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# Symposium Report on Social and Behaviour Change Communication for Better Nutrition and Health in Timor-Leste

12-13 December 2018, Ministry of Health  
Dili, Timor-Leste



## Acknowledgements

The Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Symposium held on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 was organized by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Timor-Leste and the Ministry of Health (Ministry of Health) of Timor-Leste, with the financial support from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Ministry of Health led the symposium organization, under the overall coordination of Mr. Pedro Canisio da C. Amaral (National Director of Public Health, Ministry of Health), Dra. Olinda dos Reis Albino (Chief Department of Nutrition, Ministry of Health), and representatives from the Department of Health Promotion, Ministry of Health.

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Special gratitude goes to National Director of Public Health Mr. Pedro Canisio da C. Amaral, KOICA Country Director Mr. Sikhyon Kim, and WFP Country Director Mr. Dageng Liu for their inspiring and informative speeches during the opening and closing remarks of the Symposium.

## List of Abbreviations

CHC	Community Health Centre
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
INS	National Health Institute
JSI	John Snow International
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
KONSSANTIL	Konselho Nasional Seguransa Aihan no Nutrisaun Timor Leste
LISIO	Livrinho Saúde Inan ho Oan
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSTL	Marie Stopes Timor – Leste
NSA	Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PHD	Partnership for Human Development
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
JSI	John Snow International
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFP	School Feeding Program
SISCa	Servisu Integradu Saude Comunitaria
SSM	Servisu Saude Municipio
TAIS	Timor - Leste Health Improvement Project
TOMAK	To'os ba Moris Di'ak / Farming for Prosperity
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTL	Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (National University Timor-Leste)
WFP	World Food Programme

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## Introduction

A diverse group of nutrition stakeholders representing national and international development partners and Ministry of Health convened in Dili on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 for a symposium organized by the Ministry of Health (MoH), in partnership with WFP Timor-Leste, to explore how to utilize the transformational power of social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) to address nutrition challenges facing the country, exchange best practices and consider how SBCC can contribute to the realization of national development goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The one-and-a-half-day symposium was organized to guide the development of a National SBCC strategy based on the results of the formative research on adolescent health and nutrition behaviours conducted in 2018 and other best practices of ongoing work in the country.

Timor-Leste, has one of the youngest populations in the Asia-Pacific Region (UNDP, 2018), and where adolescents constitute one of every four citizens (Census, 2015). Critical levels of under-five malnutrition exist with 50% stunting and 11% wasting rates among 0-59 months (FNS, 2013). This is an impetus for adolescence malnutrition. The nutritional status of adolescents is not optimal, as despite the lack of trend data for both girls and boys 10-19 years old, Timor-Leste counts with a school-based survey representative for students 13-17 years old (WHO-SERA0, 2017). This 2015 study shows that 21.8% were underweight –with a much higher prevalence among boys 28.0% than girls 16.3%; and 4.4% overweight or 0.8% obese, very low compared to other Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC). Others cite 33.4% underweight for girls aged 15-19, with 21.5% suffering from anaemia (MoH, 2015). Longitudinal research in two communities found that growth curves of rural Timorese children are also poorer for adolescent boys than that of girls, and that relative to the WHO standards, children show early-life growth faltering and stunting throughout childhood and adolescence (Spenser et al, 2017).

Malnutrition affects both physical and mental development, with far-reaching consequences for human capital, child mortality, morbidity, and contributes to various health and nutrition-related problems. Timor-Leste, as one of the world's youngest countries, is still struggling to address nutrition-related issues including contextual understanding of its root causes and the extent of the problem. Health and nutrition problems and related behaviours that arise during adolescence shape adult wellbeing, with important public health implications for these future adults as well as the health of their future children. With a youth bulge in Timor-Leste and given the poor nutrition status of Timor-Leste's children and adolescents, it has become imminent to find solutions and address the issues arising due to unhealthy diet, lack of adequate nutrients, physical inactivity leading to developing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and micronutrient deficiencies.<sup>1</sup>

SBCC, is a research-based consultative process that uses interactive communication tools and methodologies to influence behaviours by challenging deep rooted social norms and promoting correct health practices. SBCC uses approaches and tools keeping in mind the audience preferences, thus creating an enabling environment for behaviour change at the individual, household, and community level. In addition to reaching the audience, SBCC helps to create a demand for services, thus engaging in advocacy at the policy level to ensure implementation of health services by Governments. A range of evidence from countries in Asia and Africa, have shared the effectiveness of using SBCC methods to promote nutrition behaviours.

Government and development partners have undertaken a variety of SBCC interventions in their respective areas with the common objective to promote improved health and

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<sup>1</sup> Health for World's Adolescents: A Second Chance in the Second Decade, WHO  
<http://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section1/page2/reasons-for-growing-attention.html>

nutrition in Timor-Leste. Through presentations and moderated discussions on a variety of SBCC topics, approximately 100 participants from Government, development partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, and international experts showcased their work and emerged more knowledgeable on the landscape of current priorities with commitment to harnessing the potential of communication and improve health and nutritional well-being in the population. The 2018 SBCC symposium is a tipping point for continued collaboration in this space.

## Opening Remarks

The Symposium opened with a reflection on the health and nutrition intervention in Timor-Leste and the need to fill the gaps with SBCC integration.

Excerpts from the speech presented:

*Mr. Dageng Liu, Country Director of the World Food Programme*

Mr. Dageng emphasized SBCC as an essential tool to address malnutrition. "SBCC is now globally recognized as one of the essential actions--used in conjunction with other program components-- to address malnutrition. In recent years, WFP has evolved into an organization providing food assistance and hunger solutions, with an increased emphasis on enabling vulnerable populations to reach both their energy and nutrient needs. Thus, SBCC is now increasingly important to improve behaviours around access, selection, preparation, and consumption of nutritious foods." He continued with hope that "this SBCC symposium could serve as a platform to enhance coordination and evidence sharing among development partners working on nutrition and health. We count on your active participation so that we could learn from each other and help to develop a realistic, sustainable and scalable comprehensive SBCC strategy to address childhood adolescent health and nutrition challenges in Timor-Leste."



*KOICA's Country Director of Timor-Leste, Mr. Sikhyon Kim*

Mr. Kim highlighted that KOICA supports initiatives contributing to better health and nutrition in Timor-Leste. "KOICA will continue to assist agencies and NGOs with programs and projects on health and nutrition." Mr. Kim also encouraged all partners to "establish an effective SBCC communication with each other—with that coordination we can improve the SBCC interventions in nutrition programs." He assured that "with the symposium, we all can learn and gain knowledge from each other to develop SBCC strategies for better behaviour change and hopefully create a better and healthier Timor-Leste".



*Mr. Pedro Canisio, the National Director of Public Health of the Ministry of Health*

"Nutrition is complex, where it is interlinked with other health issues and contributes to high mortality in Timor-Leste". Mr. Canisio is hopeful that, "we can use the symposium as an opportunity to learn together, share ideas and approaches to work together in ending malnutrition; we can hope to develop better strategies and intervention for nutrition". The National Director also emphasized Ministry of Health's continued effort towards ending malnutrition. "Ministry of Health will continue with its commitment to end malnutrition. Ministry of Health has already planned for a

food and nutrition survey in 2019 and hopefully with the new survey we can learn more about the status of nutrition in Timor-Leste. In fact, even if we already have programs for malnutrition treatment, there are causes of malnutrition that we have not properly addressed. Therefore, we need to re-evaluate our approaches and intervention methods."



## Setting Objectives

Presented by Ministry of Health/ Health Promotion Department - Ms. Augusta Amaral

Ms. Amaral, an officer from the Health Promotion Department, took participants through the workshop objectives. She shared the Ministry of Health's interest to coordinate a multisectoral response to the challenge of malnutrition especially following the momentum generated by the International SBCC Summit in Bali in April 2018. She further added that the SBCC Symposium in Timor-Leste aimed to:

- Review existing SBCC approaches as a mechanism of delivering nutrition key messages about the health and nutrition in Timor-Leste with a focus on the vulnerable population groups of children under 5, adolescents and pregnant and lactating women (PLW).
- Learn about innovations in the field of SBCC, understand trends and influencers and scope potential areas of collaboration and areas of potential scale-up (geographic and thematic) to initiate the development of a realistic, sustainable, scalable comprehensive SBCC strategy to address health and nutrition issues in Timor-Leste.
- Summarize the key findings of formative research conducted by WFP, TOMAK, and Ministry of Health on adolescent health and nutrition behaviours in Timor-Leste.
- Highlight and collectively learn from past and on-going projects for consideration in the development of a coordinated SBCC strategy.
- Deliberate on a plan to develop a comprehensive multi-sectoral SBCC approach/ package of programs addressing child, adolescent, and maternal health and nutrition.
- Create momentum for the development of a national SBCC strategy and action plan focusing on for a national level strategy on SBCC for childhood adolescent health and nutrition intervention.



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