



Australian Government

Kokoda Initiative Nius

JUL-SEP 2011 ISSUE 1



IN THIS ISSUE

- ☒ Kokoda Initiative Stakeholder Forums in PNG and Australia
- ☒ Owen Stanleys: A Range of Wonders ☒ Old War-time Track Conservation
- ☒ Basic Business Training Workshops: Livelihoods Project
- ☒ Enrolments Up On the Track ☒ Meet Rapsey Vagi
- ☒ Mapping the Koiari People: Social Mapping
- ☒ Safety Package Project Update



Message from the Secretary



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of Kokoda Initiative Nius, a quarterly publication produced by my Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) in partnership with the Australian Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC).

The Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia signed a Second Joint Understanding for the sustainable development of the Owen Stanley Ranges, Brown River Catchment and Kokoda Track region in July last year. The Second Joint Understanding aims to bring together PNG and Australia's national interests, promoting the economic and social development of PNG, and protecting the important values of this region. This is delivered through the Kokoda Initiative through the lead agencies DEC and DSEWPaC, Kokoda Track Authority, AusAID and the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority.

Through the Kokoda Initiative, established in April 2008, the PNG Government has made excellent progress in defining a broad Area of Interest for the initiative in an Interim Protection Zone (IPZ). The IPZ considers the interests in the area and manages competing land uses. It is a major new mechanism for protecting the core Brown River Catchment area and the Kokoda Track.

While this is a very significant achievement that will help to assure the long term protection of the Kokoda Track and the catchment, the area of interest of the Kokoda Initiative is broader than the identified Interim Protection Zone. The wider Owen Stanley ranges region provides significant opportunities in areas such as tourism and possibly World Heritage.

This region is ecologically and economically important and includes the iconic Kokoda Track which is PNG's most land-based tourism attraction and an important source of national and local income.

The Kokoda Initiative recognises a universal tension in managing protected areas; that of balancing the rights and needs of the local communities to manage their own traditional lands, while at the same time acknowledging that their land has values and resources of national and international significance.

As the Papua New Guinea lead agency for the Kokoda Initiative, it is my pleasure to present some of our work for implementing the Kokoda Initiative and share with you our vision for transitioning into a sustainable program led by PNG. As a multifaceted, holistic program it is important that we come together and continue to update our Papua New Guinea and Australian stakeholders.

Tenkyu tru long ridim Kokoda Initiative Nius.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Wari Lea Iamo
Secretary
PNG Department of Environment and Conservation

HIGHLIGHTS

2011

- Mar 9 Australian Stakeholder Forum, Sydney
- Mar 16 Australian Taskforce Meeting, Canberra
- Mar 21 Tour Operator Forum, Port Moresby
- Mar 25 Tour Operator Forum, Brisbane
- Mar 30 PNG Taskforce Meeting, Port Moresby
- Apr 12 Opening of Trekking Season Media Launch, Sydney
- Apr 25 Anzac Day
- May 27 PNG Stakeholder Forum, Port Moresby

KEY DATES

- Aug 28-Sep 9 PNG Tourism Promotion Authority Road Show in Australia and New Zealand
- Sep 16 PNG Independence Day

WELCOME

JUL-SEP 2011 ISSUE 1

The Kokoda Initiative is a Papua New Guinea and Australian government partnership for the sustainable development of the Owen Stanley Ranges, Brown River Catchment and Kokoda Track region. Working together to protect natural, cultural and historic values.

Photo credits: Volker Scholz (cover and inside).

Kokoda Initiative Stakeholder Forums in PNG and Australia

Representatives travelled from afar to attend the PNG Kokoda Initiative stakeholder forum, held in Port Moresby at Lamana on Friday 27 May 2011. The event was hosted by the PNG Government Department of Environment and Conservation.

The forum was an opportunity to engage with key stakeholders to discuss program progress, emerging issues in the region and the sustainability of activities into the future.

PNG and Australian Government representatives, Ward Councillors, landowner representatives, local tour operators were among the 40 participants who discussed the work being carried out in the Owen Stanley Ranges, Brown River catchment and Kokoda Track region.

Secretary for the Department of Environment and Conservation, Dr Wari Lea Iamo said, "The Kokoda Initiative is a flagship of the bilateral cooperation between PNG and Australia. It is a pleasure to see so many different stakeholders at the forum to discuss environmental protection, tourism development and community development, and sustainability of work in this region."

Presentations included an overview of the Second Joint Understanding agreement between PNG and Australian governments as well as project updates from the delivery partners of the Kokoda Initiative which include; AusAID Kokoda Development Program and the Kokoda Track Authority.

Many participants were interested in transportation issues relating to the Track, the potential power and water supply projects in the region and the sustainability of assets and activities through PNG government ownership and commitment.

The Australian stakeholder forum brought together a different range of stakeholders in March, at Sydney's Rydges World Square.

Trekking operators, academics, military enthusiasts, non-government organisations, as well as a range of representatives from both the Australian and PNG Governments attended the Sydney forum.

Topics of interest ranged from military heritage, to track safety, development activities, and tourism opportunities.

Both forums were a chance to network and engage in valuable discussions about the work in the region.

As part of the Kokoda Initiative, AusAID's Kokoda Development Program (KDP), works towards sustainably improving the standard of health, education, water, sanitation and community development for communities along the Kokoda Track and broader Owen Stanley Ranges. The Kokoda Development Program aims to enhance the quality of life for landowners and communities and to date have renovated four health centres, vaccinated more than 250 children, distributed medical supplies, delivered curriculum materials and stationery to 22 schools, trained health workers and over 60 village health volunteers, trained teachers and school management boards.

To ensure a safe and well managed Kokoda Track, the Kokoda Track Authority as part of the Kokoda Initiative is committed to working with communities, customary landowners, government and tour operators. KTA's achievements include introducing the Kokoda Track Commercial Tourism Licenses and Kokoda trekking industry Code of Conduct, as well as working with the local communities on upgrading and maintaining the Track and distributing funding from the trekking fees to Track communities. The Kokoda Track Authority also implements a large component of the Safety Package program which has included the upgrade and maintenance of airstrips, roads, bridges and radio communications. These are funded by an Australian government investment with the PNG government supporting implementation.



Mt. Albert-Edward Glacial Lake. Photo credit Matthew Prebble.

The Owen Stanley: A Range of Wonders

In 2006, the Owen Stanley Ranges and Kokoda Track were submitted by the PNG government for World Heritage listing and successfully nominated. This listing is based on the outstanding heritage values of the area.

A feasibility study on the Owen Stanley Range is being prepared by DEC to gauge the possibility of a World Heritage nomination, as well as develop a plan for the long term conservation of the unique and stunning natural environment of the Region. DSEWPaC World Heritage and Protected Areas Advisor, Peter Hitchcock conducted desktop feasibility studies on the natural heritage values of the Owen Stanley Ranges during 2009-2010.

Lakes formed by glaciers gouging into the terrain during the last Ice Age, volcano sites, myriads of exotic and unique plant and animal species, historic travelling routes, prehistoric settlements, and the diverse forest types - ranging from sub-alpine to tropical forests were just some of the spectacular findings presented in Peter's report.

The high-altitude areas of the Owen Stanley Range support fragile ecosystems, some of which are home to species so interdependent on one another that the extinction of one species could result in the extinction of several more. Many such species of trees and plants, untouched by evolution, remain from Gondwana time when the island of Papua New Guinea and the continents of Antarctica, Australia, South America and Africa were geographically joined as one supercontinent hundreds of millions of years ago.

There are many species of plants surviving on the highlands of the Owen Stanley Ranges which reveal a clear link to the ancient Gondwanan forest, including conifers such as *Dacrycarpus compactus* and a number

of *Nothofagus* species of 'Antarctic Beech'. The Ochre-winged Honeyeater (*Macgregoria pulchra*) depends heavily on the fruits of the *Dacrycarpus* conifer. While the tranquil glacial lakes are believed to be home to undiscovered species of aquatic life that have survived from prehistoric times.

Key cultural values of this landscape include sites of military importance like the 'Lost' Battlefield of Eora Creek and evidence of ancient settlements such as the 2010 archaeological discovery of a series of 49,000-year-old campsites buried beneath thousands of years of volcanic ash - the oldest recording of human migration settlements from the last Ice Age in the New Guinea-Australia region.

In the next 5 years, the Kokoda Initiative will continue to investigate the natural, cultural and historic values as well as sustainable economic opportunities in this broader area.



Mt. Albert-Edward glacial lake in subalpine grassland.
Photo credit Matthew Prebble.

Conservation Work Re-routed to Old War-time Track

4

TRACK NEWS

Conservation work on the Kokoda Track is underway with the Kokoda Track Authority (KTA), as part of works to improve safety along the track through the joint PNG-Australian government Kokoda Initiative.

Erosion and steep drop-offs have been assessed by the KTA operations team and Rangers, along with local landowners and New South Wales track construction expert Barry Lewis.

KTA Chief Executive James Enage said the problematic section at Ioribaiwa is some 280 metres long and includes the last steep section up to Ioribaiwa ridge.

"The plan is to make this section safe and return this section of track to an authentic jungle experience.

"The new section of track follows a route proposed by landowners and passes through Japanese defensive positions from 1942, and in some areas picks up on the old war-time track," he said.

The new alignment allows the track slope to be on average less than 10 per cent which reduces the potential for erosion and ensures a safer path for trekkers.

Short lengths of fencing made from bush material will be placed to ensure trekkers do not damage the Japanese defensive positions.

Eleven community workers from Ioribaiwa are involved in completing works to a high standard and ahead of schedule.

Other short sections of track south of Ioribaiwa will be worked on in the coming weeks, where slippery slopes and roots place trekkers and other track users dangerously close to the steep slopes off the track edge. Work will move to Ofi Creek at the end of the month to address the steep and dangerous approaches to the creek from the north side.



Track conservation and maintenance undertaken by community workers around Ioribaiwa ridge. Photo credit Barry Stewart.

Basic Business Training Workshops: Livelihoods Project

Communities from around the region participated in business training workshops held in Kokoda, Sogeri and Efogi between April and July this year. Participants prepared business and sales plans for small enterprises along the Kokoda Track. As a result of these workshops, potential business operators have a better understanding of the trekking market and customer needs.

‘The Livelihoods project has huge potential to change the mind-set of the Kokoda Track people and transform the communities through a well structured and supported enterprise and entrepreneurial development program’, said Peter Miria of Market Pacifica, a consultancy engaged by the KTA to present the business training workshops.

The Basic Business Workshops held at Kokoda (21-25 March) included men and women from communities of Abuari, Alola, Isurava, Kovel, Hoi and Kokoda Station.

Workshop participants were taught how to start and maintain small businesses that can benefit from the trekking industry. Each participant prepared detailed business plans for enterprises such as: guest house management, including laundry services, hot water supply and coffee making; catering services for trekkers; and souvenir business. Another business plan included a library service for trekkers, providing books and other information on the history of the Kokoda Track. All participants received certificates upon completion of the workshop.

The workshops were presented by Market Pacifica, a PNG based consultancy with experience in providing training for small enterprises.

The KTA will continue to support communities in the Kokoda Track corridor in starting businesses. A community mentor program will ensure that community businesses will be supported at the start and as their business grows. Fifteen community mentors along the Kokoda Track have been selected from mentor training, which will build their skills in coaching and business development.

The Kokoda Initiative Sustainable Livelihoods Project has also involved technical training for the communities of Alola, Abuari, and Isurava as well as Naoro 1 & 2. These communities have started projects in agriculture, livestock, cooking and sewing and screen printing.



Participants of the Business Training Workshop at Efogi. Photo courtesy of Kokoda Track Authority.

Workshops were also delivered in Kokoda, Efogi and Sogeri to ward councillors and Ward Development Committee members in microfinance, governance and transparency training.

Ward Development Committee members now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have prepared detailed proposals for projects that can benefit their communities.

Enrolments Up On the Track

6

FEATURE



Student enrolment in elementary and primary schools along the Kokoda Track corridor has improved significantly as a direct result of more schools being opened and more teachers posted to these schools.

The track community has seen a 49% increase in student enrolment with 2007 students at the end of the 2010 school year compared to only 918 students in 2008. Girls make up 45% of the total numbers.

The isolation of Kokoda Track communities and the lack of education support services like proper classrooms, adequate staffing, and teaching material meant that in the past access to schooling and the quality of education provided have been below standards.

AusAID's Kokoda Development Program (KDP), through the Kokoda Initiative, have worked with Provincial and Local Level Governments to considerably improve student enrolment and the quality of education delivered in schools in this region.

Program activities involves the local community to source and cut timber used for building new classrooms and teacher housing.

The new school buildings are being built in more populated areas to cater for anticipated student enrolment numbers.

Other activities focus on providing school and curriculum materials, quality teacher training opportunities, training for school Board of Management on how to effectively operate schools and the provision of more and improved quality school buildings.

Previously teachers were sent to these remote communities with little or no professional support and a lack of preparation to teach and live in a remote community.

Consequently, few remained in their appointed school for the entire school year while most returned to Port Moresby, some for short periods and others for the remainder of the school year.

Although this remains a concern, there has since been a significant improvement in teacher retention in most schools along the track.

It is anticipated that there will be a further increase of teachers into the 2011 school year to accommodate the expected increase in student numbers.

This increase over the last 15 months is a direct result of more schools opening, better teacher support including housing, funding from the Education Department and newly trained elementary teachers.

Kokoda Track Teacher Numbers 2008 - 2010

Year	Total Teachers	Rural School Teachers	Remote School Teachers
2008	36	27	9
2009	68	47	21
2010	82	50	32

Kokoda Track Enrolment Numbers 2008-2010

Year	Total Student Enrolment	Rural Student Enrolment	Remote Student Enrolment
2008	918	739	179
2009	1688	1227	461
2010 (May)	1860	1345	515
2010 (Nov)	2007	1319	688

Source: BEDP



Elementary school students and their teacher Theresa at Kovel. Photo courtesy of Rawena Russell.

Meet Rapsey Vagi - Education Coordinator, AusAID

8



Born

Kupiano Township, Abau District in the Central Province.

Kokoda Initiative program work

My role is to identify key education needs along the Kokoda Track such as curriculum books, stationery, teaching profession needs / training. I also provide assistance to teachers through the Professionalism Development Program in collaboration with training services, in partnership with PNG Education Institute and representatives from the Central and Oro Provincial Governments who organize teacher training.

I enjoy establishing relationships at different levels and seeing results and outcomes is the most exciting part of my job. I am passionate about community strengthening and gender equality as well as inviting leaders to take on more leadership roles.

Most unforgettable or rewarding experience on the Track

I remember meeting two teachers on the Track who had taught me in primary school. They were proud of my achievements and had said to me, 'We assisted you, now you must assist us'. I feel that by helping them as teachers, I help the students and the community at large.

Vision for the Kokoda Track

My vision is for all children from communities along the Track to receive an education from primary through to tertiary levels.

I would also like to see Vocational and Skills Training institutions located on the southern part of the track and a junior high school as well. In the long run I want kids to make it to university.

Proudest Moment

Seeing the first classroom completed at Manari and assisting a teacher through the program to have her qualifications upgraded to a diploma in primary teaching.

Mapping the Koiari People: Social Mapping

Trekking through dense forest, bush and kunai and climbing mountains set out before you like menacing teeth of a jagged saw, is what Department of Environment and Conservation officer Elton Kaitokai endured to investigate the Koiari people in Central Province.

As part of a field team with the Australian National University and the University of Papua New Guinea, Elton visited outer track villages of the Koiari Local Level Government (LLG) to complete Phase 2 of the Kokoda Initiative Social Mapping project.

Social mapping is the collection of information on customary social groups and the tracts of land which they are associated with. With the vast number of cultural groups in Papua New Guinea, each with its own unique identity and customary social and political structures, social mapping provides information which can assist the Kokoda Initiative in developing better consultation for future development, tourism and biodiversity projects.

Data was collected and analysed from 16 villages, including; family and clan history, identity, community concerns and local level government boundaries.

Preparation is now underway for Phase 3 to take place at the end of the year, which will involve mapping the Kokoda LLG and those from the Northern Province within the Kokoda Initiative area of interest.

In February 2011, Elton presented findings from the social mapping project at the Developing Pacific Scholarship as part of the State Society and Governance in Melanesia program at the Australian National University in Canberra where he was among 24 participants chosen from around the Pacific.

Kokoda Airstrip: Safety Package

The airstrip at Kokoda has been freshly cut and cleaned thanks to Grace Eroro and her family who took the initiative in July. Her actions influenced over 100 community members who voluntarily joined the community clean up.

The community used grass knives to clear the area while KTA Ranger Donald Siga organised a lawn mower to assist with work. Kokoda community member Grace Eroro said this initiative was about partnership efforts and local people taking ownership.

KTA, through the Kokoda Initiative Safety Package, will be delivering a tractor and slasher in the coming months to assist with continued maintenance of the airstrip. Preparation for a new terminal at Kokoda is underway, with steel framing and bush material used as building material.



The freshly cut Kokoda airstrip. Photo courtesy of Kokoda Track Authority.

Photo credits:

- “ Volker Scholz: cover page; page 1
- “ Matthew Prebble: Owen Stanley: A range of wonders
- “ Barry Stewart: Conservation Work Re-routed to Old Wartime Track
- “ Rawena Russell: Enrolments up on the Track; Meet Rapsey Vagi

Text credits:

- “ Pauline Riman, DEC: Kokoda Initiative Stakeholder Forums in PNG and Australia; The Owen Stanley: A Range of Wonders; Mapping the Koiari People: Social Mapping
- “ Rawena Russell, DSEWPac: Conservation Work Re-routed to Old Wartime Track; Kokoda Airstrip Safety Package
- “ Gina Ormenyessy, DSEWPac: Kokoda Initiative Stakeholder Forums in PNG and Australia
- “ Francina Thomson, AusAID: Enrolments up on the Track

NIUS IS A PUBLICATION OF THE KOKODA INITIATIVE,
A FLAGSHIP OF THE BILATERAL COOPERATION
BETWEEN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND AUSTRALIA.

Papua New Guinea Government

www.dec.gov.pg

kokodainitiative@dec.gov.pg

Australian Government

www.environment.gov.au

kokodainitiative@environment.gov.au

If you do not wish to receive this publication in future,
contact: kokodainitiative@dec.gov.pg