

MEDIA RELEASE

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Reef and Rainforest Research Centre - Cairns, Australia  
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## PNG rangers share skills at forum

Two rangers from the Building Resilience in the Treaty Villages (BRTV) program in Papua New Guinea's southern coastal villages have travelled to Australia to share and gain knowledge at a forum for indigenous rangers.

The Indigenous Rangers Forum, held in Burketown over 4-6 September, brought together representatives of 72 indigenous ranger groups from all over northern Australia.

The PNG Community Rangers Senia Paho, from Mabuaduan Village, and Elda David, from Kadawa Village, were selected out of the current cohort of 110 PNG Community Rangers to attend the forum, and were a standout as they were the only ranger representatives aside from the hosts to present to the entire body.

They benefited from a wide range of experience being shared at the forum, including the methodologies of Australian indigenous rangers, small business enterprise including fee-for-service models, service-to-community principles and governance structure protocols.

Dave Rutherford at INLOC, which provides training services for the BRTV program, said the event was a major success, and that PNG rangers were swamped with offers of support from their Australian counterparts.

"The forum was an excellent opportunity for the Community Rangers to both learn from Australian operational models and also showcase what they had learned and developed over in PNG," Mr Rutherford said.

"They'll be taking this knowledge back to the Treaty Villages and putting it to good use there."

The Building Resilience in the Treaty Villages program is an innovative aid delivery program managed by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, a non-profit organisation based in Cairns.

The program operates in the Treaty Villages along the south coast of PNG's Western Province, adjacent to the northernmost islands of the Torres Strait. Residents of these communities, which suffer extreme barriers to development – including disease, drought, lack of clean water, lack of healthcare and isolation from the rest of PNG – are permitted free travel to northern parts of the

Torres Strait under the 1978 Torres Strait Treaty. The Treaty Villages are key players in the dynamics on Australia's northern borderlands.

PNG Community Rangers are selected by elders from within their communities and trained in a wide variety of vital community-building skills including water management, first aid, construction, sanitation, leadership, agriculture and even IT.

The program is funded by the Australian Aid program in PNG and is also supported by the Papua New Guinean Government.

The Indigenous Rangers forum was hosted by the Carpentaria Land Council and sponsored by the Australian Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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