



BLUE MOUNTAINS EAST TIMOR SUPPORTERS (Legally BLUE MOUNTAINS TOGETHER FOR TIMOR INC) ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Introduction

Blue Mountains has been working with Timor-Leste since 2005. A long standing 'Friendship' with the remote mountainous area of Hatobuilico has been in place since 2007 and the Blue Mountains East Timor Supporters (BMETS) have contributed to development across the nation since 2002 when Beba Sequeira first visited the Blue Mountains and prompted a long relationship of mutuality. In the last year, BMETS have slightly altered the last letter which used to stand for 'sisters'. BMETS now includes men (keeping up with the future!). Blue Mountains Together for Timor Inc. (BMT4T) was incorporated in 2015 to give all our work a legal identity. We are accompanied by partner committee, Blue Mountains Hatobuilico Friendship Committee, led by Councillor Suzie van Otdorp.

This report describes the wealth of projects that have been core to our work in 2024 2025.

This year we have had particular reason to look back and reflect on our wide and deep achievements over the last 20 plus years. In August the Blue Mountains Hatobuilico Friendship Committee (really an extension of our reach and part of our efforts) was awarded an Order of Timor from the President Jose Ramos Horta. In September, we organised for



the award to be handed over to the Mayor, Mark Greenhill, and were fortunate to have

mana Bella Galhos join us for this prestigious and memorable occasion. We are proud to have the work of these amazing band of committees made public and stand proudly with the Springwood East Timor Friendship Committee who also were recognised with an award.



Our work is ever underpinned with evaluation and planning days and this year's was led ably by Fiona Christian. We set our ambitious budget and project plan as well as have a hard look This year we have begun to review or fundraising strategy and have set yet another ambitious plan to complement our famous garage sales and donor programs. Particular acknowledgement must go to the Darcy Foundation (a la Gilling family) who are our primary donors and we also thank deeply other generous and faithful supporters who recognise that every dollar goes to our neighbour, Timor-Leste, who still has so much need and where there is so much to do.

This year we lost one of our much-loved stalwarts, Mary Travers. We miss Mary T for her robust self but also for her incredible talents with the word and the pen. It was marvellous to see Mary painted for the Blue Mountains Portrait emblazoned with the BMETS logo, so important to her (painted by wonderful Timor advocate, Janet Saunders). Mary T was joined by Mary W painted by Rani Brown – Mary W’s painting was not obviously about Timor but actually Mary W was on Timor business when the moment was captured.

We are extremely proud of our contribution to Timor! Who would have thought that we would be still vigorous and determined to make a difference over such a long time?

Timor visits

Each year members of BMETS visit Timor as volunteers. Jude Finch goes each year and this year was accompanied by Mary Waterford, Lesley Sammon and Susan Ambler in July / August. Wendy Chandler also visited to complete and promote the film that she has been making on Tasi Tolu but was able to join in on BMETS business. We attended the Timor Friendship Conference celebrating 25 years of friendship in Dili on July 9-11. BMETS reps all attended, sitting with representatives from 15 other friendship groups from across Australia. This was a marvellous opportunity to meet each other, ignite passions, locate synchronicities and hear from some groups and Timor officials about the way forward with the friendship structures that have been so



warmly encouraged by small areas across Timor. The advent of municipal government loomed large in the presentations and new contacts made for officials in our local area. The Hatobuilico Posto Administrador, senior Aniceto, attended with us. And Kaitlen Wilson, Aust Ambassador to TL.

These visits to Timor are vitally important for our work. Not only do we get to meet up with all our projects, hear how they are going and decide together about next steps, but we forge and deepen relationships of trust. Continuity is the key, oiled with responsiveness and follow through. We have our long term and shorter-term partners now but we also have a set of people who guide and assist us with knowledge, cultural understanding and better considerations, let alone logistics like how to



buy a free ticket on a wharf with no signs or organise a car or who to speak to about what. We particularly thank and acknowledge our local mentors Beba Sequeria, Acacio Soares, Sabino Soares, Elsa Pinto, Paulina Belo and many others for the vitally crucial role they play in our negotiations and movement while in Timor.

This year the trip time as longer, allowing for a visit to Atauro, time in Dili and two trips to Hatobuilico. This was very satisfying because usually we run from morning to night with a hectic schedule and this last trip allowed for a quick snorkel as well!

Highlights of the trip included:

- Attending the Friendship Conference in Dili
- Attending the Forum of women's groups in Hautio – delightful to see the women so well organised and productive (see below for fuller report)
- Being special guests for the official opening of the new Library in Hatobuilico, Bibilioteka ESCANFER and then following up with presentation of donated books (thanks special donors)
- Visiting the site of the new preschool to be completed in January 2026 and under construction as this report is written
- Presenting 3 laptops to the new library
- Visiting the Akrema Fisherwomen's Project and gaining a new source of funding for them

Projects

Hatobuilico Scholarship Program

BMT4T continued its collaboration with Blue Mountains City Council, annually providing funding for scholarships for young people from the Hatobuilico Sub-District to attend university. The program is administered through the Aloia Foundation partnership with 8 students in the year. Four of these students will graduate at the end of the year and we will take on new students into the program. One student, Anselmo from Mauchiga, attends the Baucau Teacher's College and is achieving excellent results.

BMETS Scholarship Program

This year BMETS supported 20 young women with scholarships to attend university. We are particularly thrilled to see young women that we have known over the years, Elsa, Dircia and Virisissima, complete their studies in Public Health, Education and Midwifery and go on to contribute to their communities.



Students receive support to pay fees and also to cover the costs of books and

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



It is always gratifying to meet up with ex-students as we travel about and have been pleased to meet Adriana teaching at one of the universities, Ana Maria working in administration in the Hatobuilico Sub-district office, Juliano teaching at ESCANFER as examples. In September we commissioned mana Ema da Sousa to undertake a small research study into whether students do get work at the end of their studies. Not surprisingly, not all students get paid work immediately in their chosen field but many do and all were positive, even in the face of extremely high unemployment levels in the country and the adverse impact of nepotism, that they would secure paid work. All were very positive about the varied and wide impact of studying, grateful for the opportunity to expand their skills and world view.

Hatobuilico Senior Secondary School - ESCANFER

Since 2012 we've assisted the establishment a senior secondary school in Hatobuilico called ESCANFER. We assist by paying a stipend to the volunteer teachers, contributing IT equipment, assisting poor families to attend the school and providing some contribution towards the purchase of necessary resources such as sporting and musical equipment.

School enrolments in 2025 are 198. We were very dismayed to hear that none of the teachers were in receipt of a government salary, increasing the reliance on us to keep the school afloat. We understand that the school is places similarly to other schools across the country, relying on fee income and donations plus donors like ourselves and we hope that a submission to the Catholic Church education authority, KONEKTIL, will achieve an outcome. We are definitely not passive about resolving this issue and have undertaken some research to attempt to discover a way forward. One thing that is very clear is that the local community are extremely poor and paying fees is almost out of reach for them.

Visits to the school reinforce that our contribution is highly valuable and the community are totally committed to providing quality local senior secondary schooling for their children.

In the last year, we also supported the school with new doors for the classrooms as the old doors were not secure. Independently, we have provided some information and support for a group called Water East Timor (WET) to build a water system from a spring down to the set of building in the school and church complex. It is very pleasing to see other donors make these most valuable contributions to Hatobuilico, unfortunately often neglected by national government and INGOs.

New Library in Hatobuilico



We were very pleased to be able to attend the formal opening of the new library in Hatobuilico that we have funded. Called "BIBIOTEKA ESCANFER" the library is one of only 7 such libraries scattered around Timor. We are assured support and resources from the "national library", the Xanana Gusmao Reading Room, in what is a very progressive initiative. The building has a teachers' room on the bottom floor and, opening to expansive views that will surely foster the reflective act of study and reading, the library is placed on the top

floor. The small collection has mainly text books and secondary school related resources and we were very happy to receive targeted donations to supplement these with literature in Tetun and the local dialect, Mambae, as well as English and Portuguese dictionaries. It will be exciting to see the collection and the reading fervour grow over time. Special thank you to Dave Ludenia for the donation of 3 laptops that will be housed in the library to assist with school tasks and research.



Taureme Preschool

We were able to visit the Taureme community on a couple of occasions, mainly with the intent of checking out the site for the construction of a new preschool – one of the big commitments from BMETS in 2025. On the second visit, we were joined by the senior Education Department official responsible for preschool development, mana Mafalda together with staff from the Ainaro office. Maun Sabino Soares, who will undertake the build on our behalf, attended with us and took the opportunity to negotiate with the community about the foundation work that they would start on the site.



Sabino started work on the build in August and the work has been interrupted by unseasonal rain. We expect for the two-classroom school will be completed in January.

This visit we were able to go inside the makeshift structure that the community had been using to teach the 40 children with two volunteer teachers. The construction was dark, holes in the roof letting rain through, a dirt floor but children were very proud to be attending, sang to us and sat happily on neat rows of desks in front of blackboards and home grown preschool resources. This community is ever resourceful!

As BMETS capacity is lower than desirable and we committed to assist this incredible,

isolated and poor community, we submitted to other donors for support and were thrilled to get matching grants from the Andrew McNaughtan Foundation and Give Together. Both applications, but particularly the latter, have extended our grant proposal skills and proven that one can make a promotional video in a tent in the outback as well as send it with the assistance of fellow young travellers! We are hugely appreciative to these donors. Give Together is 50 people contributing \$20.00 a week each!



Hatobuilico Women's Development Projects

BMETS continues to support eight different women's groups to establish economic enterprises.

In the period the small economic enterprises continue to operate. Products have continued to be diverse, ranging from hand woven tais to machine sewn school bags, raising pigs, growing vegetables, selling coffee and noodles to Mt. Ramelau pilgrims, embroidering tablecloths, making ornamental flowers and baking bread. Women report that they have been able to build and sustain small businesses (local kiosks and a trucking business are two examples) as individuals, paying back the small loans that got them started.



Lesley, Mary and Jude were pleased to be able to attend the annual Women’s Leadership and Training Forum which this year was held in Hautio in August 2024. This is an opportunity for women to attend from each of the groups, ably supported again by Alola staff mana Evelina, mana Paulina and mana Fina.



Each year we witness big advances in the women’s capacity. Microloans are working well with the efficient circulation of funds and women saying that they have been able to support their children to go to school, improve their health, access education themselves and improve their own literacy, participate in local development and advocacy opportunities. We see women speaking up, debating



with each other, clearly taking leadership. There were some highlights this year: the women all participated in a cooking competition – initially we thought this a bit “benign” but were amazed to see how it panned out and the degree of preparation that the women undertook and their task was to take 2 hours to prepare a multi-course meal on a wood fire using local products and meeting nutrition, pricing and recipe innovation goals; speakers included IADE which is a business support agency of government and they have agreed to support some of the women’s enterprises; women were supported by the Catholic Church – this also might not be the revolution in our terms but is definitely a marker of change and the uptake of women’s power in Timor; and, women were totally in control with excellent examples of leadership evident.

We feel very happy with the progress of this project that is clearly making a real difference in opportunity and the everyday lives of women in Hatobuilico.

Akrema Fisherwomen’s Project



We were very pleased to be able to visit Atauro and the Akrema Women’s Group. A truck and then a longish walk took us to the remote village of Akrema where we were met by 16 women members of the group. We were introduced to this group last year when we facilitated kick start funding for their fishing and seaweed harvesting program. The initial stage involved buying fishing nets and buckets and other necessary paraphernalia for their work. With productivity evident we agreed to the second stage which was to buy a fridge and a freezer for storing their catches and making ice. Our contribution has been underpinned

by advice from Acacio and then Barry from the Beloi Eco Resort.

We committed to the women that we would identify other donors for their next steps and have been pleased to have just heard from the Office of the President that they have been successful in getting Rotary funds to assist in the purchase of a motor for a boat to transport the fish to market – a fine effort from Rotary Clubs of Darwin; Darwin North, Darwin Sunrise, Darwin South and Litchfield/Palmerston. We have made separate appeals to Friends of Atauro (Indi) who have since visited this most impressive group of women. We are grateful to Acacio who, working as a volunteer himself, has supported the women to open their own bank account (an arduous process in Timor!) and purchase products.

JDN- Juventude Desenvolvimento Nationale

Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasionale (JDN) is a youth NGO based in Dili working in the districts and Dili itself in a range of young people's rights and health issues. This small and amazingly effective organisation is at the forefront of advocacy and rights for people with disabilities and this year we have been pleased to contribute to their important work on this front. At our visit, we were the coordinator of their advocacy team presented to us, together with JDN staff who explained that their goal is for total inclusion. They have started with building people's skills and confidence in public speaking, leading to self-advocacy and self-determination. Aligned strategies such as developing a board game to identify the pathway from someone's home to access their broader neighbourhood, safe travel on public transport (microlets) and ensuring that people are able to access entitlements are carefully planned and delivered by the young people themselves and the JDN team.

BMETS have been honoured to contribute to this extraordinary youth led organisation over the last 8 or so years. We have seen JDN grow from a totally volunteer group to a well funded, staffed team who are successfully tackling hard issues like sexual harassment, under nutrition of children in a very poor society and now rights of people with disabilities. The JDN team are all under 25 and it is pleasing to see members transitioning to jobs in government and the broader NGO sector as the organisation itself gains a higher profile as a high quality service provider and accesses broader funding nationally and internationally.

Arcoiris

Arcoiris works with Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender (LBT) community members within Timor-Leste, 'to enhance and sustain the pride and dignity, health, and well-being of youth and young LBT adults by empowering them with knowledge, skills, linking with services, resources and opportunities in a culturally diverse society'. They have had a partnership with BMETS since 2017.



Arcoiris' role is still primarily public advocacy and education about LGBT people together with supporting its members in attaining their rights and aligning their identities. Important work is done in reconciling young people to their families who often have misunderstood about gender identity, with young people suffering maltreatment and homophobia from amongst their family clan. Reunification with families is vitally important for identity, safety and care. Arcoiris has a focus on members gaining employment and economic independence. As a way of achieving this objective, Arcoiris runs a food canteen from President Ramos Horta offices, cooking for groups of up to 300 children at a time and also for groups such as women survivors of domestic violence. In the last year and using the same model, canteens have

been established in Oecusse and Hera. BMETS' contribution has continued to be for core operating costs because donors, national and international, will not contribute to these basic and necessary components of keeping an organisation running.

The film, 'Unstoppable Change' by Blue Mountains film-maker, Rani Brown is in post production. This included in 2025 a visit to meet again with Arcoiris storytellers to gain endorsement. The documentary about life in Timor for LGBTQ people and the relationship between the Blue Mountains (primarily Mary and Jude) and Bella and Iram, Arcoiris' founders. It will be finished early 2026.

We also hosted a visit by Bella Galhos, as representative of President Jose Ramos Horta to present the Order of Timor to Blue Mountains groups. Bella is the founder of Arcoiris, and we took the opportunity to introduce her local LGBTQ activists. We learnt a lot from each other.

Maubisse Hospital Liaison

Since 2017, BMETS have been pleased to support breast feeding and provide assistance for new mothers who birth in hospital through providing a salary for a health liaison worker at the Maubisse Referral Hospital. This project is part of the Alola Foundation Maternal Health program.

BMETS representatives visited the Maubisse Hospital this year to deliver donated blankets and clothing for children.

2023/2024 Fundraising

Garage sales

BMETS Garage Sales are great fundraisers, wonderful opportunities to recycle our treasurers and an important part of keep our 20year old group together.

Bequest

A very generous bequest continues to be the primary income source for BMETS from 2023-24 and is so gratefully received and honoured by the group.

Further details on budget expenditure, current funding and future budgets can be found in the Treasurers annual report.

2023-24 BMT4T Inc Management Committee

President: Gill Green

Vice President: Dave Ludenia

Secretary: Susan Ambler

Treasurer: Mary Waterford

Committee Members: Jude Finch, Wendy Chandler, Leanne Eagle.

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

The twenty plus members of Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters are passionate and energised. While face to face fundraising has made for a much more challenging environment the group has continued to meet monthly (for 18 years now) and to provide support and friendship to each other as well as to our friends in East Timor.

Treasurer's Report 2024 2025
Blue Mountains Together for Timor Inc (BMT4T) incorporating
Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters (BMETS)

We commenced the year on July 1st 2024 with funds of \$14,670 in our Bendigo Bank account and \$22,580 held by Global Development group. Funds carried forward on June 30th 2025 are \$19,830 held at Bendigo Bank with \$48,420 held by Global Development Groups for our Alola scholarship and Hatobuilico women's program. projects, a healthy balance total of **\$66,370**.

During the 2024/2025 Financial year BMETS groups had income of **\$157,711** and expenditure of **\$127,116.00**, a surplus of **\$30,595**

We continue to receive funds from a very generous bequest from the Darcy Gilling family trust and a contribution from BMCC towards the Hatobuilico students' scholarships, both of which are greatly appreciated by our group and those in Timor.

We also receive many individual donations, which are a substantial source of our income. Thank you to all those who supported (and continue to support) our fundraising efforts.

We are also appreciative of the \$11,600 annual contribution from Blue Mountains City Council for Hatobuilico University scholarships and grants received from Andrew McNaughton Foundation and Give Together.

Fundraising from Garage Sales is significant (and bonding hard work). Card sales at a local business and other small income earners also increase our visibility and scope.

All funds raised go towards our continued funding of projects detailed in this report including University Scholarships; Hatobuilico Senior Secondary School (ESCANFER) - Teacher Stipends, School Library building and student bursaries; Hatobuilico Women's projects; Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasional (JDN) and Arcoiris - Timor-Leste. The building of the Hatobuilico School Library and the raising of funds for the building of Taureme preschool were major projects of the year, with costs spread over 2023-2026.

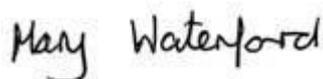
Only a very small proportion of funds raised go towards internal expenses as all work is voluntary in the Blue Mountains and members travel to Timor-Leste at their own expense.

BMETS / BMT4T made a decision in April not to renew our insurance in 2025. Our events are now held under the auspice of the Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre Inc.

Our partnership with Global Development Group (GDG) continues to enable donors to get tax deductibility for the Alola Foundation scholarship project. Thank you to Alber Lai, Jessica Corrie & Geoff Armstrong and all the team at GDG for their ongoing support.

These figures are un-audited. Records are formally kept of all transactions.

This year as part of our thinking about how we increase of resources, we did an analysis of our fundraising over the past 5 years.



Mary Waterford,
Treasurer BM Together for Timor Inc / Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters.
November 2025

BMETS / BM TOGETHER FOR TIMOR Inc Financial Report 2024 2025

INCOME	2023- 2024	2024 2025
Donations	39998	50983
Bequest	50000	50000
Garage Sales	9571	12097
Andrew McNaughtan Foundation AMF	9800	15000
Give Together		15000
BMCC (Hatobuilico Scholarships)	10600	11600
Calendar / Card sales	943	320
Solidarity Concert		2712
Transfers from BMT4T / TREK accounts 2024	36400	
TOTAL INCOME	\$157312	\$157,712
EXPENDITURE		
Hatobuilico Secondary School	17517	23242
Scholarships – Alola +Baucau Teachers Collage	67730	43731
Health Liaison Officer - Maubisse	6511	5795
Taureme School Rebuild / Preschool	26739	455
Hatobuilico Women’s Projects	12605	16529
Hatobuilico SS Library Building	4875	2570
Arcoiris TL (AMF funds)	9671	9628
JDN - Nutrition / WwD project	16280	11124
Akrema Women’s Project		1073
Unstoppable Change film		4000
Solidarity Choir		2782
Miscellaneous project transfers	2187	300
Solidarity Concert (transfer to TU Choir / projects)		2782
Calendar / Card Printing & postage	1792	114
Admin and Webhosting	582	185
Timor Trip costs		2592
Global Development Group fees	2267	2996
Insurance	1028	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE 2024 2025	\$169,784	\$127,116
PROFIT / (LOSS)	\$-12,472	\$30,596

