



## Treaty Village Rangers share knowledge at indigenous ranger forum

### Key points:

- **A pair of Community Rangers from the Treaty Villages on Papua New Guinea's borderlands with Australia have attended an indigenous ranger conference in Cairns**
- **The PNG rangers are making contacts and swapping knowledge with Australian indigenous Rangers including overcoming challenges for women and girls in low-development communities**
- **The rangers are employed under a joint PNG-Australian aid development program that operates in the Treaty Villages, a string of small villages along the south coast of PNG that form a key borderlands region between PNG and Australia that suffer major barriers to development and impacts from climate change**
- **Improving conditions in the Treaty Villages will have significant benefits for Australian border security, health and biodiversity in the Torres Strait**

Two Community Rangers from the Treaty Villages on Papua New Guinea's borderlands with Australia have exchanged knowledge with their Australian counterparts at the 2019 Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Workshop held in Cairns this week.

Female ranger Melinta Gabitu from Sigabaduru Village and male ranger Senea Paho from Mabudian Village travelled to Cairns to attend the forum, which assembled indigenous rangers from across Queensland and further afield.

The workshop gave Rangers Melinta and Senea the opportunity to study how Australian ranger groups work so they can improve their own methods when carrying out their duties in the PNG

Treaty Villages, in addition to helping form contacts and networks on the Australian side of the border.

Additionally, it gave the rangers an opportunity to share awareness of the severe challenges faced by the Treaty Village Rangers.

Ranger Melinta was also looking forward to attending the Queensland Indigenous Women Ranger Network (QIWRN) on March 29 and sharing experiences with Queensland female indigenous rangers, develop ideas to take home to the Treaty Villages and improve the abilities of the BRTV Rangers to deliver services to women and girls in their communities.

“It was good to attend the conference,” Ranger Melinta said.

“There are many hardships in the Treaty Villages but we are learning and working to deal with them.

“Not only are we learning many new skills to help our communities, we are also learning new approaches to leadership and what makes a good leader.”

The Community Rangers are part of the Building Resilience in the Treaty Villages (BRTV) Program, an innovative aid development program operated by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) and supported by the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments, is changing lives in the Treaty Villages through the skilling of Community Rangers, who undertake vital building and service in the Treaty Villages.

Community Rangers candidates are selected from among the villages by local elders, and undergo training and operations by location training organisation INLOC in a wide variety of community-building skills including first aid, construction, sanitation, timber, boat handling, disaster response, leadership, business skills and information technology.

Since the ranger program was established in 2015, Community Rangers have constructed or repaired dozens of new buildings, established thousands of litres worth of clean water storage and have responded to hundreds of first aid incidences, including many life-threatening situations.

RRRC managing director Sheriden Morris said the rangers of the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger programs greeted their counterparts from PNG warmly and offered to assist with knowledge and mentoring, in addition to being very impressed with the accomplishments of the Community Rangers in such a short timeframe.

“The program was originally modelled after Indigenous ranger programs in Northern Australia, so our tropical expertise here has really informed the methods that have been applied in the Treaty Villages,” she said.

“There’s a lot the Treaty Village Community Rangers can learn from the Queensland rangers and also a lot they can teach each other.

“The Community rangers have done so much work in the Treaty Villages, the major benefits in their communities are very easily visible – but of course there are many more challenges ahead and that’s why the Rangers are here today with the aim gaining knowledge to take back to their communities.

“It was really fantastic to see the reception from the Queensland rangers, especially the female rangers, because they’ve got experience and insight into the dynamics and challenges of communities that can’t be matched.

“Because the residents of the Treaty Villages can travel to the northern islands of the Torres Strait under the 1978 Torres Strait Treaty, building the capacity of the Treaty Villages is very important to Australian border security, health, biodiversity and biosecurity.”

The Building Resilience in Treaty Villages Program is supported by the Australian Government in partnership with the Government of Papua New Guinea.

The Reef and Rainforest Research Centre is a not-for-profit environmental research and management consortium based in Cairns, Australia.

The Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Workshop was jointly hosted by Dawul Wuru and the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger Program (DES).

For more information about the Building Resilience in the Treaty Villages Program, visit the RRRC website at <https://www.rrrc.org.au/rrrc-and-papua-new-guinea/>.

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