

# WORKING TOGETHER TO FIGHT POVERTY

*The Millennium Development Goals in our lives*

In the year 2000, world leaders agreed that we should all work together to fight income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion - while promoting gender equality, education, & environmental sustainability. They agreed on eight global objectives, now known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Every day, ordinary people are involved in development and are working to help Timor-Leste create a better future. In this series, we meet farmers, fishermen, market vendors, tais-weavers, nurses, journalists, local NGO's, and politicians (to name only a few), who are working together to help Timor-Leste achieve its development goals.

## THE GOALS

*Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger  
Achieve universal primary education  
Promote gender equality and empower women  
Reduce child mortality  
Improve maternal health  
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases  
Ensure environmental sustainability  
Develop a global partnership for development*

### **Domingas da Costa, market vendor and mother of three talks about her life**

For seven years, Domingas da Costa has run her small business to support her family and to make sure all her children have the opportunity to complete their education. She began buying and selling oranges and bananas, but seeing changes in the economic situation, she changed her business and now sells tomatoes and tempe. This is her story.

Domingas da Costa, an energetic 38 year-old women started her business during Indonesian times in 1998. Her first business was selling oranges and bananas in the Baucau market. During that time she could make a profit of 200,000 rupiah (US20/day).

In 2000 after Timor-Leste received independence, she moved from Baucau to Dili, believing that to be successful you must build your business in Dili where there are more opportunities. With some friends, she started her business at the Merkado Lama (Old Market) in Kaikoli, continuing to sell fruit such as oranges and bananas.

After two years at the Old Market, the vendors were asked to move to a new market prepared by the government. Domingas and her friends chose Komoro market, because it was close to their homes.

Since that time, she has invested a lot of energy in developing her business, never tiring. Starting at 6am every day and working until 7pm, she spends all her time manning her stall, only returning home to her 3 children at 8pm.

As times have changed, Domingas has had to change her business to suit different market conditions. "During Indonesian times there were not many imported fruits, now much fruit is coming from outside the country. And you must take that into account". So when she moved to Komoro Market she changed her business to tomatoes and tempe (an Indonesian food made from fermented soybean cake). She buys her tomatoes from Liquica, and the tempe from local sources around Komoro Market.

"It's hard right now to get a job, and it's not easy to earn money without making something," she explains. "We

hope the government can support our small businesses. Now you can see many companies from other countries with the same business as us. It is hard to survive, but we keep working."



When Domingas' husband was killed by militia in September 1999 she was left to support her family alone. This small business with tomatoes and tempe has changed her life and has allowed her to support herself and her children. Saturday's and Sunday's are her best trading days because everyone comes to buy what they need for the week. Now she is looking for new business ideas and hopes she can find a good place that is easy for people to buy things from her.

With current business, Domingas explains that she is not able to help her whole family. However, believing in the importance of education she uses all her money to pay for food and her children's schooling. "I have 3 children, one is at Dili University right now, she is studying law. My other two children are now at the Senior High School in Saint Pedro, Komoro".

Before she stands up to continue serving the people coming to buy her tempe, she says, "I believe one day my children will have a better life than me. They will not have to lose time everyday at the market. I work hard to pay for my children's schooling, because they are the future of this country, and education is very important. I don't care about how hard I have to work, I will make sure my children stay in school." With a smile, Domingas continues to serve her customers.

