Introduction
Children in Timor-Leste are born close to what the WHO considers as normal, healthy weight & height, but this deteriorates rapidly over the first 2 years of life.

This study uses the 2013 Food & Nutrition Survey & other data sources to investigate why we see this deterioration, & considers the role that agricultural production, livelihoods & household preferences for particular foods can have on the nutritional status of children.

Findings: what helps & what impedes?
Preferences
Households prioritise obtaining sufficient calories from staples:
► Once minimum energy needs (calories) are satisfied, variety can increase.

Money & livelihoods
Higher income = greater variety of foods consumed:
► Consumption of meat/fish, fruits & vegetables is highly responsive to increased income.
How the income is earned matters:
► Income earned through selling crops / coffee & wage employment = more food consumed.

Access to foods
Distance to markets & lack of availability of a variety of food (own-production or purchased) are impeding factors.

Agricultural production
Households eat what they grow & grow what they eat.
► There is little incentive to change agricultural practices in the midst of limited tools, productive labour, water supply & access to markets.

Information
Information per se is not the issue:
► Many households have received nutritional advice, but implementing the advice is difficult due to lack of money, access & practical / achievable solutions.

Water & sanitation
Good nutritional practices may be easily undone through poor water & sanitation.

Program implications
Health & nutrition messages
► Targeted & achievable messages.
► Transition to solids may be a critical phase.

Agriculture, livelihoods & markets
A focus on increasing incomes & access to markets is likely to lead to improved nutritional diversity.