



NATIONAL POLICY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Ministry of Education

NATIONAL POLICY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Education is a social good that must be accessible to all on an equal condition. It is through education that one can have its potential developed, being able to benefit from the progress made in independent Timor-Leste, and participate in the rebuilding of the country. Such assertions do not only reflect the rights (and duties) already provided for in the Constitution, international treaties and national legislation, but also represent the expectations of society in general, and those who support the strengthening of equal access and success in education, as evidenced in May 2010 on the margins of the International Conference on Inclusive Education held in Dili.

Timor-Leste has made remarkable progress in education, and in 15 years there has been an increase in more than 150,000 numbers of students - from 238,600 to 391,600, equivalent to a 64% growth of the student population in this period. By 2016, Timor-Leste had 1,715 pre-school, primary and secondary education establishments, an increase of 772 (plus 82%) out of the 943 existing in the 2001 school year.

The progress achieved did not translate into equal benefits for all in equal condition, with notable differences in terms of access, permanence and success for those living in rural and remote areas, children with special educational needs, and the female population and others. For example, while the real school enrollment / net enrollment rate in urban areas reaches almost 100%, in rural areas this is only 60%. Moreover, the national adult literacy rate is lower among the female population, with a marked negative impact on the literacy rate of women living in rural areas, with a difference of almost 20% in the literacy rate among women living in the rural and urban areas, with women generally having a literacy level of less than 6% compared to men. Among children between 6 and 14 years of age with special educational needs, because they are physically or mentally disabled, it is estimated that almost 60% of them do not participate in the formal educational process.

At the present moment of the education development in the country, it is essential to identify and promote a political consensus within the Government regarding the essentiality of inclusive education without distinction based on marital status, sex, ethnic origin, language, social position or economic situation, education and physical or mental condition. Without this, it is possible that in the near future, advances in education will accentuate these differences, creating even more difficulties for the State to fulfill its constitutional duty to ensure access to education on an equal condition.

Inclusive education is relevant across all sectors and levels of education. At the national level, it should be ensured that all policies and programs are inclusive, that infrastructure meets the needs of students with disabilities, that the human resources of education are a real reflection of community characteristics, including the teacher's involvement and the teacher's capacity to be strengthened so that they can implement the strategies of inclusive education. At the level of the school community, there are many actions that must be taken by managers and teachers to ensure the participation and success of all students in school: the search for children who have dropped out of school and their encouragement for their return, realization of classes reinforcement, dialogue with parents or guardians of students with respect and patience, use of non-violent measures to manage student behavior, implementation of programs to enable older students to support the opportunities for all students to master some cognitive ability, weather literacy, mathematics, sport, art, interpersonal skills, and the valuing of individual students' talents, performing activities that celebrate their effort, results, and success.

Based on this, the National Policy for Inclusive Education has as its main objectives: increasing attendance in pre-school education, ensuring a real universal enrollment rate in primary education, especially in rural and remote areas, lowering the repetition and drop-out rates, the development and strengthening of non-formal learning programs, including literacy and recurrent education, expansion of technical and vocational education programs, increased enrollment in secondary education, promotion of healthy environment and capable of offering protection to children's rights, creating student-centered environment at all levels of education, strengthening the human resources education capacity to implement the actions necessary for inclusive education, integration of the inclusion principles in teacher recruitment and placement, strengthening of data collection, monitoring and analysis of data relevant to inclusive education, promotion of private sector participation, and effective coordination among the various relevant government bodies and entities to positively promote inclusion in the education system.

Although this policy covers the entire educational system, it has a specific focus on students and individuals who are subject to exclusion or who have a greater challenge to access education on an equal condition, especially those with special educational needs, those who live in poverty and in remote areas, those belonging to various ethnolinguistic groups, pregnant girls and young mothers and working children. In addition to defining the objectives to be achieved within an inclusive education policy, it further identifies a number of actions that are necessary to achieve these objectives, thus ensuring its relevance to the planning of programs and measures relevant to education.

Through a concerted effort by its relevant bodies and entities, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, and with the support of development partners and civil society, the Government has the responsibility to ensure equal opportunities for all students, to be successful and see their differences not as a disadvantage, but rather as a skill. The value of inclusive education reflects the hope that the sons and daughters of all will have respect, acceptance and appreciation throughout the course of education.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

Timor-Leste is a nation that recognizes the same value for all its citizens. As expected, we find differences between people - whether by the language they dominate, their color and ethnic group, their level of education, political opinion, belief and religion, physical and mental, social and economic condition, place of residence, among others. For the nation to develop strongly, it is essential that mechanisms to be explored to make most of the abilities of all individuals, securing and strengthening the "multiple intelligence" found in society. As conceptualized by Gardner, all people are intelligent, but they do not necessarily possess the same kind of intelligence¹. And this variety of human cognitive abilities do not preclude considering them all of real importance and necessary for an effective functioning of society. According to Gardner, anyone has at least two of the various types of cognitive abilities:



Thus, education should consider each student as an individual, and encourage them to develop their talents, and have confidence in the type of cognitive ability they possess, recognizing that each student has the capacity to contribute positively to the development of society.

¹Gardner, Howard. *Multiple intelligences: New horizons*. Basic books, 2006.

Sometimes mentioning the term "inclusive education" brings the consideration that it relates to infrastructure issues for those who have physical challenges to access school facilities on an equal condition (such as ramps, etc.), or the creation of special schools for those students who have a marked mental deficiency that creates a challenge for them to attend school establishments in the public school network. Interventions of this nature are an important part of an inclusive education system, but these alone do not have the capacity to ensure inclusive education.

Inclusive education is a concept that must find daily practice in schools. It is also necessary that teachers identify the cognitive abilities and challenges of each student, and try to develop the necessary mechanism to support the wide development of the same, according to the individual potential of each one. Inclusive education requires consideration of physical facilities and classrooms, curriculum and curriculum to ensure that all students can participate, learn and feel valued. Inclusion refers to the search for the most appropriate way of teaching, to ensure the active participation of all students in the classroom, by building relationships founded on mutual respect between managers, teachers and students, and between students and their pairs.

Knowledge of mathematics is an important aspect of education, but mutual cooperation is also of great importance in this area, such as persistence, patience and musical ability. Diversity of talents is needed to ensure that everyone collectively can contribute to the development of the nation. A limited number of individuals cannot be expected to provide everything is needed by a healthy community.

B. Definition of Inclusive Education

The 1st National Conference on Inclusive Education, held in Dili in May 2010, defined inclusive education as "education that is available to all in Timor-Leste without any kind of discrimination."

It is shaped by the definition set out in the Framework for the Development of Education in the Pacific (2009-2015), which considers that:

"Inclusive education is an approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. Inclusive education assumes that all students with or without disabilities are able to learn together through access to common arrangements for early childhood education, schools and community educational environments with an adequate network of support services. "

Inclusive education is not an abstract concept, but a concept that must be practiced by all schools in their day-to-day management and in the teaching-learning process, which does not require everyone to take exactly the same actions and to be treated exactly likewise. When the national language is used to support curriculum content learning, including teaching official languages, or when a teacher determines that a student with visual problems should sit in front of the classroom, or when a student repeats what is said by the teacher to another student with hearing difficulty who is at his side, these are examples of inclusive education

actions. It is observed that interventions of this nature are at the core of inclusive education, and not only represent a support to the student facing the challenges of being treated equally, but, as illustrated in the last example, intervention also brings positive results to the student who provides the support, because it ends up developing his analytical ability in determining what needs to be repeated to the colleague with difficulties, and his ability to communicate and express. More importantly, this student and the entire classroom develops an understanding of the difficulties of other students, a skill of such importance to ensure the development of the nation from the respect of others and values of solidarity.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXT

Logical Ground

The Government of Timor-Leste believes that education is a national priority, both for socio-economic growth and for the development of the country's human resources. Citizens with a higher education level have the values, knowledge and skills needed to contribute to the country's progress and thus can more easily meet the national needs for economic and social development and for regional and international integration.

One of the main fundamental social rights included in the Constitution is the right to education (article 59), which specifically stipulates in its number 2 that "everyone has the right to equal opportunities for education and training". Moreover, the Constitution establishes as one of its principles the principle of non-discrimination, which requires that everyone must enjoy the same rights, and cannot be discriminated against on the basis of color, race, marital status, sex, ethnic origin, language, social position or economic status, political or ideological convictions, religion, education, or mental or physical condition.

Furthermore, the right to education and non-discrimination are guarantees in international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is considered that the right to education is composed of four interrelated and fundamental characteristics: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. The availability of the right to education requires that it be given a dimension of non-discrimination, physical and economic² accessibility.

Based on these guarantees, the Government has the duty to define and implement public policies to ensure an inclusive education capable of providing equal opportunity for access and success in education for all.

The Government of Timor-Leste, together with other countries, non-governmental organizations and international development agencies, endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) arising from the United Nations Millennium Development Declaration in 2010. As a result, the Government has developed its own Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) action plan. Although not participating in the Dakar World Education Forum in April 2000, Timor-Leste also embraced the goals of the Education for All (EFA) commitment in 2015. SDG and EFA promote gender equality in education, Especially those living in remote areas, members of ethnic - linguistic groups, women and children of the female sex, people with physical or cognitive difficulties or those living in extreme poverty, and to all those who are in a situation of social or economic exclusion. These principles are being strengthened through the existing Forum for Strategic Development Objectives (SDO) with its Post 2015 Development Agenda, which highlights the universal right to equal, quality and lifelong learning opportunities.

² General Comment No. 13: Article 13 (Right to Education), United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Twenty-First Session, 1999 (available in Portuguese in the Compilation of International Human Rights Instruments of the Ombudsman's Office). Human Rights and Justice).

The commitments made, due to their complexity and importance, pose several challenges in their implementation. Greater effort is therefore needed to overcome them, particularly in a country where almost half of the population is under 18 years old.

Therefore, a National Policy for Inclusive Education that is a reflection of the national commitment to promote the universality of the right to education is essential. More specifically, this policy focuses on reiterating the Government's commitment and responsibility, as well as promoting understanding by society, identifying strategies and guidelines, creating a robust monitoring system, strengthening coordination between the various ministries and other Agents, and to ensure the adequacy of resources and their use in a more effective and efficient manner.

CHAPTER III

THE SITUATION OF EDUCATION IN TIMOR-LESTE

A. SCOPE OF THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

EDUCATION DATA

1. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION (NON-COMPULSORY, AGES 3 TO 6 YEARS)

Enrollment - Pre-school education is a recent phenomenon in Timor-Leste. According to data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of 2015, the Actual Schooling Rate / Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in pre-school education in children between the ages of 3 and 6 was 14, 26% (boys 13.62%, girls 14.95%). The low NER reveals that the 2030 goal of 100% coverage in the age range of 3 to 5 years remains a major challenge.

2. BASIC EDUCATION (1ST CYCLE, 2ND CYCLE AND 3RD CYCLE) (COMPULSORY)

Enrollment - The actual enrollment / enrollment ratio (NER / TRM) for all basic education is 81.96% (EMIS 2015). The NER is higher for girls, with more than 6% difference (85.33% for girls and 78.84% for boys - EMIS 2015).

In the first two cycles of basic education, the actual enrollment rate reaches almost 90% (87.95% - EMIS 2015), while in the 3rd cycle - 7th, 8th and 9th years - there is a true decline of more than 50%, reaching less than 45% (43.65% - EMIS 2015).

There are many children below and above the age appropriated in the 1st and 2nd Cycles, since only 32.72% of the children of 6 years of age enter the 1st school year with the age provided by law³.

Although NER is close to 100% in urban areas, in rural areas the average is only 60.5% (School Survey Report, World Bank, 2012).

Repetition, Passing and Drop-out – EMIS 2015 reveals a repetition rate in the 1st year of 27.62%. The boys repeat the first year of schooling more than the girls (29.9% and 25.21%, respectively). This trend is revealed until the end of the second cycle (with 17.72% of the boys who repeat a year during the 1st and 2nd cycles, compared to 13.57% of the girls). Almost 35 percent of first year students do not make it to the second year, which means they are forced to repeat the year or end up simply dropping out of school. For many children, clearly, the first school years are of great difficulty.

Drop out in the 3rd cycle - In the 3rd cycle, the dropout rate is 3.15% (boys 3.63%, girls 2.67%) (EMIS 2015). This rate is slightly higher than the rate for the 1st and 2nd Cycles (total of 2.67%).

³ibid

Transition from 2nd to 3rd Cycle - EMIS 2015 shows a transition rate of 74.37% (boys 72.54%, girls 76.2%) between the 6th and the 7th year of schooling.

Transition from the 3rd Cycle to the Secondary – EMIS 2015 recorded a transition rate of 77.74% (boys 75.99%, girls 79.49%) between the 3rd Cycle of compulsory primary education and the non-compulsory secondary education 10th to 12th grade).

3. SECONDARY EDUCATION (NON-COMPULSORY, 10TH TO 12TH YEAR)

- Enrollment - According to EMIS 2015, the NER is at 28.76% (boys 24.65%, girls 33.24%), with the gross rate at 62.4% in 2015.
- Repetition - The repetition rate is 1.7% (boys 2.04%, girls 1.37%) (EMIS 2015).
- Drop out – EMIS 2015 shows a dropout rate of 2.66% (boys 2.79%, girls 2.53%)

4. LITERACY

According to the Demographic Census of 2015, the national rate for all adults was 63% (male 65.6%, female 58.9%, with a percentage of difference of almost 6% between male and female), is surpassing the rate of 57.8% in 2010. With regard to this rate, however, there was a difference of almost 6% between women and men, with literacy of female adults of 58.9% and reaching 65.6% among men.

There is a wide difference between the literacy rate of the urban population (86.2%) and the rural population (52.5%). Noting that the difference is more pronounced among women living in rural areas (46.6%) than in urban areas (84.3%).

It was also revealed that the literacy rate between the ages of 15 and 24 was 83.2%, an increase of 5% since 2010, with a difference of 0.5% between males and females (83.5% male compared to 83% female).

The highest literacy rate among the young population still shows considerable progress in the last decade, with an increase in enrollment in primary education. The challenge, however, remains to ensure equal access to this progress by the rural population, in particular women.

B. DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

Location: EMIS 2015 indicates that in 2015, about 5,557 children, aged between 6 and 14, were out of school. The municipality of Ermera (794 children) has the highest number of children between the ages of 6 and 14 years of school dropout, followed by Dili, Baucau and Oecusse (651,582 and 573 children, respectively).

Economic position. School attendance is directly related to family economic power. According to *the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)* in 2010, children from more affluent families are more likely to attend primary school than those from more economically disadvantaged families, proving that the limited financial means can be a strong obstacle in access to education.

Gender. Gender parity in the real schooling rate / net enrollment rate was achieved. The gross enrollment rate and the net enrollment rate under the 2015 Census as well as the EMIS data for 2015 show a slightly higher level of school attendance for girls than for boys throughout primary school. However, the gender-based violence, inside and outside the school, as well as teenage pregnancies students, continue to pose real obstacles to the conclusion of basic education by female students.

Children with special educational needs. Currently there is no specific statistics related to students with special educational needs in the current educational system.

However, the Census 2015 identifies an approximate percentage of 3.5% of the population over 3 years being the bearer of a disability (37,651 to 1,089,672 of the population over 3 years old). This number of people with disabilities, it was revealed that approximately 68% have never been to schools.

From the 32,6697 persons enrolled in the Census as full-time participants at all levels of education (from pre-school to university) ⁴, it was identified that almost 1.3% were disabled (a total of 4 378), which represents an increase, of the percentage revealed by the 2010 Census (0.8% in 2010).

A 2007 survey by Plan International estimates that, although approximately 1 in every 100 children in the 1st and 2nd cycles of basic education has a special educational need, 1%.

Taking a base estimate by high based on the 2015 Census result, it is possible to estimate a number of almost 9,000 children aged 6 to 14 years with a disability. Considering the population of students in Cycles 1 and 2 of basic education of almost 250,000 and the estimated percentage of 1.3% of children with disabilities attending school, a possible approximate number of 3,200 children could be estimated. These teaching cycles. This, even though it is a high estimate and without a truly solid base, shows a participation in the education of children with disabilities in these education cycles of less than 40%.

Despite the lack of reliable data, it is unquestionable that the educational system does not provide adequate access to those with special educational needs as a result of having a physical or mental disability.

Adolescent mothers. According to a survey by the Ministry of Education and UNFPA 2010, almost half of the 3,569 adolescent mothers in Timor-Leste (47.9%) stopped studying,

⁴ It is observed that there is a real discrepancy between the number of students according to the education data (EMIS) and those revealed by the Demographic Census of 2015. This is due to the fact that the Census is based on a questionnaire filled out by the relevant services according to an interview with the head of the household, while the education data is based on the formal recording of the student's attendance at school, assigning an identifier number to each student. It is also noted that the figures recorded in the Census are well below the actual number of EMIS, which registered more than 396,600 students in 2016

compared to only 12.8% of all girls. In addition, most adolescent mothers have never attended school compared to the overall female population of the same age, which emphasizes the essential role of education in preventing teenage pregnancy.

Working Children. When the 2015 Census was carried out, there were 5,621 working children (aged 10-14) in Timor-Leste. Of these, the majority were males (3,085) and almost all lived in rural areas (2,885, or 93.5%). In rural areas, where the vast majority of working children reside, there is no significant difference between the school attendance of boys and those working girls.

C. OBSTACLES TO EDUCATION

1. Supply: limits access to the education system and the school, including:

- **Limited access to education and early childhood development programs (including pre-school education)**

The importance of quality programs aimed at early childhood care, development and learning is increasingly globally evident. It has been proven that the benefits of quality pre-school education provide a higher return on investment than at any other level of education. However, there is a serious shortage in the supply of pre-school education schools throughout the country, with only one in ten children aged 3 to 5 years attending them. The high drop-out and repetition rates in the first years of basic education are indicative of strong inequalities in adequate access to the education system during this critical period of educational and social development;

- **Inadequate schools / classrooms**

A systemic and crucial barrier remains the lack of schools and the restriction on the number of classrooms, especially in remote areas, as well as the inadequate conditions of many of the existing facilities.

Because there are insufficient classrooms, a number of schools, especially those that provide the 3rd cycle, have to resort to the implementation of 2 or 3 shifts on the same school day. Students in these schools end up participating in the educational process in conditions inferior to those who attend one shift schools only in the mornings. Those who study in the afternoon shift end up with specific hazards, such as weather (torrential rains in the rainy season) and nightfall, which inevitably brings safety-related hazards. Most often, schools with more than one shift are not able to ensure the workload required for the full implementation of the curriculum.

- **Distance from schools in remote and isolated areas**

Children living in remote areas often have to travel long distances to attend school, even in the case of basic education schools. This situation is particularly problematic for young children, discouraging their enrollment at the suggested age of entry, as well as their

transition to years of higher education, whose schools tend to be more distant from their place of residence;

- **Education costs**

While basic education is free in Timor-Leste, informal education costs continue to be an obstacle to schooling. These include other direct school costs (textbooks, uniforms), indirect costs (transportation), and income not obtained by the fact that the children are in school and not working;

- **Schools with unhealthy conditions**

Existing schools are often unhealthy and unsuitable for children, lacking adequate water and sanitation facilities, or safe outdoor areas.

2. Supply: limits on quality in the education system and in schools, including:

- **Insufficient number of qualified teachers**

The country suffers from a severe shortage of adequately qualified teachers, especially in remote and most economically vulnerable areas of the country. Although most teachers have obtained the qualification required by law through qualification courses, it appears that a large number of teachers hired still do not have the necessary qualification. In addition, although the Ministry has expressly determined not to use volunteer teachers, this is still a current practice. It should be noted that most teachers are still at the beginning of a learning curve for more effective pedagogical methodologies. However, disciplining children through the use of violence is still a problem and, consequently, an obstacle to school attendance. At the same time, specific training on how to deal with children with special educational needs is a high priority.

- **Inadequacy / Lack of relevance of secondary school curricula**

As indicated in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011-2030, low enrollment rates in secondary education are also caused by the outdated and unsatisfactory quality curriculum program that is taught. The Strategic Plan therefore emphasizes the importance of fundamental and quality reforms at the secondary level that meet the real needs of the pupils.

- **Inadequate teaching resources and materials**

In view of the recent updating of curricula, the development, printing and distribution of new textbooks and other teaching materials are still short of needs. As such, a large number of schools are faced with frequent absences of teaching and learning materials, including textbooks.

- **Language of instruction and language teaching**

Many students do not master one of the two official languages - Tetum or Portuguese. The less teachers understand and use the first language of the students in the classroom, the more difficult it is for students to perceive the content that is taught. Evidencing this difficulty, a World Bank study in 2012 found that 15.9% of school principals felt that children repeated years because they did not understand the language of instruction.

In April 2015, the Minister of Education approved compulsory rules for the regulation of the use of languages in schools, in order to ensure the balance of the use of the language most dominated by students when necessary, and the learning of official language, and will analyze if this new strategy was able to change the difficulties currently faced. In addition, the Ministry of Education is implementing a Pilot Program on Education in Mother Tongue (EMBLI), which will collect data on quality practices for teaching in multilingual contexts in Timor-Leste.

These educational improvement initiatives have great potential for enhancing the quality of teaching, but because there are important underlying factors that the educational system encounters, such as limits on the ability to teach language progression, it will also be necessary to Implementation of a number of relevant actions.

3. Search: characteristics of students, families, communities, and society, including:

- **Poverty**

In a new and still developing country such as Timor-Leste, poverty remains a major barrier in the long term to access to social services, including education.

- **Gender**

Although the Basic Education Law (BEL) states that there must be "equal opportunities for both genders" (article 5), boys / men and girls / women are faced with different ways of teaching. This can be attributed to social rules, economic factors or other conditions that pose different challenges for boys / men and girls / women in the various stages of education.

- **Special educational needs**

The above data show that even small deficiencies can constitute a considerable barrier to access to school and especially to school learning. There is a strong social stigma as far as investment in education for children with special needs is concerned, and this stigma is sometimes little or very obvious. Some students with disabilities are admitted to school but then do not receive the special attention their special needs require. These difficulties include not only the physical, but also the cognitive and other learning difficulties.

- **Low level of education and motivation of parents or guardians**

If parents or guardians, especially mothers, have a low level of education, the likelihood of their children continuing their studies is reduced. Given the educational background in Timor-Leste, many parents have had few opportunities for study, and thus have a low level of education.

- **Cultural attitudes of the community towards education**

Community attitudes of broad cultural importance that attach less importance to education, when compared to the economic and cultural needs of the family, are a disincentive to the education of the younger generations, contributing to the maintenance of the lack of education.

- **Orphans or children separated from their families due to conflict**

Migration and separation of families, death of parents and subsequent increase in orphans are also factors that incite school dropout, or even lack of any kind of schooling.

CHAPTER IV

CONTEXT OF NATIONAL POLICY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE POLICY

As noted earlier, constitutional guarantees, international declarations, legislative norms, and current policies and programs for inclusion in Timor-Leste bear witness to the country's commitment to providing good quality education for all citizens. The various guarantees include:

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

This National Policy on Inclusive Education is consistent with various international human rights conventions and declarations that the Government of Timor-Leste has signed, ratified or adhered to, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is currently pending. Specifically, the duty of States in relation to the education of persons with disabilities has already been addressed by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education in 2007.

These binding instruments are complemented by declarations of commitments at the international level, which support the identification of practical measures for the implementation of State duties, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Education for All (EFA) and the 48th International Conference on Education in Geneva on Inclusive Education (2008).

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE BASIS FOR INCLUSION

A series of constitutional and legislative documents support the principles of inclusive education. These include:

- **Timor-Leste - Constitution** - "The State recognizes and guarantees to citizens the right to education and culture" and "everyone has the right to equal opportunities for education and training" (article 59, no. 1 and 2). It is incumbent upon the State "to guarantee to all citizens, according to their abilities, access to the highest levels of education" (Article 59, no. 4);
- **Basic Education Law (2008)** - "The right to education and culture is guaranteed to all citizens" (article 2 (1)). This right is intended to promote "equal opportunities and overcoming economic, social and cultural inequalities" (article 2 (2) (b)), "ensuring the right to a fair and effective Opportunities for school access and success "(article 2 (4)), and it is still considered as one of the fundamental objectives of education" to contribute to the correction of regional and local asymmetries and, in a balanced way, throughout the national territory, equal access to the benefits of education "(article 5 (g)). "Basic education is universal, compulsory and free and lasts for nine years." (Article 11 (1)). In addition, it is

determined in the Basic Law that basic education has as one of its objectives "to ensure children with specific educational needs, due in particular to physical and mental disabilities, adequate conditions for their development and full use of their abilities" (article 12 (1) (i)). Furthermore, article 29 lays down specific rules relating to students with special educational needs;

- **Decree-Laws no. 03/2015 and 04/2015, on January 14: National Curriculum of Pre-School Education and the First and Second Cycles of Basic Education** - specifically highlight the importance of inclusion of all children, ensuring their educational needs and the content taught to them. Article 9 (2) of Decree-Law no. 3/2015 specifically provides that "the content and implementation of the curriculum shall ensure the integration of children with special educational needs, including those with learning difficulties or access to teaching materials and structures, by defining strategies to ensure equal opportunities in learning. " Article 8 (3) of Decree-Law No. 4/2015 also provides that "the content and implementation of the curriculum shall ensure respect for persons with special educational needs, particularly those who have learning difficulties or In access to teaching materials and structures, and to value their contribution, preparing students to act as agents promoting the inclusion of all people in society on an equal condition."

- **Decree-Law no. 42/2015, on 16 December: Organic Law of the Ministry of Education** - stipulates as one of the main competences of the Ministry of Education "to develop and implement an inclusive education policy capable of ensuring access to education and success on a basis of equality, including gender equality, and meet the special needs of education "(article 2 (j)).

B. PROGRAMMING BASE FOR THE POLICY

As specified in Part II of this Policy, there are number of dimensions that highlight the fact that many children are left out of opportunities for access to quality education.

It is not difficult to foresee that the way forward for inclusion is difficult, both financially and at the level of programming or even political. However, it can be made easier by being shaped by a comprehensive, systematic and ambitious framework or policy and accompanied by specific strategies and actions. This National Inclusive Education Policy is an attempt to create this framework.

CURRENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS SUPPORTING INCLUSION

Various government policies support different aspects of inclusive education:

- **Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011-2030.** The SDP supports the view that "all Timorese children should go to school and receive a quality education that will give them the knowledge and qualifications that will enable them to lead healthy and productive lives, actively contributing to the development of the Nation" (Chapter 2, Social Capital - Education and Training). It emphasizes "social inclusion in the education system", stressing the importance of guaranteeing everyone the right to education, with the special

inclusion of the most vulnerable, and eliminating exclusion, for whatever reason, such as the economic, Gender, disability, language, etc.;

- **Program of the VI Constitutional Government 2015-2017.** Reiterates the focus of the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) on universal quality education for all people and reaffirms the Government's commitment to achieving this goal;
- **National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011-2030.** "All individuals will have the same opportunity for access to quality education that will enable them to participate in the process of economic, social and political development, guaranteeing social equity and national unity" (the Vision). "Social Inclusion" is a specific priority area that establishes the objective of "promoting the educational rights of socially marginalized groups (...) ensuring that they have full access to the same opportunities, rights and services that are accessed by society in general";
- **National Policy for the Inclusion and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.** It seeks to guarantee the rights of citizens with disabilities, including in education, reaffirming the State's responsibility in achieving this objective;
- **National Pre-school Education Policy Framework** - Stresses the goal of providing all children from 3 to 5 years of age with a quality pre-school education, giving special attention to children living in remote areas and carrying some kind of disability;

CHAPTER V

OBJETIVES OF NATIONAL POLICY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A. GENERAL OBJETIVES

All Timorese residents, irrespective of their ethnicity, language, religion, sex, age, ability level or socio-economic situation, should receive fairly good education appropriate to their individual capacities, as well as acquire the knowledge, appropriate skills and competences with the appropriate vocation to ensure their livelihood and that of their families and to participate in all areas of national development.

When the National Policy for Inclusive Education is adopted, it will be a political force capable of demanding the adaptation of attitudes and the environment in schools. Change in attitudes is needed at the level of government, managers, teachers, students and the educational community to ensure a truly inclusive education. It is also necessary to carry out environmental adjustments of the schools themselves, ensuring equal access through their location and the facilities available in terms of their infrastructure.

The general objective of the National Inclusive Education Policy is therefore the implementation of government policy on educational development, in particular, the achievement of the objectives of universal and compulsory basic education, as well as the provision of quality education to all students, without discrimination, also promoting positive attitudes oriented towards the principles and practices of Inclusive Education.

B. SPECIFIC OBJETIVES

1. RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The specific objectives and actions proposed by the National Inclusive Education Policy are as follows:

OBJETIVE 1: INCREASE THE DEMATRICULATION RATE OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Increase the number of pre-school enrollments through the effective implementation of the National Policy Framework for Pre-School Education. It is therefore intended to create a national, holistic and multi-sectoral early childhood development policy that covers children up to 8 years old.

Actions

This objective can be achieved by implementing the following actions:

- Promoting child preparation for school by expanding and strengthening pre-school programs, with special attention to excluded groups, to ensure universal access to quality early childhood services;
- Emphasizing the individuality of the child in his / her interactions with peers and adults, respect for the opposite sex, self-confidence, language skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, rather than a mere investment in Academic knowledge and literacy;
- The initiation of a process whereby educators of young children are able to detect basic developmental problems and implement learning strategies that deal with them, including communication with health services and the dissemination of information to parents and Educators;
- The establishment of policies and supports that enable pre-school educators to have a positive and supportive impact on the social and emotional development of their students.

OBJETIVE 2: ENROLLMENT OF ALL CHILDREN IN BASIC EDUCATION

Achieve a 100% Real Enrollment Rate (NER) in basic education, ensuring that all children are attending, at due age, compulsory education.

Actions

This will require the active identification of out-of-school children and effectively promote attempts at introduction into school and learning, including the following actions:

- Make schools not only child-centered, but also child-friendly, with teachers and communities trying to actively identify children who do not attend school and, on the families when they are not enrolled or are absent;
- Expand schools by establishing small branch offices in remote areas covering 1st through 6th schooling, including providing incentives for those who teach in remote areas, promoting better teacher training, as well as providing innovative approaches to broader coverage, such as the development of school transport support and teaching approaches that span years of diverse schooling.

OBJETIVE 3: REDUCE REPETITION AND DROPOUT RATES

There are currently high repetition and dropout rates in Timor-Leste, especially in the first years of schooling. The repetition in the first years shows itself as a real de-motivating factor for the continuation of the studies.

Actions

Particular attention should be paid to the following actions:

- Teacher training in identifying pupils at risk of failing or dropping out of school, providing additional support and remediation at school, or motivating families to ensure that students remain in school;
- Ensure that students in the early years are taught by appropriately trained teachers in child literacy approaches;
- Based on the forthcoming results of the ongoing Ministry of Education pilot study on "Multilingual Language-Based Education for Timor-Leste", develop a language-education policy that promotes initial literacy in the mother tongue, with the subsequent transition to Tetum and Portuguese after fully developed literacy;

- Ensure that the teaching methodologies used make schools attractive and effective in learning at all levels of education and that the disciplinary strategies used are non-violent, consistent and collectively agreed upon.

OBJETIVE 4: DEVELOP AND / OR STRENGTHEN ALTERNATIVE / NON-FORMAL LEARNING PROGRAMS OF LITERACY AND EQUIVALENT TEACHING TO BASIC EDUCATION

There should be a functional and efficient mechanism to enable children and adolescents of school age who have not had the opportunity to complete compulsory basic education or who are in a situation of exclusion to complete compulsory basic education and to be better off Prepared for a higher level of education or who are able to enter the labor market as an alternative and to ensure a minimum level of literacy for all adults.

Actions

In order to ensure inclusive education under this objective, it is necessary to:

- Strengthen and expand the Recurrent Education program, equivalent to formal Basic Education programs, for children, youth and adults, in order to achieve literacy and maintain the benefits brought by literacy;
- Ensure the continuity of the adult literacy process by ensuring that Timor-Leste is free of illiteracy.

OBJETIVE 5: EXPANDING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ACADEMIC FLOWS TO SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Given the shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers in Timor-Leste, it is necessary to adequately prepare students for the labor market, in particular by strengthening technical-vocational courses at the secondary level of education.

Actions

This objective will be reached if:

- Ensure the balance of opportunities in secondary education, including, where necessary, the conversion of general secondary education establishments into technical and vocational education establishments;
- Ensure access to technical-vocational secondary education facilities, making them closer to communities;
- Identify and implement programs that are relevant to the local community;
- Ensure liaison with the authorities responsible for employment management to promote integration in the student market, while ensuring the integration of students with disabilities.

OBJETIVE 6: INCREASE THE REAL RATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOLING

One of the most pressing objectives of secondary education is to enable more young people to enter secondary education by seeing a truly low real enrollment rate / net enrollment rate (NER), ensuring access to egalitarian secondary education throughout the country.

Actions

In order to ensure that this objective is achieved, the following measures must be taken.

- Build more secondary schools so that they are closer to the communities and attract young residents out of urban centers to continue their studies, and still have the capacity to reduce the number of students per classroom;
- Improve the quality of teaching by strengthening teachers' capacities and making their teaching more appropriate to the interests of young Timorese;
- Ensure access to necessary infrastructure facilities, including access to water and sanitation, and equipment appropriate to the curriculum.

OBJETIVE 7: ENSURE THAT SCHOOLS ARE HEALTHY AND PROTECTIVE PLACES

Schools should ensure the physical and psychological-emotional health of teachers and pupils, provide a healthy environment and ensure the protection of children, especially vulnerable children, and promote the health and nutrition of teachers and pupils.

Actions

Achieving this goal will require the following actions:

- The creation of healthy school environments (gender-sensitive sanitation facilities with good quality drinking water, safe school grounds, etc.);
- Supporting children's psychological and emotional health through policies against bullying and corporal punishment;
- The formulation of health-promoting policies (including school feeding);
- The teaching of a life skills competency-based curriculum, including knowledge and behaviors related to HIV / AIDS prevention;
- Better access to health and nutrition services, such as school meals and programs against worms and vitamin deficiencies;
- The training of teachers in the identification and management of health problems and nutrition of their students or, when necessary, in the referral to appropriate services;
- The promotion of school-community collaboration and education and health and nutrition services.

OBJETIVE 8: CREATION OF STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS – INCLUSIVE, EFFECTIVE, PROTECTIVE, SENSITIVE TO GENDER AND PARTICIPATORY – AT ALL LEVELS OF THE TEACHING SYSTEM

The school environment should always be conducive to quality learning, ensuring equal access, participation and success for all. This objective also has the aim of obtaining quality

learning outcomes that are capable of exceeding the minimum standards for school establishment accreditation.

Actions

To this end, it will be necessary to promote the following actions:

- The development of quality standards for inclusive education and the provision of education services and facilities appropriate to the special needs of out-of-school children and vulnerable and unsuccessful students;
- A welcoming, positive and inclusive school environment that facilitates the transition from the family or preschool environment to basic education;
- The training and appointment of teachers who are capable of and attentive to the developmental needs and diverse learning styles of young children;
- The reduction of class sizes and a lower teacher-student ratio, taking into account the special care that the first years of schooling require;
- Raising awareness among school principals, teachers, local authorities for education, the community and parents for inclusive education. It is also important to raise awareness among children and pupils themselves so that schools truly become a place where the different needs and characteristics of each child are appreciated.

OBJETIVE 9: PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF TRAINERS, LECTURERS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS WITH RESPECT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Strengthening the capacity of the human resources of education requires the transmission of basic knowledge on the rights of women, children and people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, and the training of the necessary skills in order to be able to teach and assist these vulnerable groups (For example, through the revision of the Teacher Competence Model for the inclusion and professional development of inclusion-oriented teachers).

The current Model requires that the teacher, in a convenient way:

- Be aware of the differences between students and teach each student taking into account differences in learning styles, abilities, genders, ages, prior knowledge, psychosocial needs and behaviors;
- Select and apply different techniques and strategies, according to the needs of each student;
- Recognize and respect cultural and personal differences among students, parents and community members, enhancing cultural and linguistic diversity and avoiding any exclusion or discrimination.

Actions

However, there is still a long way to go in reforming pre-service teacher education and training. The main actions to reach this goal go back to the implementation of capacity building initiatives, using different methods, but focusing specifically on issues related to exclusion factors, in order to ensure that new and existing teachers:

- Embrace and take advantage of the diversity of their society and understand the development challenges they face (for example, the number of languages spoken in Timor-Leste and the percentage of people with physical and cognitive difficulties, the beliefs and

traditions of their students, gender inequalities in the education system and in society in general, etc.);

- Learn to structure the natural diversity of their own classroom, to identify children excluded from learning (e.g., due to minor difficulties, language problems, frequent absenteeism, etc.) and to create ways to include them again (e.g., moving children with visual and hearing problems to the front of the room, referring them to health professionals in the community, identifying reasons for frequent absenteeism, etc.);
- Develop a customized instruction for students of different abilities, including learning specific strategies for the use of individualized weekly support periods as efficiently as possible;
- Have the ability to analyze and reflect on their own behavior and methods, seeking to avoid further exclusion or combatting it (e.g., treating girls differently from boys, ignoring "difficult" and "slow" pupils, not responding to the problems of children who do not understand the language used in teaching);
- Understand essential international and national normative documents that require the inclusion and realization of the right to education for all;
- In multilingual contexts, acquire specific language skills, both in the use of the primary language as a language of instruction (when necessary) and in the use of the primary language in the official languages domain;

Dominant differentiated teaching techniques, and acquire general teaching skills, whether in large classrooms, where many children may be ignored or neglected, or in too small classroom settings, where it may be necessary to use teaching techniques for various Years, in order to ensure that all children have the same opportunity to learn.

OBJETIVE 10: RECRUITING AND PLACING TEACHERS PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

With the objective of an inclusive education, it is necessary to promote a diversified representation in the teaching staff, thus ensuring a real reflection of society.

Actions

Within this scope, the following actions must be taken:

- Promotion of information about the importance of obtaining a diverse faculty, through the implementation of information campaigns with the community;
- Recruitment of members of underrepresented groups (women, ethnic groups, people with disabilities);
- Creation and implementation of incentives, such as scholarships, for continuing professional development for teachers working in difficult circumstances (in remote areas or special schools).

OBJETIVE 11: STRENGTHENING DATA COLLECTION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

In order to achieve quality education, it is necessary to know the scope of the education system, its impact and its limitations. Through these public policy management tools, an improvement of the service can be ensured in good time, thus allowing access to quality education for a greater number of students on an equal condition.

Actions

In order to achieve this objective, it is envisaged to take the following actions:

- Elaboration of performance indicators in the Plans and other relevant instruments, capable of promoting inclusive education;
- Collecting, recording, processing and analyzing data at all levels of the education system for both formal and non-formal education;
- Discrimination of data by sex, age, ethnicity, educational difficulty and other characteristics, in order to determine which areas and groups are at a disadvantage with regard to education.

OBJETIVE 12: PROMOTE THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND COMMUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This objective is intended to bring together various stakeholders of Timorese society in the joint effort to achieve a more inclusive education.

Actions

The main measures to be implemented under this objective are:

- Promote community awareness on issues of equality, non-discrimination, and social inclusion, especially in the education sector;
- Strengthen public-private partnerships and the involvement of other local actors in supporting inclusive education and in the protection of people belonging to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
- Encourage financial and technical contributions from social organizations and the private sector, both nationally and internationally;
- Support and train the Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) as an effective driving force in promoting inclusive education.

OBJETIVE 13: STRENGTHENING THE COMMITMENT AND COORDINATION BETWEEN THE LEADING MINISTRIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

As recognized in the Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, overcoming the goals of inclusive education requires a multi-sectoral approach, according to which each leading ministry fulfills its respective responsibilities in a coordinated way. An affordable and quality universal education system must be supported by a safe and healthy community, accompanied by greater economic stability of families.

Actions

Within the scope of this objective the following actions are necessary:

- Expanding education investment and improving its effectiveness, with an approach to planning and implementing a policy for equity;
- Adapt public financing of education to the needs of the country and ensure efficiency in public spending in the area of education;

- Strengthen coordination with development partners to more easily meet the goals of inclusive education.

2. ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE POPULATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The following goals and objectives relate to specific groups often excluded from learning:

OBJETIVE 1: STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ARISING FROM PHYSICAL OR COGNITIVE DIFFICULTIES – ENSURING THE SATISFACTION OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

This objective takes into account the delineations of the Basic Education Law (BEL), which determines that "special education" must be organized "according to diversified models of integration in inclusive environments, either in schools of the general modality of school education, in classes or groups or in specialized units, or in special education establishments, according to the needs of the learner "(article 29).

Actions

Therefore, to ensure the education of students with disabilities will be needed as much as possible, a number of actions, including:

- Include children with special educational needs in regular schools;
- Ensure the development and implementation of alternative methods of student assessment;
- When necessary, increase the availability of special schools for students with severe disabilities who are unable to learn in an integrated mode in regular education;
- Provide training to teachers and specialized staff to have knowledge and skills centered on inclusive education, including that of children with disabilities;
- Provide financial, logistical and technical support to schools and non-governmental organizations that provide education and specialized services to children with special educational needs, and to strengthen their linkage and integration with the formal education system;
- Develop resource centers focusing on special needs, beginning with a Central Resource Center at the Taibessi special school;
- Provide support devices for students with special needs;
- Provide parental training so as to promote early detection of delays and specific development (and intervene to soften them);
- Build and develop modern educational institutions, ensuring their accessibility to students with physical difficulties, based on previously approved construction criteria;
- Develop educational and informational materials that are available in formats accessible to students with disabilities (including in Braille, "talking books" and broad and advanced national sign language);
- Improve access to technical and vocational training opportunities for people with physical and cognitive difficulties within an integrated education perspective, but also considering, when necessary, the development of specific technical programs to provide equivalent higher education for people with disabilities;

- Foster liaison with government bodies responsible for implementing specific actions in the social and health sector, such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Health, and with relevant civil society organizations to ensure a coordinating effort to provide support and necessary protection.

These specific actions depend, however, on several underlying actions, such as:

- Develop a more accurate database for students' specific needs and difficulties;
- Ensure the effective implementation of the National Policy for the Inclusion and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities coordinated by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, with the active participation of the ministries of the trusteeship, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health;
- Ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

OBJETIVE 2: PEOPLE LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY – ENSURE THAT CHILDREN LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY CAN ATTEND AND COMPLETE FORMAL EDUCATION SUCCESSFULLY

While the current school scholarship program is designed to make education free and to strengthen a more affordable education for all children, families living in extreme poverty still face many challenges in ensuring the education of their children. These include additional costs of schooling, such as uniforms and school supplies, and transportation costs for school, and for older children the loss of income when they are studying not to work.

Actions

Possible specific actions to address this problem include:

- Granting additional allowances or conditional cash transfers to poor children, able to cover all costs related to the school;
- Improvement and / or extension of existing social assistance mechanisms, including the Mother's Pursuit program and school feeding, in order to support the enrollment and retention of children in school;
- Provision of uniforms and school supplies to children living in areas specifically identified as extreme poverty.

OBJETIVE 3: PEOPLE LIVING IN REMOTE PLACES – ENSURING ENTRY, ATTENDANCE AND COMPLETION SUCCESSFULLY

After the restoration of independence, many of the families who had been transferred to the urban centers by the Indonesian authorities returned to their former residence in isolated and remote areas of the country. This has made it difficult to provide social services.

Actions

Among the solutions that concern education can include the following actions:

- Provide education covering several years of schooling, ensure adequate teacher training and the development of materials to support such education;
- Other support measures, such as school bus service.

OBJETIVE 4: ETHNIC, CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE GROUPS – ENSURE THE MAINTAINANCE AND REINFORCEMENT OF THE NON-OFFICIAL PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF THE STUDENT, AS WELL AS TO ACQUIRE DOMINANTE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE COUNTRY

Timor-Leste's ethnic-linguistic diversity is only a challenge for education, but diversity is also undoubtedly an opportunity, both for education and for the development of the Nation, and as such cannot be undervalued.

Actions

Providing initial education and literacy in the existing series of non-official primary languages requires the following actions:

- A thorough analysis of the EMBLI pilot program, curricula and pre-school and basic education school curricula, in order to potentially use their results to standardize multilingual education based on the primary language of the Pupil, early childhood and early years of primary school, thus seeking to achieve initial literacy in the national non-official language, and subsequently a successful transition into official and international languages;
- The development of orthography in national languages that do not yet have it, the preparation of learning materials in the unofficial national languages and the recruitment and training of teachers in the ethnic-linguistic groups;
- The development and implementation of interventions to enable in ensuring maximum utilization of curricular content by those who do not have mastery one of the official languages at the beginning of pre-school education and in the first years of basic education.

OBJETIVE 5: GIRLS AND WOMEN (AND MEN AND WOMEN) – ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH GENDERS

The gender disparities at the national level found at different levels of the education system in Timor-Leste are not as pronounced or partial in favor of boys as in many other Asian countries. However, there are still some disparities both in favor of girls in basic education and in favor of boys in secondary education. These disparities are particularly evident when comparing different municipalities. It should be noted that gender disparities are also strongly in favor of men in positions of leadership and leadership in the Ministry of Education and educational and teaching establishments.

Actions

In order to reduce such disparities, the following measures should be taken:

- Promote the importance of girls' education and awareness, especially among ethnic and economically vulnerable groups, where female enrollment and transition rates are low;
- Strengthen, from an early age, gender-oriented socialization, preferably in pre-school programs;
- Provide healthy, protective and gender-sensitive physical facilities for girls;

- Recruitment, training and placement of female teachers and underrepresented ethnic-linguistic groups in education;
- Conduct analyzes of gender representation and stereotypes in curricula, textbooks and other teaching-learning materials in the 3rd cycle of basic education, both in relation to schools and teacher training institutions, and to develop materials that are more sensitive to gender at these levels;
- To promote the enrollment of girls in technical and vocational education programs (for the purpose of equality in enrollment in relation to boys) and the development of gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials.

OBJETIVE 6: PREGNANT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN – GUARANTEE YOUR ATTENDANCE, RETURN AND COMPLETION SUCCESSFULLY

As mentioned earlier, early pregnancy among adolescent girls continues to pose a real obstacle to the completion of compulsory education by female students. In addition, according to the 2010 Census, most adolescent mothers in Timor stop studying or have never attended school, and so it is important to implement actions that can counteract this reality. Ensure the school attendance of the pregnant girl throughout her pregnancy and the return to formal education after childbirth as soon as possible.

Actions

It is important to ensure the following measures:

- Sensitize the educational community to the right of the pregnant girl to continue to attend school, to be respected and to have the same opportunities, regardless of gestation, thus eliminating the existing stereotype;
- To make known to the adolescent mother the advantages of returning to formal education and sensitizing the school community about the importance of this return;
- Adopt a plan of action to maintain the frequency of the pregnant girl and mother in formal education;
- Reinforce education for life in schools, including knowledge that supports the choice of healthy relationships, the strengthening of self-confidence, and the necessary knowledge about reproductive health;
- Provide in legal regulations on enrollment the duty of educational institutions to accept the attendance and re-enrollment of pregnant girls and young women and adolescent mothers.

OBJETIVE 7: WORKING CHILDREN – GUARANTEE YOUR ATTENDANCE AND COMPLETION SUCCESSFULLY

According to the Labor Code, the work or employment of children under the age of 15 years is prohibited (article 68, no. 1 of Law no. 4/2012, on 21 February), but at the same time attendance in basic education is compulsory until at least the end of the school year in which the student is seventeen years of age (article 11, no. 5 of Law no. 14/2008, on 29 October). There is thus a two-year overlap between which a young person may be required to continue their attendance and at the same time to support their family budget. The need to support the

financial condition of the family means that some young people have to work and eventually drop out of school.

Actions

The main measures to be taken include:

- Encourage children to return to school, reinforcing measures such as the Bolsa de Mãe (Mother's Subsidy), to support families that ensure school attendance for their children, without this having a negative impact on family financial resources;
- Review the curriculum of the 3rd cycle of basic education, so that it promotes the teaching of skills more practical and relevant to the local context capable to motivate the continuation of school studies, such as skills related to education for life, as well as knowledge and skills related to the use of computer technologies, school garden, etc.

OBJETIVE 8: OTHER EXCLUDED GROUPS - GUARANTEE ENROLLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND COMPLETION SUCCESSFULLY IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In general, it is essential to ensure that the education system is flexible enough to meet the needs of all children who find themselves in difficult circumstances and situations of risk.

While ensuring the adequacy of the system and implementing a number of actions to ensure the continuation of formal education in the formal system, the reality is one in which a significant number of individuals cannot have effective access to formal education. It is thus in a perspective of inclusive education necessary to implement non-formal teaching approaches to ensure the opportunity for inclusion of all. In particular, the following groups should be targets for specific actions in non-formal education.

Pregnant girls and young mothers. Although there are no formal restrictions on the continuous enrollment of pregnant girls and young mothers, school practices and cultural attitudes make continuing education difficult in most cases. Still, sometimes the new role of mother, due to a small number of childcare services, does not allow the continuation of the studies. When it is not the choice of the pregnant girl or the young mother to return to formal education within an educational institution, it should be ensured the opportunity to participate in courses of equivalent level, which may also prepare for a possible return to education in the future.

Young workers. The Basic Education Law establishes that "a special study regime must be provided to student workers, taking into account their status as workers and students" (article 41). Therefore, it is important to implement policies and programs that allow school attendance to young people involved in work, at times when they are not at work, and to enable them to obtain certification equivalent to those at full-time school.

Young people out of school. The Youth Situation Analysis Report (2014) indicates that young people dropped out at age 19, and about 15% of 19-year-olds are still in the 3rd cycle of basic education. It is therefore important to create non-formal education programs in order

to provide equivalent education and, where possible, reintegrate these young people into the formal education system at the secondary and / or higher level.

Children in conflict with the law. Detained children have limited opportunities to continue their education, and this difficulty persists after their release. The constraints of both school and cultural and traditional policies make re-entry into the system a difficult challenge. The existence of non-formal education programs in prisons would allow children in prison to keep up with their studies and be more prepared and confident to return to formal education after being released.

C. COMMON STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In order to achieve the various objectives, the education system should adopt a series of common strategies, covering all levels of education and teaching and providing for future planning, budgeting and programming. These include:

- **The development of an inclusive vision and objectives** for the education system. An education system that prioritizes inclusive education policies focusing on child-centered education as well as the full and democratic participation of communities, parents and the students themselves.

Inclusive vision and objectives have been adopted in key government documents and policies, including the National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, the VI Constitutional Government Program, and the National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2030: "By 2025, the people of Timor-Leste will be well-educated, knowledgeable and qualified to live a long and productive life, respecting peace, family and traditional positive values. All individuals will have the same opportunities of access to a quality education that will allow them participate in the process of economic, social and political development, guaranteeing social equity and national unity";

- **Clarification of the principle of inclusive education as a systematic and continuous process** of addressing the diverse needs of all students, reducing obstacles in the learning environment, and ensuring the full integration of these students into the education system;
- **The defense of this broad concept of inclusive education** in order to ensure that the Ministry of Education and other relevant leading ministries and government institutions, other stakeholders and society in general, recognize the importance of ensuring good quality education for all citizens of Timor-Leste;
- **The internalization of the principle of inclusive education**, which should include all education personnel, but should also imply the institutionalization of inclusive education in the Government of Timor-Leste at national, municipal and school levels;

Within the framework of all relevant plans and programs of the Ministry of Education, including accreditation standards for educational and teaching establishments, Teacher Competencies, the National Education Strategic Plan and curriculum and school textbooks, which may require revision of documents when already approved;

- **Decentralization of authority and responsibility** to promote analysis and development of solutions to problems of educational marginalization at the more deconcentrated levels of the system;
- **The priority at the national level of inclusive education policy** in order to better understand the patterns and causes of educational marginalization and to be able to develop specific strategies and solutions and to implement localized interventions through the creation of mechanisms centered on the relation from school to community, in order to identify children outside the education system and ensure their participation;
- **Co-operation and coordinated work** to ensure that all stakeholders in inclusive education collaborate effectively and efficiently and share good inclusive education;
- **The introduction and consolidation of perspectives and components of inclusive education** in education policies, at sectoral levels, in existing programs and projects, including monitoring and evaluation components;
- **Capacity-building and promotion of cultural sensitivity** at all levels of the system, ensuring that those responsible for realizing the right to education are aware of who is not in school, and what they can do about it;
- **Empowering women and girls, as well as other disadvantaged groups**, ensuring that they play an active role in the planning and implementation of inclusive education programs.
- **Strengthening the involvement of parents and the community in the education and learning of children**, avoiding school drop-out, identifying out-of-school children and encouraging them to return, and promoting ownership of the educational process and school management in a manner to ensure the quality of teaching.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL REMARKS

Although many people see inclusive education as an area that affects only those in various disadvantaged circumstances, diversity is in itself an element that enriches the educational experience of all those involved. Ensuring that all children receive quality education is a clear responsibility of the Government, through the Ministry of Education and other related public bodies. This should not be seen as a burden, but rather as an opportunity. An opportunity to help citizens to realize their full potential so as to become valued citizens, as well as an opportunity for all Children to learn from each other's differences, developing attitudes of respect and tolerance that will be useful to them throughout their lives.

The success of the education system in Timor-Leste is highly dependent on how the issue of inclusive education is addressed on all fronts; If many are excluded, or if they are denied quality and relevant education opportunities, the entire population will suffer from such injustices, the proverb being "A current is as strong as its weakest link", of real relevance in this matter.

The Government, through a concerted effort by its organs and relevant entities, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, and with the support of development partners and civil society, has the responsibility to guarantee equal opportunities for all students, So that they are successful and see their differences not as a disadvantage but rather as a skill.