# Universal Basic Income: A Model for Timor-Leste

By

# **ARAUJO DUARTE, Felizberto**

# THESIS

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

# MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

2020

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# ABSTRACT

#### Universal Basic Income: A Model for Timor-Leste

by

### Felizberto Araujo Duarte (Tony)

The World Bank Report provides evidence that more than 1 billion people are still living in abject poverty. Drastic measures must be taken to ensure a decent livable human condition be afforded to everyone. If everyone is provided with enough sustenance to live a dignified life, the world will be a place where poverty will not quickly disappear, but drastically dissipates.

Many countries introduced some sort of social programs in order to provide an even keel to those who are not well off to look after themselves and may become trapped in precarious life situations if no assistances from the government are forthcoming. Despite such efforts, many are still sidelined, uncovered, and remain outside of the social protection system. Then surges the concept of the Universal Basic Income (UBI) as an alternative to the costly and often bureaucratic hassle to manage the existing social protection programs.

Pilot projects of UBI were introduced in many countries to investigate the effects on the beneficiaries. Interestingly, the data of these experiments showed that overall, UBI had positive effects than negative ones.

Furthermore, given that UBI has become a global issue in which many governments, organizations and interested stakeholders contemplate as an alternative to the usually heavy, costly and hard to manage many social programs and all the more so, with the onslaught of the advanced industrial revolution, it is time that this study looks at the feasibility of introducing the UBI in Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste is a country with a population of slightly over 1 million people. The country has abundance natural resources such as oil, gas and other unexploited mineral resources. It has a Petroleum Fund, which currently has over 17 billion in reserve. The fund's management is modelled after Norway with strong oversight and full transparency.

Timor-Leste is a welfare state and has introduced free education, free health care, lifetime pension for former holders of state organs (president of the supreme court, all members of the national parliament, all members of government and president of the republic), mother's purse cash transfer, old-age and disabled pensions, civil servants pension and pensions for veterans. These benefits are provided with no means test. Successive governments introduced these policies since Timor-Leste achieved its independence on May 20, 2020 and therefore there existed a broader and cross political parties' acceptance at the highest level to distribute the country's wealth to its citizens.

Moreover, the country has a nascent social protection regime and can be easily replaced with one system, the UBI, should the opportunity present itself and enough resources and political willingness to seriously look at and support it. Keywords: Universal Basic Income, Cash Transfer, Social Protection, Social Program, Timor-Leste

### DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved father, Matias Gouveia Duarte, who was born on 25 February 1951 and was forced disappeared on 8 September 1999, days after the result of the referendum held on 30 August 1999 – paving the way for Timor-Leste to secede from Indonesia. For his contribution for the fight for the independence holding the position of general responsible for health of the independence movement, National Council of Maubere Resistance, he was posthumously awarded a medal of honor, *Ordem de Timor-Leste* (Order of Timor-Leste), the highest civilian honor by the President of Timor-Leste, Taur Matan Ruak in 2015.

For my mother, Pascoela de Araújo Duarte, for her unyielding love, with whom, as children, we count upon in times of extreme hardship.

For my older brother, Natalino de Araújo Duarte who passed away young on 5 April 2013, an activist in 12 November 1999 who saw hundreds of people died for an independence cause.

For my two sisters, Natalina de Araújo Duarte and Maria da Costa Araújo Xavier Duarte and my brother, Rui de Araújo Xavier Duarte, an activist of 12 November 1999, for their love and support.

For my two nephews, José António de Araújo Camacho and Agatha da Costa Araújo for their joy and love who lived with us from their early childhood.

Lastly, my daughter, Everleynne Duarly, who I will forever love.

#### Felizberto Araújo Duarte (Tony)

Díli, Timor-Leste, May 2020

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John, 3:16, The New King James Version).

My forever gratitude to God for the opportunity to study my Master of Public Policy in Public Finance and Social Policy and Regional Development and Environmental Policy with the KDI School of Public Policy of Management. *ALL PRAISES ARE HIS AND HIS ONLY*.

My sincere thank you to my Thesis Supervisor, Professor Jaeun SHIN and Professor Sang-Mok SUH, POS Committee Member for their help, suggestion, and guidance.

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Finally, to all those who died fighting for Timor-Leste so that we, who are still alive, have the opportunities in an independent Timor-Leste. This degree is a tribute to their sacrifices.

# Felizberto Araujo Duarte (Tony)

Díli, Timor-Leste, May 2020

# **Table of Contents**

ABSTRACT
DEDICATION7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Table of Contents   9
List of Figures
List of Abbreviations
<b>1. Introduction.</b>
2. Literature Review
2.1 History of the Universal Basic Income
2.2 Universal Basic Income Experiments Around the World27
<b>2.2.1 The Alaska.</b>
2.2.2 The Islamic Republic of Iran
<b>2.2.3 Finland.</b>
<b>2.2.4 Macau.</b>
<b>2.2.5 Brazil.</b>
2.2.6 Madhya Pradesh, India
2.2.7 Basic Income Grant Namibia

3. Championing a Universal Basic Income for Timor-Leste	32
3.1 History of Timor-Leste.	32
3.2. Social Protection Programs of Timor-Leste.	33
3.2.1. Veterans and Martyrs of Independence Fighters and Their Beneficiaries	34
3.2.2. Old Age and the Disabled Pensions.	34
3.2.3. Bolsa da Mae – Mother's Purse.	35
3.2.4. Life-Time Pension for Former Members of Organs of States	35
3.2.5. Free Health Care.	36
3.2.6. Free Education.	37
4. An argument for the Introduction of the Universal Basic Income for Timor-Leste.	37
4.1 Petroleum Fund	37
4.2 Poverty and Unemployment	37
5. SWOT Analysis for a UBI in Timor-Leste.	39
6. Obstacles that Must be Addressed Prior to the Conception and Implementation of t	he UBI
in Timor-Leste	40
6.1. Obstacles in the Ease of Doing Business	40
6.2. Heavy Dependence on Imports and Weak Private Sector	42
6.3. Taxation	45
6.4. National Development Bank of Timor-Leste.	47
6.5. Loans Regulation	48

6.6. Private Credit Rating Agency
6.7. Moveable Collateral
6.8. Share Market
6.9. Anti-Monopoly Law
6.10. Bankruptcy and Insolvency Laws
6.11. Land Ownership
6.12. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
6.13. Amendment to Procurement Laws
6.14. Mobile Banking
6.15. Elimination of Lifetime Pension for Holders of State Organs
6.16. Elimination of the Pension to Beneficiaries of the Veterans
6.17. Disqualification of Pension Beneficiaries from Overseas
6.18. Citizen Fund, a Model of Alaska
6.19. Administering Agency of the UBI of Timor-Leste
6.20. A Unique Lifetime Identification Number for Each Citizen
6.21. Population Projection 2020 to 2024
6.22. Scenario of Amount of Payment for UBI for Timor-Leste
6.22.1. Allocation of Social Protection Budgets to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Socia
Inclusion 2019 61

	6.22.2. Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Ministry of Combatants of Natio	nal
	Liberation 2019	62
	6.22.3. Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Whole of Government 2019	63
7. Conclusions		
8. Recommendations		
9. I	References	.70

### **List of Figures**

- [Figure 1] Rank of Doing Business for Timor-Leste 2014 2019.
- [Figure 2] Ranking of Doing Business 2020.
- [Figure 3] Score Indicators on Doing Business Timor-Leste 2020.
- [Figure 4] Graph of Current Account Balance of Timor-Leste 2006 2018.
- [Figure 5] Graph of Timor-Leste Trade Balance 2007 to 2017.
- [Figure 6] Graph of Corporate Income Tax Comparison in South East Asia 2015.
- [Figure 7] Graph of Personal Income Tax Comparison in South East Asia 2015.
- [Figure 8] Graph of Corporate Income Tax Comparison in South East Asia 2015.
- [Figure 9] Graph of FDI Net Inflows Timor-Leste and Other Countries.
- [Figure 10] Amount of FDI Net Inflows Timor-Leste and Other Countries.
- [Figure 11] Map of Alaska.
- [Figure 12] Eligibility Requirements of Alaska Benefit Recipients.
- [Figure 13] Summary of Dividend Application and Payment.
- [Figure 14] Graph of Timor-Leste Age Structure 2007 to 2017.
- [Figure 15] Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Social Inclusion 2019.

[Figure 16] Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Ministry of Combatants of National Liberation 2019.

[Figure 17] Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Whole of Government 2019.

[Figure 18] Total Allocation of Social Protection Budget 2019.

[Figure 19] Graph of Citizens Budget 2019 Timor-Leste

## **List of Abbreviations**

- ADB Asian Development Bank
- ANZ Australia and New Zealand Bank
- BI Basic Income
- CI Citizen's Income
- FDI Foreign Direct Investment
- KDI Korean Development Institute
- NGO Non-Governmental Organization
- OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- PFD Permanent Fund Dividend
- SD Social Dividend
- SEAPRI State Secretary for the Support and Promotion of the Private Sector
- $SWF-Sovereign \ Wealth \ Fund$
- UBI Universal Basic Income
- UCTs Unconditional Cash Transfers
- UG Universal Grant
- UNDP The United Nations Development Program
- USA The United States of America

15 | Page

### **1. Introduction.**

The purpose of this study is to examine the prospect of establishing the Universal Basic Income (UBI) in Timor-Leste given that the issue of UBI has gained momentum in recent years and various pilot projects had been conducted throughout the world indicating positive impacts on the lives of people.

Timor-Leste is a small-sized country with a small population endowed with rich natural resources such as oil and gas and other untapped mineral resources. Additionally, Timor-Leste is a little over 17 years of independence and the country's social programs are still in a nascent state. All the existing social programs that the Government of Timor-Leste implements are never subject to means test whatsoever, which is a signpost of the country's political leaning towards adopting a universal social protection coverage for all should the opportunity arise. Successive Governments of Timor-Leste have embarked upon social programs with no means test to ensure the distribution of wealth of the nation to its population.

With regard to the distribution of wealth, Adam Smith was of the opinion that society could not flourish and be happy, in which the majority of its population was poor and miserable (Adam Smith, 1776). There must be a balance between those who have and those who have-nots for a society to be sustainable, inclusive and prosperous.

Furthermore, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report in 2006 discovered that through the lens of the human development, the global village, a term coined by globalization enthusiast to describe the new order that it was deeply divided between the streets of those who have and those who have none (The United Nations Development Program, 2006). Moreover, the World Development Report in 1990 called for a comprehensive approach to reduce poverty through transfers and safety net as indispensable accompaniment to the basic strategies, namely the promotion of productive use of labor, social and political institutions, infrastructure, and technology and lastly, the provision of basic social services to the needy via primary health care, family planning, nutrition and primary education (The World Bank, 1990).

Still, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), through a published report in 2009 entitled Promoting Pro Poor Growth, in which it concluded that social protection had a direct causal effect on poverty reduction, there were evidences suggesting that the social protection programs were effective and moreover there existed a growing political interest in the subject (OECD, 2009).

That fact is that 1 billion people are still living in destitution and those who live in the developing countries suffer from widening inequality. Hence, the World Bank intended to end extreme poverty in one generation and ensure greater equity (The World Bank, 2013). Even more so, Thomas Piketty, a French economist concurred that the inequality was getting worse and would continue to do so unless a global system of progressive wealth taxes were introduced to help lessen the inequality and prevent a tiny minority to amass most of the wealth for themselves (Thomas, 2014).

The recent World Bank data showed that people living in poverty was very high. 10% of the world's population, in 2015, was living under less than USD\$1.90 per day in comparison to 11% in 2013. Still approximately 1.1 billion people were in severe poverty in 1990 with East Asia and the Pacific with a total combined of 47 million people were extremely poor and Europe and Central Asia with 7 million people have achieved a reduction below 3%. Meanwhile, the Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of poor people swelled to 7 million. Progress was achieved in reducing **17** | P a g e

poverty in East Asia, the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia. However, the Sub-Saharan Africa are still suffering from an increasing number of destitute people (The World Bank, 2019a).

While progress is being made in lowering poverty, but the number of people living in extreme poverty on a global scale is still high making it hard to achieve the target of ending it completely by 2030. Furthermore, the data indicated that the largest number of global poor live in rural areas, where they are poorly educated, employed in the agricultural sector and are under 18 (The World Bank, 2019a).

The world therefore needs a different approach to lift the people out of poverty to reduce the widening gap between the rich and the poor through pro-poor policies that benefit everyone – making no one else left behind.

The concept of the Universal Basic Income (UBI) stemmed from the early advocates of several early thinkers. Marquis de Condorcet (1743 and 1794), a French philosopher and mathematician who embodied the ideas of enlightenment, advocated for a liberal economy, free and equal public education, constitutionalism and equal rights for women. Further, Thomas Paine (1737-1809), one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America (USA) and also an English American Philosopher and political activist, who espoused the enlightenment-era rhetoric of translational human rights, published the Agrarian Justice, thus, introducing the concept of the Universal Basic Income.

Then, what is the Universal Basic Income anyway? The UBI is the unconditional transfer of benefit to every citizen by the state or the government, with no means test. The UBI is sometimes referred to as Basic Income (BI), Social Dividend (SD), Universal Grant (UG) or Citizen's Income (CI). Besides, the UBI has been debated, talked about, experimented in recent decades. In the USA, the issue has gained momentum, as recently as the campaign for the United States Presidential Election, Andrew Yang advocated the idea of a minimum universal income for all American citizens for USD\$1,000 per month. And again, the UBI has been carried out in multiple countries, among others, such as 1). Maria Village in Brazil where 150,000 residents received USD\$3 per month, out of the village's share in Rio State's oil royalties; 2). Finland launched a trial program in 2017 by giving every citizen USD\$900 per month and eliminated many other welfare programs; 3). The Netherlands experimented with 19 cities by giving everyone 800 Euros per month; and 4). Pilot schemes targeting thousands of men, women and children by giving them unconditional cash payment.

Remarkably, a practical example has been implemented in Alaska through the Alaska Permanent Fund. Since 1982, the funds paid out to all 644 thousand of inhabitants of Alaska in 2015 regardless of financial position or age. The fund disbursed, on average, USD\$1,300 monthly to all residents. Historically, the payment was USD\$331 in 1984 and USD\$2,069 in 2008. Around USD\$20 billion dollars were thus far paid out to eligible recipients in thirty years (Laurinavičius & Laurinavičius, 2016).

There are motivations behind the increasing debates on the necessity of the world to look seriously at introducing the UBI anchored on several factors, namely as a response to emergency of the industrial capitalism, the need to protect the working class, the fear of technological unemployment and the rise of mass insecurity and growing inequality as well as concerns in relation to labor displacement by robotics, automation and artificial intelligence.

Timor-Leste restored its independence on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2002, which was proclaimed on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1975. Until now, Timor-Leste has only enjoyed a little more than 17 years of

independence as a sovereign country. As a blessing, the country is rich in natural resources such as oil and gas and other precious metals. With the exploration of Timor Gap Treaty, a joint petroleum exploration between Timor-Leste and Australia from 2002 has yielded in Timor-Leste's favor a Petroleum Fund of around 17 billion in reserve. A mineral law is being developed to explore the precious metals and on-land oil exploration granted to extractive companies to extract oil. Still, the government only spends around USD\$1 billion annually, which benefits its population of approximately 1.2 million people.

Through the use of the oil fund, the government has introduced free health care for all in addition to overseas health treatments if necessary, free education from the elementary until high school, monthly payments of USD\$30 to the elderly and above 18 years old persons with disability, pensions to the veterans and cash transfer to poor single mother, life-time pensions to former holders of state organs such as the president of the republic, members of government, members of parliament and president of the supreme court. The former holders of these organs receive a monthly pension of more than USD\$1,000 on a monthly basis. All payments are based on no means test. It means the government makes every social protection payment without question asked so long as the recipients are eligible. Also, the government has introduced the employment insurance to the civil servants and the private sector.

However, despite the windfall blessing of resources from the oil sector, poverty, unemployment, corruption and poor public service still beleaguer the country. The youth unemployment is at more than 10% with overall unemployment at 3% in 2018 (The World Bank, 2019e) and the public perception of corruption scores at 35 out of 100 (0, highly corrupt and 100, very clean), which is a chronic issue in Timor-Leste (Transparency International, 2019).

Given Timor-Leste's small population and a relatively young country endowed with abundant natural resources, uneven distribution of the country's wealth to its population and its existing social program with no means test, a Universal Basic Income policy should be considered and be gradually introduced.

The Universal Basic Income study as a model for Timor-Leste is based on data gathered from the government statistics office, the non-governmental organizations, the United Nations Specialized Agencies, the international organizations and other available information. Additionally, this study will contribute to the debate of the Universal Basic Income and help promote it as the alternative path to the numerous welfare programs presently in place in Timor-Leste.

Furthermore, unlike other countries that have developed centuries of social programs that cost a lot to manage and implement, given that Timor-Leste is a new sovereign country with less developed social programs, it has not met the protracted, burdensome and costly implementation and management of social programs, it is opportune that Timor-Leste looks at the UBI seriously.

#### 2. Literature Review.

### 2.1 History of the Universal Basic Income.

The social assistance programs that many governments provided to its people can be traced back centuries. In the 1520s, due to the economic difficulties, many Europeans had to live in destitute and begging was widespread prompting the governments to intervene (Miller, 2019). With the advent of industrialization and the expansion of labor markets, the poor reliefs organized chiefly by the private charities and the Church were undermined (Francis G. Castles, Stephan Leibfried, Jane Lewis, Herbert Obinger, 2012). A lot of people were left without jobs and income to live by. People did not simply become poor, but worse, they were in a state of destitute. A ban was then introduced through a legislation on November 27, 1891 for the suppression of begging and vagabondage in Belgium (Author & Binder, 1916). Consequently, it was illegal to be a beggar and a vagabond, and the government had to provide corrective measures to ensure the survivability of citizens in this category. Workhouses and poorhouses were set up. The poorhouses were for the unfortunates who were unable to make a living due to poor health condition, old age or simply caused by hard luck (Author & Binder, 1916).

Nevertheless, The Elizabethan Law in 1601 and the English Poor Law in 1834 had been enacted to address the problem of joblessness in which the welfare recipients were housed in the workhouses. As a result, these people lost their civil rights.

Furthermore, in the book entitled "The Prevention of Destitution", Webb, Sidney and Webb (1911) wrote that destitution was a condition in which the necessaries of life were non-existent, whereby health and strength, is so weakened and eventually endanger life itself. An individual not only suffered from the lack of food, clothing and shelter, but also from a condition of mental degradation.

Even prior to the 1900, the Catholic Church, under the leadership of the Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, Rerum Novarum, a modern Catholic social teaching foundational text, the Church declared the right to a living wage and to organize into unions (Miller, 2019). The encyclical was entitled "On the Condition of Labor", in which the pope recognized the right of every worker enough income to provide for a family (Quigley, 2003).

Throughout centuries various social programs were introduced to confront the growing inequality by establishing workhouses and poorhouses found in the United Kingdom and Belgium, providing subsidies to the elderly and the disabled, single mother and unemployed. Even, employment insurance was also introduced for the benefit of the workers. However, all these efforts did not reduce the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Still nearly 1.1 billion people were in extreme poverty in 1990 (The World Bank, 2019a). Every effort to lift everyone out of extreme poverty was not effective. Then, came efforts to ensure fair and equitable distribution of wealth to every citizen through the introduction of a basic income.

The Universal Basic Income (UBI) is sometimes called Basic Income, Social Dividend, Universal Grant or Citizen's Income. "A Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a regular financial payment made to all eligible adults, whether they work or not, regardless of their other means, and without any conditionality whatever". "Receiving it is a fundamental entitlement that comes with being a member of society: people can know that it will always be there, now and in the future". "It should not be a fortune, but it should ideally be enough that no-one ever needs to be hungry or cold" (Nettle & Nettle, 2018, p.166).

Moreover, UBI is also defined as "a modest amount of money paid unconditionally to individuals on a regular basis (for example, monthly)" (Standing, 2017 p.3). The UBI is intended to be paid to all as right of being a resident or a citizen of a country.

The earliest proponent of the concept liberal economy, free and equal public education, constitutionalism and equal right for women was Marquis de Condorcet who lived from 1743 to 1794 (Sen, 2019). His ideas embodied the ideals of the age of enlightenment and rationalism. Rather at the same time, Thomas who lived between 1737 to 1809, an English-American philosopher and political activist proposed the concept of the universal basic income through a

pamphlet that he published in 1797 entitled Agrarian Justice and the Rights of Man, in which he championed the case for the UBI. Through the Agrarian Justice he proposed that those who cultivated land should be taxed in order that the old-age and the disabled received financial assistance and in the Rights of Man, the payment of cash to the elderly and parents of children through tax (King & Marangos, 2006).

Moreover, C.H. Douglas through his Social Credit and claimed through Douglas Theorem that wages, salaries and bonuses distributed over a time period did not and could not purchase goods for that period. It meant that the earnings made by the workers were not sufficient despite having been employed. It thus justified further assistance from the government.

There are several high profiles individuals who came out in support of the initiative to introduce the UBI. Elon Mask, a forward thinking investor, who claimed that everyone would end up introducing the UBI and it would be necessary (Chris Weller, 2017). Billionaires Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Airlines, Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook, Dallas Mavericks, owner of Mark Cuban voiced the inevitability where automation would make people out of jobs and the UBI would provide for a foundation for those affected to build a meaningful life (Shashidharan, 2017).

Guy Standing, a professor for Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London and co-founder of the Basic Income Earth Network, an Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in 1980s, who authored a book entitled Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen published in 2017 in which he described the economy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whereby the income distribution system as flawed where millions of people faced unstable, insecure labor, dearth of occupation identity, reduced and an alarming increase of volatility in real wages, loss of benefits received and lingering indebtedness (Standing, 2017). Malcolm Torry who authored a book entitled 101 Reasons for A Citizen's Income: Arguments for Giving Everyone Some Money where he analyzed the welfare system of the United Kingdom and proposed 101 reasons for the Universal Basic Income. He wrote a final argument saying that if the United Kingdom had to restart its welfare system, would it not be simpler to commence with the UBI instead of the complicated and costly welfare system currently in place (Torry, 2015). Among the 101 reasons that the UBI will bring forth, namely a diverse life plans a possibility, deliver greater equality and independence for women, provide greater equality for people living with disabilities, carers' lives easier, benefit people without homes, provide a secure income in old age, provide a pre-retirement income, promote social inclusion, enhance social mobility, reduce stigma, value unpaid work, encourage voluntary activity, encourage creative activity and improve social cohesion (Torry, 2015).

He further added "If this is the process that we might follow in an ideal world, and it is possible to do the same in our non-ideal world, then should we not do it now?" (Torry, 2015, p. 116).

Additionally, the UBI has been discussed and experimented in recent decades. In the USA, the issue has gained momentum, a United States Presidential hopeful, Andrew Yang proposed a minimum universal income for all American citizens for USD\$1,000 per month (Wang, 2019). And again, experiments were conducted in places, among others, 1). Maria Village in Brazil where 150,000 residents were given USD\$3 per month, from the village's share in Rio State's oil royalties; 2). Finland made a trial program in 2017 by giving every citizen USD\$635 per month and found that it made people happier (Samuel, 2019); 3). The Netherlands trialed in a couple of cities by giving everyone 800 Euros per month; and 4). India targeted thousands of men, women

and children by giving them unconditional cash payment (Sarath Davala, Renana Jhabvala, Soumya Kapoor Mehta, 2015).

Remarkably, Alaska through the Alaska Permanent Fund, has paid out to all 644 thousand of inhabitants irrespective of financial position or age of recipients in 2015. In 2018 it paid out to all 639,247 recipients (State of Alaska, 2020c).

The primary factors that have been the concern of the proponents were the emergence of the industrial capitalism, protection of the working class, technological unemployment and the rise of widespread insecurity and increasing inequality and concerns related to labor displacement by robotics, automation and artificial intelligence.

Timor-Leste was only 17 years of independence. Oil and gas and other precious metals are the riches of the country. Its Petroleum Fund has accumulated around USD\$17.45 billion (Central Bank of Timor-Leste, 2019).

Furthermore, in October 2019, the National Authority for Mineral and Petroleum has launched a tender process for 18 blocks for oil and gas exploration composed of 11 offshore and 7 onshore to extract more oil (Tatoli, 2019a). Yet, the government only spent on average USD\$1 billion per year to develop the country inhabited by around 1 million people. A budget proposal submitted to the national parliament by the government for 2020 increased to around 1.95 billion (Government of Timor-Leste, 2019). The budget was however rejected by the national parliament citing the inability of the government to spend and constitutionality issues.

The people of Timor-Leste presently enjoy free health care, free education from the elementary until high schools, monthly payment of USD\$30 to the elderly and over 18 years old persons with disability, monthly pension ranging from USD\$85 to USD\$550 for the veterans,

monthly pension of USD\$120 to USD\$200 for the survivors of the deceased veterans and poor single mother-headed households receive cash transfer, life-time pensions to former holder of state organs like the president of the republic, members of parliament, members of government and president of the supreme court. These former holders of state organs receive more than USD\$1,000 on a monthly basis. Payments are not means tested. Moreover, the employment insurance to the civil servants and the private sector was introduced in 2018.

Nevertheless, the resources from the oil sectors does not seem to reduce the poverty and unemployment but instead increase corruption and worsen the public service. The youth unemployment reached higher than 10% with overall unemployment at 3% in 2018 (The World Bank, 2019e) and the corruption index is at 35 out of 100 according to the Transparency International (Transparency International, 2019).

Moreover, there is obviously a political will at the highest level of successive governments, as demonstrated by the provisions of social programs thus far made out to the population without means test. Thus, a UBI policy can become a reality and should be considered and be gradually introduced.

### 2.2 Universal Basic Income Experiments Around the World.

## 2.2.1 The Alaska.

By a margin of 75,588 to 38,518 in November 1976, the voters from Alaska voted for a constitutional amendment to establish a Permanent Fund, the Sovereign Wealth Fund of Alaska

(SWF) (APFC, 2019b). With the establishment of the SWF, then the government set up a Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD), an essential characteristic of the Alaska Model, to ensure the implementation of the Alaskan model of UBI. The PFD was established to assist every single Alaskan to make ends meet every year without any bureaucracy, ensured that the residents of Alaska receive cash payments to all residents and the only condition was the proof of residence (Widerquist and Howard, 2016). The SWF is used to generate income from the resource available and then the proceeds are then contributed to the PFD that make payments to the residents of Alaska until today.

With the introduction of the PFD, Alaska was recorded to have the lowest poverty rate in the USA and thus it became an economically equal in the past two or three decades. The PDF played a role in contributing to these achievements (Widerquist and Howard, 2016). There is no doubt that cash payment to the residents of Alaska has an effect in reducing poverty.

Since 1982 the PFD has made out payments to all 644 thousand of inhabitants irrespective of financial position or age. In 2015, on average, USD\$1,300 was paid monthly to all Alaskan residents (Laurinavičius & Laurinavičius, 2016). It is interesting to also note that Alaska relies heavily on petroleum extraction with 90% of the government revenue comes from energy extraction as well as from fishing and tourism. Military spending is subsidized by the federal government (Ted, 2015).

As of September 30, 2019, the PFD of Alaska is valued at USD \$64,107,100,000 (APFC, 2019a) to cater for around 710,231, according to its 2010 census (United States Census Bureau, 2010). A population of less than 1 million people with a dividend fund of over USD \$64 billion.

#### 2.2.2 The Islamic Republic of Iran.

A new dividend program, which involved cash transfer to citizens, and is closer to the basic income model of Alaska. (Widerquist and Howard, 2016). Iran began depositing monthly cash transfer to every family to the tune of 29% of the median household income as part of a reform to subsidies of bread and energy. A total of 90% of the population benefitted from this program. A subsequent study concluded that no evidence to suggest that cash transfer caused unemployment or reduce the labor supply. Additionally, the service sector indicated that workers increased their work hours, which could be attributed to expansion of businesses using the cash transfers received (Salehi-Isfahani & Mostafavi-Dehzooei, 2017). In short, this cash transfer program had an impact on wealth distribution among the Iranians. The Iranians became more productive by working longer hours and businesses picked up activities.

#### 2.2.3 Finland.

The two-year trial of the UBI, with no strings attached, in Finland, in which the government gave around USD\$ 640 per month per person showed that there was no significant impact on labor for 2017, which was the year the trial was carried out. From the 2,000 participants surveyed, with 5,000 in the control group. There was an increase in better health, less stress and better concentration. Trust in their future also increased (HuffPost, 2019). This trial showed that, at least, people who received the cash transfer registered positive impacts on their well-being.

### 2.2.4 Macau.

Macau had a total population of 650,834 (DSEC, 2017) and over 543,000 people that lived there had enjoyed the unconditional cash transfers of about USD\$1,200 per month and nonresident of US\$670. It was initiated in 2008. The unconditional cash transfer was renewed every year by the government (BIEN, 2017).

## 2.2.5 Brazil.

A privately funded basic income in small, rural community in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The program pays around USD\$15 per month to the community, which has a large impact on the community. The improvements of the community identified so far are as follows, improved nutrition and health in children, new housing construction, increased self-esteem and social interaction. No observable increase use of alcohol or drugs or reduction in employment (BIEN, 2012).

#### 2.2.6 Madhya Pradesh, India.

A pilot testing involving the unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) to address vulnerabilities subjected to low income Indians. The pilot project took place in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India with a monthly payment of around USD\$24 paid to 6,000 people from 9 different villages. The main findings presented were better access to drinking water, 1 in 4 households changed their sources of energy for cooking and lighting, increased in livestock and modes of transport

ownerships (bicycles and motorcycles given the remote locations of the villages), increased in food sufficiency, nutrition level in children increased, no evidence found in increase of alcohol spending, improvement in health because they could take needed medicines regularly, reduced household debt to fund health-related expenses, increased women's participation in spending decision on their basic incomes and increased access of households to many government schemes (Arya et al., 2014). Therefore, this UBI pilot testing proved to create better living standards to recipients, contrary to skeptics who argued that recipients would become lazy and unemployed.

### 2.2.7 Basic Income Grant Namibia.

The UBI conducted in Namibia was for 12 months (January 2008 to December 2009). The cash transfers of Namibian 118 per month and even reduced to Namibian 18 per month, were given to those under the age of 60 years old and the findings were encouraging, namely it helped household development, created economic growth and jobs. Furthermore, the poor was able to spend a lot on local products and services, which in turn created jobs in rural areas. It also acted as an income security, which enabled citizens to conduct entrepreneurial activities, reduced women's dependency on men for survival and also freed the women from the pressure of engaging in transactional sex (Haarmann, 2009). In the eyes of gender equality between men and women, UBI provided the necessary financial freedom to make women less dependent on men and provide financial cushion and deter them from engaging in transactional sex.

### 3. Championing a Universal Basic Income for Timor-Leste.

### 3.1 History of Timor-Leste.

The Portuguese was the first colonial empire to colonize Timor-Leste and came to the island of Timor around 1500s and were attracted by the sandalwood trade coveted in those days. From the Chinese record from the year 1225 by a Chinese Inspector of Overseas Trade, Chau JU-Kua noted that Timor was rich in sandalwood. Moreover, records from the Ming Dynasty mentioned that the island of Timor, besides being covered in aromatic wood but also had at least 12 landing sites from where the Chinese merchants could trade with the locals (Gunn, 2016).

The Portuguese administration ended its rule in Timor-Leste in 1975 and Timor-Leste was subsequently taken over by Indonesia until 30 August 1999 when the United Nations sponsored-referendum was held, where the majority of the population voted to reject the autonomy with Indonesia – paving the way for independence. A subsequent United Nations Transitional Administration ruled the country from the end of 1999 until 19 May 2002. On 20 May 2002, Timor-Leste restored its independence, which was previously declared on 28 November 1975, several days before the invasion of Indonesia.

The present-day Timor-Leste has a land area of 15,007 km<sup>2</sup> located on the island of Timor sharing a larger chunk to the east of the island called Timor-Leste and the smaller west part, with its capital Kupang, a province of Indonesia. Timor-Leste has a population of 1,066,409 (National Statistics Directorate & United Nations Population Fund, 2010).

### **3.2. Social Protection Programs of Timor-Leste.**

Upon taking the helm of the government, the First Constitutional Government of Timor Leste established a Sovereign Wealth Fund, called Petroleum Fund of Timor-Leste modelled after that of Norway. It was established with a Parliamentary Law no. 9/2005 promulgated by the President of the Republic in August 2005. The intention of the law makers was to ensure that the proceeds from the Petroleum Fund were to be used for the current and future generations (Central Bank of Timor-Leste, 2016).

On 21 March 2007, the first transfer from the Petroleum Funds was \$120,000,000 and for 2019 budget, a transfer from the fund was \$1.2 billion. As at 30 June 2019, the fund was valued at around USD\$17.45 billion (Central Bank of Timor-Leste, 2019).

Every citizen has the right to social assistance and security as provided for by the article 56<sup>th</sup> of the Constitution of Timor-Leste. Thus, with the money from the Petroleum Fund, the government initiated various generous governmental programs aimed at helping the veterans and martyrs of the independence fighters, the disabled, the old age and poor households headed by women. In addition, the provision of health care is free for all including education for students who are studying at the public elementary and high schools. The government had also embarked upon introducing an employment insurance for employees in 2019.

Moreover, the Parliament has also approved a law mandating payments to former holders of state organs such as president of republic, president of the supreme court, members of government and members of parliament, in addition to pension law for the former combatants.

### 3.2.1. Veterans and Martyrs of Independence Fighters and Their Beneficiaries.

The Parliament of Timor-Leste enacted a statute of combatants of the national liberation, Law no. 3/2006, in which it paved the way for the government to introduce further regulation to make monthly payments to the veterans and the martyrs of the national liberation including their surviving families.

The government enacted a degree law no. 15/2008, 4 of June in which the monthly pension payment was set at USD \$120 to USD \$340 per month. Meanwhile, for the surviving unmarried wife or husband or one child only, the monthly pension is USD\$ 120 to USD\$ 200 per month. This payment is not means tested.

The total number of eligible veteran's pension recipients were 27,781. An additional number of 124,600 applications were received in 2019 as potential beneficiaries, subject to further verification (Independente, 2019).

### **3.2.2. Old Age and the Disabled Pensions.**

The Constitution of the Republic of Timor-Leste, article 20 on Senior Citizens and article 21 on Disabled Citizens guaranteed that these citizens have the right to be protected and looked after by the state. Through the decree-law no. 19/2008 and a joint ministerial dispatch in 2010 increased the value of the monthly benefit payment. Citizens who are 60 years or older and over 18 years who are disabled are entitled to USD\$30 per month from 2010. It is 7.9 percent of the average household income in Timor-Leste (ILO, n.d.).

Even though the older generation was only 6% of the population, 1 in 3 household had a person with the age of over 60. From this benefit payment, 88.4% was spent on food, education (28.1%), health care (13.4%) and to buy livestock or assets (6.4%). The older generation was helping the younger generation who were not yet entitled to the benefit (ILO, n.d.). These payments were not means tested.

There are 94,287 beneficiaries composed of 86,974 old age and 7,313 disabled on the condition that they live in Timor-Leste and must have been one year living in the country continuously. The total beneficiaries translates into 18.2% of the target population (ILO, n.d.).

## 3.2.3. Bolsa da Mae – Mother's Purse.

The program targets women who are socially and economically vulnerable and as part of the government's effort to reduce poverty. The total number of people who have benefited from this program ever since it was launched in 2008 were 180,595 (Tatoli, 2019b). The payment is on the condition that the children must attend school. This payment is also not means tested.

#### **3.2.4.** Life-Time Pension for Former Members of Organs of States.

A new Parliamentary Law no. 7/2017 of 26 April revised the previous two laws that regulated the pensions for the holders of state organs, namely law no. 5/2004, 5 May (Statute on

Members of Parliament) and law no. 7/2007, 25 July (Statute of Holders of Organs of State). This new law guarantees payments of pensions as follows:

- A president of the republic who has completed 5 years of service or more is entitled to 100% of basic salary. The basic salary of the president of the republic is USD \$2,500 per month.
- A president of parliament, a president of the supreme court and the prime minister who has completed 5 years of service or more is entitled to 90% of basic salary of the president of the republic.
- A member of parliament or government who has completed 15 years of service or more is entitled to 90% of basic salary, 10 years of more (75%) and 5 years of more (60%). The basic salary is pegged to the basic salary of the president of the republic.

# **3.2.5.** Free Health Care.

Article 57 of the Constitution of Timor-Leste makes it a right for everyone to health and medical care and the state shall establish a national health service, which is universal and free of charge. Thus, the government runs publicly financed health system free to the public, which resulted in the large health care spending (90% in total health care expenditure) (Guinness et al., 2018). The free health care is also extended to all citizens who are unable to get the required medical treatment in Timor-Leste to be undertaken with partner overseas health care providers.

#### **3.2.6. Free Education.**

Article 59 of the Constitution of Timor-Leste guarantees right to education for all and it is incumbent upon the government to promote a universal, free and compulsory basic education. Therefore, every public school from the elementary to the senior high school is free.

#### 4. An argument for the Introduction of the Universal Basic Income for Timor-Leste.

## 4.1 Petroleum Fund.

The Petroleum Fund of Timor-Leste is the only source used by the government to fund all the social programs it currently runs. The fund is making steady income from its diversified investments, which make a modest return, which currently stood at around 17 billion in 2019.

#### 4.2 Poverty and Unemployment.

According to the World Bank data on poverty in Timor-Leste, the proportion of Timorese living in poverty dropped from 50% in 2007 to an approximately 42% in 2014 (The World Bank, 2019c). The Government of Timor-Leste was conscious of the poverty effecting the entire population and introduced poverty reduction measures, which contributed to lifting people out of poverty. Moreover, looking at the Gini Coefficient, an inequality index depicting the income or wealth distribution of a nation's residents, it fell progressively from 35.9 % in 2001 to 28.7 % in

2014. Meanwhile, the estimated unemployment rate in Timor-Leste stood at around 3% whereas the rate of youth unemployment is around 10% in 2019 (The World Bank, 2019d).

Despite being a new independent country of a little over 17 years, Timor-Leste has been able to provide a number of social programs to its citizens with no means test using the resources from the Petroleum Fund with no separate Petroleum Dividend Fund established like the one in Alaska.

By introducing the free health care, free education, life pension for former holders of organs of state, old-age and disabled pensions, mother's purse, pensions for veterans and martyrs of the national liberation and their beneficiaries with no means test, they contributed to substantially reduce the existing inequality. It is a demonstration of the political willingness at the highest level and across party politics to the idea of providing for all the needy and no one should be left untouched by the government's social programs.

The social programs of Timor-Leste with no means test are indications that at the political level there is a willingness to provide for all should the budget allow.

# 5. SWOT Analysis for a UBI in Timor-Leste.

	• Timor-Leste has a small number of population of around 1 million people as per 2010 census. It is projected to increase to 1.45 million in 2024.
	• The country is rich in natural resources such as oil, gas and other minerals resources. Revenues are thus far derived from the only off-shore oil explorations jointly explored with Australia.
STRENGTHS	• A further 18 block of on-shore and off-shore oil reserves are in the process of being developed.
	Untapped fishing resources.
	Untapped pristine tourism resources.
	• Agrictultural sector is not yet fully utilized.
	• Transparent Management of Petroleum Fund modelled after that of Norway.
	• A petroleum reserve of around 17.4 billion reserve in 2019 from USD\$120 million in 2007.
	Strong political support for NO means test for existing social programs.
	• Lack of knowledge among the political elite and the civil society as well as the population in general of the UBI and the need to socialize the issue at the national level.
WEAKNESSES	• Continued and prolonged neglect of establishing a proper market economic ecosystem in which

every economic sector of the country is to be revitalized, helped and protected to thrive to

	<ul> <li>Successive Timor-Leste Government maintains generous and no means test of existing social programs, a sign of political willingness to go beyond the current social protection programs.</li> <li>Timor-Leste's social protection programs are at its nascent stage of development. It is thus</li> </ul>
	<ul><li>replaceable with the UBI with little adjustments.</li><li>Existing social protection programs begin to present obstacles such as opportunist behaviors of ineligible recipients making false claims aided and abetted by the implementers of the</li></ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>social programs.</li> <li>A recent approval of a draft law to replace the lifetime pension of holders of state organs, which is over USD\$1,000 per person per month with the existing recently established general employment insurance. It reinforces the principle idea of equal opportunity for all and perhaps more open to idea of the UBI as well.</li> </ul>
	• The portfolio investment of exisiting Petroleum Fund has been diversified to be invested in high interest bearing assets so as to bring in further revenue.

contribute to generate additional revenue for state coffers.

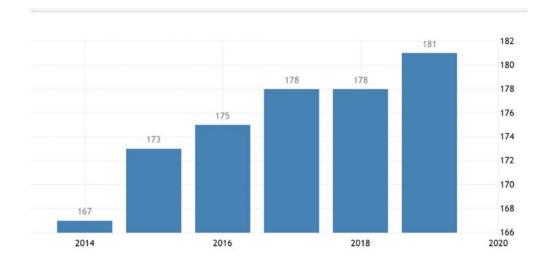
	<ul> <li>The Petroleum Fund dries up quickly to be invested in the purchase of goods and services, instead of being concentrated in investment generating programs.</li> <li>Resistance from the existing pension holder to lose their pension and revert to a new system in which, to start with, everyone earns a guaranteed income not as much as the current amount of over USD\$1,000 per month for a former holder state organs.</li> </ul>	

6. Obstacles that Must be Addressed Prior to the Conception and Implementation of the UBI in Timor-Leste.

The following identified impediments are to be addressed prior to conceiving and implementing the UBI in Timor-Leste because they are the requisites in a free and fair open market economy to drive economic activities and to increase governmental revenues for a sustainable UBI. Timor-Leste adopts a market-based economic system, but it lacks the necessary ingredients to make it fully market-based economy operating on supply and demand basis. Therefore, it is imperative to take account of the socioeconomic conditions of the country, the infrastructure to support it and the structural reform that must be carried out.

## 6.1. Obstacles in the Ease of Doing Business.

Doing Business Report published annually indicates that from 2014 until 2019 Timor-Leste did not do well. Timor-Leste's rank deteriorated from 178 in 2018 to 181 in 2019 (Trading Economics, 2020). Moreover, the 2020 report still placed Timor-Leste in the position of 181 as in 2019 (The World Bank, 2020b).



[Figure 1] Rank of Doing Business for Timor-Leste 2014 – 2019.

Source: (Trading Economics, 2020)

[Figure 2] Ranking of Doing Business 2020.

Ease of Doing Business in	Region	East Ásia & Pacific	DB RANK	DB SCORE
Timor-Leste	Income Category	Lower middle income		
*	Population	1,267,972	181	39.4
	City Covered	Dilli		

Source: (The World Bank, 2020b)

There are concrete actions that the Government of Timor-Leste must do to ensure that businesses in Timor-Leste thrive and in turn pay the right taxes, which can be used to supplement fund destined for the UBI. The Doing Business Report identified areas in which the Government of Timor-Leste must intervene. [Figure 3] Score Indicators on Doing Business Timor-Leste 2020.



#### Source: (The World Bank, 2020b)

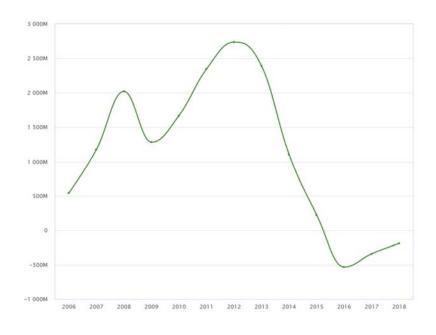
In summary, the report highlights the following issues, namely that it takes 207 days to deal with construction permits and 93 days to get electricity. There is no practice to register property and no practice to resolve insolvency because there is no insolvency law. Private credit registry, such as Experian, Equifax or Call-Credit does not exist in Timor-Leste and no corporate transparency. To make a tax return it consumes 234 hours of preparation per year and 33 hours to do documentary compliance for export. Furthermore, to enforce contract in the local court, it takes 1,285 days.

## 6.2. Heavy Dependence on Imports and Weak Private Sector.

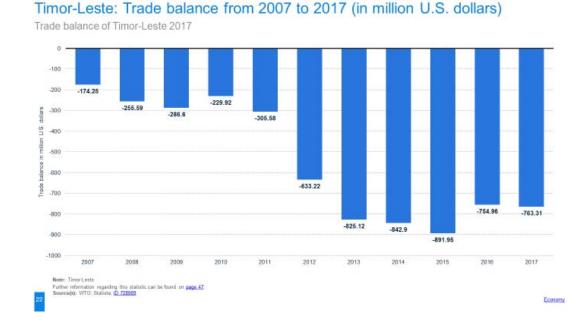
Timor-Leste imports all its daily needs from overseas from food items to construction materials. Its exports is much less than its imports. Its current account balance was negative USD\$ 191 million in 2018 (The World Bank, 2020a). Nonetheless, in 2017, its trade balance was

at negative USD\$ 763 million (Statista, 2019). The reduction in current account balance in 2018 was due to low expenditure on the part of the government caused by political impasse, which has dragged on for several years. The successive governments had governed without proper annual budget approved. They had relied upon duodecimal budget to be spent on a month-by-month basis. Once successive budgets are approved and expenditures normalcies kick in, imports will again rise higher than exports.

[Figure 4] Graph of Current Account Balance of Timor-Leste 2006 – 2018.



Source: (The World Bank, 2020a)



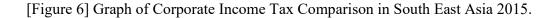
# [Figure 5] Graph of Timor-Leste Trade Balance 2007 to 2017.

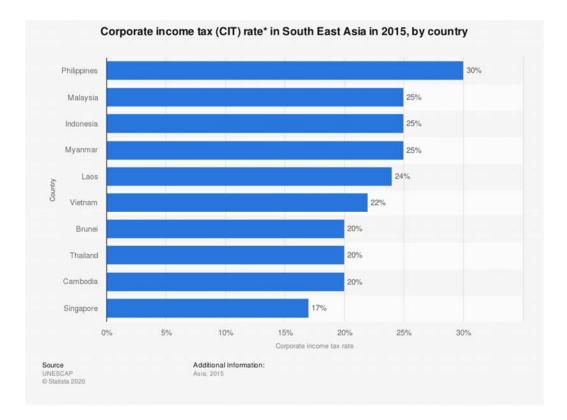
#### Source: (Statista, 2019)

Timor-Leste's dependency on foreign imports was evidenced by the World Bank Report published in October 2019 that said that Timor-Leste's medium-term growth prospects were weak because of its weak private sector, political and macroeconomic instability, less investment in connectivity and human resources, weak policy and regulation to improve business environment (The World Bank, 2019b). A weak economy does not bode well for a sustainable UBI and Timor-Leste must develop and maintain its economic growth in order to generate sustainable revenues into the foreseeable future. The country cannot solely rely on its petroleum fund from the existing oilfields that are being explored.

#### 6.3. Taxation.

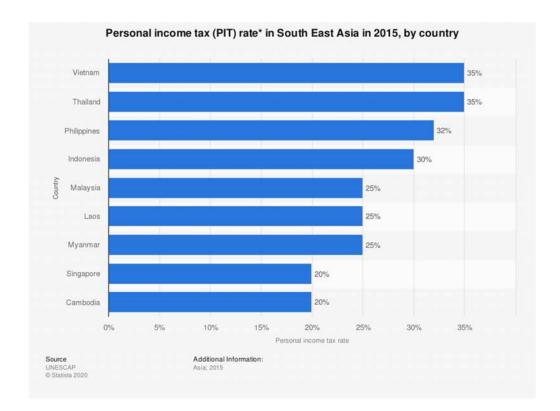
Timor-Leste has the lowest corporate income tax, which is only 10% in comparison to other countries in the South East Asia. Except for oil and gas contractor that must pay 30% of corporate tax, while subcontractor is subject to a flat rate of 6%. There is no municipal or local income tax. (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020). Not enough revenue is being generated due to low tax base, insufficient revenue collection capacity and existing legislation (Ministry of Finance of Timor-Leste, 2019a).





Source: (Statista, 2016a)

Meanwhile, the personal income tax for Timor-Leste is only at 10% rate and earning up to USD\$500 are not subject to tax. Meanwhile, countries in South East Asia has higher personal income tax in comparison to that of Timor-Leste.

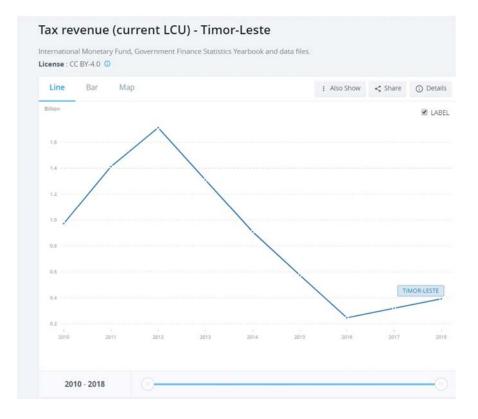


[Figure 7] Graph of Personal Income Tax Comparison in South East Asia 2015.

Source: (Statista, 2016b)

Tax revenue of Timor-Leste in 2012 was 1.713 billion declined to 247.5 million and slightly increased to 392.9 million in 2018. The amount of revenue collected by the government decreased substantially from 2012, which indicates that a tax reform is necessary to identify areas in which tax can be raised (The World Bank, 2020e).

[Figure 8] Graph of Corporate Income Tax Comparison in South East Asia 2015.



Source: (The World Bank, 2020e)

### 6.4. National Development Bank of Timor-Leste.

The Establishment of the National Development Bank of Timor-Leste is a priority stipulated in the Strategic Development Plan 2011 – 2030 and was to be operational by 2016. The aim of the establishment of the bank was to make it easy for the national entrepreneurs to access long-term financing. The shareholders of the bank would compose of the Government of Timor-Leste as the majority shareholder, shares to be sold freely to every citizen who was interested to

purchase and equity partners who would provide technical expertise (Government of Timor-Leste, 2011).

In 2015, State Secretary for the Support and Promotion of the Private Sector (SEAPRI) of the Fourth Constitutional Government was tasked to spearhead the establishment of the bank. In place were the completed construction design of the bank, allocation of construction budget in the infrastructure fund, a concept paper finalized with the Asian Development Bank, training budget of future staff allotted in the Human Capital Development Fund. The government has even issued a press release that efforts were underway to establish the bank (Government of Timor-Leste, 2015). Despite the deadline for the establishment and operationalization of the bank were set to 2016, they were not followed through. Until 2020, four (4) years have almost passed and the National Development Bank is not yet established.

Without the availability of large-scale loans, national firms that were direct contracted by the government had no finance and they resorted to subcontract their projects to foreigners who, in turn, only awarded a certain percentage to the national firms. The national firms neither learned no retained any technical expertise in project management.

### 6.5. Loans Regulation.

There is no regulation that regulates the financial institutions to restrain them from charging excessive loan rates and from imposing any fees as they see fit. An unsecured lending rate from the Australian and New Zealand Bank in Timor-Leste is advertised as 17.50% p.a. effective 1 May 2020, whereas interest on savings is only 0.05% p.a., a spread of over 17%. (ANZ Bank, 2020). If

the government is serious about helping the private sector grow, these unscrupulous practices must be regulated.

Besides the excessive loan rates, documentation requirement is cumbersome as well and the excessive time it takes before loans are finally approved.

### 6.6. Private Credit Rating Agency.

Timor-Leste has no private credit rating agency. Individuals of Timor-Leste borrow privately and businesses make loans to each other solely based on trust. These informal loans are essentially shark loans with up to monthly interest of 50% on principal. No record of these loans and their repayments are ever recorded in a centralized online system.

## 6.7. Moveable Collateral.

A difference-in-difference study found that introducing movable collateral registry increases access to loans for businesses. There was a greater possibility that a firm has a bank loan or an overdraft, an increase in its working capital and fixed assets, a decrease in interest rate on loan and longer term of repayments (Martinez, 2013)

Cognizant of the difficulties of using land as collateral to obtain finances from the financial institutions, in 2015, SEAPRI in cooperation with the ADB worked on the establishment of the moveable collateral registry. Small island states such as Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon

Islands, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu had already unlocked the potential of establishing a moveable collateral registry (ADB, 2014).

Nonetheless, more than five (5) years have passed and the moveable collateral registry for Timor-Leste is not yet to be seen.

# 6.8. Share Market.

To enable access to finance for businesses, share market is one of the avenues of raising finances and investors know that their investments are protected through government oversight and proper regulation. Without a fully functioning share market, individuals are left to fend for themselves when their impromptu, ill-advised investment decisions in companies, joint ventures, private ventures in financing projects in Timor-Leste are not honored.

#### 6.9. Anti-Monopoly Law.

Imperfect market requires that it be regulated through the intervention of the government via the introduction of regulation. The constitution of Timor-Leste adopts the free market principle. However, from 2002 until now there is no anti-monopoly law enacted to ensure fair play for all free market actors. Successive governments may lack the knowledge of what is a free and open market adopted in other parts of the world. Free market competition does not mean no regulation at all. For the existence of imperfect market caused by collusion to price fixing, abusive and anti-competitive behaviors, it requires the introduction of anti-monopoly law.

Indonesia introduced its anti-monopoly law called Prohibition of Monopoly and Unfair Competition, which was promulgated on 5 March 1999 by President B.J. Habibie, but it only came into force after one year (Government of Indonesia, 1999). Under the previous President of Indonesia, Suharto, the law did not exist, which enabled public goods and sectors of the economy to be controlled by a select few to the detriment of many.

# 6.10. Bankruptcy and Insolvency Laws.

Timor-Leste does not have bankruptcy and insolvency laws. Thus, it is not possible to wind up companies if they are unable to meet their financial obligations. Without the said law, no firm will be able to employ insolvency practice to protect business interest and creditors (Dalberg, 2018).

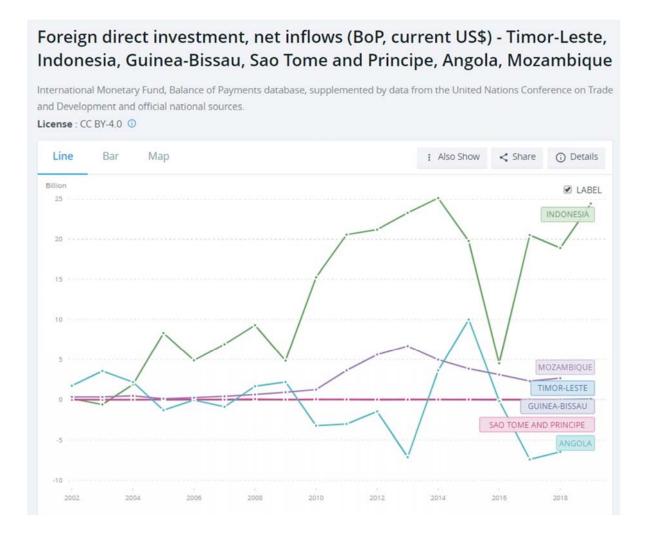
# 6.11. Land Ownership.

A new land law no.13/2017 with regard to Special Regime for the Definition of Ownership of Real Estate has been enacted, but the commission tasked to provide expeditious solution to land dispute is not yet in place. Sale and purchase of land are not subject to sales tax and land price speculation is rife.

# 6.12. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Despite the attractive corporate income tax of only 10%, the lowest in South East Asia and the special tax benefits of non-payment of profits of up to 10 years, the total investment in 2018 is only a little over USD\$47 million. FDI of USD\$75 million in 2019. A rise of only USD\$28 million (The World Bank, 2020c).

[Figure 9] Graph of FDI Net Inflows Timor-Leste and Other Countries.



Source: (The World Bank, 2020c)

Nation	Year	Net Investment
Indonesia	2018	18.91 billion
Mozambique	2018	2.678 billion
Timor-Leste	2018	47.580 million
Guinea Bissau	2018	20.554 million
Sao Tome e Principe	2018	24 million
		Negative 6
Angola	2018	billion

[Figure 10] Amount of FDI Net Inflows Timor-Leste and Other Countries.

#### Source:(The World Bank, 2020c)

If a comparison of the FDI is to be made against Indonesia, Timor-Leste's main trading partner, it is incomparable because Indonesia received over USD\$18 billion in FDI in 2018 alone. Mozambique faired far better in attracting FDI than Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste made around twice the amount of FDI compared to Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome e Principe. Furthermore, there are three strategic economic sectors that are mostly untapped for development, the agriculture, tourism and fishery sectors. These sectors have been undeveloped and require FDIs or government interventions. In 2015, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs of the V Constitutional Government, Mr. Estanislau Aleixo Maria da Silva, approved an investment company named HongLong that fished protected sharks, instead of tunas causing millions of dollars in losses to the Government of Timor-Leste. The HongLong company said that every ship would be able to make USD\$1 million in annual revenue (ABC News, 2018). It is an example of the potential that the fishery sector alone can generate with only one fishing vessel.

#### 6.13. Amendment to Procurement Laws.

Timor-Leste adopts procurement system, which are detrimental and even discriminate against national entrepreneurs. National firms are unable to compete with the often financially sound and better-managed foreign firms in any international competitive tenders of national projects. They even have to put up with the unregulated and excessive loan rates and administrative fees charged by existing the financial institutions.

#### 6.14. Mobile Banking.

Not everyone in Timor-Leste has a bank account with financial institution. However, mobile phone coverage is widespread and mobile phone ownership and issuance of sim-cards indicates that almost everyone has a mobile phone. Benefit payment through mobile phone is cheaper, easier and reduce frauds because benefit payments can be sent directly to the beneficiaries' mobile phones. The total number of mobile cellular subscriptions was 1,468,495 in 2018, which was more than the total number of the population of Timor-Leste projected to be 1,267,972 in 2018 (The World Bank, 2020d).

#### 6.15. Elimination of Lifetime Pension for Holders of State Organs.

Pension payments to the future holders of state organs, such as the members of the parliaments, members of the government, president of the republic and president of the supreme court should be discontinued. In February 2020, the Government of Timor-Leste has approved a

draft law at the Council of Ministers to put a stop to this lifetime pension for former holders of state organs and converts it into the general pension scheme, currently subscribed to by every employee. The law must be approved at the National Parliament (Tatoli Official News Agency, 2020). There is a political willingness underway to remove this lifetime pension, which is often excessive in the amount paid out to beneficiaries and not means tested.

#### 6.16. Elimination of the Pension to Beneficiaries of the Veterans.

The surviving relatives who are entitled to the pension of the late veterans should be discontinued and be moved to the UBI.

## 6.17. Disqualification of Pension Beneficiaries from Overseas.

Because Timor-Leste allows for multiple nationalities, there are many Timorese, including their descendants who are still entitled to pension payments from either Portugal, Australia, or other countries. This category of people should be disqualified from receiving UBI at the initial stage of the introduction of the UBI to ensure fair and equitable distribution of wealth to others.

# 6.18. Citizen Fund, a Model of Alaska.

[Figure 11] Map of Alaska.

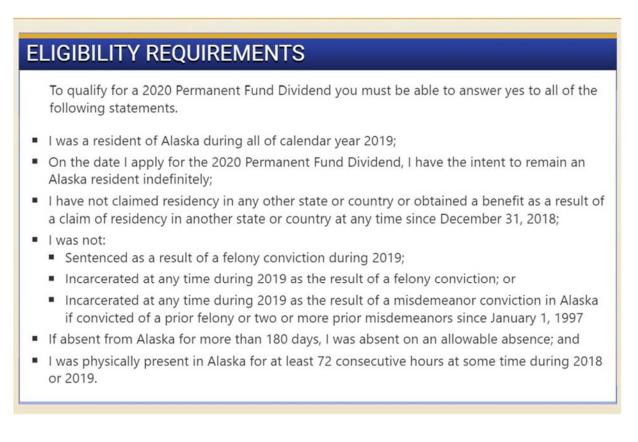


Alaska or The Last Frontier of the United States of America (USA) is located in the northwest extremity of the USA West Coast. Alaska, in the word of an Aleut word is called Aleyska, which means *great land* (State of Alaska, 2020b). Its capital called Juneau. The area encompasses 1.718 million km<sup>2</sup>. According to the 2010 census, its population was 710,231 (State of Alaska, 2010).

In 1976, Alaska set aside at least 25 percent of the revenue generated from oil into dedicated fund, the Permanent Fund. The primary purpose of the fund is to provide for all future generations of Alaska, maintain safety of principal whilst maximizing returns, use as savings to allow maximum use of disposable income from the fund. The fund is invested with the aim of making 5% yearly return (Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation, 2020).

The total value of the fund, as of April 30, 2020 is valued at around 63 billion with more than 45 billion in principal and 17 billion in earning reserve account. To entitle to the fund, resident of Alaska must satisfy the conditions listed below.

[Figure 12] Eligibility Requirements of Alaska Benefit Recipients.



# Source: (State of Alaska, 2020a)

The fund has made its yearly disbursement to every eligible recipient from 1982 when its

population was only 464,300 people until now. The lowest and highest payment ever made were

USD\$331.29 to USD\$2,072.00 respectively. Over 1 billion was paid out in 2018.

SUMMARY OF DIVIDEND APPLICATIONS & PAYMENTS						
Dividend Year	State Population	Applications Received	Applications Paid	Dividend Amount	Percent Change	Total Disbursed Amou
2018	736,239	670,759	639,247	\$1,600.00	45.5%	\$1,022,795,200.00
2017	737,847	670,706	633,005	\$1,100.00	7.6%	\$696,305,500.00
2016	739,828	674,939	638,178	\$1,022.00	-50.7%	\$652,217,916.00
2015	737,625	678,308	641,561	\$2,072.00	10.0%	\$1,329,314,392.00
2014	735,601	676,467	637,289	\$1,884.00	109.3%	\$1,200,652,476.00
2013	736,399	672,603	634,366	\$900.00	2.5%	\$570,929,400.00
2012	732,298	679,633	641,644	\$878.00	-25.2%	\$563,363,432.00
2011	722,190	677,888	644,959	\$1,174.00	-8.4%	\$757,181,866.00
2010	710,231	670,399	637,873	\$1,281.00	-1.8%	\$817,115,313.00
2009	692,314	660,29	624,888	\$1,305.00	-36.9%	\$815,478,840.00
2008	679,720	648,532	616,484	\$2,069.00	25.1%	\$1,275,505,396.00
2007	674,510	634,49	600,278	\$1,654.00	49.4%	\$992,859,812.00
2006	670,053	629,098	595,166	\$1,106.96	30.9%	\$658,824,955.36
2005	663,253	632,831	597,639	\$845.76	-8.1%	\$505,459,160.64
2004	656,834	631,229	599,992	\$919.84	-17.0%	\$551,896,641.28
2003	647,747	626,009	596,176	\$1,107.56	-28.1%	\$660,300,690.56
2002	640,544	621,257	590,031	\$1,540.76	-16.7%	\$909,096,163.56
2001	632,241	620,486	586,848	\$1,850.28	-5.8%	\$1,085,833,117.44
2000	627,533	619,063	583,633	\$1,963.86	11.0%	\$1,146,173,503.38
1999	622,000	592,779	573,324	\$1,769.84	14.9%	\$1,014,691,748.16
1998	617,082	585,222	565,657	\$1,540.88	18.9%	\$871,609,558.16
1997	609,655	575,27	555,289	\$1,296.54	14.7%	\$719,954,400.06
1996	605,212	566,061	546,651	\$1,130.68	14.2%	\$618,087,352.68
1995	601,581	564,702	542,397	\$990.30	0.7%	\$537,135,749.10
1994	600,622	559,84	535,178	\$983.90	3.6%	\$526,561,634.20
1993	596,906	550,705	528,399	\$949.46	3.7%	\$501,693,714.54
1992	586,722	544,017	523,099	\$915.84	-1.7%	\$479,074,988.16
1991	569,054	535.475	512,764	\$931.34	-2.2%	\$477,557,623.76
1990	553,171	533,876	498,447	\$952.63	9.1%	\$474,835,565.61
1989	538,900	526,511	508.71	\$873.16	5.6%	\$444,185,223.60
1988	535,000	537,279	519,724	\$826.93	16.8%	\$429,775,367.32
1987	541,300	553,32	530,594	\$708.19	27.3%	\$375,761,364.86
1986	550,700	543,858	533,315	\$556.26	37.7%	\$296,661,801.90
1985	543,900	526,976	519,413	\$404.00	22.0%	\$209,842,852.00
1984	524,000	494.15	482.135	\$331.29	-14.2%	\$159,726,504.15
1983	499,100	469,229	458,213	\$386.15	-61.4%	\$176,938,949.95
1982	464,300	487,841	470,897	\$1,000.00	02.170	\$470,897,000.00
Total		21,471,339	20,486,801	\$41,221.41		\$23,973,499,973.43

[Figure 12] Summary of Dividend Application and Payment.

Source: (State of Alaska, 2020c)

The Government of Timor-Leste should look at Alaska for a similar model of a citizen fund suitable for Timor-Leste.

#### 6.19. Administering Agency of the UBI of Timor-Leste.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity of Timor-Leste is presently the ministerial department in charge of arranging, organizing and making all social protection programs in the country. The future UBI should be centralized in this institution that has already amassed years of experience in benefit administration and payments.

# 6.20. A Unique Lifetime Identification Number for Each Citizen.

Timor-Leste presently has several identification cards, namely electoral identity card, driver's license, national identity card and passport. The government does not make it mandatory for employers, either public or private to consistently use a single identification number to identify each individual. Additionally, there is no governmental institution with centralized online system that can be utilized to crosscheck to record and detect benefit entitlements. Databases of governmental departments that hold records about every resident do not talk to each other electronically.

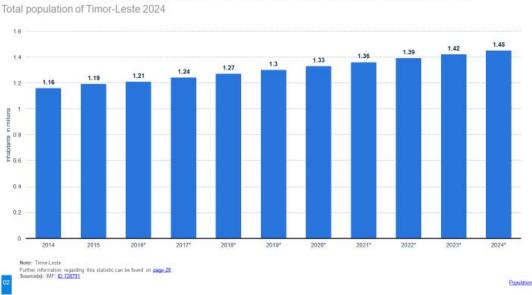
Therefore, it is imperative that a centralized online system be set up and that each Timorese citizen hold a lifetime identification number, which is only issued once and does not expire. The system will help identify each individual entitlement and avoid double payments. Ideally, this unique identifier is issued by, and centralized, at the Ministry of Finance.

This lifetime identification number, which is only issued once to an individual for lifetime will make it easy to ascertain eligibility, monitor entitlements and termination in case of nonentitlements or death. The existing practice of letting anyone presents either an electoral card or a driver's license or a national identity card or a passport will give rise to fraud and increase management cost.

# 6.21. Population Projection 2020 to 2024.

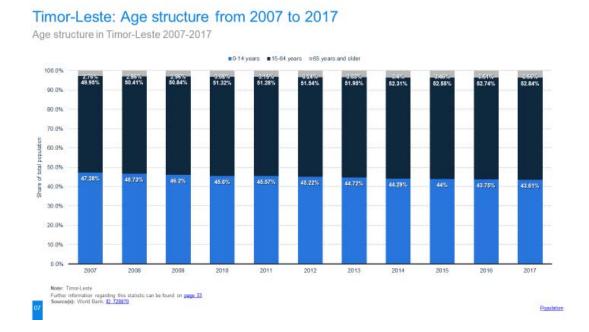
The population projection by STATISTA shows that year-on-year, there is an increase of approximately 30,000 people from 2020 up to 2024. From the total population projected to be 1.33 million in 2020, 56,39% is above the age of 15, which translates into 749,987 people.

[Figure 13] Graph of Timor-Leste Population Projection 2014 to 2024.



Timor-Leste: Total population from 2014 to 2024 (in million inhabitants)

Source: (Statista, 2019)



# [Figure 14] Graph of Timor-Leste Age Structure 2007 to 2017.

Source: (STATISTA, 2019)

# 6.22. Scenario of Amount of Payment for UBI for Timor-Leste.

6.22.1. Allocation of Social Protection Budgets to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Social Inclusion 2019.

The total budget allocated was USD\$48.879 million, but only USD\$39,181 million was intended for old age, disability pensions, mother's purse, and support to victims of natural disasters. [Figure 15] Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Social Inclusion 2019.

#### Alocação Orçamental por Programas:

	Tabela Sumário da lig Orç	ação de despesa amento por Prog			n. n.º 4	
	Programas	Bens e Serviços	Capital Menor	Capital Dezenvolvimento	Transferencia Públicas	Total Despesas
1	Ministério da Solidariedade Social e Inclusão	5,883	-	-	48,879	54,762
510	Boa Governação e Gestão Institucional	2,315	-	-	-	2,315
412	Implementação da Política de Género	-	-	-	-	
442	Combate ao HIV-SIDA de Timor-Leste	-	2	-	579	579
443	Promoção e Proteção dos Direitos da Criança	174	2	-	-	174
577	Sistema integrado de proteção social	848	2	-	39,181	40,029
580	Assistência Social	1,768	-	-	7,730	9,498
581	Reinserção e Inclusão Comunitária	778	-	-	1,389	2,166

Source: (Ministry of Finance of Timor-Leste, 2019b)

6.22.2. Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Ministry of Combatants of National Liberation 2019.

There were USD\$95,500 million allocated to the Ministry of Combatants of National Liberation to pay for the veterans of the national liberation and their families.

[Figure 16] Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Ministry of Combatants of National Liberation 2019.

# Alocação Orçamental por Programas:

Tabela Sumário da	a ligação de desp Orçamento por P			vro n. n.º 4	
Programas	Bens e Serviços	Capital Menor	Capital Dezenvolvimento	Transferencia Públicas	Total Despesas
Ministério Para os Assuntos dos Combatentes da Libertação Nacional	4,111	722	1,235	95,500	101,567
510 Boa Governação e Gestão Institucional	542			2.5	542
412 Implementação da Política de Género		-	-	-	
579 Reconhecimento e glorificação da libertação	3,568	722	1,235	95,500	101,025

Source: (Ministry of Finance of Timor-Leste, 2019b)

6.22.3. Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Whole of Government 2019.

The budget allocated to pay for the former holders of state organs was USD\$133,665 million in 2019.

[Figure 17] Allocation of Social Protection Budget to the Whole of Government 2019.

#### Orçamento

As Dotações para Todo o Governo têm um Orçamento de 189,071 milhões de dólares para 2019. Orçamento Fontes Combinadas

	2018 Orçamento	2019 Orçamento	2020 Projeção	2021 Projeção	2022 Projeção	2023 Projeção
Orçamento Geral do Estado	207,198	189,071	205,601	213,825	222,377	231,273
Recorrentes	206,958	189,051	205,580	213,803	222,355	231,250
Salários e Vencimentos	-	-			-	
Bens e Serviços	78,845	55,387	66,569	69,231	72,001	74,881
Transferências Públicas	128,113	133,665	139,011	144,572	150,355	156,369
Capital	240	20	21	22	22	23
Capital Minor	240	20	21	22	22	23
Capital Desenvolvimento		-			-	-
Fundos Confirmados de Outros do Fontes						
Recorrentes						-
Capital						
Fontes Combinadas do Orçamento	207,198	189,071	205,601	213,825	222,377	231,273
Recorrentes	206,958	189,051	205,580	213,803	222,355	231,250
Capital	240	20	21	22	22	23

Dotações para todo o Governo (\$'000)

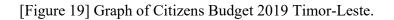
Source: (Ministry of Finance of Timor-Leste, 2019b)

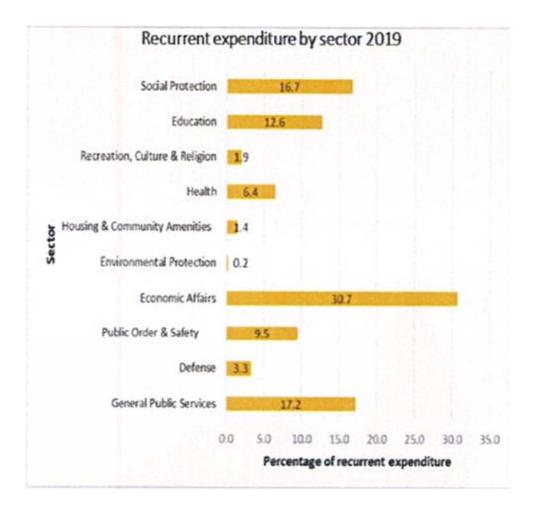
[Figure 18] Total Allocation of Social Protection Budget 2019.

<b>Total Allocation of Protection Budget for 2019 in USD\$</b>				
Ministry of Social Solidarity	39 181 000,00			
Ministry of Combatants of National Liberation	95 500 000,00			
Whole of Government Budget	133 665 000,00			
Total	268 346 000,00			

The final figure was a little bit higher than the summary provided for by the Ministry of Finance, in which the total allocation for the social protection program was around USD\$248 million. The slight difference was due to the fact that the budgets for the Ministry of Combatants

of National Liberation and the Whole of Government Budget contained budget provisioned for activities related to the social protection, not necessarily for direct transfer transfers.





Source: (Ministry of Finance, 2019)

The recurrent expenditure for social protection program for Timor-Leste in 2019 provided for a total of 16.1% from the total budget of USD\$ 1.482 billion. Thus, the government spend annually around USD\$248 million on social protection programs. Should the government opt for a UBI using the aforesaid amount for social protection program to a roughly 1.2 million population of Timor-Leste, each citizen will get around USD\$206 per year with a monthly receipt of about USD\$17. Moreover, if payment is only provided to eligible adults over the age of 15, which is 749,987 people, each person will receive USD\$ 330,67 per year. Each will receive USD\$ 27,56 per month. The amount of benefit payment will increase if further restrictions are imposed and means tests are introduced.

The current minimum wage in Timor-Leste for a month is USD\$115 as per the labor code 2011. Therefore, for one year, a working Timorese receives USD\$1,380.

It is worth to note that in Alaska, in 2018, from the population of 736,239 people with eligible payments to only 639,247 people, each received a yearly payment of USD\$1,600, equivalent of USD\$133.33 per month. Alaska was able to afford the payment because it was capable of making sound and prudent investments of its natural resources revenues.

A recent Covid-19 pandemic, which has also affected Timor-Leste and residents were also confined to their homes and impacted their livelihoods. To help alleviate the plight of its citizen the Government has approved a total amount of USD\$75,347,800 to be paid to 326,739 eligible households who earned less than USD\$500 a month. Each household is to receive a one-off USD\$200.00. This has further demonstrated that in times of need, the Government of Timor-Leste is willing to extend a helping hand to its citizen through cash transfer.

The above illustration indicates that it is possible for the Government of Timor-Leste to introduce the UBI, but efforts must be made to increase revenues, establish a working economy, tap into all the potential natural resources, including its vast sea resources, tourism and agriculture and set up a UBI fund separate from the Petroleum Fund, with the sole purpose of providing citizens UBI payment in the future.

## 7. Conclusions.

Efforts to reduce poverty worldwide have not been that successful with billions of people are still living under extreme poverty. Moreover, data from the pilot projects of UBI indicated overall positive impacts on the beneficiaries, contrary to common belief that cash transfers make people lazy and not want to be employed. With regard to the situation in Timor-Leste, the existing social protection programs in Timor-Leste with no means test are strong indications that at the political level there exist opportunities for a wider coverage of a universal cash transfer to its citizens should the opportunity present itself.

Timor-Leste spent around USD\$248 million on social protection programs in 2019, but many are still unemployed and live in abject poverty. This significant expenditure amount on social protection programs does not seem to meet its goals to touch the weaker layers of society, where poverty is still at around 42% nationally or leakages occur, and policies were not thoroughly researched and studied upon prior to implementation.

#### 8. Recommendations.

The Government of Timor-Leste should look into the model of UBI implemented in Alaska given that Alaska has somewhat the same characteristics with Timor-Leste, namely small size of population, heavy dependence on oil revenue, large chunks of areas surrounded by seas with the potential to harvest sea resources to supplement the government's revenue as the case of Timor-Leste.

Furthermore, Alaska should provide avenue for Timor-Leste whereby Timor-Leste can learn best practice and seek for adjustments for the case of Timor-Leste to gradually establish and eventually introduce the UBI for Timor-Leste in the long run.

All it takes for Timor-Leste is for its political leader to establish a separate fund for UBI along with the existing Petroleum Fund, which was established in 2005. The current Petroleum Fund is being used to fund all government expenditures, including the social protection programs.

A UBI should be discussed and disseminated to increase its awareness among stakeholders in Timor-Leste, taking the successful implementation of the cash transfer to all eligible citizens in Alaska as an example.

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