



## ENHANCING RURAL LIVELIHOODS: INTEGRATING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Globally, rural populations, heavily reliant on agriculture for their sustenance, are disproportionately affected by poverty. In order to meet the global poverty reduction and food security objectives of the SDGs, measures addressing their unique constraints are needed to enable them to actively engage in a beneficial process of agricultural growth and rural transformation.

Zambia and Timor-Leste, the two target countries, have been grappling with persistent rural poverty, with high proportions of their populations living below the poverty line. COVID-19 exacerbated these challenges by disrupting agricultural markets, limiting mobility and shrinking income opportunities in rural areas.

Strengthening coherence between social protection and agricultural interventions is critical not only for responding to the immediate challenges posed by COVID 19 but also for laying the basis for more inclusive economic development and resilience-building pathways in the medium and long term. This requires strengthening the institutional linkages between social protection and agricultural interventions, and the systems and human capacities required to manage these linkages.

Against this background, the subprogramme supported the implementation of two programmes that involved the joint delivery of social protection and agriculture support – one in Timor Leste and one in Zambia.



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### WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

In Timor-Leste, the subprogramme actively engaged in policy dialogue concerning the economic integration of SSFPs and homegrown school feeding and successfully connected 19 SSFPs with ten schools, benefiting nearly 2 500 students through the national homegrown school feeding programme, *Merenda Escolar*, in 2023. Approximately 70 individuals, including food preparers, teachers, parents and farmers, received training on nutrition, food safety and hygiene.

In Zambia, the subprogramme concentrated on enhancing the capacities of government personnel to implement coordinated social protection and agricultural interventions in rural communities. A Management Information System (MIS) was established for the Food Security Pack (FSP) programme, with plans to integrate it into various social protection and government registries to enhance its operational efficiency. The FSP, initiated by the Zambian Government in November 2000, aims to empower vulnerable farmer households with agricultural inputs and skills, enhancing their food, nutrition and income security and registered, in recent years, over 184 000 people.

### KEY FACTS

**Latest Approved Budget**  
USD 1 000 000

**Duration**  
May 2021–December 2023

**Resource Partners**  
Multilateral, Donors of the Flexible Voluntary Contribution (FVC)

**Partners**  
Timor-Leste: Hamutuk Ita Ajuda Malu (HIAM) Health; Engineers Without Borders; Manufahi Municipality; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry; Ministry of Education; Ministry of State Administration; Ministry of Health.  
Zambia: Ministry of Community Development and Social Services; Ministry of Agriculture; Smart Zambia Institute

**Beneficiaries**  
Public officials, rural communities in target countries, in particular Small-scale food producers (SSFPs), teachers and students

# IMPACT

The subprogramme contributed to improved rural livelihoods, food security, nutrition and incomes through the sustainable economic inclusion of SSFPs and the articulation of social protection and agricultural interventions in the context of COVID 19 recovery. The support provided in the context of the national home-grown school feeding programme, *Merenda Escolar*, strengthened the ability of program implementers to source local products but also contributed to sustaining the local economy and reducing food loss and waste, ultimately enhancing nutrition outcomes for children by offering fresh, locally produced food and reinforcing school attendance incentives. The support provided in relation to the FSPMIS in Zambia, on the other hand, is expected to further improve operational efficiency, leading to reduced delays in input delivery and lower programme implementation costs. All of the above will eventually assist the two target countries in accelerating progress towards achieving SDG 1 and SDG 2.

# ACTIVITIES

## In Timor-Leste

- Facilitated the connection of 24 SSFPs to a stable local market, enabling them to supply ten schools under the national homegrown school feeding programme, *Merenda Escolar*.
- Contributed to upgrading kitchen facilities by providing kitchen utensils, food storage equipment, refrigerators and water filters.
- Trained approximately 70 individuals, including food preparers, teachers, parents and farmers, covering topics such as nutrition, food safety and hygiene.
- Raised awareness among SSFPs about the advantages of supplying to local schools and equipped them with the necessary knowledge to adapt production to meet market demands.
- Provided policy recommendations to key ministries, facilitating the enactment of Decrees No. 36/2022 and No. 61/2022.

## In Zambia

- Established a MIS for the FSP, aimed at integrating it with other government registries to enhance the coordination of programmes targeting SSFPs in rural areas.
- Enhanced the capacities of government personnel to implement coordinated social protection and agricultural interventions in rural communities.
- Provided the government with targeted guidance on Information and Communication Technology infrastructure development and associated tools, such as the FSPMIS.

### Project Title

Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty in the context of Covid-19

### Project Code

FAO: FMM/GLO/157/MUL

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