Overview of the Food Security Project

Food insecurity remains a significant challenge for many families in rural Timor-Leste. Limited access to agricultural resources, water and reliable markets can make it difficult for households to grow sufficient nutritious food and generate a dependable income.
The Food Security Project, operated by Jesuit Social Service Timor-Leste (JSS) in Railaco, works alongside local communities to address these challenges. Since its inception, the project has helped families improve their agricultural practices, establish vegetable gardens, diversify the crops they grow and, in some cases, earn additional income by selling surplus produce.
In 2026, JSS is building on these achievements by placing a greater emphasis on community leadership and long-term sustainability. Alongside continued practical support for farmers, the project helps communities identify their own strengths, resources and priorities so they can take an active role in shaping future initiatives.

Support and Recent Progress

The project supports vulnerable rural households, farmers, and school communities across Railaco. During the first six months of 2026, the project achieved encouraging milestones across six participating communities:

- **Community Consultations:** 312 community members (158 women and girls, 154 men and boys) participated in consultations to identify local resources and opportunities.
- **Local Priorities:** Communities completed exercises that generated 79 potential community-led activities, ranging from improved water management and vegetable cultivation to animal husbandry and nutrition education.
- **Agricultural Infrastructure:** A 12,000-litre water pond was installed in Matata-Tarmasoru to support local farming.
- **Aquaculture Initiatives:** 1,850 fish fingerlings were provided through a partnership with the Department of Fisheries to support 10 community fishponds, creating alternative sources of nutrition and income.
- **Staff Capacity:** Six JSS staff members received specialized training in community-led development to better accompany local residents.

Growing from Within: Empowering EBF Matata Primary School

The project also supports school communities, helping students and teachers gain confidence to shape their future. At Matata Primary School in the hills of Railaco, support since 2023 has helped establish vegetable gardens and a productive fishpond.

In early 2026, 40 students and six teachers participated in workshops focused on leveraging their existing skills and resources. As school coordinator Manuel Salsinha notes:

"We want to be the owners of our own projects and be the authors of our actions. This is why we are so pleased to continue as partners."

This approach moves the school beyond simply receiving assistance toward true ownership, nurturing the confidence, leadership and determination of the next generation.

Looking Ahead: The 2027-2029 Vision

The foundations are guiding the next phase of the project (2027-2029), which focuses on four interconnected pillars:

1. **Strengthening Community Leadership:** Helping residents organise, collaborate and take responsibility for local initiatives.
2. **Improving Food Production and Livelihoods:** Building agricultural skills and supporting food processing.
3. **Supporting Education and Nutrition:** Helping families and schools improve their knowledge of healthy diets and hygiene.
4. **Creating Income Opportunities:** Supporting cooperatives, savings groups and connections to government services.

The Potential Impact of Your Support

Pilgrims 100 support can help turn these community-identified priorities into practical realities. Your support ensures that families are not only assisted to grow more food, but are also equipped with confidence, knowledge and relationships to build a secure, resilient and sustainable future.

We invite you to join Jesuit Mission in walking alongside the people of Timor-Leste, helping them unlock their potential and build their own path forward.