

January - June 2025 Edition

IN THIS EDITION

Sectoral Group Projects

Alumni of the Year Awards Project

Small Grant Activities

Alumni Showcase

Graduate Internship Program

Welcome Home Reception

Alumni Short Course & Professional Development

Alumni Meeting & Planning

SECTORAL GROUP ACTIVITIES

TL3A Sectoral Groups are committed to identifying, planning, and implementing community-based activities that address development challenges in Timor-Leste. These groups draw on the professional expertise and personal dedication of alumni to create meaningful impact. Currently, TL3A comprises eight sectoral groups: Education, Health, Agriculture, Development, Infrastructure, Media and Communication, Recreational, and Disability Networking.

During the second round of Sectoral Group Fund applications for 2025 implementation, proposals were submitted by four sectoral groups. They were as follows:

Agriculture: Nutrient Omission and Rate Trial

A nutrient omission and rate trial is an agricultural research activity aimed at identifying essential nutrients that may be limiting crop growth in a specific area and determining the optimal application rates to improve yields. The core research question guiding the trial was: "Which nutrient is limiting crop growth, and what application rate is most effective for increasing yields?"

This trial was conducted in the Vemasse area in February 2025, where the team collaborated closely with local rice farmers and two UNTL students, under the leadership of a former government agricultural extension officer. The activity attracted farmers who came together to do field observations and provide comments about the effect of different nutrient treatments on crop growth. Discussions with the farmers highlighted the importance of using optimal combinations and doses of nutrient products to address soil requirements in Timor-Leste.



Recreation: ANZAC Futsal Tournament



The 2025 ANZAC Futsal Tournament was hosted by the New Zealand Manaaki Alumni Association, and welcomed numerous alumni associations, as well as participants from the public and private sector, development agencies, and local and international NGOs. Held in Dili, the tournament commemorated ANZAC history through friendly futsal games, while promoting engagement and networking among alumni and youth in Timor-Leste. The 2025 event focused on fostering connections and camaraderie among university students and young people from various institutions, with plans to expand these peace-themed sports initiatives nationwide. After hosting the event in 2024, TL3A played a supportive role to Manaaki in 2025, with plans to take the lead again next year.

Health: Health Promotion and Mass Consultation

The School Health Promotion and Mass Consultation project aimed to enhance the health of young people by integrating health education into schools and conducting complementary health consultations in the broader community. This initiative was led by Dr. Herval de Jesus, an alumnus who recently completed his Master's degree in Australia. Health promotion activities and mass consultations were conducted in two municipalities, Liquica and Manatuto. In Liquica, the project visited Bogoro Senior High School reaching 147 students (113F/34M) with health education information. Health consultations were then carried out in Neran (Ulmera, Bazartete) reaching 77 (51F/26M) community members. Meanwhile, in Manatuto, the sectoral team carried out a health promotion activity with 80 students (53F/27M) from St. Francisco de Assis School and mass consultations in the community of Aubeon (Barique, Natarbora) reaching 121 people (60F/61M).



Disability Networking: Disability awareness-raising and accessible ramp construction

The Disability Networking sectoral group conducted a series of disability awareness raising workshops with local authorities, communities, families, and youth in Baucau municipality. Led by Australia Awards alumnus, Silvestre Ximenes, these workshops emphasised the rights of people with disabilities and the importance of ending all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against people with disabilities, including women and children. Awareness-raising also focused on the importance of using respectful language when communicating with (and about) people with disabilities.

Many persons with disabilities, especially in rural areas, face barriers to education and employment. A survey previously conducted by ADFTL (Asosiasaun Difiensia Fiar Timor-Leste) helped to further identify their needs and the number requiring support to access education. It also highlighted the need to improve accessibility in the public sector to reduce barriers for people with disabilities and the elderly. In collaboration with two local public institutions, ADFTL was supported to build accessible ramps at two government offices to increase accessibility for people with physical disabilities and elderly people.



Alumni of the Year Award 2024 Award Project – Empowering Communities with Leadership, Literacy, and Digital Tools.

This project was led by the Alumni of the Year 2024 winner, Angela de J. Tavares. The project consisted of four core activities implemented in Ermera and Manufahi municipalities between January and April 2025. Activities included: 1) a literacy program for educators, 2) leadership training for youth, 3) computer training for community members in Ermera, and 4) community tree-planting in Manufahi. The tree planting activities aimed to promote environmental sustainability by using native trees to restore ecosystems, combat climate change, and engage the community in conservation efforts. Activities in Ermera aimed to improve literacy rates among children, empower youth with leadership skills, and bridge the digital divide by equipping community members with essential technology skills. By focusing on underserved areas, the initiative was able to contribute to environmental restoration, education, and community empowerment.



SMALL GRANT ACTIVITIES

The Alumni Small Grants Fund is provided to support Australia Awards alumni to undertake research, community development, or leadership/professional development activities. The aim is to support alumni to be able to better contribute to Timor-Leste's development and/or develop stronger links between Australia and Timor-Leste. Applications under the Alumni Small Grants Fund are sought on an annual basis.

In Round 10 of the alumni small grants program, five project proposals were submitted by alumni, with two projects approved and endorsed by the selection panel consisting of an Australia Awards Timor-Leste representative and two TL3A Board members.

Inclusive Duck Farming for Communities in Liquica and Covalima

This project was initiated by AAS alumnus Jose do Karmo, and aimed to expand duck farming and develop sustainable feed production in Tibar, Liquica and Suai Loro in order to increase income, food security, and livelihoods for poor families, the elderly, and people with disabilities. By increasing duck populations and local feed supply, the project sought to create economic opportunities and promote social inclusion, especially for marginalised groups outside Dili.

Participants received training in sustainable duck farming techniques, including the use of incubators and feed processing machines. Sixty ducks were distributed among participants in the two locations to commence implementing the production practices. Due to heavy rainfall and flooding, rehabilitation of duck shelters was required during project implementation.

Participants were supported to explore marketing strategies for their ducks and linked with local buyers to enhance their income generation opportunities. Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out with ongoing oversight and mentorship being provided to participants.



School Kitchen Garden Permaculture in Hera

Australia Awards alumna Maria do Rosales utilised small grant funding to collaborate with local NGO Youth Empowerment for the Future (YEFF) on a permaculture project in Hera. The activity aimed to empower youth, students and their parents to learn about and implement permaculture practices through a School Kitchen Garden Permaculture initiative. Fifty participants took part in a three-day bootcamp from 20 to 22 February 2025 where they learned about sustainable agriculture practices, water management techniques, and the use of organic fertiliser and pesticides that are safe for the environment. The training aimed to reduce over-farming and improper use of chemical fertilisers which can lead to soil degradation and further impoverishment.

Following the training, participants and facilitators engaged in hands-on permaculture practices. These included the application of permaculture principles through planting activities in the field. Continuous monitoring of crop cultivation progress was carried out through the program, which concluded with a showcase event to present the outcomes of the initiative.

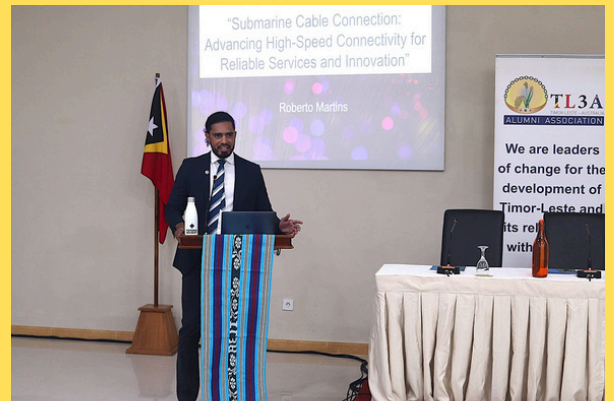


Alumni Showcase: “Submarine Cable Connection: Advancing High-speed Connectivity for Reliable Services and Innovations”

The Submarine Cable Connection Conference led by Australia Awards alumnus, Roberto M. da Costa Martins, was a one-day event focused on the vital role of submarine cables in enhancing high-speed internet connectivity and supporting digital infrastructure in Timor-Leste. The program included a series of keynote presentations, expert panel discussions, and interactive sessions. Keynote speakers featured prominent figures from the telecommunications industry, government agencies, and development partners, who shared strategic insights into the trends, challenges, and opportunities in submarine cable deployment.

Panel discussions addressed various themes, including regulatory frameworks, infrastructure investment, and the use of submarine cable systems to support e-services in sectors such as government, healthcare, and education. These sessions offered a comprehensive view of the technical, operational, and policy aspects involved in building resilient and future-ready digital networks.

In addition to formal presentations, the conference provided valuable opportunities for networking and collaboration. Interactive segments encouraged dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving on key connectivity challenges. A range of stakeholders participated in this event including the National Communication Authority, Timor Telecom, Telemor, Telkomcel, Prospares, IOB, FDCH, Sacomtel, Fundasaun Mahein, Metrolink, World Bank, the Australian Embassy, and TL3A alumni.



GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (GIP)

AATL's Graduate Internship Program is designed to support recently returned alumni in successfully transitioning from academic life to the professional workforce. By placing graduates in structured internships aligned with their field of study, the program provides practical, hands-on experience within a professional environment. It aims to enhance their skills, build confidence, and improve their employability by fostering workplace readiness, professional networks, and a deeper understanding of industry expectations. This initiative not only helps bridge the gap between education and employment but also contributes to building a skilled and competitive workforce in the country.

From January-June 2025, 7 alumni (4 women and 3 men) applied for a GIP placement. They were placed at various host organisations including public and private sector institutions, DFAT-funded programs, international and local NGOs. The value of the program is demonstrated the following reflection from an alumni participant: "During my three-month internship at the Central Bank's Petroleum Fund Department, I developed a strong understanding of how the department manages and invests our sovereign wealth fund. Additionally, I gained in-depth knowledge of bond and equity markets, enhancing my expertise in financial markets and investment strategies."



WELCOME HOME RECEPTION 2025

The 2025 Welcome Home Reception was hosted by the Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste and celebrated newly returned AAS graduates who completed their studies in Australia and returned from June 2024 to January 2025. The reception was held at GMN Salao Multiusos on 28 February 2025. A total of 28 fresh graduates — 14 women and 14 men — successfully completed their studies across a diverse range of academic fields including geoscience, public health, business administration, engineering, nutrition, biotechnology, education, and environmental science.

These graduates are now equipped with valuable knowledge and skills, ready to contribute meaningfully to Timor-Leste's development. Many are actively working to strengthen their professional networks within Timor-Leste, Australia, and internationally.

Representing the returning graduates, Ms. Nivia Pereira shared, "This moment is one of great pride and gratitude for the opportunities that we have been given, and for the collective efforts that have shaped our experiences."

The Australian Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Ms. Caitlin Wilson, also congratulated the 28 graduates, encouraged them to stay active and engaged in the Timor-Leste Australia Alumni (TL3A) and other professional development programs offered by AATL.



AATL WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2025

AATL's Women in Leadership Program took place from 2 – 11 April 2025, with six days of in-person training. The program aimed to enhance leadership opportunities for both female and male alumni of the Australia Awards, as well as other emerging leaders from government, the private sector, civil society organizations, and the Australian Embassy. It focused on developing participants' leadership, communication, and influencing skills, expanding their professional networks, boosting their confidence, and supporting them in creating career plans and strategies for advancement.

In 2025, 24 participants (21 women and 3 men) completed the program, with three participants (two women and one man) identifying as having a disability. The inclusion of three men aimed to promote understanding of both female and male perspectives and to support male advocates for women's leadership.



AATL MENTORING PROGRAM

The AATL mentoring program pairs experienced Australia Awards Scholarship (AAS) and Women in Leadership (WIL) program alumni with those who are less experienced, providing guidance and support to help them grow both professionally and personally.

Mentees benefit from personal growth, expanded networks, career opportunities, and greater professional and personal satisfaction, while mentors also experience personal growth through their involvement in the program. In 2025, a total of 9 mentors (5 women and 4 men) registered to support 1 or 2 mentees each, drawn from a group of 11 mentee participants (8 women and 3 men). The mentors and mentees come from diverse backgrounds, including government institutions, DFAT-funded programs, the private sector, and civil society organisations.

At the start of the program, AATL held a kick-off briefing with all mentors and mentees, providing an overview of the purpose of mentoring and tools to help get started, with participants then taking the lead to organise their own meetings.



ALUMNI REINTEGRATION WORKSHOP (1ST ROUND) - JANUARY 2025

This workshop focused not only on reintegration but also on building key leadership skills to help alumni apply what they learned during their studies in Australia back in Timor-Leste. Over two days, the workshop covered topics like networking, leadership, personal presence, and career development. Former scholarship alumni spoke about the job market in Timor-Leste and shared their reintegration experiences.

Participants said they gained useful skills for career growth and professional development. They learned how to manage reverse culture shock, strengthen their leadership, and adapt to new challenges. Sessions on self-branding and networking helped them present themselves well and connect with others in the TL3A community. They also improved their communication skills, including interview techniques and non-verbal presence.

The workshop also offered practical tools like how to write strong CVs and cover letters. Participants came away with a better understanding of the importance of networking and self-branding. They had time to reflect on the challenges of reintegration and learned coping strategies. Overall, they reported feeling more confident, focused, and committed to their personal and professional goals.



ALUMNI PLANNING SESSION

The TL3A Annual Planning Day provides a platform for the TL3A Board, Sectoral Groups, and members to come together to discuss strategic priorities and explore ideas and activities. Following these discussions, TL3A sectoral groups and individual alumni are invited to submit written proposals that align with the established guidelines and criteria.

In April 2025, 16 alumni representing Health, Education, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Recreational, Development, and Disability Networking attended the planning session. Various project ideas were shared and presented in this TL3A board led session and questioned by our alumni to see whether it will be relevant to key development sector of Timor-Leste and doable within alumni association capacity.

