



A letter from Kirsty

Empowering women, investing in communities. Your gift's lasting impact.

Dear Supporter

When I was establishing Fundasaun Alola following the tumultuous events and conflict of 1999, I thought that the focus for the Foundation's early work would be to provide counselling and psycho-social supports to assist women to overcome their trauma.

After travelling around the country and meeting with women and women's groups, I quickly discovered that the women of Timor-Leste had other ideas about what would be helpful.

After years of stress and pain associated with the loss of loved ones and friends, property and dignity, what they wanted most was the ability to provide for their families in the hope of a better future.

Help to gain the skills and resources to improve their livelihoods was the balm they needed to heal their loss, grief and trauma.

And so Fundasaun's Alola's Economic Empowerment Program was born!

It was the first of Alola's projects and, over the years, has successfully assisted countless individual women and women's cooperatives to gain skills in small business management, handicraft product development, pricing and market access, among other key skills. In recent times, its services have expanded to include the provision of micro-credit loans, seed funding for the establishment of small enterprises, and savings and loan schemes.

But the need for this program remains high and that is why I am writing to you today.

Please donate today to help Fundasaun Alola reach many more women.

I'd like to share the story of Maria, whose life was changed as a result of the Economic Empowerment Program.

Maria's story

Maria Tapu lives in a rural Bobometo village in Oecusse municipality with her husband and four children. Maria's husband worked as a primary teacher on a low salary and the family was struggling to make ends meet. With little formal education, but desperate to improve the family situation, Maria learned to weave tais which she would sell for a pittance at an outlet in Dili.



In 2015, Maria became one of 28 women who participated in a Micro Lending Scheme delivered as part of Alola's Economic Empowerment Program. Maria received training on business skills and financial management; she was also linked to market opportunities to sell her tais.

In addition, the women's group, with Maria as Coordinator, received a small grant of USD 1,500 to start micro loans in the village. Maria and her group members have managed these funds so effectively, that by 2018 they had quadrupled their revenue to USD 6,100, with some remaining proceeds able to be shared with group members each year.

Today, Maria runs her own separate business. She still weaves tais, but she also sells and rents computers to students in her village. Her family is involved in the business, including her eldest son who manages the computer rentals.

Maria is proud that she can now help to buy food, send her children to school and purchase school uniforms. The future looks bright for her family.

Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. Stories such as Maria's above are proof that supporting women to increase financial capability can have lasting effects, not just for the individual – but for the family and wider community.

You can support gender equality in Timor-Leste by donating today. **Your gift will be directed to Alola's Economic Empowerment Program, and will enable many more vulnerable women to exercise their economic power.** But more importantly, your donation will create opportunities for families that can heal the trauma of the past and pave the way for a better future for Timor-Leste.

Thank you again for your support and making a difference to those in need.

Warm regards



Dr Kirsty Sword-Gusmão AO
President, Fundasaun Alola

PS – All donations above \$2 are tax deductible.

Note: for those wishing to donate from overseas please email friends@alola.org.au to obtain payment instructions as these can vary depending on the currency being sent.

Thank you for your support and generosity.

Alola Australia partners with Fundasaun Alola,
raising awareness, funds and creating links in Australia.
Alola Australia is run by a Board who volunteer their time and expertise.
In 2018 our administration support costs represented 5.9% of our total income.
We work hard to ensure that all donations are maximised
to directly benefit the women and children of Timor-Leste.