



## PRESS RELEASE

### **To'os ba Moris Di'ak (TOMAK), DFAT's flagship Agriculture Livelihoods program, signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health**

**Dili, May 15, 2023** – TOMAK (To'os ba Moris Di'ak/Farming for Prosperity) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to further solidify their joint commitment and partnership to improving the nutrition status of Timorese families. This MoU formalizes the roles of TOMAK and MoH at national, municipal and local levels in the delivery of TOMAK-supported activities. It strengthens and clarifies the expected roles and responsibilities of each party, particularly in relation to technical assistance provided by TOMAK to the National Institute of Health (INS).

*“We have two goals for this collaboration: 1) the strengthening of our local population and communities to see households having greater capacity to improve their nutrition status; and 2) strengthening of the agricultural system for food security. Additionally, supporting the strengthening of our government systems will allow us to continue activities even after TOMAK ends. We want to see MoH and MAF continue interventions,”* said Narciso Fernandes, MPH, Director of Health Policy, Planning and Cooperation.

TOMAK and the MoH have laid foundations to implement consistent and aligned Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) practices to support improved behavior changes concerning nutrition practices. *“Nutrition-sensitive agriculture places nutritionally rich foods, dietary diversity, and food fortification in the middle of agriculture market systems to alleviate a myriad of negative nutritional situations. This is particularly important for Timor as malnutrition, wasting, and stunting continue to be national problems. TOMAK promotes agriculture both as a means to support food security by consuming what is grown and also increased economic resilience as farmers sell surplus to markets,”* said Renato Zrnica, TOMAK Team Leader during the signing ceremony.

TOMAK in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), MoH, and other partners developed an NSA curriculum to train MAF Extension Workers (AEWs) and MoH health workers. The curriculum received endorsement by KONSSANTIL (the National Council for Food Security, Sovereignty and Nutrition in Timor-Leste). As MoH further institutionalizes the NSA curriculum, and with continued systems strengthening support from TOMAK, MoH will be able to improve their capacity to manage, monitor, and assess the NSA module for health providers, and advocate for increased investment in the expansion of the NSA curriculum to the benefit of rural households in Timor-Leste.

In confirming its commitment to continue this collaboration moving forward, TOMAK will also increase support to INS by supporting the strengthening of INS's follow-up after training (FUAT) approaches and will explore additional opportunities to align health provider reporting on NSA within the MoH Health Information Management System (HMIS) and potential to further align with reporting into the Scale Up Nutrition (SUN) movement and KONSSANTIL. As the nutrition department is changed to the Nutrition Directorate, TOMAK will also look to identify ways to collaborate on a deeper level.

*TOMAK is a 10-year agricultural livelihoods program implemented in Timor-Leste with total funding of AUD50 million from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The goal is to ensure a healthier rural Timorese population with enhanced agriculture-based livelihoods.*

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