



**Innovative partnerships to enhance
community resilience in Timor-Leste**





Building the capacity of women and men in vulnerable households throughout six villages in Timor Leste, MAKAA'S is increasing access to food and water, improving land and water management.

Introduction

Increasingly irregular rainfall, higher temperatures and longer dry periods conspire with already highly variable microclimates to create a patchwork of exposure to climate hazards in Liquiça. The high dependence on rain-fed agriculture of rural households, marginal sloping land and ongoing degradation across the Laklo and Gularloa river catchments contribute to making this one of the most food insecure areas in the country.

CARE and WaterAid recognised these challenges and took a catchment approach when designing the MAKAA'S project¹ to enhance access to safe drinking water, deliver improved sanitation, promote climate-resilient livelihoods and reduce landslide risks and erosion. The MAKAA'S project, which was funded by Australian Aid, also worked with government to enable broader village plans for climate change adaptation. From July 2012 to March 2015, the MAKAA'S project increased the resilience of 4,057 beneficiaries (2,125 women and 1,932 men) in 1,525 rural households in Timor-Leste's Liquiça district.

The MAKAA'S project successfully built on existing partnerships through the project with local NGOs such as Centro do Desenvolvimento da Economia Popular (CDEP), Hafoun Timor Lorosa'e (HTL), Maladoi, and Naroman Timor Foun (NTF), and development cooperation initiatives financed by the Government of Australia, such as Seeds of Life, and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (BESIK).

This Learning Brief reflects on the catchment approach and how it contributed to project achievements. This Learning Brief draws from the findings of the end-of-project evaluation² (February 2015) and draws together program lessons and recommendations, for CARE Timor-Leste, partners and the broader sector.

¹ Mudansa Klímatica iha Ambiente Seguru / Climate Change in a Secure Environment

² An end-of-project evaluation was completed in February 2015, which included visits to eight of the 33 target hamlets in Liquiça district and a survey of 292 households, community workshops, and key informant interviews were completed. The findings can be found in full in Food, Water Rain, Risk: The Uphill Struggle to Adapt (*Final Evaluation of the MAKAA'S project on community-based adaptation in Timor-Leste*) which is available on CARE Australia's website: https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/CBA-Portfolio-Evaluation_MAKAAS_Evaluation-Report_FINAL1.pdf.

Achievements and lessons

The project led to increased agricultural production and higher incomes amongst farmer group members. It also generated significant improvements in access and availability of safe drinking water, reduced open defecation rates, and increased hand-washing practices, which together can lead to reduced health risks, particularly to children. Furthermore, it raised climate change awareness amongst villagers and government partners, built linkages to government and reinforced community capacity – all of which are important aspects of adaptive capacity. Significantly, most project outcomes were seen as sustainable given the willingness and capacity of villagers to continue pursuing critical project activities. Some specific lessons were learned about partnerships in the project.

Building on existing partnerships and relationships is efficient and effective

In achieving these outcomes, the MAKAS project successfully built on the expertise, networks and structures that CARE and WaterAid had nurtured and maintained through earlier projects in Liquiça district. Not only did this enable a swift rollout across the 33 target hamlets, it also provided an efficient and effective mechanism to pool and share expertise from the outset. The project brought together consortium partners with different technical expertise to address interlinked and diverse local challenges facing communities in Liquiça. The full integration of expertise in a consortium was ambitious and challenging but critical to ensure the food and water security challenges can be addressed at a watershed level. The end-of-project evaluation found that the collaboration between the two main partners of the consortium was an efficient and effective mechanism to share skills and knowledge, and that the collaboration was close and strong at the national level.

Partnerships can improve implementation for communities and the partners

The partnership approach in MAKAS benefitted the community directly as they were able to draw on the comparative expertise of all of the organisations to deliver an integrated water resource management and food security project. There were also mutual learning benefits for the partners. At the beginning, staff were either focused on agriculture or water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) but due to the partnership, they have been able to work together to increase their understanding of community-based adaptation CBA and of their colleagues' respective disciplines.



CARE MAKAS project group leader, watering her garden.

Set up management systems to facilitate partnerships

The MAKAS Project Steering Committee was set up by the project to facilitate management and implementation of the project. The Steering Committee benefited from the participation of formal partner organisations, DFAT as the donor, Seeds of Life, BESIK, line ministries, as well as a women's organisation and the National Disabled People's Organisation. It provided a forum to identify shared practical actions and linkages across activities, share information with peers and local organisations and also for participants to share information with others on the sidelines. For example, one of the ideas to come from a Project Steering Committee meeting was the establishment of a National Working Group on Climate Change which has since organised the first National Conference on Climate Change Adaptation which was held in November 2014 in Dili. A Project Operations Committee was established to bring together the Hamlet and Village Chiefs, Liquiça administration officials and partners to discuss project progress. While this forum was specifically set up for project implementation, it also strengthened linkages between members and provided a forum for sharing information and knowledge.

Ensure integration at the field level as well as the national level

Coordination between CARE, WaterAid and local partners was focused at the national level but it was also important to enhance the coordination of the day-to-day implementation of field activities. CARE and WaterAid had different target groups at the community level, which was driven by their different technical focus (Water Management Committees for WaterAid and farmers' groups for CARE). Whilst this gave a clear focus for their specific technical inputs, it meant sometimes communities were not clear on project delivery. Better field level integration could also have facilitated wider village-level planning and local technical sharing.

Engage with partners outside the project for wider sharing of project experience and bringing new expertise into the project

Throughout the project, MAKAS actively engaged with peer agencies to share approaches and learning. For example, MAKAS liaised closely with the Rural Development Project, GIZ, Instituto Camoes, Asian Development Bank Agro-biodiversity project, United Nations Development Programme, Oxfam and the National Directorate of International Environmental Affairs and Climate Change. MAKAS has been actively engaged with the Climate Change Working Group and presented the project's work extensively at the first Conference on Climate Change Adaptation held in Dili in November 2014. These discussions and forums enabled the project to share approaches and learning, which may be incorporated into other initiatives. The project has also actively facilitated visits to the project sites as well as engaged in cross visits to Oxfam's project in Oecusse and Japanese International Cooperation Agency's project in Aileu. This has helped to establish linkages that may not have otherwise been established and broadened the understanding of project participants.

Leverage the available technical expertise

The project has sought to draw on the technical expertise of different partners and institutions to foster cross-learning between partners and integration of technical expertise. Two key areas are important to consider: gender equality and reducing barriers for people with disability.

Work with partners to increase women in leadership positions

Highly gendered roles and responsibilities in urban and rural livelihoods mean higher workloads and lower recognition of women for their work. CARE and WaterAid brought significant expertise in their approaches to gender-transformative programming. MAKAS provided a valuable opportunity to share expertise between the two organisations and their partners to improve their own practices to improve women's rights. Through its partnership with the International Women's Development Agency, WaterAid has focused on building capacity of staff and local partners to facilitate gender dialogue as part of WASH community mobilisation processes with women and men in communities. The MAKAS project made efforts to ensure all twenty Water Management Groups had more than 40% female members and women held 50% of the leadership positions (chairperson, secretary, treasurer). In the end, 43% of Water Management Group members were women and 50% of leadership positions were held by women. Through CARE's agricultural and livelihoods work, the project also supported mixed as well as female-only farmers groups. This provided a space and opportunity to build women's voice, confidence and capacities to meaningfully participate in community-based adaptation (CBA) planning and management processes. Of the 81 active farmers groups at the end of the project, 18 were female-only groups were 25 of the remaining mixed groups were led by women.

Work with technical partners to improve disability inclusion

The project teams worked to reduce barriers to participation for women, men boys and girls with disabilities by identifying and supporting people with different impairments to be active participants. When this project first started, disability inclusion was a relatively new area for CARE, although WaterAid brought good knowledge, understanding and practices in disability-inclusive WASH to the partnership. To increase inclusion in the project other partners were brought in. Raes Hadomi Timor Oan (RHTO the National Disabled People's Organisation) and the National community-based rehabilitation program were invited to join the MAKAS Project Steering Committee. The project team and partners have received on-going technical support from WaterAid's Equity and Inclusion Adviser and from CBM-Nossal to identify practical approaches to disability inclusion in WASH and CBA activities. RHTO also supported implementation of the WASH activities by raising awareness within the communities about the rights of people with disabilities to be active participants in the project, and working with partners and the community to ensure people with disabilities were involved in decision-making – for example, in relation to the location of latrines and to ensure water points were accessible. RHTO also provided advice on referrals to other disability support services to ensure a holistic approach to disability inclusion was undertaken. WaterAid established a Memorandum of Understanding with RHTO to work closely together on building their capacity in WASH and building WaterAid and partners' capacity in disability inclusion. This will continue beyond the project.



CARE MAKAS project group leader inspects her eggplants.

Conclusion

The MAKAS project led to increased agricultural production and higher incomes amongst farmer group members, generated significant improvements in access and availability of safe drinking water, reduced open defecation rates, and increased hand-washing practices, which together can lead to reduced health risks, particularly to children. It raised climate change awareness amongst villagers and government partners and built linkages to government. Furthermore, collective action has been reinforced, with many villagers seeing links to the local government strengthened.

The partnership approach meant the project expanded existing partnerships and relationships and set up systems to facilitate the partnership. Working with organisations with different technical expertise (including in gender and disability inclusion) improved technical practice and gave communities and partners the chance to access highly skilled practitioners. Engaging outside the formal partnership was also important for sharing project experience beyond the project.

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ABOUT CARE

CARE works with poor communities in developing countries to end extreme poverty and injustice.

Our long-term aid programs provide food, clean water, basic healthcare and education and create opportunities for people to build a better future for themselves.

We also deliver emergency aid to survivors of natural disasters and conflict, and help people rebuild their lives.

We have 70 years' experience in successfully fighting poverty, and last year we helped change the lives of 72 million people around the world.