



Baucau Mother Support Group works with Baucau Referral Hospital

In June two members of the MSG became part-time hospital liaison officers. The women provide breastfeeding counseling to new mothers: assisting mothers with correct positioning and attachment; discussing the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and the risks of formula feeding.

At times the midwives are too busy to have a thorough discussion with the women and teach them how to breastfeed correctly, so the hospital liaison officer can provide extra support. The hospital liaison officers also distribute maternity packs which contain some of the essential items a new mother needs: baby clothes, a sarong, clothing for the mother and sanitary products. The midwives on the maternity ward are happy to have the extra help especially on the very busy days.



Hospital Liaison officers mean that new mums get the support they need to breastfeed their babies.

Alola celebrates World Breastfeeding Week but every week is breastfeeding week at Alola!



Alola staff practise what we preach and their children exhibit the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding



Over 300 children joined in the fun at Alola's school holiday program in Metinaro



Practising what we preach

In the April Newsletter we featured a farewell photo (inset) of four of our pregnant staff. Fortunately everyone returned to work after three months paid maternity leave, complete with their carers so they can continue to breastfeed their babies.

As the main photo attests, our babies are glorious examples of the benefits of feeding yellow milk (colostrum) within the first hours of birth and of exclusive breastfeeding until six months. The importance of yellow milk was the key message of Alola's World Breastfeeding Week campaign this month and what an example Alola's babies set!

After six months they will begin eating a range of locally grown foods such as papaya, pumpkin, sweet potato and carrots, and continue to breastfeed until two years. The Maternal and Child Health team provides child nutrition information so our babies will have the very best nutritional

start in life that any child can get!

The main photo is taken in Alola's childcare centre, which accommodates the carers and babies but also provides professional childcare for children up to five years of age. The childcare centre is supported by our education team to provide creative developmental play experiences for Alola's children.

With the schools closed for an extended break, Alola's education team and child rights team are joining forces to run holiday activity programs across ten districts. At their first event in Metinaro, 300 children waited eagerly to join in the fun activities. (see back page for photos.) Run in partnership with CARE International and funded through European Commission, the combined team are working hard to provide fun, developmental play experiences with simple low cost materials, so that children can replicate the activities with their friends and neighbours over the coming weeks until school resumes in October. *Kirsty*

Inside: This month our special focus on Alola's Economic Development programs.

Who is Fundasaun Alola? Alola was founded in 2002 dedicated to empowering women through improved health, education, leadership and employment opportunities. Established as a national NGO, Alola is governed by a board of management. Chair: Kirsty Sword Gusmao. Leadership Team: CEO: Anne Finch. Program Managers: MCH - Veronica Correia & Tanya Wells-Brown; Advocacy - Alita Verdial; Education: vacant; Economic Development: Bernardete da Fonseca; Office Manager—Marina Braz da Costa.

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Economic Development programs promote traditional crafts

Alola Esperanca Design & Production Centre - Taibessi

The Alola Esperanca Design and Production Centre has become one of the fastest growing manufacturing facilities in Timor-Leste. Managed through the Alola Economic Development program, it operates under its trading name, Alola Esperanca. The facility supports the activities of numerous Alola programs and manufactures Tais products marketed and sold through the Alola Shop for both the national and international market.

The centre has created employment for over twenty Timorese nationals, most women who have been part of the Alola family for many years. Two in-house traditional weavers recently joined the team, to make custom made orders and special items exclusive to the Alola Shop. Staff receive ongoing training in design, sewing, weaving, sewing machine maintenance and management.

The centre has undergone major improvements in the past few months, through the dedicated leadership of Ofelia Napoleo. Ofelia brings over twenty years of experience in manufacturing. She is also recognized as one of Timor's leading experts in traditional Tais textiles.

The Economic Development Team is led by Bernadete Da Fonseca and joined by Deevah Melendez Morales, a new Australian Volunteer International who is working with the team as their Economic Development and Marketing Advisor.

Timor Tais weavers are the main beneficiaries of this exciting



venture. The Alola Shop has created a demand for Tais from all over Timor-Leste by selling and manufacturing both products and high quality Tais textiles known as either Tais Mane (for men) or Tais Feto (for women).

Customers who purchase tais products are not only contributing to the economic empowerment of the thousands of women who rely on these sales, but also to the cultural preservation of this cherished national treasure known as Tais.

Supporting Women Weavers in Remote Districts



A major focus areas for the Alola Economic Development Program is to work closely with women weavers in remote districts, in the ongoing development and cultural preservation of traditional East Timorese Tais textiles.

The Alola Handcraft Shop, is one of the country's most important handcraft marketing hubs; selling high quality Tais to sustain one of the few cash based economic activities women can engage in.

Tais weaving is traditionally a home based activity that can accommodate the needs of family and household. The making and exchange of Tais has a long and fascinating history that is passed on throughout the generations.

Ofelia examines tais (above) and Deevah makes purchases (right) with master weavers in Oecusse

Members of the Alola Economic Development team recently traveled to the enclave of Oecusse, one of Timor's most remote districts, to work with weaving groups in the cultural preservation and marketing of their magnificent Tais. Due to their remote location, women have little access to training and marketing opportunities. Most of these women and their families rely on subsistence agriculture, and often have no other source of income.

The team visited several groups in the district, to purchase tais and provide training in business and quality control.



Metinaro Producer Group continues to grow

In the 2006 crisis, 10,000 people fled Dili to the Defence Force Barracks in Metinaro, a half hour drive from Dili, along a winding and dangerous route. A dust bowl in the dry season and a flood in the wet, it is an isolated and unpleasant place to make a home for more than two years. Alola, with the assistance of Plan International has built a traditional shelter and storage facility to house sewing, tais weaving and palm weaving activities. It is a chance for women to come together, learn new skills and work towards greater economic independence. The women built their own roadside stall to sell their products.



Women learning to sew in Metinaro IDP traditional shelter (above) & building their own shop (left)



Very happy recipients of cash paid for the beautiful organic, hand dyed and spun, traditional tais in Oecusse, examples below



The trip is one of several planned field trips to visit weaving groups across the country to ensure their active participation and accessibility to the international handcraft market.

Oecusse Tais weavers are amongst the country's most skilled in traditional futus techniques, otherwise known across South East Asia as Ikats. The futus tradition is distinct to certain sub-districts, while others specialize in the Sotis and Beit Bosse technique, unique to Oecusse.

Typically their Tais take from two months to a year to produce, using the traditional techniques of spinning and dyeing locally grown organic cotton used to weave their tais on traditional backstrap looms. Each piece is special and unique, making Oecusse Tais one of the most sought after Tais designs in the country for both their quality and cultural significance.

More importantly, these Tais skills are highly valued, enabling the women of Oecusse to improve their livelihoods while contributing to the cultural preservation of one of East Timor's most important traditional practices.

