingency plans, updating their contact lists, and ensuring the pre-positioning of stocks, to ensure their preparedness to support the GoTL in delivering relief upon request. (*HCT 24 and 26 Feb*) The Logistics Cluster completed an assessment of warehouse capacity and transport capacity, on the basis of which the Mol will plan for the construction of five additional warehouses in the country. The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS) is in the process of prepositioning food and medicine in already existing warehouses. (*HCT 26 Feb*) The below matrix includes information on the on-going pre-positioning of stocks by humanitarian partners through the Clusters:

Organization	Stocks
WASH Cluster	WASH kits available to provide for 3,000 families. Procurement of additional WASH kits on-going, to meet needs of additional 3,000 families
Food Security Cluster	Limited stock available to treat severe and moderate acute malnutrition
Nutrition Cluster	Supplies to treat 2,100 cases of severe acute malnutrition are in stock Equipment for measuring malnourished children will be provided in 13 districts, to reach 600 mal-nourished children
Health Cluster	Pre-positioning of interagency emergency health kits and diarrhea disease kits

In addition to the above outlined support, humanitarian partners conduct and facilitate complementary assessments of the impact of El Niño. A list of on-going and completed assessments is included in the following section.

## General Coordination

The GoTL has tasked all line Ministries to contribute their expertise in preparing a coordinated response to address the impacts of El Niño. ([Govt press release 7 Jan](#)) The Minister of Interior is leading these efforts (*Govt press release 7 Jan*) The Crisis Management Centre (CMC) at Mol coordinates the support provided to the population, in collaboration with the Ministry of State Administration and the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL). ([CoM press release 23 Feb](#)) This will include data collection at Suco level (442 Sucos), to help target a response effectively. (*HCT 26 Feb*) The CoM deliberated on the effects caused by El Niño on a number of occasions, most recently on 23 February.

Humanitarian partners' support is coordinated through the HCT which is co-led by the Minister of Interior, the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) and the Country Director of Plan International. HCT meetings take place regularly (last on 26 February) and facilitate information sharing.

To support the GoTL in preparing their response plan, the HCT concluded an initial rapid needs assessment in Liquiçá Municipality in December 2015. (*Govt press release 7 Jan*) Moreover, to identify needs and locate them in geographical areas to direct the GoTL response actions (*Mol 14 Jan*), Mol, MSS and MAF are working with the World Food Programme (WFP) on a "Consolidated Livelihood Exercise for Analyzing Resilience" (CLEAR).

MAF, through their Seeds of Life (SoL) program, regularly issues the El Niño Crop Monitoring Reports. It has also requested the Food & Agricultural Organization (FAO), Christian Relief Service (CRS) and Mercy Corps to facilitate a Rapid Agricultural Assessment.

The Ministry of Health (MoH), through their disease surveillance system, is regularly monitoring cases of communicable and non-communicable diseases, and assesses health impacts of El Niño.

Humanitarian partners have also leveraged on their local networks to conduct assessments as well as monitoring of the developing situation in their own impact areas. The following matrix provides an overview of various initiatives by a wide range of actors:

Organization/s	Assessments & monitoring	Location	Status
Mol & the HCT	Rapid Needs Assessment	Liquiçá	Completed Dec 2015
Mol & WFP, MSS, MAF	Consolidated Livelihood Exercise for Analyzing Resilience (CLEAR)	Country-wide	Final report by end of March
MAF SoL program	El Niño Crop Monitoring Report	Country-wide (442 Sucos)	Available every 2 weeks
MAF & FAO, CRS, Mercy Corps	Rapid Agriculture Assessment	Country-wide (402 Sucos)	Preliminary results by mid-March
FAO	<a href="#">Satellite monitoring (GIEWS)</a>	Country-wide	Data available every 10 days
Humanitarian Partnership Agreement (HPA) CARE, PLAN, OXFAM, World Vision	Multi-sectoral - household surveys and focus group discussion Rapid assessment with household surveys and focus group discussions	19 Aldeias in 8 Municipalities; Locations based on Partners' project sites	Final report was launched on 18 <sup>th</sup> March

## Funding

All humanitarian partners, including donors and recipient agencies, are encouraged to inform the UN Resident Coordinator's Office of cash and in-kind contributions. Please email any information to [adelina.lourdes@undp.org](mailto:adelina.lourdes@undp.org)

**DISCLAIMER:** This document is a compilation of information gathered from various sources, including relevant UN agencies, Government sources, INGOs, IOs, church-based organizations and the media.

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