Founded in 1945, CARE works in over 100 countries to save lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice. We have been working in Timor-Leste since 1994, and education is a core part of our programing. The Lafaek Learning Media project is central to this work. The first Lafaek magazines were published in 2001, and CARE now publishes four Lafaek magazines, with community magazine Lafaek ba Komunidade reaching more than half of the country’s households. It is the first Tetum language publication with a national reach and provides a powerful educational resource for children, teachers and adults.

**Lafaek Learning Media**

The Lafaek Learning Media project puts local language, age-appropriate learning materials into the hands of children, parents, caregivers and teachers in schools and households across Timor-Leste, with over 1 million magazines currently distributed nationwide each year and more than 6.5 million magazines distributed between 2007 and 2020.

Supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, CARE International in Timor-Leste supports Timor-Leste’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) to promote the development of the education sector, improve children’s learning outcomes and strengthen families’ social and economic wellbeing through Lafaek Learning Media.

The four Lafaek magazines are the only reading materials that reach all schools, students and communities in the most rural and disadvantaged areas, and have become an important supplementary learning material for students, teachers, and communities across the country. Developed in collaboration with the MOEYS, the Lafaek magazines align with the national curriculum and focus on improving literacy, numeracy and critical thinking; disability inclusion and girls’ leadership; teaching methodologies; and household practices in agriculture, health, nutrition, inclusion and more.

Three editions of each of the four magazines are published each year, and content is now available on Lafaek’s official website (www.laфаek.tl) and Lafaek Facebook page.

**Lafaek Ki’ik**
Reaches 109,000+ Grades 1-2 pre and primary school students with content to encourage reading

**Lafaek Prima**
Reaches 135,000+ Grades 3-6 primary school students with content to encourage reading

**Lafaek Ba Manorin**
Reaches 12,000+ pre and primary school teachers with best practice advice and inspiration

**Lafaek Ba Komunidade**
Reaches 103,000+ households—half of Timor-Leste’s households—with information on childcare, health, economic development, gender equality and more
WHY LAFAEK?

Two-thirds of Timor-Leste’s population live on less than $1.90 a day. Education is the best chance to break the cycle of poverty – but many children miss out.

From 1975 to 1999, conflict drove 4 out of 5 teachers from the country. Teachers with limited qualifications filled the gap. Rote learning is the norm, reducing children’s engagement. No teaching resources in Tetum language until 1999 greatly disadvantaged rural children.

Timor-Leste has made great gains in education since Independence in 2002, however low literacy and numeracy and high repetition rates remain a reality for many Timorese. 30% of men and almost 40% of women over the age of 15 are illiterate.

LAFAEK’S DESIGN

The Lafaek project was designed to respond to the limited availability of local language, age-appropriate learning materials for children in schools and households of Timor-Leste, and to enable parents to have access to relevant and appropriate information on child rights, childcare, gender equity, health, economic development, environmental care, and participation in local governance.

The Lafaek project is implemented by CARE as part of its long-term programming focused on women and girls in rural and disadvantaged areas, seeking to improve their wellbeing, elevate their voice and address the underlying causes of poverty.

THE LAFAEK JOURNEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Referendum for Timor-Leste’s independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Lafaek ba Labarik magazine published (G5-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Timor-Leste regains full sovereignty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Introduction of the first national curriculum, Lafaek Klik (PS, G1-2) and Lafaek teachers magazine first published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Lafaek Prima (G3-4) first published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Lafaek community magazine first published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Lafaek Facebook launches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROJECT EVALUATION

An evaluation of the Lafaek Learning Media was carried out in 2021 to understand the impact of the Lafaek learning materials on schools, students, teachers, and households. The findings will contribute to the future direction of ongoing Lafaek Learning Media activities and serve as a stepping-stone for future analyses of its impact.

The primary goal of this study was to attribute impact. We wanted to find out how Lafaek use or exposure to Lafaek impacts literacy, teaching practices, health, hygiene, nutrition, and other outcomes of interest.

Six instruments were used to gather and analyse data:

1. The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) was used to assess the literacy outcomes of students in Grades 2, 3 and 4
2. A classroom observation to identify the teaching practices of second grade teachers
3. A school survey to assess school resources, teacher and student enrolment and attendance
4. A household survey which provides data on household composition, savings and loan information, student attendance, gender and power dynamics and health and nutrition knowledge
5. Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with parents, youth, teachers, and school directors/ coordinators and interviews with selected external stakeholders
6. A Lafaek Facebook user survey to capture information from urban populations and assess the potential of the digital content

STUDY AIMS

→ Assess the results, trends, and impact of Lafaek magazines for students, teachers, parents, and the broader community including unexpected or unplanned impacts.

→ Assess the extent to which Lafaek remains relevant to the educational context of Timor-Leste.

→ Evaluate constraints, challenges and issues affecting progress and provide recommendations to address these.

→ Assess the mainstreaming of cross cutting issues including gender equality and women’s empowerment, disability inclusion, and environmental management.

→ Further inform the Lafaek business plan and results measurements table (2019-2022) to orient strategies and activities towards the sustainability of results in the project.
KEY FINDINGS:
Educational Outcomes

The study analysed exposure, inclusivity, social media, literacy, mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on learning and improved teacher knowledge and practices. The following are some of the key findings:

1. **Lafaek** is the main, and often only, reading material available to students and households. It is also often the only Tetum language material available.

2. In households with reading materials for their children, 89% relied completely on Lafaek.

3. Nearly all teachers and students report using Lafaek in the classroom and 78% also read it at home.

4. Overall literacy scores were strongly and positively linked to a student having read Lafaek, or being able to recall word games or stories from the magazine (an indicator of past engagement with Lafaek).

5. Households are primarily using Lafaek to help their children learn generally (69%), learn to read or count (32%), or read stories (22%).

6. Access to Lafaek is relatively equal, with slightly more girls reporting reading it and 82% of students with a disability reading it, compared with 89% of students without a disability.

7. Lafaek was the most commonly used study material during COVID-19 school closures, used by 68% of survey students. Students who used Lafaek to study while schools were shut down showed a 5% increase in overall literacy scores compared to students who used other materials.

8. Almost all teachers surveyed used the Lafaek magazines for teachers. 94% of 185 grade two teachers surveyed indicated that they use the Lafaek Teacher’s magazine.

9. Lafaek ranked as one of the most important tools teachers report having access to. More than half of all teachers report using the magazine to learn how to teach reading, Tetum, and mathematics.

One of the biggest challenges to inclusivity is language barriers:

- Nearly half (42.4%) of all respondents who receive the community magazine reported challenges to reading the magazine at the household level

- Primary challenges are that a member (or members) of the household can’t speak Tetum (17.9%), the Tetum being used is too difficult (5.8%), or the entire household is illiterate (12.8%)

- These results are in line with the 2015 Timor-Leste population census that found 34.5% of households are illiterate or not attending schools.

While these challenges are important to note, they are already well documented among the Lafaek team, who have taken proactive measures to help mitigate these challenges. For example, during magazine distribution, students are encouraged to read the magazines to their illiterate parent.
One of the most positive aspects of the Lafaek program is that it provides opportunities for households to learn and engage with one another in a variety of ways including health, nutrition, hygiene and economic outcomes. Another positive aspect that emerged from the qualitative data is that Lafaek has helped to support bringing parents and children together. The following are some of the key findings:

1. Using Lafaek to learn about health and hygiene was a strong predictor of a caregiver’s knowledge related to maternal healthcare practices.

2. Caregivers who reported using Lafaek to learn about health and hygiene are predicted to be able to identify an additional 2.6 maternal health practices relative to caregivers who do not.

3. Households where the parents read the Lafaek magazine were 13% more likely to have savings compared to those who did not.

4. Families that reported receiving the community magazine were 13% more likely to have a handwashing station in their home while those that use Lafaek to learn about health and hygiene are 16% more likely to have a handwashing station in their home.

5. Parents who use Lafaek specifically to learn about health and hygiene and those who report playing games related to health and hygiene are both predicted to know one more COVID-19 prevention strategy and utilise one additional COVID-19 prevention behaviour.

The study looked at patterns of use of Lafaek Learning Media and their impact on participation of men and women in household decision making and attitudes toward domestic violence. The following are some of the key findings:

1. In the qualitative data set, there are many instances of both men and women affirming beliefs about the equality of men and women.

2. There was a broad recognition that men should play an equal role in helping with household duties and chores and that women are just as capable of working outside the home and participating equally in household decisions.

My husband is very stubborn, and so one day I brought the LAFAEK MAGAZINE to read about what to do so that the family can be healthy and helping each other in the household, and so I gave it to him to read... This I give to him so that he can understand a little already and make his brain have a little more understanding.

— Mothers FGD, Lautem
The study examined the impact of the Lafaek project on social cohesion and nation-building. The following are some of the key findings:

1. As the only Tetum language reading material for many of students, teachers, and households in Timor-Leste, the Lafaek program has helped to develop a common set of messages, stories, and characters that are shared among nearly every school aged child and many households in the country.

2. The student magazine has a larger reach among students than any other source of media, particularly among rural students.

3. The impact of Lafaek in terms of providing a shared narrative and common set of narrative tools is likely to be substantial in terms of nation-building and creating a sense of social cohesion and unification.

From its inception, Lafaek was designed to facilitate the transition between Tetum and the then language of instruction, Portuguese. The study explored the impact of Lafaek on facilitating this transition. The following are some of the key findings:

1. Lafaek provided access to a reading material in a language students could understand, as well as to content in natural and social sciences and guidance on classroom practices in Tetum.

2. The Lafaek team contributed to the development of the new curriculum as well as to the multilingual education policy, and to the design and implementation of the Multilingual Education Pilot Project.

3. The Lafaek program has also contributed to nation building efforts by providing a set of common messages, stories, and characters that are shared among nearly every school aged child and many households in the country.

The study looked at the strength of the Lafaek project's long-term sustainability.

1. CARE is making great strides toward long-term sustainability and has successfully implemented a sponsorship strategy. By 2024, the Lafaek project is projected to raise 30%-40% of its annual costs through sponsorship.

2. The Lafaek Facebook page is currently the fourth most visited page in Timor-Leste and has more than 140,000 followers and its posts are seen by more than 18,400 people on average.

3. Respondents visited the Lafaek Facebook frequently, with 44% visiting every day and 36% visiting weekly. 81% of respondents described the information received as excellent or above average, and 89% would recommend it to friends and family.

4. CARE is currently pursuing promising strategies to reach more people, broaden their impact, and recruit additional sponsors by continuing to expand its digital presence.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand efforts to make content available in additional languages, including cost-effective print alternatives like digital content.

2. Offer additional guidance to teachers and parents on how to encourage students to engage with the magazine in personal ways.

3. Try distributing Lafaek Komunidade to Preschool and Grade 1 students in remote locations.

4. Expand and emphasise content on effective classroom management techniques.

5. Support teachers in understanding the link between classroom management, lesson planning, and an active classroom.

6. Focus the content of Lafaek Manorin to include more discrete lessons plans that utilize low-cost, readily accessible materials.

7. Continue to lobby the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) to include the Lafaek Program in their annual budget and continue to monitor their progress toward a new budget.

8. Encourage the MoEYS to advocate to other education development partners to use Lafaek as a vehicle for delivering their content.

9. Continue investing in expanding Lafaek’s reach through digital content.

10. Invest in increasing the capacity of the Lafaek Team to monitor and respond to online trends.

11. Make it easy for potential sponsors to integrate their timelines into the publishing schedule of Lafaek.