

First participants recruited for study tackling malnutrition in Timor-Leste.

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The Bacterial Enteropathogens and Nutrition (BEN) study is now underway, with the recruitment of the first participants to the study. This pioneering initiative aims to address malnutrition in Timor-Leste.

It is part of a 4-year research program, led by the Australian National University (ANU) and delivered in-country by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) in 3 municipalities including Dili.

Through collecting stool samples from children, household animals and their surrounding environments (including the water and soil), this study will help uncover the relationship between foodborne gastrointestinal infections and malnutrition. It will use a One Health approach, recognizing the connection between people, animals and the environment.

Malnutrition remains a significant public health issue in Timor-Leste, as highlighted by the 2020 Timor-Leste Food and Nutrition Survey, which reported that nearly half (47.1%) of children under 5 years old suffer from stunting. The BEN study will encompass multiple research projects addressing critical national priorities and gaps in knowledge concerning nutrition, food safety, and food security. All projects will provide research capacity strengthening opportunities to Timorese working in health, to design and implement research that helps inform policy and practice.

Over the last 18 months, this program of work has been co-designed with investigators and collaborators from the Ministry of Health (MoH), and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries (MALFF), and other One Health partners. This first research project is being jointly implemented by Dr Samantha Colquhoun from ANU, and Salvador Amaral from Menzies. They will work alongside the BEN Timorese team which includes a medical officer, senior laboratory technical, and four research nurses.

This research is made possible through financial support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

Find out more about our work in [Timor-Leste by visiting the Menzies website](#).

Quotes attributable to Project Lead of the BEN study and ANU researcher, Dr Samantha Colquhoun:

“The BEN Study aims to examine the risk factors identified in the pilot study in greater detail, we have designed the study to allow an iterative approach to investigate risks in food safety, food preparation, animal ownership and intersect with cultural, environmental and cost factors that can potentially be addressed by public health policy and Behaviour Change Information interventions.

“The BEN Study will build on existing One Health research capability through a multi-sectoral approach to addressing a key knowledge gap in our understanding of the drivers of poor nutritional outcomes in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in children.”

Quote attributable to Timor-Leste BEN Project Lead and Menzies researcher, Mr Salvador Amaral:

“As the Co-Principal Investigator for the BEN study, I am delighted and committed to overseeing the implementation of this vital research in Timor-Leste, ensuring it aligns with our national health priorities. This study aims to address the critical issue of malnutrition among infants in Timor-Leste. The study seeks to understand the underlying causes, effects, and potential solutions for malnutrition in this vulnerable population. Addressing malnutrition is not just a professional responsibility but all our responsibility, to secure a healthier future for our children.”

Quote attributable to the National Director of Veterinary – Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries (MALFF), Dr Joanita Bendita Jong:

“The impact of BEN study for MALFF as part of One Health approach in Timor-Leste is by identifying issues in children that are the most vulnerable to traditional raising systems in all types of animals that have a direct impact on their health.”

Quote attributable to the President of the National Institute of Public Health Timor-Leste (INSP-TL), Dra Merita A. A. Monteiro:

“The impact of BEN study for the Ministry of Health (MoH) is to improve public health surveillance for enteric pathogens, and MoH capacity to respond to clusters of infectious disease, including those of a zoonotic nature. The BEN study also will advise on issues of food safety and security impacting child malnutrition in Timor-Leste using evidence and information gained from the One Health research outcomes.”

Quote attributable to the National Director of Nutrition, Ministry of Health, dra Rosye Bela Joana Benevides Moniz da Silva:

“The BEN study is building a body of evidence to help us better understand the risks associated with malnutrition. This evidence could help the Directorate of Nutrition, Ministry of Health, to create programs or policy that targets these risk factors and reduces the rates of malnutrition for children in Timor-Leste.”

Quotes attributable to ACIAR Research Program Manager for Livestock Systems, Dr Anna Okello:

“One of ACIAR’s high-level strategic aims is to build knowledge to support crucial development objectives that enhance human nutrition and reduce risk to human health. This is particularly important to ACIAR’s Pacific program, given Pacific Island Countries continue to face a plethora of diet-related health and nutrition challenges.”

“Timor-Leste is a key focal country for Australia’s aid programme, and ACIAR works closely with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to promote productive and sustainable agricultural systems. In recent times, the focus on sustainable agricultural production in Timor-Leste has expanded into greater consideration of nutrition based agricultural strategies, given the high rates of malnutrition and stunting in the country.”

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Partisipante dahuluk sira ne'ebé rekruta ba estudu kona-ba kombate malnutrisaun iha Timor-Leste.

Dili 9 Julu 2024

Estudu Enteropatógenos e Nutrição Bacteriana (BEN) agora hala'o hela, ho rekrutamentu ba partisipante dahuluk sira ba estudu. Inisiativa pioneiru ida ne'e ho objetivu atu rezolve malnutrisaun iha Timor-Leste.

Ida-ne'e halo parte iha programa peskiza tinan 4 nian, ne'ebé lidera hosi Australian National University (ANU) no realiza iha nasaun hosi Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) iha munisípiu 3 inklui Dili.

Malnutrisaun sai nafatin kestaun saúde pública ne'ebé significativu iha Timor-Leste, hanesan destaka husi Levantamentu Ai-han no Nutrisaun Timor-Leste 2020, ne'ebé relata katak kuaze metade (47.1%) husi labarik sira ho idade menus husi tinan 5 sofre husi stunting ka raes badak. Estudu BEN sei abranje projetu peskiza oioin ne'ebé aborda prioridade nasional kriticu sira no lakuna sira iha koñesimentu kona-ba nutrisaun, seguransa ai-han. Projetu hotu-hotu sei fó oportunidade hametin kapasidade peskiza nian ba timoroan sira ne'ebé serbisu iha saúde, hodi dezeña no implementa peskiza ne'ebé ajuda informa política no prátika.

Iha fulan 18 ikus ne'e, programa serbisu ne'e ko-dezeña ona ho investigadór no kolaboradór sira husi Ministériu Saúde (MS), no Ministériu Agrikultura, Pekuária, Floresta no Pesca (MAPPF), no parseiru sira seluk husi One Health. Projetu peskiza dahuluk ida-ne'e implementa hamutuk hosi Dra. Samantha Colquhoun hosi ANU, no Salvador Amaral hosi Menzies. Sira sei servisu hamutuk ho ekipa BEN Timoroan ne'ebé inklui ofisiál médiku ida, tékniku laboratóriu seniór, no enfermeiru peskizadór na'in haat.

Peskiza ida-ne'e sai posivel liuhosi apoiu finanseiru hosi Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

Buka hatene liután kona-ba ami nia serbisu iha Timor-Leste liuhosi vizita [Website Menzies](#).

Sitasaun sira ne'ebé atribui ba Xefe Projetu husi estudu BEN no peskizadór ANU, Dra. Samantha Colquhoun:

“Estudu BEN hakarak atu ezamina fatór risku sira ne'ebé identifika iha estudu pilotu ho detalle liután, ami dezeña ona estudu atu permite aprosimsaun iterativa ida hodi investiga risku sira iha seguransa ai-han, preparasaun ai-han, propriedade animál no interseta ho fatór kultural, ambientál no kustu ne'ebé bele potencialmente rezolve hosi política saúde pública no intervensaun sira kona-ba Informasaun Mudansa Hahalok nian.

“Estudu BEN sei harii iha kapasidade peskiza One Health ne'ebé eziste liuhosi aprosimsaun multi-setoriál ida hodi rezolve lakuna koñesimentu xave ida iha ami nia komprensaun kona-ba fatór sira ne'ebe kauza ba rezultadu nutrisional ne'ebé ladi'ak iha Indo-Pasífiku, partikularmente iha labarik sira.”

Sitasaun ne'ebé atribui ba Xefe Projetu Timor-Leste BEN no peskizadór Menzies, Sr. Salvador Amaral:

“Nu’udar Investigadór Ko-Prinsipál ba estudu BEN, ha’u haksolok no komprometidu atu tau matan ba implementasaun peskiza importante ida-ne’e iha Timor-Leste, hodi asegura katak ida-ne’e aliña ho ita-nia prioridade saúde nasionál sira. Estudu ida-ne’e ho objetivu atu rezolve kestaun krítiku kona-ba malnutrisaun entre labarik sira iha Timor-Leste. Estudu ne’e buka atu komprende kauza sira, efeitu sira, no solusaun potenciál sira ba malnutrisaun iha populasau vulneravel ida-ne’e. Hasoru malnutrisaun la’ós de’it responsabilidade profisionál ida maibé ita-nia responsabilidade tomak, atu asegura futuru ida ne’ebé saudavel liu ba ita-nia oan sira.”

Sitasaun ne'ebé atribui ba Diretora Nasionál Veterinária – Ministériu Agrikultura, Pekuária, Floresta no Peska (MAPPF), Dra Joanita Bendita Jong:

“Impaktu husi estudu BEN ba MALFF hanesan parte husi aprosimasaun One Health iha Timor-Leste mak liu husi identifika kestaun sira iha labarik sira ne’ebé vulneravel liu ba sistema hakiak tradisionál iha tipu animál hotu-hotu ne’ebé iha impaktu direta ba sira-nia saúde.”

Sitasaun ne'ebé atribui ba Prezidente Institutu Nasionál Saúde Pública Timor-Leste (INSP-TL), Dra Merita A. A. Monteiro:

“Impaktu husi estudu BEN ba Ministériu Saúde (MS) maka atu hadi'a vijilánsia saúde pública ba patójenu entériku sira, no kapasidade MdS nian atu hatán ba agrupamentu moras infesiozu sira, inklui sira ne'ebé ho natureza zoonótika. Estudu BEN mós sei fó konsellu kona-ba kestaun sira kona-ba seguransa no seguransa ai-han ne'ebé fó impaktu ba malnutrisaun labarik nian iha Timor-Leste uza evidénsia no informasaun ne'ebé hetan hosi rezultadu peskiza One Health nian.”

Sitasaun ne'ebé atribui ba Diretor Nasionál Nutrisaun, Ministériu Saúde, dra Rosye Bela Joana Benevides Moniz da Silva:

“Estudu BEN harii hela evidénsia lubuk ida atu ajuda ita komprende di'ak liután risku sira ne'ebé asociadu ho malnutrisaun. Evidénsia ne'e bele ajuda Diresaun Nutrisaun, Ministériu Saúde, hodi kria programa ka polítika ne'ebé alvu ba fatór risku sira ne'e no hamenus taxa malnutrisaun ba labarik sira iha Timor-Leste.”

Sitasaun sira ne'ebé atribui ba Jerente Programa Peskiza ACIAR nian ba Sistema Pekuária, Dr. Anna Okello:

“ACIAR nia objetivu estratéjiku nivel aas ida maka atu harii koñesimentu hodi apoia objetivu dezenvolvimentu krusiál sira ne'ebé hasa'e nutrisaun umana no hamenus risku ba saúde umana. Ida-ne'e importante liuliu ba programa Pasífiku ACIAR nian, tanba Nasaun Illa Pasífiku sira kontinua hasoru dezafiu saúde no nutrisaun lubuk ida relasiona ho nutrisaun.”

“Timor-Leste nu’udar nasaun fokál prinsipál ba programa ajuda Austrália nian, no ACIAR servisu besik ho Departamentu Negósiu Estranjeiru no Komérsiu (DFAT) Governu Austrália nian hodi promove sistema agrikultura ne’ebé produtivu no sustentável. Iha tempu ikus ne’e, foku ba produsaun agríkola sustentável iha Timor-Leste habelar ba konsiderasaun boot liu kona-ba estratéjia agríkola bazeia ba nutrisaun, haree ba taxa aas ba malnutrisaun no raes badak iha nasaun ne’e.”

REMATA