



Volume twenty December 2015

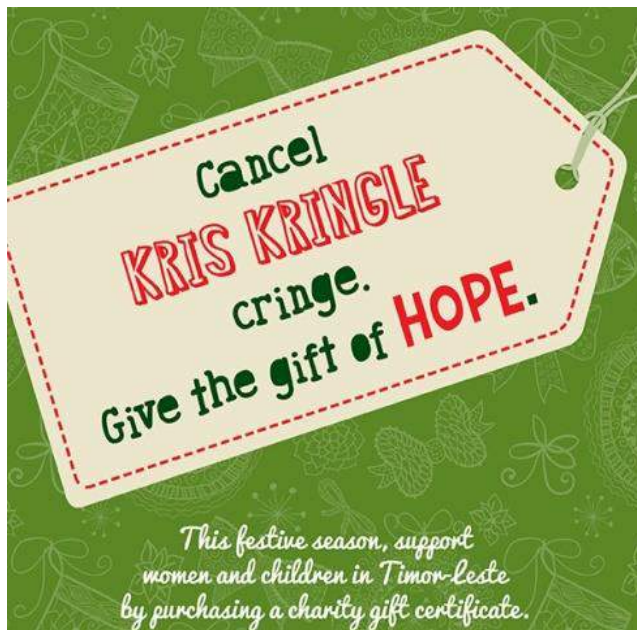
Through the stories in this end of year edition of the Alola Australia newsletter we are reminded of Alola's powerful advocacy for children, women and the nation of Timor-Leste. Alola continues to speak and act in support of women having a voice in their communities and their country, improving education, children learning to read in their mother tongue and the people and nation of Timor-Leste enjoying their economic independence. Advocacy is at the heart of everything that Alola does. We are excited to hear from Helen again who is busy making friends and sharing the story of Alola and Timor-Leste in a very wintry London.

We hope you enjoy this edition, summer and shopping with our wonderful gift certificates - supporting the work of Alola in Timor-Leste.

Give the gift of hope this Christmas

Bernadette Garcia and Alola Australia production team

Alola Australia is taking festive fundraising to a new level with the addition of our latest Christmas Gift Certificate.



Advocacy certificate

The **Advocacy certificate** costs \$50 and will help Fundasaun Alola's Women's Resource Centre to campaign for women's rights in Timor-Leste, both within local communities and with key decision-makers. This includes continuing to deliver a leadership training program with women, as well as awareness-raising activities, and creating submissions for issues that affect women most, including gender-based violence and human-trafficking.

Our suite of certificates ranges from \$10 (the perfect stocking-filler) to \$75 (a special gift for the person who has everything).

Maternity pack certificate

For \$25 your gift will support Alola's maternal and child health program to provide breast-feeding information and counselling, infant and young child feeding education, maternity packs, and research on maternal mortality in Timor-Leste.

Livelihood certificate

For \$50 your gift will give a Timorese woman the opportunity of economic independence, to support her family and contribute to the development of her community and country. Money raised through livelihood gift certificates will provide tools, materials and support to enable women to participate in the fair trade textiles market.

Education certificate

For \$75 your gift will provide a 12-month scholarship to a young Timorese student. The Alola Scholarship Program addresses some of the economic and cultural barriers preventing students in Timor-Leste from completing their education – particularly girls and those in rural areas.

Reader certificates

For \$10 your gift will provide a pack of eight Tetun readers to a school in Timor-Leste.

This year there are two varieties of the Reader certificate. One is perfect for all those Kris Kringle Gift opportunities and the other perfect for children to give or receive.

All proceeds will support Fundasaun Alola's development programs.

This is our last fundraiser for 2015 and we are appealing to all our supporters to help bring some Christmas cheer to the women and children in Timor-Leste.

Click [here](#) to purchase.

PS – Sharing is caring! Can you help us to spread the word? Click [here](#) to download a poster to help promote our Christmas campaign.

New books for a new nation

Kirsty Sword Gusmão

As well as being the Chair of Fundasaun Alola in Timor-Leste, I am the Goodwill Ambassador for Education. As a teacher by training, I am acutely aware of some of the challenges that the country faces in making quality education available to all citizens of Timor-Leste. In addition to inadequate infrastructure, long distances from home to school for many children, economic pressures on families and low levels of teacher education, language of instruction also serves as a barrier to children's learning.

In its haste to reopen schools, Timor-Leste undertook to recruit teachers from amongst the most educated members of the community, many of whom had received little or no prior teacher training.

A recent school survey, published by the World Bank, pointed out that there continue to be significant challenges, including the access gap between rural and urban areas, limited contact hours linked to insufficient numbers of classrooms, high rates of grade repetition and teacher absenteeism.

Working to develop the capacity of teachers through training, and ensuring they are appropriately resourced in the classroom, is a priority for the government of Timor-Leste. A Decree Law mandating the roll-out of a new primary curriculum

was approved by the Council of Ministers in early 2015. The new curriculum will promote advances through five main aspects:

- (1) child-centered methodology, which ensures the implementation of participative teaching methods;
- (2) curriculum content relevant to the reality of the majority of children, reflecting the national and local culture;
- (3) the teaching of literacy and numeracy using the official language most spoken in Timor-Leste (Tetun);
- (4) gradual teaching of Portuguese from first grade onwards, ensuring that all children will be able to read and write in Portuguese by the end of the first cycle (grade 4); and
- (5) increase the number of daily teaching hours.

In support of the new curriculum, I have had the pleasure of working with the Ministry of Education over the past year to develop a large selection of books and other teaching resources in the language familiar to the vast majority of early learners, i.e. Tetun. In addition, the first ever grammar of the Tetun language written for children has been developed. I believe that children's ability to learn and understand the structure and complexities of their own language will radically improve their ability to acquire additional languages, including Portuguese. Given that Tetun is not widely used in some of the more remote communities across Timor-Leste, it is my hope that in future all children will be able to acquire their initial literacy in the language of the home. Not only will this contribute to better learning outcomes for all children, regardless of socio-linguistic background, but it will also mean that Timor-Leste's some 16 local languages continue in use and are not lost to future generations.

Some of the books I have worked on with the Ministry of Education include biographies of resistance heroes and stories from the Independence struggle. Others touch on themes of relevance to children's lives today, including family violence, gender equality, integration of children with disabilities and cultural diversity. They include a beautiful atlas and the first book in Tetun on the solar system.



One book I wrote is a Grade 4-level story called *Sara's Struggle* (or *Sara Nia Luta* in Tetun). It touches on the sensitive but sadly very relevant issue of family violence. It follows the story of a young girl, Sara, and her experience of verbal and emotional violence at home. The story and her troubled relationship with her older brother take a surprising and happy twist at the end. Below is a short extract (in English translation) from the story, along with a small selection of the illustrations done

by talented artists Hipólito da Cruz and Ester da Costa Correia.

Recent cuts to the education budget mean that many of these books may not make it into the hands of East Timorese students without external funding. The Ministry of Education has requested the assistance of the National Employment and Education Foundation (NEEF) to assist with securing the financial and technical resources required to put priority texts in East Timorese classrooms in the years to come.

New Books for a New Nation is an exciting and vital initiative which will ensure that Timor-Leste's new Grade 1-6 curriculum succeeds in making learning relevant and enjoyable for children in Timor-Leste.

Visit our [facebook page](#) and find out how you can contribute to improving learning outcomes for the children of Timor-Leste through the *New Books for a New Nation* initiative!

English translation excerpt from ***Sara's Struggle*** by Kirsty Sword Gusmão:

A cool breeze began to blow from the mountains, making Sara shiver a little. From inside the house, she could hear Father talking loudly, arguing with Brother Atoi and Mother Cisca. A short time later, from inside the house she could hear somebody throwing one two ... three plates. Sara shivered again, with fear this time, and hugged her



dog's head even tighter. As usual, she chose to share how she was feeling, her fear and suffering, with this great friend, an animal but with ears that listened and a heart that gave love and sympathy. Even better than that, her dog did not argue with her and didn't use words to injure her heart like Brother Atoi and Mother Cisca did. "Lately Atoi does nothing but argue with Father and it scares me to death, I find it hard to sleep at night," said Sara to her dog. Hungry and now sleepy, too, Sara soon fell asleep under the tree. Late at night she woke and made her way inside the house as quietly and carefully as she could.



Time to draw the line - justice in the Timor Sea

Sunita Varlamos

Alola Australia co-hosted with The Friends of Baucau and the Centre for Global Research (RMIT) a fascinating talk and discussion on the issues and need to find an acceptable solution on the maritime boundary between Australia and Timor-Leste. A full auditorium braved a cold Melbourne night to hear a compelling case presented by Janelle Saffin, former Federal Parliamentarian and now advisor to the Government of Timor-Leste. Others represented at the talk included Rae Kingsbury, the Honorary Counsel to Victoria for Timor-Leste, Susan Costello, Director of Global and Urban Social Studies and Chris Dureau, representing the Friends of Baucau. Many friends and Board members of Alola Australia were also present.

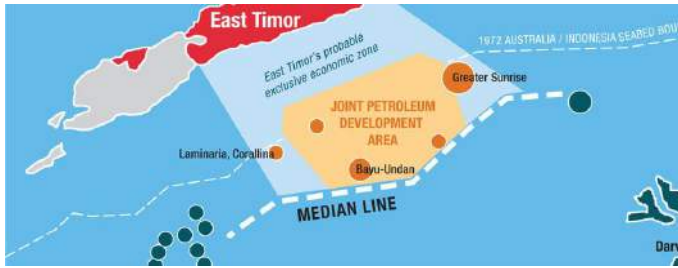
Janelle Saffin was introduced as a 'fearless fighter for justice'. As Advisor and friend to Timor-Leste over many years, Janelle has gained unique insights into the legal and historical issues on the maritime boundary between Australia and Timor-Leste.

Janelle presented an overview of the history of controversy and tension between Australia and Timor-Leste and calls over many decades for re-negotiation of the Timor Sea Treaty. Janelle explained how Australia has succeeded in short-changing the Timorese of billions of dollars' worth of oil and gas royalties. Australia has honored the widely accepted means of determining sea boundaries with all other neighbors using the 'median line'. However, with Timor-Leste it has remained steadfast in its position of using a different form of defining the sea boundary that is advantageous to Australia, namely the '1972 Australia/Indonesia Seabed Boundary'. In this way, successive Australian governments have failed in their duty to our neighbors and denied a valuable resource that could significantly lift the revenue and prosperity for Timor-Leste.

Following Janelle's presentation, we formed small groups to discuss the question *what can we do as concerned citizens to bring about a favorable legal outcome for Timor-Leste?* We shared our thoughts, ideas for action and then brought this back to the wider group for discussion. We grappled with questions such as how to bring wider public and political attention to the issues and what role advocacy may have. We explored the importance of political will, the power of corporates to affect change and the current networks that can be called upon for support. There were many very valuable suggestions, some of which are outlined below:

- Join the Timor Sea Justice Campaign: <http://www.timorseajustice.com/TSJC/introduction>

- Join the Alola Australia mailing list so we can keep the conversation going and share information about the issues and opportunities to make a difference: friends@alola.org.au



I am sure there were others at the talk like me who came without knowing a great deal about the issues. However, we left feeling informed and a keen sense of outrage at the actions of successive Australian governments against our neighbor. Importantly we also left with a drive to contribute and extend the voice of the Timorese to claim a fair resolution and gain justice in the Timor Sea. I hope you will join us in this quest.

Timor Sea justice campaign – a fair go for Timor-Leste *Maria Bohan*

Mica Barreto from Timor-Leste is currently in Australia studying for her PhD. She spoke recently at the 'time to draw the line' gathering in Melbourne that urged justice for Timor-Leste in relation to the maritime boundaries between Australia and Timor-Leste. Just revenues from the oil and gas reserves are needed by the people of Timor to support their nation building and the services the people urgently need. It is important that the Australian government and the Timor-Leste government negotiate permanent maritime boundaries. Until there is resolution of this issue the Australian government must place revenue taken from the oil and gas fields in a Trust. When the dispute has been resolved the profits can be distributed accordingly.



Concerned Melbournians including Mica Baretto and Fivo Freitas

From the Board

Maria Bohan Chair Alola Australia

Summer hello to all Alola supporters.

Thanks for reading our last newsletter for 2015.

Alola Australia's Board has worked hard in 2015 and I can report to you that we are hopefully on track with our fundraising target so we can best support Fundasaun Alola. Our support base has also grown.

In November, the Board had a planning workshop so we are ready to hit the ground running in 2016 with all our eyes on enhancing our support for the women and children in Timor-Leste.

We were thrilled that Kirsty Sword Gusmão attended this planning workshop and we thank Kirsty for her insights and on-going support.



Just after our planning workshop Alzira Reis, CEO at Fundasaun Alola, arrived in Melbourne. Alzira was here to meet with the Alola Australia Board and other partners and supporters and also to help us promote our Christmas Gift Certificates. This newsletter has more news of Alzira's visit.

Alzira Reis and Maria Bohan

This newsletter will reach you just before the Christmas – New Year Season. On behalf of the Board I send you, your families and friends, much peace and hope for this special time of the year. And I know you will join with me in sending our warmest Christmas wishes to our friends at Fundasaun Alola - to Kirsty and the Board and to Alzira, the staff and the many volunteers. May all the women and children in Timor-Leste have a peaceful, safe Christmas time.

Thank for your great support in 2015 . . . the women and children of Timor-Leste need you again in 2016.

Strong Women Strong Nation!

Connecting with friends – a visit from Alzira Reis CEO Fundasaun Alola

The Alola Australia Board welcomed the CEO of Fundasaun Alola, Alzira Reis, to Melbourne in late November. The visit was an opportunity to hear more about Alola's work in Timor-Leste and to plan together how Alola Australia can best support and contribute to the work.

Alzira was very busy while she was here. She promoted Alola's Christmas gift certificate campaign. The message is very clear - this Christmas, you can give the gift of hope to families in Timor-Leste by purchasing Alola Christmas Certificates for your family and friends.

While in Melbourne Alzira also met with many organizations and individuals working to support Timor-Leste as well as members of the Timorese community including ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), IWDA (International Women's Development Agency), Caritas Australia and WOW Australia, (Women of the World Australia). She was also able to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Timorese Declaration of Independence at the AETA (Australia East Timor Association) dinner and celebrated with the Timorese Community when one of their members was ordained to the priesthood.

Alzira visited Geelong where she met with many supporters of Timor-Leste including Friends of Viqueque, the Friendship Schools Network, the City of Greater Geelong and the Geelong branch of the Australian East Timor Association.

Alzira had a moment to reflect on her visit and sent us this message from Dili.

*"The recent visit was delightful and fruitful because I enjoyed the opportunity to provide an update on Alola's progress and achievements to Alola's partners and supporters in Australia. Therefore, there were several meetings and events in a very positive environment for engaging and connecting with recent and potential Alola friends, supporters and partners. I experienced strong synergy between Alola in Timor and our friends and supporters in Australia and I learnt that there will be more energy for us to go forward to realize our motto **Strong Women, Strong Nation**. I am delighted to thank Alola Australia for their commitment in supporting Alola and myself so far. I would like to say thank you to ACRATH, Caritas Australia, IWDA, WOW and The Friends of Viqueque /City of Greater Geelong for their time and commitment to our future collaboration."*

Alzira is a wonderful ambassador for her organization taking every opportunity to talk about the successes of the past year, Alola's greatest needs, and priorities for 2016. The Board thanks Alzira for making time in her very busy schedule to visit us. We are already planning her visit in 2016 and also hope that some of the Board will visit Alola in Timor-Leste sometime during 2016.



Rosemary Nugent AETA Geelong, Alzira Reis CEO Fundasaun Alola, Maria Bohan Chair Alola Australia

Alola friends in London - a Christmas wish *Helen Tchong*



Magical shiny Christmas decorations have gone up, the air has become crisp and fresh and it will soon be six months since I moved to London (the other side of the world). It's strange that sometimes once you settle into a routine, a once foreign place quickly becomes familiar, and begins to feel like home.

Technology now allows us to feel close to family and friends despite any great physical distance that may be between you. I continuously feel exhilarated to be in this non-stop, vibrant, too-much-choice city. However one thing that I've have had more difficulty in finding here is the same sense of community that I felt in Canberra and in Melbourne, where I was able to connect to my roots and my Timorese identity fairly easily given the established and accessible networks and flurry of community events on offer. I think in London, where the population is so much bigger, as is the city itself, all this has been harder to navigate than I initially anticipated.

Nonetheless this is something I will continue to pursue, firstly by arranging a small gathering (hopefully in time for Christmas) to meet others who share my passion for and/or connection to

Timor-Leste. I am finding most people I meet here are not familiar with, or only vaguely familiar with, Timor-Leste's story, and it has given me much pride and excitement to teach them a little bit about the parent's homeland and its story. Perhaps the next time they hear of 'Timor-Leste', they will recall that they met someone of Timorese heritage, and perhaps even remember part of Timor-Leste's story to share with others they interact with.

If you know of anyone in the UK who may be interested in connecting, please send details to friends@alola.org.au.

Keep in touch

[Our facebook page](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/AlolaAustralia>



Visit [our website](#) for

- Christmas gift certificates
- Fundasaun Alola strategic directions 2015-19

Contributors

Alola Australia newsletter production team
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Stories

Give the gift of hope this Christmas
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New books for a new nation
Kirsty Sword Gusmão

Time to draw the line - justice in the Timor Sea
Sunita Varlamos

Timor Sea justice campaign – a fair go for Timor-Leste
Maria Bohan

From the Board – *Maria Bohan*

Connecting with friends – a visit from Alzira Reis
CEO Fundasaun Alola
Alola Australia production team

Alola friends in London - a Christmas wish
Helen Tchong

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Our bank details are:

Alola Australia, ANZ Bank
Collins Place, Melbourne Victoria
BSB: 013 030
Account number: 482 087 363
Swift code: ANZBAU3M
Reference: donation [your surname]

So that we can acknowledge your donation please send an email to friends@alola.org.au with your details and amount of deposit.

Send a Cheque: Cheques should be made out to Alola Australia Ltd and mailed to
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Donate Online via Paypal: visit our website (www.alola.org.au) and click the 'Donate Now' button.

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'Strong Women, Strong Nation' 'Feto Forte, Nasaun Forte'