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Parseria Foun ba Era Foun: Soberania, Seguransa no Estratéjia iha Mundu ne'ebe Mudansa

Fundasaun Mahein, 5 Mar 2026

Introdusaun

Iha loron 28 Janeiru 2026, Governu Timor-Leste ho Governu Austrália asina Parseria Foun ba Era Foun ("New Partnership for a New Era"), akordu bilateral komprensivu ida ne'ebé kobre kooperasaun ba dame no seguransa, kolaborasaun ekonómika no relasaun povu-ba-povu ("people-to-people"). Akordu ne'e mosu hafoin Timor-Leste tama ofisialmente ba Asosiasaun Nasaun Sudéste Aziátiku (ASEAN), no iha tempu ne'ebé tensaun jeopolítika global aumenta ba beibeik. Parseria ne'e refleita mudansa boot ida iha relasaun bilateral entre nasaun rua ne'e, no mós sai hanesan resposta estratéjika ida ba presaun rejional ne'ebé muda no prioridade dezenvolvimentu nasionál.

Artigu ida ne'e analiza oinsá Parseria ne'e liga ho integrasaun Timor-Leste nian iha ASEAN no dinamika seguransa no jeopolítika iha Indo-Pasífiku. Artigu ida ne'e mós avalia oportunidade no risku sira ne'ebé Parseria ne'e lori ba soberania, governasaun no seguransa ekonómika Timor-Leste nian.

FM nota katak durante preparasaun artigu ida ne'e, konflitu militar aumenta maka'as envolve Estadus Unidus Amérika, Israel no Iráun. Konsekuénsia jeopolítika no ekonómika husi konflitu ida ne'e seidauk klaru; maibé, bele kria impaktu boot tebes ba merkadu enerjia, seguransa no estabilidade global. Maske artigu ida ne'e hakerek iha kontestu inserteza global, análiza ne'e foka liu ba implikasaun rejional Parseria no relevánsia ne'e ba soberania, governasaun no parseria externa Timor-Leste nian. FM sei kontinua monitoriza situasaun internasionál no sei fó análize atualizadu kona-ba implikasaun sira ba seguransa no envolvimentu rejional Timor-Leste.

Parseria iha Kontestu: Husi Kooperasaun Bilateral ba Integrasaun Rejional

Ba Timor-Leste, atu sai membru ASEAN fó benefísiu jeopolítiku no institusionál importante, hanesan haluan soberania diplomátika Timor-Leste, integra nasaun ne'e iha arkitetura rejional ne'ebé bazeia ba regra, no estabelese padraun no norma foun ba governasaun iha área oi-oin. Parseria ne'e koloka kooperasaun bilateral entre Austrália no Timor-Leste diretamente iha kontestu ASEAN ne'e. Deklarasaun konjunta husi governu rua reafirma Austrália nia apoiu ba Timor-Leste nia prioridade relasiona ho ASEAN no kooperasaun ne'ebé alinha ho prinsipiu inkluzividade no norma sira ASEAN nian. Ida ne'e hatudu katak Austrália haree parseria ho Timor-Leste hanesan komplementar ba mekanizmu governasaun multilateral ne'ebé ASEAN representa.

Ba Timor-Leste, ASEAN fó asesu ba merkadu ne'ebé luan liu no mekanizmu diálogu polítiku no seguransa, no hametin padraun institusionál iha alfândega, regulasaun finanseira, jestaun fronteira no prevensaun krime transnasionál. Parseria ne'e mós envolve kooperasaun barak iha área sira ne'e, ne'ebé bele hametin Timor-Leste nia kapasidade atu halo kooperasaun bilateral ho Austrália no mos partisipa ho masimu iha ASEAN. Maibé, atu Timor-Leste bele hetan benefísiu másimu husi programa sira ne'e, presiza kompromisu polítiku ho durasaun naruk ba reforma institusionál no fortalesimentu kapasidade. Nune'e mos presiza envolvimentu ativa husi ator Timor-oan sira iha dezenhu no implementasaun programa sira atu garante katak ema lokál sai na'in ba prosesu ba tempu naruk (local ownership). Falhansu husi intervensaun doadór iha kontestu frajíl ne'ebé la konsege kria impaktu sustentável fó lisaun importante kona-ba ida ne'e.

Seguransa Ekonómika: Sunrise, Infraestrutura no Dezenvolvimentu Humanu

Dimensaun ekonómika Parseria ne'e kritiku tebes, liu-liu tanba nesesidade urjente Timor-Leste nian atu halo transformasaun ekonómika estrutural ne'ebé garante sustentabilidade fiskál Estadu nian no kria oportunidade servisu formal ba populasaun ne'ebé kontinua aumenta.

Deklarasaun konjunta reafirma kompromisu atu aselera dezenvolvimentu rekursu mina no gaz Greater Sunrise, projetu ida ne'ebé inklui ona iha planu dezenvolvimentu nasionál maibé hetan atrazu boot tanba disputa polítika durante tempu naruk. Parseria ne'e mós envolve estabelesimentu Fundu Infraestrutura ida ne'ebé simu 10% husi reseita *upstream* bainhira konseitu dezenvolvimentu hetan ona provasaun, ne'ebé sei finansiadu husi parte Austrália nian.

Aspetu sira ne'e hatudu mudansa importante iha relasaun ekonómika entre nasaun rua ne'e, liu-liu tanba istória difísil negosiasaun kona-ba dezenvolvimentu mina no fronteira marítima. FM apresia aproximasaun konstrutivu husi governu rua ne'e atu rezolve disputa ne'ebé prejudika relasaun bilateral durante tempu naruk. Iha prátika, projetu Greater Sunrise, maske balun iha preokupasaun kona-ba viabilidade finanseira no impaktu ambientál, iha potensial ekonómiku boot ba Timor-Leste, tantu ba reseita Estadu nian no dezenvolvimentu industriál iha rai laran.

Aleinde ne'e, se fundu infraestrutura governa ho transparénsia, planifikasaun klaru no mekanizmu responsabilidade, fundu ne'e bele alinha ho reseita mina no gaz ho prioridade konektividade nasionál no promove diversifikasaun ekonómika.

Primeiru-Ministru Austrália mós anúnsia Pakote Kooperasaun Ekonómika ne'ebé aloka $80 miliaun ba dezenvolvimentu setor privadu no $220 miliaun ba Inisiativa Dezenvolvimentu Humanu. Programa mobilidade traballu (*labour mobility*) no formasaun téknika no vokasionál mós sei aumenta. Karik programa dezenha atu garante lokál sai nain (local ownership), inisiativa sira ne'e bele hametin reziliénsia Timor-Leste iha tempu naruk liu husi haforsa *skill*, apoiu empreendedorizmu lokál no promove kresimentu setor produtivu.

Kooperasaun Seguransa iha Ambiente Jeopolítiku no Krime Kompleksu

Pilar Parseria kona-ba dame no integrasaun rejional inklui kooperasaun iha seguransa sibernetika, krime transnasionál, seguransa marítima, kontrolu fronteira no migrasaun. Área sira ne'e relevante tebes ba interese Timor-Leste no liga mós ho ameasa seguransa rejional ne'ebé muda dadaun hela.

Seguransa sibernetika, partikularmente, sai preokupasaun bo'ot ne'ebé aumenta, liu-liu tanba alegasaun "investimentu estranjeiru kriminal" ne'ebé liga ho sentru fraude siber iha Oecusse. Sentru atividade kriminal sira ne'e aumenta ba beibeik iha Sudéste Aziátiku no Pasífiku no provoka resposta husi governu rejional sira. Foin iha Fevereiru, PNTL halo operasaun no detén ema estranjeiru na'in 18 ne'ebé deskonfia envolve iha atividade jogu online ilegal, ne'ebé hatudu katak krime siber transnasionál kontinua sai dezafiu ba Timor-Leste.

Maski Parseria la uza termu "investimentu estranjeiru kriminal" klaramente, akordu nia foku ba kapasidade sibernetika no koordenasaun lei no ordem bele interpreta hanesan resposta ba risku sira ne'e. FM durante tempu naruk halo advokasia ba investimentu boot liu iha kapasidade siber ajénsia seguransa Timor-Leste sira nian. Kooperasaun internasionál esensial, maibé tenke halo balansu ho soberania nasionál no kestaun *local ownership*. Programa sira tenke haforsa autoridade Timor-Leste nia kapasidade rasik atu deteta no responde ameasa, atu nune'e reduz dependénsia ba asistensia husi liur.

Iha área seguransa marítima, kooperasaun tenke alinha ho prioridade nasionál no haforsa kapasidade soberanu. Vijilánsia marítima no kapasidade buska no salvasaun importante atu proteje peska, infraestrutura enerjia offshore no rekursu tasi sira seluk. Peska ilegal no la reguladu ameasa seguransa ambiental no ekonómika, no afeta komunidade peskador no rekursu mariñu ne'ebé importante ba turizmu. Iha mos evidénsia katak tasi Timor-Leste sai fatin ba tráfiku umanu no kontrabandu seluk, ne'ebé presiza kapasidade seguransa marítima ne'ebé forte liu.

Kontestu Indo-Pasífiku ne'ebé Muda

Indo-Pasífiku sai arena importante ba kontestasaun jeopolítika global, ho kompetisaun ne'ebé sai maka'as liu tán entre estadu bo'ot sira. Situasaun ida ne'e kria dezafiu no oportunidade ba estadu ki'ik sira. Iha kontestu ida ne'e, postura estratéjika Austrália afeta persepsaun iha rejiaun kona-ba nia parseria bilateral, inklui AUKUS no investimentu ba kapasidade defeza domestika. Timor-Leste, hanesan vizinhu besik Austrália ho ligasaun povu-ba-povu ne'ebé forte, tenke garante katak kooperasaun ne'e la limita ita nia doutrina diplomátika "Friends with All" no autonomia estratéjika ne'ebé ita atinje liu husi sakrifisiu barak.

Ba FM, Parseria ne'e la hatudu presaun atu hili "ekipa" iha rivalidade entre estadu boot sira. Parseria fó instrumentu atu hametin kapasidade soberanu Timor-Leste iha sistema multipolar rejional. Diversifikasaun parseria externa, inklui ASEAN, instituisaun multilateral, parseiru dezenvolvimentu no investidor privadu sira, kontinua sai estrajia ne'ebé prudente. Parseria afirma klaru estrutura no norma multilateral sira hanesan Konvensaun Nasoins Unidas kona-ba Lei Tasi (UNCLOS), kompromisu ba lei internasionál no apoiu ba sentralidade ASEAN, konsistente ho estratejia refere. Maibé, karik balun iha rai-laran ka iha nivel internasionál konsidera kooperasaun bilateral hanesan alinhamentu ho kampu jeopolítiku ida de'it, ida ne'e bele limita espasu manobra diplomátika Timor-Leste nian. Atu evita situasaun ida ne'e, Governu tenke esplika ho klaru oinsá Parseria apoiu prioridade nasionál sira no la limita autonomia nasionál.

Oportunidade no Risku ba Timor-Leste

Parseria fó oportunidade no risku oi-oin, liu-liu iha kontestu tensaun jeopolitika no ameasa seguransa ne'ebé muda. Relasiona ho oportunidade sira, FM hare katak Parseria ne'e oferese oportunidade barak, inklui haforsa kapasidade institusionál liu husi apoiu tékniku, liu-liu iha área seguransa sibernetika no seguransa marítima; seguransa ekonómika liu husi dezenvolvimentu Greater Sunrise, estabelesimentu fundu infraestrutura, apoiu ba setor privadu no inisiativa dezenvolvimentu humanu; no mós apoiu ba integrasaun iha ASEAN, ne'ebé bele ajuda Timor-Leste atu hetan benefísiu boot liu husi nia partisipasaun iha organizasaun rejional ne'e.

Risku sira inklui dependénsia ba apoiu tékniku Austrália se kapasidade la dezenvolve ho lideransa lokál, no persepsaun katak Timor-Leste "hili ekipa" iha rivalidade entre Xina ho Estadu alinhadu ho Oksidente. Primeiru risku ne'e hanesan problema baibain ne'ebé mosu iha asistensia dezenvolvimentu iha jeral, no Timor-Leste iha esperiénsia naruk ona. Risku daruak ne'e relevante tebes iha ambiente estratéjiku rejional ne'ebé sai kompetitivu liu, tanba bele hafraku esforsu sira ne'ebé lideransa polítika Timor-Leste halo dezde independénsia atu konsolida soberania nasionál. Opozisaun polítika iha rai laran kona-ba parseria esterna mós bele afeta politika nia koerénsia, maibé FM haree konsensu elite Timor-oan kona-ba estratejia diversifikadu hamenus risku ida ne'e.

Fundasaun Mahein reafirma katak parseria tenke haforsa kapasidade no soberania nasionál, no la bele substitui sira. Parlamentu Nasionál, sosiedade sivil no instituisaun independente sira sei iha papél importante atu monitoriza implementasaun Parseria no garante interese nasionál.

Konkluzaun

Parseria Foun ba Era Foun marka pasu importante ida iha relasaun entre Timor-Leste no Austrália, vizinhu besik ho istória ne'ebé kompleksu. Parseria ne'e mosu iha momentu ne'ebé situasaun rejional no global muda lalais, inklui integrasaun iha ASEAN no dezafiu seguransa ne'ebé kompleksu tebes. Karik Parseria ne'e implementa ho transparénsia ho intensaun ne'ebé estratéjiku no klaru, FM fiar katak parseria bele apoia prioridade dezenvolvimentu nasionál Timor-Leste no nia partisipasaun iha rejiaun. Dezafiu prinsipal mak atu garante katak Parseria ne'e hametin soberania, haforsa governasaun no aselera dezenvolvimentu ne'ebé justu no inkluzivu, tuir aspirasaun sira ne'ebé hakerek iha Konstituisaun no planu dezenvolvimentu nasionál.

Iha Indo-Pasífiku ne'ebé sai arena ba kompetisaun jeopolitika no iha kontestu seguransa global ne'ebé muda hela, politika estratéjika Timor-Leste nian tenke garante soberania nasionál liu husi hametin reziliénsia institusionál no konsolida relasaun ho nia parseru sira. Parseria ho Austrália bele sai instrumentu ida ba esforsu ida ne'e, karik Timor-Leste forma no orienta programa sira ho ativu tuir nia vizaun rasik ba era foun ida ne'e. Hanesan Fundasaun Mahein hakerek ona, parte esensial ida husi prosesu ida ne'e mak ita tenke kontinua avansa diálogu nasionál kona-ba forma Estadu nian, identidade polítika Timor-oan no natureza demokrasía sosial Timor-Leste nian. Karik ita responde ba pergunta sira ne'e, FM fiar katak nasaun ida ne'e bele sai preparadu di'ak liu atu aproveita relasaun esterna sira hodi hetan benefísiu másimu ba povu Timor-oan sira hotu.

Parseria Foun ba Era Foun: Sovereignty, Security and Strategy in a Changing World

Fundasaun Mahein, 5 Mar 2026

Introduction

On 28 January 2026, the governments of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and Australia signed the *Parseria Foun ba Era Foun* ("New Partnership for a New Era"), a comprehensive bilateral agreement spanning peace and security cooperation, economic collaboration and people-to-people linkages. Coming soon after Timor-Leste's accession to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and amid rising geopolitical tensions, the Parseria represents both a shift in bilateral relations and a strategic response to evolving regional pressures and national development priorities.

The following article examines how the Parseria relates to Timor-Leste's ASEAN integration and broader Indo-Pacific security and geopolitical dynamics, and assesses the opportunities and risks that it presents for Timor-Leste's sovereignty, governance and economic security.

FM notes that during the preparation of this article, there has been a major escalation of military conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran. The full geopolitical and economic consequences of this escalation remain uncertain, though its effects on global energy markets, security and stability are likely to be substantial. While this article has been written against a backdrop of global unpredictability, the analysis focuses on the Parseria's regional implications and its relevance for Timor-Leste's sovereignty, governance and external partnerships. FM will continue to monitor the international situation closely and provide updated analysis of its implications for Timor-Leste's security and regional engagement in due course.

Parseria in Context: From Bilateral Cooperation to Regional Integration

For Timor-Leste, ASEAN membership provides significant geopolitical and institutional benefits, such as expanding Timor-Leste's diplomatic agency, embedding the country within a rules-based regional architecture and establishing new benchmarks and standards for governance across many areas. The Parseria situates bilateral cooperation between Australia and Timor-Leste explicitly within this ASEAN context. The joint declaration published by the two governments affirms Australia's support for Timor-Leste's ASEAN priorities and cooperation consistent with ASEAN's inclusivity and norms. This signals that Australia envisions its partnership with Timor-Leste as complementary to the multilateral governance mechanisms that ASEAN embodies.

For Timor-Leste, ASEAN offers expanded market access and political-security dialogue mechanisms, while strengthening institutional standards across customs, financial regulation, border management and transnational crime prevention. The Parseria also involves extensive cooperation in these areas, which could help to build Timor-Leste's capacity both for bilateral cooperation with Australia and full participation in ASEAN. However, for Timor-Leste to receive maximum benefit from these programs, there must be sustained political commitment to institutional reform and capacity strengthening, along with the active involvement of Timorese actors in designing and implementing interventions to ensure local ownership and buy-in over the long term. The widespread failure of donor interventions in fragile contexts to achieve sustained impacts provide important lessons in this regard.

Economic Security: Sunrise, Infrastructure and Human Development

The economic dimensions of the Parseria are critical, especially given Timor-Leste's increasingly urgent need for structural economic transformation to ensure the state's fiscal sustainability and provide formal employment opportunities for the growing working-age population. The joint declaration reaffirms commitments to accelerate the development of Greater Sunrise oil and gas resources, a project which has been included in national development planning but has faced significant delays due to protracted political disagreements. The Parseria also entails the establishment of an Infrastructure Fund seeded with 10% of upstream revenue once a commercially viable development concept is agreed upon, which will be funded from Australia's share.

These aspects of the Parseria reflect an important shift in the economic relationship between the two countries, particularly given the difficult history of negotiations around oil development and maritime boundaries. FM welcomes the constructive approach taken by the two governments to resolving this longstanding dispute which has significantly harmed relations between the two countries. In practical terms, the Greater Sunrise project, despite valid concerns about financial viability and environmental impacts, holds significant economic potential for Timor-Leste, both in providing revenues for the state and advancing industrial development. Moreover, an infrastructure fund – if governed transparently with clear planning and accountability mechanisms – can help align Timor-Leste's oil and gas revenues more directly with national connectivity priorities and promote economic diversification.

Alongside the Parseria, the Australian Prime Minister has also announced an Economic Cooperation Package through which Australia will allocate $80 million for private sector development and $220 million for a Human Development Initiative. These are complemented by expanded labour mobility and technical and vocational training programs. If designed carefully to ensure local ownership, these initiatives can significantly enhance Timor-Leste's long-term resilience by strengthening skills, supporting local entrepreneurship and promoting growth in productive economic sectors.

Security Cooperation in a Complex Geopolitical and Criminal Environment

The Parseria's pillar on peace and regional integration includes cooperation on cyber security, transnational crime, maritime security, border control and migration. These areas are highly relevant to Timor-Leste's interests while also intersecting with evolving regional security threats. Cybersecurity, in particular, is a serious and growing concern, particularly in light of the alleged "criminal foreign direct investment" in Timor-Leste associated with cyber-enabled fraud centres. These centres of criminal activity have proliferated across Southeast Asia and the Pacific in recent years and led to significant crackdowns by regional governments. In late February, PNTL conducted a raid and arrested eighteen foreign nationals suspected of involvement in illegal online activities, highlighting that transnational cyber-crime remains a persistent challenge in Timor-Leste.

While the Parseria does not explicitly frame cooperation in terms of "criminal foreign direct investment," the partnership's emphasis on cyber capacity-building and law enforcement coordination can be read, in part, as a response to these risks. FM has long advocated for enhanced investment in cyber capacity for Timor-Leste's security agencies, and international cooperation is an essential vehicle for these investments. However, this cooperation must be balanced with careful attention to Timor-Leste's national sovereignty and questions of local ownership. Interventions should aim to empower Timor-Leste's own agencies to detect and respond to threats independently, thereby reducing dependency on external assistance. Achieving this requires strong political will on all sides to engage with mutual respect and trust, as well as active engagement by Timorese authorities in the planning and implementation of programs.

Similarly, maritime security cooperation must be tailored to Timor-Leste's national priorities and targeted towards strengthening sovereign capacity. Improving maritime surveillance and search and rescue capability is crucial for protecting fisheries, offshore energy infrastructure and other sea-based assets. Illegal and unregulated fishing, in particular, poses a serious threat to Timor-Leste's environmental and economic security, and threatens both the livelihoods of fishing communities and marine resources which are a major draw for international tourists. In addition, there are indications that Timor-Leste's seas are used for human trafficking and potentially other forms of smuggling, which require significantly enhanced maritime security capabilities.

The Shifting Indo-Pacific Context

As a key arena of global geopolitical contestation, the Indo-Pacific strategic environment is marked by intensifying competition between major powers. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities for small developing states. In this context, Australia's broader strategic posture – including initiatives such as AUKUS, deeper defence cooperation and increased investment in military capabilities – inevitably shapes its bilateral partnerships are perceived in the region. Timor-Leste, as Australia's close neighbour with deep people-to-people ties, must therefore ensure that cooperation with Australia does not constrain its longstanding 'Friends with All' diplomatic doctrine or its hard-won strategic autonomy.

For FM, the Parseria does not read as an inducement to choose sides in a great-power rivalry. Instead, it mostly provides tools for Timor-Leste to enhance its sovereign capacities within an increasingly multipolar region. Diversification of external partnerships – with ASEAN neighbours, multilateral institutions, development partners and private investors – remains a prudent approach, and indeed is in line with the 'Friends with All' strategy pursued by successive Timorese governments.

The Parseria's explicit affirmation of multilateral structures and norms such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, commitment to international law and support for ASEAN centrality are consistent with this approach. However, if bilateral cooperation is perceived domestically or internationally as alignment with one geopolitical camp, it could constrain Timor-Leste's space for diplomatic manoeuvre. To avoid this, the Government must articulate clearly how Parseria supports national priorities without compromising autonomy.

Opportunities and Risks for Timor-Leste

Such partnerships carry both opportunities and risks, particularly in the current context of rising geopolitical tensions and evolving security threats. Regarding opportunities, FM sees that the Parseria presents several, including enhanced institutional capacity through technical support, especially in cyber and maritime security; economic security through Greater Sunrise development, the infrastructure fund, private sector support and human development initiative; and support for ASEAN integration which can enable Timor-Leste to benefit further from its membership of the bloc.

On the other hand, several risks can be identified, particularly increased dependency on Australian technical support if capacity building elements are not designed to be locally led; and perceptions of "taking sides" in geopolitical conflict between the Western-aligned states and China. The former is a common issue encountered with development aid in general, with which Timor-Leste has had extensive experience. The latter is particularly relevant in the increasingly contested regional strategic environment, as it could undermine the efforts made by Timor-Leste's political leadership to consolidate national sovereignty since independence. Domestic political polarisation over external partnerships could also undermine the coherence of programs implemented under the Parseria; however, FM believes that the relatively broad consensus among Timorese elites regarding Timor-Leste's diversified strategic approach makes this less likely.

Fundasaun Mahein reiterates that partnerships must reinforce domestic capacity and sovereignty, rather than substitute for it. The National Parliament, civil society and other independent institutions will play a vital role in tracking implementation of the Parseria, monitoring its compliance with national interests and ensuring that cooperation with Australia strengthens Timor-Leste's position in the region and more broadly.

Conclusion

The *Parseria Foun ba Era Foun* marks a significant milestone in relations between Timor-Leste and Australia, close neighbours with a complex shared history. The partnership has arrived at a moment of rapidly evolving regional and global dynamics, including integration with ASEAN and complex security challenges. If implemented with transparency and clear strategic intent, FM believes the partnership can support Timor-Leste's national development priorities and regional engagement. The primary challenge is to ensure that the Parseria reinforces sovereignty, strengthens governance and accelerates equitable development in alignment with the aspirations enshrined in the Constitution and national development plans.

In an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific and changing global security context, Timor-Leste's strategic policy must, first and foremost, safeguard national sovereignty by building institutional resilience and solidifying relations with its partners. The Parseria with Australia can be a tool in that endeavour, if Timor-Leste actively shapes it to fit its own vision for a new era. As Fundasaun Mahein has written previously, an essential part of this will be further advancing national dialogue about the form of the state, Timorese political identity and the nature of Timor-Leste's social democracy. By answering these questions, we believe that this country will be better placed to leverage external relationships to achieve maximum benefits for all Timorese people.