Welcome to the Alola Australia Spring 2019 newsletter. It has been a momentous few months since our last newsletter. In July we said farewell and thank you to Alzira Reis, Alola CEO and former manager of advocacy programs. Alzira leaves behind an incredible legacy, best reflected in her own guiding words of wisdom ‘women are the mothers of our nation; from strong mothers a great nation is born’. We can all be those mothers. Then on 30 August, we celebrated and congratulated all Timorese people on the 20th anniversary of the popular consultation, which ultimately led to the nation’s strong and proud independence. Viva Timor-Leste, you are nothing short of amazing. And you our friends help make this possible. Your continuing advocacy and generous support over the last few months is very much appreciated. We have a few stories to share and hope you enjoy the read. But before you do, please welcome Breanna Guterres our wonderful new administration manager. Benvindu Breanna.

Alola Australia honours an inspirational leader and very special friend

“Our women are the mothers of our nation. From strong women a great nation is born”

At the end of July, Alzira Reis, CEO of Fundasaun Alola in Timor-Leste, said farewell to the organisation she has been a part of and led for many years. Alzira is well known to many of us in Australia. She has visited many times to speak at events, to meet with key organisations and to thank Alola supporters and friends.

Alzira grew up in a village in Baucau Municipality, alongside two brothers and three sisters. She and her husband Helder have two children. She has a law degree and she joined the staff of Alola in 2003. Over 16 years Alzira has worked as Advocacy Program Manager and the CEO.

Under Alzira’s leadership Fundasaun Alola has continued to become a most impressive and strategic organisation in:

- women’s rights and equality
- women’s leadership and empowerment
- the integration of Alola’s four cutting edge programs
- making a difference to the lives of women, children and families
- influencing the political, economic and social structures of Timor-Leste.
As well as leading Alola, Alzira plays a leadership role on the boards of other organisations: Rede Feto, ALFeLA, Pradet and Centro Nacional Chega.

We remember Alzira’s powerful words at our annual fundraising dinners and in particular last October: “Our women are the mothers of our nation. From strong women a great nation is born”

Alola Australia will very much miss working closely with Alzira and we thank her for sharing her insights and convictions with us. We have learnt so much from Alzira and we treasure these learnings.

We wish Alzira well with the next phase of her journey as she continues to contribute to Timor-Leste’s future. Aliza has many friends in Australia beyond Alola Australia and we know they also send appreciation and best wishes to Alzira.

Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmão, AO, who founded the Alola Foundation in 2001, continues to be the Chair. Kirsty and the Fundasaun Alola Board are currently recruiting for a new CEO. Kirsty will miss Alzira at Alola but will keep in contact with her when she visits Dili.

### Couldn’t do it without you Kartini

Kartini has been a loyal friend to Alola since 2009; and to Timor-Leste her whole life. Over the past ten years Kartini has taken part in numerous Alola fundraisers and handcraft stalls. She set up our Facebook page and kept it going for a number of years until the rest of us caught on. This year Kartini raised a terrific $276 for the MILK campaign by holding a morning tea and selling handicrafts at her workplace, NBNCo, Operate Maintain Network department. All this while being a gorgeous mother to her three year old daughter, eight months pregnant, working, and moving house. Viva Kartini.

Kartini was born in Timor-Leste and migrated with her family to Melbourne in 1980 because of the Indonesian occupation of her country. As a child she would go with her parents to protest the occupation, call for independence and support refugees who fled their home for safety in Australia.

For Kartini, Alola means ‘helping the women and children in Timor-Leste and giving back to my home town and people who are in need’.

*Photo: Kartini’s daughter modelling the MILK stall handcrafts*

### A very big thank you - news from the Alola Australia chair

To all Alola friends and supporters

The Alola Board extends a very big thank you to everyone who made donations to our End-of-Financial Year Tax Campaign. The campaign raised $48,712 for Fundasaun Alola. The majority of the funds contribute to enhancing the financial capability of women, families and communities in Timor-Leste. Thank you also to Bernadette Garcia for her assistance in developing the campaign.

I look forward to seeing you at our annual dinner in October.

Maria Bohan
Chair Alola Australia
Alola Australia's annual dinner - it's all about delicious food, great company, fundraising and why working with women matters

Come along to Alola Australia's 2019 annual fundraising dinner for an evening of thought provoking discussion as we explore this year's theme Why Working With Women Matters with special guest speakers:

- Conny Lenneberg, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmão, AO, Founder and Chair of the Alola Foundation.

Where: Angliss Restaurant 550 Little Lonsdale Street Melbourne

When: Friday 11 October 2019, 6.30 pm onwards

Cost: $115 (includes three course meal - drinks at bar prices)

Bookings: www.trybooking.com/532276

For more information, dietary or other requirements or to contribute to our live and silent auctions contact Breanna Guterres at friends@alola.org.au

Fundasaun Alola proudly publishes her 2018 annual report

Each year Fundasaun Alola publishes an annual report to let the public know how Alola performed during the last financial year. The 2018 Alola annual report was launched on August 27 during Alola’s annual general meeting, by founder and chairwoman Dr Kirsty Sword Gusmão AO.

The 2018 annual report gives details of Alola’s key work over the previous year, outlining project achievements and the audited financial statement. It also reviews the results of the four core programs of maternal and child health, education, women’s economic empowerment, and advocacy on women’s rights. The report can be found on the Alola Foundation website:


Tetum version : https://www.alolafoundation.org/…/ALOLA-ANNUAL-REPORT-2018-…

Photo: Chairwoman Kirsty Sword Gusmão and Acting CEO Maria Imaculada Guterres with the 2018 annual report
Alola's mid-year fair - strengthening women's participation in small business, increasing family income and preserving Timor-Leste's cultural heritage.

An inside story from Alola's mid-year fair and exhibition, July 2019, based on an article by Alolamedia / FransiskusXS published on facebook10 July 2019.

The Alola Foundation is committed to facilitating opportunities for women and handcraft producer groups to participate in a variety of economic activities. The annual Alola fairs - mid-year and at Christmas - are one such opportunity, and a real solution to the obstacles faced by groups of craftswomen and men to sell their products.

In 2019, from Saturday 6 to Sunday 7 July, Alola, through a program to strengthen the economic opportunities for women, once again held the Alola mid-year fair and exhibition. The fair, the 12th to date, was held at the Alola Foundation office in Dili and attended by more than 50 craft groups. Participants showcased their latest works and sold handicraft products including tais, pottery, toys from Atauro, sculptures, accessories, natural soaps, traditional medicines, coffee and local food.

'We invited craft groups from all municipalities to participate in this exhibition . . . and sell their products' said José Ximenes, manager of Alola's economic empowerment program.

The 12th Alola fair was officially opened by the Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Peter Roberts who was accompanied by representatives from Rotary - Club of Kew, representatives of Rotary 9550 and representatives from Rotary Dili.

Alola CEO Alzira Reis, during the opening session, expressed her gratitude for the commitment of donors who have provided support for the implementation of various programs including the 2019 Alola fair and exhibition. Ms Reis said 'the success that we achieved will not be realized if there is no support from partners or donors such as Rotary who support this two-day exhibition, therefore, I thank Rotary for giving its commitment to support (the) Alola Fair'. Ms Reis also stated that the Rotary Club of Kew Australia not only provided financial support for the Alola fair but also for the Alola program for women's economic empowerment.

The Ambassador Peter Roberts as representative of the Australian community in Timor-Leste acknowledges the commitment of Rotary Australia to its support for the people of Timor-Leste. He explained that the role of Rotary Australia was very important to strengthen relations between the people of Australia and the people of Timor-Leste. He said, 'as Australian Ambassador, I am proud of the relationship between the people of Australia and the people of Timor-Leste. I always see many groups from Australia, groups from churches, groups from various schools, and various Australian Rotary Groups working in many parts of Timor-Leste (who are) committed to supporting the people of Timor-Leste'.

Ambassador Roberts said he was very pleased to be able to participate and have the opportunity to officially open the Alola 2019 exhibition. He asked all parties to support local products, especially local products representing Timor-Leste. 'This event is to support the culture of Timor-Leste, the future of Timor-Leste, because it is important to support local products, support unique products and products that represent Timor-Leste' he said.

Previously, the Alola Foundation held a two craft exhibitions and fairs each year - one before Easter and the other before Christmas. But after a review in 2018, Alola decided to implement a new approach. The Alola fair in the Easter period was transformed into the Alola mid-year fair, held between June and July. CEO Alzira Reis said, 'because we see that during the Alola Easter (Fair and) Exhibition, the visitors who came were not so many, we decided to make an exhibition in mid-year in hopes of attracting more visitors, especially tourists'. Ms Reis said there was much hope that holding the two-day exhibition would not only strengthen the family economy, but also can provide support for the development of (this community) in the future. Ms Reis added, 'we hope that in the future our activities can get support from the Australian Embassy, this is our dream'.

By the end of the two days, more than 2,000 people had visited 2019 Alola mid-year fair and exhibition. Foreign tourists; individuals, families and groups; also used this opportunity to see first-hand the unique crafts of the Timorese people and buy unique crafts directly from the producers. Maria José da Fonseca Monteiro who is the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII) was also interested in visiting this exhibition. During her visit, the
Secretary of State held direct discussions with several groups of craftswomen. She said that women’s involvement in the economic sector would strengthen family income. ‘Support for women's groups does not have an impact on some people but has an impact on increasing income for families. We will continue to try to find strategies to continue to support this policy’. Ms Fonseca Monterio also said the SEII sought to find ways to continue to provide markets for local crafts, working together with other government institutions.

Milena dos Santos, coordinator of the craftswomen group from Atu-Aben village in the municipality of Bobonaro, was very pleased with the results of the Alola fair and exhibition. As a craft group that focuses on textile products, they found that many people visited the stall and bought the tais cloth offered. She said ‘from the two exhibition days, we were happy with the results we got, many people visited to buy our products’. She added that from the sale of tais, the group received a total of US $1,527. ‘Therefore, as a target group of the Alola program, I would like to thank the Alola Foundation for always organizing craft exhibitions’ Milena dos Santos said.

Program manager Jose Ximenes, explained that the income received by 53 craft groups was highly dependent on the quality of the products they sold and the tastes of the buyers. The Alola media team at the exhibition noted that several groups of artisans had demonstrated their ability to produce high-quality handicraft products and accommodate market tastes.

Revenues collected during the exhibition totalled US$11,233.75.

Maintaining product quality and diversification is one of the challenges in the development of handicrafts in Timor-Leste. CEO Alzira Reis, asked craft producers to continue their efforts to improve product quality. She recommended ‘increased product quality and diversification’ in order to respond to market tastes.

Rotary Club of Kew representative (and long time Alola supporter), Jill Forsyth was very appreciative and grateful for the efforts of the craft producers, for their commitment and ‘because they were heroes of the legacy of Timor-Leste’. The development of the craft sector is one of the main fields of Alola's women's economic strengthening program. During 2018, the program focused on strengthening the capacity of women in rural areas through training and providing opportunities for market access with the aim of increasing income and preserving Timor-Leste's cultural identity. As a result, the participation of rural women to participate in small businesses has increased and automatically has an impact on increasing an impact on increasing family income.

**MILK - uniting mothers and babies, friends and nations**

This year’s MILK campaign invited friends, family and colleagues to get together during August for a morning or afternoon tea at their home, workplace or local cafe in support of mums and babies in Timor-Leste. Supporters were also encouraged to participate via a virtual MILK event as part of the MILK ‘Everyday Hero’ campaign and follow the MILK Facebook page.

*Photo: Wendy’s MILK afternoon tea on Magnetic Island with friends and family*

Meanwhile in Timor-Leste, Fundasaun Alola’s maternal and child health team were busy running healthy baby contests and breastfeeding quizzes in villages across the country in celebration of world breastfeeding week (pictured).

We are very excited to report that the 2019 campaign raised a total of almost $10,000. We say a big 'obrigada barak' to all those who supported MILK this year.

*Photo: Helen's MILK in Melbourne with family and friends*
Funds raised through MILK go toward maternal and child health initiatives in Timor-Leste including:

- **Alola’s ‘Suku Hadomilnan no Oan’** (Village loves mothers and babies) groups and Mothers Support Groups which encourage and support mothers to initiate breastfeeding immediately after delivery, to breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of life and to continue breastfeeding for at least two years along with introduction of appropriate complementary feeding.

- **Alola’s hospital liaison officers** who support the initiation of breastfeeding to all mothers and provide early intervention for premature and underweight babies by educating mothers on cup feeding using breast milk as well as Kangaroo Mother Care.

- **Alola’s ‘Safe Birthing - Birth Preparedness Planning Project** across villages which supports pregnant women to develop a birth plan, access professional childbirth care and gather the support of their community to organise transport when labour begins. The program also encourages mothers to use a nearby health facility to assist with safe birthing.

For more information, visit [https://www.alola.org.au/milk/](https://www.alola.org.au/milk/)

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**Keep in touch**

[https://www.facebook.com/AlolaAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/AlolaAustralia)

Join our 1,653 friends and keep in touch through the Alola Australia Facebook page.

Visit the [Alola Australia website](https://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.

[www.alola.org.au](http://www.alola.org.au) Also visit the new Fundasaun Alola website - it looks fantastic [https://www.alolafoundation.org/](https://www.alolafoundation.org/)

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**Contributors**

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Honouring an inspirational leader - Fundasaun Alola

Couldn’t do it without you Kartini - Kartini Da Cruz and Wendy Mayne

Message from Alola Australia - Maria Bohan

Fundasaun Alola's annual report - Alola Media

Alola's mid-year fair and exhibition - Alola Media

MILK 2019 - Helen Tchong
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