

**Effective Seed Storage in Timor-Leste (ESS)
Funded by USAID, Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance - OFDA**

**Quarterly Report
January to March 2014**



Insert: ESS booth at the 2014 USAID Timor-Leste Expo in Dili

Country Contact	Headquarters Contact	Program Summary	
Joanna Walshe Country Director Address: Rua Dr. Barros Gomes, Bidau Lecidere, Dili, Timor Leste Ph. +670 3312726 Mob. +670 739 9045 Email. jwalshe@tl.mercycorps.org	Gabrielle Fox Program Officer Address: 45 SW Ankeny, Portland, Oregon, USA Ph. +1(503) 896-5000 Fax. +1(503) 896-5011 Email. gfox@mercycorps.org	Award No. Start Date End Date Report Date OFDA obligated amount	AID-OFDA-G-11-00174 12 August 2011 11 February 2015 30 April 2014 US\$ 2,340,680

Program Summary

The majority of farmers in the target districts of rural Timor-Leste rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, the lack of appropriate on-farm storage and poor seed quality results in a high percentage of post-harvest seed loss for the majority of farmers in this area. These factors, combined with other challenges such as climate change, low soil fertility, poor access to water, low levels of livelihood diversification, and the dominance of traditional practices including 'slash and burn' (shifting) agriculture put seed system security at risk over time. To address these problems, since 2011 Mercy Corps has been implementing the USAID/OFDA funded Effective Seed Storage (ESS) in Timor-Leste Program. The program is designed to be sustainable through an innovative market-based approach to increase access to improved storage systems linked with capacity building of farmers and extension workers, and supporting activities to connect farmers with viable input and output markets.

In its initial phase, the ESS program successfully introduced effective post-harvest seed storage solutions to 3,120 rural farmers across four sub-districts. Based on the program's success and the continued need for seed system security throughout the country, Mercy Corps, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), carried out a nation-wide expansion of the ESS program. The expansion targets neighboring districts/sub-districts of initial target areas that can be supported by existing manufacturers. This report provides a summary of activities implemented from January to March 2014.

Performance Summary

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security	Objective: Sustainable post-harvest protection of seeds and grain stocks improve crop production and livelihoods in rural Timor-Leste			
Beneficiaries Targeted	Original: 27,503 IDPs: 0	Expansion: 240,000 (no IDPs)	Budget: \$247,501 with addition of \$1,250,000 for the first year of the expansion	
Beneficiaries Reached	Original: 34,993 ¹ IDPs: 0	Expansion: 95,245 ²	Amount Spent US\$ 971,357.09	
Geographic Area (s)	At least 10 of 13 districts in Timor-Leste			
Sub- Sector: Seed System Security				
<i>OFDA Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Progress (Date)</i>	<i>Last Day of Report Period</i>
Projected increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to seed systems activities/ agricultural inputs for beneficiary households	46.6% of HHs are food insecure with 2 months of average food shortage	30% reduction in food insecure HHs and 30% reduction in average food shortage	End-line	July 2013 ³
Number of people benefiting from seed	0	240,000	95,245 ⁴	January

¹ Calculated from number of households (HHs) buying the seed storage system plus additional farmers/HHs trained in post-harvest training times average number of HH members in the target areas ((3,378 HH + 2,266 HH) * 6.2 Individual/HH) = 34,993 individuals

² See footnote 4

³ There are no available updates for this indicator since July 2013 (when the baseline report was available). Progress will be measured during the program end-line

systems/agricultural inputs activities, by sex			(33% female)	2014
Additional Indicators⁵				
Percentage of beneficiaries reporting decreased post-harvest losses for seeds	93% for improved variety ⁶ growers report losses and 95% report losses of other varieties during storage	80% reduction from the baseline	End-line	July 2013
Increase in availability of quality seed during planting season	39% of improved variety seeds are lost during storage and 45% of other varieties	80% reduction from the baseline	End-line	July 2013
Number of farmers with access to BCC materials/training	0	40,000	15,362 ⁷ (40% female)	March 2014
Percentage of farmers adopting improved technique(s)	0	80%	End-line	July 2013
Number of farmers with access to improved seed storage system, by sex	0	40,000	11,297 ⁸ (42% female)	January 2014

Sector Summary

An additional 4,152 farmers have accessed silos as a result of community mobilization, behavior change communication training and voucher distribution

Mercy Corps and CRS continued to work with local partner organizations during this reporting period to increase community mobilization and provide behavior change communication (BCC) training to farmers. To date, the ESS Program has reached a total of 107 sucos (villages).

From January to March 2014, a total of 5,189 (41% female) participated in the BCC trainings bringing the total to 15,362 farmers trained. Amongst farmers receiving BCC training, 80% of them used vouchers to purchase silos. During this reporting period, a total of 4,152 farmers (39% female) purchased silos. The total number of outstanding vouchers (distributed but not yet claimed) is 387. This is likely because recipients need additional time to gather their cash contribution.

An additional 1,654 GrainPro bags were purchased by farmers

In addition to the silos, farmers bought 1,654 Grain Pro bags. Most were purchased by farmers in tandem with the large opening silos (75kg size). As previously reported, the program requires that large opening silos bought with vouchers are bundled with GrainPro bags. To date a total of 3,054 bags have been sold.

⁴ The total number of beneficiaries reached from the pilot (41,429 individuals) plus total number of individuals benefitting from the expansion to date (calculated from total households accessing the storage system and/or trained in BCC multiplied by average number of household members = 8,680 x 6,2 = 53,816)

⁵ Indicators have been adjusted based on the expansion proposal

⁶ This refers to Sele, the introduced maize variety by the government Seeds of Life program

⁷ Calculated based on cumulative number of households trained through previous reporting period (for an estimated total of 10,173 farmers) plus farmers trained during this reporting period (5,189)

⁸ The cumulative of 7,145 as reported in the previous quarter plus an additional of 4,152 individuals from this reporting period

Business Management and Market Activities

To assist manufacturers and retailers in marketing the new storage system, ESS developed a brand, “SILO” [locally pronounced as ‘see-lo’] with a tagline of “*Fatin Fini Foun!*” which literally means “New Seed Storage”. The brand was developed in consultation with all partners, manufacturers and retailers. Stakeholders decided the name “SILO” was catchy—and there is no specific term for silo in Tetun, the local language.

In February, as part of the promotion process with blacksmiths, Mercy Corps and CRS provided all blacksmiths and kiosks with a branded signboard. In addition, ESS also provided a bookkeeping book so that each blacksmith could record expenditures, revenue and income on a monthly basis as well as calculate income before and after the project.

Since the last reporting period, the ESS team has started to focus on market promotion to encourage farmers to buy silos directly from blacksmiths. Promotion events were held in local markets in different districts led by local NGO partners. During this reporting period, 6 events were facilitated. In most markets, these events resulted in only few sales to the farmers. A relatively successful market event was led by Kolega da Paz in Lautem where a band was hired to attract an audience and key officials, such as the District Administrator and MAF Director, were involved in the promotion. At this event, 48 silos were sold directly to farmers. It should also be noted that due to this promotion, 160 silos were purchased by Germany’s GIZ who distributed them to farmers engaged in their program. Despite this success, the ESS team realized that this kind of promotion is too expensive and time consuming, and does not really develop the market system.

Based on strategic internal ESS team discussions, the team will focus more on developing linkages between blacksmiths and retailers/kiosks, while promotional activities will be developed and delivered to kiosks to support them as points of sale. TV and radio ads are in development, meanwhile market events will be adapted to promote storage systems sold through kiosks, rather than directly by the manufacturers (except in areas immediately near blacksmiths’ locations).

In addition, the ESS Program is now starting to support interested blacksmiths to diversify their products by facilitating sharing of different product samples. The product diversification includes water tanks, different buckets, storage specifically for rice and beans, a simple cooler box-with Styrofoam inside, etc.

Quarterly Coordination Meetings

Blacksmiths Coordination Meetings. In March, a one-day meeting was held with the blacksmiths and local partner staff at the CRS Baucau office to discuss successes and to identify obstacles and potential solutions. During this meeting, ESS staff shared the updated figures on total silo sales and emphasized the need to maintain high quality silo production to ensure customer satisfaction and also to increase production to



A market event in Maliana

meet demand from new kiosks as well as the ESS program target. At the meeting it was also explained that no blacksmith had exclusive selling rights to a specific area, as previously some blacksmiths had been under the impression that they had a monopoly on certain geographical areas. This was largely accepted as some blacksmiths were unable to meet local area demands and other blacksmiths were able to produce a surplus, thus allowing free sale of silos to meet beneficiary needs promotes healthy competition. The blacksmith-to-blacksmith meeting was very successful in promoting sharing and helping identify additional support needs, including record keeping tools to monitor expenses and revenue.

After the meeting, the ESS team facilitated a visit to the blacksmith workshop in Wainiki-Baucau to learn more about its business model and how it ensures silo quality. The Wainiki-Baucau blacksmith was selected for a site visit as he is the blacksmith that trained many of the other blacksmiths under the project.

Partners Coordination Meeting. Both Mercy Corps and CRS conducted coordination meetings with their local NGO partners this quarter. In January, CRS held a local partner quarterly meeting to share progress made, identify obstacles faced and offer recommendations to improve program communication. Mercy Corps conducted a series of separate meetings in February 2014 with IMM in Same, Manufahi and OHM in Maliana, Bononaro.

CRS and Mercy Corps staff held a quarterly meeting on March 14, 2014 in Dili to review successes and obstacles encountered during program implementation. CRS and Mercy Corps staffs are in constant communication to ensure programmatic synergies.

OFDA Visit and USAID Expo

In March, OFDA Representative Harlan Hale visited ESS sites in Bobonaro, Ermera, Baucau and Lautem districts, in coordination with FAO and IOM. During the visit, the team highlighted the uptake of the silos and the institutional strengthening efforts Mercy Corps and CRS are doing with their partners and the silo manufacturers.

CRS and Mercy Corps also showcased the ESS Program as part of the USAID Expo held in Dili's Timor Plaza on March 15. Silos and other blacksmith products were displayed during this expo together with exhibitions from 17 other USAID projects. More than a thousand visitors, including many families, found out about the breadth of the U.S. partnership with Timor-Leste in the areas of security, economic growth, health, and democracy and governance.

Monitoring and Evaluation

CRS and Mercy Corps have been developing a beneficiary feedback survey that will be administered in May 2014. Regular meetings continue with partners and blacksmiths to ensure reporting is accurate and complete. Both Mercy Corps and CRS M&E Officers conducted thorough cross checks of beneficiary voucher and silo distribution lists to verify accuracy. CRS hosted a TDY to assist the ESS M&E Officer to review the data collection and reporting workflow, review data collection forms, and develop a simple database system and other M&E relevant materials.

From the Field (1)

Sebastiao Ximenes, a 38-year old male, has a family of five and lives in Queliboro-Uai, Uma-Ana-Ico-Venilale of Baucau district. Sebastiao attended the Behavior Change and Communication (BCC) training as part of the ESS Program. He was very impressed by the seed-storage specific training and expressed that he looks forward to use his newly acquired knowledge. He acknowledged farmers have needed this sort of information for a long time. Sebastiao plants 2 hectares of maize every planting season, however, he routinely loses many of his seed stores, and buys from the local market in order to fulfill his planting needs.



Sebastiao had a severe problem with seed loss every year. Even though he stored seed from each harvest, it was hard to guarantee the quality as traditional storage methods (i.e. in husk and hanging in the trees) resulted in insect infestation, fungus growth and rodent attacks. Things changed after he attended the BCC training conducted by Caritas Diocese Baucau. Following the training, Sebastiao hopes he will no longer need to purchase seed as he knows how to select seeds and mitigate loss—he stated that this project is good in promoting more effective alternatives to traditional practices.

From the Field (2)

Alberto Laca-Bere, a 47-year old and father of 6 children, is one of the ESS-supported local silo manufacturers. He lives and produces silos and other metal-based products in Manapa, Kailaku, Bobonaro.

He started producing silos in 2008 after receiving technical training from FAO through their silo project. However his silo production stopped in 2010 when the FAO project finished. Now, with support from ESS, Alberto re-established his workshop and has developed linkages with input suppliers as well as retailers to build a sustainable business. Alberto says that the silo business is booming, and that demand continues to grow. **“The community here really needs these silos to keep the grain and seeds they produce and there are a lot of villages that haven't accessed them yet,”** he says.



It was Alberto who provided a ‘clue’ to ESS staff on the need for blacksmiths to diversify products to sustain business. **“In addition to making silos, I also produce other metal-based products, like buckets, watering cans, water tanks, and others,”** he added.