



PALM Scheme Worker and Family Support Project

About CARE

CARE is an international development and humanitarian organisation that has been working in Timor-Leste since 1994. With programmes that extend across all parts of the country, CARE works with partners to save lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice.

CARE works with remote, rural communities and civil society partners to combat gender inequality, as this has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to create sustainable development outcomes.

Ensuring well-being and a voice for women and girls in rural, disadvantaged areas is at the heart of CARE's work. This is achieved in four priority areas of Education, Women's Economic Empowerment, Health, and promoting Women's Voice in society through development and humanitarian programmes.

Empowering PALM workers, their families, and communities, to better prepare for overseas employment and successfully reintegrate in Timor-Leste upon return

Project background

Timor-Leste has been participating in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme since 2012, enabling its citizens to work temporarily in Australia's agricultural and horticultural sectors.

Research indicates that the PALM Scheme delivers significant benefits to Timorese workers and their families, particularly through increased financial and social capital. Remittances are commonly used to meet household needs, including daily living expenses, education, cultural ceremonies, and home construction.

However, several reports, including contextualised research by CARE, have also highlighted some concerns. These include concerns about workplace safety and poor conditions, lack of access to services - including sexual and reproductive health care - and the emotional toll of prolonged family separation. Families face challenges managing childcare and domestic responsibilities with one partner overseas. This can lead to tension between family members and partners and, in some cases, contribute to family conflict and gender-based violence (GBV).



Project objectives

To address the significant challenges faced by workers, their families, and communities, CARE is delivering family preparation and reintegration sessions at the municipal level, **targeting 30 participants per session**. These participants are comprised of **15 workers** who are part of the Work Pool Ready package and **15 family members**.

Through these group sessions, the project aims to:

- improve the knowledge and readiness of PALM workers and their families in target municipalities,
- strengthen family and community awareness of supportive behaviour around seasonal labour migration in target municipalities,
- increase support for sustainable reintegration for PALM workers and their families in target municipalities.



Key project activities

1. Deliver Workers and Family Preparation Sessions, which include Family Financial Management and Good Relationships Free from Violence training;
2. Introduce and establish Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) as options for savings and investment;
3. Leverage CARE's Lafaek ba Komunidade Magazines to raise the awareness of seasonal workers to better manage expectations of living abroad and separating from family;
4. Deliver reintegration sessions for workers and families to navigate the challenges of reintegration;
5. Provide business support sessions and mentoring to the returning workers to support the economic reintegration of PALM returnees.



Key Project Information

Project duration

June 2025 – July 2026

Target municipalities

Ainaro, Covalima, Ermera, Liquiça, Manufahi, and Viqueque

Target groups

A total of 1,680 people, including 840 workers, 840 family members and 530,000 community members

Donor

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)