

*Approved by the President of the Republic
as of Tuesday, August 16, 2022*

National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The Government of Timor-Leste consulted widely at sub-national and national level with relevant stakeholders in education, to seek ideas on transforming the education system. We **reaffirm** that, as enshrined in our Constitution, education is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for an equitable, sustainable, resilient, peaceful and prosperous society.

We **highlight the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** on our children's learning and **recognize** that the pandemic also created opportunities and spurred new ways of thinking about how we learn and teach, experimenting for example with the first ever distance learning program in the country called 'Escola ba Uma or School Goes Home', which we launched within two weeks of school closure. The Government is scaling up this initiative to an adjusted pilot programme called "Escola iha Uma" (Home Schooling) targeting children aged 5-7 years old, as a regular programme.

We acknowledge that there is a sense of urgency for establishing a new social contract for education that demands strong community and school linkages, and meaningful engagement of learners, parents and local communities working on protecting the rights of children and young people.

We **highlight** that we have taken stock of progress made against national and SDG 4 targets for education and **underscore** the urgent need for transforming the education system to achieve our goals for education in line with the aspirations of Timorese people as enshrined in Timor-Leste National Development Plan 2011-2030.

We, therefore, **commit to the following priority actions** to transform education in Timor-Leste:

1. We commit to put in place **effective strategies to recover from pandemic** related learning losses and to prioritize learning for ALL children. We will actively monitor student attendance to ensure all children and youth have returned to schools. We will promote and provide foundational literacy and numeracy skills with focus on the most marginalized students including children with disabilities and children from minority language groups. We will also strengthen the role of parents and community members in education and empower them to support children's learning. We will strengthen and scale up the Eskola iha Uma (Home Schooling) pilot programme for children aged 5 – 7 years. This

programme has the objectives of increasing enrolment and participation rate of children in the learning process and hence increase their success rate in school.

2. We acknowledge the **pivotal role of teachers** in transforming our education system and commit to strengthen coordination between the relevant ministries and institutions responsible for teacher training to meet the demand for high quality education workforce. We will review existing laws and policies to ensure all teachers are qualified, promoted, and rewarded through a standardized teacher qualification framework and appropriate licensing and accreditation systems. We will set up a Centre of Excellence for teacher training to ensure teachers are equipped with novel pedagogical practices and ICT skills to enable them to safely integrate digital technology into daily educational practices to upgrade the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers will be trained on inclusive education and effective student-centered pedagogies to focus on the most marginalized including students with disabilities and students from minority language groups. We will also strengthen the monitoring and supervision to address teacher absenteeism and ensure the continuity of quality teaching and learning in schools. Teachers will be incentivized to serve in remote areas to deliver quality education for children in these areas.
3. We commit to ensure that schools are preserved as safe spaces where children thrive in good health both physically and mentally. We will strengthen the school feeding programme to combat student malnutrition and increase per head cost allocation for the school feeding programme. We will accelerate the provision of quality early childhood care and education for our youngest children and provide learning opportunities for our children who are out of school. We will support schools in contingency planning for future shocks of natural and man-made disasters and provide accessible water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities.
4. We commit to ensure that our education nurtures Timorese children and youth who are equipped with **21st century skills** such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, leadership, civic rights and responsibilities and be able to live in harmony with other people, species and nature. We will review the existing school curricula to make it more relevant to Timorese context including our history, culture and language. Education for sustainable development and peace will be mainstreamed with emphasis on ecological, inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary learning. We will strengthen partnerships with the private sector to develop a skilled workforce and increase investment in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics education.

5. We commit to ensure that we **harness the potential of digital technologies** for education by expanding digital infrastructure in schools and training centers and enhance access to digital resources. We will promote innovative and alternative learning strategies utilizing digital technologies to enhance accessibility and quality of education.

6. We commit to **strengthen public financing** for education by ensuring an annual increment of 10 – 11 per cent allocated to the education budget. We will ensure that allocation is based on evidence-based priority needs and improve budget execution and efficiency of spending to ensure better outcome for students learning. We will develop new innovative financing mechanisms and use a whole-of-government approach to identify and address inefficiencies and inequities in existing and new spending. We will advocate and encourage the private sector to increase their role in education to achieve our national goals and targets.

THANK YOU