

# VALUING FARMERS' WORDS AND WISDOM

A Report on Consultation with Farmers



**By La'o Hamutuk**

**Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis**

**August 2011**

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**August 2011**

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## INTRODUCTION

*“We feel that farmers’ lifestyles haven’t changed from the past to the present, that we live like this, on and on just so – and sometimes things get worse,” stated a farmer from Manufahi-Same.*

*“We don’t know what the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is planning, nor so with the [annual Government] Budget. We’ve only heard that the Parliament has approved millions upon millions, but don’t know where all that money’s sunk down to,” said a farmer from Ermera while venting his frustration.*

*“We’re confused now because things aren’t as they usually are – but who do we turn to for an explanation?” said this farmer in Maliana with a heavy heart. “This year the rains haven’t given us time to plant corn; sometimes hunger finds us...”*

These quotes are from a near-two-year consultation that commenced in 2010. This report, ***Valuing Farmers’ Words and Wisdom***, came about via in-depth consultation that *La’o Hamutuk* conducted with rural farmers and communities; it tells of the experiences lived through each day by farmers and communities in rural areas.

All information in this report comes from farmers and their communities. *La’o Hamutuk* has only facilitated this process so their words can reach the highest levels of Government and those non-Government organizations (NGOs) working for Timor-Leste’s development. These farmers speak of many issues and we believe it is difficult to represent absolutely all of Timor-Leste’s farmers’ opinions; however, we have tried to share these opinions with the public, the Government of Timor-Leste, the United Nations and its agencies, donors, international financial institutions, NGOs and all other groups involved in Timor-Leste’s agricultural development process.

### **This report is divided into four parts:**

- I. Farmers’ daily struggles – and their strengths;
- II. Government’s and other institutions’ support for farmers;
- III. Factors now creating difficulties for farmers;
- IV. Some recommendations for Government and institutions working for farmers.

This consultation occurred in the following locations:

#### 1. Ermera district

- ❖ Aldeia Palimanu; Bairru Maudio; Fatukero village; Gleno subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Liquisi, Potete village, Ermera Lama subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Sakoko, Ponilala village, Ermera Lama subdistrict

#### 2. Bobonaro district

- ❖ Aldeia Bereleu; Meligo village; Kailaku subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Raifun-Foho; Raifun-Foho village; Maliana subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Duadero - Goubin; Leolima village; Balibo subdistrict

3. Manufahi district

- ❖ Aldeia Selihasan; Betano village; Same subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Bemetan; Bairru Aidak Laran; Betano village; Same subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Bemetan tasi; Betano village; Same subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Lalika; Betano village; Same subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Babulu; Raimera village; Same subdistrict

4. Oecusse district

- ❖ Aldeia Makelap; Taiboko village, Pante Makasar subdistrict
- ❖ Aldeia Kuateles; Lelaufe village; Nitibe subdistrict

La'ó Hamutuk thanks the farmers, rural communities and local leaders who so graciously shared information with us. We hope this report may improve the work of Government and all other agriculture-related groups so to improve the lives of Timor-Leste's farmers and rural communities.

Sincere thanks,

Dili, 30 August 2011

La'ó Hamutuk Agricultural Team

## I. Farmers' daily struggles – and their strengths

### A. Farmers' struggles

#### 1. Irrigation

- Betano, Same

In the past Indonesian-built irrigation systems supplied enough water for this area's crop fields. In 2010 the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) rehabilitated these systems, but the company contracted to do so removed the Indonesian-era dam and installed a canal running directly from the river where it once stood. Now when the river flows heavily its water carries rocks, sand and branches into the fields and destroys their crops. The local community consequently cannot plant rice and is now without food.



One of Timor-Leste's biggest agricultural problems: broadly spread fields and no water. In Beilaku, Suai district. (Image: LH.)

The community of Aidak-Laran in Betano village has no water for its crops because the

Government-built irrigation canal runs only to another village, Akadiru Oan. Aidak-Laran's crops were destroyed during heavy river flows in 2010 and the community was unable to re-sow their fields for the following two seasons. They have sent a letter to the

Department of Agriculture's office in Manufahi requesting an excavator to help move rocks and sand to resolve this issue, but have not yet received a response. As a result the community cannot tend to their crops because they must depend on the Government to dig irrigation canals – this also applies to a hybrid rice planting pilot project over 50 hectares in Akadiru Oan. The Government also promoted a program called Integrated Crop Management- which uses planting systems based on understanding the interactions between different types of crops and how they grow within particular environments - over 15 hectares in Aldeia Kakeu Lulik; it wasn't successful due to lack of water.

- Aldeia Bereleu-Meligo, Kailaku subdistrict

Farmers here told of their experiences from during the Indonesian occupation until the present. According to them, not much has changed for farmers though some things have improved, and some things have worsened.

One thing that remains problematic for farmers in this area is an inadequate irrigation system. The Government has indeed constructed a dam on the river here, but it is incomplete; during floods water still flows uncontrolled into nearby fields and drives out the area's animals. Having

repeatedly requested assistance from the appropriate Government authorities, affected farmers can only see the Ministries of Agriculture and Public Works shunting responsibility for these issues to each other – while these issues remain unresolved.

## 2. Climate Change

Farmers in all locations consulted for this report are concerned about irregular climate. Heavy rains and river flows in Betano have destroyed all of the area's crops. In Meligo-Kailaku and Goubin, Leolima, farmers said they had not planted corn in 2010 because irregular rains had not allowed them enough time to prepare the ground. Farmers are confused, and do not know what is happening at present.

Farmers in Gleno said much of their rice crops had been flattened to the ground and destroyed from violently heavy rains; this is indeed a saddening situation because nobody from the Government, NGOs or the UN can help farmers face this problem. These farmers said nobody from these organizations had informed them or their communities about climate change – in the end, farmers' production and resulting income has decreased, and famine is now a very real threat.

## 3. Pestilence

Since 2010 the community of Kuateles (within Lelaufe village, Nitibe subdistrict, Oecusse) has had harvests continually fail due to rodent infestation. Upon visiting in July 2011, La'o Hamutuk found these farmers very worried that their upcoming harvest would fail again. They told that rodents would destroy the rice crops as soon as they began to mature, and were painfully aware that no group or individual would help them to thoroughly address the impending famine.



*Raihun Foho, Bobonaro: Although designated market areas exist (in background), locals sell their products at more strategic roadside stalls. (Image: LH.)*

## 4. Inadequate Selling Prices

Farmers have been unhappy for many years at the decreasing selling prices when they bring products to market. Although they've heard of the Povu Kuda Governu Sosa (*People Plant, Government Buys*) program, many farmers have not seen it implemented in their area.

Local rice farmers, for example, must lower their selling prices—and thus, their income—to compete with imported rice subsidized by the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry. In another instance, because coffee companies so markedly determine buying prices, farmers

in Ermera are selling below satisfactory prices and are confused about what a fair price really is for their coffee.

From the farmers' perspectives, the prices they sell for are miniscule compared to the efforts they put in and compared to the costs of basic goods like rice, fuel, sugar and so on.

## **5. Lacking the Means for Production**

Most farmers have their own work tools such as hoes, machetes and picks. The Government, via the MAF, has given further production means such as tractors, machines to thresh and grind rice, machines to help coffee and corn production and those to help fisher folk, as well as seeds, fertilizer and other items of use. According to farmers, however, these tools have not been evenly distributed and farmers in mountain areas remain largely unsupported.

Farmers in Ermera are saddened by the lack of tools to produce coffee. In Aldeia Raifun in Bobonaro district, the community said that their land must not seem of sufficient importance to receive tractors; but that the MAF cannot ignore them and must find ways to help them grow vegetables, raise fish and livestock, and develop local fruit production. This community has delivered a proposal stating as much directly to the Maliana district office, but have not received any response.

## **6. No Prompt Response to the Priorities that Farmers have identified**

The communities of Maudio and Liquisi, in Ermera district, are concerned that the Government is out of touch with their farmers. Liquisi farmers said that they had heard that permanent Government-funded agricultural representatives (known as *estensionistas*) would reside in each village, but had not seen any sign of them so far. A community in Betano sent a letter to MAF district staff requesting an excavator to help shift sand to improve the area's irrigation, but did not receive a response prompt enough to be of use.

In Aldeia Bereleu (Meligo village, in Kailaku subdistrict), locals continually request that the government fix the river dam, which is an ongoing threat to the community's crops and houses, but the Government has not finished its construction. Farmers in Kuateles, Nitibe, did not produce any crops last year and are this year facing a failed harvest to rodent infestation, but there seems to be no-one within Government to give any attention.

The community of Makelap, in Pante Makasar, Oecusse, said a lack of water is their biggest problem, but instead of addressing this problem, the Government built them a new marketplace closer to their homes. This marketplace is not used because there are few buyers there. Some farmers in Gleno told that their land is well-prepared to plant vegetables but that they must buy seeds from stores because they have none of their own and have never received help for this from the Government.

## **B. Farmers' Strengths**

### **1. Ownership of Local Seed Supplies**

Nearly all farmers La'o Hamutuk spoke with said that, as always, they use local seeds for crops such as red, dark and other varieties of rice. Farmers also keep local stockpiles of seeds for other crop types such as corn and string and mung beans in case they're needed in the future.

The Government tried to implement a hybrid seed project in Betano and Kailaku that was unsuccessful for lack of water and because it needed different planting techniques than usual—such as chemical fertilizers and timed irrigation—that were not catered for. Farmers have said that if



their local seeds received as much attention as those in the hybrid program—via decent irrigation and enough fertilizer—the local seeds would yield better results.

Sadly, many farmers aren't aware that hybrid seeds may be planted only once and that their yields cannot be stored for future planting. Farmers shared that they are confused about the different seeds recently distributed to them.

## **2. Ownership of Land**

All farmers hold their own land to grow crops. This basic form of natural wealth is farmers' fundamental requirement to live and prosper.

Yet some in the community of Betano question how the heavy oil power plant may affect their land. Having already given four hectares to the Government for this project, locals have been asked for a further eight hectares; this may become a threat to the community if they lose land used for farming and livestock. They also said they had not been briefed about the negative impacts that chemicals from this plant may cause to their land.

## **3. A Culture of Working Together**

Farmers who shared their words with La'o Hamutuk told of working together in many activities such as ploughing fields, digging irrigation paths, planting and harvesting rice and in many other ways. Communities always support and help each other when members need seeds, food, labor, or to support elders; such cooperation has long happened naturally with Timor-Leste's people.

In the Tetun Terik region of Alas, Manufahi, working together is called *Harosan*; in Tokodede language it's known as *Sululu*; in Iliomar, Lospalos, it's called *Fuli Dai-Dai* – and by many other names in the mother tongues of other communities. Local groups are tightly held together because of their historical, social, cultural and economic connections.

## **4. Local Wisdom**

- **Tara Bandu**

Tara Bandu is the local wisdom and the way communities seek to protect their environment, food, sea, water, animals and other resources. The nature of Tara Bandu differs according to place, but it is a deep-seated force that communities themselves create, control and protect by their own cultural rituals.

- **Seedling Planting Systems**

Farming communities understand the nature of seeds and seedlings to be grown for food, such as different kinds of beans, pumpkins and many others. This knowledge may not increase farmers' production but it does help prevent threats to food crops such as pests.

- **Local medicine**

Rural communities know a great deal about many local medicinal plants. For example, guava leaves can cure an ill stomach, papaya leaves may prevent malaria, the tamarind leaf can cure itchy or irritated skin. Many other medicines exist that haven't yet been researched or well-documented. These local medicines are important alternatives for communities that find it hard to access clinics or hospitals.



- Seed Storage Systems

Communities have their own systems for storing seeds; they know how to protect them from pests and other problems by using long-established local wisdom. For example, tying and hanging harvested corn high on trees stops damage from mice, or storing it inside bamboo prolongs the corn quality.

These traditional practices may have their weaknesses but farmers adapt well to suit their circumstances. In the past, bamboo may have been used as storage, but now tanks or barrels may be more secure; hanging crops from trees has in some cases given way to farmers storing harvests in small silos.

- Understanding of Monsoon and Dry Seasons

Communities have intimate knowledge about these periods and their effects, and use this to determine what crops may be planted when.

- Organic Farming

In the four districts La'o Hamutuk consulted, all farmers stated that they do not use inorganic fertilizers on their crops.

*NGO Haburas Moris members create organic fertilizer with local materials composted with cow manure, rice meal, leaf matter and effective microorganisms (Image: LH)*



- Variety of Work

Farmers have many means to seek food and money. During rainy periods they produce food, while at other times some farmers may work as carpenters, hunters, fishers, laborers or may raise, tend or sell livestock. This system means farmers don't need to depend on one source of income.

## II. Government's support for farmers

Farmers have the right to receive Government support to develop and keep improving their livelihoods. Yet many have still not received adequate support and, often, the help received does not suit their needs.

### A. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' Support for Farmers

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) has supported farmers to increase their production from the time of the first Government in 2002 to the present. This support has come in many forms: by giving large and small tractors, distributing seeds and fertilizer, providing machines to assist with coffee and rice production, and through other means. The MAF has also begun establishing *estensionista* representatives in each village to help farmers increase their production.

Many farmers said they appreciate the Government's support through things like tractors and ploughing machines; but some also worry at having not received tractors of their own. Many are unsatisfied with how this particular program was implemented, as it required farmers to hastily form new groups just to receive their tractors.

Farmers in Ermera expressed concerns that the MAF's policies of distributing tractors do not recognize their real needs. The MAF has given many tractors in Ermera, but they remain unused in front of its Gleno office; most farmers in this area produce coffee and therefore need other support such as a coffee processing machine – the MAF's present support for them is limited at best.



A large tractor intended to help farmers plough their fields.  
(Image: LH)

Most farmers are unsatisfied with the MAF's *estensionista* program; they do not know what the *estensionistas*' role is within their

village. Farmers hope that they can help when problems arise, but this doesn't currently happen. For example: in Kailaku, farmers said they need information about why the monsoon and dry seasons aren't happening as usual; and in Betano farmers need the *estensionistas*' support to improve irrigation – but in both cases such support has not yet come.

Farmers in Betano said the *estensionista* gave greater priority to the MAF's projects such as the hybrid seeds work than to the real needs of the farmers. Farmers from Ermera who spoke with *La'o Hamutuk* said they do not know who their local *estensionista* is because they're yet to receive any support from them.

When asked about support they have received regarding seeds, the majority of farmers said they use only their own local seeds. While the MAF has indeed conducted a hybrid seed program in Betano, it met little success. The MAF gave hybrid seeds to Kailaku farmers in 2009 but found few results; now these communities use their own local seeds. Local farmers feel that their own seeds are more than adequate to produce enough quality crops – and that problems with low yields arise from lack of water for the crops or from rivers whose flows destroy crops during heavy rains.

Farmers said they are yet to receive fertilizer or pesticides from the Government; but they can maintain production because their work is good and fertile land. NGOs have trained some farmers to produce organic fertilizers and pesticides from locally available materials; as one example, in Kailaku, the local NGO Haburas Moris-Maliana has trained farmers.

Many farmers have not yet been trained to develop their own cooperative groups. Most have not joined cooperatives, which can facilitate a process that enables them to improve their own economic positions.

## **B. The Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry: “People Plant, Government Buys” (*Povu Kuda Governu Sosa*)**



Rice imported and sold by the MTCI does not benefit Timorese farmers or the country's economy. (Image: Hasatil)

The *Povu Kuda Governu Sosa* (“People Plant, Government Buys”) program from the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry (MTCI) has received a great deal of attention from farmers. Most farmers *La'o Hamutuk* consulted with spoke enthusiastically about it: they view it as good motivation to work hard and plant more to increase food production – but many are disappointed because *Povu Kuda Governu Sosa* has not been properly implemented in their areas.

One example lies in Bairru Goubin, Leolima-Balibo village, whose farmers produce large amounts of corn and mung beans. Because

the MTCI has not bought from their harvests, farmers must sell in the Atabae or Balibo markets; yet they do not bring much to market because there is no public transport and because the produce they do bring is sold at poor prices. Coffee farmers ask why the Government buys many other products but do not buy coffee, which could potentially improve their selling prices.

The MTCI's subsidized rice program is another that attracts much attention from farmers, who have very different opinions about the program. Many farmers say that cheap rice will be good in times when their own crops do not perform well; yet they also feel that excessive rice imports may decrease selling prices for their own products such as cassava, potatoes and taro. Rice farmers themselves lament that if the MTCI's rice regularly sells cheaply it will weaken their own products' selling prices – and therefore, their own income.

Non-rice-producing farmers generally support the MTCI's program because it makes rice cheaper to purchase. That said, they are unhappy because the rice distribution doesn't happen in areas outside of district capitals or larger towns. According to these farmers, they must therefore buy MTCI rice at inflated prices from middlemen in these towns who hoard the rice before it can be distributed to where farmers live. Some farmers also state that the MTCI's rice import program has made farmers lazy from less incentive to tend their own crops.

### **III. Factors Now Creating Difficulties for Farmers.**

Farmers have the right to be part of the processes that so greatly impact their daily lives. To date, no good way yet exists to acknowledge farmers' wisdom and to support them in becoming important parts of policy discussions and agricultural programs.

The MAF itself currently identifies its own priorities, rather than having them determined by the communities. The MAF considers farmers “consumers” of their programs and has not yet recognized that each community has their own unique situations and problems. There is still no adequate system to hear what farmers have to say and to help the Government effectively improve their programs.

## A. No Consultation or Consideration of Local Wisdom

In 2010 in Betano, the Government renovated the area's irrigation system that had existed since the Indonesian occupation; during this renovation, water destroyed all of the community's paddy fields because the contracted company demolished the existing dam and opened pipelines directly from the river. This situation arose because the Government had not consulted with the community or its farmers who live in the area. The community said that this situation wouldn't have happened if the Government or company had consulted with them in advance, because the community had experienced previous irrigation renovation efforts during the Indonesian occupation, and because locals know the nature of the river whose waters supply the irrigation.

In Maliana locals do not use the mini marketplace structures constructed by the Government and some agencies. They do not use these facilities because they are far from the road, far from the communities whose products are sold there, and because customers do not go there. Some facilities also do not protect sellers from rain or heavy winds. Bearing these things in mind, communities choose to make their own marketplaces.



A La'o Hamutuk staff member consults with farmers selling their products by the roadside (image: LH)

Such situations can arise because the Government thinks it unimportant to involve farming communities in the development process. It could be said that although the Government is speaking with these communities, it does not understand farming issues as it could be. Communities in areas which have experienced problems state that Government agencies mostly liaise with the heads of villages (*sefe suku*) and do not consult the broader community.

This type of thinking is problematic because the people who daily live and work on the land know their land better than the Government or a technical

specialist from elsewhere. This is called local knowledge: such as in understanding how the water level may vary at different points in a particular river as the seasons pass. If, for example, the Government was to build a dam on the river or use it for irrigation, it must speak with and involve in this process the community who lives in the river's area.

Crop-planting systems are another example of local wisdom in action. Farmers do not plant only one type of crop: they plant a variety such as corn, beans, pumpkins, tomatoes, chilies, which makes the crops more resilient to diseases and pests.

## B. Lack of Systems for Giving and Receiving Information to and from Farmers

Through speaking with farmers and direct experience in their four districts it became apparent to La'o Hamutuk that the MAF doesn't have any good system for involving farmers in the agricultural development process. All farmers consulted with stated that they do not know of the MAF's plans each year or about the Government Budget allocations for agricultural sectors. Further, the



*estensionistas* who live together with a community are not functioning well as an arm of the MAF; in fact many farmers know little about what these *estensionistas* are supposed to be doing and they are unconcerned with what they actually are doing.

Agricultural development will not succeed without a system to properly distribute information to farmers and to receive information from farmers. The issue of climate change is one example: if the MAF had such a communication system, it could be better informed about the issues that farmers face from climate change; and farmers could more easily receive information or solutions from the Government about better adapting to such circumstances.

The farmers in Betano became victims of a Government project gone wrong, but they found it very hard to voice their problems at higher levels. As the irrigation renovation project progressed, farmers became concerned at the contracted company's quality of work, but they did not know who to speak with about their concerns. Some farmers have said they do not know who the official MAF representative is for their district.

How the Government communicates to and receives information from farmers is truly important. With greater access to information, farmers can feel ownership of the process of agricultural development on their own lands. If farmers feel they are more involved in this process, they will take on greater responsibility.

When the Government listens to farmers, its actions on the ground will surely better correspond to farmers' needs. Many Government-built fish market buildings, for example, still aren't used because the Government did not consult well with fisher folk. To meet the real needs in communities, the Government must consult well before projects relating to market areas, irrigation and other infrastructure projects. The community of Raifun-Foho earns a living selling their products by the roadside because their main customers are travelers on the road from Maliana; there is a market 100 meters off the main road, but the vendors don't use it because their customers don't use it.

### C. Unfavorable Market Conditions and Infrastructure

There are many reasons why farmers have difficulty accessing markets and finding a good price for their products. In every place *La'o Hamutuk* consulted farmers worry about costly public transport and poor road quality, both of which influence each other: bus and mikrolet drivers don't want to drive on poor-quality roads, and those that do charge high rates to pay for their vehicles' maintenance.



Goat droppings fill this market building in Meligo, Kailaku, because its community doesn't use it. (Image: LH)

Coffee farmers from Ermera told *La'o Hamutuk* that they are worried about the coffee market. Companies—rather than farmers—determine selling prices, and most of the farmers' product is sold as unprocessed beans. Farmers do not have the means to process their own coffee beans in order to sell directly and at a better price to domestic and international customers. Farmers in Betano find it hard to access markets because they are far away and transport is very costly. Many farmers in Maliana simply sell their products by the roadside.

These situations are worsened by the fact that the Government does not control the market; the markets are flooded by imported products and there is no protection or promotion of domestic agricultural products.

#### **D. Misunderstanding Farmers' Means of Production**

Most farmers who spoke with *La'o Hamutuk* see the benefits of Government programs that support their means of production. The problems which have arisen and continue to arise stem from the means of production support not meeting the farmers' actual needs or the conditions in which they work – such as many farmers in Ermera who need coffee processing machines more than they do tractors, or farmers in Raifun-Foho (Bobonaro district) who work hilly land that is unsuitable for some of the Government's programs. The Government also needs to give farmers a clearer understanding of the seed types distributed by the Government as well as donors such as the UN and NGOs.

#### **E. Lack of Integrated Capacity Building for Farmers**

This report's consultation shows that the Government of Timor-Leste—via the MAF—does not yet have clearly defined capacity-building programs for farmers, particularly related to their livelihoods. *La'o Hamutuk* has identified topics for training that farmers need but haven't yet received, including: organic fertilizers and pesticides, implementing standardized production processes, small-business and financial management and marketing practices.

Without this training, farmers' lives will not change much and they will be forced to depend on the state as well as on in-organic farming practices (those dependent on chemicals); this is an important issue because it will lead to dependence on international companies and their imports that will increase year-upon-year. Farmers in the four districts consulted also want to learn about climate change and how they can adapt to its impacts; at this point no training has been given to them.

### **IV. Recommendations**

Farmers and rural communities want to feel that they are the owners of development on their land. They want the Government to come listen to them and resolve problems together; they want the Government to respect Timor-Leste's natural wealth and local knowledge, and for it to help develop this wealth. Farmers and rural communities want a Government that is with them. The following few recommendations give more specific ideas that arose during consultation with farmers and rural communities:

**1. Infrastructure.** When building or repairing infrastructure that is on or near agricultural lands, the proponent must accurately study in detail such projects' potential impacts; this includes irrigation and aquaculture infrastructure, dams, marketplaces and many other types. Governments and donors have the duty and right to demand that companies work to acceptably high standards so that they need not spend money year after year on repairing or redeveloping such infrastructure.

**2. Material Support.** A Government or non-Government agency must ensure that the support its programs give will benefit farmers before the programs are implemented. The Government or another agency must also train farmers to use, maintain and repair damaged machinery or to address other technical problems that may arise within such programs.

**3. Local Seeds.** The Government must create policies and make laws to protect domestic seeds and allocate enough money to protect and promote local seeds and those long-established in Timor-Leste; it should establish a seed bank to store the country's local seeds. La'o Hamutuk is concerned that the Seeds of Life program is only propagating non-local seeds and doesn't have a plan to promote local seeds within Timor-Leste.

**4. Organic Agriculture.** The Government must promote organic fertilizers and pesticides and train *estensionista* to help farmers use them. Organic fertilizers and pesticides are good for the natural environment and people's health, and enable farmers to not depend on chemical products sold by companies.

**5. Diversified Income Sources.** The Government must enable farmers to diversify their income sources by training them in other activities such as food processing, animal breeding and business.

**6. Local Products.** The Government must make laws to protect and promote local products, and create systems for distributing local products within Timor-Leste. We recommend prioritizing Timor-Leste's internal needs, and that local products only be exported when there is a domestic surplus. Domestic production quality also requires much attention.

**7. Stop Importing Rice.** We recommend that the Government stops importing rice via the MTCI. It should shift its focus to the Ministry of Social Solidarity's social assistance program that will help identify which of Timor-Leste's people genuinely need help to access subsidized rice.

**8. Government Subsidized Plan.** The MTCI must integrate the *Povu Kuda Governu Sosa* program within other ministries such as the MAF, the Ministry of Economy & Development and Ministry of Infrastructure. The MTCI must identify the products that come from all villages in Timor-Leste, identify each village's needs and plan to effectively distribute these products to domestic markets and international ones when a surplus permits.

**9. Extension Program.** The Government must train and enable the *estensionista* to use efficient technologies that are effective specifically for the locations where they work.

**10. Climate Change.** In-depth research is needed about climate change's impacts to farmers; Timor-Leste's farmers must know the scale of impacts they face and how they and agricultural sectors must adapt. We recommend the Government base such adaptation measures on the resources that local farmers can access themselves, and that any modern technology used is appropriate and not destructive to the natural environment.



### Photos from District Consultations



Consulting with farmers in Aldeia Kuateles, Lelaufe village, Nitibe subdistrict of Oecusse – on the border between Timor-Leste and Indonesia (image: LH).



Irrigation systems in Kuateles that were built during the Indonesian occupation still greatly benefit locals, but the Timor-Leste Government needs to fix them further (image: LH).



Mr. Anton, a farmer from Kuateles, has six hectares of corn and rice that mice fully destroyed along with other nearby crops (image: LH).



Women of all ages are also part to the land, and the Government must listen to them. From Aldeia Makelap, Taiboko village, Pante Makassar subdistrict, Oecusse district (image: LH).



Farmers plant corn, rice and other crops during the monsoon season. If they had adequate irrigation they needn't wait for them to plant. From Makelap, Oecusse (image: LH).



Local rice seeds that communities in Oecusse have used for countless generations. The MAF supported Seeds of Life to test many foreign seeds, but there is yet to be any research about the characteristics of local seed types or how to conserve and protect them from becoming lost (image: LH).

**Photos from District Consultations**



The community of Raifun-Foho sells their products by the roadside; they do not use the marketplace built by CARE International because it is too far from the main road (image: LH).



Community members from Aldeia Bereleu, in Meligo village (Kailaku subdistrict) share their thoughts with La'o Hamutuk (image: LH).



A consultation with a Betano-based group from the HAK Association, including young people and community leaders (image: LH).



Women's voices are also important for agricultural development – pictured are women from Betano in consultation with La'o Hamutuk (image: LH).



Some farmers and community members find it difficult to leave their work to attend meetings; bearing this in mind, La'o Hamutuk tried to conduct consultations at or near their places of work. Pictured is a consultation in Aldeia Babulu,



A consultation in Aldeia Liquisi, Potete village, Ermera district: farmers and local cooperative coordinators are concerned that policies towards tractor and solar panel distribution and *estensionista* do not correspond to farmers' needs (image: LH).