

Friends of Suai/Covalima

Annual Report 2020/21





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Message from the Chair

Megs Alston

Chair, Friends of Suai /Covalima Community Reference Committee

It is a pleasure to present the Annual Report of Friends of Suai/Covalima 2020/21 and to highlight some of this year's achievements.

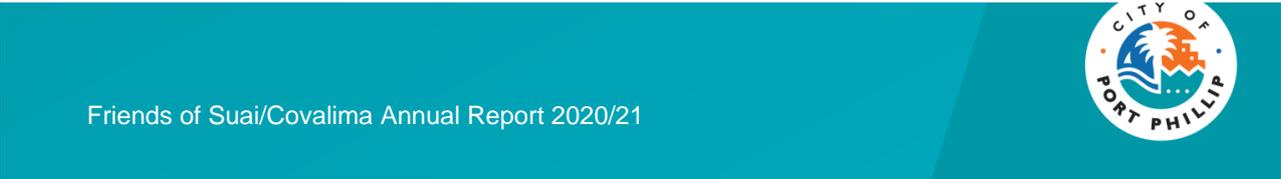
Obviously, the year has presented many challenges, both here and in Timor-Leste, but despite this, there are many remarkable successes which you will read about.

Even though many of our planned 20th anniversary celebrations were postponed last year, this year we managed to celebrate with a 20th year commemorative booklet launched online in July 2020, the release of a beautiful film "The Art of Friendship" made by member Jen Hughes in May 2021 and a significant book written and published by member Ann Wigglesworth and launched in August 2020, "Friendship for Development: Stories of a partnership between Suai, Timor-Leste and the City of Port Phillip, Australia". In between our many lockdowns in Melbourne, we held a successful Trivia Night in April 2021, a bright note for us here.

In Suai, our partner the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) continues to work closely with the Municipal Government. Relations have been further enhanced, as in February 2021, a founder and former Coordinator of the Covalima Community Centre, Francisco de Andrade was inaugurated as the new Municipal Administrator of Covalima. He is very supportive of their work. This augurs well for future collaboration and involvement of the CCC in the excellent work they do throughout the Covalima community especially on COVID-related education and prevention. Following the devastating floods which hit Timor-Leste in April 2021, the CCC played an important role in getting food and emergency relief to people in outlying areas.

A significant outcome during this year was the commitment by the City of Port Phillip to renew and extend its relationship with Covalima by signing a third 10-year Friendship Agreement between the communities of the City of Port Phillip and the District of Covalima. Mayor Cr Bernadene Voss signed the Friendship Agreement in September 2020 and it was signed in Timor-Leste by Mr Lino de Jesus Torrezão, Vice Minister of State Administration, in January 2021.

This means a great deal to the government of Timor-Leste and of course, to the people of Suai and Covalima District. Especially in this time of COVID-19 and all the challenges it presents to people around the world, our friends in Suai really appreciate support, information and ideas to help them deal with the pandemic, and to know that they have friends here in the City of Port Phillip who follow their endeavours. On our part, there has been great concern for them, and we have closely followed events in Timor-Leste and in particular in Covalima. As a border district it is vulnerable to incursions of the virus across their border and we have been impressed with their ability to educate their far-flung rural communities about the virus and take measures to control its spread.



During the year the Community Reference Committee developed and finalised a new Strategic Plan for the next five years. Despite the difficulties of having to discuss and debate ideas over Zoom meetings rather than being able to meet in person, the result is a very clear and concise plan, which contains ways to measure our success in meeting our objectives over the period ahead. On behalf of Friends of Suai I want to thank our pro bono consultant Jan Cossar who made such a significant contribution in helping us with the result and for her considerable skill and good humour in guiding our work. Thanks are due also to all the members of the committee who worked hard to achieve the outcome. The Strategic Plan 2020-25 was endorsed by Council in September 2020. The Annual Report is aligned to this 2020-25 Strategic Plan.

Once again I thank the generous and loyal donors to Friends of Suai who make so much of the work in Covalima possible, and who even though many fundraising events were cancelled have continued to give; to the City of Port Phillip Council for its formal renewal of the Friendship and for its continued support; and to the work of Coordinator Carlene Harlock whose thoughtful mentoring and support for our partner in Suai the CCC, enables its staff to develop and grow.

Megs Alston

Chair, Friends of Suai /Covalima Community Reference Committee



(Former) Mayor Bernadene Voss signing the renewed Friendship agreement in September 2020





Friends of Suai Strategic Plan 2020-25

Vision

An enduring relationship between Port Phillip and Covalima communities based on friendship, mutual understanding, learning and respect

Purpose

Contribute to social, economic and environmental development for the benefit of the Covalima community and build our understanding of community development and cultural diversity

Our Values

- **Equity** - We work towards building and sustaining our relationship with Covalima municipality in a fair and impartial way, allowing give and take by both parties.
- **Respect** - Our communication is open, honest and respectful; we will act ethically, recognising each other's wishes, rights and beliefs.
- **Integrity** - We work together to achieve our common goals through transparent democratic institutions and processes.
- **Mutual learning** - We acknowledge and value the new understandings, knowledge and skills we share and gain from each other.





Outcome 1

The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability

Strategies

1. Support CCC priority programs in education, public health, climate adaptation, livelihoods, social enterprise and advocacy
2. Assist and provide mentoring support for CCC capacity strengthening priorities in areas of human resources, management and governance
3. Support diversification of CCC funding and partnerships

The Covalima Community Centre (CCC)

Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) works in partnership with the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) to meet the aims and objectives of the Friendship Agreement between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities and municipalities.

The CCC is governed by a Commission of nine community leaders (3 women and 6 men) and the team of 33 staff is led by the Director, Vice-Director, Program Team Leader and Coordinators for each program area. The Centre is a vibrant, well-managed and inclusive community hub which provides training, support, connection and programs for people throughout the district. The CCC has a strong focus on advocacy, inclusion and gender equality in all programs and is building strong networks with local and national government and NGOs.

The CCC receives core funding from the City of Port Phillip for costs of running the Centre. Community donations from FoSC members and supporters fund a range of programs including education, health and reforestation. In addition, the CCC receives funding for other programs through partnerships with local and international NGOs to deliver programs.

This report includes an overview of all CCC activities in order to demonstrate the breadth of programs at the CCC, and acknowledges all partners funding CCC programs.



Staff and Commission members at the Covalima Community Centre.



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Public health and COVID-19 response

Throughout the year, the CCC has continued with important work to stop the spread of Coronavirus by sharing information widely throughout the district of Covalima.

Working in collaboration with the District COVID-19 taskforce, led by municipal government, the team at the CCC has visited 130 sub-villages across all seven sub-districts of Covalima. They have held community meetings, set up basic hand-washing stations and distributed WHO infographics and bars of soap donated by FoSC. In recent months, there has been a strong focus on encouraging community members to get vaccinated.

Many of these sub-villages are extremely vulnerable due to their proximity to the border with Indonesia, where cases of COVID-19 are continuing to increase. Although the government is closely monitoring the land borders, illegal crossings still occur. The CCC has advocated for vigilant patrolling and regular testing along the border.

The CCC team is also focussed on embedding health promotion messaging into training programs delivered at the CCC, at local schools, and in all communities where CCC programs are implemented.



30 CCC staff received their first Coronavirus vaccines in June 2021.



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District COVID-19 Taskforce

Early in 2020, the CCC team were formally invited to participate in the District COVID-19 Taskforce. This was great recognition for the CCC on their proactive response to the pandemic and their capacity and drive to support their community. As part of this Taskforce, the CCC staff were able to travel freely throughout the district and worked in collaboration with other local NGOs and government departments. One of the initial shared activities was to install plastic water tanks for handwashing in public places around Suai.

When COVID-19 case numbers increased early in 2021, the Taskforce was 'reactivated' and expanded to include sub-district and community leaders. The CCC is one of only two NGOs involved in the Taskforce and continues to play an integral role. The team has been asked to continue their work in preventing the spread of COVID-19, including disseminating information, disinfecting public spaces and providing demonstrations of handwashing, social distancing, etc. The Director has also attended many public events with the Municipal Administrator, Police Commander and Health department staff to remind people of COVID-19 protocols and encourage people to get vaccinated.



Left: CCC staff are regularly disinfecting quarantine and isolation centres in Suai, June 2021,

Right: CCC staff with infographics on preventing the spread of COVID-19,



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Civic Health Fund

The COVID-19 response activities at the CCC are funded through a Civic Health Fund which was established by FoSC in 2020 to fund ongoing initiatives to promote health and hygiene. Over the last 12 months the primary focus of the fund has been to share information and resources with communities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Timor-Leste has faced many challenges during the year. The social and economic costs of the continued 'state of emergency' have been high and many local traders and farmers have lost income. This has been exacerbated by damage caused by severe weather events including heavy rains and floods.

In April, Covalima district experienced severe flooding with significant damage to homes and infrastructure. Since the floods, the Civic Health Fund has also funded support for food relief for vulnerable families. Funds were raised at the FoSC annual trivia night to support these activities. Other NGOs are also working in this area, however the CCC has identified that some families are 'falling through the cracks' and are working to ensure that all families in need are receiving food packages. In some cases, the food packages have been provided by other NGOs however the CCC are assisting with distribution, coordination and transport.

Additional funds will soon be available as the CCC has successfully applied for funding through international NGO Give2Asia to provide food relief to more than 200 families.



The CCC team has distributed masks and soap to many remote villages along the border with Indonesia.



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District Disaster Management Committee

The CCC actively participate in the District Disaster Management Committee and has been involved in the emergency response in these situations. The CCC has experience delivering programs focussed on disaster risk reduction, so they are well placed to support local government and communities to undertake rapid assessments and distribute emergency supplies. Any costs incurred are funded through the Civic Health Fund.



Delivering emergency supplies to flood affected villagers, December 2020



The Municipal Administrator (second from right) distributed emergency supplies to villages after severe floods in April 2021.



Suai Secondary School WASH facilities

The FoSC-funded water, sanitation and hygiene project at Suai Secondary School continues to provide running water and toilets for the more than 2,100 students and staff at the school. There are also 46 local families living nearby who have access to the community water tank.

With encouragement from FoSC and the CCC, the school has established a WASH Committee consisting of teachers, representatives from the Parents Association and local communities, to ensure the sustainability of the water supply and to oversee the collection of funds and expenditure to maintain the facilities. The school has also recently installed a further 10 wash basins and students are encouraged to wash their hands regularly.

The CCC has an ongoing relationship with the school and continue to monitor projects funded by FoSC, including the library resources and reconstructed basketball court. They will continue to encourage health and hygiene training at the school and to monitor the facilities.

Education and training

English language and computer training

Computer and English language training courses continue to be delivered at the CCC and remain very popular. The CCC trainers have implemented COVID safe protocols, including wearing masks, handwashing, cleaning and social distancing.

This year there were 136 students who enrolled in English language training and 201 enrolments for computer training. Enrolment fees for the English language and computer training generate income for the IT Social Enterprise at the CCC.

English language students are encouraged to access the mini library set up at the CCC, which includes over 2,000 books, DVDs and games donated by FoSC. The library is also used by CCC staff and scholarship students during their school holidays.



English language and computer training courses at the CCC now include a health & hygiene component



Health training at CCC

The CCC Health Coordinator developed a health & hygiene training program to deliver, at no cost, to students who are enrolled in computer and English language programs at the CCC. The pilot program was delivered to 17 students in November 2020 and is now delivered to all students enrolled in training. The training includes demonstrating and practising handwashing techniques, and explanations of why wearing masks and practising social distancing are important. Students receive Tetun language infographics and bars of soap and are encouraged to share their learning with their families and in their villages.

Costs for the training are minimal and are funded through the Civic Health Fund established with funds by FoSC since June 2020.



Handwashing training is provided to all students doing training at the CCC



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Suai Secondary School library

FoSC continues to provide resources to add to the library collection at Suai Secondary School and funds two librarians to manage the library. The librarians maintain detailed records on the resources that are accessed and borrowed. More than by 2,100 students and teachers benefit from this fantastic collection.

The library now contains over 4,200 donated books in four languages, including fiction, non-fiction and reference materials. There is also a collection of more than 125 pieces of science equipment which are regularly borrowed by biology, physics and chemistry teachers to use in the classroom.

More resources will soon be added to the collection as a shipment containing books and science equipment, donated by FoSC volunteers, is due to reach Suai in July 2021. This year a collection of books donated by the Australia East Timor Association, also due to arrive in July, will also be added to the library collection.



The Suai Secondary School library continues to be well utilised by students



Scholarships

Education has always been a strong focus of the friendship. Since 2012, FoSC has funded a scholarship program and more than 166 scholarships have been provided for students to further their studies. The scholarship program encourages gender equity and provides educational opportunities for students from disadvantaged families. Scholarships are offered for students to further their education at senior secondary schools, vocational training colleges and universities in Timor-Leste, with courses from 12 months through to four years in duration.

Scholarships are funded through FoSC fundraising activities and community donations, and the Education Program Coordinator at the CCC organises the registration and enrolment processes. Opportunities to apply for scholarships are widely promoted, with the aim to reach students in remote communities and encourage them to apply.

Integral to the success of the program is the pastoral care provided to the students during their studies. This has been especially important during the last 12 months as the pandemic has caused many disruptions to education. In particular, students living away from home to study have been impacted by travel restrictions, school closures and having to try to adapt to online learning. Practical placements and graduation have also been delayed. The Education Program Coordinator remains in contact with all students to check on their welfare and provide encouragement. The students have expressed their commitment to complete their studies and look forward to graduating and working in the community.



CCC Education Program Coordinator Dino (left) visits students studying construction at CTC Salele in July 2020



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2020 scholarships

There are 22 FoSC scholarship recipients in 2020. This includes six new scholarships offered in 2020 for places to study primary school teaching (2), hospitality (2) and general construction (2). The 16 continuing students were studying agriculture (2), electrical studies (2), primary school teaching (6), community development (4) and nursing (2).

In addition, there were five students studying Nursing (Midwifery) at the National University in Dili who have yet to complete their studies and graduate. They are continuing to receive support from the Education Program Coordinator at the CCC and some of their continuing education expenses are funded through the FoSC scholarship program.



Left: Students at Baucau Teachers College practicing their skills in the community, June 2021. Right: Silvina with her dissertation in her fourth year of studying Primary Teaching



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2020 graduations

Two students graduated from CTC Salele vocational school general construction training and received a Certificate 2 specialising in welding. During their study they completed a practical placement reconstructing a local health clinic.

Students at the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai complete their studies in December 2020 and graduated with a Certificate 2 in Hospitality. They were also able to gain practical experience during their study and participate in a mini expo during the year to showcase their skills.

One student at Baucau Teacher College has also completed her four-year Bachelor course in primary school teaching, but the graduation ceremony has been postponed until late 2021.



Left, Two students graduated from CVTC Suai with a Certificate 3 in Hospitality, December 2020, Right: Nursing student Odelia is sharing her knowledge on family planning with the community, August 2020



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2021 scholarships

The opportunity to provide scholarships was challenging in 2021 because of the lack of certainty around course enrolments at institutions in and around Dili, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and continued state of emergency. There are students who have previously received FoSC scholarships to complete their secondary school qualifications and would still like to further their vocational education, but this was not possible in 2021.

In 2021, six new scholarships were offered for students to study primary school teaching (2), hospitality (2) and general construction (2). There are also a further 14 students ongoing, who are continuing to study agriculture (2), electrical studies (2), primary school teaching (7) and community development (2). Additionally, two Community Development students and two Midwifery (Nursing) students finished their fourth year in 2020 and are still receiving some support while they finish their final placements and research.



Students at Maliana Agricultural Secondary School completing their final year practical placement in the school garden.



Hospitality students at the Canossian Vocation Training Centre in Suai, April 2021



IT Social Enterprise

The Info Timor Social Enterprise (ITSE) at the CCC generates income through the delivery of computer and English language training programs, and selling second-hand computers at moderate prices for students, families and local businesses. Staff have been trained to refurbish computers, provide free domain software and delivery community training programs. Training course dates and computer equipment available for sale are widely publicised in Covalima and are very popular. Information on the number of students enrolled in training has been included earlier in this report.

FoSC has facilitated the ongoing development of IT services in Suai with regular donations of second-hand computers since 2007. Computers and accessories are donated by community members and through the City of Port Phillip Council disposal program. Although community demand is high, stock levels remained low so income from computer sales and repairs was limited this year. A shipment of computers was packaged and sent from Port Phillip to Timor-Leste in April and will arrive in July 2021. It contains 20 desktop computers and keyboards from CoPP and additional donations of accessories from volunteers.



Computer training courses now incorporate Coronavirus protocols



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Climate adaptation and agriculture

With One Seed reforestation

With One Seed (WoS) is a certified carbon forestry program in Timor-Leste, working with subsistence farming communities to replant deforested land and to generate income for farmers. Farmers are paid to plant and maintain trees and once the trees are established and gold standard certification has been achieved, income will be generated through the sale of carbon social credits. Funding for the establishment of the WoS program in Tilomar sub-district, including employing four staff and the provision of extensive training, has been provided by Xpand Foundation, Oxfam and FoSC funding, with the Rotary Club of Balwyn funding the building and operation of the WoS nursery.

The four staff are employed through the CCC to coordinate and implement the program. They work closely with communities and regularly communicate with the team at WoS in Baguia; where the WoS program was established in 2009. Since WoS in Tilomar sub-district commenced early in 2019, 20,000 young trees have been grown in the WoS nursery and distributed to 58 local landholders.



Left: Mahogany seedlings in the WoS nursery January 2021, Right: Tree planting and WoS program launch, 15 April 2021

Tree distribution

In 2020, 9250 mahogany trees and 750 sandalwood trees were planted, with a further 10,000 mahogany trees distributed from April 2021. The tree distribution this year coincided with the official launch of the program, which had been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The launch was attended by the Municipal Administrator of Covalima district, the Director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Chief of the Department of Forestry, Police & Defence Commanders, Directors of Government institutions and local leaders and communities. It was a significant event and televised on the national news.



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Annual farmer payments

Farmers involved in the program will receive 50 cents per tree per year for continuing to maintain the trees. The WoS staff travelled to Baguia in December 2020 to observe the process of paying farmers, before then replicating this process in Tilomar. The first annual payment to farmers took place in June 2021, at a formal meeting presided over by the Municipal Administrator and community leaders. Payments were distributed to 37 families, providing much needed money to farmers during these difficult times.

FoSC is committed to supporting the establishment of this fantastic initiative as it will have a significant environmental and economic impact in the communities in Tilomar sub-district.



First annual payments to WoS farmers on 23 June 2021



WoS team members monitoring trees, August 2020



Agriculture and disaster risk reduction programs

Haforsa Agriculture program

Until June 2020, the CCC delivered the 'Haforsa' (Strengthening Community Livelihoods) program in four villages in four sub-districts of Covalima. This Oxfam-funded program involved establishing 18 farmer groups with the aim to help them to increase their food security and income. Activities included training in food production, crop diversification, livestock practices, water and land conservation, horticulture and small-scale business.

The Haforsa team also supported the implementation of the 'Romansa' (Saving for Change) program in which groups accumulate their savings and approve small loans to each other from their pooled savings. Groups receive training to set up the program as well as ongoing training and mentoring on financial management. The groups have been very successful, and report that the majority of loans are used to support young people with education and to establish small businesses. Romansa has also been introduced into other programs at the CCC including the Rural Women's Development Program.

Although funding of the Haforsa program ended in June 2020, CCC staff are now working with the same communities and beneficiaries on the Oxfam funded Australian Humanitarian Program (AHP) with a focus on disaster risk reduction.



Social inclusion training is part of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership program, June 2021



Disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs

During the year there were two programs at the CCC that focussed on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); the Oxfam funded Australian Humanitarian Program (AHP) and a similar program funded by an international NGO called Give2Asia. The Give2Asia program was funded from 12 months for the 2020 calendar year, and the AHP program is ongoing.

Both programs work in different target areas but with similar activities, focussed on disaster preparedness, resilience building and training for communities on climate change, risk preparation, land and water conservation. Across the two programs, they work with over 975 beneficiaries in 15 villages.

The staff involved in these programs were also involved in establishing a national association for DRR and participate in quarterly meetings with stakeholders including Sub-District Management Committees. They have supported communities to develop disaster management plans to implement in each village and provided training with the aim to improve each community's knowledge of preventing and mitigating disaster risks.



Distributing emergency supplies to communities



Advocacy

The CCC is a member of Rede Covalima; a network of local NGOs undertaking a range of advocacy work in Covalima. The Covalima Network plays an essential advocacy role in supporting communities through information sharing, facilitation, mediation and mobilising them to take action.

In recent years their main focus has been on supporting communities impacted by national infrastructure projects and advocating for more community consultation and settling of land disputes. Part of this work had been funded through a partnership agreement with Oxfam, called 'Land Inclusive Development' (LID) and this operated as a CCC program, with three staff employed as part of the team. The LID program worked with 13 village groups, involving 274 members, and were involved in 55 land dispute cases during the year. Thirty of the cases have been resolved and 25 are still in process at Civil Court.

Although the LID project is no longer funded, the network still meets regularly at the CCC and is able to support communities with land issues. It now has a broader advocacy focus which includes monitoring project spending by government on infrastructure including roads, water and maintenance. Rede Covalima is the front line in this work but CCC staff and the community are able to bring issues to the network.

Empowering women

Rural Women's Development Program

The CCC has a strong focus on promoting gender equality and contributing to the empowerment of women. Working in partnership and with funding from the International Women's Development Agency since 2009, the CCC implements the Rural Women's Development Program (RWDP). The program activities, which involve 209 women, includes support for women's livelihood groups, capacity development, participation in events and building networks.

There are nine women's groups whose main income generating activities include horticulture, food production, weaving tais and handicrafts. The RWDP staff work with the groups to link them with key stakeholders and to access market opportunities. The staff also facilitate quarterly forums for the groups to share their skills, participate in training and discuss challenges faced during the state of emergency and lockdowns this year.

A further objective is to ensure that women understand gender equality and referral pathways for victims of domestic violence. Training is provided to all women involved in RWDP activities and the wider community. The CCC team also work closely with the Police Vulnerable Persons Unit and provide transport for victims of violence to the local safe house.

The RWDP program also includes leadership training for 39 women to participate in village councils. Leadership training focusses on decision making, good governance, conflict resolution and advocacy. Women involved in the training report that they have developed confidence in public speaking and their ability to advocate for local women.



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The RWDP program quarterly forums are an opportunity to share skills and challenges (left) and leadership training for members of Village Councils (right)



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CCC capacity strengthening

All CCC partners look for opportunities to strengthen skills and the capacity of the CCC team, often sharing the costs if the training is widely beneficial. When development training is offered for a specific program, wherever possible the opportunity to participate is extended to staff, volunteers and Commission members. Many programs are also focussed on 'train the trainer' so participants are encouraged to share information with their colleagues and communities.

This year staff participated in a range of training including the following:

- The finance and leadership team participated in a five-day Quickbooks training course in November 2020.
- All staff participated in fraud training in October 2020.
- More than 20 staff participated in training on gender equality in August 2020.
- Program staff and Coordinators participated in disability inclusion training in October 2020.
- The *With One Seed* program staff received training on land mapping using GPS technology in October 2020.
- Training has also been delivered to individual programs and staff on areas including prevention of gender-based violence, disaster risk reduction rapid assessment, fraud management and child protection.



CCC staff participate in a range of workshops and training programs each year.



CCC management and governance

The CCC is governed by a Commission of nine community leaders (three women and six men). The Commission operates under a Constitution and meets quarterly.

In recognition of the 20-year anniversary of Friendship, Certificates of Appreciation from FoSC were presented to the Commission members, to recognise their loyalty and service to the community. The certificates were signed by CoPP Mayor Cr Bernadene Voss and FoSC Chair Megs Alston and were sent to the CCC for printing.



CCC Commission members with Certificates of Appreciation from FoSC

CCC Strategic Plan

The CCC Commission and staff have developed a new Strategic Plan to guide their work over the next five years. Changes to the key focus areas reflect the strengths of the CCC and their work with communities, networks, organisations and government.

The six key focus areas are:

1. Contribute to the empowerment of women in Covalima
2. Advocacy and influence
3. Organisational empowerment
4. Improve agriculture and environment practices in Covalima
5. Provide training and educational opportunities in Covalima, with a focus on young women and men
6. Promote the health of the community in Covalima

Each key focus area has strategies and from July 2021, the CCC will report on their activities aligned to this plan.



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Annual General Meeting

The 2019/20 AGM scheduled to be held in 2020 had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions on social gatherings. In June 2021 the CCC held their AGM and reported to the community on their activities for both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years.

The public AGM was held on 29 June, with 85 attendees including the Municipal Administrator. Many people asked questions about the CCC programs and there was a lot of enthusiasm from community leaders wanting to be involved in CCC programs such as *With One Seed* and women's leadership training. The Municipal Administrator declared that 'the CCC is the best service for community activities in Covalima'. The *Art of Friendship* documentary film by Jen Hughes was also shown during the meeting, with an introduction and explanation provided by Alberto, and was extremely well received.



Municipal Administrator Francisco de Andrade (left) and CCC Director (right) holding the CCC Annual Report at the AGM.



CCC financial management and audit

The CCC Finance team has clear and transparent systems and policies for record keeping and monitoring program income and expenditure. Seven staff involved in financial management participated in a five-day Quickbooks training course this year to develop skills for recordkeeping and reporting for programs and payroll.

The CCC Director and FoSC Coordinator regularly discuss and review budgets and reports for FoSC funded programs. The CCC fulfils the requirements of the City of Port Phillip funding agreement for core funding for the Centre and provides six-monthly acquittals and reporting on all activities and programs.

External audit

Each year the CCC is externally audited by CC Business Solutions in Dili. Audits are funded by CCC partners and the 2019/20 audit was fully funded by FoSC. The audit was conducted in September 2020. The CCC has received a clean audit report and has implemented recommendations from the auditors, including further training on the use of Quickbooks.



The CCC finance team participated in 5 days Quickbooks training

Policies and procedures

Many policies were reviewed or introduced this year as a requirement of CCC program partners, and the CCC now has policies relating to conduct in the Centre and working with communities. These policies include anti-corruption, fraud, privacy, gender equity and a code of conduct. Program Coordinators and staff have incorporated socialisation programs into their activities to ensure that participants fully understand and follow both the Child Protection policy and Disability Inclusion policy.



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CCC networks and funding

The CCC has developed strong local, national and international networks, and regularly participate in meetings involving community leaders, NGOs, civil service organisations, government and education providers. This has resulted in stronger collaboration and better outcomes for communities.

The work of the CCC is often widely shared with community radio and the national television network is now regularly sharing stories on programs and events at the Centre. There have also been visits to the Centre by National Government members including the Vice Minister of Interior, the Minister of Justice and Vice Minister of State Administration.

In September, FONGTIL (the umbrella organisation for NGOs, CSOs and development partners in Timor-Leste) conducted an assessment of CCC programs and beneficiaries. This is to update their database and to ensure that they have current information so that they can provide information to the CCC on potential funding opportunities.

The CCC leadership team has formed a sub-committee to submit proposals for programs at the CCC. They currently have multiple submissions with international NGOs and National Government departments and are awaiting the outcome.

The CCC has been successful in their submission to international NGO Give2Asia for a food relief program to support vulnerable households in many villages throughout Covalima. This program will be implemented in July 2021.



A DRR stakeholder meeting held at the CCC



Outcome 2

City of Port Phillip (CoPP) and Covalima municipality and their communities are actively engaged in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities

Strategies

1. Increase engagement with CoPP schools and youth
2. Increase engagement with community organisations, businesses and residents in the CoPP
3. Friends of Suai/Covalima hold community events and cultural exchanges (in person or virtual) to celebrate the friendship with the Covalima municipality, including engaging Australian First Nations people
4. Reciprocal learning takes place between the local government of CoPP and Covalima municipality

Extension of friendship agreement until 2030

On 2 September 2020, Council committed to continue supporting the relationship agreement between Port Phillip and Covalima district, Timor-Leste through renewal of the Friendship Agreement for a further ten years.

The Friendship agreement comprises a Statement of Friendship between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities, and an MOU between the Municipal Administration of Covalima and City of Port Phillip.

The Agreement documents were signed in Port Phillip in September 2020, by former Mayor Bernadene Voss and FoSC Chair Megs Alston. The documents were then sent to Dili, and in January 2021 the Agreement was signed by Vice Minister of State Administration Mr Lino de Jesus Torrezão and CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros in Dili.

Signing of the agreements were celebrated in Suai, and the documents were shared with the new Municipal Administrator for Covalima, Francisco de Andrade, after his appointment in February 2021.



Alberto Barros (left) and Vice Minister of State Administration Mr Lino de Jesus Torrezão (right) signing the agreement in January 2021.

20-year anniversary celebrations

Throughout the year, FoSC has found ways to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of the friendship between Port Phillip and Covalima district. At times plans have had to be adapted or postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, but a number of events were held which involved the communities both here and in Suai.

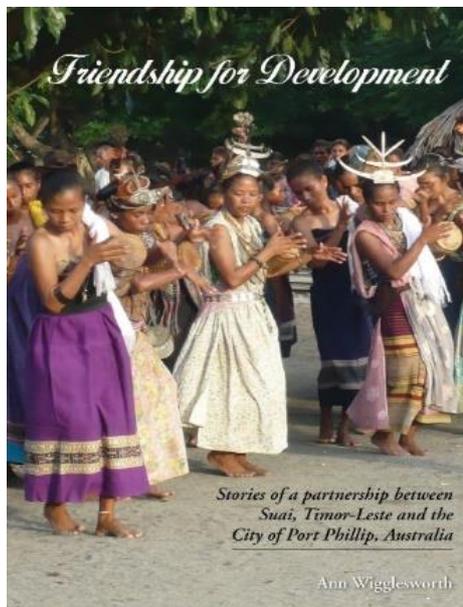
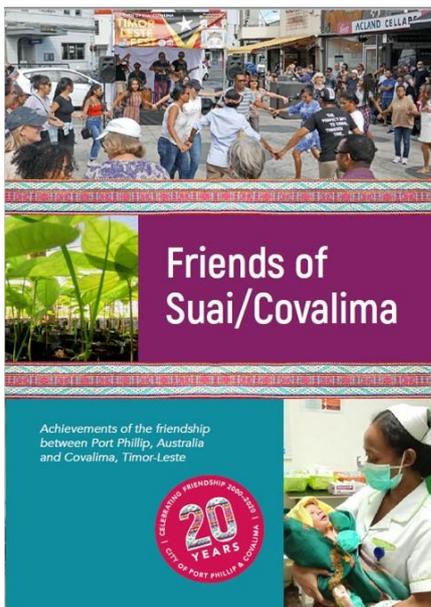
Commemorative booklet launch

A commemorative booklet titled 'Friends of Suai/Covalima: Achievements of the friendship between Port Phillip, Australia and Covalima, Timor-Leste' was produced to reflect on the past, look to the future and celebrate the partnership between the two communities. It was distributed to many involved in the friendship and copies are also available at Port Phillip libraries (hardcopy and e-book). A Tetun language version of the booklet was also produced, with copies shipped to Suai to be distributed to those involved in the friendship.

The booklet was launched online on 2 July 2020, with more than 40 attendees/viewers. There was an array of fantastic guest speakers including Bernadene Voss (former) Mayor of City of Port Phillip; Hon Julian Hill, MP; Peter McMullin, Honorary Consul to Timor-Leste; Her Excellency Ms Inês Maria de Almeida, Ambassador of Timor-Leste and Alberto de Jesus Barros, Director of the Covalima Community Centre in Suai. It was wonderful that many of the team at the CCC were also able to participate.



Friends of Suai/Covalima Annual Report 2020/21



Covers of the two books written to celebrate 20 years of friendship

Book launch – Friendship for Development

In celebration of 20 years of friendship, FoSC Committee member Ann Wigglesworth has written and published a book titled 'Friendship for Development: Stories of a partnership between Suai, Timor-Leste and the City of Port Phillip, Australia'. It includes an in-depth analysis of the partnership and many contributions from those involved in the friendship.

The book was launched by Kirsty Sword Gusmao AO, Chair of Alola Foundation at an online event on 27 August 2020, with more than 85 people attending. There were many guest speakers including two friends from the CCC in Suai; Alberto de Jesus Barros (Director) and Hilaria Amaral (Coordinator of the Rural Women's Development Program). The book is available in Port Phillip libraries or copies can be purchased from FoSC, with proceeds funding programs in Covalima.



The CCC team in Suai joined us online for the 20-year anniversary celebration



Friends of Suai/Covalima Annual Report 2020/21

Art of Friendship documentary film

Film maker and FoSC Committee member Jen Hughes has written and directed a 26 minute documentary film called 'The Art of Friendship'. Using recent and historical footage, it tells the story of how the friendship began and has developed over the past 21 years. The film was included in the St Kilda Film Festival 2021 International Perspectives online program in May 2021. A launch screening and celebration was held at ACMI X on 23 May 2021, bringing together many people involved in the friendship. The film was also shared with the CCC and screened at their AGM in June.





Friends of Suai/Covalima Annual Report 2020/21

Community events and fundraising

Trivia Night

The FoSC annual trivia night was held at Middle Park Bowls Club on 8 April 2021, with Mayor Cr Louise Crawford once again doing a terrific job as MC. Maximum capacity was almost reached, with 97 of 100 tickets sold. Many donations of quality items were received from local traders and residents for the silent auction and raffles that took place during the evening.

The trivia night was a great success, raising a total of \$10,172. Through ticket sales, the silent auction and the sale of merchandise, \$7,618 was raised to support the FoSC scholarship program. Raffle proceeds and direct donations contributed a further \$2,554 for a flood relief appeal in response to the disastrous floods that had just occurred in Timor-Leste the same week.



Left: Mayor Cr Louise Crawford once again did a great job as MC of the trivia night fundraiser Right: More than 90 community members attended the annual trivia night at Middle Park Bowls Club

Online silent auction fundraiser

In November 2020, FoSC held an online silent auction to raise funds for the FoSC scholarship program and it was a great success.

A variety of donations were received from FoSC members, supporters and local businesses, and included artwork, getaways, vouchers and local services. Over \$3,400 was raised through auctioning these items and a further \$5,210 was donated through the platform as a contribution towards future scholarships.





Support for decentralised government

City of Port Phillip is one of 15 Victoria Council's which has signed a Municipal Cooperation Agreement with a sub/district in Timor-Leste. This government to government agreement is focused on sharing professional experience, advice and mentoring and underpins the intent of the friendship agreement between Port Phillip and Covalima municipalities.

Representatives from each Council participate in regular meetings of the Local Government Timor-Leste Network, organised by the Victoria State Government. At these meetings, the Friends of Suai/Covalima Coordinator shares information and stays informed of the work of other local Councils and the Victorian Government Timor-Leste program.

Although many opportunities for visits and reciprocal learning have been hindered by the pandemic, the network is committed to the relationship between the local government sector and Ministry of State Administration in Timor-Leste.

In February 2021, Francisco de Andrade was inaugurated as the new Municipal Administrator of Covalima. He is a founder and former Coordinator of the Covalima Community Centre and very supportive of their work. He has plans for extensive community consultation and engagement.

As decentralisation processes continue to be implemented in Timor-Leste, this strong link between the CCC and Municipal Administration will help to ensure good communication and opportunities to implement the Municipal Agreement between Port Phillip and Covalima local governments.



Outcome 3

Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient

Strategies

1. Enhance communications with CoPP Council, staff, residents and key stakeholders
2. Develop new donors and fundraising initiatives
3. Increase and diversity membership of the Community Reference Committee Terms of Reference
4. Monitor Strategic Plan and annual budget

Donations

Over \$50,000 was donated to FoSC this year for programs in areas including health, education and reforestation. Donations were received from individuals, community groups and service organisations in Port Phillip and the wider community.

Many in-kind donations are also received from individuals and organisations, including computer equipment, tools, books and science equipment for the Suai Secondary School library. Books have also been donated by the Australian East Timor Association and were shipped to Suai early in 2021.

FoSC is grateful for all donations and would like to especially recognise those donors who make regular contributions and those who provide multiple year scholarships for students to complete three years of senior secondary school or tertiary qualifications. There was also a strong community response to appeals to support the CCC COVID-19 activities and disaster relief after the floods in April.

FoSC would also like to especially acknowledge the Rotary Club of Balwyn for their significant long-term commitment to the *With One Seed* reforestation program in Covalima. The Club has made a three-year commitment to fund the establishment and operations of the *With One Seed* nursery, with a further contribution of \$15,000 this financial year.



FoSC annual meeting

The FoSC Annual Meeting was held online on 11 March 2021 with 27 attendees. Highlights and photos from the 2019/20 Annual Report were shared, along with an update on FoSC funded programs. There were also two very engaging presentations from guest speakers. Alberto de Jesus Barros, Director of the CCC in Suai, spoke about the impacts of COVID-19 in Covalima and the actions being taken at the CCC to support local communities. Andrew Mahar AM, CEO of the Xpand Foundation and co-founder of *With One Seed*, provided an update on the *With One Seed* community forestry program in Timor-Leste and plans for the future.

Strategic Plan 2020-25

During 2020, the FoSC Committee developed a new five-year strategic plan, which has a strong focus on sustainability, engagement and accountability. The CCC team were involved in the process and has also now developed a new five-year plan for the Centre, with both plans complementing each other.

The FoSC Strategic Plan 2020-25 was endorsed by Council on 2 September 2020.



Mahogany seedlings growing in the WoS nursery February 2021



Financial report

Friends of Suai/Covalima Income and Expenditure - 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

| INCOME | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| City of Port Phillip funds | 60,458 | * |
| Individual donations and grants | 50,436 | |
| Trivia night fundraiser | 10,172 | |
| Online silent auction fundraiser | 3,460 | |
| Coffee & merchandise sales | 648 | |
| Total Income | \$ 125,174 | |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| CCC core grant | 44,866 | * |
| Scholarships | 28,279 | |
| <i>With One Seed</i> reforestation | 20,186 | |
| COVID-19 response | 8,054 | # |
| Teacher / library project | 7,160 | |
| CCC audit support | 4,769 | * |
| Shipment of computer equipment | 2,023 | * |
| CCC meetings/materials | 1,967 | * |
| Administration | 1,333 | * |
| 20-year anniversary celebrations | 757 | |
| Coffee & merchandise | 400 | |
| Total Expenditure | \$ 119,794 | |

* *City of Port Phillip funding*

Combined CoPP funding and donations

Friends of Suai/Covalima Donations account - 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2021

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Opening balance 1/7/2020 | \$ 37,597 |
| Plus income | 64,717 |
| Less expenditure | 59,336 |
| Closing balance 30/6/2021 | \$ 42,978 |