



# Pilot Study: Liaison Extension Worker and Women Farmer Groups

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Australian  
Aid 

 **TOMAK**  
To'os ba Moris Di'ak

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# Abbreviations & Acronyms

AEW	Agricultural extension worker
Demplot	Demonstration plot
FFD	Farmer Field Day
FFS	Farmer Field Day
FGD	Focus group discussion
GAP	Good agricultural practice(s)
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSA	Nutrition-sensitive agriculture
PGPR	Plant growth promoting mycobacteria
PNDS	<i>Programa Nasionál Dezenvolvimentu Suku</i> (National Suku Development Program)
PO	Project officer
SAPIP	Sustainable Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project
SEII	<i>Sekretária Estado ba Igualdade no Inkluzoun</i> (Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion)
TOMAK	To'os ba Moris Di'ak (Farming for Prosperity) Program
WVTL	World Vision Timor-Leste

# Executive Summary

From June to November 2020, TOMAK carried out a pilot activity to strengthen gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approaches within the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' (MAF) extension service. As part of this pilot, TOMAK and MAF selected a female agricultural extension worker (AEW) from suku<sup>1</sup> Balibo Vila to provide targeted support to women farmers and farmers with disabilities. Following the pilot activity, TOMAK conducted a small evaluation including focus group discussions with three women farmer groups and a semi-structured interview with the selected AEW to understand the impact of the approaches trialled. Key findings from the pilot are outlined below.

## Regular support provided by the AEW to women farmer groups

- Prior to the pilot, the AEW and TOMAK had established a demonstration plot (demplot) and facilitated Farmer Field School (FFS) training activities with one of the groups of women farmers. This farmer group gained technical knowledge of good agricultural practices (GAP) for mung bean and expanded their production. The two other groups had also planted mung beans with support from the AEW but had yet to expand their production due to difficulty accessing sufficient water.
- The three groups involved in mung bean production activities had used their income to buy food for their family, pay for education costs and contribute to traditional ceremonies.
- The AEW also accompanied nutrition activities supported by TOMAK and World Vision Timor-Leste (WVTL) including cooking demonstrations and promoting nutritious foods with farmers including orange flesh sweet potato, moringa, red beans, soybeans, and mung beans.

## Additional support provided to women's farmer groups during the pilot

- With training and support from TOMAK, the AEW carried out a mapping of women and people with disabilities in her suku in order to increase her support to these groups. From this mapping, the AEW identified a number of women farmer groups, however she did not identify any farmers with disabilities in the suku despite consulting with local leaders.
- The AEW supported the women farmer groups by sharing information about opportunities available through various programs and activities. For example, the AEW supported groups to link with and/or submit proposals to TOMAK, WVTL and the Sustainability Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (SAPIP) in order to join activities and access training or inputs/equipment.
- The AEW involved one of the groups in a WVTL workshop held in the aldeia office on how to prepare proposals for smallholder chicken and pig raising activities, and shared information from SAPIP about animal husbandry and forestry activities (later helping four groups to submit proposals).
- The AEW also contacted the groups regularly (visiting each month or telephoning them) in order to monitor their activities and progress.

## Women farmers' experiences

- The majority of the women farmer groups were happy with the regular nutrition-related activities implemented by the AEW together with TOMAK and other partners including cooking demonstrations. Groups recalled the promotion of nutritious foods led by WVTL and shared that

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<sup>1</sup> Suku = a village, usually consisting of several aldeia (hamlets or sub-villages).

they had practiced cooking and consuming foods from their own gardens and farms such as mung beans, orange flesh sweet potato, moringa, pumpkin, etc.

- The majority of women farmers from the three groups stated that through the AEW's regular activities, they gained knowledge about GAP and nutrition, but that they had not yet received any specific training relating to gender. Despite this, women farmers stated that the AEW had spoken to them about the importance of involving both women and men in agriculture, and the need to involve both women and men in decision-making processes related to the use of household income.
- The women farmer groups stated that their AEW was a key source of information for them. In general, the groups have limited access to information and typically receive their information from their AEW and sometimes from the xefe aldeia (hamlet/sub-village chief). They do not participate in activities if not informed by the AEW, xefe aldeia or the xefe grupu (group leader). Farmers and groups that lived in more remote areas received less information compared to those living in areas closer to the AEW.
- Like other farmers, the women farmer groups in Balibo Vila face a number of challenges to their agricultural production. This includes limited access to inputs and other equipment, lack of knowledge and capacity, and broader challenges such as limited access to water and climate change. The majority of women farmers said that they would like more time with their AEW, but the AEW also faced challenges in meeting regularly with the groups.

## **Recommendations**

The evaluation results suggest that a better approach might be to concentrate on further integrating GESI approaches into the daily work of AEWs who have received training and mentoring. Along with this key finding, additional recommendations are outlined below:

### *Recommendations for AEW service provision*

- TOMAK should further promote strategies during regular training and mentoring provided to AEWs that guide AEWs to better integrate gender and disability inclusion considerations in their regular work with farmers. This should include:
  - Increasing AEWs' knowledge of and relationships with local organisations/service providers that provide targeted support for women and people with disabilities so AEWs are better placed to connect farmers with these services as needed.
  - Developing AEWs' capacity to support farmers with disabilities by equipping them with the knowledge to recognise the needs of people with different types of disabilities as well as specific approaches that can be taken to enhance people with disabilities' ability to participate in and benefit from AEW services.
  - Improving AEWs' ability to provide inclusive services for women farmers by utilising strategies that make access to and participation in AEW services more meaningful for women farmers.
  - Providing opportunities during regular mentoring with AEWs, for example during monthly meetings, to reflect on the specific support they provide to women farmers and farmers with disabilities, and allow AEWs to discuss best practice approaches and seek further guidance from TOMAK as needed.
- TOMAK should conduct advocacy and provide targeted support to MAF leadership that encourages MAF to foster GESI inclusive approaches throughout its extension services.

*Recommendations from women farmers*

- AEWs and other development partners should continue to provide training and capacity development opportunities to women farmer groups including on farming techniques, nutrition, agribusiness, GESI, as well as skills that will support them to access opportunities in agriculture (proposal writing, leadership).

# Main Report

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. About TOMAK

The *To'os Ba Moris Di'ak* (Farming for Prosperity) Program (TOMAK) is a 5-year agricultural livelihoods program implemented in Timor-Leste with support from the Australian Government. The aim of the program is to ensure rural households live more prosperous and sustainable lives. TOMAK has sought to achieve this aim by implementing parallel and linked activities which seek to:

- Establish a foundation of food security and improved nutrition for rural households (Component 1); and
- Build their capacity to confidently participate in agricultural markets (Component 2).

Component 1 (Food Security and Nutrition) promotes nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) approaches in order to increase the availability and utilisation of nutritious food. Component 2 (Market Systems Development) promotes the development of commercial agriculture using a market systems development approach. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approaches are integrated across all program activities. MAF AEWs have been actively involved in the implementation of both components (especially Component 2), including GESI activities.

### 1.2. About the Liaison AEW pilot

TOMAK's GESI team designed the pilot activity to strengthen GESI approaches within MAF's extension service in order to improve support to women farmers and farmers with disabilities. Although the majority of women in Timor-Leste are involved in agriculture, and globally one in seven people has a disability, AEWs typically do not utilise inclusive approaches in their work. Thus there is ample opportunity for AEWs to improve their service provision to these target groups.

One female AEW was selected to lead implementation of the pilot in suku Balibo Vila. AEWs from three neighbouring suku were involved in the initial training in order to observe, learn and implement as far as possible the same approaches, but were not provided any specific support during the pilot period. The Liaison AEW was tasked with providing support to targeted women farmers and farmers with disabilities, and where possible linking these farmers to relevant support services and opportunities. The AEW received an allowance of \$20 each month to cover the costs of phone credit in order to carry out the additional roles and responsibilities outlined in the Liaison AEW guidelines (Annex 2). The pilot was implemented over six months in order to assess the possibility of implementing the approach with other AEWs.

The objective of the pilot was for the AEW to provide targeted support to women farmers and farmers with disabilities. Such targeted support is important to improve extension services, in particular for women, which is a key commitment made by MAF in the Maubisse Declaration<sup>2</sup>.

To realise this objective, the key roles and responsibilities of the AEW in the pilot were to:

- Undertake a mapping exercise to identify the target population in her suku
- Provide targeted extension support to women farmers and farmers with disabilities
- Link these farmers with appropriate services

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<sup>2</sup> The Maubisse Declaration holds the government accountable to work on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against rural women to promote their full contribution in the economic development of the country. The 8<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Government adopted the second Maubisse Declaration (2018-2023) on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2018 and 17 institutions signed the Declaration.

- Promote good communication and share information about household decision-making with all farmers
- Closely observe and pay attention to the work of women farmers and people with disabilities
- Conduct monitoring in order to identify opportunities for further support; and
- Share relevant information about COVID-19 prevention with farmers

These roles and responsibilities are described in detail in the Liaison AEW guidelines in Annex 2.

### 1.3. Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of the agricultural extension services provided to women farmer groups. To do this, TOMAK conducted a small study in order to understand the support provided and benefits for the target groups.

The information from this study will assist TOMAK and MAF to make decisions about how to further improve extension support for women farmers in order to address the key challenges they face.

## 2. Methodology

The study utilised a qualitative methodology including focus group discussions with three women farmer groups from aldeia Fatuklaran, Fatululik no Atara in suku Balibo Vila, Bobonaro. The evaluation team also conducted a semi-structured interview with the AEW in Balibo Vila. Table 1 shows the number of participants in the study.

**Table 1. Study participants**

Aldeia/group name	Total participants	Study method
Aldeia Atara group	5	FGD
Aldeia Fatululik group	8	FGD
Aldeia Fatuklaran group	10	FGD
Balibo Vila AEW	1	Semi-structured interview

The study received coordination support from the AEW in Balibo Vila and was carried out from 10-11 December 2020 and continued on 18 January 2021. Focus group discussions were facilitated by TOMAK's M&E team and a TOMAK project officer (PO) who made an audio recording and took notes from the discussions.

The question guide included a section for informed consent to verify group members' willingness to participate in the discussion. Facilitators explained the objective of the study and informed participants that they were welcome to speak freely as their names would not be recorded, only the information they provided (see Annex 1).

Data analysis was undertaken and the written report (in Tetum language) drafted by the TOMAK M&E Manager with support from TOMAK's GESI and M&E Specialist. The report was also reviewed by TOMAK's National Gender Specialist and Communications Specialist before translation to English.

### 2.1. Study limitations



- During the FGDs, some participants were not active in the discussion, despite the facilitator encouraging all participants to contribute. Because of this, the group leader was more active and provided most of the information, while information from other group members was limited.
- FGDs with two groups were facilitated by the evaluation team (TOMAK's M&E Manager and GESI and M&E Specialist), but due to time and resource limitations, TOMAK POs conducted the third FGD.
- This evaluation focused on the AEW leading the pilot. The evaluation team did not conduct interviews with the three neighbouring AEWs who were involved in the initial training but who were not provided any specific support during the pilot.
- During data collection and analysis, it was sometimes difficult to determine which activities the AEW conducted as part of her regular activities with TOMAK and other partners, and which specific activities she carried out as part of the pilot activity. The AEW was herself confused about this and would sometimes combine the two when sharing her experiences.

### 3. Key Findings

#### 3.1. Roles and responsibilities of the AEW

AEWs have a key role in supporting farmer groups and farmer associations by identifying problems and obstacles to agricultural production and proposing appropriate solutions. TOMAK initiated this pilot activity to reinforce GESI approaches within the extension service, by working with a female extension worker to strengthen service provision to women farmers and farmers with disabilities.

In order to support the AEW to reach these target groups, TOMAK's GESI team provided training to four extension workers including the Liaison AEW from suku Balibo Vila and three AEWs from neighbouring suku of Cowa, Leohitu and Batugade. This training introduced the role of the Liaison AEW and was accompanied by nine meetings with MAF personnel (including with the MAF Director to firstly identify the Liaison AEW following set criteria, and with the Liaison AEW to conduct the mapping exercise and carry out monthly monitoring).

The Liaison AEW's area of responsibility covers suku Balibo Vila, in the administrative post of Balibo, Bobonaro. At the time of the pilot, she was supporting four women groups in four separate aldeia in Balibo Vila, with each group comprising 12-16 members. Before implementing the pilot, the AEW carried out her regular role which involved forming groups of men and women farmers and providing them with technical support. Suku Balibo Vila met the criteria for the Liaison AEW pilot by having a female AEW (only one in 10 extension workers are women) and having a number of active women farmer groups. The AEW noted that



**Figure 1.** Liaison AEW carries out a mapping activity of women farmer groups in her suku.

while many of her groups are a mix of men and women, for the pilot activity she focused her activities on the women farmer groups she had formed and/or provided with support.

Prior to implementing the pilot, the AEW had already worked with key development partners in agriculture including TOMAK, WVTL and SAPIP to provide technical support to farmers and share nutrition information with them. In partnership with TOMAK, the AEW had implemented field demplot

activities including promoting application of recommended GAP techniques through both FFS and Farmer Field Day (FFD) activities.

### *3.2. Support received by women farmer groups*

As part of the pilot, the AEW provided ongoing assistance to the women farmer groups, including sitting together to identify areas of need related to their agricultural activities. During these discussions, the AEW also shared additional information with the groups from various agencies operating in the suku. The AEW noted that women farmers had also seen other farmers in the administrative post of Bobonaro utilising tarpaulins to collect rainwater, and the AEW supported two groups that had difficulty with water access to submit a proposal to WVTL to help them access similar rainwater collection materials. The result of this proposal is still pending.

The AEW also helped connect the women farmers groups to TOMAK (one group had already participated in Component 2 activities and expanded their mung bean production) in order to explore the possibility of joining peanut, mung bean or shallot production activities. For the two groups that had not hosted demplots but had previously participated in TOMAK's FFS activities, the AEW advised that to join the expansion farmer program, the groups would need to cover 50% of costs of expansion (based on TOMAK's selection criteria for expanding farmers). These two groups had not yet joined the expansion farmer program given ongoing issues of water access and the requirement to invest their own money. The two groups had still received and utilised improved seeds they received from the AEW and achieved a good result, with the resulting income used to purchase food for the family and pay for children's school fees.

Apart from the technical support and inputs received as part of TOMAK, women farmers said that they had also learned about the three food groups and applied improved family nutrition practices as a result of nutrition activities and cooking demonstrations led by TOMAK, WVTL and their AEW. Two of the groups said that they enjoyed the cooking demonstrations because they used locally available ingredients including pumpkin, beans, moringa, etc. They noted that after these activities, they had tried the practices themselves at home although they were not able to prepare the meals frequently as they depended on foods being in season and/or making food purchases.

*"From the cooking demonstrations led by TOMAK and our AEW, we learned how to cook pumpkin, coconut and mung bean and when they left, we did it ourselves and until now we have done it again four times when we have ripe pumpkin." - Women farmer group, aldeia Atara.*

One of the women farmer groups had participated in an activity in the local aldeia office led by WVTL with participation of the AEW. Group members said that WVTL had encouraged them to grow moringa and that they had also received information about how to prepare a proposal for a WVTL chicken raising activity. This group was supported by the AEW to submit a proposal but has yet to receive a response. In addition, other groups noted that WVTL together with the AEW had visited on four occasions and delivered training on seed germination and use of compost through a demplot activity. Before these interactions with WVTL and the AEW, one of the groups had been mobilising themselves with direction from their group leader who had helped them establish their own plan and submit proposals to NGOs.

The groups had also sought support through the SAPIP program. With support from their AEW, they prepared proposals for SAPIP animal husbandry and forestry activities. SAPIP has processed the group proposals from the administrative posts of Cailaco and Maliana but has yet to determine which groups will receive support in Balibo. As such, the groups are still waiting to hear on the outcome of their proposals.

### **Gender activities**

Women farmer groups noted that during the pilot, they did not receive any specific gender training. However, the group leaders noted that while they had not received specific gender training, the AEW regularly talked about involving both men and women in farming and encouraged them to create women farmer groups.

One farmer group said that they had heard information about gender through their group leader who had participated in a training led by SEII and PNDS with cooperation from WVTL. This group leader was active in encouraging other women to engage in farming to increase their income.

In terms of household decision-making about the use of household income, groups stated that men and women usually decide together about large purchases but can decide separately about smaller purchases. The groups said that women and men generally discuss together investment in the farm, as well as paying for education costs and traditional ceremonies. Women were generally responsible for deciding what food to purchase for the family to eat.

Going forward, the AEW noted that she has a plan to run training about PGPR (liquid organic fertiliser) for the groups in aldeia Fatululik no Fatuklaran that have requested this training. The farmer groups have prepared local materials for this training as instructed by the AEW. The AEW stated that they are still looking for opportunities through MAF, TOMAK, WVTL and SAPIP for the women farmer groups to access additional support. This information was also confirmed by the farmers.

### *3.3. Access to information*

Women farmer groups noted that their AEW had become a key source of information for them. Generally, the farmers stated that they receive information mostly from their AEW and sometimes also from their xefe aldeia. From the xefe aldeia, they were most likely to hear general information from NGOs and also information from local government or the xefe suku (village chief). Information from the AEW was most often related to specific activities being implemented through NGOs and other agencies in cooperation with MAF including from TOMAK, SAPIP, Avansa, etc. Women farmers noted that when activities were being organised in the aldeia, the AEW would contact the group leader who would then inform the group members. Two groups living in remote aldeia far from the main part of the suku also received information regularly from the AEW despite being visited less frequently.



**Figure 2.** Meeting between AEW, TOMAK PO and a group of women farmers in suku Balibo Vila.

*“We find things out only from our extension worker and we provide information through the extension worker as well. We don’t know many other people so if the AEW doesn’t come and share information, we don’t know who to inform.” – Group leader, women farmer group aldeia Atara.*

When the AEW informed the groups about NGO-led activities being implemented in the suku, the AEW always accompanied the activities. When other activities were taking place at the aldeia level, the xefe aldeia would inform the group leader who would inform other group members. But the groups mentioned that sometimes NGO-led activities had already taken place before they heard any information about the activity. Because of this lack of information, some group members stated that they did not always have the opportunity to participate in activities implemented in their aldeia.



**Figure 3.** Flowchart showing women farmers’ access to information

The majority of farmers noted that they had heard information about COVID-19 from a range of sources. They noted that prior to TOMAK distributing information, they had also heard information on this topic from WVTL, Ministry of Health and from media sources (Facebook and television). They had all heard some information about prevention practices including how to build a tippy tap at home, as well as the importance of washing hands regularly with soap, wearing a mask, maintaining social distance and staying at home.

### 3.4. Challenges

#### Challenges for the AEW in providing support to women farmer groups and people with disabilities:

- When the AEW conducted a mapping of women farmer groups and farmers with disabilities in her suku, she consulted the local xefe aldeia but they did not identify any individuals with a disability. However, the AEW was primarily focused on identifying people with physical disabilities and it is possible that people with other types of disabilities were not considered in

her mapping. Because of this, it is difficult to assess the AEW's capacity to provide extension services to people with disabilities.

- Although the AEW sat with the women farmer groups to identify the problems and obstacles they face, it was difficult for the AEW to help respond to all problems. The AEW provided additional support to prepare proposals with the groups but sometimes the groups were waiting for government and agency responses, or their proposals were not accepted.
- The connection between the AEW, women's organisations and other service providers that support women and people with disabilities is not yet strong, and women farmer groups did not mention any referrals to these groups provided by the AEW. Instead, it seems the AEW chose to focus predominantly on increasing her own services to these groups.
- When bringing together farmers for training or other purposes, the AEW felt that she should provide food for the group (but the pilot did not include any budget for snacks during these activities).
- When groups were located in remote areas, it was difficult for the AEW to visit regularly. Although the AEW has a motorbike she uses to visit farmers, as a woman she did not always feel safe to make long journeys alone.
- The Liaison AEW also noted similar challenges that have been raised by other AEWs including limited resources to conduct activities, as well as limited time due to being involved in numerous activities and needing to provide services across a large area.

#### Challenges for women farmers:

- Women farmers from two groups noted that they wanted the AEW to provide increased support to their group, noting that the AEW was often busy with her everyday activities and responsibilities as an AEW, or involved with other activities being implemented by development partners.
- Women farmer groups noted that they still have limited capacity and confidence to prepare proposals for NGO support, and requested additional support on this from the AEW.
- Sometimes, women farmers and the AEW could not find a suitable time to meet each other because farmers were busy with regular farming activities, selling their products, or attending cultural activities. The AEW noted that she attempted to visit groups once per month and if she could not visit, she would contact the groups by phone.
- Farmers living in remote areas often received less information and they sometimes felt marginalised if the xefe aldeia did not inform them about activities. They reported feeling less important on occasions when they heard about activities that they were not invited to participate in from other people. They could only participate in activities if the AEW or xefe aldeia informed them.
- Two women farmer groups were facing the more general agricultural problem of reduced access to water on their farms, which made it difficult to join some activities such as TOMAK's demplot program for mung bean or peanut.
- Climate change was a major factor affecting mung bean harvest results for the group in aldeia Atara.

## **4. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations**

### *Conclusion and Discussion*

Linked with the role of the AEW to help farmers identify and look for solutions to problems they face, TOMAK was interested to explore greater integration of GESI approaches through this pilot with a female extension worker in Balibo Vila. To strengthen AEW services provided during the pilot,

TOMAK's GESI team provided training on how to conduct mapping to identify women farmers and farmers with disabilities in order to provide targeted agricultural support. This training involved four AEWs, including the Liaison AEW as well as AEWs from three neighbouring suku who observed the approaches with a view to applying them with their own farmer groups when they had the opportunity. Despite this training, the AEW from suku Balibo Vila has not yet identified any farmers with disabilities in her area in order to provide support to them.

TOMAK has cooperated with the AEW from Balibo Vila for several years through its two main activity areas (Component 1: Food security and nutrition; Component 2: Market systems development). This cooperation included implementing demplot activities with farmers using FFS and FFD approaches to promote improved farming practices. The AEW's regular activities also included facilitating training and distributing subsidised inputs for mung bean, peanut and shallot farmers. Other TOMAK activities involving the AEW included implementing cooking demonstrations using locally available ingredients that farmers grow themselves. The AEW regularly cooperated with WVTL to promote nutritious foods including beans and orange flesh sweet potatoes. The three women farmer groups involved in this pilot had participated in a range of these activities with the AEW.

The AEW noted that during implementation of the pilot, she continued providing support to the women farmer groups by visiting them monthly or calling them by phone. She helped the groups to link to various programs and organisations (including SAPIP, TOMAK and WVTL) and supported them to prepare and submit proposals relevant to their agricultural activities. These included proposals to WVTL for chicken and pig raising activities, and proposals to SAPIP related to animal husbandry and forestry activities. At the time this evaluation was carried out, the women farmer groups had not yet heard the results of their proposals and whether or not they had been successful.

Although the AEW provided additional support to the groups, the farmers noted that they received no specific training about gender. Despite this, women farmers noted that the AEW spoke to them regularly about the importance of both women and men being involved in agriculture, and in household decisions related to use of income. These issues relate to gender norms and roles and show that the AEW had sufficient confidence to integrate these topics into discussions with farmers.

One group expressed that they were happy with the support provided by their AEW, although two groups said that they would prefer additional support from the AEW who was often occupied with other work and/or supporting various development partners. Groups located in more remote aldeia were visited less frequently by the AEW, due to safety concerns of the female AEW when travelling long distances alone.

In this pilot, the AEW was seen as an important source of information for the women farmer groups. These groups generally receive limited information, mostly from their AEW and sometimes from the xefe aldeia. For groups in more remote locations, it was often difficult for them to participate in activities held in the aldeia/suku, especially when they had their own everyday activities to attend to. But they were still interested to be involved in agricultural activities, especially activities that would help them address key challenges including water access and climate change which affect their agricultural production.

The results of the evaluation suggest that women farmers greatly appreciate technical support received from the Liaison AEW. That being said, the majority of the support they noted formed part of the AEW's regular activities and were not necessarily the result of additional support provided as part of the pilot. The AEW's performance in this respect seems to have been impacted by issues of time and logistical challenges that limited the amount of support she provided to the target farmers. The evaluation results suggest that a better approach might be to concentrate on further integrating GESI approaches into the daily work of AEWs who have received training and mentoring. Along with this key finding, additional recommendations are outlined below:

### *Recommendations for AEW service provision*

- TOMAK should further promote strategies during regular training and mentoring provided to AEWs that guide AEWs to better integrate gender and disability inclusion considerations in their regular work with farmers. This should include:
  - Increasing AEWs' knowledge of and relationships with local organisations/service providers that provide targeted support for women and people with disabilities so AEWs are better placed to connect farmers with these services as needed.
  - Developing AEWs' capacity to support farmers with disabilities by equipping them with the knowledge to recognise the needs of people with different types of disabilities as well as specific approaches that can be taken to enhance people with disabilities' ability to participate in and benefit from AEW services.
  - Improving AEWs' ability to provide inclusive services for women farmers by utilising strategies that make access to and participation in AEW services more meaningful for women farmers.
  - Providing opportunities during regular mentoring with AEWs, for example during monthly meetings, to reflect on the specific support they provide to women farmers and farmers with disabilities, and allow AEWs to discuss best practice approaches and seek further guidance from TOMAK as needed.
- TOMAK should conduct advocacy and provide targeted support to MAF leadership that encourages MAF to foster GESI inclusive approaches throughout its extension services.

### *Recommendations from women farmers*

- AEWs and other development partners should continue to provide training and capacity development opportunities to women farmer groups including on farming techniques, nutrition, agribusiness, GESI, as well as skills that will support them to access opportunities in agriculture (proposal writing, leadership).

# Annex 1: FGD and Interview Guides

## **FGD GUIDE FOR WOMEN FARMER GROUPS**

### **Informed consent**

Hello, my name is (interviewer) and my colleague (if applicable) and I are here today to talk with you and hear your thoughts about the services of your agricultural extension worker (AEW) as part of a pilot activity we recently carried out in suku Balibo Vila. During the last 6 months, your extension worker might have visited your group and provided you with some support in order to help respond to some of the challenges you face as women farmers.

Today, we are here to see the progress of these activities, what worked well, what hasn't worked well or could be improved going forward. We anticipate our discussion with you to last about an hour today. You are free to speak freely about anything you have learned and anything that might have been positive or negative.

The information you provide is anonymous and will be used only by the evaluation team to help inform future TOMAK activities. Do you agree to be interviewed? Yes or no?

*(Interviewer must stop the interview if any participants do not wish to participate)*

*(Prepare template to register participants)*

1. What activities have you participations and/or interactions have you had with your extension worker in the past 6 months?  
(Example: AEW facilitated a meeting to discuss challenges, encouraged women to express their opinions and look for opportunities to seek assistance as farmers, etc.)
2. How do you feel about these activities? Did they help you? If no, why?
3. How do you identify your challenges and needs as farmers?
  - Did it alone or with support from the AEW? When did you do this?
  - Who do you normally talk to about these challenges and needs? And how do you inform them?
4. Have you received any support from your AEW or with the assistance of your AEW?
  - What support was this?
  - Who provided this support?
  - When did you receive this support?
5. Have you participated in any training or events during the last 6 months?
  - Who provided this?
  - What was it about?
  - Why did you want to participate?
6. To what extent are you involved in decision-making processes about how to use the income generated from farming? (probe: slightly involved, involved in some decisions, involved in the majority of decisions)
  - If involved, how do you make decisions about using money to purchase nutritious food? When was the last time you did this?
  - What about decision-making related to investing in your farm?
  - When was the last time you did this?
7. What changes have you experienced as a result of the support from your AEW? Compared to before you received support from the AEW?
  - Positive?
  - Negative? Why?



8. What difficulties have you found when you would like to meet with your AEW?
9. What steps have you taken to prevent COVID-19 in your family?
  - When did you do this?

Thank you very much

## **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR AEW**

### **Informed consent**

Hello, my name is (interviewer) and my colleague (if applicable) and I are here today to talk with you about the pilot Liaison AEW activity we recently carried out in suku Balibo Vila. We know that you have connected with women farmers to provide appropriate assistance and opportunities during the last 6 months.

Today, we are here to see the progress of these activities, what worked well, what hasn't worked well or could be improved going forward. We anticipate our discussion with you to last about an hour today.

The information you provide is anonymous and will be used only by the evaluation team to help inform future TOMAK activities. Do you agree to be interviewed? Yes or no?

*(Interviewer must stop the interview if the participant does not wish to participate)*

a. Date of interview	b. Interviewer
c. Respondent name	d. Respondent gender
e. Year of birth	f. Position
g. Municipality	h. Administrative post
i. Suku:	j. Aldeia:

### Role of the AEW

#### 1. Basic information

- How many targeted farmer groups have you worked with (women)?
- How many members does each group have?
- Are there any people with disabilities in these groups?
- Are there any farmers with disabilities in your village? *(If yes) Why are/were they not involved in your target groups?*

#### 2. What activities did you carry out to support farmers? And how?

*(Example: AEW facilitated a meeting to discuss challenges, encouraged women to express their opinions and look for opportunities to seek assistance as farmers, etc.)*

3. How do you feel about these activities? Were there benefits for the farmers? If yes, what were they? If no, why not?
4. What was the participation of farmers like during your meetings? Were they able to speak up about the challenges they face?
  - What did they talk about?
5. What difficulties did they request your support to address? How did you resolve these?
6. What support have farmers received from government/NGOs/TOMAK/other partners you're your support?
7. How have you promoted equitable household decision-making about the use of income for:
  - Buying nutritious food (provide an example)

- Investing in the farm (provide an example)
- 8. Are there farmers in your target groups that do not talk or who are less active? If yes, what methods have you used to try and encourage them to speak up? I
- 9. What changes have occurred for you personally after being involved in this activity? What have you learned?
- 10. What changes have occurred for the farmers with your support? Compared to before?
- 11. What does your supervisor think about your involvement in this activity? Do they support you? If no, why do you think they do not support you?
- 12. What challenges have you faced while implementing this activity with farmers? How did you resolve these challenges?
- 13. What do you think would help to make your work more effective going forward?
- 14. As you know, the work you have been doing is part of a pilot activity to increase outreach to women farmers. If TOMAK were to expand this activity to include other AEWs, what recommendations would you have to improve the approach? (probe: additional training, incentives, other forms of support)
- 15. What have you done with farmers to promote COVID-19 prevention?

Thank you very much.

# Annex 2: Liaison Agricultural Extension Worker Guidelines

## **SUMMARY**

TOMAK's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) team is piloting an approach to strengthen the services that Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) provide to women farmers and farmers with disabilities. Although women make up roughly half of the population of farmers in Timor-Leste and one in seven people in the world have a disability, current AEW services do not always take a social inclusion approach and therefore there is an opportunity for AEWs to provide more targeted support to these farmers.

One lead female AEW from Balibo Vila has been selected to implement the pilot approach. Three other AEWs from neighbouring suku will observe, learn and implement where possible, however no specific support will be provided to them during the pilot. The Liaison AEW will provide targeted support to women farmers and farmers with disabilities, including linking them to services and opportunities as appropriate. The Liaison AEW will be provided with \$20 phone credit monthly to support the implementation of the roles and responsibilities outlined in these guidelines. The pilot will run for six-months, after which a decision will be made on whether or not to implement the approach with other AEWs.

## **OBJECTIVE**

Provide targeted support to women farmers and farmers with disabilities. Support these target farmers to have better access to and support from extension services in accordance with the MAF objectives outlined in the Maubisse Declaration.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Conduct mapping to identify target population
  - Develop a list of phone numbers of women farmers and people with disabilities in your catchment area and note what crops and/or livestock they farm
  - Use the mapping tool in Annex 1
2. Provide targeted support to women farmers
  - Call/meet with women farmers to discuss their needs and challenges
  - Provide opportunities for women farmers to ask questions and share their opinions during farmer group meetings/events
  - Encourage farmer groups to select women for leadership positions within the groups
  - Link to local women's organisations that may be able to provide specialised support
3. Provide targeted support to farmers with disabilities
  - Ensure group meetings are held in a location that is accessible to farmers with mobility issues
  - Ensure farmer group meetings are accessible to people with vision or hearing difficulties
  - Link farmers with disabilities to disability services if the farmer asks for support
  - Utilise technology/machinery that is appropriate for people with different disabilities (e.g. keyhole garden, irrigation system, etc.)
4. Link farmers to extension services as appropriate
  - Facilitate farmers to make requests to use MAF materials (equipment, machines, etc.)
  - Support farmers to prepare proposals for specific funding opportunities
  - Link farmers to training provided by MAF or other training opportunities
5. Promote good communication and shared household decision making with all farmers
  - Encourage farming couples to make decisions together about how to save and spend their money, and to think carefully about how their savings can be used to purchase nutritious food and agricultural inputs

- Discuss men's and women's roles in farming and food preparation. Discuss with farmers strategies to manage their workload so there is still time to ensure their family eats nutritious food, particularly during busy production times.
- 6. Highlight work of women farmers and farmers with disabilities
  - During regular AEW team meetings or reports to your supervisor, highlight work of women farmers and farmers with a disability, including successes and challenges
- 7. Monitor additional support provided
  - Keep monitoring tool up to date
  - Keep in regular contact with TOMAK team members to share progress and/or ask for support
- 8. Share relevant COVID-19 information with farmers
  - Share accurate and quality COVID-19 prevention information

### **REFERRAL PATHWAYS AND CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>Name of organisation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Contact Phone Number</b>
<b>TOMAK</b>	An agricultural livelihoods program supported by the Australian Government.	Cecilia da Fonseca	77548833
		Orlandina Leite	78065004
<b>RHTO</b>	National disabled people's organisation - Bobonaro focal point	Arcanjo do Santos Guillermina	75921187/78142123 77288287
<b>OHM</b>	Local NGO with programs related to agriculture/NSA women's economic empowerment, gender, etc.	Rince Napo	77615050
<b>MSSI</b>	Government ministry with a mandate to provide support to vulnerable groups	MSSI	3310501-3310219
<b>VPU</b>	Vulnerable Persons Unit within the national police (PNTL) which assists vulnerable women and children and is a member of referral pathway group	VPU National	3310282
<b>Women's Associations</b>	Focal points established under SEII to assist vulnerable women and act as a focal point of SEII in each municipality	Viqueque Baucau Bobonaro	77349301 77259413 77246286

## **MONITORING**

### Liaison AEW responsibilities:

The Liaison AEW should keep track of all interactions with women farmers and farmers with disabilities using the monitoring tool in Annex 2. The Liaison AEW should make a minimum of three (3) contacts (by phone or face-to-face visit) with the target population per month. A copy of the monitoring tool should be provided to TOMAK staff at the end of each month.

### TOMAK staff responsibilities:

The TOMAK team will contact the Liaison AEW each month to discuss the progress in the monitoring tool and gather feedback from the AEW. The TOMAK staff will ask the AEW the following questions:

1. What went well over the past month?
2. What challenges did you experience over the past month?
3. What additional support do you require from TOMAK or MAF?
4. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

After six-months of implementation, the TOMAK team will conduct five interviews with farmers that were targeted during the pilot to evaluate their experience with the pilot, including any impacts they experienced as a result of the pilot.

Tool for mapping women farmers and farmers with disabilities

AEW name: \_\_\_\_\_

Suku: \_\_\_\_\_

No	Aldeia	Name of farmer	Age	Disability			Crops farmed	Livestock raised	Notes
				Y	N	Type of disability			

Tool for monitoring interactions with women farmers and farmers with disabilities

AEW name: \_\_\_\_\_

Suku: \_\_\_\_\_

No	Date	Phone/visit		Aldeia of farmer	Name and age of farmer / group type	Sex		Disability		Summary of contact	Follow up actions
		T	V			F	M	Y	N		
1											
2											
3											



TOMAK Timor-Leste



@TOMAKTimorLeste

[www.tomak.org](http://www.tomak.org) | [info@tomak.org](mailto:info@tomak.org)



Adam Smith International



@adamsmithint



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