Executive Summary

The TLTT program is a great program, relevant to the needs and has good coordination with Government. The program delivered good training for teachers and it was easily transferred to the students. (School Coordinator and Teacher, Viqueque)

This report is of the progress of the Tetun Literacy and Teacher Training Project (TLTTP), an education project managed by Mary MacKillop Today (MMT) in Timor-Leste.

Ethos of Engagement Consultants (EoE) was commissioned to undertake the evaluation between November 2021 to March 2022. The evaluation team was headed by Dr Anne Stephens and Co-Lead Ms Cristina Freitas Benedek in Australia, and Ms Rita Pires, Mr Octávio Piedade and Ms Herminia Martins, field researchers in Timor-Leste.

Focus group and key informant interviews were conducted between 31 January and 18 February 2022 with a sample of 49 educators, parents, students and school administrators, represented in the Dili, Ermera, Manufahi and Viqueque Municipalities.

Project Background

The transformative impact of education in promoting sustainable and community-led development is acknowledged in Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, which aims to ensure all citizens have access to a "quality education that will allow them to participate in the economic, social and political development of [the] nation." Education and training are the keys to improving life opportunities for Timorese and enabling them to reach their full potential.

The TLTTP is one of three education projects managed by MMT focussed on providing quality education to children in the early years of learning, pre-school and years 1-4. The suite of projects provides teacher training, quality teaching resources and school infrastructure supports across the key learning areas health promotion, Tetun literacy and numeracy. The projects are implemented in Municipalities across Timor-Leste.
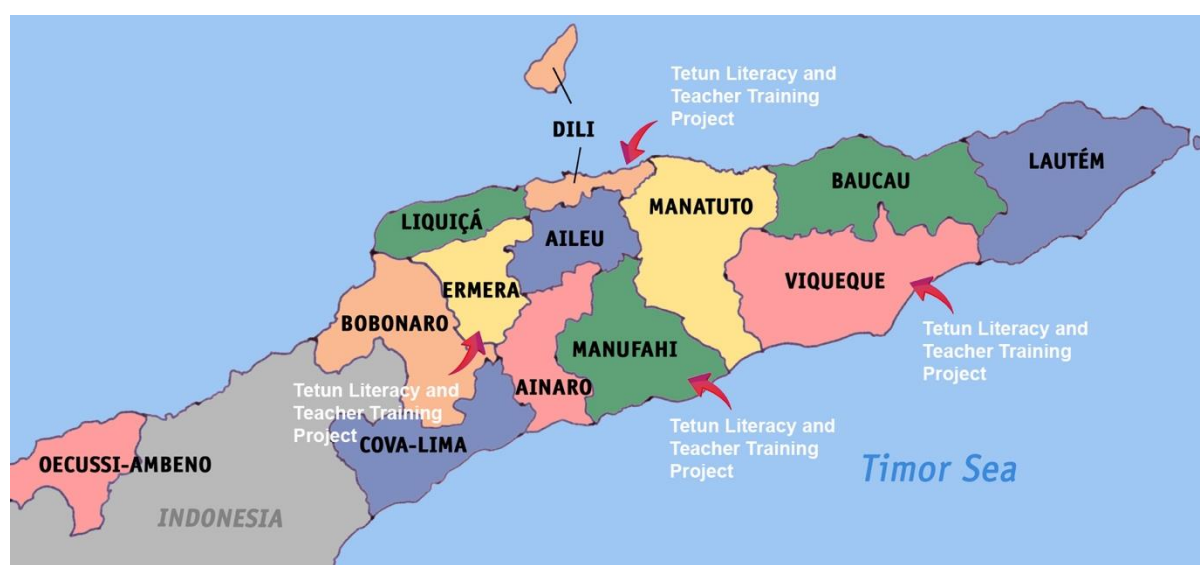
Tetun Literacy and Teacher Training (TLTTP) Project

With a history dating back to 2006, since 2019 MMT have delivered the TLTTP project across 4 municipalities: Dili, Ermera, Manufahi and Viqueque. The project's aim is to enhance teachers' skills for delivering high quality Tetun literacy education in inclusive and safe learning environments. The project contains a small grants scheme and provides monthly stipends to volunteer teachers.

Key Recommendations

The evaluators recommend the TLTTP be continued towards national-level replication. The evaluators recommend the project be continued and replicated across Timor-Leste. Eight recommendations are made to support the next three-year phase of the TLTTP.

1. Equity and Inclusion

    MMT consult with key disability advocacy groups and education experts to develop training resources, FBO upskilling and teacher guidance documents to support students with disability access to the curriculum, that is consistent with the learner-centred approach being taught and modeled to teachers.

    MMT continue to strongly reinforce and promote child protection laws, policy and values consistent with the new teaching approach with the end goal to eliminate the use of violence and harsh behaviour management strategies in all participating schools. MMT should consider ways in which they might continue to influence and change teachers behaviours. This may include conducting formal research into the prevalence of verbal, emotional or physical abuse, and utilising those findings and/or recommendations in ongoing programmatic work, or provide a follow-up campaign to all schools who have participated in the TLTTP reinforcing key messaging from the training provided.

    The evaluation did not make reference, encounter or seek out the voices of parents, teachers and students who may identify as LGBTIQ. However, LGBTIQ people's aspirations and needs could be scoped for incorporation into the project in the future.

2. Teacher training

    Teachers strongly recommend that the training days increase from 5 to 10 days as they described the training as rushed as it tries to cover too much content in too little time available.

    Teachers suggest that MMT consider off the training during the school holidays or in the weeks before the school year starts. This is to enable teachers to fully concentrate on the training over the course of a week, instead of during the school time.

    Teachers also request that the training be expanded to other disciplinary fields- from literacy and numeracy to natural science, arts etc.

    Guidelines to schools should also be provided to assist schools with the appropriate selection of their teaching workforce to participate in the training.

    The recommendation is the MMT scope the duration, timing, training content and criteria for the selection of teacher trainees, with the Municipal MEYS and INFORDEPE partners prior to the implementation of the program in a new Municipality.

3. Resource development

MMT continue to lead the development of novel Tetun-based resources that are aligned with the TLNG's curriculum and have the approval for teacher training and dissemination by INFORDEPE.

4. Teacher Monitoring and Mentoring by FBO

Teachers and administrators request the post-test results. These could be shared with teachers to demonstrate the range of change made over the year by both themselves and as a cohort of trainees.

Teacher post-test results may be included in the formal certification being developed by MMT with INFORDEPE, as proof of achievement, as well as course completion.

5. Parents/Carers training in early years

The evaluators recommend that MMT include parent awareness campaigns to support the TLTTP objectives. Parent awareness of early childhood observation, development and techniques to prevent bullying, child abuse and neglect should be conducted by schools with MMT guidance to support their content development. The awareness campaign includes national policy goals for gender equality, the rights of people with disability, child protection and domestic violence law.

6. Small grants

Consider extending the building grant scheme to support the upgrade, training or building of libraries, storage facilities etc., for the secure handling of books and resources.

We recommend MMT explore opportunities to formalise maintenance and ongoing costs associated with library facilities with government in their formal agreements (i.e. MOU) and seek other donor supports for the provision of essential school infrastructure.

7. Teachers' Communities of practice

Within Municipalities, MMT could establish Teachers' Communities of Practice (CoP), that once established, are self-autonomous and driven by teachers themselves. This is to help resolve the issue that sharing of resources to teachers who did not attend the training is less likely to be effective without providing ongoing pedagogical advice, mentoring and support. One-off sessions will not effect change but may stimulate interest to learn more.

The COPs provide informal supplementary training and refresher training in a peer-to-peer format. MMT might supply COPs with guidance on its purpose. The COPs will reinforce the learning from the training beyond schools' year-long association with MMT through the FBOs and continue parent literacy awareness events.

8. MMT Monitoring and Reporting

The evaluators recommend a tightening of reporting processes and attention to report detail including ensuring project reports update, rather than reproduce, the report from the previous period.

The monitoring indicators might also include key school data metrics including school attendance, child nutrition data, literacy and numeracy outcomes, and child behaviour data recorded by schools, as another set of measures of student change over time. For students with disability, particular records might monitor their individualised progress against a modified curriculum. Records and information on student achievement and behaviour would not substitute for the current sets of indicators and measures collected, but may present a pattern indicating the influence of the project is having during the year-long implementation.

The recommendation is for MMT to scope with MEYS, INFORDEPE and MoH partners permission to receive data sets on particular student cohorts.