

Friends of Suai/Covalima



Annual Report 2021/22



City of Port Phillip
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Contents

Message from the Chair.....	3
Friends of Suai Strategic Plan 2020-25.....	5
Outcome 1 The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability	6
Education and training	7
IT Social Enterprise.....	14
Public health	15
<i>With One Seed</i> reforestation.....	18
CCC capacity strengthening	21
CCC governance and management.....	22
CCC funding and partnerships	24
Outcome 2 City of Port Phillip (CoPP) and Covalima municipality and their communities are actively engaged in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities	28
Visit to Suai.....	28
Plans for Municipal Government computer training	30
<i>Art of Friendship</i> exhibition.....	31
Annual trivia night fundraiser.....	33
City of Port Phillip computers sent to Suai	33
Outcome 3 Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient	35
Donations and fundraising	35
Annual meeting.....	36
Financial report	37

Cover photo: Umbelina Madeira from Tilomar sub-district, proudly showing her *With One Seed* identity card and one of the 750 mahogany trees planted on her land.



Please consider the environment before printing.



Message from the Chair

Megs Alston

Chair, Friends of Suai /Covalima Community Reference Committee

This has been a challenging year once more for Friends of Suai Covalima (FoSC), for two principal reasons. Firstly, the continuing COVID restrictions limited our ability to meet in person and to carry out several of our planned objectives and activities.

More importantly, Port Phillip Council made the decision in December 2021 to phase out its funding to the Friendship over 5 years, ending in financial year 2025/26. This means the annual Council grant to FoSC, which this year was \$60,000, will reduce by \$15,000 each year to zero, and the part time Coordinator's role will also be cut back in the same period. These two consequences of the funding cut will have a significant impact on the operations of our partner in Suai the Covalima Community Centre which receives most of the Council grant. Additionally, phasing down the Coordinator's role will reduce the mentoring and support to the CCC and will have implications for the voluntary committee's work within the City of Port Phillip.

The Annual Report outlines the many achievements of the past year, and I want to touch on some highlights.

The *Art of Friendship* exhibition at Carlisle Street Arts Space was created to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of friendship in 2020 and to provide audiences with a deeper understanding of the enduring friendship between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities. It included artwork from local artist Liz Milsom, glasswork from Pat Jessen and many tins, baskets, paintings and photos representing the friendship. The documentary film '*Art of Friendship*' by local filmmaker Jen Hughes was also on display. These three creative talents are members of FoSC. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions the exhibition was significantly delayed, being finally installed on 28 July 2021. Unfortunately, restrictions recurred so plans for an opening event, film screening and 'meet the artists' events were all cancelled. Open for only a few days in November 2021, sessions were held for people to view the artwork. The FoSC Annual Meeting was held in the gallery on the exhibition's final evening, providing an opportunity for many people to view this wonderful display.

The sixth annual FoSC trivia night was held on 17 March 2022 at Middle Park Bowls Club and Councillor Louise Crawford once again did a fantastic job as MC and quiz master. The event was a great success, raising \$11,652 to support community development work in Covalima District. More than 90 local residents and friends attended the event, including Councillors and officers. Local traders, artists and residents donated over \$5,000 worth of goods and services for the quiz prizes, silent auction and raffle.

In May 2022 I travelled with FoSC Coordinator Carlene Harlock to Timor Leste after an absence of more than 2 years due to travel restrictions. We met with Mr Lino de Jesus Torrezão, the Vice-Minister for State Administration in Dili, who signed the current Friendship Agreement with the City of Port Phillip in 2021, and the Australian Ambassador Mr Bill Costello. Both expressed their

thanks for the Friendship, its achievements, and the people-to-people links it has forged. Clearly it is more important than ever now for Australia to maintain and strengthen such relationships in the current geo-political environment.

It was wonderful to meet with our friends in Suai again and see developments there. As part of an annual review of our Strategic Plan, part of our visit was spent interviewing a cross section of stakeholders, to ascertain the extent to which strategies had been achieved. In summary, the review demonstrated the CCC is extremely well regarded and is considered to be an important community organisation in Suai and more widely across the Covalima District. It is seen as a major player in community development, that provides opportunities for people across the district. The scholarships program for young people was cited by many as a game changer, in addition to raising awareness about matters such as disaster preparedness and response, public health, gender equality and climate change through the programs it manages. It is trusted and respected within the community.

With One Seed program continues to develop in Covalima. Under this reforestation program, 45,401 trees have been planted in three years, with 152 small landholders receiving trees they are paid to maintain. During our visit we travelled to Lalawa to observe the annual payment to farmers, which was clearly an important event in this sub district, providing scarce income to the subsistence farmers. There is strong demand from others who want to be part of the program in future.

Thanks again to the generous donors to Friends of Suai who make the work in Covalima possible and to our Coordinator Carlene Harlock whose ongoing support for the CCC staff provides a constant link with the City of Port Phillip and greatly enhances the Centre's effectiveness.

Megs Alston,
Chair, Friends of Suai /Covalima Community Reference Committee



Left to right: Megs Alston, FoSC Chair; Francisco Sarmento, CCC Board member; Alberto de Jesus Barros, CCC Director; at the Covalima Community Centre in Suai

Friends of Suai Strategic Plan 2020-25

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

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

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 diversify membership of the Community Reference Committee Terms of Reference
4. Monitor Strategic Plan and annual budget



Outcome 1

The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability

Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) works in partnership with the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) to meet the aims and objectives of the 2020-30 Friendship Agreement between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities and municipalities.

The CCC maintains a well-managed and inclusive community hub for Covalima which facilitates training and participation through the provision of affordable and inclusive courses, projects and access for local community members and groups. 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 the costs of running the Centre, including salaries, administration and operational costs. Community donations and fundraising from FoSC members and supporters fund a range of programs including education, health and reforestation.

In addition, the CCC receives funding to deliver other programs and projects through partnerships with local and international NGOs and has internal income generating activities.

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.



CCC staff and Board members at a quarterly meeting in September 2021

Education and training

Scholarships

Education has always been a strong focus of the friendship. Since 2012, FoSC has funded a scholarship program and more than 169 scholarships have been provided for students to further their studies. Scholarships are offered for students to continue their education at senior secondary schools, vocational training colleges and universities in Timor-Leste, with courses ranging from 12 months to four years in duration.

The scholarship program provides educational opportunities for students from disadvantaged families and encourages gender equity. Scholarship opportunities are widely promoted, with the aim to reach students in remote communities and encourage them to apply.

Key to the program's success is the thorough selection and interview process and involvement of families to ensure open communication and provide information about the commitment involved. This has resulted in a high percentage of students completing their studies and graduating.

Scholarships are funded through FoSC fundraising activities and community donations, and the Education Program Coordinator at the CCC organises the registration and enrolment processes and provides pastoral care. The Program Coordinator remains in contact with all students and training institutes, to ensure the welfare of students and provide encouragement throughout their studies.



Students at Baucau Teachers College do a three month practical placement in their final year

2021 scholarships

In 2021, four new scholarships were offered for students to study primary school teaching (2) and hospitality (2). There were also two successful candidates to study general construction however this course did not proceed. There were also a further 13 students ongoing, who were continuing to study agriculture (2), electrical studies (2), primary school teaching (7) and community development (2).

Additionally, there were two Community Development students and two Midwifery (Nursing) students who finished their fourth year in 2020 and were still receiving some financial support from FoSC while they finished their final placements and research and prepared for their post-graduate studies.



A scholarship recipient at Maliana Agricultural school proudly showing her vegetable garden at the school.



Students at the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai which has great facilities for hospitality students

Scholarship graduations

Two students graduated in December 2021 with a Certificate 2 in Hospitality from the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai. During the training they gained practical experience which included a two-month placement in Dili. Students also participated in a mini expo during the year to showcase their skills. Both students received excellent results and have been offered employment.

In 2020, one student at Baucau Teacher College had completed her four-year Bachelor course in primary school teaching, and four students successfully completed their third year. Their graduation ceremony had to be postponed until September 2021 due to the pandemic. Two of the third year students did not continue to study their Licentiate, but the two students who did continue graduated in March 2022. Both are now working as volunteer teachers at junior secondary schools located close to their home villages in Covalima.

Four students also completed their secondary school education at specialist secondary schools located in Maliana; two at the Maliana Agricultural School and two at the Don Bosco Technical School. FoSC hopes to provide opportunities for them in the future to continue their specialist training.



Dino, the CCC Education Program Coordinator (centre) attended the graduation ceremony for two students at Maliana Agricultural School



Left: Four students graduating from Baucau Teachers College; Right: Graduates from CVTC Suai graduated in December 2021 with a Certificate 2 in Hospitality

2022 scholarships

Providing opportunities for scholarships continued to be challenging in 2022 because of the lack of certainty around course enrolments at institutions in and around Dili, with some courses cancelled or postponed.

In 2022, 14 new scholarships were offered for students to study primary school teaching, hospitality, general construction, motorbike mechanic training, primary school teaching and automotive studies. However, only five students commenced their studies; primary teaching (2), hospitality (2) and motorbike mechanic training (1). There were also seven students continuing their studies at Baucau Teachers College. All students have reported that they are enjoying their studies and the practical components to develop their skills.

Since 2016, FoSC has provided scholarships for seven nursing students (specialising in Midwifery) and four Community Development students at the National University in Dili. Ten of these students are working towards completing their post-grad studies, which were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Five of the midwifery have recently completed their research and are in the final stages of writing their theses. They are doing their best to finalise everything and graduate this year. FoSC will continue to provide funding for their continuing education expenses until they complete and graduate.



Left: One student is training to be a motorbike mechanic at Senai Becora and gaining lots of practical experience; Right: A student at Baucau Teachers College is completing her final three month placement at Debos Primary school in Suai

Computer and English language training

The CCC trainers continue to deliver both English language and computer training courses which are popular with both primary and secondary school aged students. There were 41 students registered for English language training this year and 55 registrations for computer training.

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

Students have reported that they benefit from the training by developing skills for future employment, improving their results at secondary school and increasing their chances of gaining entry to tertiary education.



Students improve their English language and computer skills through training at the CCC

Suai Secondary School library

More than 2,200 students and teachers at the Suai Secondary School use the school library, which was established through the Friendship. FoSC continues to provide resources to add to the library collection and funds two librarians to manage the library. The librarians maintain detailed records on the resources that are accessed and borrowed. Many students and teachers benefit from this fantastic collection, which includes over 4,200 fiction, non-fiction and reference books in four languages.

There is also a collection of more than 130 pieces of science equipment which are regularly borrowed by biology, physics and chemistry teachers to use in the classroom. Other schools also borrow this equipment.

More resources were added this year, with FoSC members and Australian East Timor Association donating books and science equipment for the library collection. These items were shipped and arrived in September 2021.



Students and teachers regularly borrow the books and science equipment at the Suai Secondary school library

Library software training

The librarians and English language trainers at the CCC recently participated in a training course on installing and using KOHA library software to catalogue and manage the library materials. The trainers from the Xanana Gusmao Reading Room in Dili also provided a wi-fi router, barcode reader and collection of fiction books. The staff are now busy cataloguing the library collection.



Librarians were trained to and catalogue the library collection

Science and Maths training support

In recent years, FoSC has provided funds to a group of Science & Maths teachers, called Knua Pratika, to further their training and increase student engagement. Funds had been provided for in-service teacher training in 2020, however this had to be cancelled at the beginning of the pandemic. This small group of innovative teachers continues to meet regularly, and put forward a proposal to engage students in fun and enjoyable learning experiences during public holiday celebrations.

In May, a week-long community event to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence was held in Suai, including sporting events, exhibits, markets and competitions. The Knua Pratika teachers organised a student exhibit, demonstrations and competition. There were 48 students from six junior secondary schools competing for prizes, and many other students involved in the activities.

Many students and community leaders provided feedback that this was a great initiative and experience for students and encouraged FoSC's continuing support for these activities.



Student demonstrating science experiments at the community event in Suai in Suai

IT Social Enterprise

Since 2007, FoSC has facilitated the ongoing development of IT services in Suai with regular donations of second-hand computers to the Info Timor Social Enterprise (ITSE) established at the CCC. Most of the computer equipment is donated through Council’s disposal program when equipment is upgraded.

The ITSE at the CCC generates income through selling second-hand computers at moderate prices for students, families and local businesses, and the delivery of computer and English language training programs. Staff have been trained to refurbish computers and provide free domain software, and have the qualifications to deliver community training programs.

Donated equipment from Council has ensured the sustainability of the ITSE. Two shipments were sent in 2021 and another in April 2022, including many laptops, tablets, desktops and accessories. There is great demand for affordable computer equipment and training in Covalima district, and the ITSE is the only local provider.

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.

Access to computers and training ensures community members can develop skills for employment and education purposes and improved access to information.



CoPP superseded laptops are used to deliver community training at the CCC

Public health

COVID-19 activities

COVID-19 cases remained low but constant through most of the year, with no cases reported since April 2022. The CCC team has continued to deliver health and hygiene training at the CCC and in all communities where programs are conducted. The community training, resources and demonstrations on hygiene practices include information handwashing, social distancing and encouraging vaccination. During the year, staff also actively participated in the District COVID taskforce and were responsible for disinfecting public buildings and spaces during the height of the pandemic.



Disinfecting public spaces was one of the District COVID taskforce activities delegated to the CCC

Vaccinations

FoS supported the CCC in their work to encourage vaccine uptake, by answering questions and providing information on personal experiences of vaccinations. This was especially important when information about different COVID variants was not clearly explained and when lots of misinformation was being shared on social media.

The CCC also supported the national government campaign to share information broadly, so that as many people as possible had the opportunity to be vaccinated, Covalima district having the third highest vaccination rate in Timor-Leste.

The CCC training room was used as a vaccination clinic on multiple occasions and the CCC vehicle was used to provide transport for community members who needed support to reach health clinics.



Staff received vaccines at a clinic set up at the CCC in August 2021

Civic Health Fund

All public health activities are funded through a Civic Health Fund which was established by FoSC in 2020 to fund ongoing initiatives to promote public health. During 2021/22, the primary focus of the fund was to share information and resources with communities to prevent the spread of COVID-19, however funds were also used to promote the prevention of dengue fever and for disaster response activities, including fuel and food packages for vulnerable families.

Health training at CCC

This year all training included a health component, with training on hygienic practices including the importance of handwashing.

Students received Tetun language infographics and bars of soap and were 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.



Students at CCC learning about the importance of handwashing training

Suai Secondary School WASH facilities

The largest public health project undertaken by FoSC was the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project at Suai Secondary School, which continues to provide running water and toilets for the more than 2,200 students and staff at the school. There are also 46 local families living nearby who have access to the community water tank. The school has been encouraged to establish a WASH Committee to ensure the sustainability of the water supply and to oversee the collection of funds and expenditure to maintain the facilities.

The CCC Health Coordinator continued to monitor the facilities and encourage health and hygiene training at the school. In April 2022, the Coordinator successfully advocated to the National Government for the urgent repair of electricity supply and the water pump after it had been struck by lightning. All facilities are now working well.

Food relief

In 2021, the pandemic and severe weather events left many communities isolated and with increased food insecurity. The CCC was successful with a proposal to international NGO Give2Asia, to fund a food relief project for 153 vulnerable families. The CCC had identified that there were many more families in these villages who also needed assistance, so the FoSC-funded Civic Health Fund was used to fund food packages for an additional 67 families.

In August 2021, a team from the CCC including the CCC Director, the Municipal Administrator and the Police Commander of Covalima Municipality, distributed basic food packages to 220 households in 43 sub-villages. They also shared information about Covid-19 prevention and the potential risks from illegal border crossings with Indonesia.



The Municipal Administrator Francisco Andrade (left) and CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros (below) helped to distribute the food packages.



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. Trees are grown in the WoS nursery and distributed to farmers. The farmers own the trees and are paid to plant and maintain them. Once the trees are established and gold standard certification has been achieved, income will be generated through the sale of carbon social credits.

Community engagement has been integral to the success of the WoS program. There is great enthusiasm for this long-term initiative with many landholders understanding the environmental benefits of planting trees and protecting their land from erosion, and also the economic benefits for their families and communities.

Established in 2019 and funded through FoSC and other partners (including Xpand Foundation and Oxfam), the WoS program in Tilomar sub-district is managed through the CCC and employs four staff. A significant donation to FoSC from the Rotary Club of Balwyn funded the building and operation of the WoS nursery.

Staff work closely with communities and provide extensive community engagement and training. They have also worked on activities to ensure that gold standard accreditation is achieved. The team regularly visit and communicate with the team at WoS in Bagaia, where the WoS program was established in 2009.

With funding from the EU, this successful initiative is now being expanded into other districts of Timor-Leste and there is a lot of information sharing and collaboration to ensure its successful expansion.



Seedlings are prepared each year in the WoS nursery in Lalawa village, funded by Rotary Club of Balwyn

Tree distribution and technology

In April 2022, more than 26,000 mahogany trees were distributed to farmers, bringing the total number of planted trees since 2019 to more than 43,000. To date, 152 small landholders have received trees, with many more hoping to be involved in the coming years.

Data on tree location and ownership is captured using TreeO2 technology. This digital community forestry management platform is specifically designed to manage smallholder tree and carbon farming. A website is being developed so that donors can see where the trees are being planted and maintained.



Mahogany seedlings are distributed and planted each year by local landholders.

Annual payments

FoSC is committed to financially supporting the WoS program which will generate income for the tree owners for many years to come. FoSC has raised the funds for the annual farmer tree payments; with each farmer receiving 50 cents for each surviving tree planted in 2020 and 2021.

Payments this year were distributed starting in June 2022. There were 58 households who received money for a total of 16,697 surviving trees planted in 2020 and 2021, bringing much needed income into this remote community.



Annual payments were made to landholders at an official ceremony in Lalawa in June 2022.

Rai Matak launch in Tilomar

On 28 January 2022, an official launch of the EU-funded Rai Matak (Green Land) program was held in Tilomar. The Rai Matak program objective is to expand the WoS program and support the implementation of WoS in three more districts of Timor-Leste in the coming years.

The launch was a very successful event with a lot of media coverage. Attendees included the EU Ambassador, José Ramos-Horta (Patron of WoS and now President of Timor-Leste), the Minister for Economic Cooperation, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Vice Minister for Agriculture, the Oxfam Country Director and the team from WoS Baguia.



Left: CCC Director Alberto Barros (left) with the EU Ambassador; Right: Many invited guests and community members attended the launch

CCC capacity strengthening

Organisational strengthening is a key focus area in both the FoSC and CCC Strategic Plans and is also a priority for CCC partners. Program partners and national and international NGOs often provide development training opportunities to strengthen the skills and capacity of CCC staff and will invite all staff, volunteers and Commission members to participate if the training is widely beneficial. Some training is also focussed on ‘training the trainer’ so participants can then share information with their colleagues and communities.



CCC staff participating in training on preventing gender-based violence

During 2021/22, CCC Commission members, staff and volunteers participated in a range of training and capacity building activities, funded through FoSC and other partner organisations. Some of the training opportunities included:

- Two librarians received training on setting up a KOHA library database and cataloguing all resources, and participated in a national library forum in Dili.
- Asia Justice and Rights and local NGO ACBIT provided training to all staff on project monitoring and evaluation, proposal writing and combating violence against women.
- In September, 24 staff participated in refresher training on financial systems and procedures. This workshop was in response to recommendations from the audit report.
- All CCC staff received information and training to implement their Gender Equality policy.
- The Health Program Coordinator participated in a train the trainer program on community based disaster risk management, gender equality and child protection. The training was conducted by Plan International, CARE International and Civil Protection.
- In March, three Program Coordinators participated in training regarding the process of conducting a social audit, including design, reporting monitoring, questioning and data analysis.
- The RWDP Program Coordinator participated in training on proposal writing.
- The WoS team participated in training on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse.
- The Health Program Coordinator participated in a 5 day train-the-trainer program in Dili (facilitated by Plan International) regarding climate change adaptation.
- Ten staff participated in refresher training on fraud which was organised by IWDA.
- In June, seven staff attended refresher finance training on Online Quickbooks.

CCC governance and management

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.

The CCC is managed by the Director, Vice-Director and Finance Manager, with Program Coordinators overseeing the work of more than 20 staff and volunteers. There is a lot of collaboration between CCC program staff and management, especially in relation to proposal writing and policy development and implementation. This has been integral to the success of the CCC.

CCC Strategic Plan

The CCC Commission and staff developed a new Strategic Plan in 2020-25 to guide their work over the next five years. The six key focus areas are: Contribute to the empowerment of women in Covalima; Advocacy and influence; Organisational empowerment; Improve agriculture and environment practices in Covalima; Provide training and educational opportunities in Covalima, with a focus on young women and men; and to Promote the health of the community in Covalima.

Each key focus area has strategies and from July 2021, the CCC aligns its reporting of activities to its Strategic Plan.

Annual General Meeting

Each year the CCC holds an AGM to report to the community on their activities, share the Annual Report and hold elections for Commission members. Invited guests include local government, NGOs, village chiefs, community leaders and program beneficiaries. The AGM is a celebration of the achievements of the CCC and also ensures that the CCC maintains its reputation for being transparent and accountable. The 2021/22 AGM is scheduled to be held in September 2022.



CCC staff and Commission members at a quarterly meeting in January 2022

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. Six staff involved in financial management participated in a three-day Quickbooks management training course this year to further their skills in recordkeeping, reporting for programs and audit preparation.

The CCC Director and FoSC Coordinator regularly discuss and review budgets and reports for FoSC funded programs. The CCC fulfilled the requirements of the City of Port Phillip funding agreement for core funding for the Centre and provided six-monthly acquittals and reports 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 2020/21 audit was funded by FoSC. The audit was conducted in July 2021. The CCC received a clean audit report and implemented recommendations from the auditors, including further training on the use of Quickbooks.



Left: CCC Director Alberto Barros and CCC President Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral with the CoPP funding agreement; Right: CCC Manager of Finance Anto Moniz (centre) completed Quickbooks management training in June 2022

CCC funding and partnerships

The CCC has developed strong local, national and international networks, and regularly participates in meetings involving community leaders, NGOs, civil service organisations, government and education providers. They have also been invited to participate in District Taskforces established by local government to promote COVID-19 prevention and Disaster Management. This has resulted in stronger collaboration and better outcomes for communities.

The CCC is an active and well-respected member of FONGTIL, the national network of NGOs. During the year, FONGTIL has sought assistance from the CCC with advocacy work in Covalima and has actively supported the CCC with funding proposals.

The CCC reputation for community work and advocacy has been recognised throughout the year with invitations to participate in national and local government and civil society forums. Program activities are promoted on the CCC Facebook page which has more than 2,141 followers, and through local television and radio.

The CCC leadership team has worked hard to increase partnerships and diversify their income, and were successful with submissions for funding from national government and international development agencies. Additional income has been earned by hiring the training rooms and facilities at the CCC and conducting research for The Asia Foundation.

An outline of the programs implemented at the CCC this year, and their funding partners, is included in this section.



The CCC training room was rebuilt due to flood damage and is now hired regularly by community groups.

Rural Women's Development Program

The CCC has worked in partnership with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) since 2009, and implements the Rural Women's Development Program (RWDP). The program activities, which involve more than 200 women, include support for women's livelihood groups, capacity development, organising community events and building networks. Economic empowerment, training and promoting women's leadership are the focus of this successful program, which is having a great impact in Covalima.

The RWDP team continues to provide support to 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.

Women involved in leadership training report that they have developed confidence in public speaking and their ability to advocate for local women.

A further objective is to ensure that women understand gender equality and referral pathways for victims of family 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 CCC is nationally renowned for their work to support women's leadership, gender equality and raise awareness about gender based violence. They are actively involved in many networks and meetings with local and national government, NGOs and CSOs.



A member of the Fitun Naroman (Bright Star) group weaving a traditional tais



Above: Young women participate in leadership and gender quality training through the RWDP;

Right: Many women participated in the International Women's Day event in March 2022



Social audit - School feeding program

The CCC was successful with their proposal to the Office of the Prime Minister Civil Society Support Fund to conduct a 'social audit' of the government funded school feeding program at six schools in Covalima. Named 'Merenda Escola' (School Snack) this 12-month program involves many activities to ensure schools are providing nutritious meals for students.

This is a pilot program and it is hoped that at the end the national government will ask the CCC to implement this program more broadly. This work is aligned to the CCC strategic focus on education, health and advocacy. The CCC staff report that they are very happy to be involved in a project to improve nutrition for young people in Covalima.

Solar lighting project

The CCC has a long history of working on solar projects in rural communities throughout Covalima district. This year the team successfully applied for funding through the UN Development Program Renewable Energy project. The project involved sourcing and installing solar lighting in sacred houses in Fohorem sub-district.

Using their excellent technical and communication skills, the project has involved a lot of community engagement, training and ongoing mentoring for local technicians. The installation was completed and officially launched in June 2022. The Municipal Administrator attended the launch and communities are thrilled with the results.



The CCC team installed solar lighting in sacred houses as part of a UNDP funded project

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs

The CCC team continue to be involved in DRR work in Covalima including emergency response. Funded and administered through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership and Oxfam Timor-Leste, the DRR program involved providing training for communities to take a leadership role in preparedness, response, early recovery, risk reduction and resilience efforts. This involved supporting communities to develop disaster management plans to implement in each village, and to improve their knowledge of preventing and mitigating disaster risks.



The CCC also actively participate in the municipal government District Disaster Management Committee and has been involved in the emergency response after severe weather events during the year. The CCC team were able to support local government and communities to undertake rapid assessments and to distribute emergency supplies.

DRR activities including building gabion baskets to fill with rocks and prevent erosion and land slides

Outcome 2

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

Visit to Suai

On 21 June 2022, the FoSC Coordinator Carlene Harlock and FoSC CRC Chair Megs Alston, travelled to Timor-Leste for 10 days. It was a very successful and productive trip, with all objectives achieved. The three objectives were:

Objective 1: Clearly communicate Council's decision to implement a transition plan that will progressively reduce Council funding to the FoSC Program.

A letter from Mayor Cr Marcus Pearl advising that Council funding is being progressively reduced was hand delivered and translated to the following people:

- Amelia de Jesus Amaral, President of the Covalima Community Centre
- Mr Francisco de Andrade, Municipal Administrator of Covalima
- HE Lino de Jesus Torrezão, Vice Minister of State Administration (signatory to the Friendship agreement).



Meeting with HE Lino de Jesus Torrezão, Vice Minister of State Administration (second from left) at his office in Dili.

Objective 2: To discuss with the CCC Commission, staff, and other key stakeholders the need to source alternative funding, and approaches to minimise impacts to the operation of the CCC and on the broader community.

A meeting was held with the CCC Commission and staff to clearly outline the changes to funding arrangements over the next four years, including the reduced role of the FoSC Coordinator.



CCC Commission and staff meeting on 30 June

Objective 3: To undertake a review and evaluation of the FoSC Strategic Plan 2020-25
Outcome 1-The CCC and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability.

Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders including CCC Commission members, the CCC Director, Program Coordinators, program beneficiaries and the Municipal Administrator of Covalima Administrator.

Interviewees were asked questions about their experiences with the CCC and its programs, with the 'most important change' as the framework for gathering evidence. The responses have been collated according to themes and the report will include direct quotes from interviewees.

FoSC will now work to complete the review of the 2020-25 Strategic Plan and provide a report to Council on the outcomes of Council's financial contribution to CCC and the value of their programs for the Covalima community.

Plans for Municipal Government computer training

Supporting and strengthening municipal government in Covalima is an intention of the Friendship. FoSC has provided funds for CCC trainers to deliver computer training for Municipal Government employees, using computers donated by the City of Port Phillip.

A request for training was made by the Municipal Administrator Francisco de Andrade early in 2022, as he identified that many employees needed assistance with using computers for reporting and recording data. He reconfirmed this request during the FoSC visit to Suai in June and said that there is potential to extend the training to include representatives from all village Councils in Covalima, as they have each received a computer from national government.

An agreement is being prepared to commence a pilot program in the CCC training room starting in September 2022.



The Municipal Administrator of Covalima is very supportive of the work of the CCC. When Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste HE Bill Costello (left) visited Suai in May 2022, Municipal Administrator Francisco de Andrade (centre) encouraged him to visit the CCC. The CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros (right) shared information with the Ambassador and presented him a copy of the FoSC 20-year anniversary commemorative booklet.

Art of Friendship exhibition

The *Art of Friendship* exhibition at Carlisle Street Arts Space was created to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of friendship in 2020 and to provide audiences with a deeper understanding of the enduring friendship between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities. It included artwork from local artist Liz Milsom, glasswork from Pat Jessen and many tais, baskets, paintings and photos representing the friendship. The documentary film titled '*Art of Friendship*' by local filmmaker Jen Hughes was also on display, with plans for a hosted screening during the exhibit.

This exhibition was significantly delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, but was finally installed on 28 July 2021. Unfortunately, restrictions continued during the exhibition, with plans for an opening event, film screening and 'meet the artists' events all cancelled. On the final day of the exhibit in November, sessions were held for people to view the artwork. The FoSC annual meeting was also held in the gallery on the final evening, providing an opportunity for many people to view this wonderful exhibition.



Left: Local artist Pat Jessen contributed glasswork pieces for the exhibition Right: FoSC Coordinator Carlene Harlock assisted with the photo selection and installation. Below: Timorese woven baskets on display at the Art of Friendship exhibition





Artwork created by local artist Liz Milsom and Pat Jessen tell the story of enduring friendship.



Many FoSC supporters and Port Phillip residents and artists enjoyed the exhibition



Photos and text panels tell the story of Friendship.

Annual trivia night fundraiser

The sixth annual FoSC trivia night was held on 17 March 2022 at Middle Park Bowls Club and Councillor Louise Crawford once again did a fantastic job as MC and quiz master.

The trivia night is the largest annual fundraising event for FoSC and receives great support from the Port Phillip community. More than 90 local residents and friends attended the event, including Councillors and officers. Local traders, artists and residents donated over \$5,000 worth of goods and services for the quiz prizes, silent auction and raffle that took place during the evening.

The event was a great success, raising \$11,652 towards community development programs in Covalima district.



Left: Participants bid on more than 40 items in the silent auction Right: More than 90 people attended the trivia night, hosted by Cr Louise Crawford

City of Port Phillip computers sent to Suai

Since 2007, FoSC has facilitated the ongoing development of IT services in Suai, Covalima with regular donations of second-hand computers. Most of the computer equipment is donated through Council's disposal program when equipment is upgraded.

In April, more than 50 boxes were packed at the St Kilda Town Hall. FoSC would like to thank Councillor Tim Baxter, CRC members and the five Council officers who volunteered to help with packing the equipment during their lunch break.

Equipment included desktop computers, laptops, keyboards, and monitors. The DTS (IT) team also played a key role in preparing the equipment and worked closely with the FoSC Coordinator.

Donated equipment from Council has ensured the sustainability of the IT Social Enterprise. There is great demand for affordable computer equipment and training in Covalima district, and the IT Social Enterprise is the only local provider.



Cr Tim Baxter (left), CoPP staff and FoSC CRC members (right) volunteered to help with the packing



A CoPP community bus delivering the boxes to Rotary DIK, FoSC Coordinator organises the packaging and delivery

Outcome 3

Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient

Donations and fundraising

Over \$60,000 was donated to FoSC this year for education, reforestation and health programs facilitated through the CCC. Donations were received from individuals, community groups, church groups and service organisations in Port Phillip and the wider community.

FoSC is grateful for all donations and would like to acknowledge donors who make regular contributions and those who provide multiple year scholarships for students to complete three or more years of senior secondary school or tertiary qualifications.

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 had made a three-year commitment to fund the establishment and operations of the *With One Seed* nursery, with their final instalment of \$15,000 made this financial year.

FoSC is a registered fundraiser with Consumer Affairs Victoria. Funds were raised this year through the annual trivia night and the sale of merchandise including coffee, bags and photographs from the *Art of Friendship* exhibition.

Donations for the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) safe house

FoSC were pleased to provide a small grant and donate items to the Vulnerable Persons Unit safe house in Suai. The donation included bedding, clothing, kitchen supplies and toys for the women and children seeking refuge in the safe house.

The VPU safehouse is located next to the Police Offices in Suai and managed by Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral, who is also the President of the CCC Commission (Board). She is a passionate community advocate and works very hard to prevent gender-based violence and to support victims.



Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral (left) with items donated by FoSC to the VPU safe house

Annual meeting

The FoSC annual meeting was held on 18 November 2021. The meeting was held in the Carlisle Street Arts Space at St Kilda Town Hall on the final day of the *Art of Friendship* exhibition, providing an excellent opportunity for the 35 attendees to view the exhibit, which had been closed for many weeks due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Highlights from the 2020/21 Annual Report were shared by FoSC Chair Megs Alston and FoSC Coordinator Carlene Harlock provided an update on the scholarship program and work of the CCC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Louise Crawford opened the meeting, acknowledging the work of the artists involved in the *Art of Friendship* exhibit and the impacts the pandemic has had on celebrating the 20-year anniversary of Friendship.

Guest Speaker Andrew Mahar AM, Honorary Consul of Timor-Leste, spoke about the establishment, success and expansion of *With One Seed* in Covalima district and throughout Timor-Leste.



Left: Mayor Louise Crawford opened the annual meeting in the Carlisle Street Arts Space
Right: Guest speaker Andrew Mahar AM spoke about the *With One Seed* program



Financial report

Friends of Suai/Covalima Income and Expenditure - 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022

INCOME		
City of Port Phillip funds	59,874	*
Individual donations and grants	60,932	
Trivia night fundraiser	11,652	
Coffee & merchandise sales	1,645	
Bank interest	53	
Total Income	\$ 134,156	
EXPENDITURE		
CCC core grant	44,608	*
Scholarships	30,603	
<i>With One Seed</i> reforestation	22,269	
CCC audit support	4,676	
Teacher / library project	4,636	*
Shipment of computer equipment	3,857	*
CCC training support	3,108	*
Administration	2,017	*
Meetings and events	1,608	#
Suai VPU safe house contribution	1,110	
Civic Health / COVID-19 response	854	#
Coffee & merchandise	500	
Transfer of reserves to CCC	18,468	
Total Expenditure	\$ 138,314	

* City of Port Phillip funding

Combined CoPP funding and donations

Friends of Suai/Covalima Donations account - 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022

Opening balance 1/7/2021	\$ 42,978
Plus income	74,282
Less expenditure	78,440
Closing balance 30/6/2022	\$ 38,820