



Friends of Suai/Covalima Annual Report 2022/23





City of Port Phillip

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Cover photo: Women at the Covalima Community Centre in Suai celebrating an International Women’s Day event with the theme to ‘Creating Equality for Women’s Economic Empowerment’.

Message from the Chair

Megs Alston

Chair, Friends of Suai /Covalima Community Reference Committee

It is a pleasure to present the Friends of Suai Covalima (FoSC) Annual Report, which sets out many achievements of the past year. With CoPP funding decreasing substantially now, a transition is underway requiring a revision of our Strategic Plan. However the City of Port Phillip Friendship Agreement remains in place, with ongoing commitments to our partner the Covalima Community Centre (CCC) and its programs.

In Suai, the CCC continues to play a leading role in the community development arena, where it maintains a highly regarded reputation both in Covalima and more widely in Timor Leste. It is recognised for effectiveness, including its work with national and local networks in disaster management, public health information and dissemination, and in promoting gender equality.

Some of the major programs supported by FoSC which continue to assist the local community to develop are

- The Scholarship Program under which five new scholarships were awarded in 2022 and nine in 2023, with ten students graduating this year: five nurses, two teachers, four in hospitality and one motorbike mechanic. Over 174 scholarships have been awarded since 2012.
- With One Seed reforestation program involving more than 180 farmers with over 74,000 trees planted.
- The IT Social Enterprise at the CCC which uses computer equipment donated by the City of Port Phillip disposal program and from community donations, that is shipped to Timor Leste and sold to generate income. This endeavour also assists people to learn technical skills and gain access to information.
- This year we also supported an International Women's Day initiative to provide computer training for 15 women from rural locations in Covalima.

In Melbourne, public events included:

- A Book launch on 16 October – 'Everything and nothing: The life and development work of Bill Armstrong', attracting more than 75 attendees – which raised \$305 in book sales.
- FoSC Annual meeting on 17 November with guest speaker – Alan Dupont – 'Australia and Timor-Leste strategic relations and the Tasi Mane megaproject'.
- A film night fundraiser on 9 Feb that raised \$975 for With One Seed.
- The FoSC Coordinator launched a successful initiative to raise funds and receive donated computer equipment at the CoPP International Women's Day event on 9 March, attended by over 80 invited guests including Councillors.

- The annual Trivia night on 20 April at Middle Park Bowls Club attended by 105 people raised over \$14,000, and with \$5,500 value of goods & services donated by residents and businesses.
- After FoSC Committee members and CoPP residents travelled to Timor-Leste to act as election observers for the parliamentary election held on 21 May 2023, we hosted an election monitoring report back on 30 May with 35 attendees.

I sincerely thank our generous donors and volunteers upon whose support we rely more than ever now. Thanks again to our Coordinator Carlene Harlock for outstanding commitment to the work here and with the CCC, and lastly to the Council of the City of Port Phillip for the support it provides.

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



Friends of Suai/Covalima 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. Actively work to assist the CCC to gain funding, support and resources in light of the reduced CoPP annual grant.

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 CoPP residents with the support of Councillors.
3. Friends of Suai/Covalima hold community events and cultural exchanges (in person or virtual) to celebrate the friendship with the Covalima municipality.
4. Encourage reciprocal learning 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 and its working groups.
4. Implement the Community Reference Committee Terms of Reference.
5. Monitor Strategic Plan and annual budget.

Outcome 1 The Covalima Community Centre and its programs are strengthened towards sustainability

The Covalima Community Centre (CCC) works in friendship with the City of Port Phillip to meet the aims and objectives of the renewed ten-year Friendship Agreement signed in 2020, which comprises an MoU between the Municipal Administration of Covalima and Port Phillip and a Statement of Friendship 2020-30.

Friends of Suai/Covalima (FoSC) is a Community Reference Committee to Council and partners with the CCC to deliver outcomes and contribute to the stability and growth of CCC staffing and programs. Their work is supported by the FoSC Coordinator.

Outcome 1 of the 2020-25 Strategic Plan has the following three 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. Actively work to assist the CCC to gain funding, support and resources in light of the reduced CoPP annual grant.

The CCC continues to develop into a dynamic organisation providing opportunities for people to develop personally and contribute to the social and economic growth of their district of over 70,000 people. The Centre is a registered NGO and training organisation and has partnerships with local and international NGOs to implement a range of programs. It also has internal income-generating activities including community training programs and hiring of facilities.

The growth of the Community Centre in Suai is one of the greatest achievements of the Friendship.



Led by the CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros, there are over 20 staff and volunteers at the Centre working to improve the lives of their community. The FoSC Coordinator has regular communication with the Director and Program Coordinators to provide assistance and mentoring support and share updates on programs.

CCC staff and Board members at a quarterly meeting in December 2022

The City of Port Phillip has been the main contributor to the core running costs of the CCC, including key staff salaries, administration and operational costs. This funding has decreased by 25% each year and will not continue beyond 2023/24. FoSC are working to raise funds and find alternative income sources to cover the shortfall.

In addition, the CCC manages initiatives funded through community donations and fundraising by FoSC, including in education, health and reforestation.

This report includes an overview of all CCC activities to demonstrate the breadth of programs at the CCC and acknowledges all partners funding CCC programs. FoSC is grateful to the CCC staff and partners for the information provided for this report.

Education and training

A Key Focus Area in the CCC 2020-25 Strategic Plan is to 'Provide training and educational opportunities in Covalima, with a focus on young women and men'. Strategies are:

1. Provide scholarships to young people on merit, to continue their education.
2. Further develop the IT Social Enterprise including delivery of IT and Language training.
3. Contribute to improving education through supporting teachers and students in Covalima.

FoSC support for education includes fundraising for scholarships and salaries for two librarians. Resources are also donated for the IT Social Enterprise and the public Senior Secondary School in Suai.

Scholarships

There has been great support from our community to provide educational opportunities for young people in Covalima district and since 2012, FoSC has funded a scholarship program and more than 174 scholarships have been provided for students to further their studies.



*Left: Scholarship recipient Francisco, learning to repair motorbikes while studying at Senai Becora in Dili in 2022
Right: Four young women have received scholarships in 2023 year to study a Certificate 2 in Hospitality in Suai*

Scholarships are funded through FoSC fundraising activities and community donations. The Education Program Coordinator organises the registration and enrolment process and provides pastoral care. 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. The Education Coordinator also remains in contact with all students and training institutes, to ensure the welfare of students and provide encouragement throughout their studies. This has resulted in a high percentage of students completing their studies and graduating.

Scholarships are provided for students from disadvantaged families and gender equity is encouraged. Scholarship opportunities are widely promoted, with the aim to reach students in remote communities and encourage them to apply. 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 nine months to four years in duration.

2022 scholarships

Five new students received scholarships in 2022. Two students commenced at Bacau Teachers College, two students studied Hospitality at the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai, and one student studied motorbike mechanic training at CNFP Senai Becora in Dili.

There were also seven students continuing their studies at Baucau Teachers College and 11 students at the National University in Dili (seven Midwifery students and four studying Community Development). Five of these Midwifery students completing their post-grad studies in 2022.

FoSC is continuing to support and encourage these students to finish their study and will continue to provide funds to cover costs associated with preparing their theses and graduation.

Scholarship graduations

Two students graduated in December 2022 with a Certificate 2 in Hospitality from the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai. This training course continues to have great employment outcomes for graduates and both young women have been employed to work in restaurants.

In 2022, two young women at Baucau Teacher College completed their third year of study and graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching. Their graduation ceremony was held in March 2023. One student has decided to continue her studies this year to complete the Licentiate (Bachelor of Education). She has been preparing her research topic and doing an extended placement at pre-secondary school close to Suai.



Feliciana and Olandina graduated with a Certificate 2 in Hospitality and both are now employed

One young man graduated in 2022 with a Certificate 1 in Motorbike Mechanic Training at Senai Becora vocational training centre in Dili. He has been encouraging other students from Covalima district to attend the training centre and sharing his skills while he looks for paid employment.

Five nursing students have completed their post-graduate studies in Midwifery at the National University in Dili and their graduation ceremony was held in April 2023. These young women have shown great resilience and determination to complete their studies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and are looking forward to starting their nursing careers.



Above Left: Casilda and Carmelita graduated from Bacau Teachers College after completing a 3-year Bachelor of Teaching



Nursing students Aida (above right), Belarmina (left) and Elsa (right) graduated in April after completing post-graduate studies in Midwifery

2023 scholarships

Nine new students received scholarships in 2023. Their areas of study are Primary teaching at Baucau Teachers College (1 student), Hospitality at the Canossian Vocational Training Centre in Suai (4 students), Motorbike mechanic training at CNFP Senai Becora in Dili (2 students) and Automotive studies (2 commenced but 1 has withdrawn).

There were also five students continuing their studies at Baucau Teachers College. All students have reported that they are enjoying their studies and have been undertaking their practical placements at schools in Covalima.

We are also continuing to support students at the National University in Dili to complete their post-graduate studies. One of the nursing students is on track to graduate at the end of 2023. Two of the Community Development students are underway with their post-grad studies and the other two will start soon.



Left: Revalino is enjoying his automotive training at Don Bosco Training Centre

Right: Casilda has been completing a three-month teaching placement at a school in the village of Ogues, near Suai

Computer and English language training

Many young people participate in English language and computer training programs at the CCC. Students have reported that they benefit from the training by developing skills to improve school grades (at primary and secondary school), increasing their chances to access further study opportunities and developing skills for employment. This year there were 55 registrations for English language training and 50 registrations for computer training.

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

This year there were also two computer training programs funded through FoSC, utilising computers donated through the City of Port Phillip disposal program. The first was a training program for 42 Municipal Government employees to develop skills for reporting and recording data. There is more information on this training program later in this Annual Report (Outcome 2).

FoSC also raised funds this year for an International Women’s Day initiative, to train 15 rural women to develop literacy skills to improve opportunities for village level leadership positions. This training commenced on 21 June and will continue through until July. Outcomes will be reported next year.



Many young people complete English language training at the CCC in Suai.

Suai Secondary School library

FoSC has provided funds, resources and skilled volunteers to establish and maintain a library at the public Secondary School in Suai which has over 2,200 students and teachers. This includes funding the salaries of two librarians who interact with students and manage the library collection which includes more than 4,200 fiction, non-fiction and reference books in four languages. There are also more than 130 pieces of science equipment donated by FoSC stored in the library which are borrowed by science teachers to use in the classroom.

Last year the two librarians received training from the National Library in Dili to install software to catalogue all the books. The team from Dili is continuing to support the librarians and has also provided donations of books in local dialects to add to the library collection.



The school library is a great space for students to sit and read.

Basketball court at Suai Secondary School

Students enjoy using the basketball court located in the school grounds. The reconstruction of the basketball court, which included a complete resurface, new goal posts, boards and rings, was completed in December 2019, with funds donated to FoSC. Major contributors included Albert Park College students and the Port Phillip Basketball Association.



Students at the Suai Secondary School enjoy using the basketball court.

IT Social Enterprise

The IT Social Enterprise (ITSE) at the CCC provides access to computers and training to ensure community members can develop skills for employment, education and improving access to information. It is a branch of Info Timor, the first not-for-profit enterprise in Timor-Leste focusing on capacity building and using information technology as a primary tool to create positive social change. The staff are trained to refurbish computers, provide free domain software and deliver community training programs.

Income is generated through delivering community training programs and from the sale of donated computer equipment. Regular donations of equipment through the City of Port Phillip disposal program have ensured the sustainability of the ITSE in recent years, including providing stable employment for the four staff and contributing to the core running costs of the CCC.



In February, the ITSE team provided a three-month placement for four students from the Cristal Suai technical secondary school. The students participated in a range of activities at the CCC including learning to refurbish computers and assisting in computer training classes.

Students from Cristal Technical school were shown how to load free software onto computers.

Civic health

In 2020, FoSC raised funds to establish a Civic Health Fund for the CCC to implement initiatives to promote public health. The primary focus of the fund was to share information and resources with communities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This program is overseen by the CCC Health Coordinator, with funds from FoSC donations and the City of Port Phillip. This year health priorities have broadened to include sharing information on immunisations, preventing the spread of dengue fever, monitoring health facilities, distributing donations and embedding health and hygiene training and practices in community education programs.

Another important focus has been working on disaster risk reduction and response activities. There are many vulnerable communities in Covalima that have been impacted by extreme weather conditions this year, with heavy rains and strong winds damaging property, crops and infrastructure.

The Health Coordinator and other CCC staff have worked with communities to build their resilience by providing information and training to more than 130 community members, to help to manage resources and establish village-based disaster management committees. There is a strong focus on inclusion and making sure all members of the community, especially the most vulnerable, have information and resources that they need to reduce the impact of disaster.



The CCC Health Coordinator is also building networks within communities and with local government departments to share information and skills. He is an active member of Rede Saude, the national health network which includes the Ministry of Health, and also the National Disaster Network.



(Above) CCC Health Coordinator Janu delivered the masks donated from FoSC to the Health Department

(Left) Wheelchairs donated to FoSC by Rotary Donations in Kind arrived safely in Suai in October

Suai Secondary School WASH facilities

The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project at Suai Secondary School was a major undertaking by FoSC and the CCC in recent years. It has provided running water and toilets for the large school community of more than 2,200 students and staff. There are also 46 local families living nearby who have access to the community water tank.

The school community and staff are working to ensure the sustainability of the water supply and to oversee the collection of funds and expenditure to maintain the facilities. The Health Coordinator is continuing to monitor the facilities and encourage health and hygiene training at the school. During a visit earlier this year he reported that the facilities are well maintained, and the school is also using the water to develop gardens around the school.

With One Seed reforestation

With One Seed (WoS) is a certified carbon forestry program in Timor-Leste, working with subsistence farming communities. It involves planting trees on deforested land, local ownership, environmental education and building local economies. Farmers receive a small annual income for planting and maintaining trees on their land.

WoS has been established in Tilomar sub-district in 2019, with four staff employed at the CCC to manage the initiative. FoSC has raised funds for the annual farmer payments and received a significant donation from the Rotary Club of Balwyn for the construction and operation of the WoS nursery.

WoS in Tilomar is preparing for an audit to attain Gold Standard certification so that the carbon storage in the trees can be sold on the international carbon market. The income this will generate will ensure the sustainability into the future.



There is a lot of collaboration involved, with the CCC and FoSC working with Xpand Foundation, Oxfam and WoS Baguia on this initiative. WoS is now part of the EU funded Rai Matak (Green Land) project, which will see the expansion of this community-led carbon forestry model into other districts of Timor-Leste.

Thousands of trees have now been grown in the WoS nursery

Tree distribution and technology

In April 2023, approximately 28,000 trees were distributed to farmers, bringing the total number of planted trees since 2019 to more than 74,000. To date more than 160 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.



*Left: Farmers have ID cards and records are kept of the location and size of all trees planted through the WoS program
Right: Trees are planted and maintained by subsistence farming families.*

Annual farmer payments

In 2022, FoSC raised the funds for the annual farmer tree payments; with each farmer receiving 50 cents for each surviving tree planted in 2020 and 2021. In 2022, 58 households received payments totalling USD8,348.50 for 16,697 trees, bringing much needed income into these remote villages in Tilomar sub-district. The annual payments this year will be made after June 2023 once the tree count is completed. It is expected that there will more than 45,000 trees, with the payments funded by donations to FoSC and Xpand Foundation.



Farmers receive an annual payment of 50c for each tree they are maintaining on their land.

CCC capacity strengthening

Organisational strengthening is a key focus area in both the FoSC and CCC Strategic Plans and is also a priority for other CCC partners. Program partners provide many development training opportunities as they recognise that training strengthens the CCC capacity and sustainability.

Training held at the CCC is often offered to all staff, with volunteers and Commission members also able to participate. It is also common practice for individual staff to share information if they attend training, workshops or seminars that may be beneficial across all programs.

This year, there has been a strong focus on organisational sustainability, gender equality, inclusion and policy implementation. Some examples of training in 2022/23 include:

- All staff attended:
 - a workshop on integrating Gender Action Learning Systems when working with communities
 - training on LGBTQIA+ to increase their understanding, reduce discrimination and become role models in community and family
 - training on conducting research and collection of meaningful data
 - workshops on developing, reviewing and implementing policies
 - reflection sessions and training on child protection.
- Senior staff attended a workshop on developing safe and sustainable organisations.
- Individual and program staff members have also attended many other seminars, with topics including gender equality, social inclusion, anti-corruption, creative and critical thinking.

Monitoring and reporting workshop

In May, FoS Committee member Ann Wigglesworth visited the CCC and provided training to staff on monitoring and reporting. The workshop was prepared in response to a need identified by the CCC Director, Alberto de Jesus Barros. Together, Ann and Alberto co-facilitated the workshop, with the objective to improve staff skills and confidence to report on program outcomes. Feedback has been received that the team found the workshop to be very useful and there has been a noticeable improvement in reporting on outcomes.



CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros co-facilitated a staff working on Monitoring & Reporting



*Left: CCC staff Dino (left) and Nizio (right) enjoy participating in staff training.
Right: CCC staff Teresa (left) and Janu (right) brainstorming ideas during a workshop.*

CCC governance and management

The CCC is governed by a Commission of nine volunteer community leaders (three women and six men). The Commission operates under a constitution and meets quarterly to oversee operations and provide information and advice. The current Commission President is Sgt Amelia de Jesus Amaral. Amelia is head of the Vulnerable Persons Unit in Suai and is a strong advocate for gender equality.

The CCC is managed by the Director, Alberto de Jesus Barros, with assistance from the Vice-Director and Finance Manager. There are more than 20 staff at the CCC, with programs led by Coordinators. The staff regularly collaborate and share information, especially in relation to proposal writing, policy implementation and professional development. This has been integral to the success of the CCC.



CCC Commission members and senior staff at a meeting in April 2023

CCC Strategic Plan

The CCC work is guided by their vision to 'build a community in which everyone has the opportunity to develop their capacities so that they can contribute to the social and economic development of the Municipality of Covalima, Timor-Leste'.

The 2020-25 Strategic Plan outlines six key focus areas: 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. The CCC aligns its reporting of activities to its Strategic Plan. A review is planned for next financial year.

Annual General Meeting

The CCC 2021-22 AGM was held on 13 September 2022, with over 80 attendees. Invited guests include local government, NGOs, village chiefs, community leaders and program beneficiaries. The CCC views the AGM as a chance to 'show and improve their transparency and accountability' and the format provides opportunities for community members to comment, ask questions and make recommendations to the CCC. At the meeting, the CCC presented their annual report and celebrated their achievements.

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. In recent years the team has gained confidence using Quickbooks for financial management and reporting and would like to further develop their skills.

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.

Each year the CCC is externally audited by CC Business Solutions in Dili. Audits are funded by CCC partners, including the City of Port Phillip. The 2021/22 audit took place in July 2022. The CCC received a clean audit report and recommendations have been implemented.



The CCC Finance team working with the external auditors

Media

The CCC provide regular updates on their activities on their Facebook page, which has more than 2,400 followers. The CCC also has a good relationship with the local media in Covalima and their work is regularly reported on radio and television. This has resulted in a wider national audience understanding the work of the CCC and greater influence, especially in relation to advocacy and working to empower women to take up leadership roles.



Left: The staff at the CCC enjoy hosting visitors and sharing information about their work

Right: Alberto, Director of the CCC was interviewed by local TV and radio stations after the CCC AGM in September

Networks

The CCC participate in many local, national and international networks, with opportunities to sometimes host and present at meetings and forums. The high degree of CCC involvement sought by the government and external organisations is an indication of the high regard with which CCC is held in the municipality for their community work and advocacy.

The CCC has worked closely with local government and in recent years, the CCC has been invited to participate in District Taskforces to promote Health and Disaster Management. They also work with local law enforcement to assist with supporting victims of violence.

The CCC is also 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. As a member of the Asia Justice and Rights consortium, the CCC is also involved in activities to strengthen local NGOs.

The CCC is also part of the TAF national research network, which has 26 members. In March, the CCC Director attended a one-day forum in Dili, facilitated by Asia Pacific for Dialogue, Development, Diplomacy and Defence (AP4D) to discuss development in Timor-Leste and Australia/Timor relations. This was a great networking opportunity for the CCC and a chance to contribute to a national conversation on development.

Other CCC partnerships and programs

The CCC leadership team has worked hard to increase partnerships and diversify their income. Additional income has been earned by hiring the training rooms and facilities at the CCC. Computers supplied through the City of Port Phillip disposal program also ensure the sustainability of the IT social enterprise and training at the CCC.

This year, the CCC has been successful with submissions for funding from national government and international development agencies. An outline of other programs implemented at the CCC this year, and their funding partners, is included in this section.

IWDA Rural Women’s Development Program (RWDP)

The International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) has worked in partnership with the CCC since 2009 to implement the Rural Women’s Development Program. IWDA is an important partner of the CCC and regularly contributes to operational costs of the CCC and provide professional opportunities for staff.



Initially the RWDP program focused on establishing and supporting women to develop livelihood groups with income generating activities including horticulture, food production, weaving and handicrafts. Staff worked with the groups to link them with key stakeholders and access markets. Women have also been involved in capacity development activities, community events and networks.

A further objective is to ensure that women understand gender equality and referral pathways for victims of family violence. 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 has now evolved to also focus on training for women to take on leadership positions in the community. More than 100 women have been involved in leadership training and report that they have developed confidence in public speaking and their ability to advocate for local women. Many strong female leaders have emerged from these programs and there is growing enthusiasm

for women to compete with men in upcoming village elections.



The CCC is now nationally renowned for their work to support women’s leadership, gender equality and raising awareness about gender-based violence.

RWDP Program Coordinator Hilaria (above) delivers workshops for future women leaders (left)

Social audit - School lunch program

This year the CCC continued to implement a 'social audit' of the government funded school lunch program at five schools in Covalima district. With funds from the Prime Minister's Office Civil Society Fund, the social audits are conducted to address concerns about the misuse of funds and quality of food in the school lunch program. Activities focused on building the capacity of the school community, including the Parents' Association, to work together to advocate and make improvements.

This program was completed in December, with the CCC reporting their findings to national government and the local community. This was a pilot program and the CCC were congratulated on their program implementation, reporting and outcomes and has been encouraged to apply again in the future. This work aligns to the CCC key focus areas of education, health and advocacy. There is great community support for this project and it has widespread benefits, as other schools are also encouraged to improve their school lunch programs and improve nutrition for young students.



Many community members supported the social audit to improve outcomes for students

The Asia Foundation research

The Asia Foundation (TAF) conducts national research projects in Timor-Leste and regularly engages the services of CCC staff to conduct interviews in communities in Covalima. In recent years, many CCC staff have participated in this research and have developed their skills in conducting interviews, community engagement, planning and reporting. The CCC has been commended by TAF for their efficiency in organising their work and for their excellent reporting. This year research was conducted in January and February, with CCC staff visiting 19 sub-villages in six sub-districts of Covalima. Preliminary meetings have been held to discuss a larger scale research project in 2022/23.

Outcome 2 City of Port Phillip and Covalima municipality and their communities are actively engaged in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities

Visits to East Timor

FoSC members Ann Wigglesworth and Nancy Price travelled to Timor-Leste to act as international observers for the Parliamentary Election on 21 May 2023. Elwood resident, Susan Attrill also travelled with Ann, on her first visit to Timor-Leste. During their visit they provided support to the CCC and Friendship activities.

Nancy Price met with the CCC Education Coordinator in Dili to visit current scholarship students, graduates and training institutes. Nancy learned about the vocational and tertiary training options in and around Dili, and employment outcomes for scholarship graduates.

Ann and Susan travelled to Suai for a few days. As reported earlier, Ann worked with the Director of the CCC to co-deliver a training session on monitoring and reporting outcomes, and Susan worked with the CCC English trainers and students.

During their stay in Suai, Ann and Susan met with the Municipal Administrator Francisco de Andrade. Ann and Francisco have known each other for many years, both having been involved with the Friendship for some time.

Face to face meetings between our two communities have been limited in recent years since the pandemic. These visits are a valuable reminder of the long-term connection between the Port Phillip and Covalima communities and importance of forging new relationships.



Left: Ann met with Covalima Municipal Administrator Francisco de Andrade during her visit to Suai

Right: Nancy enjoying a meal with recent midwifery scholarship graduate Aida in Dili



Susan Attrill visited Suai in May and spoke with the students learning English at the CCC.

Municipal Government computer training

Early in 2022, the Covalima Municipal Administrator Francisco de Andrade requested assistance from FoSC and the CCC to provide computer training for municipal government employees. He had identified a need for many employees to build skills to use computers for reporting and recording data.

FoSC provided funds for the training in the 2021-22 financial year and the training program commenced in September 2022.

The CCC trainers delivered the training, using computers provided through the CoPP disposal program. There were 42 employees enrolled in the training, which was completed in small groups over a six-week period. An evaluation of the program showed that the training was valuable to participants with very low-level skills and experience, however some participants would have benefited more from intermediate or advanced level training. FoSC is working with the CCC to identify professional development opportunities to upskill the IT trainers at the CCC with the aim of providing advanced training in the future.



Local Governance Advisor, Ergilio Vicente (left), Covalima Municipal Administrator, Francisco de Andrade (centre) and CCC Director Alberto de Jesus Barros (right) collaborated to organise the training.



42 Municipal government staff received computer training at the CCC

Community events and fundraising

Book launch – ‘Everything and Nothing’

FoSC celebrated the launch of the book ‘Everything and Nothing: The Life and Development Work of Bill Armstrong’ written by Peter Britton, at the Middle Park Bowls Club on 16 October 2022.

Bill Armstrong AO is the former Chair of FoSC and was instrumental in establishing the community-to-community partnership between the City of Port Phillip and Covalima communities. This book is about Bill’s life in international and community development, including the people and events that influenced him and the relationships he built to make change happen.

The book was launched by Julian Hill MP, Member for Bruce, and former Mayor of Port Phillip who signed the first friendship agreement with Xanana Gusmao in 2000. The MC was FoSC Chairperson Megs Alston and other speakers included Bill Armstrong, the author Peter Britton and Bill Hebb, former National President and International Secretary of the YCW.

Over 70 people attended the launch, and many copies of the book were sold, with proceeds raising \$305 for FoSC programs.



Julian Hill MP (left) launched the book about the life and work of Bill Armstrong AO (right)

Film night

A fundraising film night was held at the Classic Cinema in Elsternwick on 9 February 2023, to see the film *Tár*, starring Cate Blanchett. It was a sell-out event with 75 people attending a private screening. The event raised \$975 for the With One Seed carbon forestry initiative in Covalima district.

International Women's Day event

The FoSC Coordinator Carlene Harlock was invited to speak at the CoPP International Women's Day event on 9 March 2023 at St Kilda Town Hall. The 2023 theme was 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality' and over 80 people attended, including the Mayor and Councillors.

The presentation included information on Council's relationship with Suai, the importance of the computers donated by CoPP and the valuable work of the CCC to promote gender equality throughout Covalima district. An initiative to fund 15 women from rural areas to undertake computer training at the CCC to improve their chances of competing with men for employment and local leadership positions met with enthusiastic support and the \$1,050 required to fund the training was raised. The program will commence at the end of June 2023.



Mayor Heather Cunsolo (left) with FoSC Coordinator Carlene Harlock (right) at the International Women's Day event at St Kilda Town Hall

Annual trivia night

The seventh annual FoSC trivia night was held on 20 April at the Middle Park Bowls Club. The event was a great success, raising \$14,094 from ticket sales, a raffle, silent auction and donations. Local traders and residents generously donated over \$5,500 worth of goods and services for prizes for the event.

The trivia night is the largest annual fundraising event for FoSC and receives great support from the Port Phillip community. There were 116 tickets sold and attendees included Councillors, Council staff, residents and friends. There was a lot of enthusiasm and a competitive spirit between tables, making for an enjoyable evening.

Each year Cr Louise Crawford has generously donated her time to host the annual trivia night. This year she was involved in preparation but unfortunately was unable to attend. FoSC is grateful to professional trivia host Ben May from Question 1 for stepping in at last moment and doing a terrific job as host.



The annual trivia night was a great success and many new and old friends attended

Election Observer Mission report back

Since the vote for independence in 1999, Australians have travelled to Timor-Leste to act as impartial election observers with the aim to promote democracy in support of free and fair elections. The Timor-Leste parliamentary election was held on 21 May, and the Australian East Timor Association organised a group of Australian volunteers to act as election observers, including two members of the FoSC Committee.

FoSC was pleased to host a report back from the Election Observer Mission in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 30 May, with 35 people attending. Speakers included:

- Michael Leach, Professor in Politics and International Relations at Swinburne University of Technology, who presented a summary report from the team.
- Nancy Price, Friends of Suai Committee member, who has volunteered at five Timorese elections and spoke about her experience on election day and changes over time.
- Hon Martin Foley, former ALP minister in the Victorian Government reflected on his experiences at the Timorese election and their robust but fragile democracy.

The observer mission team has congratulated the people of Timor-Leste on a successful 2023 parliamentary election process, which shows that the Timorese people continue to embrace and value their democratic institutions.



Left: (left to right) Glenda Lasslett, Paulie Stewart, Hon Martin Foley, Jean McLean AM and Ann Wigglesworth enjoyed catching up at the election observer mission report back.
Right: Guest speaker Michael Leach and FoSC Committee member Pat Jessen

City of Port Phillip computers sent to Suai

The IT Social Enterprise at the CCC receives computer equipment through the City of Port Phillip computer disposal program. The equipment, which includes desktop computers, laptops, keyboards, and monitors, is used to generate income through community training programs and the sale of computers to the community.

The FoSC Coordinator works with the IT staff to collect and store the equipment, and in November, six Council officers volunteered their time to help pack the equipment into boxes.

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.



Left: Staff at the CCC all pitch in to unload and unpack the computers when they arrive in Suai
Right: CoPP staff member Kiel Hall volunteered to help pack the computers at the St Kilda Town Hall

Outcome 3 Friends of Suai/Covalima is accountable, effective and efficient

Donations and fundraising

Over \$25,000 was donated to FoSC this year for education and training, reforestation and health programs facilitated through the CCC. Funds were also raised for CCC operations to cover the shortfall in the Council grant. Donations were received from individuals and church groups 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 have requested donations to FoSC programs and the CCC in lieu of birthday gifts.

In-kind donations included items from local businesses and individuals for the annual trivia night. FoSC members have donated toys for the Vulnerable Persons Unit safehouse in Suai, and Rotary Donations in Kind has donated wheelchairs and walking sticks for the Covalima community. Community members and organisations have also donated computer equipment to be shipped to Suai with the computers from the City of Port Phillip disposal program.

Fundraising activities this year included the annual trivia night, book launch sales and a film night. These activities are detailed earlier in this report. Funds were also raised through the sale of merchandise including Timorese coffee and handicrafts.

FoSC is a registered fundraiser with Consumer Affairs Victoria.



FoSC has continued to support the VPU safehouse in Suai

Strategic Plan review and update

The Friends of Suai/Covalima 2020-25 Strategic Plan was endorsed by Council in September 2020. The Strategic Plan has a fundamental goal to strengthen programs towards sustainability and to actively engage the Port Phillip and Covalima communities in cultural exchange, mutual learning and development activities.

A review of the Strategic Plan was conducted by FoSC in 2022 and the review report details the work and the value of the Friendship relationship in both communities, with information obtained from interviews with key stakeholders in Suai, Covalima.

Insights from the review report, and Council's decision in 2021 to implement a transition plan to reduce FoSC resourcing led to the FoSC CRC's decision to revise the Strategic Plan. The revision was endorsed by Council on 2 November 2022.

Annual meeting

The FoSC annual meeting was held on 17 November in the Council Chamber at St Kilda Town Hall. The 2021/22 Annual Report was presented at the meeting, after receiving endorsement from Council on 2 November.

The guest speaker, Dr Alan Dupont AO, is an international security expert, strategist, journalist and former adviser to Timor-Leste who has written about Australia and Timor-Leste strategic relations. The Tasi Mane (South Coast) megaproject and the processing of gas from the Greater Sunrise field in the Timor Sea were the topic of his presentation, followed by a Q&A session moderated by Megs Alston.

At this meeting the FoSC Community Reference Committee officers were endorsed, and Megs Alston was selected to continue as FoSC Chair. This appointment was endorsed by Council on 1st February 2023.



Dr Alan Dupont AO gave an interesting presentation on Australia and Timor-Leste strategic relations

Financial report

Friends of Suai/Covalima Income and Expenditure - 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

INCOME		
City of Port Phillip funds	45,016	*
Friends of Suai donations and fundraising		
Individual donations and grants	25,793	
Trivia night fundraiser	14,094	
Film night fundraiser	1,793	
Coffee & merchandise sales	1,648	
Book launch sales	305	
Bank interest	1,185	
Total Income	\$ 89,834	

EXPENDITURE		
City of Port Phillip funds:		
CCC core grant (CoPP funding agreement)	30,000	*
Shipment of computer equipment	3,932	*
CCC audit support	3,875	*
CCC training support	2,822	*
Civic Health program	2,000	*
Meetings and events	1,364	*
Administration	1,023	*
Friends of Suai donations and fundraising		
Scholarships	22,253	
<i>With One Seed</i> reforestation	10,357	
Teacher / library project	7,587	
CCC core funding (FoSC contribution)	6,631	
Fundraising costs – events and coffee	2,018	
Monitoring visit expenses (June 2022)	1,115	
IWD event – computer training course	1,055	
Total Expenditure	\$ 96,032	

* City of Port Phillip funds

Friends of Suai/Covalima Donations account - 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

Opening balance 1/7/2022	\$ 38,821
Plus income	44,818
Less expenditure	51,016
Closing balance 30/6/2023	\$ 32,623

