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## SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION PILOT PROGRAM

# INVENTORY OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO DROPOUTS IN TIMOR LESTE



**Contract No. EDH-I-00-05-00029-00**  
**Task Order AID-OAA-TO-10-00010**

July 22, 2011

This study was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Creative Associates International.



**Inventory of Policies and Programs  
Related to Dropouts  
Timor Leste**

**Submitted to:**

**United States Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC**

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**Creative Associates International, Inc.  
Washington, DC**

**July 22, 2011**

This report was made possible by the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of Creative Associates International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

## DEC Submission Requirements

a.	USAID Award Number	Contract No. EDH-I-00-05-00029-00 Task Order AID-OAA-TO-10-00010
b.	USAID Objective Title	Investing in People (IIP)
c.	USAID Project Title	USAID Asia and Middle East Regional School Dropout Prevention Pilot (SDPP) Program
d.	USAID Program Area and Program Element	Education (program area 3.2) Basic Education (program element 3.2.1)
e.	Descriptive Title	Inventory of Policies and Programs Related to Dropouts in Timor Leste
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h.	Sponsoring USAID Operating Unit and COTR	AME/ME/TS Rebecca Adams, COTR
i.	Date of Publication	July 22, 2011
j.	Language of Document	English, Portuguese, Tetun

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## Acronyms

AME	Asia and Middle East Bureau
CFS	Child-Friendly School
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (USAID)
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
INDMO	National Institute for Manpower Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
RDTL	Democratic Republic of Timor Leste
SDPP	School Dropout Prevention Pilot
SISCA	Integrated Community Health Services
SMC	School Management Committee
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program



## Executive Summary

Each of the four countries involved in the USAID-funded *School Dropout Prevention Pilot (SDPP)* program – Cambodia, India, Tajikistan, and Timor Leste – has set policies for the education of its children, some more extensive than others. Each has local and international non-government organizations (NGOs) assisting in the provision of education services, though the number of such groups varies from a few in Tajikistan to well over 50 in Cambodia. SDPP is tasked with implementation of a project in each country to reduce the dropout rate, and in each case the intervention must fit within the policy context and supplement, but not duplicate, current efforts. This report focuses on the policies and programs related to dropout in Timor Leste.

To create an inventory of policies and programs, SDPP in-country partner CARE completed a matrix to describe about 40 topics that have proved relevant to school dropout rates, describing the content of the relevant documents and programs, their target group, and the ground reality of the implementation of the policy or program and its reported effect on dropout. In general, these topics cover the legal context of education (e.g., requirements for free and compulsory education, services for at-risk children and girls, school calendar and class sizes), the school facilities (e.g., accessibility and female-friendly), teacher recruitment, training, and behavior in the classroom (e.g., special recruitment of minorities or women, use of mother tongue), support services offered at the school in addition to basic education (e.g., bridge courses, health services, or meals), and cultural practices that may lead to dropout (e.g., early marriage). Following a presentation of Timor Leste's policies and programs is a set of options for interventions that SDPP might use within the country, given the established educational context. It should be noted that the viability of these preliminary suggestions will be informed by the findings of the SDPP in-country situational analysis and discussions with the ministries of education and other key stakeholders.

Timor Leste has a smaller set of education policies than the other SDPP countries. In some areas no policies exist (i.e., class size, transportation, school transfer); in other areas policies have been proposed but are not yet or fully implemented (i.e., automatic promotion for lower primary, scholarships for girls, accessible and female-friendly facilities, female teacher recruitment, teacher training in Portuguese, use of mother tongue in the early grades); and in a few others only pilot projects have begun (i.e. child-friendly schools and supports for at-risk students). Many schools lack appropriate textbooks, follow a school calendar that is incongruent with the local agricultural seasons, use “filial” schools with volunteer teachers in many communities, and offer few support services to ensure students will attend. SDPP might:

- Support the MOE in its efforts to draft and implement additional policies that can help prevent children dropping out of school.
- Implement a Children's Book Project to produce needed materials for primary classrooms through the efforts of current education personnel.
- Assist the MOE to improve the quality of the current textbooks for primary grades by either improving their translations into indigenous languages or updating them.

- Design and implement a pilot test to allow primary schools to set alternative school schedules, working around agricultural calendars, and evaluate the effect on attendance and dropout rates.
- Set up teacher clusters for those working in schools and implement a coaching or mentoring program to improve their skills.
- Empower PTAs or work with local leaders to monitor teacher and student attendance, develop and implement school improvement plans, and sensitize parents to the importance of education.
- Work with local stakeholders to build student clubs and introduce support for club members to stay in school.

## I. Introduction

In order to make informed decisions about programs that may reduce the dropout rate in a country, it is important to fully understand the policy context of education within the country and the set of programs currently operating. Interventions need to fit within existing policies, rather than contravene them, they must not unwisely duplicate existing programs, and they must have evidence of success in similar contexts. The literature review<sup>1</sup> on dropout programs conducted under the *School Dropout Prevention Pilot* (SDPP) program provided a number of suggestions of potential approaches to address the problem of dropout. This inventory of existing policies and programs, completed under the same contract, serves as the next required step in the path of building successful dropout prevention programs in the project countries of Cambodia, India, Tajikistan, and Timor Leste.

This inventory is divided into three sections. Following this Introduction, we describe the *existing policies and programs* in Timor Leste, addressing more than 40 topics or areas that may affect student dropout. Then we translate the policies and programs into suggested *options for SDPP interventions* to address the specific policy context and existing programs. It should be noted that the viability of these preliminary suggestions will be informed by the findings of the SDPP in-country situational analysis and discussions with the Ministry of Education, and other key stakeholders.

An initial list of 42 policy topics was presented to in-country SDPP staff to research; edits reduced the number to 41. All topics were chosen because they have been shown to encourage parents to send their children to school (e.g., removing all fees for public schooling, forbidding child labor), support teachers in their provision of a quality education program (e.g., teacher code of conduct, use of mother tongue in the classroom), or help children stay in school (e.g., female-friendly facilities, provision of health care within schools). For the purposes of reporting and analysis, these topics have been grouped into five areas:

- (1) *Legal context of education.* This area specifies the education laws of the country and its rules of implementation, addressing both the ideas of free and compulsory education and the group of actions that, while unintentional, often exclude certain children from access (e.g., the cost of required uniforms or school supplies, entrance or leaving exams, gender policies, lack of services for at-risk children or those with disabilities, a school calendar out of synchrony with the agricultural season). In many cases, the laws state a philosophy or an approach to education, but inquiry into whether the law is fully implemented shows that it is more a goal than a current reality. An important issue to consider is whether the existing philosophy and curriculum provides a range of options in terms of what students are able to study such as options for alternative or vocational education programs.
- (2) *School facilities.* Topics in this area include the provision of accessible and female-friendly facilities and dormitories or hostels. This is the “hardware” of education, the data on buildings that may or may not attract and hold children’s attention.

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<sup>1</sup> *School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program Review of the Literature*, Creative Associates International, 2011.

- (3) *Teacher recruitment, training, and behavior in the classroom.* This area focuses on the process of delivery of education services within the classroom, beginning with each country's set of qualifications for teaching staff and the training they are offered and continuing with key aspects of their behavior in class: Do they use the children's mother tongue for instruction? Are they "child-friendly" in their teaching practices? How do they contend with misbehavior?
- (4) *School support services.* In addition to classroom teaching, many schools offer support services that can make a difference to a child attending or not. This area comprises such services as bridge courses for overage children, a noontime meal, health care, or life skills classes or clubs.
- (5) *Cultural practices.* This final area shows key cultural practices that may affect a child's continuance in school, such as the age children marry, the response to pregnancy, and any rites of passage that children must go through.

Following the main body of the report is Appendix A, which contains the full explanatory charts of policies and programs in Timor Leste and describes the resource documents, target group(s), comments on implementation, and the reported effects of the policies and programs on dropout rates. In most cases, formal evaluations of the effectiveness of various policies and programs in relation to dropout were not available. Instead, SDPP country staff met with MOE officials, funding or implementing agency representatives, and local education specialists to obtain their informed impressions of the effect on dropout.

## II. Policies and Programs

### A. Legal Context of Education

Table 1 shows the policy context in Timor Leste with regard to the offering of compulsory and free education. The first five rows speak to the issue of the “compulsory” nature of education by describing whether the country believes education is a child’s right, has enacted laws to require schooling, has prohibited child labor (which is likely to keep children out of school), holds schools accountable for meeting state-imposed standards, and ensures that children attend. Timor Leste accepts a child’s right to education, through a national commission set up to ensure such rights, and has made elementary education (grades 1 through 9) compulsory. It officially limits the work of children under 15. A U.S. Department of Labor study (2008) indicated that 85 percent of Timorese children between 10 and 14 years of age were working, 91 percent of them in agriculture. There are no laws holding schools or local educational authorities accountable for ensuring children are in school, and no equivalent of “truant officers” to follow-up on absent students, so that the “compulsory” nature of basic education may not be uniformly enforced.

**Table 1: Timor Leste’s Policies on Compulsory and Free Education**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
1. Children’s rights	A National Commission on Child Rights promotes such rights
2. Compulsory education	Requires “basic” education (grades 1-9)
3. Child labor laws	Prohibits work for children under 15
4. School accountability	None
5. Tracking/ follow-up of absent students	None
6. School tuition and/or fees	Prohibits fees through grade 12
7. Tuition subsidies/ scholarships	Provides “mother’s grants” for poor/ single/widowed mothers to keep children in school
8. Uniform requirements	Does not require uniforms
9. Provision of school supplies, textbooks, etc.	Has had NGO programs offering grants to schools or books/supplies

Rows 6 to 9 in Table 1 show information regarding the costs of schooling, including the right to or prohibition from charging fees, the offering of scholarships to offset the costs for needy families, the requirement of uniforms and the provision of books and supplies. Timor Leste prohibits fees for both elementary and secondary school, but many primary schools, particularly in remote locations, use volunteer teachers, whom parents are expected to pay or provide in-kind contributions to. Also, parents must pay for some school supplies. The government does offer “mother’s grants,” dependent on children’s attendance in school, for single mothers, widows and those from impoverished households. The country does not require uniforms for school children, which eliminates that potential cost, and is working to supply teaching and learning materials to schools. It has worked with the World Bank to offer grants for primary schools which may be used for supplies and free textbooks in Portuguese, although the program has experienced some challenges with the irregular distribution of grants and difficulty on the part of some children and

teachers in understanding the textbooks. The government has also supported the production of Lafaek magazines for students and teachers, which provide articles, games and lesson plans grounded in the local context and in a bilingual format – a progressive introduction of Portuguese.

Tables 2 through 4 continue the review of the legal context for Timor Leste by displaying a list of factors that are known to impede children’s *access* to and *retention* in school. Such factors include the country’s policies and practices regarding the following:

- *Examinations*, which may be required for children to enter a grade or new school cycle or graduate from grade to grade or cycle to cycle;
- *Promotion*, where schools may have a quota of children required to pass or a policy of automatically promoting children;
- *Age limits* for school cycles, so children may “age out” of a school, even though they have not completed the required work;
- *Gender*, which may encourage girls to enter and continue their education or form barriers for them;
- Services to *at-risk children* and those with disabilities, who may be excluded because of caste, tribe, language or physical/mental problem;
- *School calendar*, which may or may not adapt to the agricultural schedule of families;
- *Class size*, which may be so large that some children are “lost” in the crowd;
- *School distance from habitation*, which may be so long that parents do not feel it is safe or appropriate for children to make the trip;
- Provision of *transportation*, so that those relatively far from the school can easily make the trip; and
- *Transfer* requirements, which can facilitate a child whose family moves from place to place.

**Table 2: Timor Leste’s Policies on Examinations and Promotion**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
10. School entrance exams	None
11. Promotion quota	None
12. Automatic promotion	Has proposed automatic promotion for grades 1-3, which is not yet implemented
13. Age limits for school cycles	None
14. School leaving exams	Required at end of cycles (grades 6, 9 and 12)

With regard to examinations and promotion requirements, as shown in Table 2, Timor Leste is, in some ways, encouraging of students’ progression through school: it has no entrance examinations, no age limits for school cycles, and only requires end-of-cycle exams (grades 6, 9 and 12). Having found massive repetition and failure in early grades, often resulting in older students dropping out of school, the ministry has proposed automatic promotion for grades 1 to 3, but the policy has not yet been implemented.

Table 3 summarizes information on policies for equal access to and retention in school, regardless of gender, at-risk status (e.g., orphans, minorities), family income, or presence of disabilities. Timor Leste has a policy for girls' scholarships but no budget to support such a program and has approved only a pilot program from CARE to advocate for girls' education. Similarly, it has formed a Department for Inclusive Education, which is just beginning its work using a support center for children with special needs in the capital.

**Table 3: Timor Leste's Policies and Programs to Support Girls and At-Risk Students**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
15. Gender-related policies	Suggests scholarships; has one pilot program operating to advocate for girls' education
16. Support for at-risk students	Has organized a support center for children with disabilities in the capital

Table 4 summarizes the positions of Timor Leste on other issues that have been associated in the literature with access and retention. The first is that of school calendar. Since many children are needed by their families to participate in agriculture, which has seasonal variations in the need for extra help, many may be absent for weeks during a school term. One result of their absence may be falling behind in their course work, leading to a need to repeat the grade. The second is class size, as children in large classrooms can be ignored and fall behind, without the teacher even being aware there is a problem. Traveling a far distance to school can be discouraging to children, and parents may view distances as unsafe for their children (especially girls) to cover each day. Finally, in some countries it is only possible to transfer at the beginning of the school year or a term, so that children whose family changes location may have to wait up to a year to re-enter school after the move.

**Table 4: Timor Leste's Policies and Programs on Other Access/Retention Issues**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
17. School calendar	Maintains a strict school calendar
18. Class size	No restrictions
19. Access/distance to school	Has set up "filial" schools for grades 1-3 to increase access; is trying to integrate them into regular government schools
20. Transportation	None
21. School transfer	None

In one of these areas, Timor Leste has a policy that may encourage students to attend school. When the country was a part of Indonesia, many "filial" schools were created for grades 1 to 3 to increase children's access to schooling, and the number of such schools has continued to increase. Unfortunately, the filial schools have not tended to offer a quality education, as most of the teachers are untrained volunteers and the schools are open irregularly. The goal of the current ministry is to integrate such schools into the regular government system, but it remains to be seen if children actually move from filial schools to regular schools to finish basic education. Its

other policies may discourage attendance: a strict school calendar, which in some locales is incongruent with the local agricultural seasons; the lack of limitation on the distance a child must travel to school; the lack of provision of transportation for students; and the lack of a policy to ease student transfer of schools.

## B. School Facilities

Table 5 discusses two major policies with regard to facilities. In Timor Leste, some schools do not yet have separate toilet facilities for boys and girls, and though construction of toilets in certain locations has been proposed, matching budget allocations were not made. In general, children are expected to get to school on their own, and dormitories are only provided for students at secondary level, and only in some schools. The education system has not had the funding to expand its facilities to reach a level of quality in many schools that is likely to be inviting to children.

**Table 5: Timor Leste’s Policies and Programs Concerning Facilities**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
22. Accessible and female-friendly facilities	Has proposed the construction of separate toilets for girls in some primary schools, but there is not yet a budget provision for these
23. Dorms/hostel for students	Some schools offers dorms for secondary school students

## C. Teacher Recruitment, Training, and Behavior in the Classroom

Getting children into school is essential to education, and keeping them in their classroom depends upon governmental policies like those discussed above, the practices of teachers, and the contents of the curriculum. Table 6 summarizes Timor Leste’s policies and programs for teacher recruitment and training. In addition to the regular pre-service teacher training, the MOE has proposed two relevant policies. First, to increase the number of female teachers and work toward a gender balance, they have proposed giving scholarships to undergraduate women in education. Second, training in Portuguese and pedagogic skills has been provided to teachers, mostly to primary school teachers. These strategies may improve the number of role models for girls in school and increase the ability of teachers to handle the curriculum. They may also make school more attractive to students.

**Table 6: Timor Leste’s Policies and Programs for Teacher Recruitment and Training**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
24. Teacher recruitment	Has proposed a policy (supported by UNIFEM) to increase the gender balance among teachers by giving scholarships to female undergraduates and give further professional training to female staff at the MOE
25. Teacher professional development	A considerable number of teachers have received training in Portuguese through the Portuguese Cooperation, most of them primary school teachers

As shown on Table 7, Timor Leste has begun the work of ensuring that classrooms are child-friendly:

- Its teacher code of conduct is based on a competency framework which includes fluency in the official languages of Portuguese and Tetun and good pedagogic skills;
- It has approved a pilot project by UNICEF to create 30 child-friendly schools;
- It has recently approved a policy to encourage the use of the children’s mother tongue in the early grades and gradually introduce the official languages; and
- It prohibits the use of corporal punishment.

All of these initiatives are steps in the child-friendly direction and need to be fully implemented and monitored to ensure they have the appropriate effect of increased retention of children.

**Table 7: Timor Leste’s Policies and Programs on Teacher Behavior in the Classroom**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
26. Teacher code of conduct	Has adopted a competency framework for teachers in the four key areas of professionalism, technical knowledge, fluency in the official languages, and pedagogic skills, which will be used to evaluate their performance
27. Bullying/ harassment prevention	None
28. Corporal punishment	Forbids corporal punishment, though reportedly it is still widespread
29. Child-friendly schools	Has a pilot project in 30 schools, conducted by UNICEF, which includes 1-week recurrent training sessions for teachers on child-centered pedagogy, school management and community participation
30. Language of instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines Portuguese as the official language of instruction and allows Tetun as an auxiliary language, to be phased out by grade 4</li> <li>• Recently approved a policy to use mother tongues in the early grades with a progressive implementation of Tetun and later, Portuguese</li> </ul>

Table 8 displays information on the current curriculum in public schools and the options for vocational education. Because the primary curriculum is largely based on the Portuguese curriculum, which was not well translated or well understood by teachers, it is unlikely to be “friendly” for students. However, for those who have dropped out or at least completed pre-secondary school, there are schools and alternative programs to develop technical and vocational skills.

**Table 8: Timor Leste’s Policies and Programs on Curriculum**

<b>Policy Topic</b>	<b>Timor Leste</b>
31. Primary and secondary school curriculum	Developed a primary school curriculum largely based on the former Portuguese curriculum, which is not universally relevant and requires skilled teachers; its translation into the vernacular has presented challenges, and some teachers do not fully understand it or are able to deliver it
32. Vocational education	Provides support to technical-vocational schools for graduates of pre-secondary schools and centers for alternative programs for students who dropped out of school

#### **D. School Support Services**

Table 9 summarizes the additional services offered by schools or community institutions that may be of assistance to students and keep them in school. Timor Leste offers only a few:

- A primary school feeding program (whose implementation has become erratic);
- Outreach to communities by health professionals to monitor health and promote good nutrition and healthy behavior;
- Some life skills integrated into the pre-secondary curriculum; and
- The development of PTAs in some schools.

In general, schools in Timor Leste are institutions for the delivery of an educational curriculum to children and offer only very limited additional services.

**Table 9: Timor Leste’s Policies and Programs on School Support Services**

<b>Policy Topic</b>	<b>Timor Leste</b>
33. Remedial tutoring/ bridge programs	None
34. Provision of meals	Offers a primary school feeding program by giving schools a monthly supply of rice, beans, oil and gas, but distribution was disrupted by the 2010 transition from the WFP to the MOE; previous implementation was also irregular and not supplying the necessary caloric intake to students, due to a sudden
35. Health care for students	The Ministry of Health provides outreach to communities and bring practitioners to monitor health and promote good nutrition and healthy behavior in monthly community meetings
36. Life skills workshops/ classes	Has incorporated aspects of a UNICEF life skills program for youth into the pre-secondary curriculum
37. Extracurricular activities	None
38. Community participation	Has supported the implementation of PTAs with the support of UNICEF

## E. Cultural Practices

Though not a part of ministry rules for education, some cultural practices may affect a child's access to school and ability to stay in school. Such practices include the traditional age of marriage, traditional rites of passage that may interfere with a school schedule, and expectations if a girl falls pregnant (see Table 10). Timor Leste has no legal age for marriage, and some groups do practice early marriage. Similarly, there is a high teen pregnancy rate of nearly 20 percent and no law regarding pregnant girls attending school or returning once the child is born, but girls generally do not return to school.

**Table 10: Timor Leste's Cultural Practices**

Policy Topic	Timor Leste
39. Age of marriage	Has no legal age for marriage; early marriage is common among some groups, including Baikeno speakers
40. Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has no policy on pregnant girls attending school or returning after the baby is born, but most schools do not accept teen mothers</li><li>• Has a teen pregnancy rate that reaches nearly 20%</li><li>• Commissioned a study of the effect of teen pregnancy on dropout</li></ul>
41. Rites of passage	None



### III. Options for SDPP Interventions

Timor Leste has a smaller set of education policies than the other countries within the SDPP project. In some areas, no policies currently exist (i.e., class size, transportation, simple school transfer); in other areas policies have been proposed but are not yet implemented (i.e., automatic promotion for lower primary, scholarships for girls, accessible and female-friendly facilities, female teacher recruitment, use of mother tongue in early grades); and in a few others only pilot projects have begun with no promise yet of their becoming policy (i.e., child-friendly schools and supports for at-risk students). These issues suggest the first option for an SDPP program:

**(1) Support the MOE in its efforts to draft and implement policies that can help prevent children dropping out of school.**

Such support may require SDPP staff to become adjunct staff members of the ministry, ones who can assist committees working on policies, help advocate for the appropriate funding, bring potential donors to the table to discuss their programs, evaluate the effects of current policies on child attendance and continuance in school, and prepare briefs in support of new policies and programs. Staff could put together a Primary Education Task Force, for example, which would bring stakeholders together to advise the ministry.

The next two options come from the lack of quality textbooks for children. The first proposes production of supplemental materials, somewhat akin to the issues of Lafaek magazine, and the second proposes an upgrade of the textbooks themselves.

**(2) Implement a Children’s Book Project to produce needed materials for primary classrooms through the efforts of current education personnel.**

In other countries with a lack of reading material for children (e.g., Tanzania), NGOs have brought together members of the education community, largely primary school teachers, in workshops in which trainees are provided support and encouragement to write and illustrate a children’s story. Such stories may be pieces about the history of the country, fiction that involves young children, biographies of important people, science books that describe native flora and fauna, or personal stories. With ministry approval, SDPP could “publish” the best of these stories in the sense of producing multiple copies and distributing them to primary schools.

**(3) Organize a project to improve the quality of the current textbooks for primary grades by either improving their translations into indigenous languages or updating them completely.**

Because the Portuguese textbooks are not of sufficient quality, it would also be possible for SDPP staff to coordinate improved translations of primary textbooks and, upon ministry approval, hand them over to the ministry to publish and distribute them. Because the books are “old,” it may be possible to update their contents as well. We assume that, as these translations are occurring, the ministry will also be implementing its policy on the use of the mother tongue,

so that in addition to improving the materials, SDPP could assist in organizing teacher training in the use of bilingual education in the classroom.

The next option for SDPP responds to the strict school calendar:

**(4) Design and implement a pilot test to allow primary schools to set alternative school schedules, working around agricultural calendars, and evaluate the effect on attendance and dropout rates.**

We know that many children are taken out of school to share in the family's agricultural tasks, and that they may fall behind in their studies. A pilot program in a small number of primary schools, where stakeholders decide on a schedule that provides time for farm work, could test whether such flexibility enhances attendance and lowers the dropout rate.

The following two options provide assistance in filial schools, where volunteer teachers do not have quality training for their positions and the school has only limited government support.

**(5) Set up teacher clusters and implement a coaching or mentoring program to improve their skills.**

To improve the quality of instruction, SDPP could help teachers to join together in clusters that would meet monthly and provide opportunities for them to discuss common issues, improve their subject matter knowledge and hone their pedagogical skills. The project would not be paying teachers – this would still be left to communities – but could instill pride in their work and enhance the quality of the education they bring to the students.

**(6) Empower PTAs or local leaders to monitor teacher and student attendance, develop and implement school improvement plans, and sensitize parents to the importance of education.**

Another way for SDPP to improve the quality of filial schools would be to ensure they have operating PTAs and that these groups act in helpful ways to improve the quality of the school. The PTAs could be trained in their jobs, asked to develop school improvement plans, and supported (perhaps with small grants) to implement key items in the plan.

SDPP might also tackle the issue of student motivation to get to school every day through enhancing the regular curriculum with clubs and helping children with transportation.

**(7) Work with local stakeholders to build student clubs and introduce supports for club members to stay in school.**

Many countries have used student clubs to encourage attendance and spread important information. SDPP could work with a pilot group of schools to build clubs, find out what gets in the way of members coming to school each day, and help solve the difficulties, where possible. A club might organize skits for the community on the importance of education, give children the opportunity to learn important skills or crafts, or make a product where the proceeds benefit the

school. If children have trouble getting to school, it may be possible to provide them with bicycles, to be “owned” by the club and passed along to others when the child graduates.



**Appendix A:  
Country Charts of Policies and Programs  
for Timor Leste**

## Timor Leste Policies and Programs That May Affect Student Dropout

Policy Topic	Document(s)	Target Group	Description/Comments	Reported Effect on Dropout
<b>LEGAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION</b>				
1. Children's rights	The <b>National Commission on Child Rights</b> was established in 2008 under the Ministry of Justice to advocate for child rights and support policy implementation to promote child rights.	Parents, teachers, children	The Commission has promoted campaigns against domestic violence, supported children movements and promoted education and health at the community level.	There has been an assessment of violence against children, but results have not yet been released.
2. Compulsory education	The <b>Basic Education Act</b> (2009) states that education is mandatory from grades 1 to 9. Starting in 2009, these grades will be called "Basic Education."	Children aged 6-14	250 "Basic Schools" are being created/ constructed by the MOE; smaller schools will be linked to "Basic Schools," and it is expected that children will move from smaller schools to Basic Schools as they progress through more advanced grades. The government is also seeking an increase in the number of children enrolling at the appropriate age for grade 1 (6 years) and a decrease in repetition in the early grades (1 <sup>st</sup> cycle).	EMIS preliminary data show an increase in enrollment at the early grades, but this might be associated with an increase in population. Enrollment in the early grades increased during the years previous to the introduction of this policy, presumably as a result of population increase, abolition of school fees, introduction of school feeding and an increase in the number of filial schools (smaller rural schools, close to the hamlets).
3. Child labor laws	Timor Leste has ratified the first ILO convention and theoretically children under 15 are prohibited to work.	Children under 15		Implementation is yet to occur. A U.S. Dept. of Labor study <sup>2</sup> indicated that 85% of Timorese children

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Labor (27 August 2008). *2007 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - East Timor*. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48caa46cc.html>.

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				between 10-14 years of age were working, 91% of them in agriculture. Anecdotal reports and observation indicate that children are still widely engaged in agricultural work and informal commerce.
4. School accountability				
5. Tracking/ follow-up on absent students				
6. School tuition and/or fees	<b>School fees</b> were abolished in 2006 as part of an effort to increase enrollment and prevent drop out.	Students from grades 1 to 12 in public schools	Many expenses are still associated with schooling. Many primary schools, particularly in remote locations, use volunteer teachers due to the lack of hired teachers, which parents are expected to support. Also, parents must pay for notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, etc. The government is seeking to integrate volunteer teachers in the workforce, but the process is likely to be slow due to: (a) the need to properly train those teachers; and (b) budget constraints.	Not formally analyzed. However, the abolition of school fees is likely to have had a limited effect because of the continuing costs to parents of education.
7. Tuition subsidies/ scholarships	The Ministry of Social Solidarity implemented a system of “ <b>mothers’ grants</b> ” to enable single mothers, widows and mothers from impoverished households to provide minimum support for their children and increase enrollment in school. Mothers are required to keep children in school and provide them with health care in order to receive financial	School-aged children from female-headed and/or	The program is being redesigned after problems were identified with the initial implementation. A new approach, including a monitoring network, is being piloted.	No data available yet regarding the impact on dropout.

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	support.	poor households		
8. Uniform requirements	Uniforms are not required.		There is some pressure in urban areas toward requiring uniforms.	
9. Provision of school supplies, textbooks, other learning materials	From 2005/6 to 2008/9, the MOE implemented a program of <b>grants for primary schools</b> , funded by the World Bank. Grants could be used for school improvement and/or to buy school supplies for the classroom and for the poorest students.	Primary schools	Anecdotal reports from teachers and MOE officers indicate irregular distribution of grants and poor compliance, with limited results, especially in rural areas.	
	Launched in 2006, the <b>Fundamental School Quality Project</b> of the MOE, supported by the World Bank, offered free textbooks in Portuguese for primary schools.	Primary school students	Due to technical and logistic issues, the books were stored for a long period and only distributed in 2010. Distribution did not cover all schools, students or subjects. Anecdotal reports from teachers suggest that many teachers and students have challenges in understanding the content due to language issues.	
	<b>Lafaek magazines</b> were produced in three formats for students, plus a teachers magazine, to support the implementation of the primary school curriculum and later (2010) of the new pre-secondary curriculum. The magazines provided articles, games and lesson plans completely grounded on the local context, published in a semi-bilingual format (progressive introduction of Portuguese as a language of instruction).	Students and teachers from kindergarten to grade 9	The final report indicated that Lafaek magazines were the most recognized curriculum resource and reading material available to students, with over 96% of students reporting knowing the magazine, 86% reporting use of the magazines at school, and 93% using the magazine at home to study. 96% of teachers used the magazine to teach.	No direct effect on dropout was measured.
10. School entrance exams	There are no entrance exams.			
11. Promotion quota				

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12. Automatic promotion	A policy on <b>automatic promotion</b> for grades 1-3 was proposed in 2009, but has not been implemented.	Students in grades 1-3	Massive repetition and failure in early grades often resulted in older students dropping out of school. Parallel mechanisms for student support (tutoring, extracurricular activities, formative evaluation) are not a part of the proposal.	
13. Age limits for school cycles	There are no age limits.			
14. School leaving exams	To ensure that students have acquired minimum competencies and skills to proceed to higher levels of education, <b>school leaving exams</b> are designed by a central MOE team.	Students in grades 6, 9 and 12	A recent reinforcement of standards of quality resulted in fewer students passing the exam, and students in some schools staged violent demonstrations in response (2009-2010). Even so, anecdotal reports consider the national exams to be much below the level of requirement really demanded by the national curriculum.	Anecdotal reports indicate that most of the students who fail the exam (around 10% of the enrolled students in those grades) are likely to drop out of school. No comprehensive study of the effect of the national exams has been conducted.
15. Gender-related policies	Seeking to increase the number of female students, the Gender Unit of the MOE has suggested a policy of providing <b>scholarships, advocating at the community level</b> using drama and road shows, and working with the curriculum division.	Girls	Implementation of the policy is dependent on budget provision not allocated in 2010. The advocacy component is being implemented on a pilot scale through CARE's "Educating Young Women in a Young Nation" project.	Not yet measured.
16. Support for at-risk students and those with disabilities	A <b>Department for Inclusive Education</b> was created at the MOE in 2008, promoting initiatives (trainings, workshops, provision of material) and advocating for inclusive education with support from UNICEF and NGOs.	School-aged children with disabilities	A support center for children with special needs has been created and supported in the capital Dili.	Not yet measured.
17. School	A <b>new school year</b> from January to December was	Public		Anecdotal reports suggest

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calendar	implemented in 2010 to realign teacher training cycles. There is no alignment with agricultural seasons (corn/rice/coffee planting or harvest).	schools		that students' and teachers' attendance is negatively affected by agricultural chores and traditional events. No comprehensive study conducted.
18. Class size/student: teacher ratio				
19. Access/distance to school	During the Indonesian occupation, small “ <b>filial schools</b> ” up to grade 3 were created to serve the population in remote areas.	Children aged 6-10	Given population increase, abolition of school fees, provision of school feeding, deterioration of infrastructure and a number of other factors, the number of filial schools has expanded considerably, particularly from 2007 onwards. The MOE has provided support to filial schools through FTI funding (school materials and training) but is seeking to decrease the number of filial schools by prohibiting the opening of new schools and integrating them into Basic Schools.	Although filial schools have been responsible for a sharp increase in enrollment from 2007-2010, it is clear that the quality of those schools is considerably below acceptable standards. Most teachers are untrained volunteers and the provision of services is irregular. It remains to be studied if children actually move from filial schools to main schools in order to finish Basic Education.
20. Transportation				
21. School transfer				
<b>SCHOOL FACILITIES</b>				
22. Accessible and female-friendly	The Gender Unit of the MOE has suggested <b>construction of toilets</b> in schools to strengthen female attendance.	Students in primary school	There is not yet any budget provision for this effort.	Not yet measured.

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facilities				
23. Dorms/ hostels for students	Dorms are provided, at times, only for secondary students in government schools.	Secondary schools		
<b>TEACHER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM</b>				
24. Teacher recruitment	<b>MOE Female Staff Promotion Policy:</b> The Gender Unit of the MOE, supported by UNIFEM, has proposed a policy (not yet implemented) to promote hiring female teachers to increase gender balance in the workforce and provide girls with positive role models. The policy will initially be implemented by conceding scholarships to female students at the Faculty of Education, encouraging them to finish undergraduate studies. Additionally, the policy proposes professional development for female staff working in the MOE central and regional offices, promoted through training and meetings.	Primary and secondary teachers	It is currently estimated that more than 70% of the teachers in Timor Leste are male. Percentages are higher for cycle 2 onwards (grade 5 and above). This situation reduces the availability of role models to female students and might result in biased gender attitudes in the classroom.	
25. Teacher professional development	<b>MOE Teacher Training Policy:</b> The MOE has proposed a new policy (not yet fully implemented) for teacher training, focusing on additional Portuguese language training. A course sponsored by the Portuguese Cooperation, named 'Bacharelato,' provides the training, which includes language, basic pedagogy and options for a 1-month follow-up course on Math, Physics and Biology. Additional trainings, mainly on language, have been provided by MOE in three 3-week breaks during the year.	Primary and secondary teachers	This training has been offered to a restricted number of teachers, most of them from primary schools.	
26. Teacher code of conduct	<b>Competency Framework for Teachers in Timor Leste (September 2008):</b> To improve the quality of education professionals, a teacher competency framework was initially developed in 2005-2006, when four competency domains were identified as key characteristics of a competent teacher	Registered teachers	The competency framework is expected to form the base for the evaluation of teachers' performance through the inspectorate's actions and the National Teacher Evaluation Exam. Teachers who do not	There has been no formal evaluation of the policy's effects. However, results from a training on the competencies in 2010 by NRC, in partnership with

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	(professionalism, technical knowledge, fluency in the official languages, pedagogic skills). Although there is no official code of conduct from the Ministry, the competencies are expected to guide teachers' behavior and attitude.		demonstrate the necessary skills in the four domains will not be hired or promoted from 2009 onwards.	the MOE, in 30 remote schools reported an increase in the number of students due to the return of dropouts to school.
27. Bullying/ harassment prevention				
28. Corporal punishment	An MOE resolution on “ <b>zero tolerance for corporal punishment</b> ” was passed by the Minister of Education and published in the Lafaek teachers' magazine in 2009.	Teachers	Teacher training reinforced aspects of positive discipline and reinforcement of students. However, the policy has not been extensively reinforced and corporal punishment is still widely practiced in Timorese schools.	
29. Child-friendly schools	Implemented by UNICEF as a pilot in 30 schools in peri-urban areas, the <b>Eskola Foun</b> project consists of 1-week trainings for teachers and directors on child-centered pedagogy, school management and community participation, followed by ongoing monitoring and support.	Primary schools		Evaluation to be conducted in 2011.
30. Language of instruction	The <b>Education Act, 2008 and 2010</b> , and the <b>National Policy on Language of Instruction, 2007</b> , state that Portuguese is the official language of instruction, and Tetun can be used as an auxiliary language (oral only). A <b>communication from the MOE (2008)</b> considers it appropriate to progressively increase the use of Portuguese up to full implementation of Portuguese as the language of instruction in the 4 <sup>th</sup> grade. A new national policy was developed by the UNESCO National	All schools	The 2004 census indicated that most of the population is not fluent in the language of instruction (Portuguese). A 2007 study carried out by UNICEF <sup>4</sup> indicated that the level of understanding of Portuguese by students was not sufficient for most of them to reach minimum scores in language tests constructed per curriculum standards. Anecdotal	Although no comprehensive research was performed, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that language comprehension plays a major role in students' repetition and is likely to be a major factor for dropout.

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	Commission and a working group specially convened for this purpose and was launched in March 2011. <sup>3</sup> The new policy will implement the use of mother tongues in early grades, with progressive implementation of Tetun and later on, of Portuguese.		reports are unanimous in indicate that neither teachers nor students have enough fluency in Portuguese to use it as a language of instruction; additionally, there is clear indication that students and teachers in the districts of Lautem and Oecussi face difficulties in understanding Tetun as well. In the final evaluation of the Lafaek Curriculum Support Project, 30% of the students reported having difficulties in understanding Portuguese (even if the content was presented in a bilingual format).	
31. Curriculum			The official primary curriculum, released in 2006, is poorly understood by teachers, despite their having received some training on it. It is strongly linked to the Portuguese curriculum with limited local relevance, requires skills that are beyond the grasp of most teachers and the translation of the curriculum guides into the vernacular is of poor quality. Official textbooks are in Portuguese, and teachers have limited fluency in this language.	
32. Vocation-al education or school-to-work	<b>INDMO</b> (national framework for qualification of training) provides support to technical-vocational schools (for graduates of pre-secondary schools) and	Graduates of pre-secondary	The Secretariat for Professional Training and Employment provided massive support to technical-	Not yet measured. INDMO is likely to have an

<sup>4</sup> Vine, Ken. (2007). *Pilot Study of Learning and Achievement in Grades 3 and 5 in Mathematics, Tetum and Portuguese*.

<sup>3</sup> Komisaun Nasional Edukasaun and Ministry of Education. (Draft, 2010). *Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education for Timor Leste: National Policy*.

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programs	centers for alternative programs for students who dropped out of school.	schools and dropouts	vocational centers for maintenance, equipment and scholarships, working in partnership with the Church, NGOs and bilateral cooperation programs, with AusAID and ILO support. A national qualification framework was established in partnership with the MoE for the accreditation of the supported courses and alignment to the formal education system.	effect on drop out by aligning qualifications obtained in technical-vocational courses to the formal education system.
<b>SCHOOL SUPPORT SERVICES</b>				
33. Remedial tutoring				
34. Provision of meals	A <b>school feeding program</b> was implemented by the MOE in partnership with WFP between 2006-2009 as a monthly supply of rice, beans, oil and gas to primary schools, and an implementation package of gas stoves, cooking facilities and plates/cutlery. In 2010, MOE took responsibility for food distribution.	Children in grades 1-6	The distribution of food became erratic or non-existent in 2010 after the MOE took responsibility for logistical arrangements.	EMIS data shows a sharp increase in enrollment in the early grades from 2007 onwards. Anecdotal reports from teachers and parents identify school feeding as a major incentive for enrollment. When distribution of food became erratic in 2010, a number of teachers complained of the negative effect on attendance. A study conducted by WFP in 2009 <sup>5</sup> describes irregular delivery and implementation issues, and did not find quantitative evidence of

<sup>5</sup> Evaluation of WFP Timor Leste PRRO10388.1 – Assistance to Vulnerable Populations – Final Report – November 2009

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				impact in enrolment or attention level of students.
35. Health care for students	<b>SISCA (Integrated Community Health Services)</b> is an outreach program implemented by the Ministry of Health in partnership with NGOs. The program organizes periodic community meetings, bringing health practitioners and volunteers to monitor health standards. It also promotes improved nutrition and healthy behavior.	All community members, but targeting particularly children under 5 and pregnant mothers	Many students live too far away from clinics and hospitals to have access to regular health care.	There have been no studies linking SISCA to improved retention or decreased dropout, but the program is likely to have a positive effect, particularly for students in rural and remote areas. CARE's research on girls' dropout (2010) found that illness among students and parents is one of the causes.
36. Life skills workshops/ classes	UNICEF implemented a <b>life skills training program</b> for youth in partnership with the MOE. Components of the program were later included in the pre-secondary school curriculum.	Children and youth		Not yet measured.
37. Extra-curricular activities				
38. Community participation	UNICEF and MOE have supported the implementation of <b>PTAs</b> through the child friendly schools (CFS) program since 2006, through trainings, workshops and monitoring.	Primary schools		The program will be evaluated in 2011.
<b>CULTURAL PRACTICES</b>				
39. Age of marriage	There is no legal requirement.		Early marriage is common among some groups, such as Baikeno speakers. 'Marriage' is also a loose concept. Teenage pregnancy reaches 20%, but does not necessarily lead to marriage. A couple can live together for 15 years and then marry, once the	

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			man has amassed enough resources to pay the full bride-price. However, an agreement among families and sacred houses, named 'fetosa'a-umane' must take place before a relationship is fully accepted.	
40. Pregnancy	A study has been conducted by the Gender Unit of the MOE, in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Social Solidarity and the Secretariat for Promotion of Women, to <b>identify the impact of teenage pregnancy on dropout in secondary schools.</b>	Secondary school students	Per guidance of the Minister, no students in previous grades or out-of-school students were included. The study is supposed to inform policy for reintegration of young mothers in secondary schools.	To be assessed after policy implementation.
41. Rites of passage				

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