



LEAVING NO YOUTH BEHIND IN TIMOR-LESTE

POLICY BRIEF # 2

MIGRANT YOUTH IN DILI CITY



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Introduction

Young people are key to achieving sustainable development. It is essential that all young people receive equal access to quality education, justice, health services, employment opportunities, chances to participate in society, and to be protected from violence. Through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and the approval of the new National Youth Policy in 2016 by the VI Government, Timor-Leste has committed to leave no youth behind.

In support of this national effort, the United Nations (UN) in Timor-Leste and the NGO Belun are, in a collaborative effort, launching a new policy series entitled 'Leaving no Youth Behind in Timor-Leste'. The objective of this series is to increase understanding of the situation and vulnerability of some specific youth groups and the particular challenges they face in benefitting from the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Each policy brief presents a situation analysis based on quantitative data from an independent analysis of the 2015 Timor-Leste Census and qualitative data from focus groups discussions (FGDs), as well as supporting evidence from studies and reports conducted in Timor-Leste. Findings illustrate the situation of young people in terms of healthy lifestyle, education, employment and employability, civic participation and violence and crime, as per the National Youth Policy pillars. The briefs also offer recommendations to Government, civil society, the private sector and development partners as to how to ensure equal opportunities for these groups in context of the development of Timor-Leste.

Background

Mobility has long been a coping strategy for people in order to increase their opportunities, 'driven by the desire for a better life'. Whether to find better jobs, access quality services, escape poverty or insecurity, millions of people in Asia constantly leave their home village to go to big cities, becoming internal migrants. Worldwide, rural youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years represent the largest group migrating to urban areas.

In Timor-Leste, Dili City has long been a destination for internal migration. Census data shows that 30% of the population of Dili in 2015 had not been born there. Over 70% of people who moved between municipalities between 2004-2010 had moved to Dili. Like in other countries, migrants were more likely to be young (in 2010, 43% of migrants were between 15-29 years old and 28% between 15 and 24).

This brief specifically looks at the situation and vulnerabilities of youth who have migrated to Urban Dili (Dili City) from their home Municipality. Additionally, Belun conducted six FGDs among young Dili City migrants. Finally, a literature review provided additional evidence to this situation analysis.

Findings

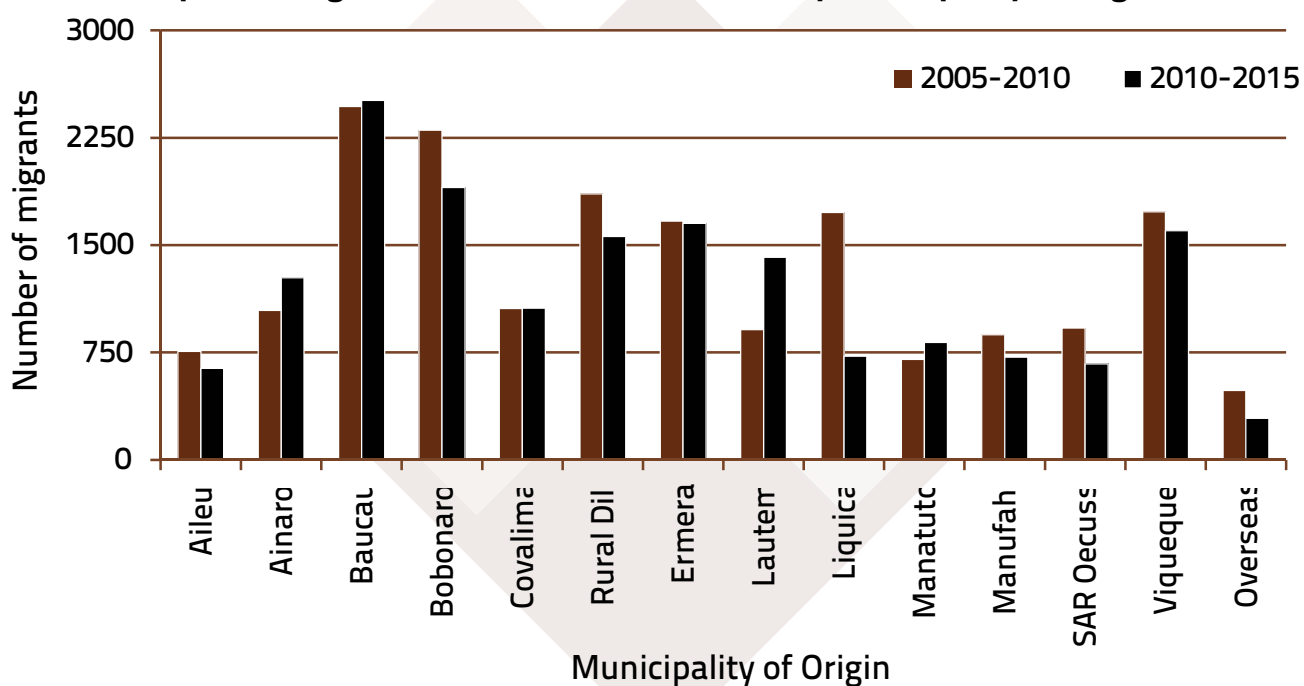
The analysis of the 2015 Census data found that a quarter (26%) of all the youth aged 15–24 living in urban Dili in 2015 had moved to the capital within the past 5 years, and 4,980 (or 8%) youth aged 15–24 had moved to Dili City in the last year alone. Of these migrants, slightly more women than men moved to Dili City in the past year.

In the period 2010–2015, fewer youth came to Dili City compared to the period 2005–2010, suggesting that the migration influx may be slowing down, although the reasons for this are unclear.

Migrants came from all thirteen municipalities. The Municipalities with the largest numbers of migrants included Baucau, Bobonaro, rural Dili, Viqueque and Ermera. These are among the Municipalities with the largest youth populations. When looking at percentages of youth migrating out however, all Municipalities saw 2 to 3% of their young people moving to Dili City each year. The only exception was rural Dili which had a much higher proportion of youth migrate to the urban area (16%).

Between 2010 and 2015, there were considerably more migrants from Lautem and Ainaro, and notably fewer migrants from Liquica, Bobonaro, rural Dili, and SAR Oecussi as compared to the period 2005 to 2010. Liquica dropped the most significantly: there were over 1,000 fewer migrants who moved from Liquica in 2010–2015 than in 2005–2010.

Number of people who moved to urban Dili during the five years proceeding the 2010 and 2015 censuses, by Municipality of origin

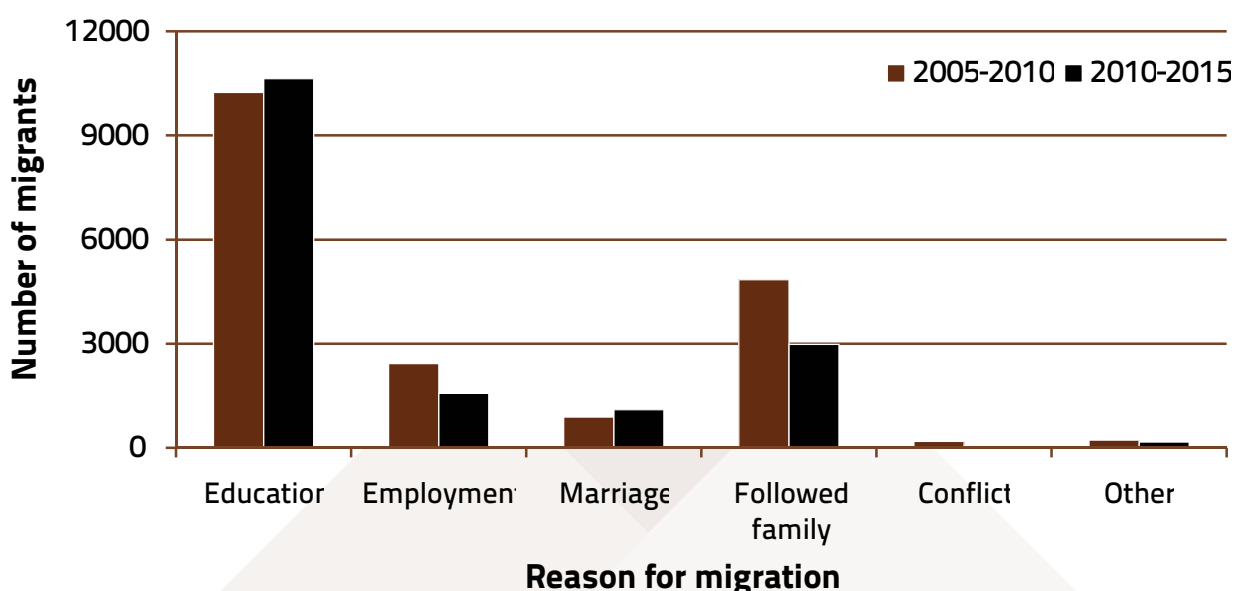


The women who moved to Dili City in the past year (2014–2015) outnumbered men from all Municipalities except SAR Oecussi and Viqueque.

Of the 4,980 youth who came to Dili City in the 12 months prior to the 2015 Census, the analysis found that 56% came for education, 12% came for employment or in search of employment, 19% followed family, 6% for marriage, less than 1% due to conflict, and 6% gave another reason.

When examining the reasons for movement by sex, there were many more women coming to Dili City to follow family or due to marriage. There were also slightly more women than men moving to Dili City to seek education and employment. This contrast with the situation in 2010 where young women were less likely to move for education and employment purposes than young men. This suggests that young women increasingly seek opportunities for upward mobility.

Reasons people moved to urban Dili during the five years preceeding the 2010 and 2015 censuses



Youth migrants' education

Among youth who moved to Dili City to pursue schooling, the analysis found that 84% were indeed enrolled at the time of the 2015 Census, with similar rates for young men and young women.

As explained by FGDs participants, the migration process is driven by the limited availability of university-level or technical courses available outside of Dili City. Where courses existed, they were often not of the same caliber or quality to those in Dili City. Besides secondary or tertiary education, some participants also came to Dili City to gain better access to technical courses or other opportunities for training or employment skills development. Participants listed language courses (English and Portuguese were repeatedly mentioned), courses on computer skills or other 'office' skills, which cannot be found 'back home'.

Youth migrants' employment

Many young people come to Dili City for 'business, employment, or in search of employment', looking for opportunities they do not find in other Municipalities or rural Dili. Indeed, the majority of youth in 7 out-of-13 Municipalities claimed their opportunity to earn money as quite limited. In a recent study on rural livelihoods, young people reported finding few appealing opportunities to start agribusinesses and agricultural entrepreneurial activities. This is because they are not interested in traditional farming practices, resent the long-term investment for a pay-off in a distant future, lack the access to information, education and training to make these activities financially successful or miss out on the needed credit and loans opportunities. Many therefore prefer to try their luck in Dili City.

Of people who came to Dili City in the past 12 months for work, 62% were actually employed. One-third (32%) of those who came for work were now either studying or involved in housework, with only 6% currently unemployed. Many young people took advantage of Dili City's enhanced education opportunities even if they initially came for other reasons: between 400 and 1,000 young people who had come for work or to follow their family/spouse ended up enrolling in school.

Both in 2010 and in 2015, migrant youth were less likely to be unemployed than other young people in Dili City: in 2015, the unemployment rate among migrant youth was 22-23%, while the overall unemployment rate for youth in Dili City was 28%.

	2010			2015		
	Young people who migrated to Dili City in the past year	Young people who migrated to Dili City in the past 5 years	Total youth population in Dili City	Young people who migrated to Dili City in the past year	Young people who migrated to Dili City in the past 5 years	Total youth population in Dili City
Unemployment rate	31%	30%	35%	23%	22%	28%

Young migrants often reported during the FDGs their difficulties in finding employment. All groups said that it was very difficult to find opportunities for work, that there were no jobs for youth, or that they struggled to secure them. For some, the challenge to finding work was inherently tied to their status as migrants. Some said it can be harder for migrants to find a job than Dili City-based youth, who can depend on their families while they search for a job and often have better connections to hear about job openings than do migrants. Despite these difficulties however, data shows that the unemployment rate of youth migrants is lower than the general unemployment rate of Dili City youth.

From the above mentioned analysis, it is apparent that young migrants in Dili City are succeeding, either at school or at work. Of course, due to the methodology used, it is not possible to capture the situation of these young people who came to Dili City and failed at school or at finding a job and went back to their home village. It also does not capture young people who, after failing to settle in Dili City, decided to move onwards overseas. Young people can enroll in Government schemes with South Korea and Australia or can decide to emigrate alone, sometimes falling prey to human trafficking. However, even with this caveat in mind, it seems young people moving to the capital are benefitting from their migration. Additionally, the evidence does not support the commonly held view that they come ‘flooding’ into Dili City, creating ‘crowds of idle youth’ in the capital. On the contrary, they appear to be resourceful, responsible young people committed to their success. Many, however, do face serious challenges and their specific vulnerability is evident.

Vulnerability to violence and exploitation

What all the young people coming to Dili City have in common is the need to find a place to stay and money to live, which often makes them more vulnerable than back home. Even though limited information is available on this issue in Timor-Leste, international literature confirms that young migrants are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, social exclusion, violence, abuse and exploitation .

The majority of young migrants moved to Dili City without their parents, staying with brothers, sisters, or extended family members (74%) or with non-relatives (4%).

Relationship between youth in Dili City and the head of their household		
Relationship to head of household	Migrants (in last 12 months)	Non-migrants
Head of household	6%	2%
Spouse of head of household	6%	3%
Daughter/son	8%	56%
Daughter/son-in-law	3%	2%
Sister/brother	32%	15%
Sister/brother-in-law	5%	2%
Other relatives	37%	19%
Non-relative	4%	1%

Most young migrants reported that these living arrangements were beneficial, depending on relatives so that they could go to school or look for a job, and most young migrants were grateful for these arrangements. But in the majority of cases, living without one's parents also brought difficulties, sometimes even some risks. Some young people stated that the chores and housework expected of them were more than what was reasonable so heavy that it could compromise their studies, sometimes feeling they were discriminated against and treated worse than the children of the household. In some cases, this bordered exploitation. Some young people shared their stories of violence and abuse: examples were given of being beaten by a drunken uncle or being forced to either join a Martial Art Group or leave the house. In another recent study among migrant university students, some shared similar stories of having to move out to escape a brother-in-law's attempts at having sex and being raped by an uncle and sent home pregnant.

To escape life with relatives when it is too difficult or simply too noisy, crowded and busy, some young people decide to rent a room (kos). Many interviewed young people reported that renting a kos allowed them to study more, take advantage of the library, or enroll in additional courses. But it also increased their need for money to pay rent, a serious problem for them since everything is more expensive in the capital than in the Municipalities and money didn't always come on time from their parents.

Financially, young people are highly dependent on the help from family members who, in the vast majority of cases, are funding their studies. This can be a substantial investment for parents who are predominantly either agricultural workers or home workers with very little income. Many youth attempted to find part-time work to pay for their schooling, kos, or food. Most of the FGD participants who had found work were men who were able to work in construction, laboring jobs, security, repairing shoes, or assisting other vendors in the markets. The women were rarely able to find part-time work. Due sometimes to extreme circumstances, the JDN study found that some young people were found compelled to use the most risky strategies, such as engaging in transactional sex or stealing.

Regardless of their living arrangements, young migrants reported that the integration in their new neighborhood was sometimes difficult. Seen as outsiders, they sometimes felt like easy targets of community violence. As a result, some young migrants tried to live in communities from their area of origin, feeling this would increase their safety. Still, up to 29% of young women in Dili City for their university studies report feeling unsafe where they live.

Violence and exploitation was also sometimes the result of the economic activity young migrants engaged in. Many young women come to Dili City to be domestic workers. A recent survey found that 76% of domestic workers in Dili City had migrated from other municipalities, with a third coming specifically from Ermera. One third (34%) of domestic workers were under 25 years of age, some of whom were under the legal working age, and the majority had not completed primary school. The report found that domestic workers often did not receive the legal minimum wage, did not work standard hours, and had no legal recourse. Some were the victims of exploitation, abuse and/or sexual violence.

Recommendations

The objective of this policy brief is not to recommend whether youth migration should be prevented or not. After all, a lot of literature does point to the benefits of migration for rural areas (through remittances they receive afterwards), for urban areas (through the economic growth brought about by migrant workers), and for migrants themselves who gain valuable education and employment. The purpose of this brief is to suggest ways in which young people can first have more options for their personal growth in their rural areas, so that migrating is not their only solution; and second support/protect young migrants in Dili City to limit their vulnerability. Finally, this brief aims to help changing the perception of society on youth migrants who, far from being reckless and disruptive, seem to be valuable contributors to national development.

What follows are the main recommendations:

1. In Municipalities of origin

a. Access to quality education

- Ensure an accessible distribution of advanced education facilities, especially secondary school, vocational, and technical facilities, across all municipalities in both urban and rural settings.
- Provide grants to Universities in order to develop satellite campuses in the municipalities, taking advantage of distance learning opportunities (via the internet) or other innovative teaching methods.
- Encourage parents and students saving plans to anticipate financial needs of studying in Dili City in the future

b. Improve economic opportunities for youth

- Government creates employment programs for youth that allow youth to continue to develop within their existing communities. For example, projects which improve agricultural production through new technologies or taking the lead on simple infrastructure projects, addressing the barriers to young people's involvement in agribusiness and entrepreneurship in rural areas, including the difficulties to access credit.
- In cooperation with the Secretariat of State for Youth and Labor, the private sector, young suco representatives, and civil society organizations, improve dissemination of information on youth professional training and employment opportunities to the rural areas.

c. Improve social services for migrant youth

- Introduce community social sessions for potential migrants as well as community members, with the objective to inform young people of the difficulties in migrating, encourage proper planning before leaving and share information about where to access help and services in Dili City.

2. In Dili City

a. Access to quality education

- Increase the availability of safe and affordable student accommodation for students coming to Dili City.
- Increase the Government-granted scholarships to financially support students coming to Dili City for studies.
- Training and capacity building of staff within education institution's to identify students who are being neglected outside of school and how to handle these cases when this arises.

b. Improve social services for migrant youth

- Create a migration resource center in Dili City where youth migrants can access information on where to get help and services in Dili City, receive training to reduce their vulnerability, and support their social integration.
- Create online support networks for internal migrants to connect, share experiences, and advice and offer support to each other.
- Provide education to young people for the prevention of risky behaviours (health information, especially on sexual and reproductive health and the effects of alcohol consumption and drugs, violence prevention, gender awareness, training on their rights and responsibilities). Also consider utilizing social media as a means of diffusion.

c. Improve legal protection and civic participation for migrant youth

- Develop a National Policy on Migration and include those most vulnerable as stakeholders in the development of this policy, which integrates youth employment and migration concerns.
- Ratify/enforce the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.
- Strengthen the enforcement of the Labor Code to better protect youth and domestic workers.
- Conduct further research on internal migrants, especially young women, in order to understand why they are moving, the effects of migration on their lives, especially their risk of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, domestic violence, and STIs.
- Actively fight the perception that young migrants are responsible for insecurity and instability in Dili City.
- Strengthen the human trafficking prevention system.

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