



BLUE MOUNTAINS TOGETHER FOR TIMOR INC / BLUE MOUNTAINS EAST TIMOR SISTERS ANNUAL REPORT 2021 2022

Despite a couple of years of lock down (and 17 years working together), we are still going strong, maybe even stronger than ever! How do we know?

In the period May to July 2022, after a prolonged period of enforced absence, five of our members visited Timor-Leste to reacquaint ourselves with our project partners there and to see how our projects had fared. Before leaving, someone said, “Will you know anyone there now? It’s been a long time”. Well, it could not be more different.

Dave Ludenia, Leanne Nora Eagle, Jude Finch, Lesley Sammon and Mary Waterford were greeted like long lost friends. We were informed, feted, dressed in traditional clothes, engaged in discussion and entertained. We attended the opening of two different women’s centres, both developed with BMETS support, saw and heard that the women’s groups had not only sustained but built their membership and were all well along with growing new crops, weaving new products, cooking for markets, hosting dignitaries to their villages ... Moreover, we witnessed that women who a few years ago had sat quiet and reticent were speaking up loud, leading meetings, greeting leaders, acting as leaders, confronting violence in their communities, showing compassion for each other.

On several occasions we met the 28 young women and men to whom we offer university scholarships. They had survived the covid time too, continuing studying under very difficult circumstances and still achieving notable results. The BMETS scholarship student set now include three young women with disabilities who are active advocates for the rights of their peers.

JDN young activists and leaders (and now microlet drivers – the first women drivers in the country) spoke about their work on sexual harassment, nutrition for young mothers and women, gender rights and then we saw Analia and Elga in action leading a workshop with the Hatobuilico women. Fabulous talent and energy. BMETS is proud of this connection.

Our visit also showed that Arcoiris has used the covid time to build up the beautiful safe place that is used as a refuge and training centre for LGBTQ women and set new staff, volunteers, and administrative stability in place.

Why has this all worked so well? Because we have deep sustained relationships with Timorese people – the staff at the Alola Foundation (mana sira Paulina, Josefina, Evelina, Nuni, maun Triponio) JDN mentors and the Arcoiris leadership team, Bella and Iram. We are so fortunate to work with the massively skilled and connected maun Acacio who has been our “legs” and “light” in Timor for so many years now. On top, we now are well known and acknowledged by the local leadership, particularly in Hatobuilico, where we now focus much of our effort – the chefe de sucos, new Hatobuilico Sub District Administrator Senor Bento, Padre Agiu to mention a few.

And here in Australia? BMT4T and BMETS through covid and the scourge of zoom plus prohibitions on face-to-face fundraising, has maintained its marvellous, committed band of people. We have also kept the funds rolling in and just found unique ways to retain our donors and keep our projects afloat and, indeed, develop now initiatives. We have held our 8th TREK for Timor!

Blue Mountains has been working with Timor-Leste since 2004. We have a particular 'Friendship' with the remote mountainous area of Hatobuilico. BM Together for Timor Inc. (BMT4T) was established and incorporated in 2015 to build on all the relationships between Blue Mountains local communities and communities in Timor.

Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters (BMETS) was established in 2004 and is auspiced by BMT4T. Both groups work closely with, Blue Mountains City Council Hatobuilico Friendship Committee and the Springwood East Timor Support Group. BMT4T exist to develop stronger international understanding and co-operation. We raise funds to enable development and resources, especially in education and women's leadership.

The period of this Report is marked by the covid pandemic, and the aftermath of the severe flooding experienced In Timor-Leste in March 2021. Covid has meant Timor-Leste has had repeated states of emergency and lock downs. We had a long time between visits to projects, but work continued well assisted by WhatsApp and then the visits.

This document reports on the separate and combined outcomes of BMT4T and BMETS (in some instances, BMETS and BMT4T have combined projects; in some instances, separate projects).

Significant achievements of 2021 2022: Summary

- **Covid**– despite all the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic, BMT4T & BMETS have continued meeting regularly and developing & resourcing projects
- **Hatobuilico Women's groups** opened two new centres
- **Women's NGO 'FUAN: Unian Feto Hatobuilico'** administered the flood response funds and food
- **BMETS /BMT4T partnership** and both groups have not only continued to meet but have thrived (unlike many counterparts in other areas who have struggled during the last year) and **BMT4T Management Committee** has functioned well within the year
- The **Global Development Group** partnership and BMT4T & BMETS continue to go well
- **Our liaison / community development officer**, Acacio Soares, continued to keep our programs going & communication with Blue Mountains alive. Sadly, he resigned from his role after 5 years at the end of the period. We deeply appreciate our connection with him and his work for us.
- We were fortunate to have two separate visits to our projects in the period
- And **our projects** as follows – so much great work achieved ...



Significant achievements of 2021 2022: Projects

Hatobuilico Scholarships Program (BMT4T)

BMT4T, in collaboration with Blue Mountains City Council, annually provides funding for scholarships for young people from the Hatobuilico Sub-District to attend university. The program is administered through the Alola Foundation partnership with 9 then 8 students in the year. Supporting these students to undertake tertiary qualifications helps build the capacity of the local Hatobuilico community. Studying subjects as diverse as Teaching, Engineering, IT and International Relations, the students are selected on merit and their ability to contribute back to the community.

Three students successfully graduated at the end of 2021, undertaking careers in banking and teaching. One student was accepted into a labour program in Australia, commencing mid year 2022.

Following our visit in 2022 we plan to provide each student with a laptop, having heard that students faced huge barriers in the current on-line environment, that computer access at their universities was restrictive and limited and that they were required to regularly use particular software programs as part of their studies. During our meeting with the students we heard about the complexities that they face undertaking their studies, including lecturers failing to turn up for class, long delays in receiving their results, and lengthy waiting times to graduate.



2021 2022 Hatobuilico Scholarship program:

Hermenegilda da C. de Araujo	English (Teaching)
Jacinta da Silva Rodrigues	Teaching
Agostinho Brandao Araujo	IT
Andre da Silva Pacheco	IT
Angelina dos Reis	Education
Ronaldo Verdial Lopes	Civil Engineering
Odelia Bastias	Political Science
Victorino Marques Araujo	International Relations

BMETS Scholarship Program 2022 program

BMETS supported 18 young women with scholarships in 2021 and 20 in 2022 to attend university.

Students receive support to pay fees and also to cover the costs of books and materials related to their studies. Without this support these women would not get the opportunity to study at tertiary level and develop professional careers. They come from the 13 districts across Timor-Leste and to participate in the program must come from very poor families and show educational promise.

Students study subjects as varied as accounting, midwifery, geology, education, nursing, laboratory science, entrepreneurship, and public health. At the end of 2022, 5 students will graduate. In this year, we were pleased to support 3 young women with disabilities from Ahisaun. Fortunately, we met the young women when we visited Timor in June / July this year and were very impressed with their determination and intelligence. We heard that these students needed additional resources and equipment to enable them to study successfully (which we committed to provide), computer access and we were also very pleased to hear later that JDN had had independent contact with the young women who were active as activists for their peers.

As for the BMT4T students detailed above, BMETS students similarly reported a need for access to computers / laptop and we undertook to support this necessary component of modern study.



Hatobuilico Senior Secondary School (BMT4T)

The Hatobuilico Senior Secondary School (ESCANFER) continues to grow through 2022 to now with 160 students enrolled right now.

This year the school has managed to secure government funding for 7 teachers to be put on paid, contract work at the school. This means that now 10 of the 17 teachers are funded with contracted salaries and the school can continue to operate and improve its credentials and recognition of importance to the community by the government.

In June 2022, a number of Together for Timor committee members visited Hatobuilico and were specifically welcomed by the Senior Secondary school including David Ludenia, followed by Mary Waterford, Judy Finch and Lesley Sammon later in the month. These visits have been the first for several years and are an important way of maintaining successful and clear communication with the school and its projects.

The school has informed us that they are running out of teaching space now with works continuing albeit slowly on a new administration building to facilitate another classroom. Several requests and suggestions have been made for future projects, possibly from the 2022 Trek for Timor funds, in regard to the school. A few are listed below:

- Library and IT building for Senior Secondary School; providing funding for books, computers etc
- Volunteer teacher's stipend increased
- Increase poor families' allocation to US \$2,000
- Increase in sports & music equipment
- Support curriculum materials - texts in science, English, geography etc
- Funds for notebooks, pens etc

An in depth look at the school's current financial status is required to establish future funding and how the current funds are being distributed and shared for infrastructure, poor family allocation and teacher salaries.



Hatobuilico Women's Projects (BMETS)

In the last year, BMETS continued to support seven women's groups and added an additional group (making eight now) to establish economic enterprises.

In the period the small economic enterprises developed significantly. Products have been diverse and have ranged from hand woven tais to machine sewn school bags, raising pigs, growing vegetables, selling coffee and noodles to pilgrims, embroidering tablecloths, making ornamental flowers and baking bread.

The 2-day annual Women's Leadership and Training Forum was held in Datari in July 2022 with over 50 women coming from across the sub-district. Specific training about sexual harassment led by young women from Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasional (JDN). The workshop included training by Alola staff about nutrition, cooking with local vegetables. And the women responded enthusiastically to discussion about some of their membership standing as candidates in forthcoming elections. Women gained from hearing from each other about how they had developed their products, managed their finances and maintained and extended their groups. This was followed up with each of the women going back to their groups and passing on the learnings from the workshop.

Some of the groups are going very strongly with powerful and clear leadership; some groups have more limited skills and leadership; there is some conflict within some of the groups but in most instances the members get on amazingly well and cooperation is exemplary.

We continue to work in partnership with the Alola Foundation, through mana Evelina, mana Paulina, and their Ainaro field officer, mana Josefina Perreira, to support the groups.

We have funded the construction/renovation of three women's specific centres (two in this period):

1. The Mauchiga women's centre was essentially completely rebuilt with a verandah and a separate kitchen added. Now there are continuing repairs necessary for the roof. Despite some leakage and damage the centre is being fully used by Mauchiga women.

2. The building of a brand-new women's community centre in Datari was enabled by Andrew McNaughtan Foundation funds. The building and the fit out (funded by BMETS) is now completed. The women are able to undertake training, work together to develop products for sale, rent space to visiting dignitaries and government visitors. Women are working together to develop products for sale in local markets.
3. The Hatobuilico Women's Shop and Restaurant is an addition to the Hatobuilico Community Centre. BMETS funded the reconstruction of the building; USAID provided the fit out of the café and shop. Three of the Hatobuilico women's groups are collaborating to develop a small business that will sell food and local handicrafts and souvenirs to tourists and pilgrims climbing Mt Ramelau. The women have received training in hospitality, product development and financial management during the year, specific to the tourism venture.



Additionally, the women were supported by a local NGO called JU,S to register as a legal Association FUAN: Unian Feto Hatobuilico. This is a massive opportunity for the women who, with registration, will be able to apply to manage Timorese government funding.



Young women took on positions of leadership which was a fabulous outcome. Mana Josefina Perriera, the Field Officer from Alola Foundation, has been working extra hours with the Hatobuilico women to help them get their restaurant going well. Renovations to the Hatobuilico Community Centre are now completed and the women have commenced their catering business.

We have submitted for further USAID funds to support this project and unfortunately have not been successful to date. However, we now hear that the women will receive support for their tourism ventures from the Timor Government.

BMETS members attended two special occasions for the inauguration of the two centres: Datari and Hatobuilico in July 2022, both held because we were able to attend as guests and were incredible affairs. The ceremonies were attended by local officials demonstrating the connectedness and visibility of the groups. We were impressed with the leader from the Ainaro Women's Association speaking and the impact on the women.

JDN- Juventude Desenvolvimento Nationale (BMETS)

Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasional (JDN) is a youth NGO based in Dili working in the districts and Dili itself in a range of young people's rights and health issues. We have funded them for a range of projects: resourcing young women to advocate about the issue of sexual harassment against young women; assisting with their important work on nutrition and tourism development; assisting them to link with the *indigo foundation* as a new donor and to linking them with the Andrew McNaughtan Foundation to gain funds to buy a microlet. Now they have two paid staff and over 120 volunteers. The work of the organisation is supported by two Australian mentors, Jenny and Bernie.

In the last year, JDN have significantly advanced their work on reducing sexual harassment. This has been achieved by working on public safety, particularly focusing on being women being able to travel securely on microlets (training for drivers, establishing a code of conduct, public policy development, women training as microlet drivers, working with a large team of more than 80 young people committed and trained as advocates who then train up their peers in their local neighbourhoods, providing workshops on nutrition for young mothers in different areas within Dili, gender rights work with young people with disabilities.

The JDN model is that everything is driven and undertaken by young people themselves and they have been fortunate to have particularly talented and committed young leaders in Analia and Elga.

We were pleased to see firsthand the quality of their work when we invited them to present at the annual women’s workshop in Datari (outlined above). They proved to be very well prepared and organised as well as skilled and enthusiastic facilitators and animators.

JDN really are a very impressive organisation, and their work is extremely high calibre, spanning impact on the personal and family front on gender changes, to public policy and broader social change.



Arcoiris Timor-Leste (BMETS)

Arcoiris works with Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender (LBT) community members within Timor-Leste, ‘to enhance and sustain the pride and dignity, health, and well-being of youth and young LBT adults by empowering them with knowledge, skills, linking with services, resources and opportunities in a culturally diverse society’. This group is un-served by mainstream supports and has had a partnership with BMETS since 2017.



In 2021 2022, BMETS partnered with Arcoiris to facilitate the implementation of a ‘Safe Place’ for and managed by the LBT members.

It is a drop-in place to visit for LBT participants can visit with no prior appointment and share their personal and family reactions towards their gender identity and sexual orientation. The LBT members are offered meals, tea, coffee at the safe space- Shelter besides facilities for shower and laundry. Many of them request Arcoiris to hold meetings with their families and explain concepts of SOGIESC and encourage them to accept their LBT family members. Besides, the visiting the place is also available for members to learn new skills like Carpentry, land scaping and recycling of waste materials and baking. Arcoiris works with a small team with the support from LBT community volunteers. BMETS are proud of our association with this ground-breaking work in Catholic Timor and are assisting Arcoiris to find additional funding.

Uma Ramelau

Uma Ramelau is the name of the student house that has been built in Ailoklaran in Dili to provide accommodation for young University students from Hatobuilico Sub-District. It has been largely funded through donations sought from friends under a small informal foundation. The building is complete now and fitted out, agreements reached and criteria set with the Hatobuilico xefe de sucos. UR has its own bank account and is only loosely under the auspice of BMT4T.

In the last year, following Dave and Leanne’s visit and then the visit with Mary, Lesley and Jude, a water system was developed. This was extensive really, enabling fresh clean water from a spring above the house to be piped to a holding tank at the house. The system required the water source to be protected from landslide and slippage of soil, safe flow of water to the house, storage and then gravity feeding to the kitchen and bathroom. The house is not on a town water supply and would have required a well to be sunk as an alternative method for securing water access, which would have been prohibitively costly. To date, the young people living in the house have needed to purchase water, stored then in a tank and carried to the kitchen. This has been beyond their means.

At the time of visiting, there were 6 young people living in the house and studying at university. Olandino de Araujo, the brains and he person who has put most effort into the building of the house, has completed his degree in tourism and now is acting as the house manager. We expect that the full complement of 12 young people will be able to be accommodated in the house in 2023. This will be the completion of a dream and 7 years of sustained effort.



Maubisse Hospital Liaison (BMETS)

For many years, BMETS have been pleased to support breast feeding and provide support for new mothers who birth in hospital through a salary for a health liaison worker at the Maubisse Hospital.

Alola Field Officers (BMETS)

In the last year, we have responded to the Alola Foundation’s need for support for their invaluable field officers’ program. Field officers are based in each of the 12 districts across Timor. They are all women. The field officers undertake a range of responsibilities including assisting local women leaders, actual and potential, to develop their skills and confidence in reaching out to their communities, gaining a profile, contributing to community planning and decision making; running local forums where women identify needs in their communities and then advocating for these; acting as a first port of call for women facing domestic violence and referring them to legal, police and support services. The field officers also are the contact point and organisers for other Alola staff who deliver programs such as nutrition for newborn babies or domestic violence rights to women in the rural areas.

The work of the Alola Foundation, who are truly a national organisation and offer services and support and advocacy for women from all the districts, require a solid team of field officers. Unfortunately, Alola has not been able to secure funding for the salaries for the program in the recent period and they appealed to us for support. We have responded by submitting to other donors on their behalf, as well as providing one off funding for unfunded field officer salaries for periods. We would love to be able to assist more!

Blue Mountains’ liaison / community development officer: Acacio Soares (BMT4T)

None of this work could have happened without the input of Acacio Soares, BMT4T’s liaison / community development officer who has been energetic, imaginative, encouraging and supportive as the women have moved forward with their ambitious agenda. We have been fortunate indeed to work with someone as reliable, communicative and determined as Acacio has shown himself to be.



Acacio at right at opening of the Hatobuilico Women’s Centre. Mana Josefina at centre with Senor Hilario, chede de suco Nunomogue second from left

2021 2022: The people here in the Blue Mountains

Blue Mountains Together for Timor Inc Management Committee 2021 2022:

President	Mary Waterford.
Vice President	David Ludenia
Secretary	Susan Ambler
Treasurer	Sue Atherton
Projects Officer / Public Officer / Committee member	Jude Finch
Committee member	Wendy Chandler
Committee member	Catherine Van Gelderen

The BMT4T Management Committee is the backbone of the work of the Blue Mountains Timor-Leste partnerships and its members are much appreciated for their commitment to the work. They provide the legal structures that re-enforce the relationships and each take responsibility in different ways.

Trek for Timor 2022 was once again led by Dave Ludenia. Together with a dedicated IT team of Ian Watson and Maggi Williams we were once again able to run the Trek virtually. We sought a different fundraising platform Raisely [Trek For Timor Blue Mountains \(raisely.com\)](https://www.raisely.com) which made the process much easier for trekkers and donors. Report below.

The twenty plus members of Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters are energetic and steadfast. While face to face fundraising has made for a much more challenging environment the group has continued to meet monthly (for 17 years now) and to provide support and friendship to each other as well as to our friends in Timor.

Much thanks and recognition must also go to Councillor Romola Hollywood who has been a key supporter of the work with Timor.

Special report 1: Tribute to John Telford (10 January 1937 - 21 July 2022)

John was a key member of all the Trek organising committees and all things Timor for over a decade. John sadly passed away this year.

This is from the obituary published by the BM Gazette.

John Telford lived an extraordinary life, and the Blue Mountains is better for his choice to live and work here. It is not possible to talk about John without including his partner, Elaine. John and Elaine were inseparable in their shared determination to develop their community.

Prior to retirement and settling in Hazelbrook in 2005, John and Elaine lived around the world, working on community development projects including in Africa, Jordan and remote parts of Australia. John was known for his pioneering approaches to community development focussing on the principles of self-determination and empowerment.

John was a kind, thoughtful man, enacting the same impassioned responsibility in the Blue Mountains that was the hallmark of his 85 years. John was a highly respected advocate for social justice and reconciliation with First Nations peoples and for opportunities for disadvantaged communities. His involvement in the Blue Mountains People for Reconciliation (BM ANTaR) and his leadership of the Blue Mountains Hatobuilico / Timor-Leste Friendship Committee and its associate action groups (BM Together for Timor; BM Trek for Timor) were avenues for significant and lasting

contributions.

Ever modest about his achievements, John drew people to him, people were confident in him. John was humble with a mantra, “You can achieve anything if you don’t mind who gets the credit”. With the skills of a real leader, John did not promote himself but he was reliably available, offering his experience or donning an apron. John was a heavy lifter - facilitating complex planning sessions, solving seemingly intractable community issues, taking minutes, making sandwiches.

John grew up on a dairy farm in the Gippsland Region of Victoria, raised in a family where community service was the norm. These principles guided his choice to work with the Institute for Cultural Affairs in remote Australia and in other countries. Later John held senior positions with Community Aid Abroad and CARE Australia, working in Iraq. Then John and Elaine successfully co-tendered for the role as ‘Australians for Reconciliation’ Co-ordinators in NSW. Significant achievements included establishing the State Reconciliation Committee, setting up the Women’s Reconciliation Network, his work culminating in the Walk for Reconciliation in 2000 when hundreds of thousands walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge.

John will be greatly missed though leaves a legacy in a profound contribution to social justice in the Blue Mountains and beyond.



Special report 2: Trek for Timor Blue Mountains

The Blue Mountains Trek for Timor was once again held as a virtual event in October 2022, due to many uncertainties and complexities around track hazards, closures and availability to host an on the day event. This was a tough decision and difficult to continue motivation for many repeat trekkers and so although down on previous Treks, the event was still a key contributor to Together for Timor’s funding with \$33,800 raised. 49 trekkers participated throughout the month of October, trekking cumulatively over 2700kms.

There was great media coverage once again by the Blue Mountains Gazette and the creative marketing and journalistic writers from the Trek volunteer committee which undoubtedly contributed towards not only the financial outcome but awareness around the Together for Timor projects, committee and exceptional volunteers. An Instagram account was also created by Eva Soares and managed, alongside the current Facebook page to further engage with trekkers and interested people for the future.

A key difference in the online event platform was the new operating system hosting the event through Raisely. This platform not only simplified the sign up, sponsorship and logging kms profiles of each trekker but also the accounting and reporting back end of the event. A special mention must be made to Ian Watson for the significant time, expertise and energy contribution to transitioning to this new platform whilst maintaining the current hosting website of the Trek. This new platform also has significant cost savings for the event meaning that more of the funds raised can go directly toward the Together for Timor projects.

Special thanks to the incredible work of the Trek organising committee: Ian Watson, Maggi Williams, John Tweedie, Mikayla Muscat from the wider community; Sue, Wendy, Susan, Lesley, Jude, Eva, and Dave Ludenia from BMT4T.



Blue Mountains Together for Timor Inc.

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Blue-Mountains-Together-for-Timor>

Trek for Timor Blue Mountains

[Trek For Timor Blue Mountains \(raisely.com\)](https://www.raisely.com).

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/trekfortimorbm>

Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters Project,

PO Box 4, Wentworth Falls 2782 NSW Australia

www.bmets.org.au

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BlueMountainsEastTimorSisters>



BM Together for Timor Treasurer's Report 2021-22

During the 2022 Financial year Blue Mountains Together for Timor Inc (BMT4T), incorporating Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters (BMETS) and BMT4T raised a little over \$87,000 for our projects in Timor Leste. This was down from the previous year as we did not hold a Trek event and Covid restrictions hampered our ability to hold other fundraising events. We received a very generous bequest and a contribution from BMCC . Thank you to all those who supported (and continue to support) our fundraising efforts.

Slightly under \$78,000 was spent on projects during the year. This included the continued funding for several projects including University Scholarships, Hatobuilico Senior Secondary School (ESCANFER) Teacher Stipends and student bursaries, Hatobuilico Women's projects and Alola District Field Officers. New Youth Leadership Sexual Harassment/Nutrition (JDN) and Acoiris projects were also funded.

A surplus of a little over \$9,000 was retained for spending in future years.

Our partnership with Global Development Group (GDG) is continuing to develop. A few issues during the year were quickly resolved. Thank you to Jessica Corrie & Geoff Armstrong and all the team at GDG for their ongoing support.

Challenges remain such as the difficulty for our Timor partners to quickly access bank accounts due to accountability protocols in East Timor. Huge thanks must go to Acacio Soares, our Timor Leste Project Officer for his hard work and perseverance in ensuring the best outcomes for the people of Hatobuilico. Also to our other partners in Timor Leste - Alola Foundation, Hatobuilico Senior Secondary School – ESCANFER, Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasional (JDN), Arcoiris - Timor-Leste and others as per the Annual Report.

Sue Atherton,
Treasurer BM Together for Timor Inc.