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### Citizens of Timor Leste now facing new crisis of malnutrition

By Nurfadhillia Kamarul | Posted: 28 July 2010 2225 hrs

TIMOR LESTE: Four years after social unrest swept through Timor Leste, the people are now facing a new crisis - malnutrition.

And non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well the government are stepping up efforts to curb this problem.

It is estimated that more than 40 per cent of children under the age of six in Timor Leste suffer from chronic malnutrition.

As part of current efforts, the government hopes to distribute 50,000 packets of rice to the poor this year.

Last year, more than 100,000 packets of rice were given out to poor families in Timor Leste.

And more NGOs are carrying out nutritional food programmes for children under the age of six.

For instance, the Agape Kindergarten provides students with milk, fresh food and Vitamin C under its nutrition programme.

The kindergarten was opened in 2003 by Agape Foundation, an NGO from the Philippines and a partner of the Singapore International Foundation, with the aim of improving the educational needs of young children in rural Fatumasi.

Wennie Fernandez, director, Agape Kindergarten - Fatumasi, said: "The first day I asked them to come and bring food or snacks, only two girls brought their snacks. One brought bread and the other brought a hard-boiled egg. And the rest just brought water.

"When I saw the bottle of water, it was not clear water....it was not portable water. And our heart was broken, we almost cried. 80 per cent of the children here are malnourished." - CNA/ms



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