

TREATY VILLAGE RESILIENCE PROGRAM

South Fly District, Western Province, Papua New Guinea



Interim Phase Report

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Prepared by the Reef & Rainforest Research Centre





1 Introduction

The Treaty Village Resilience Program funded by Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) extends the pilot project that focused on Mabaduan, Sigabaduru, Buzi/Berr, Sui/Parama in the South Fly District of Western Province, Papua New Guinea. The program is delivered by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) in partnership with INLOC International.

The pilot project tested an innovative approach to building resilience and providing support for community development in four remote and disadvantaged communities on the PNG-Australian border. The region was selected as the pilot site because of its strategic importance to Australia under the Torres Strait Treaty and the close family ties between the PNG Treaty Villages and the Torres Strait and Cape York region in North Queensland.

The Treaty Villages are impacted by seasonal flooding, extended drought periods, high water tables, extreme coastal erosion, sea level rise and no roads that present operational barriers to enabling improvements in healthcare, clean water, sanitation and hygiene. The recent severe *El Nino* weather pattern had significant impact on the Treaty Villages however there was a clear difference between the communal 'fortunes' of those pilot villages with infrastructure and skills delivered by the pilot project and other Treaty Villages. For example new water storage has enabled the Mabaduan School to remain open while the other schools are closing due to water restrictions.

The 'change to resilience' framework developed by the project is based on the successful Land and Sea Ranger programs in action across northern Australia over the last decade. The experience and lessons learnt from the Australian Ranger programs has informed both the theory and the practical implementation of the Treaty Village Resilience Program.

The current transition phase commenced on 1 October 2016 with continued training and support for the 52 Community Rangers in TB detection and case finding, construction of concrete tanks, and the introduction on Community Action Days. These activities were supported by the addition of three Ranger Support Officers and the first distribution of donated linen as part of the RRRC Connect initiative.

This phase will be further supported with advanced leadership and project coordination in preparation for greater autonomy of Community Rangers in planning, costing and running community projects.

Building on the notable progress to date:

- 1 Three disabled villagers have now joined the TVRP as Ranger Support Officers.
- 2 The Rangers have been trained in the construction of concrete tanks, using modular concrete rings made with the ring moulds developed for lining of hand-dug water wells.
- 3 The introduction of monthly Community Action Days lead by Rangers in support of a TVRP-initiated community projects.
- 4 The distribution of donated linen to the first two Treaty Villages went smoothly, coordinated by village women's groups and supported by the Rangers.

2 Governance

The project faces the same governance and project delivery challenges that are well-recognised throughout PNG. Despite the mining wealth of Western Province, the Human Development Index is well below most other PNG Provinces, with the Middle and South Fly Districts being the most poorly developed and under-serviced. The South Fly District has a Human Development Index of 0.26, equivalent to the Democratic Republic of Congo and one of the lowest globally. The district struggles with the very basic of service delivery, with extremely limited infrastructure and poor law and order. Official accountability is poor and resources are rarely delivered where they intended. As a result, there is limited trust by the citizens in the South Fly District, Western Provincial and PNG governments.

Governance affects virtually all aspects of a country's prosperity. Good governance is critical for improving aid effectiveness because it influences the extent to which governments develop and implement good policy, citizens have access to basic services and hold leaders to account, and businesses flourish. Good governance underpins programs in all sectors, including education and health, and determines the extent to which they will achieve their objectives.

There has been an evolution of governance in the TVRP from external agenda setting to Rangers setting priorities, and engaging with Elders and communities to deliver agreed task with negotiate funds. The pilot Treaty Villages are moving to greater self-sufficiency, with Rangers leading the delivery of local services in consultation with villages. Rangers photograph activities before, during and after to track progress, and are responsible for costing, engaging and delivering the service. Recent leadership and governance training provided Rangers with the skills to accurately cost activities, and maximise efficiency so they can secure higher returns. This phase of the project is building leadership and responsibility in governance for pilot Treaty Villages.

The Treaty Village Association

The RRRC has been engaging with the Treaty Villages since 2009, and this experience has resulted in an adjustment to engagement practices. In 2012, the RRRC partnered with the elected Ward members from the 13 Treaty Village to establish and register the Treaty Village Association (TVA), complete with planning, finance and fraud management committees (see attached). The TVA petitioned the Western Province and National Government for funds to deliver a development and sustainability project in the Treaty Villages. The successful bid resulted in the Prime Minister, Hon Peter O'Neill travelling to Daru to ceremoniously deliver a PNG Treasury cheque for K19 million to the Provincial government, K3m for the Daru high school and K16m for the Treaty Villages. The member for Leichhardt, the Hon Warren Entsch and the candidate for the South Fly District, the Hon Aide Ganasi were also in attendance. Within a week of the funds being drawn, K9m was re-appropriated resulting in the Provincial Administrator being charge and jailed for corruption.

Local Level Government elections resulted in many of the Ward members being replace. The founding members of the TVA would not relinquish their positions resulting in the structure becoming ineffective and outside the District governance structure. A considerable quantum of resources had been expended on this process with little gain and limited sustainability.

To deliver future sustainability in governance, the Resilience Project has adopted a 'Council of Elder' approach the brought the clan leaders in each village into the community planning and priority-setting processes. The intent is to protect community development and progress from the vagaries of political change that impacts Ward and LLG planning processes.



This evolution in governance is operationalising DFAT governance policy at a local level. The DFAT Effective Governance Strategy identifies a series of guiding principles for enhancing governance and emphasises the fundamental importance of understanding and responding to the specific context of recipient communities. The Treaty Village Resilience program is delivering on these specific DFAT areas in relation to effective governance:

- Requires capacity, legitimacy and authority to deliver public services, [regulate the economy, maintain order and the rule of law, collect and use revenue,] and act in the public good
- Representative, accountable and transparent governance
- Gender equality
- Promoting local leadership and working on issues that are important locally

The governance outcomes of the project are consistent with DFAT's approach of supporting decentralised governance in PNG and downscaling organisational capacity and leadership from national to Provincial levels, to give PNG responsibility for delivery of services. This project downscales to a village level to give village communities responsibility for their service delivery and subsequent development.

3 Project Implementation

The introduction of Community Action Days has worked well in the transition phase. After consultation, initially with the community leaders and then with all interested parties at community meetings, the Rangers lead the community on monthly Community Action Days in support of TVRP-initiated community projects. The Rangers provide the expertise, equipment and key materials, and the community provides their labour and local bush materials (e.g. sand and aggregate for making concrete). This approach has relieved the expense of using Rangers for unskilled labour tasks in support of TVRP projects, and has engaged the community in investing themselves directly into community outcomes – which is aimed to gradually change the culture towards one of more communal ownership of shared resources and infrastructure. The Community Action Days are expected to be a permanent part of the TVRP as it continues into the 3-year expansion phase from July 2017.

3.1 Physical environment – water and sanitation infrastructure

Since the start of the pilot project, the Community Rangers trained under the Project have delivered greater than 1.25 million litres of water holding capacity to the four pilot villages and a further 90,000 L in an adjacent Treaty Village (Katatai) not included in the pilot. In addition, eight new wells have been dug, each with a life span of 80-100 years (subject to sea level rise and damage from natural disasters) and infrastructure has been enhanced in three natural springs. Manual water-lift pumps have been fitted by Community Rangers to five wells to date.

New infrastructure installed in Mabaduan school – two new rain tanks with associated water harvesting system and one latrine – has had additional benefits for student attendance and teacher availability. Noting that students no longer leave early to source drinking water, and teachers from outside the village who don't have access to clan water facilities no longer leave early to source ground water. Trials of innovative roofing fabrics at Mabaduan school have the dual benefit of rain water capture and weather-proofing classrooms.

In the transition phase of the project, the Rangers have received additional training in the construction of concrete tanks, using modular concrete rings made with the ring moulds developed for lining of hand-dug water wells. This technique reduces the need for the purchase and transport of large poly tanks of similar capacity, and therefore reduces cost. It also makes villages less reliant on products from outside that have to be shipped in. Using the techniques taught, Rangers have been mentored through the installation of an innovative water management system at Mabaduan. To improve water management capability in support of village-determined water governance protocols, four concrete tanks have been constructed. These tanks are fed from the main water reserve, an 80,000 L metal tank, and are designed to self-level so that all four village clan groups receive exactly the same amount of water. Village leaders believe this system, which replaces one where all four groups consumed an ungoverned amount of water directly from the main tank via four separate taps, will greatly reduce inter-group conflict on water usage and the consequent frustration-fuelled damage of communal water infrastructure.

3.2 Community Health

The Resilience Project recognises that good community health is a pre-requisite to participation in economic, political, and social development. It was therefore important that community health be integrated into project activities. This is of particular importance with regards to women's health and the very high rates of communicable disease including multi drug resistant tuberculosis, HIV/Aids, leprosy, cholera, filarial elephantiasis, gastro-based diseases and malnutrition. Some of the communicable diseases are selectively impacting women and children.

The working relationship between the Daru Hospital and the Resilience Project has been mutually beneficial with two Daru Hospital nurses delivering extensive women's health and general health training to the female rangers. In response, the female rangers support health officers in the pilot villages in delivering emergency first aid. All 52 Community Rangers have completed and are competent in First aid/First respondent training (standard HLTAID003) with the addition of relevant elements of HLTA302C Remote Area First Aid.

The Project has attracted further activities in the community health area by distributing donated linen to the first two Treaty Villages went smoothly, coordinated by village women's groups and supported by the Rangers. The villagers expressed their gratitude to the donors and the Rangers. A number of village women expressed similar sentiments to the effect that they regarded this type of aid as being particularly appreciated because it was not part of other government-initiated health programs (such as distribution of mosquito nets), but is a gift of important hygiene materials from average Australians who care about what is happening in PNG. It was interesting to hear how they characterised linen as a hygiene necessity (where Australians look at it more as a comfort item), because they can now change their linen more frequently, and can wash it properly to reduce the incidence of insect infestation and skin ailments that are prevalent in the villages. The communities will also use linen as other essential items difficult to find in the Treaty Villages, such as bandages, shade for the elderly and birthing bedding.

3.3 Women empowerment and equitable participation

While there remain significant barriers to active and equal participation by women and minority groups in decision-making in the Treaty Villages, the TVRP has trained 12 female Community Rangers. The project also engages two female chaperones to enable the women to attend the training sessions and two local female medical staff to assist with training and mentoring. Low levels of literacy, obligations to the family and cultural issues were placed as initial barrier to female inclusion. However, after much negotiation female candidates from the pilot villages were selected by clan elders and inducted into the training program. Female candidates undertake the same training as the men including boat training, first aid, building, communications, small motor maintenance and plumbing. They also undertake additional training in women's health and birthing assistance. Their inclusion in the Project to date has brought considerable benefit to the communities. For example, the female community rangers assisted during the water crisis by attending water collection points and training local women in water purification and gastroenteritis control. This in turn significantly reduced the reliance on the Torres Strait medical facilities during this period. The female rangers also play a significant support role for the health workers in each of the communities. Their success and the appreciation by community members has resulted in the female Community Rangers having a greater participation in village meetings.

Three disabled villagers have also joined the TVRP as Ranger Support Officers. The three include two amputees and one with very little lower body mobility due to a severe spinal injury during childhood. The three officers are undertaking part-time training in logistic management, maintenance programming and supplies administration over a three-month period of paid instruction, and will then commence full duties in May 2017. The Ranger Support Officers are paid at the same rate and have the same status as their fully trained and fully able fellow as Community Rangers in the TVRP.

Community Rangers are speaking out about gender and disability equality and family violence, which is an important factor in influencing the broader communities' attitudes towards these issues. The Project is providing strong female role models and positions for disabled community members, promoting information to counter cultural norms about gender roles and community domains.





The female Community Rangers have developed an anti-family violence narrative based on the reality that if a woman is beaten then she is unable to look after the children or undertake village work. Therefore beating your wife is an act against the whole village and pulls the village down. The male Community Rangers have adopted this narrative and represent a serious gender, enabling group. The male Community Rangers are held to the highest standards as community mentors. If a Community Ranger commits family violence or other unsavoury conduct, he loses his job, which will bring shame to his Clan and reduce his family's income. Male rangers are also called upon to ensure that the female Community Rangers are safe at all times when visiting other villages or Daru.

3.4 Disaster Risk Reduction

The Torres Strait and South Fly District are recognised internationally as a hot spot for climate change and increased natural disasters. There has been significant sea level rise (highest astronomical tide increase estimated at 52cm since 1920's), and more frequent extreme rainfall events – drought and flooding. These natural disasters are predicted to increase in intensity over the next 50 years. Natural disaster impacts combined with communicable disease outbreaks (e.g. cholera, multi-drug resistant TB) are a significant driver of cross border instability.

Disaster risk reduction plans and response training are a significant component of the Resilience Project. The four safety vessels and equipment such as shovels and chainsaws make up part of the village disaster response facility. Early warning and prior preparation are the key to building community resilience. Baseline studies conducted in the Torres Strait on traditional coping mechanisms are utilised along with focused planning and broader community training.

Draft Disaster Preparedness Plans have been developed as part of the Community Plans for each of the pilot villages, and Community Rangers have been trained to implement the plans. While the Treaty Villages will respond as a unit to a disaster, coordination with District, Provincial and National Disaster Response frameworks has been limited to date.

4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Project has established a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) approach that provides both quantitative and qualitative metrics. The initial baseline infrastructure surveys provide the evidence for practical progress by the TVRP and Community Ranger progress can also be mapped against the work plans in each Community Plan. This evaluation approach allows for a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of different leadership approaches in tangible outcomes for the community. Qualitative and observational analysis can be made between pilot villages and others that have not received intervention from the Project.

As part of the administrative training for the Community Rangers and as a measure of progress, the Rangers are required to report on their activities. This reporting is comprehensive, and includes:

- Detailed reports on each first aid/medical emergency they attend
- Detailed reports and photographs of the crowd of people attending the community training session that they conduct. This also provides a 'head count' of community members receiving training from the Rangers
- Detail reports of infrastructure work (installing tanks, digging wells) achieved independently of project mentors with supporting photographs for verification
- Written report on issues and impediments and suggestions improvements in the future

These reports are collated and included in the general project reporting. The responsibility of reporting and evaluating performance is embedded as part of the overall leadership training. Accuracy and integrity in reporting is an essential element for each of the villages. The Community Rangers also verbally report to the Council of Elders in each pilot village on their achievements against the work plan. Where the village leadership is weak, achievements against the work plan is poor, and this outcome is transparent.

The RRRC utilises the Australian Government M&E system and holds appropriate data in a number of formats. RRRC also holds relevant data from other Australian Government program relevant to the South Fly District. In terms of information sharing, review and learning activities, the Community Rangers regularly meeting with mentor/trainers and analyse progress and challenges.

5 Communications

The Project has a structured communication protocol with Treaty Villages and the District Administration and associated agencies. Regular briefings are given to update the District Administrator, District Treasurer, Police, Customs, Border Development Authority and Daru Hospital (when possible).

The sharing of information has helped the Project overcome considerable scepticism about the project objectives. Many community members believed that the intent of the project was to prevent the harvesting of dugong and fisheries resources by Treaty Villages, or some other policing exercise. These misconceptions have been addressed and the work of the Community Rangers now receives community support and regular coverage in the local and national newspapers. The District Administrator saves these articles about the activities of the Community Rangers on his wall, which are regularly updated by his staff.

Collaboration with other institutions and potential partners is principally through the annual Traditional Inhabitants meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee of the PNG and Australian Torres Strait Treaty. Updates are presented to the attending PNG and Australian government agencies. Given the rapid progress of the Resilience Project, the information supplied has been well received and opportunities to integrate with other Australian Aid funded projects are also identified.

6 Innovation

The entire TVRP methodology reflects classic 'participatory action research', with an emphasis on community participation and action. The approach utilises community-based collective inquiry and learnings grounded in experience and social history. In addition, there is scope to facilitate other types of innovation in the delivery of the project. It is clear that innovation opportunities exist for: more functional water capture and storage, sanitation, alternative energy supply, food production and storage, fish attractant structures and low input aquaculture. The innovative sanitation and food security areas have started in this transition phase, with agromony and fisheries training planned for March – June 2017.

The trialling of innovative water capture, storage products and sanitation systems is already well advanced in the pilot villages. If successful, these innovations will revolutionise water systems in remote rural communities that are difficult to access.

7 Value for Money

To date, an analysis of actual expenditure highlights the substantial investment in the initial ranger training and platform for implementation. The higher expenditure on trainers has given way to implementation costs, and are detailed as follows:

- Personnel costs (52 rangers + 2 female chaperones + 8 Australian mentors/trainers + 2 PNG mentor/trainers + PNG support staff + science support) was 42.7% of the overall budget
- Operational costs (fuel, materials, travel, supplies, safety equipment, vessels, freight) were 51.4% of the overall budget
- Administration costs were 5.9% of the overall budget

Given the high costs of staffing in-country, it is not unreasonable that personnel costs constitute the largest single component of expenditure. There are 52 Community Ranger, 2 chaperones, 10 trainers/mentors/experts (8 expat, 2 female nationals), 4 cooks/kitchen staff, and 2 guards.

The high expenditure on materials for repair, maintenance and new infrastructure, raises the question of PNG government investment. Through an MOU, the Project has been able to leverage nine new water tanks and two birthing beds from the PNG Border Development Agency. In addition, the RRRC Connect philanthropic initiative has received 25 donated hospital beds that will be distributed to the Mabaduan Hospital and other suitable aid posts for use as emergency beds.



8 Impact and Sustainability

In summary, the most significant improvements in community well-being and resilience to date include:

- Significant increased water capture and storage capacity (1.2 million L in pilot villages and 90,000L in non-pilot villages) and long-term increased access to water supply (water wells).
- Building a critical mass of 52 trained Community Rangers with capacity to deliver services into the Treaty Village communities. These are the leaders of the future and with leadership and governance training present a pathway to strengthen the social and economic fabric of the Treaty Villages.
- Addition of three Ranger Support Officers from the pilot Treaty Villages who are disabled and would otherwise have limited job prospects.
- Four draft Community Plans and work programs, which reflect the agreed priorities of all clan groups in the Treaty Villages and are less vulnerable to political changes.
- A culture of safety and maintenance has been introduced into the pilot villages.
- Transitioning to a more self-driven leadership and governance systems lead by Community Rangers to deliver community services.
- Reduced family violence and improved gender equity that are openly supported by both male and female Community Rangers, resulting in a greater empowerment for women and opportunities to participate in decision-making and service delivery at the village level.
- Improvements in community health understanding and reduction in water-borne diseases.
- Increased disaster/emergency response capacity in pilot villages and assistance to marine disasters (more than six rescues at sea performed to date).
- Establishment of a safe and reliable platform of service delivery enabling future 'fee for service' businesses to be developed (e.g. for Treaty Awareness visits, biosecurity, research and health services).
- Distribution of six containers of donated linen to the pilot Treaty Villages to be used for a variety of purposes.
- Livelihood training for Community Rangers who are competent in preparation and costing of service tenders. There is also an audit of village skills and equipment to identify opportunities for the villages to compete against external tenderers for the delivery of service contracts that have been let by the District Administration or donor agencies.
- Improved 'work readiness' of Community Rangers through the skills training and qualifications acquired, to enable access to employment opportunities in PNG or internationally.

Further Reading

Treaty Village Rangers, South Fly District, PNG: <http://rrrc.org.au/programs/png/>

Djunbunji Ranger Program: <http://www.djunbunji.com.au/ranger-program/>

Gunggandji Rangers: <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2016/2/23/gunggandji-rangers-bring-traditional-expertise-to-caring-for-country>

Torres Strait Land & Sea Ranger Program: <http://www.tsra.gov.au/the-tsra/programs-and-output/env-mgt-program/land-and-sea-ranger-program>

