INTRODUCTION

This country scan outlines the prospects of using EdTech in Timor-Leste as part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and UK Supporting the Advancement of Girls' Education programme (ASEAN-UK SAGE). The programme is a UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) programme for ASEAN and Timor-Leste. Other partners in the programme include EdTech Hub, the ASEAN Secretariat, the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Office (SEAMEO), the British Council, and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

- Timor-Leste is a small island nation that was occupied by Indonesia in 1975. After decades of conflict, Timor-Leste gained its independence in 2002.
- According to UNICEF, the country has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 42% of its population under 18 years old. This reality presents opportunities for socio-economic development and challenges regarding Timor-Leste's limited resources to provide for the growing number of young people entering the education system and workforce.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TIMOR-LESTE

A top-level summary of policy, partnerships, and challenges

POLICY

The National Education Strategic Plan 2011–2030 (↑Ministry of Education & República Democrática de Timor-Leste, 2011) presents the government's long-term goals to:

1 Reform the education system by improving the quality of education and ensuring equal access to the various levels of education for all Timorese.

2 Reform the education management and administration system by decentralising education services, creating regional inspection services, crafting a new teacher training policy, and improving the quality of management and administration in the Ministry of Education.

PARTNERSHIPS

Key development partners in education include (but are not limited to) UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Australia Aid, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

CHALLENGES

School infrastructure is a key challenge to the education system in Timor-Leste. Most of the country's education infrastructure was destroyed when violence erupted in 1999, as noted in the government's Strategic Development Plan for 2011–2030 (↑Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 2011). Currently, many schools operate under multiple shifts, which reduces instruction time. Existing school buildings require renovation, and more construction is needed to accommodate the growing school-age population and increasing demand for higher levels of education.
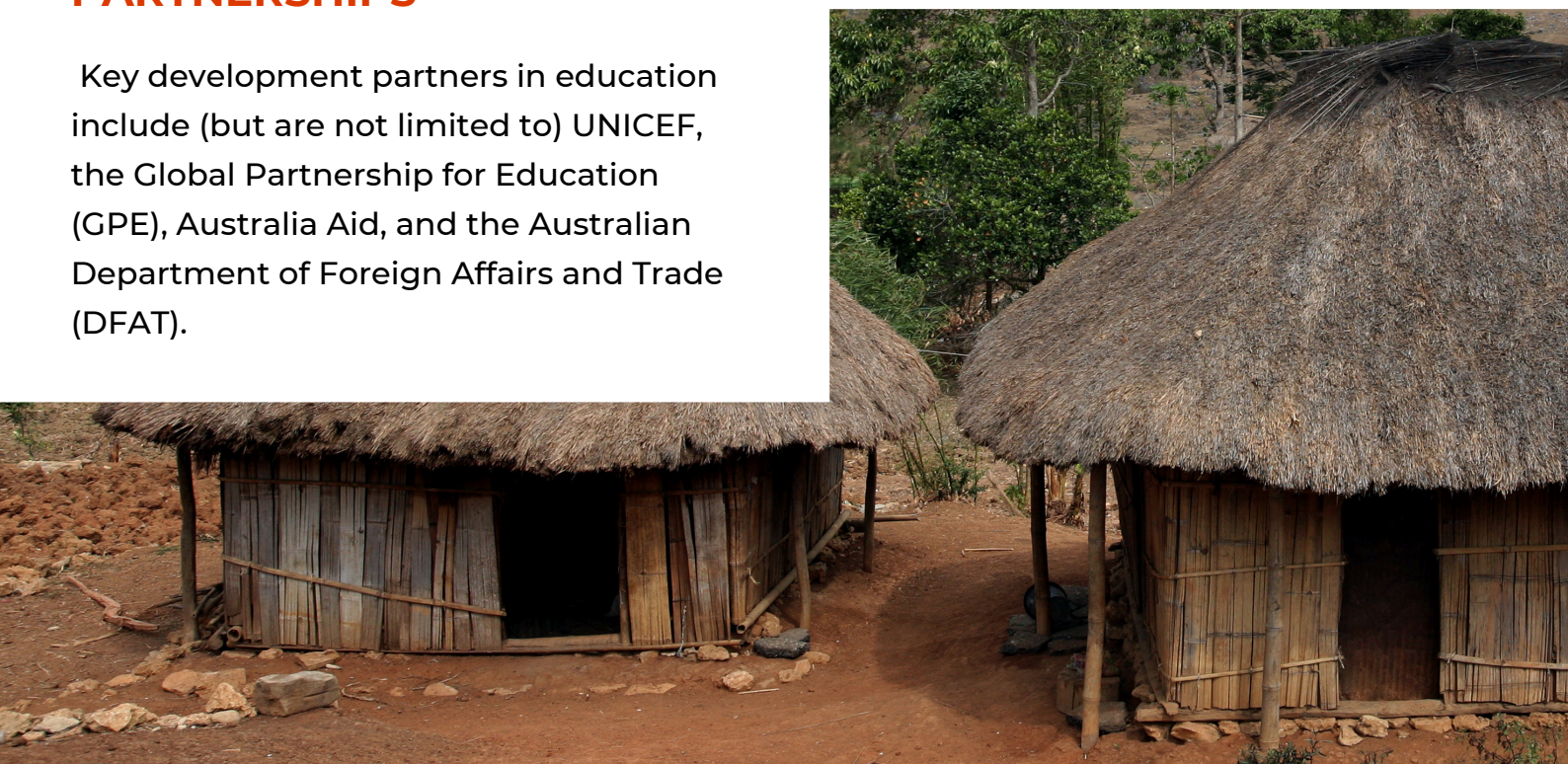
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN & YOUTH (OOSCY)

- ↑UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020) reports that 5% of children of primary school age are out of school, but this figure increases to almost 13% for pre-secondary school and 26% for secondary school. OOSCY rates for boys are significantly higher than for girls at all levels of education.
- Surveys of out-of-school children and their families report that economic and academic factors are the primary reasons for dropping out.
- The government established foundational courses and a national equivalency programme to better support OOSCY.

GIRLS' EDUCATION

- Gender parity has been achieved at the primary school level. Enrolment data from the Ministry of Education shows that girls in Timor-Leste have higher access to education up to the secondary school level.
- The country has strongly held social norms regarding gender roles. Girls and women face gender inequality in the workforce and gender-based violence. There are societal expectations for women to marry and start a family, which can impact young women's post-secondary education (↑Ars, no date) opportunities.

LEARNERS WITH SEND

- The 2022 Census reports that 1.4% of the population over five years old has one or more disabilities (↑Government of Timor-Leste, 2022). However, data about learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Timor-Leste is limited. A policy brief by UN Timor-Leste and the non-governmental organisation Belun (↑ 2018) estimates that less than half of youth with disabilities have attended school at some point.
- The government adopted the Inclusive Education Policy in 2017, calling for its inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms and the development of accessible materials, among other reforms (↑Government of Timor-Leste, 2017).

INFRASTRUCTURE

- According to the ↑International Telecommunication Union (no date), internet penetration is lower in Timor-Leste than in the rest of Southeast Asia. The Timor-Leste 2016 Demographic and Health Survey reports that most of the population is covered by mobile-cellular networks, and mobile phone ownership is high, with 84% of households owning a device (↑Ministry of Planning and Finance & Ministry of Health, 2018).
- However, per the ↑UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2019) report on regulatory policies and information and communication technology (ICT) trends, the cost of mobile and fixed broadband services is high compared to the Asia-Pacific region. This expense is a barrier to regular internet use and should be considered when developing educational programmes.

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

LICENCE

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