



Fondazione Marista
per la Solidarietà
Internazionale ETS
FMSI
Per il Bene dei Bambini



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Joint Stakeholders' submission on:
Human Rights in Timor-Leste

Submitted by:

Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)
(NGO with special consultative status with ECOSOC)

and

Marist Brothers – Star of the Sea Province
Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This joint stakeholder submission of the above-mentioned organizations, assesses the implementation of recommendations accepted by Timor-Leste during previous Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle and examines the current human rights situation affecting children, adolescents, and young people. The report focuses on **four priority areas: (a) education and educational infrastructure; (b) health, nutrition, and well-being; (c) youth employment and economic opportunities; and (d) infrastructure, accessibility, and inclusive governance**. Each section conveys recommendations to the Government of Timor-Leste.
2. **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)**¹ is an international non-governmental organization with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2011. It has more than 18 years of experience promoting and defending the rights of children, with a particular focus on access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education, as well as child protection from violence, exploitation, and neglect. FMSI works in collaboration with Marist educational and social institutions globally in more than 80 countries worldwide, supporting advocacy initiatives, capacity-building programs, and community-based interventions aimed at advancing the rights of vulnerable children and young people.
3. The **Marist Brothers – Star of the Sea Province** is part of the global Marist Institute, a Catholic religious congregation dedicated to education and the holistic formation of children and youth, especially those most disadvantaged. In the Pacific and Asian regions, the Province oversees a network of educational institutions and social initiatives committed to strengthening human development through values-based education, teacher training, and community engagement. Its mission is rooted in promoting dignity, solidarity, and inclusion in education systems, particularly in underserved and rural contexts.²
4. In Timor-Leste, the Marist educational mission is implemented through the **Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP)**, based in Baucau. Established in 2003, ICFP is a key national teacher training institution dedicated to strengthening the quality of primary education across all municipalities of the country. The institute plays a significant role in addressing critical gaps in teacher qualification, pedagogical capacity, and educational access, particularly in rural and remote areas where learning outcomes remain below national standards.³ ICFP has contributed significantly to the professional development of primary school teachers, thereby improving foundational literacy, numeracy, and classroom practices.

¹ Cf. <https://fmsi.ngo/en/>

² Marist Brothers Institute, Mission and Vision Statements; Star of the Sea Province Educational Reports; International Marist Education Network Publications Cf. <https://champagnat.org/en/marist-institute/our-presence/>; <https://www.mariststar.org/>

³ Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP), Institutional Reports and Strategic Plans; Ministry of Education, Timor-Leste Teacher Training Framework Documents.

across Timor-Leste's basic education system. Through its training programs, the institute supports the Government's efforts to enhance the quality and equity of education, in alignment with national education sector strategies and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education.

II. GENERAL REMARKS AND COOPERATION WITH THE UPR MECHANISM

5. Timor-Leste was reviewed in January 2022 at the 40th Session of the Working Group on the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**. The submitting stakeholders welcome the constructive participation of Timor-Leste in the UPR process. On that occasion, Timor-Leste received 194 recommendations, supported 186 while noting 8 of them.⁴ The present submission represents the follow-up to the UPR recommendations accepted by the State in 2022.
6. We also welcome the adoption of many recommendations that are connected to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**⁵ such as: 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions (39%); 5 - Gender Equality (17%); 10 - Reduced inequalities (14%); 4 - Quality Education (6%); 3- Good health and Well-being (6%);
7. Timor-Leste has made notable progress since the restoration of its independence in 2002. Democratic institutions have become increasingly consolidated, access to primary education and basic healthcare has expanded, and the Government has demonstrated continued engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms.⁶ However, despite these achievements, substantial challenges remain in ensuring the full realization of economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly for children and young people living in rural and geographically isolated communities.
8. As Timor-Leste celebrated the twenty-fourth anniversary of the restoration of its independence on 20 May 2026, it found itself at a critical demographic crossroads. The country possesses one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia, with more than half of its citizens below the age of 20.⁷ This demographic reality presents both a significant opportunity and a pressing challenge. Investments in quality education, vocational and technical training, healthcare services, child protection systems, and youth employment initiatives are essential to harnessing the country's demographic dividend and ensuring sustainable development. Failure to address these priorities risks perpetuating cycles of poverty, exclusion, and socioeconomic vulnerability among future generations.

⁴ Cf. "Matrix Recommendations Timor-Leste" available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/tl-index>

⁵ Cf. Infographic <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/tl/2022-12-23/Timor-Leste.pdf>

⁶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report; World Bank, Timor-Leste Overview; Government of Timor-Leste, Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030.

⁷ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), State of World Population Reports; Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Population Prospects.

9. This report draws upon information gathered through consultations with civil society organizations, educators, youth groups, faith-based institutions, community leaders, and development practitioners, as well as data from national and international sources. It highlights key human rights concerns affecting children and youth and identifies priority areas requiring action by the Government of Timor-Leste and its development partners.
10. The report provides an evidence-based assessment of the human rights situation in the country. It evaluates the implementation of recommendations accepted during previous UPR cycles and assesses progress towards fulfilling obligations under international human rights instruments, including the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, and the 2030 Agenda for **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**.

III. METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Methodology:

11. The preparation of this stakeholders' report is based on a mixed methods participatory research design combining primary qualitative and quantitative data collection with secondary desk-based review of relevant literature, policy documents, and statistical reports. This approach was selected to enable a comprehensive understanding of human rights issues affecting children and young people by integrating lived experiences with existing empirical and institutional evidence.
12. Primary data were collected between 28 April and 12 May 2026 through field-based consultations conducted at the **Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP)** in Baucau, Timor Leste. Data collection methods included structured questionnaires and facilitated focus group discussions designed to capture both measurable trends and in-depth qualitative perspectives on education, child protection, youth development, and access to essential services. A **total of 182 participants** took part in the study comprising 163 student teachers and 19 academic staff members. This composition allowed for a dual perspective combining the experiences of preservice teachers who are themselves young people with those of academic staff engaged in teacher training and education system development.
13. In addition to primary data, the report draws on secondary sources including government policy documents, United Nations agency reports, academic literature, and civil society publications. This process of data triangulation was used to enhance validity, reduce bias, and strengthen the reliability of the findings by cross verifying information from multiple sources.⁸

⁸ Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. This supports use of multiple data sources to improve validity.

14. The participatory research approach was adopted to ensure that the voices of rights holders, particularly young people and future educators, are meaningfully reflected in the findings. This aligns with human rights-based approaches to research which emphasize participation, empowerment, and inclusion as core methodological principles in data collection and analysis.⁹

Overview:

15. **Education, quality and infrastructure:** Children and young people continue to face numerous barriers that undermine their ability to fully enjoy their rights. While school enrolment rates have improved, concerns remain regarding educational quality, school retention, learning outcomes, teacher capacity, and unequal access between urban and rural areas.¹⁰ School resources and facilities are inadequate, a lot of teachers are not qualified or sufficiently motivated, truancy is a problem in some municipalities, and the lack of clean water and poor sanitation in schools result in health risks. Better education about sexual diseases and self-discipline in relationships is a priority. Also, the government must invest in libraries and science laboratories in secondary schools.
16. **Health, nutrition, and well-being of children and young people:** High rates of child stunting and malnutrition remain significant public health concerns despite government efforts and international support.¹¹ The health services also need a big increase in government funds as most hospitals are grossly under resourced and lack basic medicines and equipment.
17. **Youth employment, economic opportunities, and merit-based recruitment:** Youth unemployment and its consequences are a major concern. Many young people leave Timor-Leste in search of work in other countries, particularly to Korea, England, Ireland and Australia, and this is a huge drain on human resources. Youth unemployment and underemployment further limit opportunities for economic participation and social mobility, particularly among school leavers and young adults entering the labor market.¹²
18. **Infrastructure, accessibility, and inclusive governance:** Vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, girls, children living in poverty, and those residing in remote communities, often experience compounded forms of exclusion. Barriers to accessing healthcare, education, justice, and social services continue to undermine efforts to achieve equality and non-discrimination. Gender-based violence, child protection concerns, and

⁹ United Nations Development Group (2017). Human Rights Based Approach to Data. This supports participatory, rights-based research methodologies.

¹⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); Ministry of Education, Timor-Leste Education Sector Reports; UNICEF, Education Fact Sheets for Timor-Leste.

¹¹ UNICEF Timor-Leste, Nutrition Programme Reports; World Health Organization (WHO), Timor-Leste Health Profile; Global Nutrition Report.

¹² International Labour Organization (ILO), Youth Employment and Labour Market Assessment in Timor-Leste; World Bank Jobs Diagnostic for Timor-Leste.

limited opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes also require sustained attention.¹³

19. The submitting organizations respectfully urge the Human Rights Council and Member States to consider the findings contained in this report and to encourage Timor-Leste to strengthen measures aimed at promoting inclusive development, protecting children's rights, empowering young people, and ensuring that no child or young person is left behind in the country's development trajectory.

IV. EDUCATION: QUALITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

20. Education is a core obligation under article 28 of the CRC and article 13 of the ICESCR, and a central pillar of SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education. While Timor-Leste has achieved near universal basic literacy estimated at approximately 99 percent, significant structural challenges continue to undermine the full realization of the right to education for children and young people, particularly in relation to quality, retention, and infrastructure.¹⁴
21. Evidence from the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review indicated a secondary school dropout rate of approximately 60 percent, reflecting persistent systemic barriers that disproportionately affect adolescents and young people and limit their transition from basic education to further learning, skills development, and employment opportunities.¹⁵
22. Field consultations conducted for this report indicate that infrastructure deficits remain one of the most critical barriers to effective learning for children and young people. Approximately 87 percent of respondents reported that primary school classrooms require major repair or full rehabilitation. Participants consistently described overcrowded classrooms, insufficient learning materials, and unsafe physical conditions that undermine the right of children to learn in dignified environments. One participant stated that *“school resources and facilities are inadequate, and many teachers are not qualified or sufficiently motivated,”* while another emphasized that *“the lack of clean water and poor sanitation in schools result in health risks for children and reduced attendance, especially among girls”*.¹⁶
23. These findings reflect partial implementation of previous UPR recommendations¹⁷ calling for improved school infrastructure, strengthened teacher training systems, and enhanced

¹³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on Timor-Leste; UNICEF Child Protection Reports; UN Women Timor-Leste Gender Equality Assessments.

¹⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Timor Leste Education Indicators; CRC (1989), article 28; ICESCR (1966), article 13; SDG 4 Framework.

¹⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review of Timor Leste, Third Cycle Report, A/HRC/WG.6/33/TLS/2.

¹⁶ Primary data collected at Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP), Baucau, April–May 2026 (n=182)

¹⁷ The government supported several recommendations focused on increasing investment and improving school facilities, particularly in remote areas:

- **116.108 (Switzerland):** Increase the percentage of the national budget dedicated to education.

access to quality education for children and young people in rural and remote areas. While the Government has undertaken initiatives to expand school construction, upgrade curricula, and increase teacher deployment, these efforts remain insufficient in scale and impact.

24. Government efforts through the Ministry of Education to rehabilitate schools and expand access to basic education represent important progress. However, persistent gaps in financing, infrastructure maintenance, and human resource capacity continue to undermine the right of children and young people to quality education, particularly in rural areas where inequalities remain most severe.¹⁸
25. **To ensure that every child and young person in Timor Leste can fully enjoy their right to inclusive, equitable, and quality education in conditions of safety, dignity, and non-discrimination, the submitting stakeholders recommend:**
 - a. **Increase national education financing by allocating a higher proportion of the national budget to the education sector to ensure adequate investment in school infrastructure, teacher development, and learning materials.**
 - b. **Rehabilitate and expand school infrastructure through the repair of dilapidated classrooms, construction of additional classrooms to reduce overcrowding, and the creation of safe, child friendly learning environments for all children and young people.**
 - c. **Guarantee access to safe water and sanitation in all schools to protect the health, dignity, and consistent attendance of children, particularly girls and those in rural and remote areas.**
 - d. **Strengthen teacher quality and accountability systems through the establishment of a national framework for continuous professional development to ensure that all teachers are adequately trained in pedagogy, subject knowledge, and language of instruction.**
 - e. **Expand equitable digital access for children and young people by investing in reliable and affordable internet connectivity in schools and ensuring access to digital learning tools, especially in rural communities.**

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- **116.111 (United Republic of Tanzania):** Improve the infrastructure of schools in remote areas to ensure access to education for all.
 - **116.114 (Poland):** Improve school infrastructure with a view to achieving higher enrolment in rural areas and in secondary education.
 - **116.115 (New Zealand):** Promote education for children and young people by improving accessibility and attendance for rural areas and increasing investment.
 - **116.117 (Fiji):** Increase investment in human, technical, and financial resources to strengthen and improve the education system and infrastructure.
 - **116.118 (South Sudan):** Continue developing a policy of providing training to teachers through the National Institute for Training of Teachers and Education Professionals

¹⁸ World Bank, Timor Leste Education Sector Analysis; Ministry of Education Timor Leste, Sector Reports.

- f. Integrate comprehensive sexuality education into the national curriculum in an age-appropriate manner, to equip adolescents and young people with accurate knowledge on reproductive health, protection, and wellbeing, thereby contributing to the reduction of teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and school dropout rates.**

V. HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

26. The right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health is guaranteed under article 24 of the CRC and article 12 of the ICESCR. The realization of this right is fundamental to children's survival, development, protection, and participation, and is intrinsically linked to SDG 2 on ending hunger and malnutrition and SDG 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.¹⁹
27. Timor-Leste has made important progress in strengthening public health outcomes over the past decade. We acknowledge the Government's efforts to expand immunization coverage, contributing to the elimination of measles in 2018 and reducing children's vulnerability to vaccine-preventable diseases.²⁰ Investments in community health services, maternal healthcare, and social protection programs have also contributed to improvements in several key health indicators.
28. Notwithstanding these advances, significant challenges continue to undermine the health and well-being of children and young people. Chronic malnutrition remains one of the most serious threats to child development. Available evidence indicates that approximately one in every two children under five years of age experiences stunting or chronic malnutrition, placing Timor-Leste among the countries with the highest prevalence rates globally.²¹ This situation continues to affect children's cognitive development, educational attainment, physical growth, and future economic prospects.
29. Stakeholder consultations revealed persistent concerns regarding the accessibility, quality, and availability of healthcare services. Respondents frequently reported shortages of essential medicines, inadequate health infrastructure, and limited access to specialized healthcare, particularly in rural and geographically isolated communities. One participant observed: *"Hospitals are grossly under-resourced and lack basic medicines."*
30. This concern was echoed by several respondents who highlighted the limited availability of mental health support services and their impact on young people. One participant noted:

¹⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 24; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), Article 12; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 3.

²⁰ World Health Organization (WHO), Timor-Leste Country Health Profile; UNICEF Timor-Leste Annual Reports.

²¹ UNICEF Timor-Leste, Nutrition Programme Reports; Global Nutrition Report; World Bank, Timor-Leste Human Capital Review.

"Mental health issues are common but not properly addressed, especially among young people who face uncertainty about their future."

31. The findings suggest that significant disparities continue to affect children's and young people's access to healthcare. Geographic isolation, shortages of qualified health personnel, insufficient medical supplies, and weaknesses in referral systems continue to impede equitable access to quality healthcare services, particularly for children and families living in remote areas.²²
32. Concern was expressed regarding the limited attention given to adolescent and youth mental health. While awareness of mental health challenges has increased, access to counselling, psychosocial support, and community-based mental health services remains inadequate. Young people facing unemployment, educational pressures, social exclusion, family instability, and uncertainty regarding future opportunities often lack access to appropriate support mechanisms.²³
33. During previous UPR cycles, Timor-Leste received recommendations aimed at strengthening maternal and child health, reducing malnutrition, improving healthcare accessibility, and expanding social protection systems.²⁴ The Government has responded through the implementation of national nutrition strategies, maternal and child health initiatives, community health outreach programmes, and social assistance mechanisms, including the Bolsa da Mãe program. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to improving health outcomes for vulnerable populations.
34. Nevertheless, stakeholder consultations indicate that implementation gaps remain significant. Chronic malnutrition continues to affect a substantial proportion of children, healthcare facilities frequently operate with limited resources, and access to essential services remains uneven across municipalities. Rural communities, female-headed households, and families experiencing poverty continue to face heightened barriers to

²² Ministry of Health, Timor-Leste Strategic Health Sector Plan; WHO Universal Health Coverage Monitoring Reports.

²³ WHO Mental Health Atlas; UNICEF Guidance on Adolescent Mental Health; UNFPA Timor-Leste Youth Well-being Assessments.

²⁴ For example:

- **116.85 (Bahamas):** Ensure adequate funding in the national budget to provide food security, safe water, and health care.
- **116.95 (Armenia):** Strengthen health-care services to reduce maternal mortality, broaden access to immunization in remote areas, and improve child nutrition.
- **116.96 (Indonesia):** Step up efforts to improve national health-care services and infrastructure to ensure access and reduce stunting.
- **116.100 (Uruguay):** Strengthen the public health system, including increasing the availability of mental health services adapted to the needs of young people.
- **116.174 (Spain):** Adopt measures to guarantee access to safe food and nutrition for children to reverse high rates of delayed development.
- **116.175 (Philippines):** Redouble efforts in improving child nutrition and food security.

accessing adequate nutrition and healthcare services. These challenges impede the realization of children's rights and risk slowing progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 3.

35. **The evidence presented above underscores the need for strengthened and coordinated action to advance the health and well-being of children and young people. In this regard, stakeholders submit the following recommendations to the Government of Timor-Leste aiming to strengthen the country's capacity to fulfil its obligations under the CRC while accelerating progress towards the achievement of SDG 2 and 3, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations:**
- a. **Prioritize increased and sustained investment in child and adolescent health within national budgetary frameworks, with particular emphasis on primary healthcare services, maternal and child health programs, nutrition interventions, and healthcare delivery in rural and remote communities.²⁵**
 - b. **Accelerate the implementation of comprehensive measures to reduce child malnutrition and stunting, including strengthened interventions during the first 1,000 days of life, expansion of school feeding initiatives, nutrition education programs, and targeted support for vulnerable households experiencing food insecurity.²⁶**
 - c. **Expand access to child and youth friendly mental health services through the integration of mental health support within primary healthcare systems, the establishment of accessible counselling services, and the development of school-based and community-based psychosocial support programs for children and young people.**
 - d. **Strengthen maternal, newborn, and emergency healthcare systems to ensure equitable access to timely and quality healthcare services for children, adolescents, pregnant women, and families living in remote and hard-to-reach communities, including access to emergency obstetric and neonatal care.²⁷**
 - e. **Enhance school-based health and well-being programs through regular health assessments, nutrition monitoring, reproductive health education, and referral pathways that support the holistic development, protection, and well-being of children and young people.²⁸**

²⁵ WHO Health Financing Guidance; SDG 3 Targets and Indicators.

²⁶ WHO Guideline on Reducing Childhood Stunting; UNICEF Strategy for Improved Nutrition of Children and Women; FAO Food Security Framework.

²⁷ WHO Standards for Improving Quality of Maternal and Newborn Care; UNFPA Maternal Health Programme Framework.

²⁸ WHO Health Promoting Schools Framework; UNESCO International Guidance on School Health and Well-being Programmes.

VI. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT

36. Timor-Leste's young population represents one of the country's greatest assets for sustainable development. However, the ability of young people to contribute meaningfully to national development continues to be constrained by limited employment opportunities, skills mismatches, underemployment, and concerns regarding transparency and meritocracy in recruitment processes. These challenges affect the realization of the rights of young people to work, participate in public life, and enjoy an adequate standard of living as recognized under the ICESCR and reflected in SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth.²⁹
37. According to international labor estimates, youth unemployment among persons aged 15 to 24 remains significantly higher than the national average, reflecting the disproportionate barriers faced by young people entering the labor market.³⁰ Despite improvements in educational attainment and skills development initiatives, many young people continue to experience difficulties securing decent and stable employment opportunities.
38. During previous UPR cycles, Timor-Leste received recommendations relating to youth employment, poverty reduction, good governance, institutional transparency, and anti-corruption measures.³¹ The Government has taken positive steps through vocational education programs, technical skills development initiatives, entrepreneurship support schemes, and implementation of national youth policies. The establishment of youth development programs and partnerships with development agencies has contributed to expanding opportunities for some young people.
39. Nevertheless, the submitting stakeholders note that significant gaps remain between policy commitments and implementation outcomes. Youth unemployment and underemployment continue to affect large numbers of young people, particularly those living outside urban centers. Access to finance for youth entrepreneurs remains limited, while employment

²⁹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Articles 6 and 7; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

³⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO), Global Employment Trends for Youth; ILOSTAT Country Profiles, Timor-Leste; World Bank, Timor-Leste Systematic Country Diagnostic.

³¹ The following supported recommendations address capacity building and economic inclusion for young people and marginalized groups:

- **116.83 (Algeria):** Continue efforts to provide education and training opportunities to strengthen the capacity of Timor-Leste workers, particularly young people and the unemployed.
- **116.122 (Germany):** Take measures to increase the percentage of women within formal work arrangements and enhance their access to productive resources.
- **116.125 (Slovenia):** Increase opportunities for women and strengthen their capacity to participate equally in supply chains and markets.
- **116.191 (Algeria):** Enhance the effectiveness of national policies relating to persons with disabilities, including employment opportunities.

creation has not kept pace with demographic growth. Concerns regarding transparency and merit-based recruitment continue to be raised by participants and civil society actors.

40. The continued outmigration of educated and skilled young people in search of employment opportunities abroad presents an additional challenge. While labor migration may provide economic benefits through remittances, the loss of skilled human capital can constrain national development and reduce the availability of qualified professionals needed to support public services and economic diversification.³²
41. Nepotism is noted as a major and widespread issue. It is common practice in Timor-Leste when there is a change of government, for almost all government employees to lose their jobs. They can re-apply, but often positions, such as Directors of schools, are given to less qualified and less able applicants, who in most cases support the party in power. This practice creates a major loss of talent, experience, and know-how and causes great inefficiencies in the public service.
42. Addressing these challenges is essential not only for improving employment outcomes but also for ensuring that young people can participate fully in the social, economic, and civic development of Timor-Leste. Investing in youth employment, transparent governance, and equal opportunity will be critical to harnessing the country's demographic dividend and advancing sustainable and inclusive development.
43. **Considering these challenges, stakeholders submit the following recommendations to the Government of Timor-Leste:**
 - a. **Strengthen measures to promote transparent, accountable, and merit-based recruitment across the public sector, including the adoption and effective implementation of safeguards against nepotism, favoritism, and political interference in hiring and promotion processes.**
 - b. **Accelerate implementation of a comprehensive National Youth Employment Strategy with measurable targets focused on job creation, skills development, vocational training, and labor market integration for young people, particularly in rural and underserved communities.**
 - c. **Expand economic opportunities for young people through dedicated support for youth entrepreneurship, including access to affordable financing, business incubation services, mentorship programs, and technical assistance for youth-led enterprises.**
 - d. **Strengthen partnerships between government, educational institutions, and the private sector to improve school-to-work transitions, apprenticeships, internships, and employment pathways for graduates and first-time job seekers.**

³² International Organization for Migration (IOM), Labour Mobility and Migration Reports; UNDP Timor-Leste Human Development Reports.

- e. **Promote decent work opportunities that enable young people to contribute to national development within Timor-Leste, including targeted incentives for employers, investment in labor-intensive sectors, and measures aimed at reducing the outmigration of skilled youth while supporting their meaningful participation in economic and public life.**

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESSIBILITY, AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

- 44. Sustainable, resilient, and inclusive infrastructure is essential for the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights and for ensuring equitable access to education, healthcare, employment, and public services. Adequate infrastructure and effective governance systems are particularly important for children and young people, whose opportunities for development, participation, and well-being are directly influenced by access to transportation, public facilities, information, and essential services. These obligations are reflected in the ICESCR and are closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 9, 11, and 16.
- 45. Since the restoration of independence, Timor-Leste has made notable progress in expanding access to electricity and basic public infrastructure. Government investment in electrification has contributed significantly to improved living standards and increased access to services in many parts of the country.³³ Nevertheless, substantial infrastructure deficits continue to impede inclusive and sustainable development, particularly in rural and remote areas where children and young people face disproportionate barriers in accessing schools, healthcare facilities, markets, and employment opportunities.
- 46. Stakeholder consultations conducted for this report identified transportation infrastructure as one of the principal obstacles to social inclusion and economic development. Available evidence indicates that more than 80 per cent of the national road network remains in poor or very poor condition, limiting mobility and restricting access to essential services. Poor road conditions have a particularly adverse impact on children and young people by increasing travel times to schools, reducing access to healthcare, and constraining opportunities for social and economic participation for social and economic participation. A young respondent stated that *"The state of the roads isolates communities and prevents access to essential services."*
- 47. Respondents further reported that poor road connectivity, especially during the wet season, contributes to school absenteeism (especially for the thousands of children who walk long distances to school), delays access to emergency healthcare, and restricts livelihood opportunities for young people, particularly in rural municipalities. These concerns

³³ Asian Development Bank (ADB), Timor-Leste Country Partnership Strategy; World Bank, Timor-Leste Infrastructure Sector Assessment.

demonstrate the close relationship between infrastructure development and the effective realization of children's rights.

48. Unresolved landownership disputes are a significant impediment to infrastructure development and public investment. Despite legislative and administrative measures adopted by the Government, overlapping land claims and deficiencies in land registration systems continue to delay infrastructure projects, create legal uncertainty, and limit opportunities for economic development.³⁴ The Government has undertaken important initiatives to advance decentralization, strengthen public institutions, and improve infrastructure planning. While these efforts are commendable, the implementation challenges, resource constraints, and institutional weaknesses continue to affect the delivery of services and the equitable distribution of development benefits.
49. There is also a concern regarding the limited participation of young people in public decision-making processes. Although young people constitute a majority of the national population, opportunities for meaningful engagement in municipal governance, development planning, and public policy formulation remain limited. Greater inclusion of young people in governance structures would contribute to more responsive policymaking and strengthen democratic participation.³⁵
50. Timor-Leste has yet to ratify the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.³⁶ Ratification and implementation of the Convention would strengthen legal and policy protections for persons with disabilities and promote accessibility across public institutions, transportation systems, educational facilities, and community infrastructure.³⁷ Attention should be given to ensuring that children and young people with disabilities are able to participate fully and equally in all aspects of social, educational, and civic life.
51. **Based on the above findings, the stakeholders submit the following recommendations to the Government of Timor-Leste. These recommendations aim to reduce geographic disparities, strengthen social inclusion, improve access to essential services, and expand opportunities for children and young people:**

³⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review of Timor-Leste, Second and Third Cycle Recommendations concerning governance, decentralization, public administration, and citizen participation.

³⁵ Primary data collected through consultations at the Instituto Católico para a Formação de Professores (ICFP), Baucau, 28 April–12 May 2026 (n=182).

³⁶ Recommendation **116.20 (Thailand)**: Accelerate the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to effectively address their needs.

³⁷ Other countries also recommended adopting measures to promote the well-being of persons with disabilities:

- **116.182 (Ireland)**: Establish a national council for persons with disabilities to provide advice and support to relevant ministries.
- **116.184 (Libya)**: Ensure that persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups have access to all areas of political and economic life and basic public services.

- a. **Prioritize the rehabilitation and expansion of climate-resilient road infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas, in order to improve access for children and young people to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and other essential services.**
- b. **Enhance strategic transportation infrastructure and national connectivity, including improvements to airport, road, and public transport systems, in order to support sustainable economic growth, strengthen regional integration, and expand opportunities for young people.³⁸**
- c. **Ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and ensure that public infrastructure, transportation systems, educational institutions, and government services are fully accessible to children and young people with disabilities.³⁹**
- d. **Strengthen mechanisms for the meaningful participation of young people in municipal and national decision-making processes, including through formal consultative structures that enable young people to contribute to development planning, public policy formulation, budgeting processes, and governance initiatives affecting their communities and future prospects.⁴⁰**

VIII. DIRECT VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

52. We strongly believe that listening to and considering the direct voices of young people living in Timor-Leste is the best way to provide appropriate responses to their needs. As explained in the methodology, the participation and protagonism of young people is at the core of the work carried out for drafting this report, giving them a direct voice.
53. The thematically grouped sentences presented below in quotation marks are the result of interacting with and listening to young people who participated in the consultation process at the Instituto Católico Para a Formação de Professores (ICFP) for the 2026 Universal Periodic Review (UPR):
54. **Education and Educational Infrastructure**
 - *"Resources in schools are poor."*
 - *"Children in remote areas cannot access school."*
 - *"The school curriculum must align with the market place."*

³⁸ Asian Development Bank, Timor-Leste Transport Sector Assessment; World Bank, Infrastructure and Connectivity Reports.

³⁹ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); UNICEF, Children with Disabilities Programme Guidance.

⁴⁰ United Nations Youth Strategy 2030; UNDP, Youth Participation and Governance Framework.

- *"Improve school facilities in the rural areas, especially clean toilets and clean water."*
- *"Teachers in schools must be qualified."*
- *"Too many children abandon or cannot access education."*
- *"The quality of education is not good enough."*
- *"The curriculum needs to be more relevant and less crowded."*
- *"Invest in libraries and science laboratories in secondary schools."*
- *"In lots of places the quality of education is very poor."*

55. Health, Nutrition, and Well-being

- *"Improve the health system."*
- *"Buy more medicine for the hospitals and improve health services."*
- *"Access to health services is not good, need more mental health services."*
- *"Reproductive health and the stigma of teenage pregnancies."*
- *"Mental health and limited health resources."*
- *"Better education about sexually transmitted diseases and related matters."*
- *"24-hour dial-in support for mental health issues."*
- *"Poverty and malnutrition."*
- *"Better health services in the rural areas and increase the medical supplies."*
- *"Improve medical equipment in the rural areas."*

56. Youth Employment and Economic Opportunities

- *"Young people travel overseas to get work."*
- *"Because of nepotism less qualified people get jobs."*
- *"Provide work and change young people's attitudes."*
- *"Create opportunities for work."*
- *"A lot of young people cannot afford to study at university and struggle to live day by day."*
- *"More apprenticeships are needed for youth in the government and private sector."*
- *"Provide cheap internet and cheap loans for young people who want to start a business."*
- *"Invest in the private sector, don't rely just on oil for income."*
- *"Support small business with incentives."*

- *"Try new strategies to engage the youth such as providing credit for young entrepreneurs."*
- *"Remove the system of nepotism."*
- *"Appoint people with ability for government jobs not because they are party members."*
- *"Nepotism is a big issue."*
- *"Stop corruption and nepotism."*

57. Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Inclusive Governance

- *"Improve the country's infrastructure, roads and electricity."*
- *"The internet is expensive and slow in the rural areas; it is difficult to learn on-line."*
- *"Listen to the voices of young people."*
- *"Improve digital infrastructure."*
- *"Include young people in the decision-making process within Municipalities."*
- *"The Government must create opportunities and practical solutions, and simply not make policies, or nothing will change."*

IX. CONCLUSION

58. The submitting stakeholders recognize the positive measures undertaken by the Government of Timor-Leste in response to previous UPR recommendations. However, greater emphasis is now required on the effective implementation, monitoring, and resourcing of policies and programs to ensure that commitments are translated into tangible improvements in the lives of children, young people, and their communities.
59. Timor-Leste has made significant progress since the restoration of its independence. These advances reflect the Government's commitment to nation-building and to the progressive realization of human rights. Nevertheless, the findings presented in this report demonstrate that substantial challenges continue to affect the enjoyment of rights by many children and young people, particularly in relation to educational quality, health and nutrition, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and meaningful participation in public life.
60. The submitting stakeholders respectfully encourage the Government of Timor-Leste, development partners, civil society organizations, and the international community to work collaboratively towards strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights in the country, with special attention to those who are most vulnerable and most often left behind. Such efforts would contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, and ensure that every child and young person in Timor-Leste is able to realize their full potential and participate meaningfully in the future development of the nation

61. We are grateful for the opportunity offered by the United Nations to participate through the UPR mechanism. Special thanks for allowing us to amplify the direct voices of the young people with whom we have worked, reflected, and drafted this report.