

## Future Australian Aid Policy Focus in Timor Leste

### Introduction

Australia is one of the largest and wealthiest nations in the Asia – Pacific and in the world. However, it is surrounded by post and ongoing conflict countries. Some conflicts are faced between countries such as between Indonesia and Timor Leste in the past and others are within countries such as crisis in Myanmar, and Indonesia which are still ongoing and needs international support to resolve.

Promoting peace and security should be an essential foundation for sustainable development in Australia's neighboring countries in Asia and pacific, in order for the regions to be more equitable, prosperous and stable.

Therefore, Australia's aid policy should focus on building peace and stability for inclusive development and prosperity in Australia's neighbor nations in Asia and the Pacific; including Timor Leste.

This writing will explore area of focus under different where Australia aid should focus to achieve the above-mentioned objective with particular focus on Australia's investment in Timor Leste.

### Aid Investment pillars

Given the condition and history of Timor Leste; just independent in 2002, the Australia aid should be organized to focus on the following pillars for Timor Leste to achieve its development objectives, prosperity of the people and Australia to achieve its aid objective a stable and prosperous Timor Leste:

#### Pillar: Ensuring Peace and Stability

##### a. Leadership Dialogue

The Australia's neighbors are in the process and some are learning to implement transparent and democratic processes; crisis in Myanmar, Indonesia and elsewhere are some of the examples. In past investments, Australia has been very risk averse and reluctant to direct aid through engaging with critical leaders such as the leaders of the Fretilin and CNRT. However, they both are important for Timor Leste's economic and political development. Therefore, the first focus of the Australia should be providing platforms for political, leaders and youth dialogues on bring their countries forward through a democratic and transparent process. This will include educating the people to welcome political and leadership changes that occur periodically in the regions.

##### b. Support Defense and security

Defense and security strengthening is important for neighbor countries to live in peace and harmony. Therefore, the support should be focusing on national police and army to have knowledge; skills and resources to combat organized and cybercrimes, human trafficking and ensure the protection of their borders and resources within their countries.

#### Pillar 2: Infrastructure Development

In the past investment from Australia has focused on basic infrastructure projects and the international airport. These supports should be continued and expand to other areas including basic and advanced infrastructures that links village to village, post administrative and municipalities, digital technology and teaching. At the same time choose agriculture areas or groups as starting points; identify local area,

productive agriculture groups, support and link to national and international market then scale up nationwide in years to come. The area that needs to be focused via infrastructure and development is the Public private and community partnership concept. A customized public private partnership to include communities in the development by giving them tax concession or job placement to ensure the communities are involved in the development process without losing their property rights. Dili the capital of Timor Leste should be the major focus of Australia's investment to have a good urbanization planning, prevent flooding and protect the lives of the population after experiencing the devastated flood in April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### Pillar 3: Workforce Development

#### Education

DFAT has invested a lot in education at both tertiary levels to produce more Timorese with higher education and leadership skills; and vocational education for more technical areas. However, this education has been limited: Australia scholarships was only able to produce less than 400 graduates from 2000 until 2022. Similarly, the vocational education has been limited to hospitality and tourism but the demand for hospitality in country and overseas are low for Timorese people.

DFAT should work closely with the ministry of education, national agency for higher education accreditation (ANAA) to lobby and increase a target of 100 scholarship per year for the next five to ten years. The support for vocation education should focus mainly on employability and entrepreneurship skills with the objective of expanding Labour mobility and maximize the skill and knowledge from overseas in country.

To achieve the above target; DFAT may wanted to focus on the following:

- i. **invest in English language training** at the municipality and post administrative levels and target the best graduates to apply for the Australian award scholarships.
- ii. **In country scholarship**; the scholarship can be given to the best students from general and vocational high schools to take up foundational courses at the universities with a pathway to study in Australia's institution.
- iii. **Collaborate** with ANAA and ministry of education to establish foundational skills courses for six months to one year before students entering universities in Timor Leste. At the same time create opportunities for teaching and tutoring skills at the university levels. This is the area has been lacking in Timor Leste National Qualification and TVET supports from Australia
- iv. **Support** INDMO and ANAAA to resolve their long -term difference around dual certification of the technical vocational high schools and training centers.
- v. **National volunteer Program**  
Work with the Secretariate for Vocational Training and Employment (SEFOPE) Australia Volunteer International to establish national volunteer program to provide English languages and mathematic teachers to the universities and training centers in Timor Leste. This program can also offer learning opportunities for TVET and university graduates to learn in companies and business to gain real business skills.

#### Health

Support strengthening national hospital resources; human specialist doctors and nurses, allied health professionals; scientists and biomedical engineers. Develop facilities such as oncology services at the national hospital and expand radiological and laboratory services at the subnational levels; at district hospital and post administrative community health centers. The national hospital could be supported to have access to internal airport (roof top airport for helicopter) transfer from regional hospitals. Also, support to national mental health system to help Timorese to recover from post-traumatic disorders they experience from long years of struggle against Indonesian occupation. Lastly, support also the mobile health services through SABEH or local NGO to bring basic health services to the community in rural and remote areas

#### Pillar 4: Economic Growth

Labour mobility has become one of the great resources for Australia and neighbor countries through PALM programs. They bring back a rich set of skills, knowledge and finances back to their country. Some countries such as Timor Leste has Labour mobility resources from other countries too, in Korea and Europe. Australia aid can support the return workers in neighbor countries Grow and expand Labour mobility; inter -intra Asia pacific regions. Australia focus may cover the following:

- i. Support to reintegration of the Timorese workers from overseas from economic development. This should range from technical support to reintegration policies and strategies to coordination of the government and private sector stakeholders'
- ii. Foreign direct investment  
Building on the reintegration; the workers and employers can be supported through the foreign direct investment to ensure international investors invest in Timor Leste to boost more employment and increase economic growth
- iii. Support government of Timor Leste to invest in agriculture  
Timor Leste staple food is rice. Thus, Timor Leste has imported hundred to thousand of tones every year using multimillion state budget which give a figure of 1.7 billion (80%) state budget flow overseas in 2021. To stock up the National Logistic Center (CLN). However, the productive land and productive group such as Popular Organization of Timorese Labors (OPTT) have been remained un touched an abandoned by Timor Leste. Therefore, DFAT may work with key central government, Ministry of Education, Tourism and Industry to target to reduce rice import to up 75% over the next five years by giving more support to local production and the productive agriculture groups are well equipped with advance technology.
- iv. Development of green and blue economy  
Timor Leste is surrounding by beautiful ocean, beautiful valleys and mountainous in the east and south. However, this has been an explored and un developed. DFAT may focus on developing tourist sites with basic infrastructures; food and hospitality to help Timor Leste to develop its tourism and increase tourist per years as targeted by the Tourism policy of ten thousand tourists per year.  
Development

#### Pillar 5: Social Protection

Australia through past and current support goes into the Ministry of Social Solidarity for new future generation; but the coverage has been limited. Yet the children in the capital Dili are exposed to child labor (selling fruits and eggs) on the streets of Dili try to find some coins for their parents or cover household incomes. Others, however, would like to continue their education but unable to do so due to family economic conditions. Therefore, the Bolsa da Mae support can be expanded to protect the street vendor kids and poor and needy children to access education and training to learn soft and life skills to equip them for work and be productive in the future.

#### [Pilar 6: Bureaucracy and administrative process](#)

The past and current support through the Governance for Development Program and now Partnership for Inclusive Prosperity have been focused on policy and strategic issues, with less concentrated on the day to day operational and practical experience of the public administrative process at the sub national levels. As a result, Timor Leste has very centralized and highly bureaucratic administrative process. This leads to long and windy decision making and complicated administrative process, both at the national and subnational levels. DFAT support can also be modified or expand to reform the public administrative process and reduce bureaucracy to allow the municipal and community leaders to make decision quickly and be accountable to the system.

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