



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

**Quarterly Report  
October to December 2013**



Insert: A monitoring visit by Mercy Corps staff to one of the ESS beneficiaries

<b>Country Contact</b>	<b>Headquarters Contact</b>	<b>Program Summary</b>	
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		Start Date	11 August 2011
		End Date	11 February 2015
		Report Date	30 July 2013
		OFDA obligated amount	US\$ 1,497,501

## 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 for the majority of farmers in this area and poor seed quality results in a high percentage of post-harvest seed loss. 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.

The ESS program successfully introduced effective post-harvest seed storage solutions to 3,120 rural farmers in 4 sub-districts. Based on the success of the program 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 easily scaled up through the currently supported manufacturers. This report provides a summary of activities implemented during the period of October to December 2013.

## Performance Summary

<b>Sector:</b> Agriculture and Food Security	<b>Objective:</b> 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 <sup>1</sup> IDPs: 0	Expansion: 56,637 <sup>2</sup>	Amount Spent US\$ 810,665.73	
Geographic Area (s)	At least 10 out of 13 districts of Timor-Leste			
<b>Sub-Sector: Seed System Security</b>				
<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 <sup>3</sup>
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural inputs activities, by sex	0	240,000	56,637 <sup>4</sup> (33% female)	January 2014
Additional Indicators <sup>5</sup>				

<sup>1</sup> 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)

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 3

<sup>3</sup> July 2013 represents the program baseline. Progress updates will be available following the program end-line.

<sup>4</sup> The total number of beneficiaries reached from the pilot (41,429 individuals) plus total number individual benefited from the expansion to date (calculated from total household accessed the storage system and/or trained on BCC multiplied by average number of household members = 3,491 x 6,2 = 21,644)

<sup>5</sup> Indicators have been adjusted based on the expansion proposal

Percentage of beneficiaries reporting decreased post-harvest losses for seeds	93% for improved variety <sup>6</sup> 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	10,173 <sup>7</sup> (40% female)	January 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	7,145 <sup>8</sup> (44% female)	January 2014

## Sector Summary

Focus activities during this reporting period were: community-based implementation, program and manufacturer coordination, and kiosk identification and support.

*An additional 2,599 farmers have accessed silos as a result of the community mobilization, behavior change communication training and voucher distribution*

From October through December 2013, Mercy Corps and CRS continued to work with local partner organizations to increase community mobilization and provide behavior change communication (BCC) training in a total of 65 sucos (villages). The trainings are held in communities by local partner staff, often accompanied by Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) Suco Extension Officer. During this period, 3,491 farmers (2,081 male and 1,410 females) participated in the BCC trainings bringing the total to 10,173 farmers trained (40% female). Once trainings are completed, farmers determine if they would like to purchase a silo and they receive a voucher for its purchase if they are committed to providing a contribution of \$3.00 for a 35kg silo or \$6.00 for a 75Kg silo and \$4.00 for a GrainPro bag. The pricing has now been modified so that farmers purchasing a 75Kg silo must contribute \$10.00 as the Silo and GrainPro bag are sold as a package.

Blacksmiths are available within the community at the end of training to sell silos with vouchers and the complete cash contribution. They are also available for farmers to redeem their vouchers at a later point at their shops. The participating blacksmiths have assumed all responsibility for silo transportation and costs. Further data is being collected on the total costs and revenue of the blacksmiths in order to ensure their profit margins are adequate with the current pricing, but initial feedback from blacksmiths suggest that costs are manageable. During this reporting period, 2,599 farmers (1,525 male and 1,074 female) used vouchers to purchase silos, bringing the total to 7,145 (44% female). An additional 226 vouchers have been distributed to farmers who intend to purchase but need additional time to gather their contribution.

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

<sup>7</sup> Calculated from number of households (HHs) trained up to previous reporting period (6,682 farmers) plus trained farmers during this reporting period (3,491 farmers)

<sup>8</sup> The total number of 4,546 as reported previously plus additional of 2,599 households from this reporting period

### *An additional 400 GrainPro bags were accessed (in tandem with the introduced silos)*

As reported previously, Mercy Corps has successfully linked Loja Agricultura, an input supplier in Dili with GrainPro Inc. in the Philippines for making the GrainPro bags available in the country. The bags are used either alone as a container or combined as an internal container within a sturdier outer container. The first purchase of 400 bags was done by the Loja Agricultura and has been marketed through the blacksmiths and their sales networks. In November 2013, the supplier procured another shipment of 400 bags that were then sold to farmers through blacksmiths (bundled with the large opening 75kg silo).

Following this, 600 bags were ordered to meet forecasted demand, however there was a delivery problem encountered by GrainPro Inc. that resulted in delay in the order's shipment. As a result, the program allowed the sale of 75Kg silos without the GrainPro bags. The BCC training emphasizes that it was essential to use the 75Kg silo with an internal hermetically sealed container, such as recycled water bottle. As providing farmers with the 75Kg Silo without the Grainpro bag presents a risk of farmers using the silo without hermetic seal, it is now required that each 75Kg silo be sold with a GrainPro bag. Although there are still delays in availability of GrainPro bags, a coordinated mechanism has been developed to ensure adequate supplies in the future. With this new system, district retailers and blacksmiths send bi-weekly or monthly SMSs on existing stocks and expected demand to the Dili-based suppliers to better forecast ongoing demand and needs.

### *Mercy Corps and CRS quarterly coordination meeting was conducted*

CRS and Mercy Corps staff are in constant communication to ensure programmatic synergy. A quarterly meeting was held in CRS' Dili office on 27 November 2013 to discuss successes and obstacles of ESS implementation. Successes identified include (i) start-up activities for ESS nation-wide expansion; (ii) start-up assistance for additional 15 manufacturers/blacksmiths nation-wide; (iii) linking Loja Agricultura with GrainPro Inc.; and the (iv) development and implementation of standardized M&E forms. Challenges discussed included improving the demand forecasting for GrainPro bags, local NGO partner staff capacity building (especially on silo quality control), and improving the Household Tracking Sheet form to include voucher recipients' signatures as well as Quality Checklist form to include raw material minimum standard checklists. Following this meeting, program staff provided hands-on training during field visits to local NGO partner staff for performing quality checks on silos and how to fill in revised monitoring forms.

### *Two blacksmiths' coordination meetings were held in Baucau and Dili*

On December 18, 2013, a one-day coordination meeting was held at Mercy Corps' office in Dili and was attended by 11 blacksmiths from the central and western districts (1 blacksmith was absent due to illness) to discuss successes and obstacles, and make any needed modifications to their systems. On November 25, 2013, a similar meeting was held at CRS' Baucau office for the five blacksmiths from the eastern districts. During the meetings, the update on GrainPro bag being standard and mandatory with 75Kg Silo was explained and agreed upon by blacksmiths. Both meetings were very successful for cross sharing amongst blacksmiths and identifying additional support needs, including record-keeping tools to monitor expenses and revenue. Discussions were held and initial ideas developed on market promotion and starting non-voucher sales for new manufacturers. The program will increase its focus on working with blacksmiths to improve marketing and promotion of silos and expects improved results in next quarter. The program team expects that targeting blacksmiths is key to a more market-oriented approach and facilitative role in establishing farmers' sustainable access to affordable silos.

Blacksmiths have created their own mechanisms for transporting materials to their respective locations as currently silo production inputs (especially the particular metal sheeting) are only available in Dili. This includes using public buses and/or hiring vehicles to transport bulk materials. The program continues trying to identify district-based shops to stock materials to simplify input purchasing but current methods are sufficient to continue production.

### *12 kiosks have been identified and three engaged to link with silo manufacturers and Dili suppliers*

As part of market facilitation for the introduced storage systems, Mercy Corps and partners conducted a small survey to identify district- and community-level kiosks to link with silo manufacturers and Loja Agricultura in Dili (for GrainPro bags). The goal of this linkage is that silos and GrainPro bags will be displayed and available for purchase through participating kiosks, ensuring sustainable access to the storage systems.

During this reporting period, 12 kiosks interested in the sale and promotion of silos and GrainPro bags were identified. Three of those kiosks began selling the products, with 18 reported silo sales. Mercy Corps, CRS and partners will work with kiosk owners to improve marketing and increase sales.

### *Proposal modification to include Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILCs) submitted*

In cooperation with CRS, Mercy Corps submitted a proposal for a program modification to include Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILCs) into ESS. This modification will build on the successes of ESS implementation and introduce a SILC component with a set of existing program beneficiaries in at least three target districts to expand access to credit and promote a culture of savings among poor farming households. The inclusion of SILC will be based on CRS' experiences in other countries and built on Mercy Corps' previous work in Timor-Leste. The continued aim of the program is to improve food security and resilience through strengthened seed system security. SILC membership provides savings-led financial services to communities that have little or no access to formal financial services, or where access to formal financial services is limited due to high transaction costs and other entry barriers. In addition to the benefit of increasing financial assets through loans, savings and profit generation, SILCs provide training to group members in new skills such as bookkeeping, savings and lending policies, accountability, and good governance. Mercy Corps and CRS are targeting 1,000 households for this modification.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

CRS and Mercy Corps reviewed the program monitoring and evaluation system during the latest quarterly meeting and identified data collection and monitoring forms requiring modification. CRS and Mercy Corps M&E officers modified the forms and trained local partners and blacksmiths on the modifications. One significant finding was the omission of signatures of program beneficiaries when they receive vouchers and silos. These revisions have improved monitoring of program activities. Monthly meetings are held with partners and blacksmiths to ensure reporting is accurate and complete. Program staff conduct thorough cross checks of beneficiary lists on voucher and silo distribution to verify accuracy. Payment to blacksmiths for vouchers is managed based on verified data.

## **Coordination**

Meetings have been conducted regularly with the district level Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) staff and extension officers for continued selection of new target communities and voucher recipients within the initial target sub-districts and sucos. In keeping with program selection criteria, new target

communities have a high proportion of maize farmers and proximity to blacksmith. Additionally, local leaders are involved in organizing and promoting trainings to farmers within their communities to ensure awareness amongst all community members, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Within each district, CRS, Mercy Corps and local partner organizations participate in and present ESS program updates at MAF-coordinated Harmonization Meetings. During this reporting period, Mercy Corps also presented the program at the Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA) launch workshop in October.



## From the fields

### *Beneficiary Feedback*

Sra. Aquina Monteiro is a 25-year-old woman from Bahalarawain, Viqueque. She is the breadwinner for her family of three. She is a very hard working farmer who is always looking to improve her way of life.

In the past she has experienced many problems with how and where to store her seed from harvest to planting season. She was storing her seed in the traditional method, which is to leave the maize on the cob inside the husk and place above fire place or hanging in trees, or inside of a sack. She had tried many different methods in the hopes it stayed protected for next season. Most years her seed would be infested with weevils, or the cobs saved for seed were not the best quality as she hadn't inspected the seed. She did not know where to gain knowledge on how to best store and protect her seed.

Sra. Aquina Monteiro attended a training conducted by CRS local implementing partner Kolegas de Paz and says that the training was extremely informative and that now she will be able to protect her seed. She was happy that the training not only provided opportunity to learn about silos and how they protect the seed, but also about how to select and dry seed. She purchased a silo, using a voucher, and is now planning on incorporating the new knowledge at harvest this year. She was thankful for the opportunity to participate and considered the training to be very helpful for herself and her community.

**A Photo Story by Mercy Corps' M&E team**



A local kiosk selling silos in Zumalai, Covalima



A farmer carrying silo on bike in Betano, Manufahi



A BCC training



A blacksmith at work



A signboard giving direction to the location of a blacksmith in Holsa, Maliana



M&E staff interviewing a blacksmith in Humboi, Ermera



A silo with mung beans inside