



Volume 22 June 2016

The vision of *strong women strong nation* is powerfully reflected in the experiences, commitment and stories we've collected for this winter edition of the Alola Australia newsletter. Maria Imaculada Guterres shares with us the promise she made in childhood to improve the health of women and children in Timor-Leste and the journey that followed to become the manager of Alola's maternal and child health programs. Alzira Reis tells us about the very exciting *women's action for voice and empowerment* workshop she recently attended which marked the beginning of an ongoing approach to strengthening the advocacy work of women and organisations within and across the Asia Pacific region. We follow Margaret Rollings as she continues her very literal journey across Spain in support of women with breast cancer in Timor-Leste and hear from Nicole Bluett-Boyd about the fabulous evening that was had raising funds for Alola's mobile library. All this and more.

We hope you enjoy the read.

## People of Fundasaun Alola

### **Macu – manager of Alola's maternal and child health programs**



*My name is Maria Imaculada Guterres (Macu) and I work at Alola as the Maternal and Child Health Program Manager.*

#### **What has been your journey to this role?**

*I come from a remote area of Timor. Throughout my childhood I felt sad to see how women and children's deaths occurred because they lacked information and adequate services in the community. Therefore, I dreamt that someday I would study to become a nurse to assist mothers and children to improve their health. When I graduated from junior high school I decided to go to one of our nursing schools in the district. I was fortunate to have been employed by the UN to work at one of the UN clinics in Timor-Leste. However, after a while my inner-self told me that I should find work that I was passionate about. The right moment came when I had a chance to become one of the staff in Alola's Breastfeeding Association programs. I have now been working in this area for several years. It has*

*been a blessing that last year I was able to graduate as a Bachelor of Public Health. The degree helps me with a lot of things I do in my job as the Maternal and Child Health Program Manager.*

#### **What does a typical day look like for you?**

*On a daily basis, for most of my time, I attend or organize meetings with or lobby potential donors, supervise more than 20 local staff, write proposals and reports to donors, undertake program planning and supervise staff in the implementation of program activities, work with consultants and coordinators in the development of training modules or guidelines for meetings with ministry of health and other stakeholders. When I return home after work I am a housewife, I look after my children and ensure that they all are well looked after.*

#### **What are the main concerns for women, children and communities that you see through your role?**

*There is a high maternal mortality rate and child mortality rate in Timor-Leste. Many children die before reaching the age of five years. Malnutrition in rural and remote areas and a lack of access to health care services are contributing factors. At the same time, there is lack of information and basic understanding of the importance of nutrition in some communities.*

## How is the work of Alola addressing these concerns?

*Alola has identified the Maternal and Child Health program as one of key priority areas for promoting the health of women and children in Timor-Leste. Alola does this through working with community members and health workers in community and health facilities. Our local staff work tirelessly in the rural and remote communities to identify children who are malnourished and give counselling on how their parents can use local foods to meet their nutritional needs. We also provide counselling to pregnant women and new mothers on what foods to eat to meet their own and their babies' nutrition needs.*

## What is the most challenging and most rewarding aspect of your role with Alola?

*The most challenging aspect is the lack of long term funding to support the program, and as a consequence we have to write proposals every year.*

*The most rewarding part of my role is that I give a chance to mothers and children in the community to live a longer and healthier life. At the same time, I provide mentoring; monitoring and supervision to staff who also develop personally and professionally.*

## Is there anything special coming up that you would like to mention?

*We are currently planning for the Mother Support Group graduation. I am also visiting Australia in August as part of the annual MILK campaign to talk more about maternal and child health in Timor-Leste.*

## What do you hope to see for the women and children of Timor-Leste in the next 15 years?

*I hope the women and children are healthier and their mortality is decreased.*

*Obrigada*

Fundasaun Alola has established **138 alternative pre-school centres** in Viqueque and Emera to help improve access to early education for children aged three to five years in rural areas.  
*The Dili Weekly 20 June 2016*

## Walking for women with breast cancer in Timor-Leste – Haliku 'I choose to get better'

Margaret Rollings is well on her way as you will see from these excerpts from her diary on the journey

along the Camino del Norte in Spain to raise awareness and funds for women with breast cancer in Timor-Leste.



Day three - Zarautz to Deba and 759 kms remaining. Easily the most brutal and exhausting day so far and tomorrow will be more so! However, the view was probably the best on this route.

Day four - Deba to Markina-Xemein and 758.5 kms remaining. Thinking of people facing personal battles on the way today, particularly our sisters in Timor-Leste.

Day nine - Pobena to Castro Uriales and 625.5 kms remaining. What started out to be what I thought would be a less challenging coastal route, wasn't. Half way along I opted for a change of scenery to the tougher official Camino inland variant which ended up being 27.5 kms. The next two days are 30 kms each so am having an early night tonight.

Day nineteen - I have walked 476.5 kms and there are 351 kms remaining to Santiago de Compostela. Today is a rest day and I'm making the most of it in this magnificent coastal city of Ribadesella Asturias. There are quite a few stages to go before reaching Galicia the final province. I have two big days ahead, both exceeding 30 kms so the rest will do me good.

Today however I have time to reflect on this amazing journey which at this time two years ago was the furthest thing from my mind, because as you know I was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer, getting well was my priority. At the moment because of the 'state of the art' hospitals and finely tuned treatments available to us in Australia along with highly trained surgeons and astute specialists I am now in remission and have resumed normal life.

How I wish all of this were the case for our sisters in Timor-Leste. For this reason I shall continue my journey 'on the way' to raise sufficient funds which I know will make a positive change, albeit small. Walking this Camino is much like life. Some days are brilliant, some days I can't wait for them to finish. Sometimes I walk with pain, others I'm free as the breeze.

To support Margaret's campaign, please click the link below to donate

<https://give.everydayhero.com/au/walking-for-women-with-breast-cancer-in-timor-leste-haliku-i>

## A new wave of women in leadership: Alola participates in the women's action for voice and empowerment (WAVE) workshop

**Women's action for voice and empowerment – WAVE** – is a five year program funded by the Government of the Netherlands and delivered by IWDA. The WAVE inception workshop was recently held over ten days in Melbourne with 32 women from 16 partner organisations across six Asia and Pacific nations. Representing Fundasaun Alola at the workshop were CEO Alzira Reis and Advocacy Program Manager Maria Evelina Imam.

The WAVE theory of change outlines impacts in four key areas:

1. Individuals – developing women leaders and leadership capabilities across generations.
2. Political and governance systems – generating change to inequitable legal, policy and economic frameworks.
3. Women's movements and community organisations – catalysing collective action and accountability for women's rights and gender equality.
4. Research, evidence and learning – applying knowledge from women's voices and lived experiences to advocacy and education settings.

The WAVE program brings together similar work that participating organisations are doing across the region into one program. It will provide opportunities for: long term funding for leadership and advocacy work; connecting and strengthening relationships across the region; and support in organisational development and research.

*(information provided by Georgia Ride former IWDA project manager for Timor-Leste)*

## Trip report on the IWDA WAVE inception workshop

by Alzira Reis

The Alola Foundation has been a partner with IWDA since 2014. The aim of the partnership is to strengthen women in leadership at all levels of society. This year Alola's confidence and the partnership with IWDA will be strengthened through the new program called **WAVE**.

From 1-8 June Maria Evelina and I had the opportunity to participate in the WAVE inception workshop in Melbourne, Australia. The main objective of the workshop was to familiarise and deepen our understanding of the WAVE program vision and develop a range of tools to support the management

of the WAVE program in our communities. These tools include monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and communication strategies. The inception workshop was also about building alliances between women activists from women's organisations who are involved in empowering women across the Asia-Pacific.

I enjoyed the workshop and learned that many women have a commitment to develop their country. The more women tell their stories the more I feel I am in the right place and I want to stay and to share.

My appreciation to the IWDA team and the Netherlands government for their support to empowering women and addressing inequality.



*Alzira Reis at the WAVE workshop*



*Alzira Reis, Maria Evelina Imam and WAVE workshop participants*

*Photographs by Gemma Carr*

Thanks to Friends of Same for their warm welcome to the celebration of Timorese culture and independence on 29 May at the City of Boroondara Hawthorn Arts Centre.

# A very special Mobile Library Fundraising Dinner

Story by Nicole Bluett-Boyd

On Friday 29 April 2016, Alola Australia hosted a special dinner event to raise funds for Fundasaun Alola's mobile library program. This amazing program delivers comprehensive resources and educational programs to pre-primary and primary aged children in remote or marginalised communities in Timor-Leste. It aims to promote parental and community involvement in children's education and measure changes in community attitudes to literacy and education. The program is also a vehicle for engaging unemployed young to participate in activities that benefit children in their communities, by providing them with training and support to lead after-school activities for primary school-aged children.

Over 105 guests attended the brilliant Angliss Restaurant to raise funds for the mobile library program. The evening began with a special video presentation from Alola Australia that demonstrated the impact and necessity of the mobile library program in Timor-Leste. Hosts Mary Bluett and Nicole Bluett-Boyd then introduced the main feature of the night, a special conversation between Kirsty Sword OA and Annie Keogh. The conversation focussed on the challenges of accessing and continued engagement with the education system in Timor-Leste. With a visual presentation running behind them, Kirsty and Annie spoke of the unique barriers facing the children of Timor-Leste including insufficient infrastructure and resourcing, teacher training and language issues. Guests then engaged in a lengthy question and answer session, enhancing the knowledge of all in the room.



Annie Keogh and Kirsty Sword in conversation by Jorge de Araujo

Following dessert, guests engaged in a lively auction of beautiful donated items. Auctioneer Paul Caine began the auction by taking bids on bottles of wine that he himself donated. Over the course of the auction, dozens of bidders competed for unique holiday experiences and Timorese art. Many more

donated items were on offer for the gourmet hamper raffle and at the silent auction.



Jane Crouch and Jan Donovan at the mobile library dinner by Jorge de Araujo

By the end of the night, our special guests had collectively raised over \$12,000 for the mobile library program. Alola Australia would like to thank all of those in attendance, as well as those that generously donated their time and auction items. We further thank the Angliss Restaurant for a delicious three course meal and providing a perfect venue for the event.

## Looking to buy Timorese handcrafts and produce?

- Friends of Same have a stall at the monthly Hawthorn Craft Market.
- The Rotary sustainability and fair trade shop can be found at the rear of 654 Burke Road Camberwell Junction Monday to Saturday 10.00 – 4.30. pm.

## Alola Australia board news

Maria Bohan Chair Alola Australia

### Fundasaun Alola CEO meets with the Board of Alola Australia

On her recent visit to Melbourne to attend the IWDA WAVE workshop, Fundasaun Alola CEO Alzira Reis (Azzi) and the Board of Alola Australia took the opportunity to meet up over dinner. Our conversations covered many topics including: Fundasaun Alola's 2015 Annual Report (available on the website), the Fundasaun Alola and Alola Australia Partnership Agreement, how Alola Australia can enhance our support for Fundasaun Alola, and planning for Azzi's 2017 visit to Australia.

## Fundasaun Alola's CEO and Advocacy Manager in Melbourne in June

Azzi was joined in Melbourne by Fundasaun Alola Advocacy Manager Maria Evelina Imam for the IWDA WAVE workshop. Representatives from the Board of Alola Australia, Maria Bohan and Sunita Varlamos attended one of the WAVE evening events on the theme of women in political leadership.

## Some new members of the Board of Alola Australia



**Yvonne Lay** is of Timorese background and has both a personal and professional connection to Timor-Leste. Her parents and extended family left Timor in the late 1960's and 1970's and Yvonne was born in Melbourne. Her family started a

coffee bean growing and processing business in Timor-Leste in early 2000 and in 2014 Yvonne spent four months in Timor-Leste working on a research project surveying community attitudes to domestic violence. Yvonne has worked in the family violence services system for over ten years. She joined the Board in June 2015.



**Jeannelle Menezes** is committed to supporting women and children in Timor-Leste, especially their wellbeing and their rights. Jeannelle grew up in a developing country, has lived and worked around the world, and has experienced first-hand the

potential for meaningful impact of good development support. Jeannelle is experienced in dealing with government bodies, regulators, and in legal policy. Jeannelle joined the Board in March 2016.



**Helen Skinner** has a general interest in development across the Asia-Pacific region, particularly as it relates to the lives of women and children. She is passionate about promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion and is excited about contributing to

strong governance in the not-for-profit sector. Helen has 13 years' experience in audit, risk management and compliance across public and not-for-profit organisations. Helen joined the Board in February 2016.

**Strong Women Strong Nation!**

Make a mark Australia (MAMA) and Fundasaun Alola are very excited to announce a new **Women's Resource Centre** to be built in Mascarenhas Dili. Find out more at [makeamarkaustralia.org.au](http://makeamarkaustralia.org.au).

## Alola's MILK Campaign is underway

The annual MILK Campaign aims to raise vital funds for Fundasaun Alola's maternal and child health programs in Timor-Leste and to increase awareness of problems faced by mothers and children in Timor-Leste.



MILK was launched on World Breastfeeding Day in 2011 by Kirsty Sword Gusmão, founder and chair of Fundasaun Alola along with hundreds of mothers and babies in Melbourne and Timor-Leste. It is now an annual event across both countries that celebrates the joys and challenges of breastfeeding and motherhood, and supports improvements in child and maternal health in Timor-Leste. And there are so many ways for you to be involved:

### Host a MILK morning tea

We warmly invite you to host a MILK fundraising morning tea during or around World Breastfeeding Week, 1 - 7 August 2016. If you would like us to promote your MILK morning tea, please let us know via our online MILK page: [www.alola.org.au/milk](http://www.alola.org.au/milk) the MILK facebook page: MILK unite with mothers in Timor-Leste or the MILK Campaign Twitter feed @MILK\_campaign.

Spread the word by creating a MILK campaign [Everyday Hero](#) fundraising page and sharing it via your social media

### Share the story

A promotional brochure is available to download from Alola's website. If you would like a bundle of printed brochures sent to you, please contact us. More information and digital resources are available at: [www.alola.org.au/milk](http://www.alola.org.au/milk)

## Donate

### Donate Online

OR deposit directly into Alola Australia's bank account:

ANZ Bank Alola Australia

BSB: 013 030 Account Number 482 087 363

SWIFT Code ANZBAU3M

So that we can receipt and acknowledge your donation please send an email to

[friends@alola.org.au](mailto:friends@alola.org.au) with your details and amount of deposit.

## The reasons why MILK is important

- For every 1000 live births, 24 Timorese babies die compared to two Australian babies. The under-five mortality rate is 55 Timorese deaths compared to four Australian deaths, per 1000 live births.
- For every 100, 000 live births, 270 Timorese women die giving birth compared to six Australian women.
- 78% of Timorese births are unattended by skilled health staff compared to 0.9% of Australian births.

But thanks to the efforts of organisations such as Alola the situation is steadily improving. Rates of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months have increased from 31% in 2003 to 52% in 2010. And this is important because:

- Children who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life are 14 times more likely to survive than non-breastfed children.
- The under-five mortality rate decreased from 125 to 64 per 1000 live births between 2001 and 2009. In the same period infant mortality fell from 88 to 44 per 1000 live births.
- Timor-Leste was one of only a few countries on track to meet the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal No. 4, to reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

*Data Sources: World Health Organisation - Key Country Indicators, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, 2015.*

**21 May 2001 - 22 May 2016**

Congratulations to Fundasaun Alola on a proud and strong 15 years supporting women and children in Timor-Leste

## Come to dinner with Kirsty Sword Gusmão and Maria Imaculada Guterres

[Geelong Friends of Viqueque will hold a fundraising dinner](#) to support the development of a Mother Support Group in Viqueque.

Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmao AO, former First Lady of Timor-Leste (East Timor) and founder and chair of the Alola Foundation will be addressing the audience.

Following this, a Q & A will be held with a panel also including:

Ms Maria Imaculada Guterres, Manager of Maternal and Child Health Programs (MCH) at Fundasaun Alola;

Ms Deb Singleton, Science Coordinator at Christian College Geelong who has visited Viqueque many times in her role as a teacher, and knows Viqueque and Timor-Leste well.

When: 5 August 2016, 6.30 pm

Where: Fred Flanagan Room  
Geelong Football Club  
Kardinia Park  
12 Kilgour Street, Geelong

Costs: Adult (no concessions) \$100.00  
Other/more information  
(table of 10) \$900.00

Facilities: Catering and/or dining  
Parking available  
Toilets available  
Wheelchair accessible

Further information:

Contact Steve Levakis  
Phone: 5272 4044  
Email: [slevakis@geelongcity.vic.gov.au](mailto:slevakis@geelongcity.vic.gov.au)

## Keep in touch

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



Join our 1,251 friends and keep in touch through the Alola Australia facebook page.

Visit our 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)

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### Fundasaun Alola news

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### Stories

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María Bohan Chair Alola Australia

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Account number: 482 087 363  
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**Send a Cheque:** Cheques should be made out to Alola Australia Ltd and mailed to

PO Box 382 Abbotsford 3067 VIC. Australia

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