



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

First Quarterly Report

August – December 2011



Traditional Maize Storage in the sheaf as practiced throughout Timor-Leste

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		End Date	11 February 2013
		Report Date	24 January 2012
		Total	US\$ 247,501
		Award	

Executive Summary

During this first quarter of implementation of the Effective Seed Storage in Rural Timor Leste (ESS) project, the country has remained peaceful with no substantial disruption despite predicted tensions due to upcoming parliamentary elections. The recruiting process for staff began in August and selection was finalized in September with all staff members fully on board by December 2011. This quarter the ESS project has been introduced in all target villages and communities have shown enthusiasm to participate. The sensitization meetings included local leaders, both formal and informal, as well as target beneficiaries. Also, a Scope of Work (SoW) has been developed this quarter for an external consultant to conduct a study on seed storage infrastructure in early 2012; however the negotiation process with ADM Institute for the Prevention of Post-harvest Loss at the University of Illinois is still in process given some travel challenges encountered with the initially proposed consultant.

A partnership with Seeds of Life (SoL) was established enabling farmers in the target areas to have access to high quality seeds for informal seed multiplication. Various meetings have been held at the national and district levels with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and with other local government to coordinate program activities and garner support for the project.

Program Overview

The majority of farmers in the target districts of Ainaro and Manufahi in Timor-Leste rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods and are effectively caught in a poverty trap, with poor seed quality and poor storage fundamental to this problem. The continuous use of farm saved seed is leading to reduced yields, and the lack of appropriate on-farm storage results in a high percentage of post-harvest seed loss. These problems, combined with a lack of market access, result in falling incomes for farmers over time. At present, effective storage for seed is not available for the majority of farmers in rural Timor-Leste. Based on the results of an in-depth assessment Mercy Corps is conducting a seed storage program to introduce appropriate and effective post-harvest storage systems, primarily focusing on maize, the main staple crop in Timor-Leste. Through the Effective Seed Storage (ESS) program Mercy Corps is moving away from the distribution/handout model, and implementing a market-led approach to storage that has not been applied in Timor-Leste to-date.

The ESS program is designed to be sustainable by involving local manufacturers to increase access to improved storage systems, linked with capacity building of farmers and extension workers to connect farmers with viable input and output markets. The program complements an existing 3.5 year, \$1.7 million European Commission (EC) funded food security program implemented by Mercy Corps and partners in the two target districts. ESS will fill a critical gap in the ongoing program while benefiting from cost efficiencies and established relationships with farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Performance Summary

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security	Objective Sector: Sustainable post-harvest protection of seeds and grain stocks improving crop production and livelihoods in rural Timor Leste				
Beneficiaries Targeted	27,503 IDPs: 0		Budget	\$247,501	
Beneficiaries Reached	0 IDPs: 0	0% 0%	Amount Spent	\$ 14,404	5.8%
Geographic Area (s)	Ainaro and Maufahi District - Timor Leste				
Sub-Sector: Seed Systems and Agriculture Inputs					
OFDA Indicator	Baseline	Target	Progress (Date)		Last Day of Report Period
1. (Projected) increase in number of months of food self sufficiency due to distributed seed systems/ agricultural inputs for beneficiary families.	Number of months of food sufficiency is 8.1 months	At least 3 months	0		December 30, 2011
2. Number people benefiting from seeds systems/agricultural inputs activities	0	1,560	0		December 30, 2011
Mercy Corps Indicators					
2.1 # of improved storage designs	0	3	0		December 30, 2011
2.2 # of local storage manufacturers trained	0	4	0		December 30, 2011
2.3 # of trainings	0	52	0		December 30, 2011
2.4 # of early adopters	0	1,560	0		December 30, 2011
2.5 # of additional farmers with access to storage solutions	0	3,120	0		December 30, 2011
2.6 % decrease in seed storage losses amongst pilot farmers	0%	50% reduction in seed loss	0		December 30, 2011
2.7 # additional months maize is available in the household as a result of	0	3	0		December 30, 2011

improved storage					
2.8 # of farmers purchasing storage for seed	0	3,120	0		December 30, 2011
2.9 % increase in grain / seed sold by farmers as a result of new storage solutions	0	30%	0		December 30, 2011
2.11 % increase in grain/seed sold by farmers as a result of new storage solutions	0	30%	0		December 30, 2011

Sector Summary/Major Accomplishments

Recruitment

The official start date of the ESS program was August 11, 2011. During the initial start up phase the outgoing Mercy Corps Country Director and the Agriculture/Food Security Program Manager coordinated recruitment and project start-up.

The recruiting process for staff began in August and selection was finalized in September 2011 with all staff members fully on board by December 1, 2011. Ramalho Baretto, an experienced local manager was selected as the Program Coordinator while Augusto Pinto, an agriculturist, was selected as the Program Officer. All the staff have been oriented and introduced to Mercy Corps' operations and financial systems. The outgoing Country Director, Paul Jeffery, left at the end of November 2011 to assume his new post as Mercy Corps Country Director in Indonesia. The new Timor-Leste Country Director was selected internally and will join the team in March 2012.

Program sensitization

The ESS program complements Mercy Corps' existing Sustainable Crop Production, Utilization and Resource Management through Capacity Enhancement (SECURE) program in the two target districts of Manufahi and Ainaro. Through SECURE, Mercy Corps is working with two local NGO partners, Ida Mos Maunfahi (IMM) in Manufahi and Hametin Ita Rai (HIR) in Ainaro. These local NGO partners will also support implementation of ESS. A kick off meeting with the local partners was held on 11 October 2011. During the meeting, the goal and strategy of ESS was explained and a detailed implementation plan was developed with the partners. The partners agreed to start program sensitization at the *suco* (village) level; each Community Mobilizer (of HIR and IMM) in each *suco* conducted sensitization with the assistance of ESS Program Officer. The sensitizations included meeting with local leaders, both formal and informal, as well as meeting with target beneficiaries. Meetings with target groups were carried out during the regular community mobilization process of SECURE, lead by the community mobilizers from the local partner organizations. The sensitization to all target villages was completed this reporting period.

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Preparation for technical assistance

A Scope of Work (SoW) for a consultant to conduct a study on seed storage infrastructure has been developed. The roles and responsibilities of the international consultant will include: (i) to assess existing practices on seed storage and identify international best practices/innovative seed storage options that will contribute to the development of local solutions; (ii) to design and develop sustainable, scalable, farmer seed storage models in Timor-Leste (at least three models of storage); and (iii) to assess existing informal seed market systems.

Mercy Corps is currently still in the negotiation process with ADM institute for post-harvest of the University of Illinois. The ESS team has been communicating with Professor Steven Eckhoff, the head of the center, since August 2011 and is aiming for the consultancy to commence in January 2012. In the event the negotiation process with Professor Eckhoff falls through, Mercy Corps is also investigating other recommended technical resources to fulfill the consultancy.

In addition to this, the team has also collected information on existing seed storage practices and facilities, as well as identifying locally available materials that might be informative for the consultant/study.

Preparation of Training Modules

The Program Officer attended training on post harvest for maize facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Baucau on 15 November 2011. The training covered several topics, including seed selection and post-harvest handling (i.e. drying and measuring moisture content, storage, etc).

The ESS post-harvest training modules for maize and rice have been developed internally, both in Tetum (the local language). However, consultation with extension workers and also testing with the community have not yet been implemented; it is planned to take place after the Christmas and New Year holidays. A one day workshop is planned to do the consultation with extension workers in each district, while the testing will be done subsequently in four existing farmer support groups of the SECURE program.

Cross Cutting Themes

N/A

Monitoring and Evaluation

In accordance with the project implementation target indicators, a Monitoring and Evaluation plan has been developed by the M&E officer based on the log frame indicators. The project has also extracted relevant data from SECURE Baseline Report as the project baseline data (see Annex).

Coordination and Meeting

In September 2011 ESS formed a partnership with Seeds of Life (SoL), a Timor-Leste government initiative supported by the Australian Government to test and introduce several high quality seed varieties for five food crops (maize, rice, peanuts, cassava, and sweet potatoes). Through this partnership, Mercy Corps and SoL agree to support the farmers in the target areas with high quality seeds and support them in implementing informal seed multiplication. SoL committed to provide improved quality seeds to be multiplied by target farmers, as well as training for MC and partner staff. Training on informal seed production was facilitated by SOL in Ainaro on September 13 and 14, and in Betano on September 25. The ESS Program Officer and partner Community Mobilisers were actively involved in this training. Mercy Corps will support implementation in the field, including access to improved seed storage through ESS.

The Dili based Program Coordinator is making frequent trips to the Districts to coordinate sensitization activities, support the local partners and hold meetings with stakeholders, including the extension coordinator in each district. In addition he conducted meetings at the national level with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) to coordinate program activities.

- Meeting with the National Director of Crops and the National Director of Rural Development and Extension Services in MAF. Both National Directors welcomed Mercy Corps as a development partner to implement the ESS in Timor Leste. They have encouraged Mercy Corps to work closely with the MAF Director in Ainaro and Manufahi district. In addition, they proposed that ESS work closely with the head of extension workers to develop activities plans to ensure sustainable access of farmers to this knowledge through the government extension services. MAF outlined that extension workers are lacking experience and skills, therefore they would like Mercy Corps to help provide capacity building training to the extension workers.
- Meeting with District and sub-district administrators in Ainaro and Manufahi. Both district administrators are fully supportive of the program and ready to encourage the MAF director and community leaders and the DFSC (District Food Security Committees) as necessary, to work with Mercy Corps Timor Leste in order to increase food security at the village, sub district and District level.
- Other stakeholder meetings: Mercy Corps is part of the food security working group which meets on a monthly basis. This group consists of NGOs currently implementing food security or related programs in Timor Leste. In addition Mercy Corps also presented ESS to the MAF and development partners' meeting in November 2011. In order to coordinate activities and encourage program collaboration, Mercy Corps has also met with other organizations implementing agriculture and rural development programs, such as GIZ implementing the Rural Development Program (RDP) 2, and Landell Mills implementing RDP 3 in Manufahi as well as CRS, Oxfam and others.

Conclusion

The project start-up went well in this first reporting period. Recruitment of the full ESS team was slightly slower than expected, but this has not hindered overall progress. Baseline data has been established, sensitization has been conducted at the National, District/Sub-District and community level, and relationship-building has commenced with the key stakeholders with whom Mercy Corps will be working.

The next key step is the scoping study on appropriate storage infrastructure, which will be carried out in early 2012.

Success Story

The project is in the start-up phase and there are no relevant success stories to-date.

Annexes:

Baseline Data Effective Seed Storage in Timor Leste Project (ESS)