Their Stories, Our Impact

A series of human stories on entrepreneurship and business development of the ILO-BOSS Project

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Introduction

This special edition of "Human Stories" documents and compiles inspiring stories on entrepreneurship, business development and skills development. All human stories of this special edition are part of the the partnership between the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE) with the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Business Opportunities and Support Services Project (BOSS) Project. Funded by Irish Aid and NZAID, this partnership is aimed at unlocking business opportunities by developing functional value chains and promoting better coordination and alignment of private sector initiatives.

Jamie Lemos' Chicken Business Innovation

by **Camilo Santos** and **Brandolindo R. Fatima**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

AGE IS no barrier to starting an innovative new business. At the age of 60, Jaime Lemos C. Moris founded and opened a kampong chicken business in the Lautem district, Timor-Leste, called Copanhia Panirasa Dinaste Lda. He was inspired by village women who travel far from their homes to sell their chicken at the market. The women told Jaime Lemos that they raise kampong chicken to support their families financially.

Kampong chicken is a term referring to indigenous chickens raised using traditional techniques in the villages, and represent an important source of meat and eggs for villagers in some Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor-Leste.

"When they told me that every household in the village breeds chickens, it gave me an idea how to help them sell the chickens and fulfil customers' needs for local chicken meat," said the father of eight children, sharing the inspiration for his business, which he started in 2014.

When looking for ways to start his business and get capital, Jaime Lemos came across an announcement regarding the 2014 Innovative Business Plan Competition conducted by the Institute (IADE) under the Economic Affairs. He immediately registered as a participant.

The initiative is also backed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project,

..... it gave me an idea how to help them sell the chickens and fulfill customers' needs for local chicken meat.

which supports enterprises to build sustainable jobs and income in this small, post-conflict nation. Jointly funded by Irish Aid and NZAID, the ILO-BOSS project works in partnership with IADE to deliver business development services to micro, small and medium enterprises, unlock business opportunities by developing functional value chains in specific sectors and promote better coordination and alignment of private sector initiatives.

Although he did not win the competition, his business idea was selected as one of the top 10, and he later applied to and was accepted into the IADE's Business Incubation Facility (BIF) programme. The programme provides comprehensive business assistance in the form of business management advice, technical training, business promotion and limited investment for up to two years.

In addition, IADE also connected Jamie Lemos to the Village Livestock Workers to ensure the health of the poultry.

I thank the IADE for providing me with business assistance in the form of business advice and promotion, including building a network with buyers and breeders

"I thank the IADE for providing me with business assistance in the form of business advice and promotion, including building a network with buyers and breeders," he said.

The funding assistance he received was used as the initial capital to open the business in his home, and to buy the equipment needed and a freezer. We should explain his business: he buys local chicken from the communities, processes, freezes and transports to shops and markets in Lautem and to Dili Supermarkets

"Then, I used my savings as additional capital to buy chickens from local communities and market them throughout Lautem," he said, adding that his chicken business receives kampong chicken from seven groups of chicken breeders, of which each group consists of five to 10 breeders.

To ensure the chicken's quality and hygiene, Jamie Lemos adds a product label indicating production and expiration dates.

"One of the supermarkets reminded me about the importance of production and expiry labels. My chicken can last for three months and is usually sold out before that," he said proudly.

To support the production process, the entrepreneur, who was born into a farming family, now employs four workers for chicken slaughtering and cleaning, as those roles are still performed manually.

"I employ out of school youth as an effort to open up more jobs for them. Currently, I have ordered a chicken cleaning machine to accelerate the production process, so that I can employ more workers," said Jaime Lemos, who was born and raised in a small village in Lautem.

To date, Jamie Lemos sells around 150 chickens per month in the US$7-US$13 price range, depending on the weight, providing a stable income for both his family and the surrounding communities. ✪

The two writers with Jaime Lemos.

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Delicious Original Meatball Business

by **Sanzinha dos Santos Branca** and **Domingos Ribeiro Damiao**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

TWO YEARS ago, realizing that no meatballs made by Timorese were available at local supermarkets, a 42-year-old woman, Luisa Maria S. da Silva, was inspired to become a supplier of fresh meatballs. Luisa, whose nickname is Alu, likes cooking and has experience working as a cook. So she approached two supermarkets in Dili and they welcomed her meatballs.

To date, her meatballs are available at six supermarkets throughout Dili with a total production of 84 packages per month

Assisted by one employee, Alu makes her meatballs manually. She is deftly able to make three kilograms of meatballs in two hours. Under the brand "Bakso Original" (Original Meatballs), these meatballs, made by the mother of five children, are free of formalin and preservatives and are sold at a price of US$6 per package.

To ensure the quality and hygiene of the meatballs, Alu adds a label indicating production and expiry dates.

"My meatballs can last for 1.5 months, and are always sold out before the expiry date," she said.

Alu says the supermarkets have told her that their customers love her Bakso Original.

"They said these meatballs are different from other meatballs. You can feel the taste of the beef and the spice smells enticing. Just delicious," she said, repeating what she was told by the supermarkets.

Not surprisingly, she is receiving more orders. She now delivers her meatballs two to three times a week to each supermarket. To date, her meatballs are available at six supermarkets throughout Dili, with a total production of 84 packages per month.

To develop her business and to get additional capital, Alu participated in the 2014 Innovative Business Plan Competition. The competition was organised by the Institute for Business Support (IADE).During the competition process, Alu received business management training and business counselling from IADE's trainers.

The initiative is also supported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) through its Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project, backing enterprises to build sustainable jobs and income in this small, post-conflict nation. Jointly funded by Irish Aid and NZAID, the ILO-BOSS project works in partnership with IADE to deliver business development services to micro, small and medium enterprises, unlock business opportunities by developing functional value chains in specific sectors and promote better coordination and alignment of private sector initiatives.

....these meatballs are different from other meatballs. You can feel the taste of the beef and the spice smells enticing. Just delicious

Although she only reached the semi-final, Alu, who also has a catering and cake business, gained benefits from the training and business counselling, particularly on financial management and negotiation skills.

"I learned how to manage finances for my business and for my family. I also learned how to do promotion, negotiation and client networking," she said.

To date, Alu regularly visits IADE to continue receiving business counselling and build a network with other IADE business clients. From the knowledge she gained, she has successfully approached more stores and supermarkets.

"Timorese tend to be shy. I am no longer shy, as I know that I come with a clear business proposal and good quality products," she said confidently.

In addition to stores and supermarkets, Bakso Original is also popular in her surrounding neighbourhood.

"I also have orders from small restaurants and meatball vendors. Unfortunately, I cannot fulfil all of the orders as I am still making my meatballs manually," she said.

Alu admits that she is now overwhelmed with fulfilling orders. Yet, she insists on making the meatballs herself to ensure the quality.

"I wish that I can have a meatball maker machine to make this business more modern and accelerate the production process. This will increase sales," said Alu, who receives the support of her husband and her family to continue her business. ✪

The two writers with Luisa Maria S. da Silva.

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Talho Moris' Butcher Shop

by **Helder Mendonca** and **Prudencio Barbosa Moniz**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

A COOL and clean atmosphere welcomes customers entering Talho Moris' butcher shop at Bemori Street in Dili. A refrigerated display unit showcasing the various fresh meat cuts helps the consumers to choose what they need. Unsurprisingly, the shop is always full of customers.

Coming from their own personal experiences of the difficulties in finding good quality meats, Carlos Jose Vongue and Kunfi Maria Sequeira, saw a good business opportunity to open a butcher shop in the heart of Dili. However, neither of them had any business experience, and they were doubtful about making a profit from the business.

I always remind all of my employees to be pleasant, put number one priority to meat hygiene and quality as customers' satisfaction is very important

In the midst of their deliberations, they learned from one of their relatives of a business counselling programme conducted by the Institute for Business Support (IADE). Without further ado, they contacted IADE and received consultation to formulate their business plan.

"Neither of us had a business background. We proposed this business idea to IADE through its Business Incubation Facility (BIF), a programme that offers a package of business management support, technical training and access to finance to micro and small enterprises.. We have received much assistance and support in building this business. We obtained a loan from our family," said Kunfi, recalling the beginnings of the meat business.

As BIF clients, they received assistance in preparing a hygienic butchery place and storefront, learned proper meat cutting techniques, purchased meat cutting machines, and promoted the store's products through TV and newspaper advertisements for seven months, as

well as the continuous distribution of flyers and brochures.

To ensure international standard of the meat cutting techniques, their employees were given training by experienced butchers from Timor-Leste and Australia.

"Our cutting knives are specially imported from Australia," said Kunfi.

Both Carlos and Kunfi admit that the first six months were the hardest period for both of them. The couple had to visit each restaurant and hotel in Dili to promote their fresh meats.

"We did not have many consumers in the first six months. I was desperate and even questioned my decision to open my own business," said Kunfi, who was seven months pregnant at that time.

"In addition to promotion, we also improved and prioritized service quality. I always remind all of my employees to be pleasant, put the number one priority onto meat hygiene and quality as customer satisfaction is very important," said Kunfi, who now acts as manager. As a result, all employees are always equipped with boots, head covers, gloves, and full-body plastic aprons.

The various promotional efforts began to yield results. More customers started to visit and those customers spread through word of mouth of the high quality of the meat that could be bought from Talho Moris. To attract more customers, the shop has launched several promotion programmes, including price discounts during weekends.

"We are also very flexible, as our intention is for all Timorese to be able to afford high-quality, fresh meat. Therefore, our customers can buy

The two writers with Kunfi Maria Sequira.

We wish to open a one-stop-meat-shop to fulfil all of our customers' needs

meat based on their purchasing ability." said the mother of a one-year-old daughter.

From only one bull per week, today Talho Moris is able to sell 60 bulls per month, with an average of two bulls sold during weekdays and four bulls during weekend days. With a total of six employees, the daily income has increased by 50 per cent for regular days and 100 per cent during special occasions such as Christmas and New Year.

Moreover, the Talho Moris meat shop supplies fresh meat to various supermarkets, hotels restaurants in Dili and institutional buyers such as the Timorese army.. The couple expects to gain back their investment capital this year.

In an effort to expand sales, Talho Moris meat shop will open a new outlet in Dili.

"In addition to opening a new outlet, we hope that we can expand our meats to chicken, pork, lamb and fish. We wish to open a one-stop-meat-shop to fulfil all of our customers' needs," said Kunfi, enthusiastically expressing her dream.

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Skilled Butcher from Ebai Talho

by **Egas Seraiva** and **Lurdes Marques**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

JEFERINO Aleixo Saldanha's hands skilfully cut and slice the fresh beef into a variety of ready-to-cook cuts - sirloin, tenderloin, rump steak, cube roll and rendang. He also expertly trims the fat from the meat and ensures its hygiene and quality before selling the cuts to customers.

For me, Joni is a diligent staff and he is a fast learner. I just gave him an example, and he could already do it

Elisio Antonio da Costa,
the Manager of Ebai Talho

Jeferino or Joni, as he is usually called, is 30 years old and one of the most skilful butchers in Timor-Leste. He has been pursuing this profession since 2012 when he joined Ebai Talho, the first butcher shop in, Timor-Leste. Ebai Talho officially opened for business in May 2012.

This curly haired man had never imagined himself as a butcher. The profession requires special skills, which are rare to find in Timor-Leste. The father of a three-year-old daughter previously worked as a labourer at a brick-making company. His main task was to carry heavy bricks, and in 2010, after two years, he decided to quit.

"Working on brick-making was very hard. I finally found myself quitting. Unemployed, I was doing small, odd jobs for two years before joining Ebai Talho in the beginning of March 2012," said Joni, sharing his life experience.

Joni then took part in training in slaughtering and butchery techniques, provided by a professional butcher from Australia, for two months.

"At first I was very nervous because I had been performing butchery without any formal training. I found it difficult at first to learn proper butchery techniques," said Joni, recalling the training.

The slaughter and butchery training was part of the partnership between the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE) with the International Labour Organization (ILO) through

Joni and his manager, Elisio Antonio da Costa.

its Business Opportunities and Support Services Project (BOSS) Project.

Funded by Irish Aid and NZAID, this partnership is aimed at unlocking business opportunities by developing functional value chains and promoting better coordination and alignment of private sector initiatives. Cattle business development is one of the selected sectors, as it is a major commodity in Timor-Leste.

Cutting his hands, or improperly cutting the beef, were among the challenges he had to face.

"I improperly cut up more than two kilograms of beef. The beef then had to be minced and made into sausages," said Joni. Yet, he refused to give up although his body and hands were once injured when a bull kicked him during slaughter.

After the training, Joni continued to improve his skills under the guidance of Ebai Talho's manager, Elisio Antonio da Costa. Elisio, 43, also participated in butchery training with the Australian trainer.

"For me, Joni is a diligent member of staff and he is a fast learner. I just give him an example, and he can already do it," said Elisio.

Joni's hard work has now yielded results. To date, he is able to do the skinning and carcass dressing

I am delighted if I can help my co-workers in improving their butchery techniques, for example, on how to remove tendons

of a bull in only three hours. In one week, he is able to slaughter and butcher two to four cows to fulfil the customers' needs. He has also provided butchery training for other employees in the shop, and even the employees of another new butcher shop, Talho Moris.

"I am delighted if I can help my co-workers in improving their butchery techniques, for example, on how to remove tendons," said Joni. As the eldest of five siblings, his profession has even inspired his brother to follow his example as a butcher.

To date, Joni's tasks are not limited to butchery. He is now entrusted to assist Elisio as an assistant manager. Joni is now responsible for managing administration and shop operations when Elisio is out of town for business. He is also in charge of meat weighing and registering, as well as serving customers if needed.

"I cannot work by myself. I must teach him managerial duties as I have to be able to delegate my tasks and somebody needs to take charge while I am out of town on business," said Elisio.

Receiving a salary above the minimum wage, Joni's hope is simple: making his family happy.

"I am proud to have been given an opportunity to work here. My family is also happy because the workload is manageable with adequate earnings," said Joni, smiling. ✪

The two writers with Jeferino Aleixo Saldanha.

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University Student's Canteen Business Opportunity

by **Mariana Ximenes**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

While I am still young, I want to do everything that I can..... I also play an active role in students' senate council as a training motivator

BECOMING an entrepreneur is the dream of a 20-year-old girl named Maria Mazarela Lay. This beautiful, tall girl has started a canteen business in Timor-Leste's State University, where she is studying economy management. The canteen specializes in serving traditional homemade Timor-Leste cuisine.

"My campus does not yet have a canteen where students can look for something to eat and hang out at the same time. A canteen would also be a place where I can sell my home-made snacks that I currently sell directly to my friends," said Maria, who really likes to cook and is planning to name her canteen J-Fitun, which means shooting star.

Every day, Maria, who also won the 2013 edition of Miss Culture of Timor-Leste, sells homemade wrapped rice and nagasari (banana cake) to her fellow students.

"They are sold out every day. I am able to sell 60 wrapped rice and 80 nagasari cakes every day," said the eldest daughter of five siblings.

Maria is assisted in her business by her family. She wakes up at 4 am every day, but she does not feel tired as she has been running this business since her senior high school years.

"The income earned is to help my family, as my father's condition does not allow him to work as hard as before and he is not able to manage his tailoring business as he used to" said Maria.

During the examinations period, Maria reduces the amount of food she prepares so that she can focus on her exams. For her, the most important thing is to manage her time well, as she also works in product promotion during weekends, in Timor Plaza mall, for additional income.

"While I am still young, I want to do everything that I can. In addition to selling food during school days, I work during weekends. I also do freelance modelling. Furthermore, I also play an active role in the students' senate council as a training motivator," she said.

To start her canteen business, Maria participated in the 2015 Innovative Business Plan Competition organised by the Institute for Business Support (IADE) and won the second prize. As part of her participation in the competition, Maria has obtained training and business advisory services from IADE, particularly in generating business ideas, business management and finance.

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I am more and more enthusiastic about starting my canteen with the additional business knowledge gained during the training and counselling. I also often visit IADE to learn more about business information and keep an open network with other entrepreneurs

"I am more and more enthusiastic about starting my canteen with the additional business knowledge gained during the training and counselling. I also often visit IADE to learn more about business and keep an open network with other entrepreneurs." said Maria, who likes to play badminton and read books during her spare time.

She hopes that one day she can expand her canteen business into a restaurant, continuing her late mother's restaurant business. Maria is also confident with her decision to become an entrepreneur.

"If I have my own business, I can be my own boss and I can create jobs for others," she said confidently. ✪

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Felix Manuel:

"I aspire to make my clothing label famous"

by **Valdemar de Sa e Silva** and **Cornelis Bareto**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

"I ASPIRE to open a ready-to-wear clothing store with my own label in Timor-Leste, and I desire to make my label, Hare Cloth Apparel, famous in this country," said 26-year-old Felix Manuel de Jesus Amarel, showing his determination to achieve his dream of developing a clothing business.

Ready-to-wear is a term used for a clothing business, based on creativity, using its own label, and is a growing trend among young people.

Felix was one of the participants in the 2014 Innovative Business Plan Competition organised by the Institute for Business Support (IADE). The competition initiative was also supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project.

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Before joining the competition, Felix experienced business failure in 2011. All of the capital he had saved from his previous work, as well as the money he received from his family, was gone.

"My family is not rich. They were so furious when I lost the US$2,300 capital of my previous business. It was a lot of money for my family," said Felix.

Failure did not make the oldest of seven siblings lose hope. Instead, it made him more motivated and determined to develop a clothing business in Timor-Leste. To earn new capital, he worked at a printing company while planning and initiating his clothing business.

"I saved my salary. I also took a side job printing t-shirts. Together with a friend, I designed an attractive business brand. I decided to use 'Hare', which means paddy, with products that present contemporary designs from Timorese culture" said Felix.

To make his dream come true, he developed a business proposal with the intent to secure an investor or a loan from government institutions or banks.

"While I was thinking how to get start-up capital, by chance, IADE was printing a poster for the Innovative Business Plan Competition at the printing company where I worked. I said to myself, this is it my way to start my business," he recalled.

Felix immediately submitted his design portfolio to IADE. Although he did not win the competition, his clothing idea was selected as one of the Top 10, and he was awarded business counselling and capital to purchase the printing equipment needed.

"I learned about business plans and marketing strategy. I also learned how to manage the book keeping," said Felix.

"This training and business counselling really increased my knowledge about business, broadened my network and strengthened my determination to seriously pursue my clothing business idea" he added.

Using the initial capital from IADE Felix started to build Hare Cloth Apparel. Every month, Hare launches a new T-shirt design and limits the production to 200 pieces to make it more 'exclusive'. These t-shirts are distributed to several shops, including the Timor Plaza mall, at US$ 10 each. Hare also accepts orders from government institutions and communities for special events.

To boost sales, Felix also makes the best use of social media channels through Facebook and Twitter, as well as word-of-mouth. To date, his business turnover has risen 40 per cent per month,

The two writers with Felix Manuel.

I designed an attractive business brand. I decided to use Hare, that means paddy, with products that present contemporary designs of Timorese cultures and Tourism

and in July 2015 reached 70 per cent. The number of employees has also increased from seven to 10, with three of them designers.

"I am now looking for a bigger place due to increased orders. I need a place to store raw materials and equipment," said Felix who acts as the head designer of Hare, adding that the new place will integrate a marketing office, production and storage.

Through this business, is now able to pay his brothers' college tuition and renovate his family's house. But, he does not stop dreaming.

"At this young age, I want to expand my business. My target is to open my own outlet and to expand my production line by producing bags and shoes," he said.

He also dreams to create job opportunities for Timorese youth.

"I like to hang out with my friends and other youth to share and exchange ideas about the clothing business. I am not afraid of the competition, as the most important thing now is how the clothing business can grow in this country," he said. ✪

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Unlocking a Herbal Business Opportunity in Timor-Leste

by **Tomas H. Guterres Ximenes** and **Clotilde da Costa**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

THIRTY-SIX year old Ruben da Silva Gusmao knows that he will not be an employee for the rest of his life. He is motivated to become an entrepreneur, considering the vast unlocked business opportunities in the Timor-Leste market.

"After working for more than four years in a company I now plan to start my own business. My family also supports my entrepreneur plan," said Ruben, who holds a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering

Together with his two partners, who are pharmacists, Ruben has developed a herbal baby oil product made from candlenuts. Candlenuts are known for being beneficial for health and beauty.

"Based on my experience as a father of two children, my family uses candlenuts for the health care of our children. Traditionally, candlenuts are used as a healthy remedy for children," said Ruben, adding that he believes his product has a big market opportunity in Timor-Leste.

While developing his business plan, Ruben came across a website about the 2015 Innovative Business Plan Competition organized by the Institute for Business

After working for more than four years in the company where I am working now, I plan to start my own business. My family also supports my entrepreneur plan

Support (IADE). He immediately registered his business idea and joined the selection process, eventually reaching the semi-final.

"It is like a dream come true. I know a lot about engineering, but I do not have any business knowledge. I do not understand managerial matters and other business supporting factors, such as investors, marketing, business networks and so forth. I feel very lucky being able to participate in this competition," he said.

As part of his participation in the competition, Ruben received business training and counselling from IADE. He fine-tuned his business idea, he conducted a market survey, and received business management, including promotion, marketing, and packaging.

"The market research analysis was very useful. I was pushed to learn about how big my target market is and how strong the consumers' purchasing power is. I also learned what promotional techniques I should use to market this new product," he said.

Ruben is now even more motivated to become an entrepreneur and is formulating plans to make his product known.

"My main purpose in joining the competition was neither money nor prizes. Winning or losing does not matter for me, for I have gained knowledge that will stay with me forever," he said.

The two writers with Ruben da Silva Gusmao.

It is like a dream come true. I know a lot about engineering, but I do not have any business knowledge. ..... I feel very lucky being able to participate in this competition

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Improving the Tourism Potential of Atauro Island, Timor-Leste

by **Gita Lingga**, Communications Officer of the ILO Jakarta

ATAURO is a small island close to Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste. The country is located in the Coral Triangle known for its rich and abundant marine life. The pristine natural environment is its biggest draw. With rugged mountains and a long coastline, such as those found in Atauro, Timor-Leste is one of the upcoming tourist destinations in Southeast Asia. With a population of 10,000 people, Arauro can be easily reached from Dili by ferry, water taxi, or charter plane.

Atauro is home for Avelino Pereira Fernandes, a 30-year-old entrepreneur who chairs the Grupo Turismo Atauro (GTA). The group works to promote tourism in Atauro, improve the capacity of local tourism businesses and provide a platform for planning, development and advocacy.

"I have been the chair of this group for nearly two years. We bring different businesses together so that we can support each other and contribute to the development of the tourism industry in Atauro. We directly involve local communities so that they can benefit from tourism," said Avelino.

A similar group was initiated in 2005. However, due to a lack of coordination and commitment, it did not function very well. With assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the group was revitalized in 2013, with Avelino appointed as its chair.

Source: visiteasttimor.com

This work was supported by the ILO through its Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project. Jointly funded by Irish Aid and NZAID, the project works in partnership with the Institute for Business Support (IADE) to deliver business development services and unlock business opportunities in various economic sectors, including tourism.

To date, 20 tourism businesses, ranging from handicrafts, to restaurants, homestays and many others, have registered as members. By working together, GTA has identified potential tourism attractions in Atauro that can be further developed, such as snorkelling, camping and trekking.

In addition, GTA has provided training to its members on hospitality, cooking and business management. Promotional material such as brochures and a website were developed to market Atauro as an attractive tourism destination.

"I really appreciate the support given by the ILO. The capacity of local businesses is still weak and there is lot more help needed," said Avelino.

To ensure effective collaboration, members of the group meet regularly once a month to discuss their work plans and new initiatives. However, Avelino admits that not all the members actively participate in this monthly meeting. Some are still hesitant and doubtful about the benefits that they can gain from their membership.

To attract more members and to build more solid commitments, GTA has developed priorities that bring beneficial results to the enhancement of tourism in Atauro. Building networks, particularly international networks, according to Avelino, is one of the priorities. Others include the improvement of marketing channels through the dissemination of brochures, as well as making more information on Atauro available on the Internet.

Our businesses also want to maximize the use of local products and resources so that more people benefit economically, and in turn improve their living conditions

"I believe it is only a matter of convincing members by showing them the results of our work and not just discussing plans. I also believe these improvements will help the group attract more visitors and increase the number of days visitors stay on the island," said Avelino.

He hopes that in future, GTA members can participate in more training for local guides and homestays. He believes that realizing the tourism potential in Atauro will benefit local communities. ✪

The writer with Avelino Pereira Fernandes.

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The neatest vegetable plot in Timor Leste

by **Jenny Ikelberg**, Value Chain Development Expert of the ILO/BOSS project

WATCHING A couple of years ago Juanico Soares saw an opportunity to improve his and his family's lives by partnering with Josephina Farm, a Timorese owned enterprise that provides agriculture support and buys vegetables from farmers for on-sale to Dili supermarkets and restaurants.

Juanico is 38 years old and has lived his whole life in Liuhumo, a small village in the coffee producing areas of Ermera district.

Juanico was a carpenter when he met Guido Sequeira the director of Josephina Farm. Guido was working for the President Office to improve lives of rural poor and Juanico's village had been identified for support. Guido formed a farmer group of 16 people that started producing vegetables. Juanico continued working as a carpenter but made a meager income as he dependent on local orders that were few.

My dream is to build a new house for my family closer to the road where I already have land

As the President Office's project came to an end, so did the engagement with the farmers. Guido returned to Dili where he a few months later received a phone call from Juanico who asked for some seeds to restart planting, he wanted to lead a new farmer group and sell to Josephina Farm. Guido gave the seeds but did not expect any results as he had previous experience of farmers asking for input that never yielding anything.

At that time there was some instability in Dili and to protect the cool truck owned by Josephina Farm, the driver of the company Carlito was asked to take it to his home village, Liuhumo, Juanico's village. As the situation in Dili went back to normal, Guido called the car back and to his surprise it arrived full of vegetables, from Juanico. From that day Guido began picking up vegetables weekly.

In 2012, Josephina Farm partnered with the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project and began contract farming with farmers in Maubisse, Ainaro district. Jointly funded by Irish Aid and NZAID, the ILO-BOSS project works in partnership with the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE) to deliver business development services to micro, small and medium enterprises, unlock business opportunities by developing functional value chains in specific sectors and promote better coordination and alignment of private sector initiatives.

ILO supported Josephina Farm to develop and deliver the offer to farmers, including providing agriculture input supply, regular technical assistance and delivery to markets. As the company expanded it needed additional staff and, although Juanico is illiterate, Guido had seen his potential and recognized his strong work ethics rarely found in rural areas.

Juanico began commuting between his own plot in Ermera and Maubisse to assist farmers there. He has since received additional technical training from BOSS and he has proven to be the most receptive of all farmers in learning and applying new knowledge in his field and when assisting others. Although small, his plot is one of the neatest and most productive in the country. He is still responsible for the production on his family land but while away in Maubisse assisting others, his cousin Alfonso Soares is leading the farmer group.

Juanico and Alfonso Soares

Although small, his plot is one of the neatest and most productive in the country. He is still responsible for the production on his family land

After years of selling vegetables and recently receiving salary from Josephina Farm, one would think that Juanico has made enough money to realize his dream "My dream is to build a new house for my family closer to the road where I already have land". But his house is still the same he always lived in with bamboo walls and stamped earth floor. "Kultura Timor" he replies when asked why. Especially in rural areas in Timor Leste culture obligations weight heavy on people.

This year Juanico's grandmother died and he had to purchase a bull for the ceremony. As he was short of cash, he paid $1,000 to buy the bull on credit, which almost equals one year of salary for him. This reality however has not deterred him from continuing working hard to one day realize his dream. ✪

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Zety's Dedication and Strength

by **Bernabe Mesquita Soares** and **Leto-Ranger**, staff of the Institute for Business Support (IADE) under the Minister of State, Coordinator of Economic Affairs (MECAE)

BEHIND her calmness and softness, there lies great enthusiasm and strength. Lizete Maria Maia dos Santos, 42 years old, is one of few women in Timor-Leste working as a Village Livestock Worker, and has done so since 2003. Considering her achievements and dedication, Zety, as she is usually called, was selected and appointed as a civil servant by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Timor-Leste in 2012 at the Livestock Health division for Maliana District, Bobonaro Municipality, located in the far west of the nation.

Initially she was just an ordinary housewife, busy taking care of her family and her late husband who worked at the livestock quarantine section in Maliana. However, in 2003, as a graduate from an agricultural school, Zety was offered to become a Village Livestock Worker.

The Village Livestock Workers were initiated to support the roll-out of the Government livestock vaccination campaign. . The VLWs received training on livestock vaccination and equipment and medicine. For the campaign Government paid the VLWs per animal vaccinated. The VLW also treat sick animals and cost for medicine and treatment is paid by the receiving farmer, the cost ranging from US$1 to US$10, depending on the type of treatment and medicine.

At first, when doing my village visits, locals tended to underestimate me as they did not believe a woman could perform vaccinations

In 2012, Zety was selected as one of the 10 best VLW in Bobonaro district to participate in the revitalization programme held by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) Project. This programme is part of the Project's beef value chain development initiative and focuses on improved cattle health, nutrition and reproduction, as part of an effort to increase sales value.

As an APS worker, Zety and her co-workers are each assigned to manage one of seven villages in Maliana District.

"I am assigned to Raifun village. At first, when doing my village visits, locals tended to underestimate me as they did not believe a woman could perform vaccinations. They considered this job too heavy for women," said the mother of six sons.

"This cannot be true, can she really work?" said Zety, imitating what the local communities would say, disbelieving her capability as a Village Livestock Worker. However, she refused to give up.

"I proved that I could do this job. I could perform a vaccination without getting kicked by the cattle," she said, smiling.

For Zety, vaccinating small animals such as chickens, pigs and goats is an easy task.

"Small animals are easy to vaccinate. My biggest fear is to vaccinate cows, as they tend to move and kick you. But, I have my own way to tame cows," she added. During a vaccination session, she can vaccinate 50 cows and buffaloes in one day.

The most important thing for her is to provide livestock education and health services to local communities. She is even willing to travel far, visiting remote areas. "I do not need to be paid with money. I accept anything given by local communities," she said.

Not surprisingly, she often receives animals as payment - from chickens to goats, cows or buffaloes. She breeds these animals to support her family, while the money she receives is then used to purchase medicine.

Her dedication and hard work yielded a good result when she was elected to participate in the civil servant selection process in Bobonaro Municipality, together with other 20 APS colleagues.

"In the first selection stage, only 10 people passed, then it was eight and by the end of the selection, it was only I who was elected as a civil servant," she said of the selection process.

As a civil servant, she is still allowed to have a double role as an APS worker outside her regular, official working hours.

"As a civil servant, I serve local communities for free from 8am to 5pm. However, for service requests after my official working hours and during weekends, I can accept payment from villagers," said Zety, who is also a mentor for other VLW.

Zety has also been actively participating in several training programmes to continue strengthening

The two writers with Lizete Maria Maia dos Santos.

Since 2014, there have been more women in this profession. I am happy

her capacity as an APS worker. These programmes are part of the partnership between the Institute for Business Support (IADE) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in improving the cattle sector in Timor-Leste.

In addition, ILO in collaboration with Mercy Corps, has linked Dili based animal medicine suppliers with district based kiosks to improve access to animal medicine for farmers. The kiosk owners calls on the VLWs to administrate the medicine to the sick animals to limit wrongful administration of the farmers themselves who lack the proper knowledge.

"I am pleased to learn more about health, nutrition and animal reproduction," said Zety. Her fieldwork is mostly focused on animal health and less on nutrition and reproduction.

"Now, I can give counselling on nutrition and reproduction that are equally important to maintain the quality of the livestock," she said.

With her sons growing up, this tough woman continues to dedicate herself to local communities. Riding her motorcycle, she visits Raifun's people every day to enlighten them about animal health and care. She often comes home late.

For the future, she hopes that her APS co-workers can also be appointed as civil servants just like her. She is also proud that more women are now becoming village livestock workers.

"Since 2014, there have been more women in this profession. I am happy," said Zety, whose eldest son is now a college student majoring in petroleum techniques. ✪

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