



Volume 27 - September 2017

Welcome to the spring edition of the Alola Australia newsletter, celebrating the wonderful and inspirational partnerships with friends and organisations that support the work of Fundasaun Alola. From soup and sweets with the Inner Wheel women on Phillip Island to Jude Finch's Australian Volunteer International assignment in Timor-Leste, there are many stories to tell about how you, our friends have supported Alola's work across maternal and child health, education, economic empowerment and advocacy. These partnerships support Fundasaun Alola to nurture women leaders and advocate for the rights of women and children in Timor-Leste, and they work.

You will also see by many of our stories that we have loved having Alzira Reis, Fundasaun Alola CEO staying with us over the past ten weeks. Alzira was here to undertake professional studies and has been enormously generous with her time. We congratulate Alzira on the successful completion of her studies.

## World Breastfeeding Week – with tea and good friends

Six years ago Alola launched the annual MILK campaign, which is celebrated in Timor-Leste and Australia during world breast feeding week 1 – 7 August – give or take a few weeks.

*The Global Breastfeeding Scorecard (an initiative of the WHO/UNICEF Global Breastfeeding Collective), which evaluated 194 nations, found that only 40 per cent of children younger than six months are breastfed exclusively (given nothing but breast milk) and only 23 countries have exclusive breastfeeding rates above 60 per cent. Timor-Leste is one of these.*

'Where did the last six years go? The good news is that rates of exclusive breastfeeding in Timor-Leste have risen even further since 2011 to over 60 percent, all thanks to the incredible efforts of Fundasaun Alola at the grassroots level across the country. 'Parabens' and power to the people, particularly to the mothers of Timor-Leste who are the most influential agents of change in their communities'. *Kirsty Sword Gusmão.*

Kirsty Sword Gusmão facebook 30/8/17



Breastfeeding is critical for the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals. It improves nutrition (SDG2), prevents child mortality and decreases the risk of non-communicable diseases (SDG3), and supports cognitive development and education (SDG4). Breastfeeding is also an enabler to ending poverty, promoting economic growth and reducing inequalities.

<https://www.unicef.org/breastfeeding>

## Inner wheel women fundraising to prevent childhood malnutrition in Timor-Leste

by Jan Hudson, President, Phillip Island Inner Wheel

Inner Wheel is a world-wide female friendship and service club. Our objectives are to 'promote true friendship, to encourage the ideals of personal service and to foster international understanding'.

My club is Phillip Island; one of twelve clubs in district A62 which stretches from Phillip Island to Bairnsdale. Clubs choose how much fund raising they do. Our district has two projects that we will support for two years. The local project will provide aids for people with motor neurone disease and the international project is fighting childhood malnutrition in Timor-Leste.

I had read an article in my husband's medical journal that said that 58 percent of children in Timor-Leste had stunted growth and rural children had limited food options. Our district decided to support this project. The clubs raise funds in their own way such as street stalls, BBQs, dinners, special functions or fashion parades. They then divide the money raised between projects. Our Phillip Island club has only 15 members, many of them single ladies, so I decided to have a monthly *soup and sweets night*. I made the soup, some of the ladies made sweets, everyone paid \$15, everyone had a goodtime, and the money will help make children healthy in Timor-Leste.



Members of the Phillip Island Inner Wheel Club at a soup and sweets night.

We were pleased Christine Perkins and Natalie Savin came to Warragul for our district meeting, to meet members, and tell us more about Alola.

Christine said: *'we were so warmly welcomed to Warragul that the drive was already well worth it. And then to top it all off we were presented with an amazingly generous donation for Alola's Nutrition program. The hard work of the various groups in A62 District raised \$8096.70 in just 12 months. Thank you so much'*.



Inner Wheel District A62 Chair Lynne Devine presenting the \$8096.70 cheque to Christine and Natalie

Thank you also for giving me the opportunity to meet, and hear Alzira Reis and Kirsty Sword Gusmão talk about Timor-Leste at the recent afternoon tea at the Brigidine Centre in Albert Park.



Jan Hudson with Alzira Reis and Kirsty Sword Gusmão

Alola Australia and Fundasaun Alola say a big thank you to the Inner Wheel women of the A62 district for your support and for having raised \$8096.70 to date.

## World Breastfeeding Week Alola morning tea in Geelong

by Maria Bohan, Chair Alola Australia

During world breastfeeding week, forty friends of Timor-Leste gathered at Zigfrids Restaurant in Geelong West for a morning tea to raise awareness and funds for Alola's Maternal and Child Health Program in Timor-Leste.

Special Guest Alzira Reis, CEO of Fundasaun Alola spoke about Alola's Maternal and Child Health Program, especially mentioning programs in the District of Viqueque. The Geelong Friends of Viqueque hosted this event and most guests were from Geelong and surrounds. However others travelled from Melbourne, Ballarat, Werribee, Castlemaine and two guests were from the City of Monash Friends of Vemasse. Alola has many friends in Geelong and it was great to have some new Alola supporters attend.

A stall of Alola handicrafts was popular and guests purchased birthday and even Christmas presents for family and friends. Donated raffle prizes also assisted raising funds.

The Chair of the Geelong Friends of Viqueque, Brian Edward, thanked Alzira for coming to Geelong.



Special thanks go to Rosemary Nugent and Anne Fairbairn for organizing this event. Gratefully, together we raised around \$1300 to support the Maternal and Child Health programs coordinated by Fundasaun Alola and another \$199 to support Timorese artisans, with the handicrafts sales.

*Alzira Reis and Rosemary Nugent*

## Morning tea for Alola at the Timor-Leste Embassy in Canberra

*by Sunita Varlamos, Alola Australia board member*

Senora Ana Guterres, the wife of Senor Abel Guterres Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia, hosted a wonderful event for Alola Australia on September 1, the first day of spring at the Embassy in Canberra. Mana Alzira Reis, CEO of Alola Foundation, was the special guest speaker and attended with Sunita Varlamos, board member of Alola Australia who wrote us this account of the event.



Ana had gone to great lengths to create a brilliant event that attracted over forty people. We met many people from the Canberra Friends of Dili, partners of numerous Ambassadors and a range of other special friends who had a connection and interest in Timor-Leste.

*Ana Guterres and Alzira Reis*

We were guided in acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we were meeting by Auntie Lydia, a proud Torres Strait Island woman.

Ana provided a delicious range of traditional treats which were enjoyed while the group mingled and purchased hand-crafts made by women as part of Alola's economic empowerment program in Timor-Leste. There was singing by Nathanael and many conversations had with friends and supporters of Alola and Timor-Leste.

Alzira spoke about the MILK campaign, Alola's success in improving breastfeeding rates, and the health and education of women and children in Timor-Leste. The audience was keen to hear about the challenges and the successes of the programs.

I would personally like to thank Ana for her wonderful efforts to bring us all together to learn and celebrate

the work of the Alola Foundation. I would also like to thank all who generously supported the raffle, the stall of hand-crafts and made donations.

## Continuing the relationship between Alola and the Brigidine Community over afternoon tea

*by Natalie Savin, Alola Australia board member*

Two years ago Fundasaun Alola CEO Alzira Reis spoke at the Brigidine Centre with our ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious against the Trafficking of Humans) friends in Albert Park about Alola's work in Timor-Leste.

Among those who heard Alzira speak that day was Sister Kathleen Butler, a Brigidine sister from Coogee in New South Wales, and supporter of both Alola and ACRATH.



*Alzira Reis and Sister Kathleen Butler*

Little did we know that Alzira's words were sowing the seeds of a deepening relationship with the Brigidine Sisters from NSW and New Zealand. What has

followed is a commitment from this generous community to support Alola's work over 2017 and 2018.

How fitting it was that on Alzira's next visit to Melbourne, Sister Kathleen was there again, on Sunday 27 August 2017, not only to hear further news of Timor-Leste, but to present a cheque for \$5,000.



*Sunita Varlamos, Natalie Savin and Helen Skinner Alola Australia board members*

We are grateful to the Brigidine Community for this gift. We look forward to assisting the work of Fundasaun Alola by further developing our relationship with Sister Kathleen and her community.

## From local to global: Alola takes part in the Santa Fe international folk art market

Fundasaun Alola with the support of the Asia Foundation and the American Embassy in Timor-Leste recently participated in the *14<sup>th</sup> Annual International Folk Art Market* in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This was a terrific opportunity to showcase traditional Timorese tais and other local creative products, learn and share experiences.

The *14<sup>th</sup> Annual International Folk Art Market* brought together one hundred and sixty artists from 53 countries, including Cuba, Haiti, South Africa, Cambodia, Israel, Syria, and the Palestinian territories and many others, over two days from 14 to 16 July. Ninety percent of all sales at the market go home with participants.

'The market has positioned folk art as an engine of enterprise, bringing opportunities to indigenous artists the world over' says Jeff Snell, CEO of the International Folk Art Alliance, the Market's parent organisation. 'It provides artists with the financial ability to radically improve their lives and communities, and gives consumers a way to positively invest in the world in more meaningful ways'.

The market officially opened with a celebration involving all participants, including the delegation from Timor-Leste, pictured here with Fundasaun Alola Economic Empowerment Manager Jose Ximenes on the left. Next to Jose is Mario Barreto from Alola, Armindo Moniz artist from Lospalos, Bengko Sena from Empreza Diak, Lucia Ximenes artist from Baucau and Antonieta Maya from The Asia Foundation Timor-Leste.



*Jose Ximenes, Mario Barreto, Armindo Moniz, Bengko Sena, Lucia Ximenes and Antonieta Maya*

Prior to the opening, the Fundasaun Alola Timor-Leste delegation also participated in a seminar convened by the market organizers. Jose Ximenes said it was an 'extraordinary experience [to be] the ambassador of the nation, to introduce the Timorese tais [and raise] the identity of Timor-Leste [with] folk art lovers who come from around the world.' He said this experience could be an inspiration for the development of the market for art products in Timor-

Leste in order to become one of the tourist attraction for foreign tourists' and in particular 'the International Folk Art Market, Santa Fe will be a valuable experience to further develop the Alola Fair' which is held two times each year.

*Source: Fundasaun Alola facebook 17 and 18 July 2017.  
www.facebook.com/fundasaun.alola*

## News from the Alola Australia Board

In this newsletter you will read many stories of great events bringing Alola friends and supporters together: Geelong, Albert Park and Canberra. The Board of Alola Australia has really enjoyed catching up with long-time supporters and meeting new supporters. When we meet you we like to hear your suggestions about what Alola Australia should be doing to support the Alola Foundation in Timor-Leste.



*Alzira Reis and Maria Bohan at the Geelong morning tea.*

At our recent events it has been wonderful to have the Alola Foundation CEO speak and to catch up on news from Timor-Leste. In Albert Park we also heard from the Alola Foundation Chair Kirsty Sword Gusmão, AO.

Kirsty reported that the Alola Foundation is well led by a wonderful CEO, highly competent senior managers and a great team of staff and volunteers. Kirsty also reminded us that in one of their four important programs, Alola seeks to nurture women leaders and advocate for the rights of the women in Timor-Leste.

I hope to see some of you at our Fundraising Dinner on 20 October 2017. I acknowledge that this is in Melbourne at night time and that this time does not suit all of you.

Please keep in touch and if you would like a representative of the Board to visit your organisation or town please contact us.

In conclusion, I would like to publically thank all the wonderful donors who donated to our end of financial year tax campaign. This was our first tax campaign because we are now able to offer tax deductions for donations.

Happy spring to you all.

*Maria Bohan  
Chair, Alola Australia*

## Alola Australia welcomes its newest board member



Stephen Lavender joined the Alola Australia board in August 2017. He has since been appointed to the role of treasurer. Stephen has a decades' long interest in international justice, including with Timor-Leste. Stephen believes that Australia has a unique link and special

responsibility to support Timor-Leste. Knowing that supporting women to achieve justice and equitable development is of crucial importance, Stephen is keen to support the work of Fundasaun Alola and Alola Australia. Stephen has over 20 years' experience in financial management in the not-for-profit sector and currently volunteers and serves on boards in several not-for-profit agencies, including Oxfam, New Internationalist and the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre.

## Striving for gender equality in Timor-Leste

by Australian Volunteers International, with special thanks to Melanie Wilson, stakeholder communications and media manager

As one of the world's youngest nations, gaining independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has had to overcome internal violence and political instability to achieve tremendous progress<sup>1</sup>, but there is still much to do both economically and socially to strengthen the nation. Australian volunteers have been supporting Timor-Leste to achieve better socioeconomic outcomes since 1995.

Gender equality and women's empowerment is an important part of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, including Timor-Leste, as it is a foundation for sustainable development.

Alita Verdial, Senior Program Officer with AVI, delivery partner for the AVID program in Timor-Leste, explains that Timor-Leste's Constitution provides a framework for the promotion of gender equality, the country has ratified relevant international conventions, and there has been significant progress in women's political representation.

*"Having skilled, inspired and politically engaged women as leaders is an essential step towards*

*gender equality in the country, however many challenges remain,"* says Alita.

*"The nature of Timor's patriarchal society means that women do not have sufficient respect and resources to allow them to make their own decisions. There is also a high prevalence of violence against women and girls throughout Timor-Leste, particularly domestic violence.*

*"This situation prevents women and girls enjoying their rights and creates multiple barriers to empowerment. It confirms that gender inequality is persisting despite the progress made in women's political participation,"* she explains.

The AVID program takes an integrated approach to strengthening capacity across the gender sector in Timor-Leste. This year, for example, 14 volunteers will be placed across 10 organisations to work alongside their local counterparts in legal aid and representation, justice, trauma and psychosocial, advocacy and human rights, labour rights, economic empowerment, education, health, political voice and representation.

According to Alita, *"The AVID program has made essential contributions to gender and women's empowerment programs. It has strengthened local capacity through mentoring and developing individuals and organisational potential to achieve gender equality, which is at the core of development of the country."*

Rede Feto, Fundasaun Alola and Casa Vida Timor-Leste are just some of the many local organisations that the AVID program is currently working with to improve outcomes for women in Timor-Leste.

Rede Feto is Timor-Leste's umbrella organisation for grassroots women's organisations. It coordinates submissions to international and national policies and laws, leads advocacy and awareness-raising activities and participates in national and international forums. Australian volunteer Mary Waterford, External Relations and Advocacy Mentor, is supporting Rede Feto to increase its capacity to advocate for improved women's rights in Timor-Leste, develop its ability to fundraise and strengthen external relationships and partnerships.

Fundasaun Alola is another organisation striving for better outcomes for women in Timor-Leste, led by the motto "Strong Women Strong Nation". The Foundation works across four program areas: maternal and child health, education, economic empowerment and advocacy.

Australian volunteer Jude Finch is working with her colleagues on a major integration project across the organisation, which will result in the four program areas collaboratively. This new strategic approach will result in multiple program viewpoints being applied to each issue, delivering a holistic response.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/timor-leste/overview#1>

Jude explains, “We plan to test our capacity to work collaboratively and, in terms of community benefit, assess outcomes for the community of combined efforts for change.”



Fundasaun Alola staff member Agostina Fraga and Australian volunteer Jude Finch on a field trip in Maliana, Timor-Leste. Photo supplied by Jude Finch

The focus of Casa Vida Timor-Leste is providing support to children and young women who have experienced sexual abuse. With high rates of violence against women and children in Timor-Leste<sup>2</sup>, Casa Vida’s work is critical. Their activities include support services, operating shelters, a day-care centre and pre-school, vocational and life-skills training and community education programs.

The focus of Australian volunteer Katherine Dobson’s role is to provide support, advice and encouragement to the leadership team and to assist with the development of a new strategic plan.

Katherine says, “My most significant contribution to Casa Vida has been providing coaching and support to emerging leaders within the organisation. Working alongside and supporting passionate, dedicated and intelligent national staff has been incredibly rewarding. I also believe it is a really important part of building strong organisations and sectors.”

Mary, Jude and Katherine’s volunteering assignments are part of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, an Australian Government initiative.

#### References:

World Bank country overview – Timor-Leste, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/timor-leste/overview#1>

Timor-Leste, Rede Feto, ‘NGO Shadow Report’, Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Against Women, 2015, p. 58.

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<sup>2</sup> Fifty-nine per cent of women who have ever been in a relationship (ever-partnered), reported having experienced some form of physical or sexual partner violence, or both, by a male partner in their lifetime, and 47 per cent in the 12 months before the interview. The Asia Foundation, *Understanding Violence against Women and Children in Timor-Leste: Findings from the Nabilan Baseline Study 2016*, 2016.

The Asia Foundation, *Understanding Violence against Women and Children in Timor-Leste: Findings from the Nabilan Baseline Study 2016*, 2016.

#### For more information visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/redefeto/>,  
<http://www.casavidainternacional.org/projects-tl/>,  
<http://www.alolafoundation.org/>,  
[www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com),  
[www.dfat.gov.au/australianvolunteers](http://www.dfat.gov.au/australianvolunteers)

## Sharing Alola’s passion to advance opportunities for women and children

by Jude Finch, Australian Volunteer International volunteer with Fundasaun Alola

Spending 18 months volunteering with the Alola Foundation fulfilled a dream sparked for me when I first visited Timor-Leste in 2005. I was part of a very excited group of women from the Blue Mountains who met Mana Kirsty and some of the Alola staff and were inspired by their determination and effort.

I come from the Blue Mountains and am a member of long-term groups working together to assist our neighbour. A bit of a ‘Timor-passionate’ I have spent another year volunteering there and have made many visits. With a background in community work and management, a placement with Alola was a good fit.

From March last year to just a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of contributing to Alola as an organisational development mentor through the Australian Volunteer International (AVI) program. My role was various, ranging from assisting with policy development, strategic planning, donor negotiations, preparation of submissions and advising on program design.



Jude Finch being farewelled at Fundasaun Alola.

During the time I was fortunate to see Alola contribute to significant advances for women. The number of women elected as local chiefs (xefe de sucos) doubled as a result of the support provided by Alola; a Human Trafficking Law was promulgated affording protection for women; and young women advocates demonstrated their leadership in the prevention of early pregnancy. Additional Mother Support Groups were established supporting women to make healthier choices in birthing and early feeding. New women led businesses producing virgin coconut oil and other products were developed. Over 100 new community led preschools were established in two districts; and early literacy programs were introduced through the

Mobile Library Program that meant that parents and the community stood behind children learning to read. And much much more ...

I get asked about my main impressions of the Alola Foundation. I reply that I was able to see for myself that the Alola Foundation is based on clear principles that guide everyday actions. Women and children are in the forefront. All staff work hard to develop their country and articulate daily their mission of advancing opportunities for women and children. Organisational systems are well developed and integrated into day-to-day practice. There is very fine leadership, from the Board to the CEO to the Program managers – all with a vision and determination to enact change. The Alola Foundation is ambitious, setting a high standard and deserving their reputation as the leading foremost women's organisation in the country. The Alola Foundation is a very good organisation (maybe amongst the best, I say quietly).

But the job is not yet done and there is still deep need in Timor-Leste. I hope that Alola continues with its passion to ensure that all women live free of violence; girls attend school and have later opportunities to contribute through work; women give birth safely; and malnutrition if eliminated.

## Welcome to our Dinner



We are excited to announce that we are preparing for our annual fundraising dinner in Melbourne. Our theme for the event is: Walking the Line – making the link between access to resources and women and children's development in Timor-Leste.

All proceeds will greatly contribute towards our shared vision with Fundasaun Alola *Strong Women, Strong Nation* and in particular, to expanding and strengthening the Suco Hadomi Inan no Oan Program (SHIO) – Our Village Loves Its Mothers and Babies Program in two remote villages: Kaimauk and Manumera in sub district Turiscai.

### Venue:

Angliss Restaurant 550 Little Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne

### Guest speakers:

- Kim McGrath, author of *Crossing the Line, Australia's Secret History in the Timor Sea*
- Kirsty Sword Gusmão, AO, Chair Fundasaun Alola, Timor-Leste
- Alzira Reis, CEO, Fundasaun Alola Timor-Leste – via video link

### Art exhibition:

- By Lindy Yeates, with works from her *Mind the Gap* exhibition, including this linocut print of Kirsty Sword Gusmão
- By Alfeo Sanches Pereira, Timorese Artist, with artworks from his *Missing Threads* collection.



### Auction:

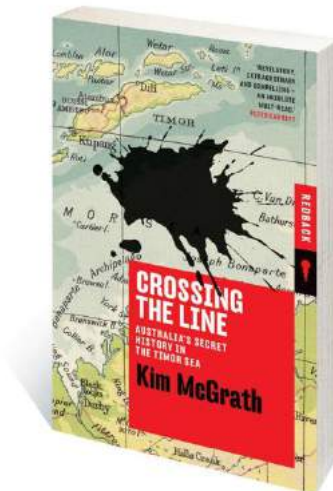
The evening will include a fundraising auction and we would love to receive donations of items. If you would like to offer auction items please contact Marita at [friends@alola.org.au](mailto:friends@alola.org.au)

### Tickets:

To purchase your tickets please go to [www.trybooking.com/RXRF](http://www.trybooking.com/RXRF)

Please RSVP by Friday October 13

And please share our event with your community even if you can't make it.



# Fundasaun Alola's annual report - published with pride at the annual general meeting

Each year, Fundasaun Alola publishes an annual report of activities undertaken in the previous year. The 2016 annual report was officially published at Alola's Annual General Meeting by Chairwoman and founder Kirsty Sword Gusmão.

Kirsty Sword Gusmão writes in the report 'It is with tremendous pride and pleasure that I share this annual report for the year 2016. I am sure that you will agree as you browse its pages that Fundasaun Alola continues to contribute significantly to the empowerment, health, education and well-being of Timor-Leste women and their families.'

In a statement on the report, CEO Alzira Reis says 'The existence of the Fundasaun Alola for 16 years has contributed effectively to the well-being of women and children in Timor-Leste. Our age is the same as a young girls' and we are indebted to the various support we receive from our donors, partners and the entire Board - my gratitude for this.'



You can find a copy of the report on Alola Australia's website: <http://www.alola.org.au/fundasaun-alola-2016-annual-report/>



Triana Oliveira; Maria Domingas Alves; Cedeliza Dos Santos; Kirsty Sword Gusmão; Cidalia Mozinho, First Lady of Timor-Leste; Albina Freitas; Siverio Pinto Baptista; Carmen da Cruz; Mislizia Vital



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Visit the **Alola Australia website** for the latest on upcoming events and campaigns, Fundasaun Alola programs, annual reports, making donations, getting involved, newsletters you might have missed and much more. [www.alola.org.au](http://www.alola.org.au)

## Contributors

### Alola Australia newsletter production team:

Wendy Mayne, Christine Perkins, Sue Lee, Marita Jacobsson

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