Many children spend years in primary schools in Timor-Leste without learning to read, according to a recent World Bank report *Timor-Leste: An Analysis of Early Grade Reading Acquisition*. The conclusion of the Early Grade Reading Assessment found that most 1st and 2nd grade students were unable to read a single word of randomly selected simple text in either of the country’s official languages, Portuguese or Tetun.

Inspired by this fact and evidence that the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills are best learned in the mother tongue, The Asia Foundation and its local partner, the Alola Foundation have proposed a pilot project - *Teaching Children to Read*. As a complement to to the government’s recent Mother Tongue Based Education (MTBE) policy, *Teaching Children to Read* seeks to improve early grade reading by producing a set of authentically Timorese series of basic early literacy booklets to be used by teachers and children in their mother tongues in three pilot districts.

Together, The Asia Foundation and the Alola Foundation will equip teachers with essential tools to facilitate reading instruction for children by developing early literacy and visual aid tools for teachers to use in the classroom. These tools will include a set of guidebooks for teaching basic literacy, along with a variety of visually stimulating aids, including posters and flashcards to be used by teachers in all the participating schools in the pilot program and will be easily replicated for a national roll-out of trainings for teachers.

Moreover, The Asia Foundation and the Alola Foundation will also reach out to students’ parents to familiarize them with the importance of continued education and academic nurturing at home. The program will foster a community-wide approach to nurture children’s learning both inside and outside the classroom through socialization, information sessions, and workshops and trainings for parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders to introduce them to *Teaching Children to Read* and the MTBE National Policy.

In addition, The Asia Foundation and the Alola Foundation will communicate regularly with the Ministry of Education in Timor-Leste to ensure buy-in from Timorese authorities both at the national and district level. Local ownership by government and educators is key for making the program sustainable, and The Asia Foundation will use its considerable experience in coordinating with the Government of Timor-Leste to maintain open channels through regular meetings and updates throughout the program.