

CASE STUDY:

Better Food, Better Health Project in Timor-Leste

Causes of malnutrition in Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste (also known as East Timor) has one of the highest rates of undernutrition in the world – the highest in Asia and higher than in most African countries. Undernutrition can have devastating effects on children’s long-term development.

The causes include low incomes, low agricultural productivity, food insecurity, limited access to health services and markets and a lack of understanding around health and nutrition.

Approximately 80 percent of the population – living predominately in rural areas – depend on subsistence food production. This means families grow limited amounts and types of food. They don’t have enough money to buy additional food, resulting in gaps in food security and nutrition.

Better Food, Better Health Project - background and planning for effectiveness

PROJECT GOAL: Children under 5 and their mothers are well nourished.

Outcome 1: Caregivers of children under 5 have improved nutrition and health seeking practices

Outcome 2: Households have improved access to ‘superfoods’

Outcome 3: Households have increased income from ‘superfood’ production

Outcome 4: Improved sustainability of health and agriculture services

Funded by the Australian government, the project aims to improve nutrition for 31,806 direct beneficiaries in four regions in Timor-Leste. It’s particularly focused on improving the production and use of six “superfoods”: soybeans, mung beans, red kidney beans, orange sweet potato, moringa and egg. These foods are highly nutritious, grow well locally and have market potential.

To set the foundations and strategy for this important project, World Vision conducted a baseline study to determine the pre-program conditions. This study focused on understanding the existing attitudes and knowledge of the target population with respect to child health and nutrition, and ‘superfood’ utilisation, food production and sales. This information was then used to inform project design and provide a baseline from which to evaluate the project’s achievements towards its goals, outcome, and outputs.

The team found that improving the nutrition profile of women and children will require a diverse and tailored set of sustainable interventions. Project sites vary greatly, including their access to food, agricultural practices and so on. This means a multipronged (diverse) approach will be needed to address the needs of individuals and their communities most effectively.

Recommendations include promoting “superfoods” in everyday cooking, investigating the potential to grow and consume orange sweet potato, and investigating the preferences and barriers to selling “superfoods”.

It is hoped that the project will be able to reduce undernutrition by improving demand for nutritionally diverse foods, as well as enhancing year-round access to these foods.

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Program Features

The Better Food, Better Health project involves a social and behaviour change communication strategy, built on learnings from the baseline study and previous World Vision child health and nutrition projects in Timor-Leste.

Core features include:



Establishing community groups: Building on this existing government initiative, World Vision supports the government to run parent clubs and visit households, spreading key health and nutrition messages. There is a particular focus on women. This includes other community groups such as farmer groups, food processing groups, savings and loans groups and Citizen Voice and Action groups.



PSF Training: Community health volunteers, known as PSFs, play a central role in the project. They are trained in “superfood” production, utilisation, preservation, storage (e.g. Tofu and tempeh), improved agricultural techniques and technologies including Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). PSFs are also trained in the skills to facilitate parent club meetings, perform home visits and undertake child growth monitoring and health promotion.



Promoting, training, and supporting communities: Trained PSFs empower community groups with knowledge and skills (superfood production, utilisation, preservation, storage, improved agricultural techniques) to apply to their own households and farms boosting the supply and use of superfoods.

- promoting the use of superfoods in everyday cooking
- chicken package training aimed to reduce the severe losses of both chickens and eggs, improving the availability of eggs for sale and home consumption.



Strengthening and expanding markets: the project supports farmer groups to market and add value to their produce, through activities like training in tempeh and tofu production.



Access to finance: the project also provides access to finance through village savings and loans groups (VSL groups) enabling members to provide better nutrition and other essentials for their children.

STUDY NOTES: Key knowledge & skills

1 Who is World Vision? **Identify** the focus approaches that underpin their work?

2 What is the **aim** of the Better Food, Better Health (BFBH) project in Timor-Leste?

3 What is the **role** of World Vision in the BFBH project?

STUDY NOTES: Key knowledge & skills

4

How is the BFBH project delivered? Annotate the features in the diagram below.

HINT: Your response here is flexible, choose detail that **you** are likely to remember.



STUDY NOTES: Key knowledge & skills

5

- **Identify** *four* key features from your diagram in Q4 and list them in the first column.
- **Explain** how each feature can promote health and wellbeing for individuals and communities.
- **Explain** how each feature can promote human development for individuals and communities.

Project features	How it promotes health and wellbeing	How it promotes human development

STUDY NOTES: Key knowledge & skills

6

How **effective** is the BFBH project in ensuring mothers and their children are well nourished? Is this sustainable?

BONUS ROUND:
Taking things a little bit further...

1

Identify and **justify** two SDGs that World Vision's BFBH project seeks to address?

2

Discuss how DFAT's partnership with World Vision is effective in complementing Australia's aid program to promote health and wellbeing, and human development.

NOTE: You may wish to use your understanding of the BFBH project to help your response.

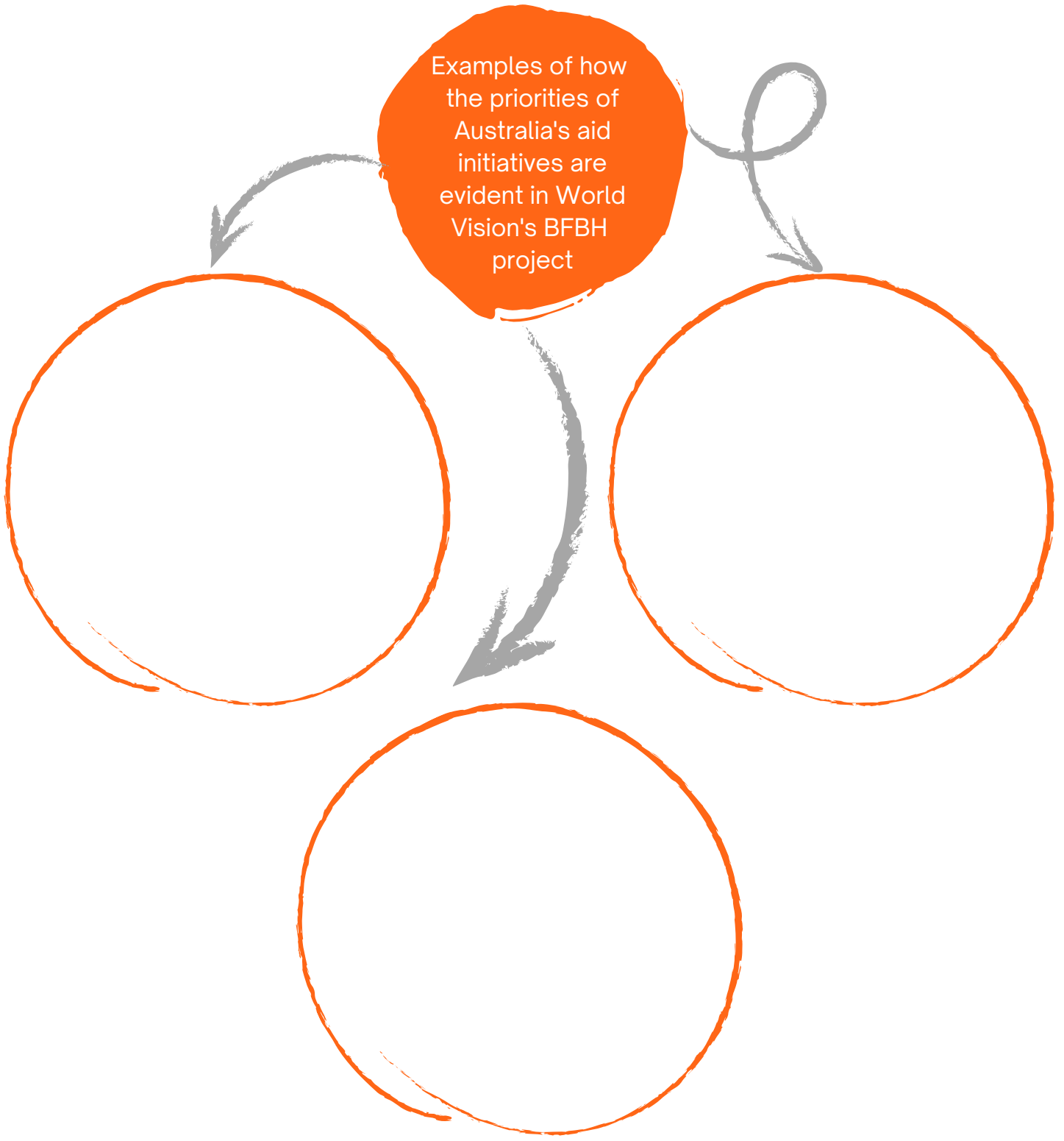
3

Justify the effectiveness of aid provided by NGOs compared to bilateral aid.

BONUS ROUND:
Taking things a little bit further...

4

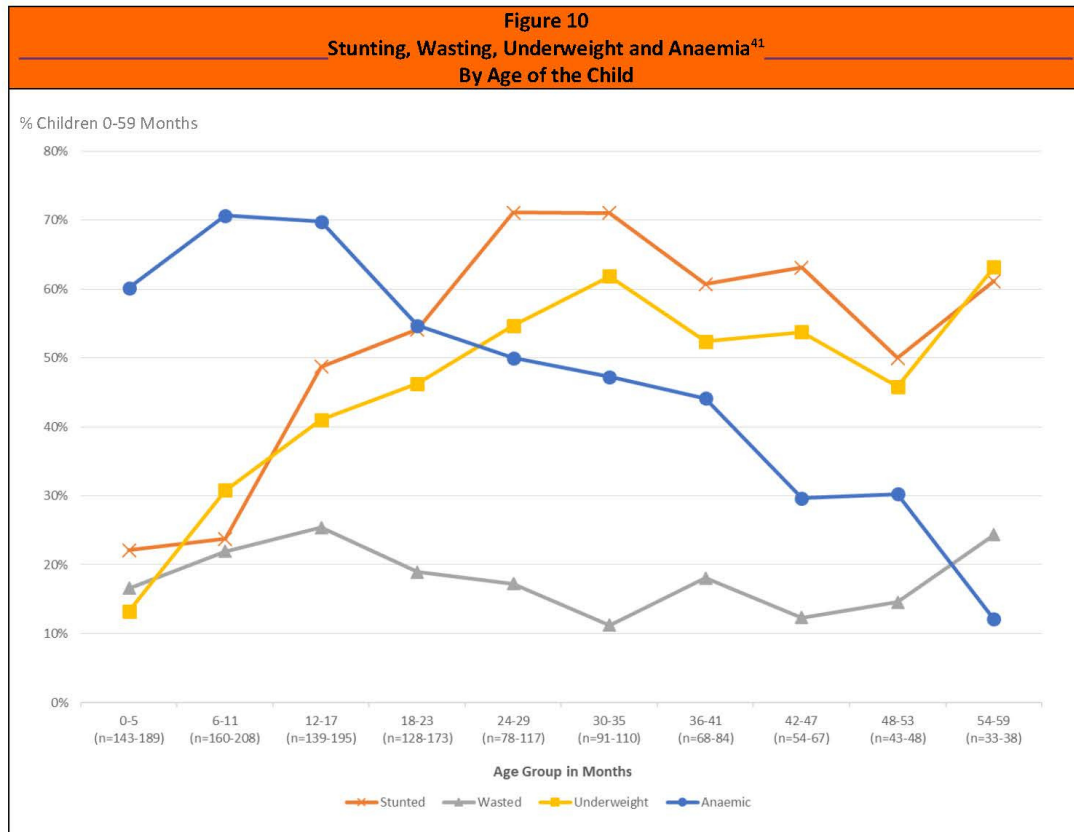
Identify three priorities of Australia's aid initiative and explain how they are evident in the BFBH project.



BONUS ROUND: Taking things a little bit further...

5

The graph below summarises the health of children before the BFBH project began.



Timor-Leste BFBH Project Baseline Report 2018 P. 71

Identify two trends in the graph below and suggest how the BFBH project could help to reverse these trends.

BONUS ROUND:

Taking things a little bit further...

6

Below are some questions identified by World Vision to use in evaluating the effectiveness of the BFBH project in Timor-Leste as it progresses. This allows for refining the program initiative and objectives for a better outcome overall.

Beside each question, identify which feature of effective aid it relates to.

PORT: Partnerships, Ownership, Results, Transparency.

- How are caregivers given more knowledge and empowered with regards to nutrition, hygiene and health?
- How are women empowered in decision-making regarding use of income and feeding the household?
- To what extent does the program support women in a way that is mutually respectful of their culture?
- How can households now access superfoods more readily?
- How does the project lead to an increase in income for households?
- How do small loans assist households to generate a sustainable income?
- How have communities, particularly women, been empowered to increase food production?

BONUS ROUND:
Taking things a little bit further...

7

Evaluate the effectiveness of the BFBH project using the features of effective aid to develop your response. **PORT:** Partnerships, Ownership, Results, Transparency.

Partnership & collaboration

Ownership by recipient country & community



Results focussed

Transparency & accountability