



Situation Analysis of Children in Timor-Leste

Adolescent voices

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Suggested citation:

Government of Timor-Leste and UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Children in Timor-Leste, Dili, Timor-Leste, 2020.

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Adolescent Voices is a special insert of the Situation Analysis of Children in Timor-Leste which has been developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance – General Directorate of Statistics and the Commission on the Rights of the Child.

To ensure that the views of children were taken into account, UNICEF organized a large-scale nationwide consultation with adolescents, in partnership with the Alumni Association of the Timor-Leste Youth Parliament. These consultations and the views of the participants are presented in this report.

Sincere thanks go to all those who contributed to the development of this situation analysis, including from the Government of Timor-Leste, UNICEF staff and international consultants, the Alumni Association of the Youth Parliament of Timor-Leste (APFTL), and other stakeholders, particularly the many adolescents who took part in consultations.

Adolescent voices



● The process – engaging adolescents

To meaningfully engage adolescents in the analysis of the situation of children in Timor-Leste, UNICEF Timor-Leste and the Alumni Association of the Timor-Leste Youth Parliament (Alumni Parlamentu Foinsa'e Timor-Leste (APFTL) carried out a broad consultation with adolescents in September 2019.

In total, 848 adolescents mainly aged 12 to 17 (58 per cent girls, 42 per cent boys) participated in workshops throughout the country to discuss their situation and changes they would like to see. They brainstormed collectively during the workshops.

The consultation process unrolled as follows:

1

APFTL mobilized young people from among its own members, from other youth groups and from artists' groups to facilitate the consultation. UNICEF trained these young people over two and a half days, focusing on the objectives of the consultation, facilitation techniques, ethical research involving children and planning the conduct of a workshop. The training included a mock workshop to enable facilitators to practice.

2

The trained young facilitators (10 females and 16 males) and young artists (1 female and 12 males) then organized and facilitated half-day workshops in three locations in each of the country's 13 municipalities, in collaboration with members of the Timor-Leste Youth Parliament. In total, 39 workshops were held in September 2019 for participants to analyse their current situation and discuss the changes they want to see. The discussions were captured through writing, drawing, acting and video messages addressed to decision makers.

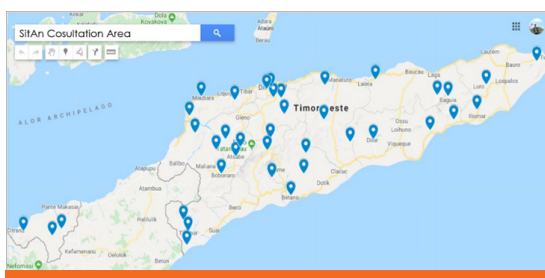


3

At the end of each workshop, a short survey was administered to participants, using Kobo Collect.¹ One UNICEF staff member and three youth volunteers from Hamutuk Ita Rezolve youth group monitored some of the workshops in 6 of the 13 municipalities.

The facilitators undertook an initial analysis

¹ A free and open-source suite of tools for field data collection for use in challenging environments.



4

of the workshop results and presented them to UNICEF in October 2019. UNICEF then deepened the analysis in consultation with the facilitators, based on the material gathered in the workshop, in particular problem trees capturing the participants' ideas.

UNICEF staff and the situation analysis consultant



5

met face-to-face with the workshop participants in Remexio (Aileu) and Dom Alexio (Dili) in October 2019. These dialogues provided an opportunity to discuss the conclusions of the workshops, to present the results of the survey and to validate some initial findings of the situation analysis. This helped to integrate adolescents' inputs into the new UNICEF country programme.



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context of the development of the new programme of cooperation between the Government of Timor-Leste and UNICEF, with face-to-face meetings between UNICEF staff and adolescents to discuss programme strategy.

One of the aims of the consultations was



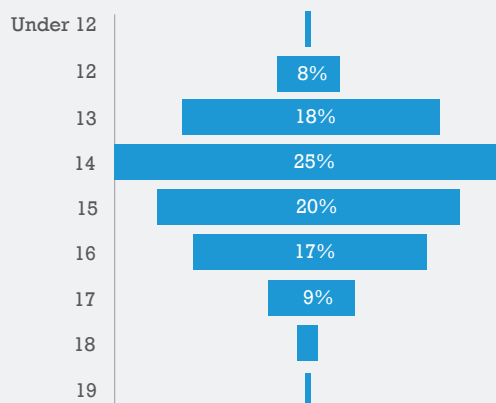
The participants

A total of 848 adolescents participated in the workshops, in all of the country's municipalities:



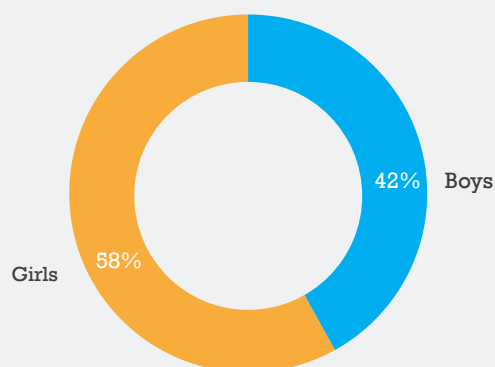
1

They were mainly aged 12 to 17, with 63 per cent of them aged 13 to 15



2

More girls than boys participated (489 girls and 359 boys)



3

The workshops were particularly popular in Lautém municipality, where they attracted many more participants than expected

Municipality	Number of participants	Proportion of girls	Average age
Aileu	63	68%	14
Ainaro	67	57%	15
Baucau	60	60%	15
Bobonaro	50	44%	15
Covalima	59	64%	14
Dili	67	63%	15
Ermera	64	52%	14
Lautém	113	58%	15
Liquiçá	66	56%	15
Manatuto	55	62%	14
Manufahi	61	51%	14
Oecusse	61	48%	15
Viqueque	62	58%	14

Lessons learned from the process

to hear from adolescents in their full diversity. The workshops were successful in covering the whole country, with a conscious effort to reach out to populations in remote locations. They included many young adolescents, with just over half of the participants being 14 or younger. Despite their young age, adolescents were enthusiastic and comfortable sharing their perspectives and ideas with young facilitators. Both girls and boys participated, with a higher share of girls (58 per cent), and independent monitors reported that both girls and boys took an active part in the discussions. Adolescents, when they were later probed by UNICEF about the greater participation of girls, explained that boys were “shy” and needed to be encouraged.

It proved more difficult to ensure participation of adolescents living with disabilities. As per the facilitators, some of the workshops included participants with disabilities, but no exact data are available and it is likely that they were few. Similarly, participants tended to be school-going children, raising questions on the participation of out-of-school adolescents. More preparation time would have been needed for the workshops to be fully inclusive, but there were set constraints during the planning phase due to other, pre-existing commitments of both APFTL and UNICEF. This points to the importance, for any future consultations, of allowing ample time for preparation and outreach to diverse groups of adolescents.

Another challenge that occurred in a few instances was related to languages used during the workshops. Some participants did not speak Tetum well and when facilitators did not know the participants’ local language, they had to rely on ad hoc translators to ensure that all could participate. It is thus crucial to pay greater attention to possible language barriers, particularly when reaching out to diverse groups and younger adolescents.

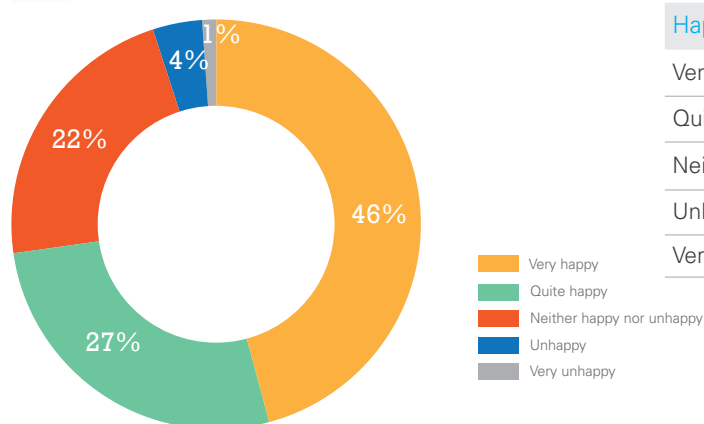
Various means were used to capture the analysis and recommendations of adolescents during the workshops, including drawing, videos and theatre. Some of the drawings made by young artists provided powerful illustrations of the situation and desired changes, but the video and theatre activities did not yield the expected outputs. This points to the need to provide more training and guidance, and to provide equipment (good quality mobile phones or tablets) to ensure better audiovisual products that can be used to convey adolescents’ voices to decision makers.

The voices – listening to adolescents

Survey results

The 848 workshop participants provided individual answers to a survey completed using Kobo Collect on mobile phones.

1 Happiness



Happiness scale	All	Girls	Boys
Very happy	46%	44%	48%
Quite happy	27%	29%	24%
Neither happy nor unhappy	23%	22%	24%
Unhappy	5%	5%	4%
Very unhappy	1%	1%	1%

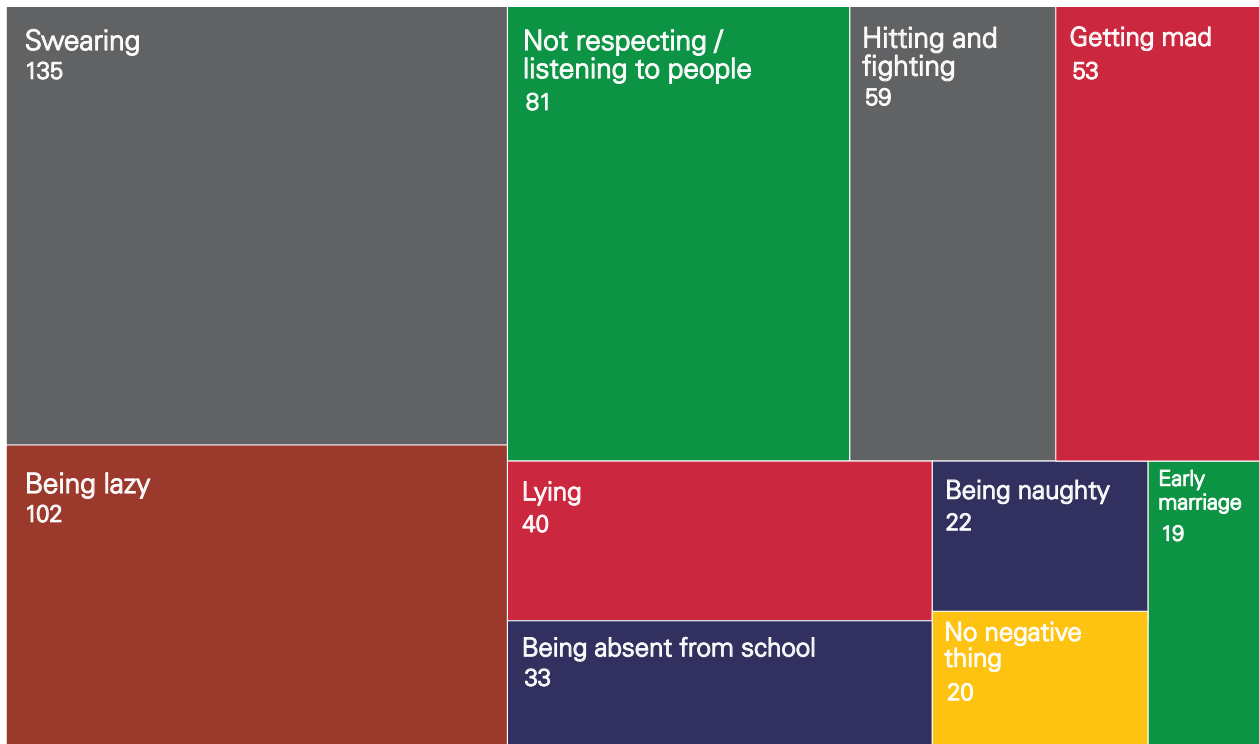
2 Positive and negative things in life

Cite one positive thing and one negative thing in your life.

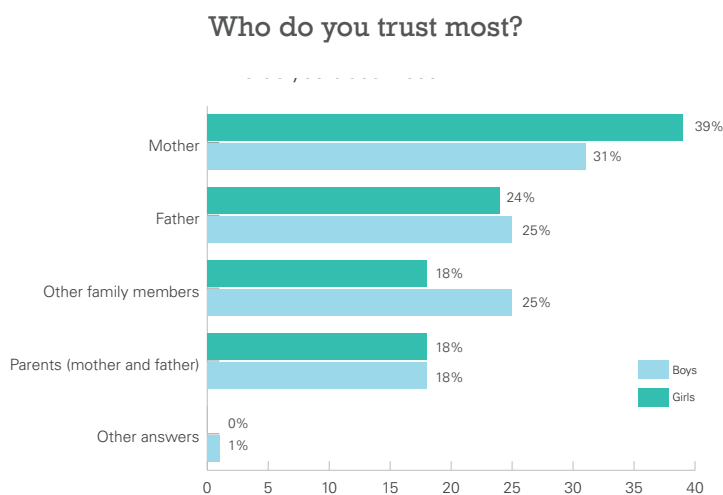
One positive thing



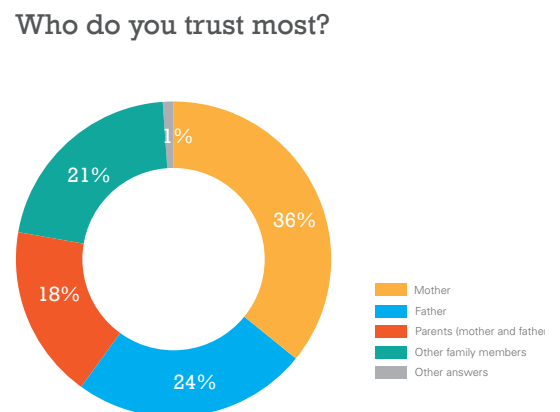
One negative thing



3 Person whom adolescents most trust



Note: due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.



The responses highlight the great role that parents play, with 78 per cent of adolescents choosing their mother, father or both parents. Mothers were the most trusted person in over a third of answers, and girls were more likely than boys to feel so.



Profession	Percentage
Doctor	28%
Teacher	17%
National police	11%
Defense Force of TL	7%
Journalist	4%
Other	33%

Girls' top 5 dreams

Boys' top 5 dreams

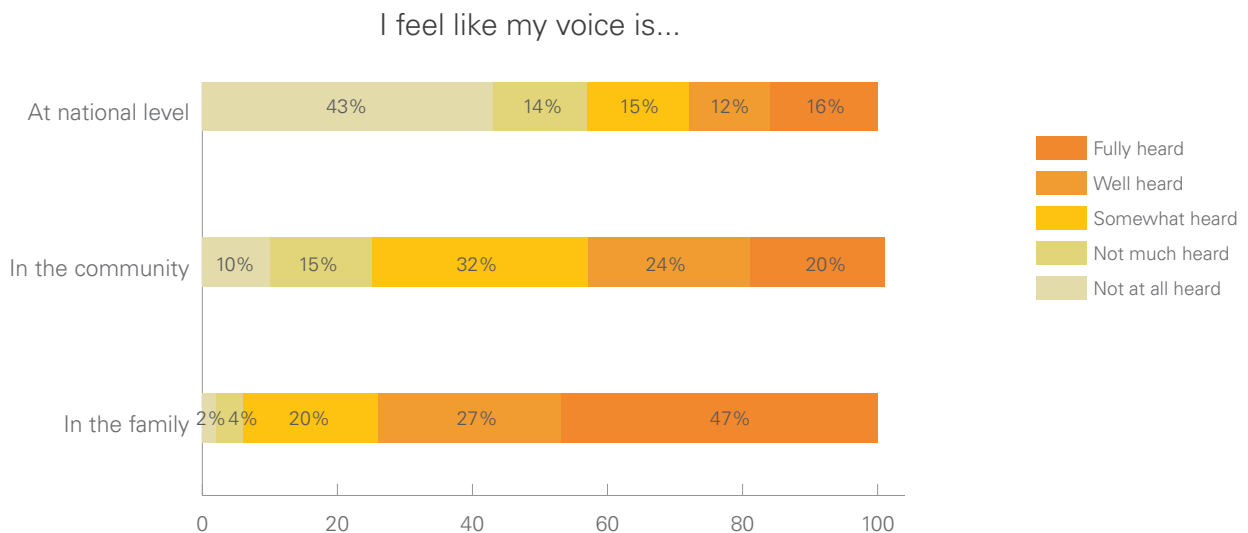
Dream	Answers
National Police	64
Doctor	53
Defense Force of TL	46
Teacher	46
Development of the country and home village	13

"We young people play an important role in development."

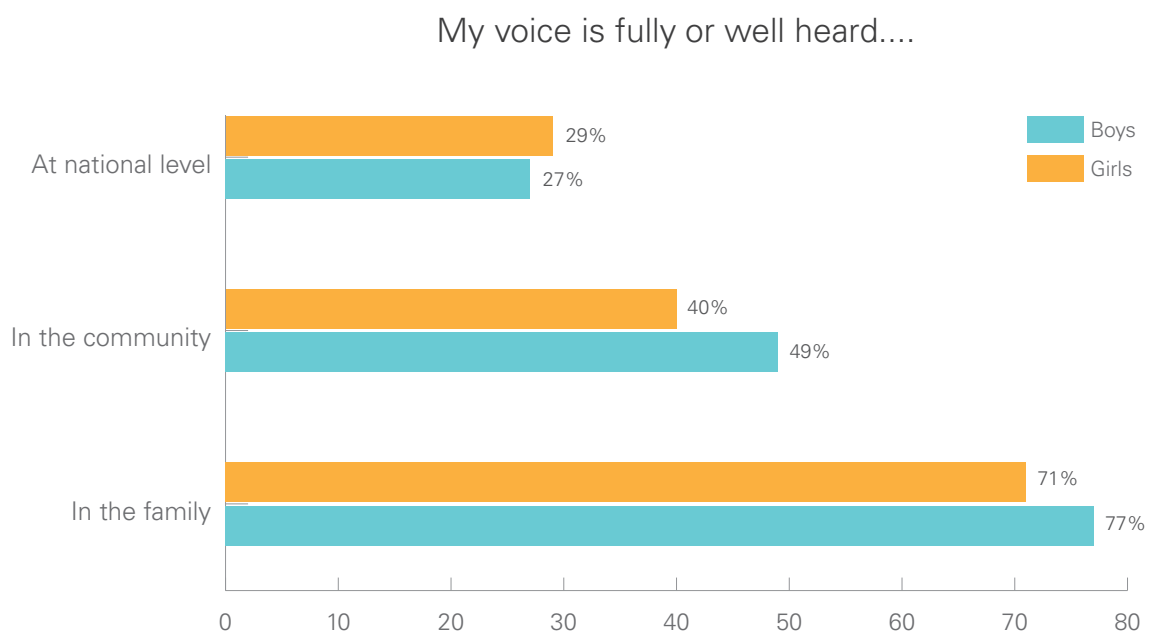
"We must study hard because the future is in our hands."

5 Influence

Do you feel that your voice is heard in different forums?



While the majority (74 per cent) felt fully or well heard in the family, this percentage decreased to 44 per cent at community level, and dropped further to 28 per cent at national level. Girls were less likely than boys to feel fully or well heard in the family (71 per cent versus 77 per cent) and in the community (40 per cent versus 49 per cent), but slightly more likely at national level (29 per cent versus 27 per cent).



“Let's take our hands, give freedom and rights to young people to show their ability and capacity...that can bring positive values to the country.”

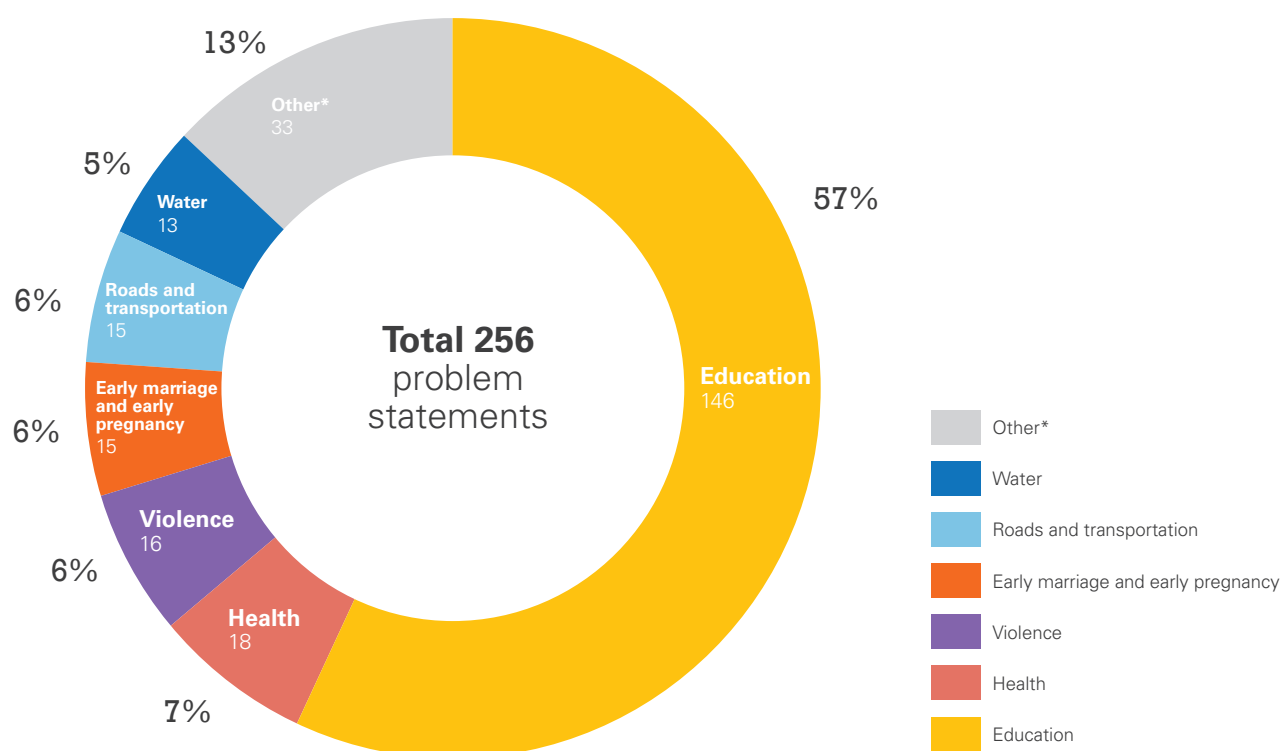
Workshop results

The most-discussed themes

During the workshops, participants were first asked to discuss their current situation and analyse its causes. Many groups used problem trees, with a problem statement accompanied by causes and effects. This was followed by discussions on what would be the ideal situations, paths of changes from the current to the ideal situation and recommendations for action.

In the first process of raising issues, some groups listed many issues, while other groups prioritized and selected a few, which made it difficult to analyse the overall popularity of issues of concern. Nevertheless, issues related to education were the most commonly cited, far ahead of other topics.

Themes raised by participants



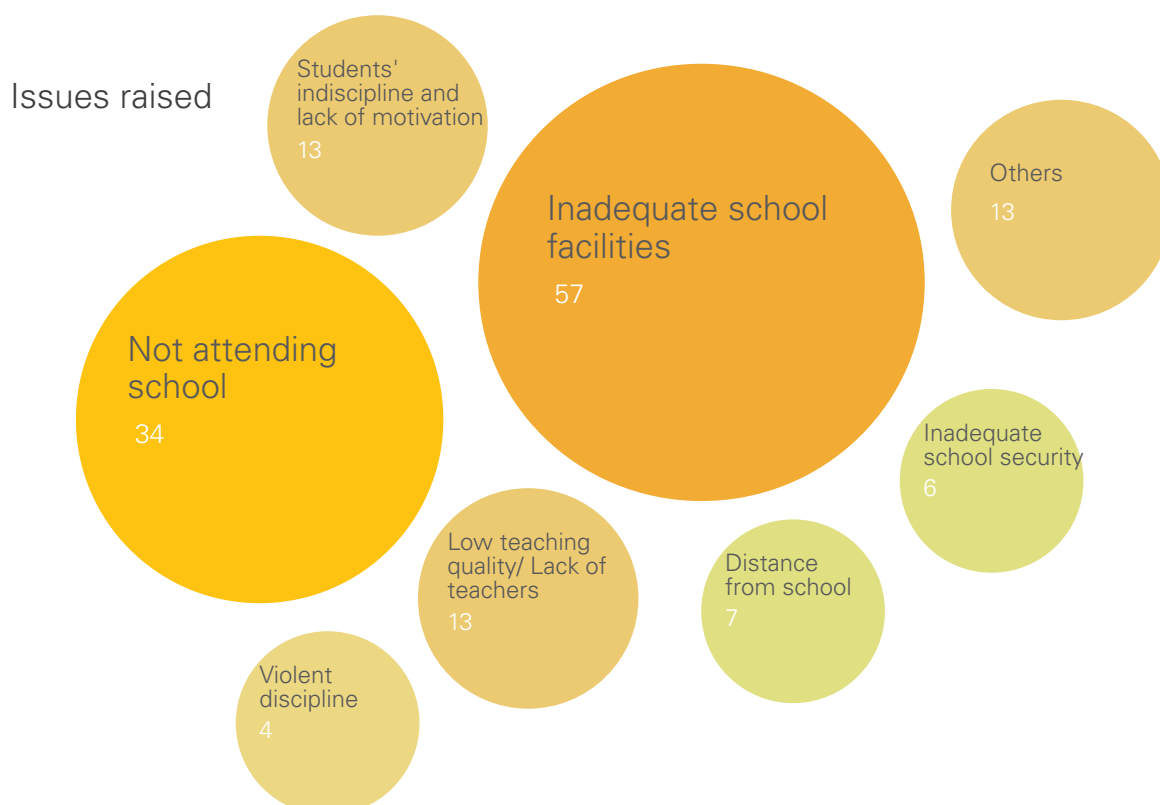
* These included sports and recreation, electricity, environment, social media and telecommunications, and poverty.

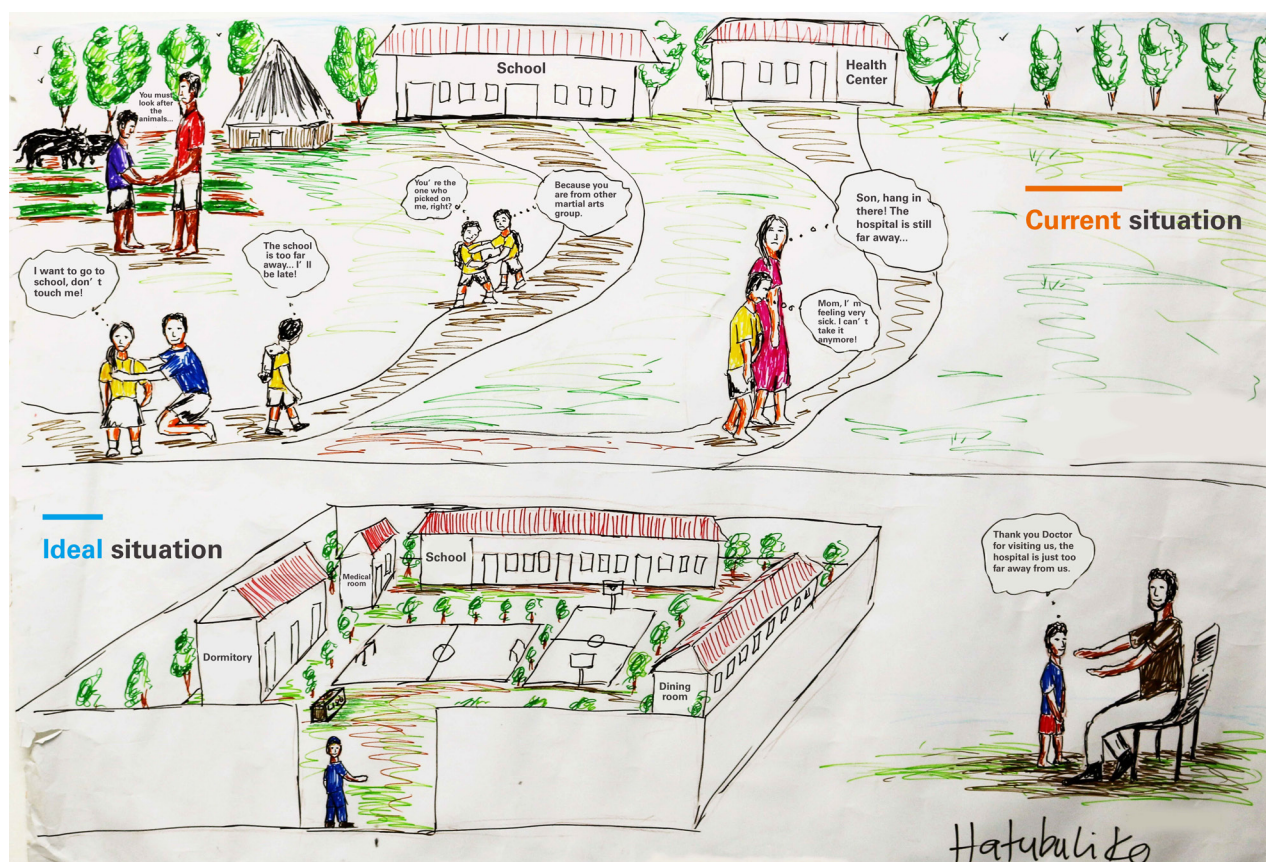


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1 Education

Adolescents who discussed issues related to education most often raised **inadequate school facilities** and the **issue of not attending school**.





Inadequate school facilities

The majority of groups that discussed inadequate school facilities mentioned specific items, equipment or facilities. Libraries were the most frequently cited.

Inadequate facilities/items	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Library	11
Books and textbook	7
Sports facilities	7
Multimedia equipment	7
Windows and doors	7
Desks and chair	6
Toilet	5

Causes raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Lack of support from the Government	10
Damage by students	5
Lack of support/control from school authorities	4
Damage by communities	3
Others	8

[In our school] “there is no clean water, no water in the toilets, no library, no gate, and a lack of chairs and desks.”

“The school director doesn’t see the importance of raising issues brought up by students to the Ministry of Education.”

Effects raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Students learn less	28
Students lose motivation to study	8
Students cannot practice (sports and other subjects)	5
Others	23

Participants put forward some recommendations:

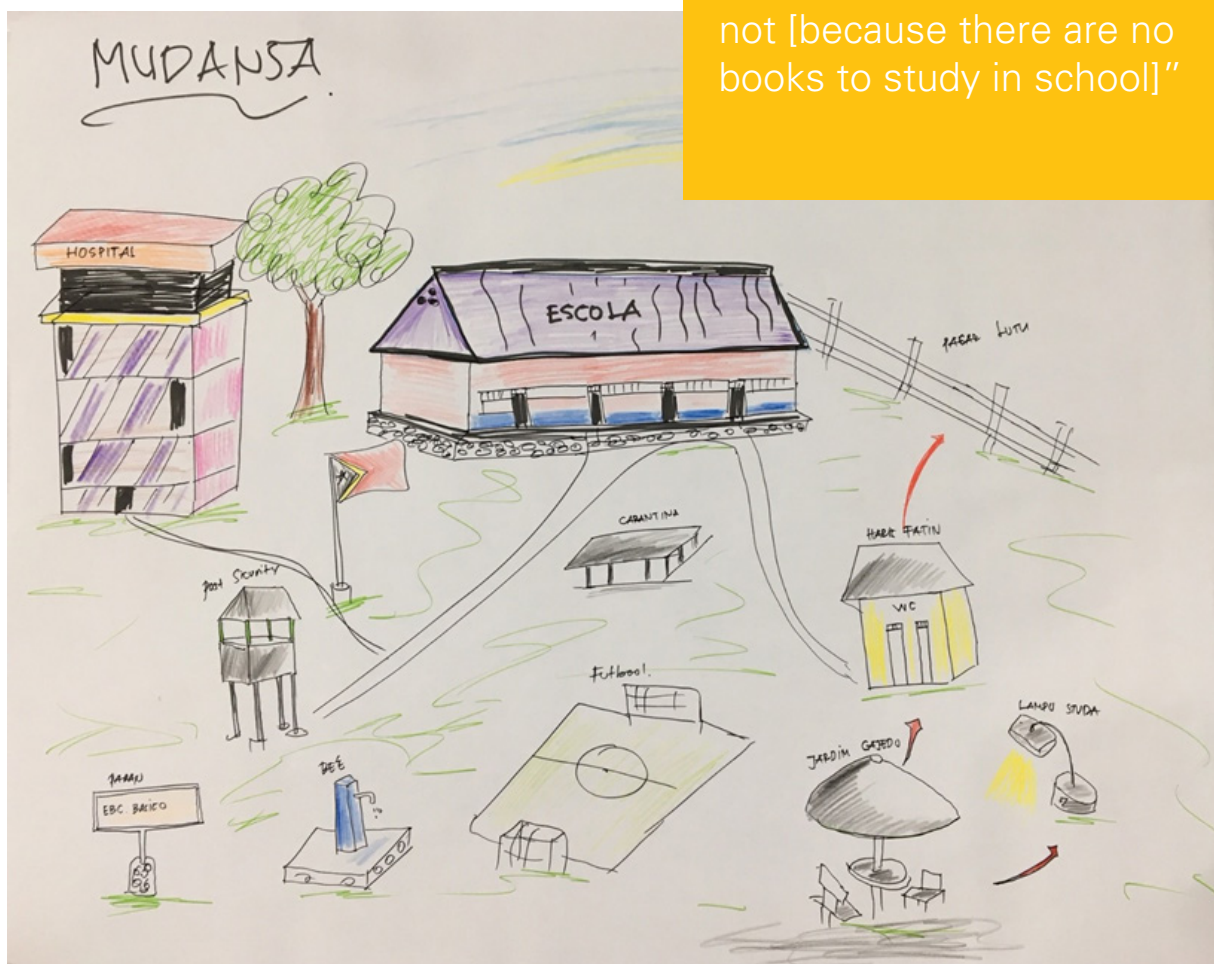
- “The Ministry of Education should go to the field directly to observe what schools need and what they lack, so that these needs can be fulfilled.”
- “The communities need to take care of schools as their own.”

“With a worn-out roof, broken windows, and no chairs and desks, the learning process doesn't go well, especially during the rainy season.”

“We don't study because there are no books.”

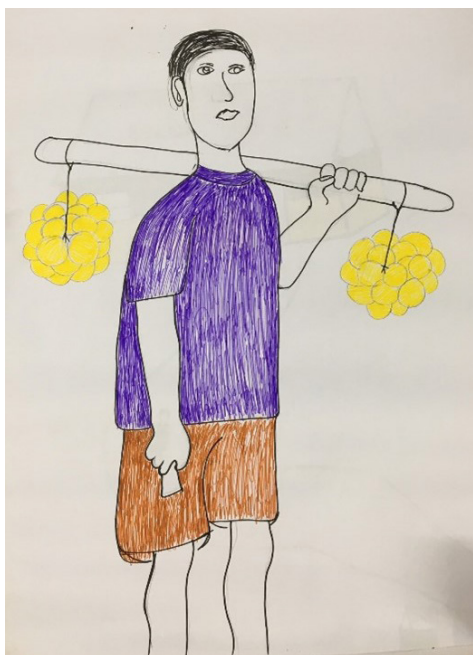
“In overcrowded classrooms (80 - 90 students in one classroom), we feel unmotivated to learn, we can't focus to listen to the teachers' explanations.”

“Our future is like a question mark, whether we can be successful or not [because there are no books to study in school]”



Not attending school

The second issue most raised within education was that some students did not attend school. This problem statement incorporates three situations: children who never attended school, children who dropped out and children who attended irregularly.



Causes raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Economic reasons / having to work	24
Students' indiscipline and lack of motivation	20
Distance to school / Accessibility issue	17
Early marriage / Early pregnancy	12
Health issues	5
Involvement with martial art groups	5
Lack of support/care from parents	5
Violence experienced by students	5
Others	8

"Parents cannot pay for school because they have a lot of debt due to cultural practices"

"Parents force their children to stop going to school to get married"

"Students experience sexual harassment on their way to school by young people involved in martial arts"

Effects raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Risky behaviours (including <i>"hanging around," "troublemaker," "smoking," "drinking alcohol"</i>)	13
Less knowledge and skills	12
Less opportunities in the future	9
Unemployment	9
Early marriage / early pregnancy	8
Work at a young age	6
Others	21

Participants put forward some recommendations:

- *"We want leaders to provide money to support the poor"*
- *"The Government and communities need to sit together to build schools in communities"*
- *"We want the Government to [...] provide transportation"*
- *"Students shouldn't focus on the family plot, but should instead focus on school"*
- *"The National Police of Timor-Leste should investigate martial arts activities in our administrative post to build friendship and peace"*
- *"We don't want teachers to hit us"*

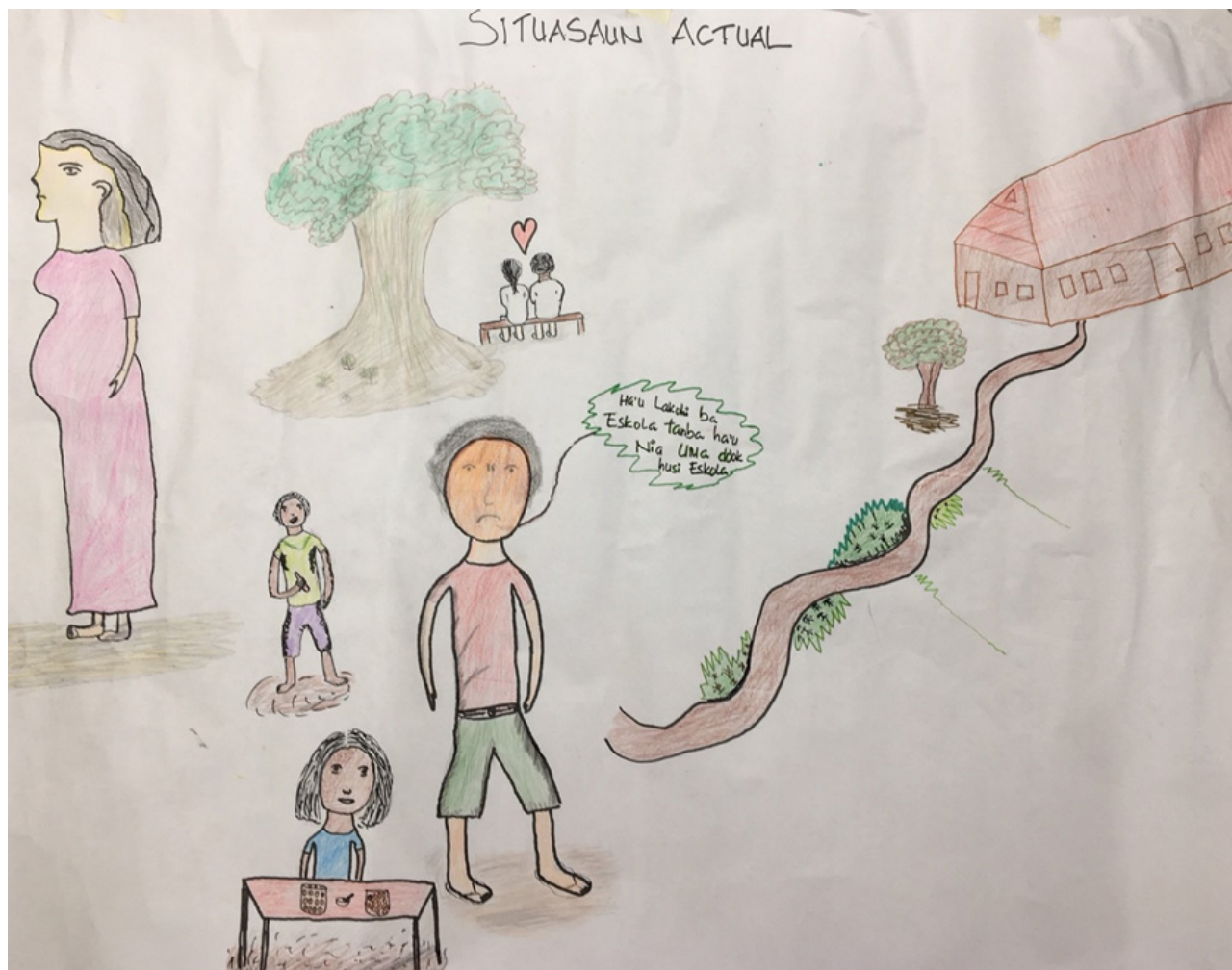
Low teaching quality and lack of teachers

Low teaching quality and lack of teachers was another commonly raised issue related to education. When discussing causes, some groups pointed out that some teachers *"don't explain the learning materials well," "are not punctual"* or *"are not active because of school distance"* while others felt this was due to a lack of support from the Government or from schools to provide learning materials.

Participants put forward some recommendations:

- *"Teachers should return corrected exam papers so that students know the mistakes that they make."*
- *"Teachers shouldn't be late and need to follow the school's rules."*
- *"Teachers should only teach the subject that corresponds to their academic background."*
- *"The Government should recruit more teachers so that each subject can be taught by one teacher."*
- *"Students need more practical learning sessions."*





Distance to school and accessibility issue

Distance to school and accessibility issues were also commonly raised. Adolescents highlighted as causes the insufficient number of schools, lack of transportation to school and the bad state of roads. As a result, *"students are always late"* or *"students are exhausted, unmotivated to go to school."*

Adolescents put forward some recommendations:

- *"We would like the Government to build more schools near our sucos."*



2 Health

Adolescents who discussed problems related to health most often raised as critical issues **lack of medical supplies and equipment**.

Issues raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Lack of medical supplies and equipment	7
People get sick	4
Low quality of services	4
Lack of health facilities / Distance to health facilities	3
Lack of health personnel	3

Some of the **causes and effects of the various health-related problem statements** are presented through the quotes below:

Issues	Causes	Effects
Lack of medical supplies and equipment	<p>"The Ministry of Health hasn't delivered the medicines"</p> <p>"The Chief of the health centre doesn't pick up the medicines"</p> <p>"Lack of transportation, bad roads"</p>	<p>"People don't want to go to the health centre as they are losing hope"</p> <p>"The health centre is available; however it lacks medicines, and there is no ambulance so it is difficult to transfer pregnant women to the nearest hospital which is better. Patients who are in need of urgent care cannot be helped."</p>

People get sick	<i>"Dirty environment, dirty water, dust, domesticated animals, cooking smokes"</i>	<i>"Itchy skin and stomach ache, coughing, runny nose, cannot breathe"</i>
Lack of health facilities/ distance to health facilities	<i>"The health centre is far away from home"</i>	<i>"People want to go to hospital but the communities don't have money for transportation, as a result they just wait to die"</i>
Lack of health personnel	<i>"Imbalanced distribution of health personnel to all health centres from the Government"</i> <i>"The Government doesn't prepare a place for the health personnel to live in"</i>	<i>"Many babies don't get immunization"</i> <i>"Sometimes there's no doctor when we go for a check-up at the health centre"</i> <i>"Many pregnant mothers suffer or die because they're not assisted by health personnel when giving birth."</i>

Participants put forward some recommendations:

- *"Increase the numbers of health personnel and prepare facilities for them"*
- *"The Ministry of Health should build or open a clinic or a hospital in the community, take care of the medicines stock and health equipment such as ambulances"*

3 Violence

Adolescents who discussed issues related to violence most often raised **fighting and illegal martial arts groups**.

Issues raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Fighting and illegal martial arts groups	10
Domestic violence	3
Sexual harassment	1
Sexual violence	1
Unspecified violence	1

Some of the causes and effects put forward for problem statements related to violence are presented through the quotes below:

Issues	Causes	Effects
Fighting	<i>"Bullying, swearing, overuse of social media"</i> <i>"Girlfriend-boyfriend"</i>	<i>"Creates hate and vengeance"</i> <i>"Narrowing the path to learn"</i>
Martial arts groups	<i>"Want to fight"</i> <i>"Different groups provoke each other"</i> <i>"Want to force friends from other martial art groups to join the same group"</i> <i>"Drunk"</i>	<i>"Train in the evening and don't go to school the next day"</i> <i>"Murder"</i> <i>"Jailed"</i> <i>[Others are] "afraid to go to town"</i>

4 Early marriage and early pregnancy

Participants who discussed early marriage and early pregnancy frequently identified individual choice as the cause, followed by family decision.

Causes raised by adolescents	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Own choice	24
Parents/family decision	13
Lack of support/care from parents	3
Sexual violence	1
Not attending school	1

Own choice:

- *"They want it themselves, because they are young and think that forming a family is an easy thing to do"*
- *"They get involved in a love and sexual relationship too early"*
- *"They associate with the wrong groups and don't listen to what their parents say"*
- *"Always hanging around / engaging in risky behaviour (ransu livre)"*
- *"Parents give freedom to children to do whatever they want"*

Parents/family decision:

- *"Parents force their children into marriage with a rich family so that they can benefit from it"*
- *"Parents cannot afford to send their children to school because they are paying more attention to cultural practices" [and they then marry their out-of-school children]*
- *"Insufficient family means"*

Lack of support/care from parents:

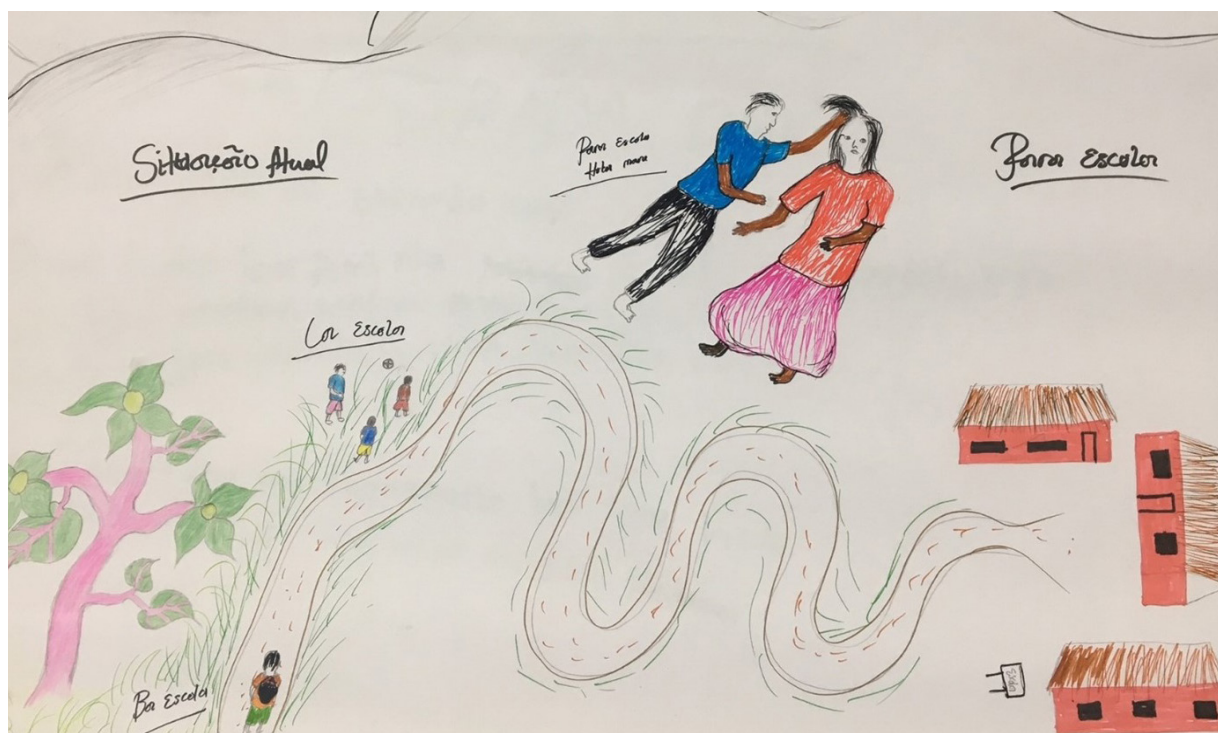
- *"Parents do not pay attention to their children, because they are preoccupied with cultural practices"*
- *"If they get married at a young age they will lose their future"*
- *"Insufficient means which can lead to a divorce"*
- *"Some young mothers die after giving birth"*
- *"Degrade dignity of their parents"*
- *"Defame the neighbourhood"*
- *"Cannot support the family"*

Effects raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Poverty / unemployment	9
Abortion / abandoning baby	8
Difficult delivery / maternal and newborn death	7
Less opportunities in the future	7
Divorce / fighting	6
Domestic violence	3
Other	14

Participants put forward some recommendations:

- “As educated young people, we would like those who have already formed a family at a young age not to be afraid and feel ashamed, and keep walking forward with strong faith and purpose”
- “Adolescents should be at school, they should complete their studies”
- “Parents should put efforts to work and support their children to go to school”
- “Parents should not always follow what their children want and should not do things that are negative and don't benefit their children”
- “The Government should create a programme for those who are not at school so that they all can have access to education”

5 Roads and transportation



Adolescents who discussed **bad roads and lack of transportation** as a critical issue linked it to various causes and effects.

Causes raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Environmental/climate-related causes (heavy rain, floods, landslides)	8
Lack of support from the Government	6
Lack of infrastructure and maintenance (no bridge, no drainage system, potholes)	6
Tree cutting and burning that facilitate landslides/floods	4
Communities do not allow road construction	3

“The local authority prefers the roads to be rehabilitated by local companies and doesn’t allow other companies to do the works”

“Communities don’t allow the road construction works because it will impact gardens and houses near the roads”



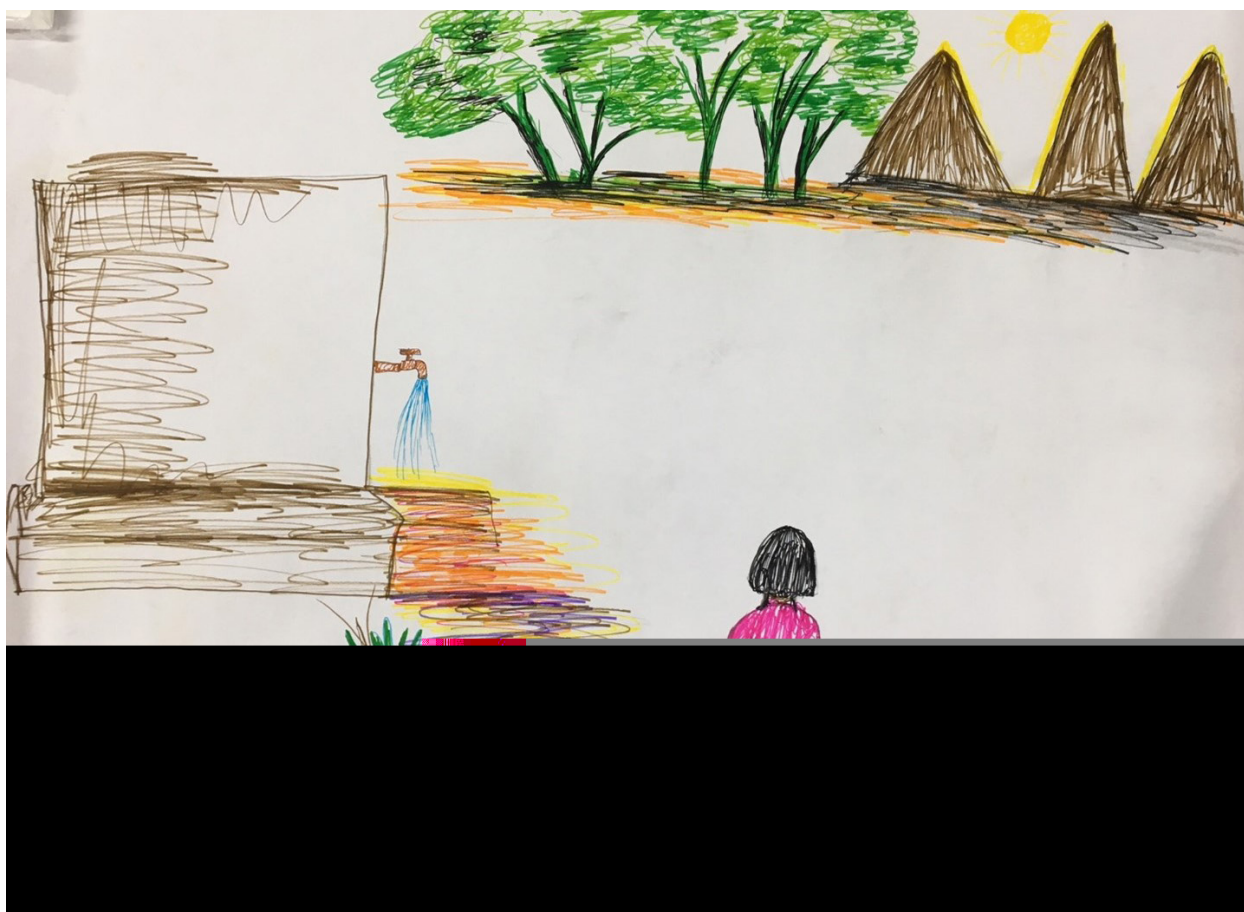
Effects raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups	Percentage out of all effects raised related to roads and transportation
Limited movement (to school, markets, health centres; for authorities, for tourists)	19	61 per cent
Accidents	4	13 per cent
Air pollution	4	13 per cent
Others	4	13 per cent

“The reality here is that when someone is in critical condition and needs to be taken to Dili, immediate emergency care cannot be provided due to the bad roads, which don't allow vehicles to run fast.”

Adolescents put forward some recommendations:

- *“The Government should rehabilitate roads so that children can go to school”*
- *“We want a small bridge so that we can go to school when it rains”*

6 Lack of clean water



Among groups of adolescents that discussed **lack of clean water** as a critical issue, the cause most frequently cited was lack of care for the environment.

Causes raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Lack of care for environment (inconsiderate slash and burn, littering, not replanting trees)	12
Inadequate or broken facilities	3
Lack of support/control from the Government	3
Distance to water source	2
Drought	2
Others	2
Effects raised by participants	Number of mentions by workshop groups
Cannot cook or wash dishes and clothes	8
Causes health issues	7
Cannot wash oneself	6
Affects schooling	4
Cannot grow plants and vegetables	3
Others	7

“We come to school late in the morning because we have to fetch water from a faraway water source.”

“It increases the number of diarrhoea cases.”

Adolescents put forward some recommendations:

- *“We want a water tap in every household”*
- *“Do not cut trees inconsiderately, because trees are very important for water”*



Looking ahead – acting on adolescents' voices

Beyond the specific recommendations that adolescents addressed to themselves, to parents, to communities and to the Government, their rich analysis also gives some more general insights that serve as a pointer for further action.

Adolescents have much to contribute and must be listened to on a range of topics.

While many of the issues pointed out by adolescents were expected, their causality analysis may differ from that of adults. In order to make policies more effective, not only for adolescents but for the community at large, it is critical that adolescents have opportunities to express their views and that their opinions are taken into account.

Adolescents remind us of how interconnected issues are, and that solutions should be too.

The frequent linkages that adolescents made between sectors, in their analysis, call for the Government and development partners to break sectoral silos and increase collaboration and coordination among sectors.



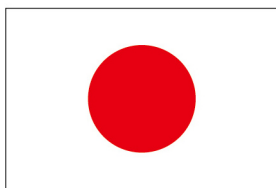
Adolescents addressed a number of recommendations to their own age group, which reveals that **adolescents see themselves as change makers and that adults should support this active role**. Adults should not only be thinking of solutions they provide for adolescents, but also empower adolescents as key change makers and create a supportive environment where they can fully contribute.

Finally, the causality analysis developed by adolescents revealed both the strength of prevailing social norms on some issues, in particular early pregnancy, but also the willingness of some to challenge these norms. It is thus important for the Government and its partners **to invest in promoting positive social norms, including gender norms, and to co-design any such initiatives with adolescents and youth** ready to have a dialogue with their peers and elders.



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Published by the United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF Timor-Leste

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November 2021