

AHP

Disaster READY

# DISASTER READY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Timor-Leste

Australian  
Aid 



Image: CARE



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# WHERE WE WORK\*

- ◆ CARE
- ◆ Caritas
- ◆ Oxfam
- ◆ Plan
- ◆ World Vision

\* Based on data provided by AHP Partners in Year 1 Phase 2 Disaster READY Project Plan Annual Reports

# INTRODUCTION

## Timor-Leste

Disaster READY aims to improve preparedness, resilience, and the ability to respond to the impacts of disasters and climate change in Timor-Leste. The program supports communities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and government. Disaster READY emphasises the inclusion of women and girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups as well as the localisation of program design, implementation, and monitoring. Disaster READY in Timor-Leste is being implemented by five lead agencies: Plan International, Oxfam, CAN DO, World Vision and CARE. These non-governmental organisations work to deliver Disaster READY in partnership with 14 local CSOs.

Year 1 of Phase 2 of Disaster READY (July 2022-June 2023) included the completion of Phase 1 (2017-2022) activities and associated reporting. Partners also completed the Phase 2 country and project-level design process to support work to be undertaken from 2022-2026. This involved a country-led, comprehensive redesign of Disaster READY Phase 2 projects, country level plan and associated deliverables, including a localisation plan and development of a collective learning agenda.

Simultaneously, Disaster READY partners commenced implementation of Phase 2. All projects and country-level plans are designed to support the achievement of three overarching intermediate outcomes:

**Intermediate Outcome 1.1:** Communities (especially vulnerable groups) plan and implement effective, inclusive, and integrated disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation (CCA) activities.

**Intermediate Outcome 1.2:** Local Civil Society actors — Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs), churches, and informal groups — have improved institutional and technical capacity to fulfil their role in effective disaster preparedness and CCA.

**Intermediate Outcome 1.3:** National and Sub-national governments are supported to lead effective, inclusive and coordinated disaster preparedness, CCA and response activities.

The first year of Disaster READY Phase 2 in Timor-Leste has focussed on laying the groundwork for successful project implementation in new and existing communities. A summary of early results against the intermediate outcomes is outlined below. This report also outlines initiatives and results against the key cross cutting themes of the program: inclusion, localisation and coordination.



# CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Timor-Leste is a small and mountainous country with a population of 1.3 million people. Flooding is the most frequent disaster impacting Timor-Leste, and the country is ranked 16th on the 2021 World Risk Index. Communities are particularly vulnerable to flash-flooding caused by monsoonal rains. Subsequent landslides and erosion are only enhanced by the country's steep topography and widespread deforestation. Climate change is already impacting the people of Timor-Leste, and climatologists predict that the weather in Timor-Leste will become hotter and drier, leading to harsher and more drawn-out drought conditions, causing heavier and more erratic rainfall, and increasing flooding and landslide hazards.

In January 2023, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit northern Australia and was felt in Timor-Leste. There were no reports of damage or tsunami risk. A magnitude 6.2 earthquake hit the Banda Sea in May 2023 and was felt in northern Australia and Timor-Leste. Again, there were no reports of damage or tsunami risk.

# YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS

- Partners supported the establishment of 14 new suco (village) disaster management committees (SDMCs) and provided refresher training to an additional 11 existing SDMCs. This takes the total to 70 new SDMCs established through Disaster READY Phase 1 & 2.
- Partners are supporting communities to become more resilient by encouraging the uptake of CCA activities.
- Partners are supporting 14 CSOs to improve their institutional and technical capacity.
- Institutional capacity building of CSOs has resulted in the adoption of humanitarian standards, protection policies and safeguarding of vulnerable community members.
- Partners are supporting national and sub-national government to adopt gender responsive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and CCA programming.
- Partners are working with Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development (ABC ID) to increase disability awareness and inclusion in DRR.



# RESULTS AGAINST INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES





## Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Communities (especially vulnerable groups) plan and implement effective, inclusive, and integrated disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation activities.

Partners have achieved progress towards community level preparedness through establishing disaster management committees and providing a range of associated support. Disaster READY partners in Timor-Leste supported the establishment 14 new SDMCs and provided refresher training to a further 11 existing SDMCs. Partners also supported communities to develop and/or update 40 disaster risk reduction (DRR) and CCA plans.

SDMCs were also provided with a series of support including Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) training, emergency response simulation exercises, gender equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) training, women leadership and proposal writing sessions. As a result, six SDMCs wrote and submitted small proposals to the government and related institutions to seek support for implementing their mutually agreed-upon plans, demonstrating independence and the ability to seek support for community priorities.

Partners supported community resilience through establishing and operationalising nine savings groups

composed of 174 members (the majority women). The savings groups have increased financial capacity for members, strengthening resilience to economic shocks and stresses, and also contributed to increased female leadership in disaster management. The groups have used the savings to implement small-scale activities to mitigate the impact of climate change, such as water source protection, building local gabion boxes, and practicing climate smart agriculture techniques like sloping agricultural land technology which is designed to conserve soil and increase food production.

Partners are supporting communities to become more resilient through integration of CCA focused activities. DRCC partners, in collaboration with SDMCs and community-based organisations, supported 40 communities to develop or update existing DRR plans to include CCA specific actions. For example:

- Partners trained 340 community members (including 10 people with disability) on Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) in Viqueque municipality.

Further information is available in the Inclusion section on pages 17-21.



2,791 people reached



43 percent were women and girls



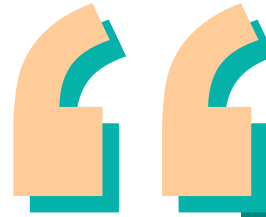
6 percent were people with disabilities



14 new community disaster management committees were formed



- Communities in four sucos adopted a food mapping calendar and planned production. They moved from a monoculture approach to diversifying between staple crops, tubers and vegetables across wet and dry seasons to support improved and sustainable crop production, therefore increasing community resilience.
- Four villages in Oecusse undertook actions to protect water springs and construct local gabions in flood prone areas. Community members reported that these techniques increased their access to water.
- To date, 11 villages used the plans to incorporate actions that address the specific needs of women and 19 villages included specific actions for addressing the needs of people with disabilities related to climate change. For example, actions related to water source protection/conservation and clean water accessibility in specific locations where vulnerable community members were identified. Partners leveraged community profiling to design specific evacuation actions and procedures for people with disabilities, pregnant women, and the elderly.



*I am really happy with the Disaster READY project, because it really helps us with water spring conservation activity. Every dry season the source of clean water always decreases, and impacts myself as a disabled person to access clean water to ensure my day-to-day activities. However, with support from [partners] Fraterna and ChildFund, conserving our water source, now I can access clean water nearby my home, also in dry session clean water is still sufficient for all the community.*

Gusti Aranda Hornai,  
community member

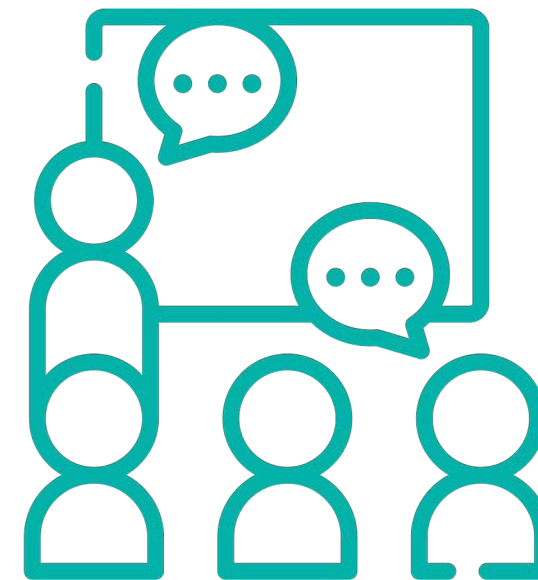
## Intermediate Outcome 1.2: Local CSOs (NGOs, CBOs, OPDs, churches, informal groups) have improved institutional and technical capacity to fulfil their role in effective disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation.

In the first year of implementation, partners supported 14 local CSOs and 20 additional community-based organisations (youth and farmer groups). Partners signed agreements with these civil society organisations, completed capacity assessments and due diligence training. As a result of this work, partners and civil society actors have agreed to develop plans to improve the organisational capacity and technical skills of CSOs to lead DRR/CCA activities. These plans will support the development of skills related to core humanitarian standards, disability inclusion, gender-based violence prevention, child protection and inclusive data management.

Institutional capacity building of CSOs has resulted in the adoption of humanitarian standards, protection policies and safeguarding of vulnerable community members. Training included financial policy, procedures and reporting, proposal writing training, GEDSI, safeguarding in emergency,

Sphere and Humanitarian Inclusion Standards:

- CARE has supported local CSO, KHC, with financial management and policy training. As a result, KHC has begun revising their internal financial management systems. After receiving training of trainers, KHC staff are now independently facilitating gender-based violence training in target villages.
- Oxfam worked with local CSO, ASB, to provide training of trainers on Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities to 24 staff and local partners. Having completed the training, participants reported that they were more confident to facilitate training with government representatives and community leaders in order to improve inclusion in disaster planning and to reduce physical barriers for people with disabilities. In addition, participants from local organisations who received training committed to cascading the training to additional staff.



# FOURTEEN

Civil Society Organisations increased technical or organisational capacity. Ten of these organisations completed needs assessments and organisational action plans.





*Thank you, World Vision, for partnering with us as a local implementing partner. Through this finance training we are aware of how to comply with the finance procedures and to avoid fraud. We are also aware about safeguarding that helps our staff to behave better towards the community. We will adopt this safeguarding as mandatory for our staff not only for the AHP project but also in other projects.*

**Abel Pereira**  
Executive Director, HADEER, Timor-Leste



# IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES

As in many countries, women in Timor-Leste are more likely to be responsible for collecting water for their household than men. Twice a day, Maria walks from her home west of Balibo to a spring to collect water for her husband and their eight children. They used to have to collect the water from a pool in a stream bed, and sometimes the water was polluted, making her family sick.

But poor sanitation is now a problem in the past, thanks to a grant to improve Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) provided through Disaster READY.

Disaster READY partner Caritas Australia (via CAN DO) installed pipes in Maria's village, tapping into an underground spring. Now she and other families living in Cova Aldeia fill their jerry cans locally from a large water tank saving time and energy.

This water is safe to drink year-round, whereas in the rainy season the water used to become muddy and unsafe.





(...continued) Maria still remembers how it was before the spring was improved.

“In our community, we’re affected by drought,” Maria said.

“We’d use a water dipper to scoop the water from the spring, [but] it’s not good for us to scoop the water because we take some dirt and mud into the jerry can as well.

“We collect it to drink, to cook food and to wash dishes. Sometimes it can make us sick.”

But with the water piped directly into the tank, she knows it will be good to drink.

“After the tank was built, it was easy for us to cook, wash clothes and drink water because we just place the jerry can under the water tap one after another once it is all full,” she said.

“Usually, we bring five or six jerry cans to collect the water.”

Although having the tank doesn’t make the walk back up the hill to her home any easier, especially when she has to carry up to 25 litres of water at a time, knowing that her family won’t get sick from drinking or washing in it provides Maria with peace of mind.





## Intermediate Outcome 1.3: National and Sub-national governments are supported to lead effective, inclusive and coordinated disaster preparedness, climate change adaptation and response activities.

Partners are supporting national and sub-national government to adopt gender responsive DRR/CCA programming. Partners conducted five events on building capacity, supporting and coordinating with national and sub-national governments and stakeholders to ensure effective and inclusive disaster risk management processes in Timor-Leste. The focus of these events has been building capacity on gender and social inclusion in emergencies. Partners provided training to national level emergency responders, including Civil Protection Authority (CPA) staff, on gender responsive budgeting to ensure gender and inclusion considerations in national and sub-national level disaster management budgeting. Partners held regular coordination meetings with CPA and community leaders at the sub-national level and supported local authorities to organise different initiatives at community level. To date, initiatives have included the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction

celebrations, socialisation of the CPA law, and introducing Open Street Map, a tool for identifying buildings, populations, critical infrastructure and public facilities/amenities.

**Partners are working with ABC ID to increase disability awareness and inclusion in DRR.** Partners supported improvements to relationships between media, CSOs and government to promote citizen awareness and engagement on disability inclusion through programming a national radio package featuring government, CSOs and community leaders. The radio program relayed advocacy messages on the need to ensure that disaster preparedness and response plans were inclusive. It is hoped these public radio broadcasts will support and reinforce the community-based disaster management initiatives being implemented by partners. The radio shows included segments which were moderated by a person with disability.



# 5

collaboration and coordination activities and events to support government, improving NGO/government relationships and increasing government capacity with a focus on inclusion.





*"Now we are realising that the current policy for standardisation of food packages is not considering the needs of vulnerable groups, especially women and people with disabilities. Therefore, we are now aiming to review the existing food package which will ensure the needs of vulnerable people in emergencies."*

Ismael da Costa Babo  
President, Civil Protection Authority, Timor-Leste

# CROSS CUTTING ISSUES





# INCLUSION

Inclusion is a critical component mainstreamed across all Disaster READY partner projects and activities. In Year 1, progress towards inclusion across all activities has been modest with partners laying foundations for improved practices going forward. Two independent technical advisors have completed reviews of each of the Timor-Leste projects and provided detailed recommendations for each partner to progress towards improved gender equality and disability inclusion.

Participation figures from Timor-Leste show that 43 percent (1,193) of participants were female and six percent (168) were people with disabilities.

40 DRR/CCA action plans were also developed, with 68 percent (27) of action plans including actions to address the specific needs of women and girls and 63 percent (25) including actions to address the specific needs of people with disabilities.

\*sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics

## 63%

of DRR/CCA action plans address the specific needs of people with disabilities



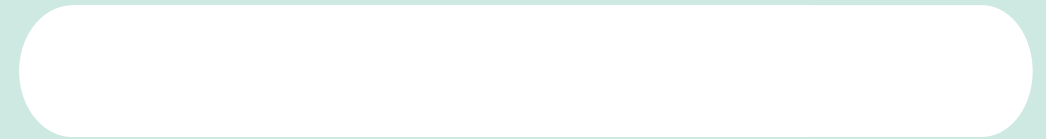
## 68%

of DRR/CCA actions plans address the specific needs of women and girls



## 0%

of DRR/CCA action plans address the specific needs of diverse SOGIESC\* peoples







## DISABILITY INCLUSION TAKES A LEADING ROLE

Angelina da Costa is accustomed to the risks nature poses to her remote community in Timor-Leste. As someone with a disability, she knows she is particularly at risk when a disaster occurs. That's why she has taken a leadership role in helping others in Faturilau village prepare for natural disasters, as part of the Disaster READY project.

"There is a risk of disasters here – strong winds, heavy rainfall, flooded rivers and landslides," she said. "Floods can wash away our farm animals, and even people."

She recently took part in a training session of the Disaster Management Committee to improve the community's ability to cope with the next disaster and to minimise the risks to the villagers, their stock and their farms.

Angelina said she found the training useful and it made her confident that the community of Faturilau



(...continued) will be better placed to cope with whatever nature throws at them.

“The Disaster READY Project’s program is good because persons with disabilities are included in this training,” she said. “Also, they brought male and female people with disabilities to train us on disaster risk reduction, because we are most vulnerable when disasters occur.”

The disaster preparedness planning meeting at Faturilau was run in partnership with the Timor-Leste Government’s Civil Protection Secretariat, under the Ministry of Interior. Besides training sessions like this, the Suco Disaster Management Committee also works on creating disaster risk-reduction plans and proposal writing to ensure the community has the resources it needs to prosper.

Angelina’s participation in the Suco Disaster Management Committee reflects the deliberate effort to ensure they reflect their communities.

With the Disaster READY Project operating in most of Timor-Leste’s municipalities, women make up more than a quarter of committee members and nearly half of the committees include persons with disabilities.





# INCLUSION

CARE undertook community level women's leadership training for 36 (31 Female and 5 Male) Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) members in four villages. The VSLA members were supported to develop skills to engage with the SDMCs. In addition to the leadership training, CARE, in collaboration with their local implementing partner KHC, trained SDMC members in six villages on gender-based violence (GBV) and how to access the referral system. As a result of this training, SDMCs have reported 11 cases of GBV through the referral network.

Through its partnership with local CSO RHTO, Oxfam implemented a series of changes to its disability identification and targeting processes, including adopting the Washington Group of Questions. As a result, 12 percent of the total Disaster READY participants in Oxfam's target communities are people with disabilities, representing a two percent increase from Phase 1 and a result that is considerably higher than the national reported average of 3.9 percent of the population. In addition, Oxfam in collaboration with ABC ID, developed national radio packages to promote citizen awareness and engagement on disability inclusion. The packages aimed to ensure that disaster preparedness and response plans were inclusive.

The DRCC has also committed to progressing inclusive practices. Some examples include:

- The DRCC now includes membership of both a women's rights group FOKUPER and representative from the national Disabled People's Organisation RHTO.
- The DRCC membership is made up of 54% women.

Across all Disaster READY countries, including Timor-Leste, the inclusion of persons with diverse SOGIESC has been a significant challenge. For example, the community DRR/CCA action plans developed currently do not include specific actions to address the needs of diverse SOGIESC peoples. This will become a focus area in future years.



# YOUNG WOMEN LEADING ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

At just 21 years old, Leonia is demonstrating the value of women's leadership in disaster risk reduction and preparedness as the group leader of the Haberan Ekonomia (Expanding Economy) Village and Saving Loans Association (VSLA). Along with the group's 30 members, this young leader is proactively planning ahead for the issues her community may face if a disaster strikes.

Through the Disaster READY program, Leonia and her group members have accessed information and training on the risks posed by climate change, preparedness for disasters, and how to manage finances and savings for resilience. Prior to her involvement with the project, Leonia grew and sold vegetables at the local market to support her family and pay for her children's education. "The income I received was not fixed as it depended on the market price – that means when the market prices drop, we also earn less. We live far from the bank and the requirements to access loans are beyond our financial capabilities," Leonia said.

Self-managed VLSAs provide the opportunity for community members, particularly in remote areas, to save money in a safe space, improving their resilience. The funds can be used for loans, or as a form of emergency insurance. Leonia leads her group in creating financial plans and managing their income and expenses. Aware of the hazards and with the chance to prepare, Leonia and her group members can now access loans to purchase food to stock up for a disaster. If heavy wind is on its way, Leonia and her group can also use loans to purchase suitable housing materials to withstand the force of cyclones, or to repair damaged dwellings.



# LOCALISATION

Year 1 of Disaster READY Phase 2 included a country-led 'design refresh'. This process was driven by the country level, with implementing partners coming together with stakeholders including government to develop a shared barrier analysis and a coordinated locally-led approach to project planning. This process culminated in the development of the Timor-Leste Disaster READY Country Plan.

During the refresh process, the DRCC developed a Timor-Leste Localisation Plan that outlined collective goals and measurement approaches to progress towards locally-led humanitarian action. Partners integrated localisation approaches with the Disaster READY intermediate outcomes and used the Pacific Islands Association for Non-Government Organisations PIANGO/Humanitarian Advisory Group's (HAG) localisation framework. The framework consists of seven core components for measuring progress on localisation in a holistic way. These are outlined in the following table, with accompanying notes on country-level progress.



Component	Description	Progress
Partnerships	Equitable and complementary partnerships between local, national and international actors.	Established partnership agreements with 14 civil society actors.
Leadership	National actors define and lead on humanitarian action.	Four new CSOs have joined the DRCC, with rotating leadership and meetings held in English and Tetum
Participation	Communities lead and participate in humanitarian response	Following the partnership brokering exercise, the DRCC was restructured to include local implementing partner representatives in line with the localisation plan. Following suggestions and comments received during the partnership brokering workshop, the DRCC revised their governance mechanisms.
Policy influence and advocacy	Humanitarian action reflects the priorities of affected communities and national actors.	Civil Protection Authority (CPA) participated in gender responsive training to ensure gender and inclusion considerations in national and sub-national level budgeting. Collaborating with ABC ID to promote disability awareness and inclusion in DRR/CCA.
Capacity	Local and national organisations are able to respond effectively and efficiently, have targeted and relevant support from international actors.	Community level capacity building in CBDRM and CCA allowed community members to develop the skills to more effectively identify and address vulnerabilities. Training included gender equality and disability-inclusive planning; women's leadership training, engaging men and boys, GEDSI; women-led savings and loans groups; development of DRR plans and funding proposals, etc.
Funding	Increased number of national and local organisations describing financial independence that allows them to respond more efficiently.	36 percent of expenditure went to national or local organisations.

## THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE INGO AS INTERMEDIARY

From Phase 1 of Disaster READY through the redesign process, CARE Timor-Leste have shifted from a direct implementation role to partnering with two local civil society organisations, FOKUPERs and KHC. In the model for Phase 2, CARE will provide organisational and technical support to these local partners, who will in turn co-lead implementation of the community-based preparedness work and support to government. This new model represents a commitment to shift funding and power to local partners, with the International NGO assuming a new role as intermediary to support this process.





## ENGAGING LOCAL LEADERS

Balbina is a police officer, stationed in Ossu since 2017. As a trusted and valued community member, she was a perfect candidate to work in a leadership role in the local Disaster READY Suco Disaster Management Committee. As a deputy team leader, Balbina has been able to consult the community and develop a Disaster Risk Plan that meets the specific needs of her community.

“In the Suco Disaster Management Committee we have a plan for the future. If something like this occurs, we always sit together and share information with each other so that we can share this on the ground with the community.

“This program can help us, increase our knowledge, and further build our capacity to continue to be with the community and share information with them so that in the future if they face problems or any disasters occur, they have a guide to follow. They will know that if a disaster occurs, this is what we do and this is how we prepare ourselves.”

# COORDINATION AND LEARNING

The program funds a country DRCC with coordination, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning, Communications and Disability Inclusion positions. The DRCC plays a key role in supporting coordination of the program and has a dedicated budget for joint learning activities. In Year 1, the DRCC coordinated the development of this learning agenda which will focus on research to document the best approaches for effectiveness, inclusion and localisation of community preparedness activities. The learning agenda will be promoted from year two.

The Timor-Leste Disaster READY partners also began developing a Partnership Agreement which outlines shared principles and objectives as well as processes for developing collaborative/joint proposals.

The DRCC leveraged this mechanism to successfully submit a proposal to undertake a joint project for the AHP Anticipatory Action trial. This trial leverages the Disaster READY resilience strengthening activities and will begin implementation in early 2024.



# CONNECTING GOVERNMENT WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Disaster READY NGO partners help to link Government departments with Civil Society to ensure broader policies of inclusion. Last year in Timor-Leste, Oxfam worked with local OPDs, partner RHTO and the Timor-Leste Government's Civil Protection Authority to assess the ongoing impacts of Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja. The cyclone caused widespread damage across the country. Augusta and her family lost their home and were forced to live in a tent for over a year.

Thousands of families were affected by the cyclone, but Augusta was chosen to be one of five families whose homes in Dili were rebuilt by Oxfam's engineers and RHTO. In 2022, Augusta and her family moved to into their new two-bedroom home, which was fully adapted to meet the needs of someone with limited vision, including a ramp that allows her to access the home easily.

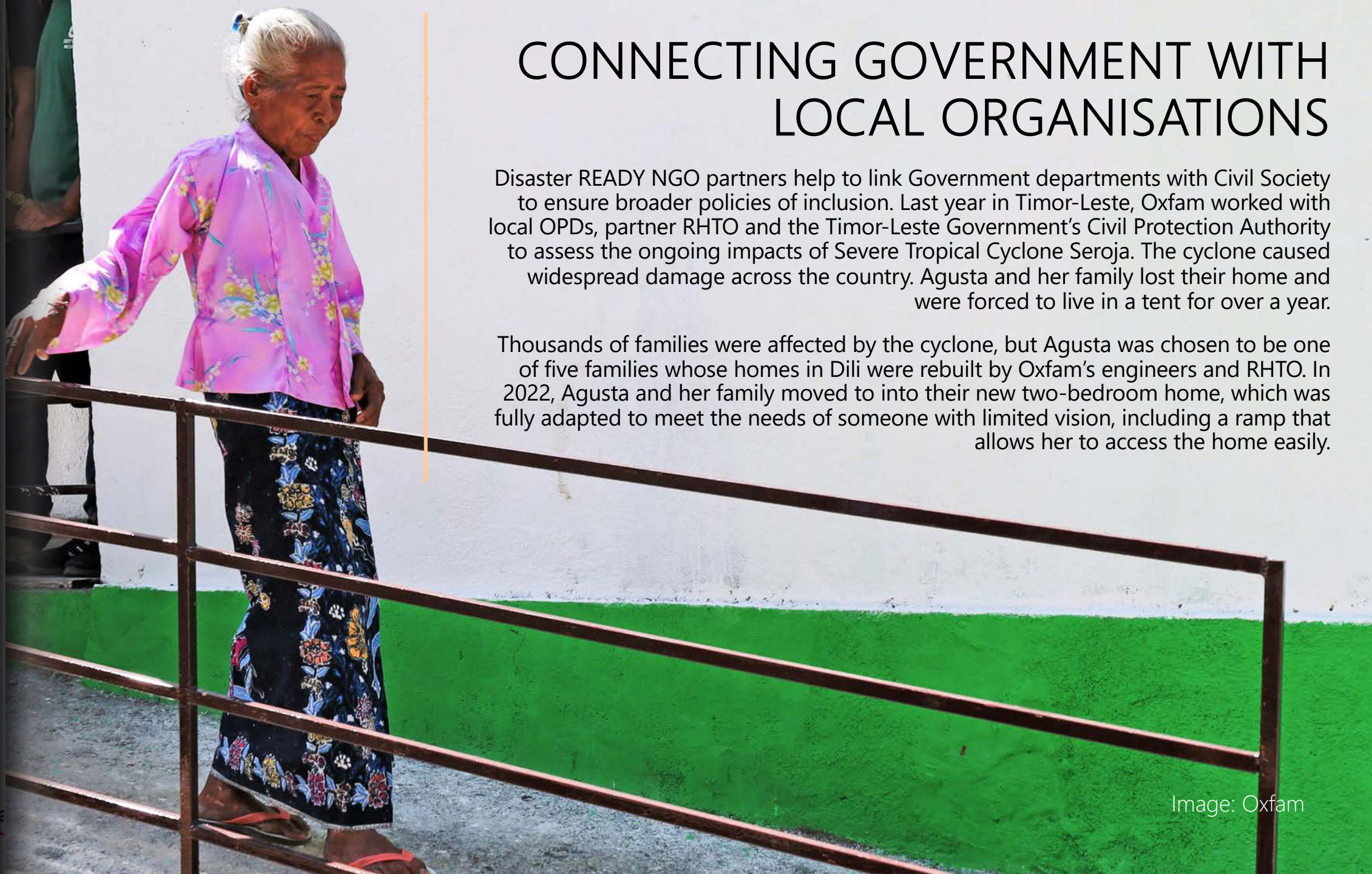






Image: World Vision

# INCREASING COORDINATION

Atuaben village's location on the crest of a ridge in Bobonaro municipality means it gets more than its share of problems in the rainy season. Strong winds and landslides are just part of life here. Januari Fernandez, the Suco Chief, arranged training for the Suco Disaster Management Committee, which brings together community members, including people with disabilities, to prepare for and mitigate the impact of disasters.

"The risks that affect my community are risks like landslides and strong winds that occur in the rainy season," he said. "The committee's objective is to provide information to the community before and during disasters occurring within the community."

After the committee reviewed plans for how best to respond to problems during the rainy season, World Vision conducted a training session where committee members practised putting

the plan into action. This included heading through the spread-out village using a megaphone to alert the community to problems caused by wild weather and later members of the disaster management committee simulated clearing debris from the spring on which the village relies for water.

"The support we received from Disaster READY was about first aid (pictured), search and rescue, early warning, data collection, and disaster evacuation of communities," Januari added.

Besides practising how to react when the next disaster strikes, the committee also writes proposals to get the resources it needs. He said it was important that Atuaben's disaster management committee reflected the community it served.



# GOING FORWARD

With foundational activities in Year 1 complete, partners will now seek to increase their level of implementation according to their workplans. For the DRCC, the learning agenda will play a key role in supporting partner cross learning and a move towards best practice. Shifting from output to outcome focussed reporting, with emphasis on capturing qualitative and quantitative data that tells the 'so what?' story for Disaster READY, is also a key area for future improvement.

**AHP**

Disaster READY

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