



Villagers and guests at the official opening of the Alola Community Museum and Trade Centre in Northern Province on 25 September 2019

Alola and Buna community museums support tourism and trade across Kokoda Track region

In September and November, the communities of Alola and Buna in Northern Province celebrated the official opening of two community museums and trade centres.

The Alola museum is located right on the Kokoda Track, while Buna museum is found on the northern coastline around two hours from Kokoda Station.

Funded by Australia through the Kokoda Initiative and in partnership with the National Museum & Art Gallery (NMG), the two buildings in Northern Province follow the opening of the Efogi Community Museum and Trade Centre in Central Province in April.

Each museum displays a range of World War II military artefacts collected from the local area and are a key part of the NMG's Military Heritage Management Plan for the Kokoda Track region.

All three buildings have an open-air trade centre attached to the museum providing a space for villagers, particularly women,

to sell souvenirs and refreshments to the 3,500 trekkers who tackle the Kokoda Track each year. Community consultations were held in Alola and Buna

in mid-August and Efogi in October to assist communities in further developing livelihood opportunities.



Northern Governor Hon. Gary Juffa, Fisher (Queensland) MP Hon. Andrew Wallace and Australian High Commission Minister Counsellor Andrew Egan are joined by other dignitaries for the ribbon cutting to officially open the new Buna Community Museum and Trade Centre in Northern Province on 5 November





Kokoda teachers trained in ethics and values

Over 50 teachers from Northern Province in the Kokoda Track region have undertaken Citizenship and Christian Values Education (CCVE) curriculum training to guide students in becoming model citizens based on strong ethics and values.

The four-day training at Kokoda Station in September was delivered in conjunction with the Oro Provincial Education Office to 21 elementary and 34 primary school teachers.

CCVE was introduced by Papua New Guinea's Department of Education this year as a compulsory subject for all students from the preparatory level to grade 12.

It aims to encourage the spiritual development of children by understanding and demonstrating Christian principles and practices in everyday life.

School inspector and training facilitator James Pelega said teachers play a key role in influencing young people to be good citizens for the betterment of society.



Primary and elementary school teachers discuss ethical values and principles during the CCVE training

"The CCVE course gives teachers a solid framework to foster the raising of well-educated and respectful children that go

from the classroom to their communities to become the future leaders of tomorrow."

Hygiene kits for Sogeri girls



Sogeri school girls receive hygiene kits from village health volunteer Elma Teke

School girls from Sogeri Primary school in Central Province were given sanitary hygiene kits free-of-charge in August as part of health education.

The girls from grades six to eight were given the kits to assist them in managing their menstrual cycle with dignity.

Village Health Volunteer, Elma Teke, from Sogeri presented the kits to the girls.

The kits are part of 1,000 produced in the second round of the Seif Meri Mun project by the Adventist Development Relief Agency with support from Australia through the Kokoda Initiative.

KTA hosts landowner forum

The Kokoda Track Authority (KTA) held its inaugural Landowner Forum in October to address issues raised by Kokoda and Koiari landowners and to explore ways forward for the sustainable development of the Kokoda Track region.

More than 200 landowners, community representatives and ward councillors attended the forum in Sogeri, with Governor of Northern Province Hon. Gary Juffa and Governor of Central Province Hon. Robert Agarobe.

KTA Acting Chief Executive Officer Julius Wargirai said the meeting provided a

platform for the KTA and stakeholders to inform landowners and communities on the role they play in managing and developing the Track.

"We are here to listen to issues and look at how we can all work together for the sustainable development of the Track going forward," said Mr Wargirai.

Landowners were able to discuss the range of programs delivered by the KTA and Kokoda Initiative, including military heritage, health and education, infrastructure, and environmental conservation and bio-diversity mapping.



Participants at the Kokoda Track Landowner Forum held in Sogeri and organised by the Kokoda Track Authority

Health and education inspections

From 14 to 18 October, the Kokoda Initiative (KI) team travelled to communities in Sogeri and Kokoda to conduct annual health and education supervision inspections at KI-supported facilities.

In Kokoda, the team visited 22 elementary schools, six primary schools and four health centres in the Kokoda catchment. It was also an opportunity to conduct assessments on the 34 village health volunteers engaged with the program.

While in Sogeri, the team travelled with Hiri health and education counterparts to

visit 13 elementary schools, nine primary schools, four aid posts and one health centre. School inspectors assessed the quality of school governance, school environment and management, and school learning outcomes.

The combined supervisions assess the quality of staff performance, with facilities inspected to ensure they meet the minimum requirements set by the National Departments of Health and Education.



School Inspector James Pelaga addressing teachers during the school inspections in Kokoda

Children's Day celebrated



Beverlynnne Wangillen from the Australian High Commission presents a prize to Dulcie Vuse at St Margaret's Catholic Primary and Elementary School

Students of St Margaret's Catholic Primary and Elementary School at Brown River in Central Province celebrated Universal Children's Day in November.

Supported by the Kokoda Initiative under the PNG-Australia Partnership, the students participated in fun games and musical performances to promote inclusion and the awareness of child rights, with top performing academic and sports students presented with prizes.

Universal Children's Day is celebrated on 20 November each year to promote international togetherness and the improvement of children's welfare. It honours the date the UN General Assembly adopted both the Declaration and the Convention on children's rights.

CEPA: Working to protect Kokoda Track values

The Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA) is working with communities and stakeholders in developing a long-term plan to protect the unique values of the Kokoda Track region.

James Sabi, Manager of Terrestrial Ecosystem Management within CEPA, said the plan aims to identify and protect the region's unique natural, cultural and military heritage values while ensuring sustainable communities and lifestyles.

"Over the years CEPA has set about documenting and recording these outstanding values throughout the region to build a case for it to become a protected area. This work is a part of the formal submission that must go to the Minister for Environment to have the area officially recognised by law as a National Protected Area," he said.

Research shows that the Kokoda Track region has the highest number of species of any area of comparable size in PNG. It holds nearly 20 per cent of all major plant species found on the mainland, half the bowerbird species and an unusually high concentration of birds of paradise. Many species living in the region are so rare they occur nowhere else in the country or the world.

Through the Kokoda Initiative and Institutional Partnership Program, Australia's Department of Environment and Energy provides technical and policy advice to CEPA on environment and heritage conservation and protection activities.

In 2006, the Kokoda Track and the Owen Stanley Ranges were placed on PNG's World Heritage Tentative List. CEPA is working towards a World Heritage nomination for the region to gain international recognition and provide an additional level of protection.



Association aims to improve accommodation facilities

Attendees at the first general meeting of the Kokoda Track Camp Ground and Guest House Owners Association were reminded that proper accommodation facilities are required to meet the needs of trekkers.

Held in August, the meeting brought together more than 40 accommodation providers from across the region.

Kokoda Track Authority (KTA) Acting Chief Executive Officer Julius Wargirai said there are plans to provide assistance to improve accommodation standards based on Tourism Promotion Authority (TPA) guidelines.

Clare Atava from the TPA presented the different standards based on the Accommodation Accreditation Scheme and assessment criteria.

To meet accommodation standards, she said most campsites and guest houses need to improve basic facilities like toilets, showers, kitchens and signage.

Inaugurated in March 2019 following months of consultation, the Association was formed to provide an avenue for owners to collectively address accommodation issues and concerns.

Through the Australian-supported Kokoda Initiative, the KTA and TPA are assisting the Association to improve trekker accommodation standards and to enhance the trekker experience. Both authorities have committed to working together on a minimum standard toilet and shower block to be used in all guest houses and campsites.



KTA Acting CEO Julius Wargirai with members of the Camp Ground and Guest House Owners Association

FROM THE TRACK

Julius Wargirai Acting Chief Executive Officer Kokoda Track Authority



Where are you from?

I come from Ululatava in Kokopo District, East New Britain Province.

What is your role?

I am the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Kokoda Track Authority (KTA). My role as the administrative head of KTA is to ensure the proper and effective management of the Kokoda Track and to keep it safe and sustainable.

How long have you worked with the KTA?

I joined KTA as Interim CEO on 26 October 2018 and was later appointed by the National Executive Council as the Acting CEO on 24 May 2019.

What are your plans for KTA?

My plan for KTA is to strengthen the Authority to achieve the intentions of the national government by bringing more benefits to landowners and the people of Koiari and Kokoda, the Oro and Central Provincial Governments and also Papua New Guinea. As the administrative head of KTA, I also have other roles to play to fully manage the Track.

What is the way forward for KTA?

The way forward now is that after bringing back confidence, the KTA is now reorganising its administrative and operational management to ensure it continues to implement its mandate more effectively.

Kokoda weather station upgraded

The Kokoda Automatic Weather Observation Station has been upgraded to improve functionality and security.

High quality security fencing and lighting has been installed to prevent theft and other criminal behaviour. Vandalism impacts on the station's ability to provide accurate weather information to pilots, and prevents flights into and out of Kokoda station for locals and tourists.

Originally built with Australian support in 2012, the weather station is managed by PNG Air Services and equipped with instruments to measure atmospheric conditions. Pilots require weather information to ensure the airspace around runways is safe for landing and take-off.



Kokoda Automatic Weather Observation Station with new security fencing and lights

