



Volume 30 - September 2018

Welcome to the Spring 2018 Alola Australia newsletter. Spring is a time of new beginnings and so we have a new format for our newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading more stories and seeing bigger photos. Let us know what you think. On that, we also have a new Alola newsletter letters column and would love to hear your thoughts on the stories we share in each edition. In this edition we have some terrific stories and photos from Alola's work in Timor-Leste and support from across Australia. Each story reflects the strong connections between people, organisations and nations and all that can be achieved when we recognise our shared experiences and aspirations; particularly when it comes to the enjoyment of basic human rights, access to quality education and the health of women and children.

Introducing a love of Timor-Leste

by Kirsty Sword Gusmão and Nandy Gurr



Photo: Kirsty Sword Gusmão and traditional dancers from the Le-Ziaval culture group, one of the many groups who meet at the Xanana Gusmão Reading Room

A year ago we had the privilege of leading a Melbourne Forum Study Tour to Timor-Leste. We enjoyed sharing our love of Timor-Leste and were excited to be involved in a similar tour this year.

Our 2018 Alola tour to Timor-Leste gave eight participants a unique opportunity to experience Timor-Leste, meet its leaders, learn more about our nearest neighbour and raise funds for Haliku. Haliku, a program that is integrated into the maternal and child health programs of Fundasaun Alola, educates women about breast cancer and the importance of early detection, and supports women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer.

There were many highlights of this year's tour, however for us the greatest pleasure was introducing eight people to Timor-Leste and witnessing them fall in love with the country and her people.

The 2018 Alola tour to Timor-Leste

By Peter McManus



Photo taken at a Alola Mothers Support Meeting in Liquica. The meeting was to celebrate World Breast Feeding Week and incorporated a healthy baby competition, a talk about breastfeeding and a talk about breast self examination. Our tour was warmly welcomed by Alola staff and many mothers, some dads, and their babies. We shared lunch together before heading out to Balibo.

Heading to Timor-Leste I was not sure what to expect. In the back of my mind I had snippets of information from half-remembered news reports from 1975 and the succeeding years up to 1999 when the now Australian Governor-General led the INTERFET Peacekeeping mission, and then the transition to independence in 2002. I had also done some reading over the years, but as with many other countries, once the media interest moved on to other places, Timor-Leste was only in the news when there was some crisis. More recently being a supporter of Alola had kept me in touch with some of the work happening on the ground through the Alola programs.

My recent visit to Timor-Leste with the 2018 Alola tour however has given me (and I suspect, everyone in our group) a new perspective on the country and its people. I have come home with many images in my mind (and my camera); the beauty of the coast and the sparkling oceans; the charm of Dili, Baucau, Balibo and the rural villages; the warm, colourful welcome given to our group by the organisations we visited; the memories of significant people and places of recent history; and of course the warmth of the people. While our group – Jock and Elizabeth, Alex, Helen, Christine, Russell, Karin, and I – were an eclectic bunch with very different backgrounds and from different places in Australia (Perth, Canberra, Melbourne), we shared an interest in Timor-Leste that brought us together on the tour.

I think that I can speak for us all in saying that, whatever our level of knowledge and interest before our visit, seeing the country and meeting a range of people has deepened our knowledge, interest and understanding – as Jock said, “it was an important opportunity to get under the surface”. And perhaps all of us will return one day – hopefully before too long.

To read the whole article by Peter go to the Alola Australia website [here](#) (it's worth it) but before you do - there's one more thing from the Alola tour to Timor-Leste group . . .

We are grateful to our friends at Alola Australia for helping us to promote the Alola tour to Timor-Leste this year. We successfully raised \$25,000 for Haliku and are looking forward to organizing another tour in 2019.



Alola Australia presents a very special 10th Anniversary Fundraising Dinner



ACHIEVING AGAINST ALL ODDS

Friday 19 October 2018, 6.30pm for 7pm start

Angliss Restaurant, 550 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

With Guest Speakers: **Glenda Lasslett**, supporter of independence and sustainable development for Timor-Leste in New York and Australia since 1975, has lived and worked in Timor-Leste with AVI, IWDA, the UN and Oxfam; **Abel Guterres**, Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia; **Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmão**, AO will be present to meet and chat with all guests.

Tickets \$110 includes 3 course meal; drinks at bar prices.

Live Auction and Silent Auction

Purchase tickets at www.trybooking.com/XHDG

Bookings close 12 October 2018.

For all enquiries email friends@alola.org.au

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO OUR PARTNER IN TIMOR-LESTE, FUNDASAUN ALOLA
DONATIONS OF \$2 OR MORE TO ALOLA AUSTRALIA ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

AUCTION ITEMS PLEASE

We would appreciate items that we can auction at our dinner to enhance our fundraising effort. Your donations in the past have included: Timorese art and craft, weekends away, wine, sailing trip, scenic tours, catering, holiday accommodation, art and books. (Smaller items are also appreciated as we can combine them to create beautiful hampers).

Please contact Marita: friends@alola.org.au if you would like to offer or discuss any auction items.

MILK 2018 - having your cup cake and supporting mothers and babies in Timor-Leste too

by Christine Perkins



The theme for this year's World Breastfeeding Week was 'nutrition, food security and poverty reduction' supported by the message 'breastfeeding: foundation for life'. Once again Alola Australia mounted a campaign to obtain support for Fundasaun Alola's Maternal and Child Health Program.

A call for volunteers to bake a cake, invite their friends around and ask for gold coin donations was posted on our website, Facebook and twitter pages. Even the Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste tweeted support for the MILK campaign.

MILK morning and afternoon teas, some big and many small, took place in cities and towns around Australia. Here are some we thought we'd share with you.

In Melbourne guests enjoyed delicious home baking by Alola Australia board members and other helpers and fresh Timorese coffee by Friends of Baucau barista Chris Dureau. Jacky Mandelbaum reflected on her recent experience giving birth in Australia and compared her experience to that of women in Timor-Leste. Jacky said, 'growing a child and giving birth is the most amazing thing I've done. The experience is something shared by women all over the world. But, it is alarming how many women don't experience it in the way that I had the opportunity to'. The full text of Jacky's talk can be read on the Alola Australia website, [here](#).



Photo: Christopher Dureau and Kirsty Sword Gusmão



Photo: Jan Hudson Inner Wheel, Kirsty Sword Gusmão Chair Fundasaun Alola, Maria Bohan Chair Alola Australia

Kirsty Sword Gusmão spoke about Fundasaun Alola's MCH program. \$225 was donated by those present and Jan Hudson from Inner Wheel District A62 presented a cheque for \$7,900 raised over the past year by their groups for Fundasaun Alola's nutrition program.



Photo: Wendy's 'check your breasts for lumps rhubarb muffins'

Wendy Mayne and her friends gathered for afternoon tea in St Leonards on a very cold Victorian Sunday but the warmth of their interest and support for the women and children in Timor-Leste was evident in the \$275 they contributed to the MILK campaign.

A MILK breakfast took place in Canberra, co-hosted by the Timor-Leste Embassy, Canberra friends of Dili and Cooking Circles. Those present enjoyed a lovely breakfast which included batar da'an, a traditional Timorese meal that breastfeeding women eat in Timor-Leste.

Helen Tchong spoke about the MILK campaign and Fundasaun Alola's work supporting maternal and child health and Ana Guterres the Timor-Leste Ambassador's accompanying spouse, reflected on the situation in Timor-Leste. Over \$580 was raised at the event. You can read Helen's Canberra talk on the Alola Australia website, [here](#).

Photo: Ana Guterres, Helen Tchong, Anita and Llandi (Llandi was in Canberra for surgery under the ROMAC (Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children) program.

The MILK campaign is held every year in August to coincide with World Breastfeeding Week. You can be involved too by planning to hold a small (or large) morning tea with your friends in 2019. Raise some funds, take some photos and send us a story for this newsletter, but most importantly have a cup of tea and a cup cake in solidarity with women and children in Timor-Leste.



A celebration of breastfeeding in Timor-Leste

Source: Fundasaun Alola Facebook/ Alola Media 2 August 2018



Every year Timor-Leste makes the most of the month of August to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week. This year Fundasaun Alola in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and supported by Conoco Phillips, Woodside and Child Fund celebrated World Breastfeeding Week in villages across Timor-Leste.

Dozens of SHIO (village loves their mothers and children) groups and hundreds of mothers participated in various activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of breast milk to infants in their first six months and nutrition for newborns.

The activities held included breastfeeding quizzes and healthy baby contests. There are five criteria for the healthy baby contest. These are: the baby is or was exclusively breastfed during their first six months and for up to two years or beyond while adding other food nutrients; the baby is fully immunized; the baby is weighed regularly and is healthy; the mother displays good personal hygiene; and the baby was (where possible) born at a health facility.

Fundasaun Alola Foundation continues to play an important role in improving maternal and child health across Timor-Leste. But there is still much more to do. With your support Alola's vision of 'Strong Women – Strong Nation' can become a reality.

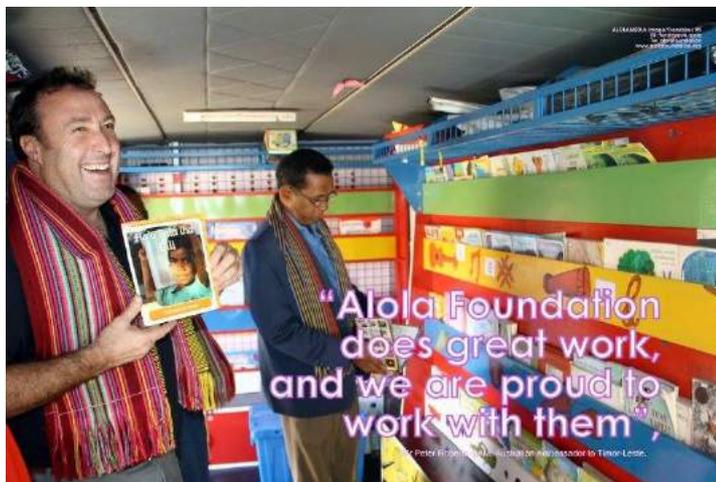
Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste supports the 2018 MILK campaign

Source: Fundasaun Alola Facebook/ Alola Media 3 August 2018

Photo: Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste Mr Peter Roberts on his visit to the Alola Mobile Library.

A deep appreciation of Alola's maternal and child health work came from the Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste Mr Peter Roberts during World Breastfeeding Week. Mr Roberts invited his twitter followers in Australia to participate in Alola's MILK campaign. He wrote '... the Alola Foundation does great work, and we are proud to work with them. Have a look at this fundraising opportunity'.

In response, Fundasaun Alola chair Kirsty Sword Gusmão wrote through her twitter account 'Thank you so much for your help with promotion, Peter, and for the support the Australian Embassy provides to Alola's wonderful work in Timor-Leste'.



Sharing the Haliku experience at the 3rd Annual South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium

Source: Fundasaun Alola Facebook/Alola Media 3 August 2018



Alola's maternal and child health program manager, Maria Imaculada Guterres (many will know her as Macu) was a keynote speaker at the 3rd Annual South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium in August. Together with other international speakers, Macu shared her experience of the Haliku (I choose to be healed) program's efforts to conduct an early detection campaign for women's cancer in Timor-Leste

'This is an opportunity for Alola - Haliku to be able to share experiences on efforts to prevent cancer of women through various campaign activities at the rural and national levels' she said.

Haliku, which was founded to increase women's understanding on prevention, early detection and treatment of breast cancer is an important part of Fundasaun Alola's maternal and child health program.

In 2014 Haliku organised the first Women's Cancer Conference in Timor-Leste. The conference involved around 800 people including ministries, institutions, students and media. Since 2016, 80 women's cancer prevention workshops have been conducted for community health volunteers, government and private institutions, female soldiers and school students. Raising awareness campaigns have been conducted in 59 villages and exhibitions held at government institutions in 11 municipalities.

Haliku's participation in 3rd Annual South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium at the Pullman Hotel, Kuching, Sarawak opens a new bridge for closer cooperation between Fundasaun Alola and organisations in the South East Asian region that focus on women's cancer.

The 3rd Annual South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium "Patient Centred Care" was organised to share knowledge and skills on the latest information and innovations surrounding breast cancer, increase capacity for breast cancer management and improve the quality of care for breast cancer patients. (Macu appears on the conference program and flyer)

Alola's scholarship project - increasing access and participation in quality education

(article based on information taken from Fundasaun Alola Facebook 13 July 2018)



Photo: DFAT supported Alola scholarship recipients Ms. Marcelina Ines, Ms. Terezinha Lopez Soares and Ms. Safira de Jesus on graduation day.

In Timor-Leste the participation rate of young women in secondary and university education remains lower than that of young men. That is, by the age of 25, 16 percent of young women will have completed secondary or tertiary studies compared with 25 percent of young men of the same age.

Alola's scholarship project is one very important way in which women can become equal beneficiaries of high quality education in Timor-Leste. The scholarship project is primarily concerned with addressing the compound disadvantage experienced by young women. Its focus is on young people from remote areas, single-parent or orphaned families, gender based violence survivors and children from large families or from situations of risk.

With support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other international groups and individual donors, the Alola scholarship project supported 200 students in 2017. The students, enrolled at all

levels of education, included 135 girls and young women, and 65 boys and young men. The boys and young men had been identified by individual donors for financial support which was then managed by Alola. Among the 200 students were 38 young women from a mix of urban and rural areas who, with ongoing support from the Australian Embassy, were assisted to access universities in Timor-Leste.

Photo: Marcelina Ines, Alola scholarship recipient and university graduate and Alzira Reis, Alola CEO

In 2017, 16 young women and three young men, all scholarship students, graduated from university. It is expected that by end of 2018, 100 percent of the 30 students with DFAT's support will graduate from university. Alola is also expecting more students will be graduating with support from the committed groups and individual donors.

Parabens to all Alola scholarship students.



News from the Alola Australia Board

by Maria Bohan, Chair Alola Australia Board

Alola Australia welcomes new Board member Nandy Gurr



Photo: Nandy Gurr and Kirsty Sword Gusmão with women and children celebrating maternal and child health in Timor-Leste at Fundasaun Alola, Dili.

Nandy's interest in Timor-Leste began in 2004 when her husband went there to work. Whenever Nandy herself visited she would go to Fundasaun Alola and it was there that she met Kirsty Sword Gusmão. Nandy encouraged her church community and her friends to support fundraising ventures in Timor-Leste, including school nutrition programs, books in Tetum, building a preschool, new classrooms for schools, and children's activity centres at Dili and Baucau hospitals.

In 2017 and 2018 Nandy co-hosted with Kirsty, tours to Timor-Leste offering participants opportunities to meet Timorese leaders and learn about the country. Nandy contributes diverse skills and energy to assist Alola Australia's important partnership with Fundasaun Alola.

To all Alola friends and supporters

The Alola Australia Board extends a big thank you to all for your fabulous support during 2018. Your donations to our End-of-Financial Year Tax Campaign and your participation in our events has been inspiring. The Board not only values your support and contributions but it gives us great determination to work harder and harder to be a strong supporter of Fundasaun Alola.

Working together to stop human trafficking - here in Australia and in Timor-Leste

Photo: Christine Carolan ACRATH with Alola Australia board members Helen Skinner and Helen Tchong.

Christine Carolan, Australian Catholic Religious Against Human Trafficking executive officer, was a special guest of the Alola Australia board in July. Christine spoke about the realities of



human trafficking and the role of ACRATH, a small Catholic community service organisation focussed on addressing forced labour, forced marriage and slavery in supply chains of goods and services used in Australia.

Christine pointed the board to the [US State Department's Annual Trafficking in Persons Report*](#) released in June 2018 and in particular the section on Timor-Leste. The trafficking profile for Timor-Leste described it as both a source and destination country for forced labour and sex trafficking. Other trafficking activities occur in domestic servitude in Indonesia and other countries, and also on foreign fishing vessels.

Christine ended the conversation with the board by posing two important questions:

1. How can Catholic Women Religious in Timor-Leste better engage with global Catholic Women Religious' work to stop human trafficking? The global Catholic Women Religious' group is [Talitha Kum](#)
2. How can young Timorese workers be better supported while working in Australia in agriculture and hospitality industries?

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo released the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report on June 28. To download the full report on #TimorLeste, please visit: go.usa.gov/xU25E (English) or: go.usa.gov/xU25y (Tetum). (Fundasaun Alola facebook 10 August 2018)

Fundasaun Alola founder and Chair Kirsty Sword Gusmão proudly presents the Alola 2017 Annual Report

The following story is the presentation by Kirsty Sword Gusmão to the Fundasaun Alola Annual General Meeting 9 July 2018, Dili, Timor-Leste.



2017 saw presidential and parliamentary elections take place in a peaceful and stable environment across Timor-Leste. I am proud of the role that Alola's staff played in continuing to promote the active contribution of women in the democratic process, both as party political leaders and voters. Alola managers and staff were also able to visit all thirteen municipalities to monitor the elections and to guard against discrimination, violence and intimidation. Over 30 percent of elected members of parliament were women, continuing the inspiring tradition of women's leadership in the national political arena.

In August 2017 I was privileged to lead a study tour to Timor-Leste and to introduce the eight Australian participants to some of the people and places that were pivotal in the nation's Independence struggle.

It was also a great pleasure and a source of pride to take the visitors on a tour of Fundasaun Alola and to share with them some of the highlights of Alola's contributions to national development over the past 16 years.

Since the study tour had a thematic focus on education, we visited a number of primary and pre-schools in Dili and beyond. Included among them was the small Lacoto Pre-School, located in the neighbourhood of my former home, some ten kilometres south of Dili. My mother and I established the school from nothing but with the strong and active support of the community back in 2001. While in general terms, this community is an under-privileged one, it is lucky in that it has a facility that caters for early childhood education. The gross enrolment rate for pre-school education in Timor-Leste is 16.9 per cent, one of the lowest rates in Southeast Asia. One of the contributing factors is the lack of a local pre-school or early learning facility.

Since 2016, Alola has been the chief implementing partner in an Alternative Community Pre-Schools project, funded by the New Zealand Government and UNICEF. The project has given some 5,000 children in remote areas access to early childhood learning opportunities in community centres and in private homes where no pre-school exists. Making use of community leaders such as village heads as advocates, the aim is to improve school readiness, thus facilitating a smoother transition to primary education. Alola's Education team has put its many years of experience of teacher training, community mobilisation and learning resource development to great effect in this project, earning it the respect of the donor partners, local target communities and the Ministry of Education.

Being based back in Melbourne has enabled me to enjoy a closer link and collaboration with our 'sisters' and partners at Alola Australia. It was a great privilege to have been asked to speak at the annual Alola Australia fund-raising dinner in October 2017 alongside the author of the new book, *Crossing the Line*, Ms Kim McGrath. Kim spoke passionately about the subject of her book which is an issue of vital importance to Timor-Leste's economic future – the delineation of a permanent maritime boundary in the Timor Sea. The some 114 attendees on the night listened, learned, enjoyed the company of old and new friends and donated generously, with over \$18,000 raised.

I am grateful to Alola Australia and to our many other donors and partners in the Australian community, on the ground in Timor-Leste and from around the world for the shared vision of a more healthy and dignified life for the wonderful women of Timor-Leste, their children and families.

I commend CEO, Alzira Reis, the managers and staff of Fundasaun Alola for continuing to be at the forefront of the struggle to advance the rights and interests of women and their families in Timor-Leste.

Alola newsletter letters

Alola Australia is very appreciative of all the support and donations for Fundasaun Alola's work in Timor-Leste. And we love hearing from our readers, so we thought it would be good to introduce a new Alola newsletter letters segment. We were inspired to do this by some of our very good friends, including Dawn Richardson from Canberra and the Brigidine Sisters in NSW.

Dawn gave some wonderful feedback on the Canberra MILK breakfast when she wrote to us saying:

'I enjoyed the breakfast, Helen gave an excellent talk and I was also pleased so many men were present. It is their business too! It was fun to catch some people I knew in Friends of Dili.'

The Brigidine Sisters have been keeping up to date with Alola's work through the Ministry Support Fund group; Sisters Kathleen Butler, Maureen Keady and Jan O'Neill. The three sisters read the quarterly newsletters then distribute the information to all the sisters in a briefer version they call 'Alola Quick notes'. The sisters have contributed \$5,000 this year stating they:

'particularly enjoyed reading the article on the activities of Maria Odete who has become an important and capable village leader, thanks to support and training from Alola. We are especially supportive of women where the action is – anywhere.'

Send your letters to 'Alola newsletter letters' at friends@alola.org.au

Keep in touch



Join our 1,582 friends and keep in touch through the [Alola Australia Facebook page](#).

Visit the Alola Australia website: www.alola.org.au 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.

Contributors

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Wendy Mayne Avo volunteer, Christine Perkins Alola Australia board director, Sue Lee volunteer and Marita Jacobsson administration manager.

News from Fundasaun Alola:

* Alzira Reis CEO Fundasaun Alola.

This edition:

- * *Introducing a love of Timor-Leste* by Kirsty Sword Gusmão and Nandy Gurr
- * *The 2018 Alola tour to Timor-Leste* by Peter McManus
- * *MILK 2018 - having your cup cake and supporting mothers and babies in Timor-Leste too* by Christine Perkins
- * *A celebration of breastfeeding in Timor-Leste* from Fundasaun Alola Facebook/Alola Media Australian
- * *Ambassador to Timor-Leste supports the 2018 MILK campaign*
- * *Sharing the Haliku experience at the 3rd Annual South East Asia Breast Cancer Symposium* from Fundasaun Alola Facebook/Alola Media
- * *Alola's scholarship project - increasing access and participation in quality education* from Fundasaun Alola Facebook
- * *News from the Alola Australia Board* by Maria Bohan
- * *Working together to stop human trafficking - here in Australia and in Timor-Leste* with Christine Carolan
- * *Fundasaun Alola founder and Chair Kirsty Sword Gusmão proudly presents the Alola 2017 Annual Report* by Kirsty Sword Gusmão
- * Alola newsletter letters with Sister Kathleen Butler

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**‘Strong Women, Strong Nation’
‘Feto Forte, Nasaun Forte’**