



# IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis Timor-Leste 2022 - 2023



# **IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis Timor-Leste 2022-2023**



## Forward

Acute Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a standardized, global scale that provides strategically relevant information to prevent, mitigate, or decrease severe food insecurity that threatens lives or livelihoods in the short term. According to the analysis, 300,000 people (22%) in Timor-Leste are facing high food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) for the current lean season period (November 2022 – April 2023) while 262,000 people (20%) are projected to face high food insecurity during the coming period (May 2023 – September 2023). Eleven out of fourteen municipalities are categorized as phase 3 (crisis) during the current and projection period, with three municipalities, Covalima, Ermera, and Manatuto having 5% of their population classified in Phase 4 for the current period. Also, three other municipalities are categorized as phase 2 (stressed).

The key drivers of food insecurity are reduced purchasing power due to global impacts and climate-induced natural disasters. The Pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, and related global food and fuel price increases have reduced the ability of households to access and afford food. Furthermore, Timor-Leste's increasing exposure to natural disasters, including floods in early 2022 and 2021, has significantly eroded purchasing power, with affected populations facing long-lasting effects of food insecurity.

Urgent action is required to save and protect lives and livelihoods as well as reduce food consumption gaps. Intervention should involve the following: an immediate launch of humanitarian support for the 22% of the population classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) and 4 (Emergency), and the scale-up of livelihood support programs to ensure income sources and mitigate the loss of purchasing power of the most vulnerable households. Furthermore, resilience-building and emergency preparedness, augmentation of social safety nets, asset and livelihood creation, the establishment of an Early Warning Platform, investment in human capital, and the mainstreaming of gender and climate into policy and response formation are necessary.

The suggested interventions require close collaboration and coordination between all related parties in the food and nutrition sector. With this rigorous, evidence- and consensus-based analysis, decision-makers will be equipped to effectively respond to food and nutrition insecurity and reach the most affected populations in the short term. The continued consolidation and sharing of data and resources is necessary and will contribute to increasing the resilience and food sovereignty of Timor-Leste.

I would like to share my utmost gratitude to all those who contributed, especially WFP which hosted the event, for the creation of this much-needed analysis.

Let us now look at the next steps; on how to reach the people most in need.

Together we must and together we can.

  
**Eng. Pedro dos Reis, Msi**  
**Ministru Agrikultura no Peskas/ Prezidente KONSSANTIL**

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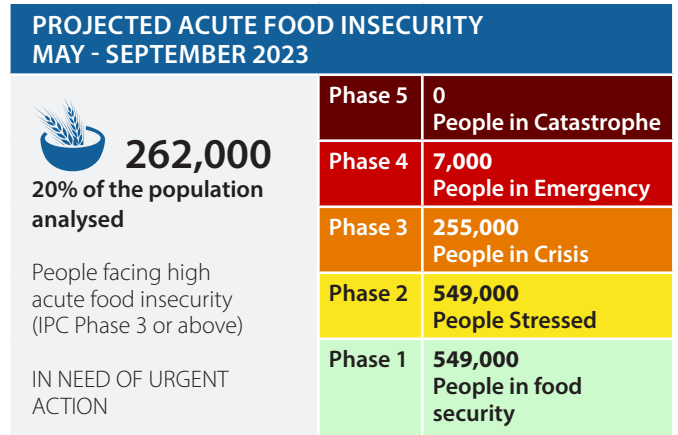
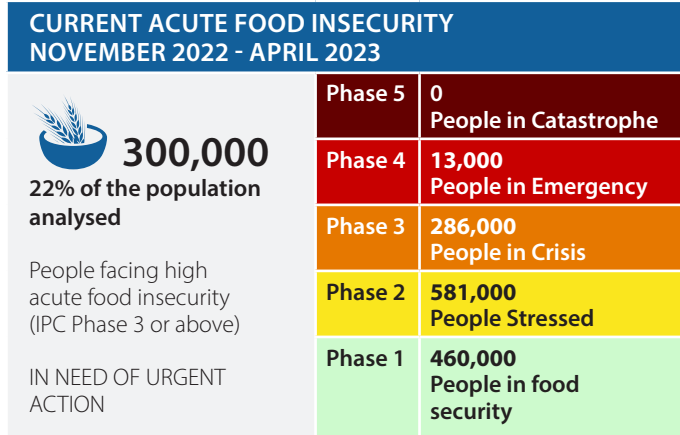


# TIMOR-LESTE

High food prices, reduced purchasing power, persistent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent major floods are driving 300,000 people into high acute food insecurity

## IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS

**NOVEMBER 2022 – SEPTEMBER 2023**  
Published on February 14, 2023

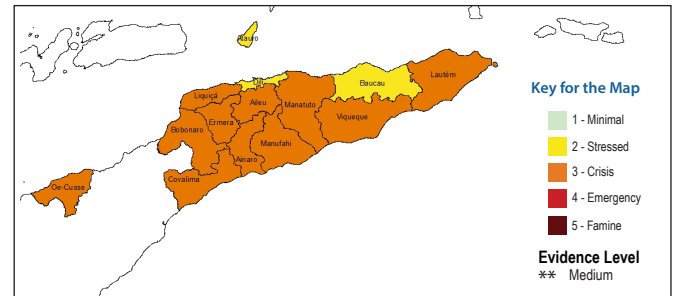


### Overview

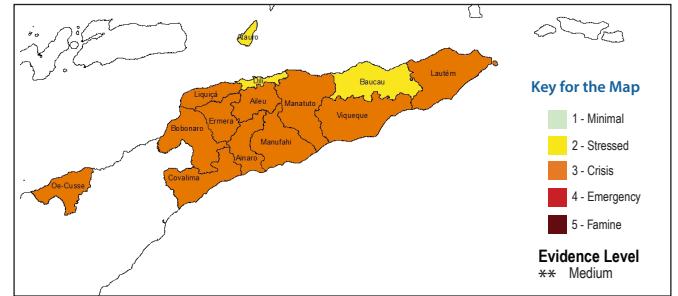
Timor-Leste ranks 16th according to the World Risk Index, which indicates the country's severe exposure, vulnerability, and susceptibility to shocks – as well as the lack of coping and adaptive capacities. Floods, in particular, have affected food insecurity significantly in 2022. During the current period of analysis (November 2022 to April 2023), corresponding to the lean season, nearly 300,000 people representing 22% of the total population face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), of which 286,000 people (21% of the total population) are classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), and 13,000 (1%) in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). Urgent action is required to protect livelihoods, reduce food consumption gaps, and save lives and livelihoods of the people experiencing Crisis or Emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Out of the fourteen municipalities, eleven are classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), whereas three municipalities are in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed). The main drivers of high acute food insecurity include high food prices, reduced purchasing power, and the persistent impacts of the COVID-19-pandemic as well as the 2021 and 2022 floods.

The projection period, May to September 2023, corresponds to the harvest / post-harvest season and shows a slight reduction of people classified in IPC Phase 3 or above, from 22% to 20%. Of this group, Ermera has 5% of its population in Phase 4 (Emergency), making up 1% of the total population in Phase 4 (Emergency). The main factor contributing to a slight improvement of food security is the expected positive impact of harvest, which generates agriculture-related employment opportunities, improves food availability in the market from local production, and increases food stock for households relying on agriculture. However, the positive results of the projection period will depend on how severely climatic shocks like floods and droughts will affect the 70% of the population dependent on agriculture. Moreover, people with unsustainable sources of income, which often generate irregular and inadequate income, will still find it difficult to obtain resources in order to mitigate their food gaps. Prices of local products are expected to decline during the post-harvest season; however, they will remain high compared to the pre-pandemic levels.

### Current situation: November 2022 – April 2023



### Projected situation: May – September 2023



### Key Drivers



#### Reduced purchasing power:

The COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Russia-Ukraine conflict have intensified underlying issues in Timor-Leste, reducing incomes and increasing food and fuel prices.



#### Floods:

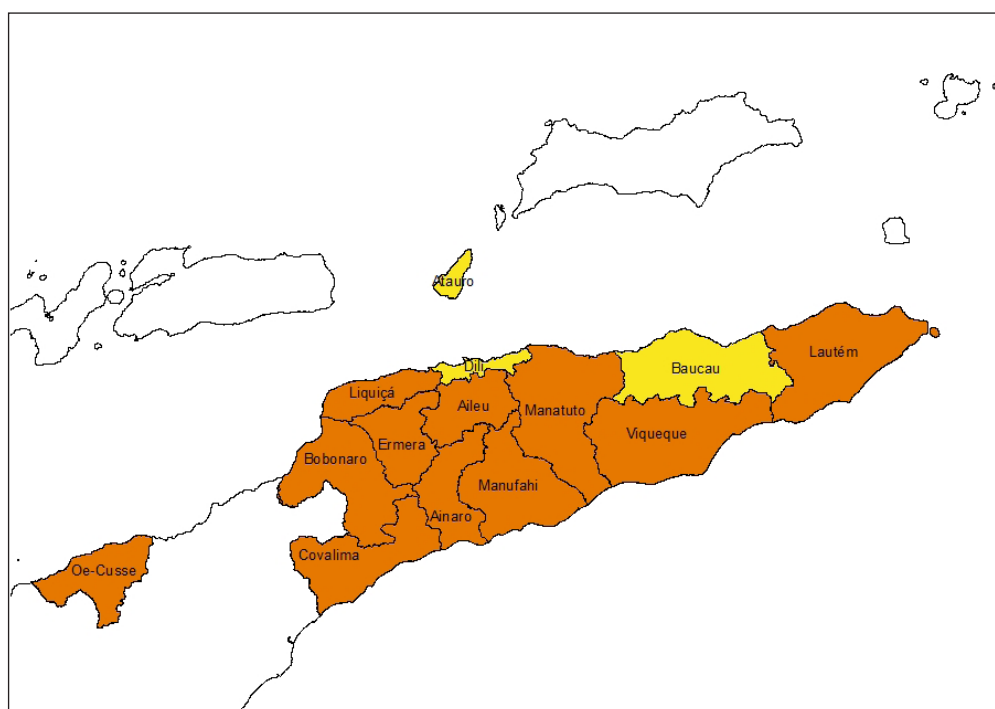
The floods in early 2022 and 2021 have significantly affected the population, creating long-lasting effects on food security of affected populations into the current period.



#### COVID-19:

The pandemic has intensified the underlying issues in Timor-Leste, resulting in poorer harvest, reduced income, and increased household debt, etc.

## CURRENT IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION (NOVEMBER 2022 – APRIL 2023)



**Key for the Map**  
**IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification**  
 (mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not analysed

**Evidence Level**  
 \*\* Medium

Population table for the current period: November 2022 – April 2023

Municipality	Total population analysed*	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Aileu	54,631	16,389	30	24,584	45	13,658	25	0	0	0	0	3	13,658	25
Ainaro	72,989	25,546	35	32,845	45	14,598	20	0	0	0	0	3	14,598	20
Atauro	10,302	5,666	55	3,091	30	1,545	15	0	0	0	0	2	1,545	15
Baucau	133,881	40,164	30	73,635	55	20,082	15	0	0	0	0	2	20,082	15
Bobonaro	106,543	42,617	40	42,617	40	21,309	20	0	0	0	0	3	21,309	20
Covalima	73,909	22,173	30	29,564	40	18,477	25	3,695	5	0	0	3	22,172	30
Dili	324,269	113,494	35	162,135	50	48,640	15	0	0	0	0	2	48,640	15
Ermera	138,080	34,520	25	55,232	40	41,424	30	6,904	5	0	0	3	48,328	35
Lautem	69,836	27,934	40	24,443	35	17,459	25	0	0	0	0	3	17,459	25
Liquica	83,689	29,291	35	29,291	35	25,107	30	0	0	0	0	3	25,107	30
Manatuto	50,989	20,396	40	15,297	30	12,747	25	2,549	5	0	0	3	15,296	30
Manufahi	60,536	21,188	35	24,214	40	15,134	25	0	0	0	0	3	15,134	25
Oe-cusse	80,726	36,327	45	24,218	30	20,182	25	0	0	0	0	3	20,182	25
Viqueque	80,054	24,016	30	40,027	50	16,011	20	0	0	0	0	3	16,011	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,340,434</b>	<b>459,721</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>581,193</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>286,373</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13,148</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>299,521</b>	<b>22</b>



## CURRENT ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW AND KEY DRIVERS (NOVEMBER 2022 – APRIL 2023)

### Current Situation Overview

For the current period (November 2022 – April 2023), the IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis classifies 22% (300,000 people) of the total population in IPC Phases 3 or 4 (Crisis or Emergency). Overall, during this period which corresponds to the lean season, 34% of the population is classified in IPC Phase 1 (No Acute Food Insecurity), 44% in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed), 21% in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), and 1% in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). Out of the fourteen municipalities, eleven (Aileu, Ainaro, Bobonaro, Covalima, Ermera, Lautem, Liquica, Manatuto, Manufahi, Oe-cusse, and Viqueque) are identified as Crisis (IPC Phase 3), while three municipalities (Atauro, Baucau, and Dili) are classified in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed). Of the eleven municipalities in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), Covalima, Ermera, and Manatuto have 5% of their population in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency).

### Hazards and Vulnerabilities

Timor-Leste is a new country with an estimated population of 1.3 million. The country ranks 16th highest in the 2021 World Risk Index Assessment, a comprehensive index that measures a country's exposure to risks including a lack of coping and adaptive capacities. The country is considered as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world in terms of its susceptibility to climatic shocks, such as La Niña, El Niño, and tropical cyclones. The 2021 International Foundation of Red Cross (IFRC) report on climate change states that due to global warming, Timor-Leste will experience more intense climatic variability and its negative impacts in the future. Extreme rainfalls caused by La Niña, such as those that led to the 2021 Easter flooding, will become more intense and frequent – while shorter wet seasons caused by El Niño are strongly associated with droughts, in a country where 70% of the total population relies on agriculture.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the underlying issues in Timor-Leste. According to the 2021 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA-2) report, a joint United Nations (UN) project led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Finance and the General Directorate of Statistics (GDS). COVID-19 has significantly diminished the country's capacity on many fronts, including key indicators such as household income levels, harvest, livelihoods, and purchasing power. These factors are compounded by the country's longstanding struggle with poverty; a rate captured at 42% by the most recent Timor-Leste Survey of Living Standards (TSL-3) conducted in 2014, as well as the 2020 Human Development Index (HDI) ranking 141 out of 189 countries. The poorest households in Timor-Leste struggle to recover from both long-standing issues and recent shocks, in the context of relatively poorer opportunities despite the country's growth potential.

These observations are in line with some of the findings captured in a recent survey. According to the findings of the World Food Programme (WFP)'s mVAM Food Security Assessment survey conducted in 2022, 21% of the interviewed households were headed by females, 22% reported their household's income having decreased in recent times, and 32% of households have 7 or more members in their households. Moreover, 67% of households reported that increased food prices were the primary concern of households – highlighting the combined effect of increased prices and reduced purchasing power of households as drivers of food insecurity.

### Availability

According to the 2020 TL-Rapid Food Security Assessment (TL-RFSA) led by MAF, Mercy Corps, and Oxfam, households rely on agriculture (92%), livestock (53%), and pensions (18%) as their livelihoods, with the impact of previous infectious diseases and floods bringing forth significant changes to people's livelihoods. The flood data even preceding the 2021 Easter flood shows 20% of total households with their homes damaged or destroyed, 59% of all agricultural households with their standing crops destroyed, and 82% of all respondents reported to have previously been affected by the African Swine Fever in 2019. The TL-RFSA suggests that household savings and food stocks were limited even before the floods; 58% of households rated their food storage levels as less than the same time in a typical year, with only 22% of respondents saying they had any savings – and of those, only 7% reported to have more than US\$ 250. Although the survey was conducted on 1,217 respondents – a figure which exceeds a nationwide minimum recommended sample size of 385 – across all municipalities, its findings effectively portray a snapshot of an immediate, post-crisis situation in Timor-Leste. The above-mentioned figures from the survey show to an extent, that the recent twin shocks felt by the nation were predicated on highly fragile grounds, particularly for food security. This bears strong implications for the Timorese population, as 66% of the total population relies on agriculture-based activities according to the Timor-Leste Agriculture Census of 2019.



The 2021 SEIA-2 report confirms that due to low productivity, local production is only able to meet 40% of the domestic demand while the remaining 60% is met by imports from different neighboring countries. Therefore, high reliance on imports makes Timor-Leste particularly susceptible to external shocks; such as rising global inflation, trade bans from COVID-19, and impacts of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Although making a downward trend since 2022 June, the country faces high inflation, with the latest November inflation data from GDS pointing to a 7.2% food inflation. This is in part due to the heavy reliance on imported fuel and food leading to significant market disruptions, especially after the export-restrictive measures of COVID-19. In 2020, 75% of the households had more than one food/income source affected and 50% of respondents had experienced a food shortage in markets, showing the negative impacts on food availability.

### Access

The latest World Bank Economic Report on Timor-Leste published in December 2022 points to the limited access to food in Timor-Leste. The report finds that the national Consumer Price Index (CPI) remains high compared to pre-pandemic levels, and a recovery of GDP per capita has not been seen yet. Similar findings are shown in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) report released in November 2022, where prices of cereals (wheat, maize, and rice) along with several other staple food items have increased in the global market since this October. Following a

similar trend, the October 2022 Timor-Leste Market Monitor report published by WFP shows that prices of cereals and non-cereals have recently slowed down on their upwards trend, yet they remain above the three-year average as well as pre-pandemic levels. The contributing factors to uneasy global price trends include the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, lower production estimates, and the soaring prices of fertilizers in major grain-producing countries. The country's local production is not sufficient to meet the demand, so its reliance on imports makes it prone to the unpredictable price shocks of the global market. Furthermore, the 2021 SEIA-2 report observed about two-thirds of the total respondents' incomes changed since early 2020 with 45% of all respondents witnessed a moderate decrease, 23% saw a significant decrease, and 4% lost all of their income. The rise in prices is likely to impact the economy at the household level, making food accessibility more complex for people.

Due to the economic stress placed on households by the pandemic, flooding, and other difficulties, the 2021 SEIA-2 report estimates that 58% of households were forced to use at least one form of livelihood coping strategy. The WFP's mVAM survey from 2022 revealed other contributing factors. The survey reported that 40% of households have insufficient food consumption, and seven in ten households are using livelihood-based coping strategies such as consumption of seed stock (23%), purchase of food on credit (20%), and reduction of expenditure on health and education (12%), etc. Additionally, the survey found that 32% of households have seven or more members, with increased food prices (67%) and shortage of food (16%) being the primary household concerns reported by the households. According to the 2020 TL-RFSA, even before the 2021 flooding, households were experiencing food insecurity when it should be the most food secure. Over 40% of households were reducing the amount of food they were eating at least once a week, indicating the diminished accessibility of food.

### Utilization

Access to safe drinking water is also a concern for the population. According to the 2022 mVAM Food Security Assessment conducted by WFP, 22% of the households are relying on unimproved sources of drinking water, which includes rain buckets/tanks, river/lake/stream, or tanker trucks and unprotected shallow wells. Public taps (34%), piped water (25%), boreholes (13%), and river/lake/ stream (9%) are among the highest used sources of drinking water.

### Outcome Indicators (mVAM):

**The Food Consumption Score (FCS):** Overall, around 3 out of 5 (60%) of households have 'acceptable' food consumption, nearly 31% have 'borderline' food consumption, and around 9% have 'poor' food consumption.

**The Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI):** Overall, 59% of households have used 'no or low' food-based coping (0 to 3), 40% have utilized 'medium coping' (4-18) and the remaining 1% have used 'high' food-based coping strategies.

**The Household Hunger Scale (HHS):** Overall, 77% of households have reported 'none' to having issues in accessing food in the past 30 days. 20% answered 'slightly', and 3% 'moderately'.

**Livelihood-Based Coping Strategy Index (LCSI):** The Livelihood Coping Strategies Index was not in line with the IPC reference table; therefore, it was used as an indirect indicator during the analysis.





## Overall Food Insecurity in the Current Period

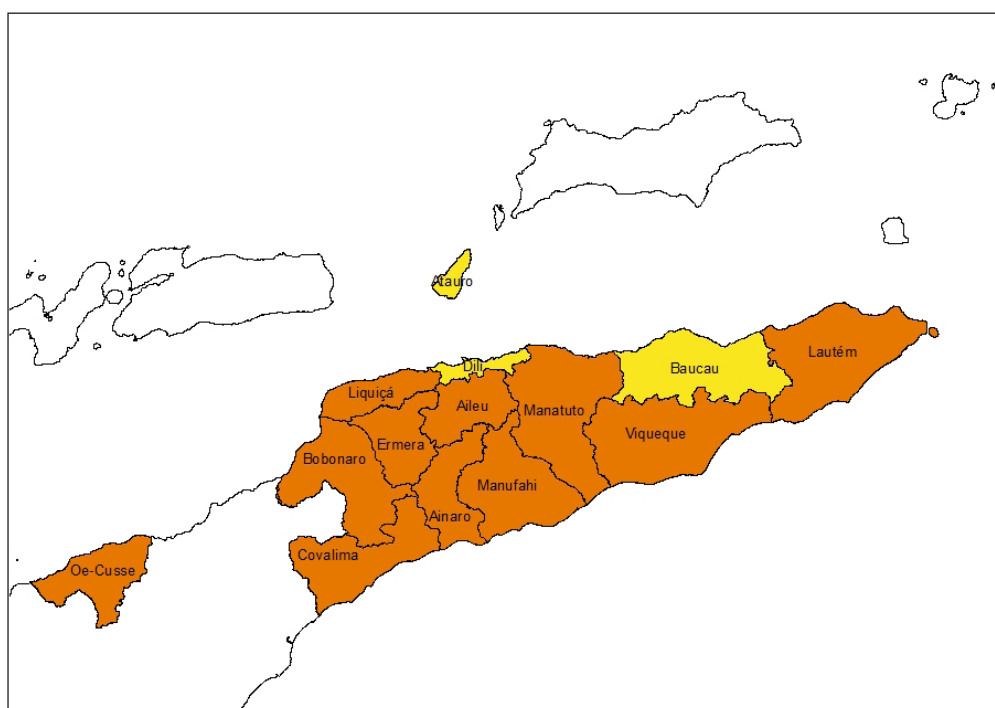
Overall, different sources echo the severity of food insecurity in Timor-Leste. The FAO's Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) reported in the latest 2022 World Bank Economic report estimates that around two out of ten households in Timor-Leste suffer from moderate or severe food insecurity. According to the June 2022 round of the Timor-Leste High Frequency (HiFy), Household Phone Survey led by the UNDP, GDS, and MoF, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity is estimated at 44.5%. Compounded by the reduced purchasing power of the population due to increased prices and the lingering impacts of COVID-19, 22% of the population identified as IPC Phase 3 and above during the current period are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The 5% of the population identified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity situation in three municipalities (Covalima, Ermera, and Manatuto) is the result of an IPC process named 'convergence of evidence', in which all evidence made available for the analysis is used, while also considering the local context on the ground. These results were discussed and agreed upon on a consensus-based plenary at the end of the analysis in line with the IPC protocols.

Covalima was particularly hit by the effects of La Niña after the 2021 Easter flood and used noticeably high food-based coping strategies. The only landlocked municipality, Ermera, reported the highest dependency out of all municipalities on selling agriculture and livestock-related products as its source of income. Manatuto, along with Ermera, Alieu, and Oecusse, had the highest ratio of the population (75%) reported having engaged in livelihood coping strategies, showing a sharp contrast from 44% reported in Dili. The classification of 5% of the population in IPC Phase 4 for these three municipalities was also supported by the mVAM survey, in which the contributing and outcome indicators were also showing a portion of their population in Phase 4.

For the three municipalities, WFP's mVAM Food Security Assessment from 2022 indicates the following data points. Only 20% of the households in Covalima had an Acceptable food consumption score (FCS), 66% Borderline and 14% had Poor FCS. Moreover, 22% of households engaged in Crisis or Emergency coping strategies, 89% sold more of their non-productive animals, 68% relied on agricultural wage labor, 23% had their income reduced compared to the last month of the survey, and 38% of households had seven or more members. In Ermera, only 18% of households had an Acceptable FCS, 68% Borderline, and 14% Poor FCS. Almost four households out of ten (39%) engaged in Crisis and 13% in Emergency coping strategies, 45% sold more of their non-productive animals, 24% sent their household members to eat elsewhere due to lack of food, 27% borrowed food on credit, 19% consumed their seed stock, and 7% sold their house/land. In addition, in Ermera, 48% of households had seven or more members, 25% of households' income declined compared to last month of the survey, and 72% of households were worried about the shortage of food. In Manatuto, only 30% of households had Acceptable FCS, 57% Borderline and 13% had Poor FCS. In addition, 31% of households engaged in Crisis and Emergency coping strategies, 82% sold more of their non-productive animals, 23% purchased food on credit, 51% consumed their seed stock, 24% saw their income decline compared to last month of the survey, 52% of households relied on unimproved sources of drinking water, and 52% of households had seven or more members at the time of the survey.

Along with the abovementioned sources and reasons for IPC Phase classification, it should also be noted that the technical working group (TWG), consisting of government officials, UN agencies, and international and local NGOs, came to a consensus on the findings of IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis in Timor-Leste – including the classification of 5% of IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) population in Covalima, Ermera, and Manatuto during the current period. The ground-level information was also used to support the Phase classification.

## PROJECTED IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION (MAY – SEPTEMBER 2023)



**Key for the Map**  
**IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification**  
 (mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not analysed

**Evidence Level**  
 \*\* Medium

Population table for the projected period: May – September 2023

Municipality	Total population analysed*	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Aileu	55,505	22,202	40	22,202	40	11,101	20	0	0	0	0	3	11,101	20
Ainaro	74,522	33,535	45	26,083	35	14,904	20	0	0	0	0	3	14,904	20
Atauro	10,457	5,751	55	3,137	30	1,569	15	0	0	0	0	2	1,569	15
Baucau	135,488	67,744	50	54,195	40	13,549	10	0	0	0	0	2	13,549	10
Bobonaro	107,822	43,129	40	43,129	40	21,564	20	0	0	0	0	3	21,564	20
Covalima	75,239	26,334	35	33,858	45	15,048	20	0	0	0	0	3	15,048	20
Dili	329,457	131,783	40	148,256	45	49,419	15	0	0	0	0	2	49,419	15
Ermera	138,080	41,424	30	55,232	40	34,520	25	6,904	5	0	0	3	41,424	30
Lautem	70,534	24,687	35	31,740	45	14,107	20	0	0	0	0	3	14,107	20
Liquiçá	85,530	34,212	40	29,936	35	21,383	25	0	0	0	0	3	21,383	25
Manatuto	51,649	20,660	40	18,077	35	12,912	25	0	0	0	0	3	12,912	25
Manufahi	61,505	27,677	45	21,527	35	12,301	20	0	0	0	0	3	12,301	20
Oe-cusse	82,583	37,162	45	28,904	35	16,517	20	0	0	0	0	3	16,517	20
Viqueque	80,614	32,246	40	32,246	40	16,123	20	0	0	0	0	3	16,123	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,358,985</b>	<b>548,546</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>548,522</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>255,017</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6,904</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>261,921</b>	<b>20</b>



# PROJECTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION OVERVIEW AND LIMITING FACTORS (MAY – SEPTEMBER 2023)

## Projected Situation Overview

Regarding the projected period of analysis from May to September 2023, 20% (262,000 people) of the total population is classified in IPC Phases 3 or 4 (Crisis or Emergency). Overall, 40% of the population is identified in IPC Phase 1 (No Acute Food Insecurity), 40% in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed), 19% in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), and 1% in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). Out of the fourteen municipalities, eleven (Aileu, Ainaro, Bobonaro, Covalima, Ermera, Lautem, Liquica, Manatuto, Manufahi, Oe-cusse and Viqueque) are classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), while three municipalities (Atauro, Baucau, and Dili) remain in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed). Of the eleven municipalities in IPC Phase 3, only Ermera is projected to have 5% of its population facing Emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 4).

## Hazards and Vulnerabilities

The government's social protection programmes, such as Cesta Bázika and the Veteran's Fund, are reflected in a national system that provides a wide range of benefits. According to the December World Bank report, these benefits are expected to continue throughout 2023 after the elections early next year, as part of Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI).

Although Timor-Leste has one of the highest social protection spendings in the developing world, the nation is significantly limited in its impact on poverty reduction and improvements in welfare. The December World Bank report shows that although the level of government spending has been consistently high despite the receding impact of the pandemic, the coverage of social protection programmes (excluding short-term emergency measures such as Uma Kain cash transfer) remains low and does not fully reach the most vulnerable groups. The SEIA-2 report also points to similar findings, where only 4% of households with persons of disabilities list receiving disability benefits as one of their income sources, and 11% of the poorest households lists receiving income from Bolsa da Mae; the only program in Timor-Leste that targets vulnerable households with children. These findings are also supported by the joint UN Common Country Analysis published in 2020, where a lack of coordinated framework for social protection and fragmented implementation and delivery mechanisms of government social protection schemes are the main reasons Timor-Leste remains compromised in its overall effectiveness of social transfers. The high poverty rates and food insecurity concerns exacerbated by COVID-19 in Timor-Leste are not expected to improve during the projection period without a drastic structural reform.

As extreme climatic variability and weather trends greatly impact small island developing states (SIDS) such as Timor-Leste, it is important to examine the projected climatic shocks. According to the 2021 Red Cross country analysis report, due to global warming, the country will experience a shift to an even hotter climate, with hot days and nights becoming the norm. While people in Timor-Leste are used to such weather, the drastic increase in days with temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius and tropical nights will require enhanced adaptive efforts. Extreme rainfall events from La Niña will become more intense and frequent; increasing the risks of loss of life, injury, and damages to critical infrastructure as well as an increase in agriculture losses during flash floods and landslides, which also negatively impacts market access in rural areas. As the projection period includes the dry season, adverse agricultural impacts including shortages and poor quality of drinking water, as well as crop failure and pasture losses are expected. For vulnerable households, making up 40% of the total population living below the national poverty line, the 2021 Red Cross report finds that their capacities for combating climate change-related hazards are reduced. Geographical isolation and lack of connective infrastructure are among the factors that influence poverty, making landlocked municipalities such as Ermera particularly susceptible to climate change as a risk multiplier, on top of other factors contributing to food insecurity in the region.

## Availability

According to the SEIA-2 report, although over 70% of the total population is engaged in agriculture, food production is still very low to meet the local demand; approximately 60% of the domestic demand is met via imports, as the country generally relies on imports from different neighboring countries such as Australia and Indonesia. Since the projection period includes the main post-

## Key assumptions

**Price spikes:** The prices of staple food items will remain high compared to pre-pandemic levels despite the expected increase in local food production during the projection period. Following the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the prices of gasoline and diesel have also increased substantially in 2022.

**Increased local production:** During the post-harvest season, local production will increase, however, it will still be unable to meet the local demand. Moreover, local production will be subject to climatic shocks of the projection period.

**Decreased purchasing power:** Reduced income along with increased prices are the main factors decreasing the purchasing power of households.

**Exposure to climatic shocks:** The country's high susceptibility to climatic shocks is an important area of concern when monitoring the food security situation of households. Given that La Niña conditions will likely persist, the possibility of floods, drought, and landslides is assumed to be high.

**Elections:** The next round of elections early next year is expected to not cause any major political instability in the country.



harvest season, local food production is estimated to increase, pointing to a slightly improved outlook on the availability of food in Timor-Leste. This improvement may provide landowners with ample opportunities to engage in agriculture-related employment opportunities, consume their products, sell them, or use a mixed approach. However, as mentioned above, local production is subject to various climatic shocks resulting from the prolonged La Niña conditions. The possibility of extreme, unexpected natural hazards is well-known for Timor-Leste; reducing the availability of local foods also a possible reality. In most of the municipalities where the vast majority of the households rely on agriculture, the food security situation is expected to improve slightly, whereas, for those that are more urban, like Dili, the situation will likely remain similar. According to the 2018 joint UN vulnerability report on Timor-Leste, agricultural production in the country has been growing in the past decade, reporting a high growth rate of 26.6% captured in 2012. This trend is also supported by the 2022 production data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, pointing to a rebound in local production figures for rice and maize for most municipalities, after a slight decrease during COVID-19. While financial access to food may not completely rebound to pre-pandemic levels, if food availability continues its increasing trajectory during the projection period, improvements in availability and access to food may become possible in the future.

### Access

In the projection period, households with arable land are estimated to have improved access (both physical and financial) to food, which will still be subject to climatic shocks. Even though there will be less rain due to the dry season of the country corresponding with the post-harvest season, an increased harvest will provide more for households without any arable land or livestock (including households with non-regular income), to whom financial access will still be a significant challenge. According to the joint Agricultural Outlook published by FAO and OECD in 2022, the expected economic recovery of 4.7% in the South and Southeast region should financially help in overcoming short-term food insecurity in the region. In the short-term, however, GDS, as well as the November FAO FPMA report suggest that the prices of food commodities, both globally and nationally, are expected to remain high compared to pre-pandemic levels during the projection period. Furthermore, the Timorese are confronted by a worsened physical access to food, particularly after permanent shop closures during COVID-19 and damages to critical infrastructure after recent major floods. Loss of connectivity therefore leads to reduced physical access to markets, posing a financial burden on households already on the brink of falling below the poverty line. In this sense, despite the potentially improved availability of food, the households are likely to experience some issues concerning food access during the projection period, where both financial and physical access remains limited. Furthermore, the country is likely to continue facing highly inflated market prices, which will make affordability more complex for the households. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, lower production estimates, and soaring prices of fertilizers in the major grain-producing countries will keep global food prices above the long-term average.

Moreover, according to the mVAM survey, approximately one out of five of the total population has seen their income shrink since COVID-19. This reduction has been accompanied by increased food prices and an erosion of household purchasing power, especially for households that have more than seven members. The latest December World Bank Economic Report confirms this narrative, by stating that inflated international commodity prices, especially food, have a considerable impact on the purchasing power of Timorese households, as much of the food must still be imported.

Out of three municipalities that had 5% of their population classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) in the current period, only Ermera will have 5% in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) in the projection period as well. The improvements in availability and access dimensions of food insecurity during the post-harvest period are expected to shift the population from IPC Phase 4 to lower phases. However, this movement is not expected in Ermera, as its respondents had the poorest food access, and have already depleted their coping strategies to bridge their food gaps, with limited resources for mitigation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

### Response Priorities

- Humanitarian Assistance:** In order to protect the lives and livelihoods of the 22% population classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) or above, an immediate launch of humanitarian support is required especially considering the three municipalities with a 5% population in Emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 4). Any delays in the humanitarian response will lead to the deterioration of the food security of the population. In discussing the next steps, a committee with WFP and other relevant stakeholders should be formed to discuss targeting strategies of the most vulnerable populations, as well as implementation of humanitarian assistance projects.
- Livelihood Support:** According to the findings of the 2022 mVAM Food Security Survey, seven out of ten households are engaging in livelihood-based coping strategies to mitigate their food shortages. Furthermore, the survey reveals that the primary concerns of households are increased food prices (67%) and shortage of food (16%). Therefore, the scale-up of livelihood support programs is required to ensure income sources and mitigate the loss of purchasing power of the most vulnerable households.
- Asset and Livelihood Creation:** Food for Asset (FFA) programs should be considered where possible while providing cash or in-kind assistance to construct and rehabilitate water infrastructure for drinking, agriculture, and livestock such as tube wells, water channels, and reservoirs for better conservation and management.
- Resilience building:** Considering the regular occurrence of extreme climatic shocks, stakeholders should also focus their attention and funding on programs that aim to build resilience to disasters and strengthen emergency preparedness to mitigate the impact. In particular, investing in climate-resilient infrastructure is essential, as Timor-Leste continues to be affected by climate-related disasters without sustained improvements in critical infrastructure.
- Establishment of an Early Warning Platform:** The current early warning system should be strengthened by adding food security and nutrition data in order to establish an integrated and robust warning system.
- Investment in Human Capital:** Investments should be made in the youth, which makes up a large portion of the total population, and farmers. Programs such as vocational skills training/food for training (FFT), literacy programs, training for farmers, etc. should be implemented to provide training on good agriculture and nutrition practices, as well as foster e-agriculture. Moreover, enhanced learning opportunities should be provided to students in the health and agriculture sectors.
- Gender & Climate Mainstreaming:** Women and girls experience greater impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses threats to livelihoods. Women, particularly in developing countries, also play a crucial role in the production of food and feeding their families. This links gender equality to food security at a local, national, and global level. As gender and climate concerns are cross-cutting, it is important that they are mainstreamed into future policy formulations and our immediate response plans.

### Situation monitoring and update

Considering the volatile nature of key food insecurity drivers, monthly technical working group (TWG) meetings are required to take place to monitor food insecurity. Price monitoring data of WFP and the government will provide a solid basis for monitoring the prices of staple food items and other essential non-food items, as well as the analysis of terms of trade (ToT) in the market analysis as a proxy of purchasing power. The next round of UNDP's High-Frequency (HiFy) Household Phone Survey can also be used to monitor the food security situation. Moreover, remote sensing and satellite imagery data will be checked to monitor climatic shocks.

This report further suggests preparing a timeline for the next round of IPC AFI analysis. It's also recommended to have a one-round of face-to-face food security survey, followed up by an IPC AFI analysis workshop, which will allow for a collection of expenditure data, the creation of a minimum expenditure basket (MEB), and a regular assessment of the affordability and expenditure gap.

### Risk factors to monitor

Key risk factors to monitor are.

- Upcoming elections
- Impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on food availability, prices, and purchasing power
- Climatic shocks

## PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

Following the IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Analysis in 2018, this was the first ever IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis conducted in Timor-Leste. Since the country has two main seasons – rainy or dry – it was decided that the current period of analysis will include November 2022 to April 2023 period (6 months; rainy, lean season) and the projection period from May to September 2023 (5 months; dry, post-harvest season). The analysis was conducted at the municipality level which includes all 14 municipalities.

A three-day training workshop was held in Baucau from November 24 – 26 2022, led by the regional IPC coordinator with technical support from WFP analysts from Timor-Leste and Afghanistan country offices. The training was followed up by a four-day analysis workshop from November 28 – December 1, 2022, with the last day being a plenary session for reaching a consensus on the results with all members of the TWG present from beginning to end. The two workshops were attended by 45 participants from different UN organizations, government ministries, and other international and local NGOs. All available pieces of evidence for the outcome and contributing factors of food insecurity were utilized for the food insecurity phase classification, adhering to the global IPC protocols and v3.1 guidelines. The level of evidence for the analysis was assessed as Medium, as per the IPC protocols. The analytical conclusions were drawn from the inputs of the TWG, and all participants agreed on the final results.

### Sources

The main data sources referred to for this analysis include:

- Food Security mVAM survey results – World Food Programme (WFP)
- Market monitoring price data – WFP
- Precipitation data – Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Agricultural Stress Index (ASIS) – FAO
- Climate projection data – FAO
- Annual rainfall data – FAO
- Production data – Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)
- Crop calendar data – MAF
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) data – General Directorate of Statistics (GDS)
- Social protection data – Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI)
- Aquaculture estimates data – World Fish

### Limitations of the analysis

This was the first time that IPC AFI analysis was conducted in Timor-Leste. The fluency of local stakeholders regarding the IPC AFI analysis process was low since the analysis had to start immediately after the training period. Poor internet connectivity and language barriers were also two constraints. Furthermore, a lack of face-to-face food security survey data on a national level limited the information available. Therefore, the TWG relied on the most comprehensive, recent national survey which exists for Timor-Leste, the mVAM data from September 2022, which was conducted on the portion of the population that owns mobile phones. Even though in 2016, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS survey) confirmed that 66% of women and 77% of men-owned mobile phones back then, the representative value of the 2022 mVAM survey for the purposes of IPC AFI analysis is lower than desired since the food security situation of those without mobile phones in 2022 are not captured. Moreover, as Atauro became a separate municipality in early 2022, limited data were available for this municipality. However, the TWG used the IPC protocol based on the nearby close similar area to conclude the Atauro classification with the available data used for Dili. For the next round of IPC analysis, data should be collected for Atauro as well.

### What is IPC? Comparing AFI and CFI

The IPC Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) analysis refers to a Food Insecurity (FI) that persists over time mainly due to structural causes, including intra-annual seasonal food insecurity with medium-and-long-term objectives of improving the quality and quantity of food consumption for an active and healthy life. However, the IPC Acute Food Insecurity refers to a FI that is found at a specific point in time and of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context, or duration with short-term objectives of decreasing severe food insecurity that threatens lives or livelihoods. The IPC CFI focuses more on the quality of diet in addition to quantity, while the AFI focuses on the quantity of food (whether minimum kilo caloric needs are met).

This report suggests not directly comparing the results of the two different sets of analyses due to the different analytical focus and methodology used in the two analyses. Additional work needs to be conducted to better understand the linkages between AFI and CFI. Furthermore, the response priorities are different for the two analyses; Chronic prioritizes the long-term, structural solutions focusing on the quality of food, whereas Acute prioritizes responses that have an immediate positive impact in reducing food consumption gaps and restoring livelihoods.

### What is the IPC and IPC Acute Food Insecurity?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

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This analysis has been conducted under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and General Directorate of Statistics. It has benefited from the technical and financial support of WFP and FAO, as well as the joint SDG fund

Classification of food insecurity and malnutrition was conducted using the IPC protocols, which are developed and implemented worldwide by the IPC Global Partnership - Action Against Hunger, CARE, CILSS, EC-JRC, FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, IGAD, Oxfam, PROGRESAN-SICA, SADC, Save the Children, UNICEF and WFP.

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