

Track communities get vaccinated during routine health patrols



Local health volunteer administering the COVID-19 vaccine to villagers in the track communities.

More than 1000 people in communities in the Kokoda Track catchment region have been given COVID-19 vaccines which were delivered during Kokoda Initiative's routine maternal and child health (MCH) patrols.

Prior to receiving the vaccines, the communities received COVID-19 vaccine awareness through the village health volunteers visiting the communities, providing them with accurate information and opportunities for informed discussion and the chance to be vaccinated.

The sessions were delivered by the National Department of Health, UNICEF, the Central Provincial Health Authority and the Oro Provincial Health Authority.

This was supported by the PNG-Australia Partnership's Kokoda Initiative.

Local leaders including ward councillors, pastors, teachers and health workers were also engaged to help raise awareness on vaccines from village to village.

KI's health program coordinator Dulcie Mausen said the routine MCH patrols was timely to get the vaccines across to the communities.

"Through the routine MCH patrols, we were able to deliver the vaccines to almost all the communities in Sogeri, Mt Koiari and Kokoda catchments. Most of the communities were made aware and despite some hesitancy, agreed to get

vaccinated when provided the clinical COVID vaccine advice."

The patrol team also visited Edevu community in the Sogeri and Brown River catchment where more than 30 mothers came for antenatal care visits and over 300 Covid-19 vaccines were administered.

Mothers with babies came forward to get vaccinated after learning about COVID-19 transmission and health impacts and the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccine sessions continue to be delivered across the region as part of quarterly Kokoda Initiative maternal and child health patrols delivered by the Central and Oro Provincial Health Authorities with support from the Australian Government.

Disclaimer: Images where social distancing and mask wearing are not featured were taken prior to the current Covid-19 situation. Please be assured that all measures are being undertaken to keep our communities safe.





Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels Day celebrated

On 3 November the National Museum and Art Gallery acknowledged and commemorated the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels Day.

The day was officially recognised on the PNG calendar due to the importance of Papuan and New Guinean carriers during World War II.

Director of the National Museum, Dr Andrew Moutu advised that plantation workers from across the country were conscripted during the war to provide support services to the Australian defence forces.

“This work included loading and unloading supply ships, labour for roads, airfields and other public works, and famously their work on the Kokoda Track and at other places of battle, where they became orderlies and stretcher bearers assisting with the carrying of injured servicemen to first aid posts and field hospitals. These carriers showed great compassion in looking after their wounded charges with extreme care and tenderness.”

“The gratitude of the servicemen was immortalised in the famous photo taken on Christmas Day 1942 by war photographer George Silk.”

The photo is of Australian soldier Dick Whittington being helped along the Buna Road by Raphael Oembari, whilst he was encamped near the wartime village of Uberi on the Kokoda Track.

The National Museum and Art Gallery has had a long association with the Australian War Memorial and received a painting titled ‘Native bearers carrying wounded’ by painter Sir William Dargie, in 1982.

Through the PNG-Australia Partnership, Australia supports the National Museum to manage, protect and conserve military heritage and historical artefacts in Papua New Guinea and across the Kokoda Track.



KTA rangers commence ranger training and track maintenance

21 trainee rangers commenced the ranger capacity development professional training program in September to strengthen and support the Kokoda Track Authority to manage and maintain the Track.

The 21 trainees include four women and 17 men.

Through the Ranger Capacity Development Program (RCDP) the rangers commenced a four-month training program including theory-based classwork and field-based practical training which will prepare them to work with regional communities to ensure the Track is well managed and maintained for locals and visitors.

Classroom learning includes ranger roles and responsibilities and first aid training followed by practical hands-on track maintenance including chainsaw operations, bridge building, monitoring of campsites, guesthouses and military sites including conservation and land management.

The rangers are being supervised by two fully trained, experienced international experts from INLOC, Australia, and a Ranger Advisor identified by Queensland Parks and Wildlife services who are familiar with the Kokoda Track, operations of the Kokoda Track Authority and expectations of the local landowners and communities.

To support the rangers and their work, KIP recently upgraded the KTA Owers Corner ranger station to boost rangers work with the communities on the track.

The role of the rangers is essential to ensuring the Kokoda Track remains safe and accessible for communities and tourists and, its special military significance is protected.

The launch of the training program and the upgraded Owers Corner Ranger Station was attended by KTA Chief Executive Julius Wargirai, Vesulogo Ward Councillor Helen Weana and Australian High Commission representative, Patrick Williams.

Mr Wargirai said the recruitment of new rangers and infrastructure upgrades will result in better track maintenance.

“There are no roads for these communities – just the Kokoda Track,” Mr Wargirai said.

“By ensuring it is safe to travel we support the tourism economy and the delivery of vital services like health care.”

“The ranger station will be staffed by rangers who have been trained to look after the Track and attend to the needs of nearby communities, as well as local and international trekkers.”



Track rangers clearing the Kokoda Track

Mr Williams said the KTA is building a bigger, stronger ranger team to maintain the Kokoda Track.

“The Kokoda Track is an important symbol of the partnership between our two countries and has continued to create people-to-people links between Papua New Guineans and Australians,” he said.

“Australia is proud to support the KTA – which does a tremendous job to keep the track safe, open and well managed.”

As part of the Ranger Capacity Development Project (RCDP) along the Track, the Kokoda Track Authority also commenced track maintenance works along the entire 96 kilometres of the track.

KTA Rangers and Kokoda Initiative officers along with the support of more than 330 local men and women commenced works from the Southern to the Northern end.

The first phase of track maintenance included clearing debris, grass cutting and identification of areas that needed further work.

Phases two included track stabilisation works such as benching, drainage and stairways and was conducted by the Rangers commencing from the southern end of the Track between Owers Corner and Va-ule.

Following further chainsaw training and assessment of locations for wet crossings, the rangers will be engaged in clearing the track of fallen trees and construction of simple foot crossings at various locations on the Track in early 2022. Track maintenance is annually carried out by the Kokoda Track Authority to keep the track well maintained and managed which is vital for development and delivery of services for regional communities, as well as local and international tourism.



Sogeri Health centre refurbished

Sogeri Health Centre in Central Province has been upgraded and is ready to provide better quality health care services to people in the southern Kokoda Track region.

The 20-year-old facility was reopened on 5 October after two months of refurbishment work which included the replacement and extension of roofing, guttering, walls, shelving and window frames.

A new solar power back up system, pharmaceutical cabinets, an external incinerator for hospital waste and covered walkways were also provided as part of the upgrade.

The upgrades to the health centre were supported by the PNG-Australia Partnership as part of a broader program of upgrades to health facilities across the Kokoda Track region through the Kokoda Initiative.

The health centre supports more than 9,000 people in 60 communities and 23 schools within the Sogeri catchment region.

Sister-in-charge Cecilia Valamb said, “this upgrade has greatly improved the look and feel of the health centre making us feel proud to work in such a place.”

Australian High Commission representative Patrick Williams said during the opening that Australia supports activities to improve health outcomes in the region.

“PNG and Australia are partnering to promote sustainable development for people along the Kokoda Track, including stronger health service delivery,” Mr Williams said.

“The upgraded health facilities complement support for the vital maternal and child health patrols delivered to remote communities by dedicated health workers and village health volunteers that are currently bringing essential COVID-19 vaccinations to Kokoda region communities.”

The Kokoda Initiative in partnership with Central and Northern Provincial Health Authorities supports 14 health facilities that service Kokoda Track communities, including works currently underway to upgrade the Kokoda Hospital in Northern Province.

The Kokoda Initiative also supports in-service training for health workers and health worker qualification upgrades through flexible, open distance education (FODE) scholarships.



St John Ambulance Inspector Nelson Mare demonstrating a first aid procedure to VHV’s on how to assist a casualty with a neck or spine injury.

VHV’s undergo training on providing first aid

Village health volunteers (VHVs) in the Kokoda Track region have been trained in providing first aid and are better equipped to provide care to more than 15,000 people in the local communities.

More than 20 Mt Koiari and Kokoda based VHVs completed the two-day advanced first aid skills course facilitated by St John Ambulance PNG in Sogeri, Central Province, in October.

VHVs are an essential part of the national health system – linking remote communities to formal health services and facilities, including in some of the most remote parts of PNG.

The training was supported by the PNG-Australia Partnership’s Kokoda Initiative and covered slings and bandages, attending to bone fractures, dressing cuts and wounds, transporting casualties to health centres and resuscitation amongst others.

St John Ambulance inspector, Nelson Mare, who facilitated the training, said VHVs must be upskilled to fulfil their health promotion and disease prevention roles to assist the frontline health workers.

“For VHVs who work closely with health workers especially in remote communities, providing first aid is a need-to-know skillset,” he said.

“Most of them have been trained and know basic first aid so now they need

to know how to provide it especially in the environment where they work.”

Mt Koiari VHV Kellen Tei said it was a good refresher course following her previous first aid training in 2015.

“I can remember the basics of first aid since my training, but I needed this training to refresh my memory especially on wound dressing and fractures,” she said.

VHV trainer supervisor Muksy Malo said attending the training was necessary for VHVs, especially those in remote communities.

“We [VHVs] need to know how to provide first aid because we will always use a skill or technique from this training in our everyday lives,” he said.

“I was fortunate enough to be part of the VHV training in 2015 and I used the skills learnt to assist my mum with a fractured arm. I knew what and how to do the sling through first aid training.”

The PNG-Australia Partnership has also supported VHV training on COVID vaccine awareness, disability assessments, basic healthcare services for persons with disabilities, maternal and child health patrols, and assisting health workers at community health centres.

The Kokoda Initiative supports more than 80 VHVs who work to improve health services and the wellbeing of people and communities in the Kokoda Track region.



Projects helping communities

Communities across the track are being supported through Kokoda Initiative Livelihoods programs to improve their earning potential and increase disposable income for families, women and communities.

The PNG-Australia Partnership's supported Kokoda Initiative program has assisted more than 200 campsite and guesthouse (CSGH) owners and local vendors to improve product development, financial literacy and business planning skills to support their livelihoods.

The program has conducted eight artefact product development workshops in Sogeri, Mt Koiari, Kokoda and Buna, delivered eight business management and financial literacy training programs in partnership with the Small to Medium Enterprise Corporation (SMEC).

To support and promote tourism and economy along the Track region, with the support of the Tourism Promotion Authority (TPA), meetings and workshops were delivered to the Kokoda Track CSGH Owners Association to improve the local camp sites and guesthouses.

The Association meetings aim to improve compliance with the TPA's accreditation standards with flow-on benefits to improve income generation through better business management, service quality and amenities that command higher rates.

A tribute to late Daleya

The late Daleya was a trusted and respected leader to Kokoda Track communities and established extensive relationships and networks across the region.

In 2004, late Daleya worked on Abt's Health and HIV Implementing Services Provider for more than seven years before re-joining Abt in 2017 as the Community Driven Development Project Officer for the Kokoda Initiative Partnership.

Among his achievements were projects that brought solar lighting to over 800 households, the establishment of the Kokoda Track Campsite and Guest House Owners Association which saw more than 70 campsites and guest house owners registered under the association, the facilitation of eight successful financial literacy trainings with service provider (SMEC), eight product development



Buna community showcasing their creative products made during the product development workshop.

This supported CSGH owners to create and register the Kokoda Track Campground and Guest House Association with 76 CSGH owners currently registered. As part of raising the accommodation standards over 500 signs were provided to the CSGH.

Local seamstresses in Kokoda and Sogeri have also been supported to produce menstrual hygiene kits and face masks for distribution to women, girls, and students in Kokoda catchment region. The Seif Meri Mun (SMM) project improves women and girls' health and hygiene by providing reusable menstrual kits and an opportunity for improved income generation for over 35 seamstresses fabricating the kits. Since the project commenced, over 1650 kits have been produced and distributed to Kokoda region villages and schools.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, KIP in partnership with the No Roads Expedition Foundation trained Sogeri based seamstresses to sew reusable WHO standard face masks for students across the Kokoda Track region. In total since 2020, over 12,500 masks have been produced and distributed in the region.

workshops for local artisans and vendors in Sogeri, Mt Koiari, Kokoda and further down to Buna and Sanananda and extensive work to promote greater COVID-19 awareness.

He also worked on the track under the track maintenance program assisting KTA and worked on KI's household survey along the Kokoda Track.

Throughout his time with Abt, late Daleya always led by example with quiet humility. He was a mentor and role model to younger colleagues and was affectionately referred to as 'Uncle Daleya'. He is survived by his wife Olive and children Evelyn, Jack and Peter.

Till we meet again. May your soul rest in Eternal Peace.



FROM THE TRACK

Stella Kanawi Kokoda Track Ranger



Stella Kanawi is from Mamba and Botua villages in Kokoda and Tufi of Northern Province. Stella is one of the four female rangers from the 21 new ranger recruits currently training under the KTA Ranger Capacity Development Program.

Why did you become a ranger?

When I heard about the RCDP I felt like I could make a difference as a ranger in the community. As a woman, we are leaders in our own house and community and so we can be leaders on the track as a ranger.

How do you feel about the ranger training?

It has been a very challenging journey for me especially training amongst men to do similar work as them. I have learnt so much over the past few months working with other female rangers, the men and our trainers from INLOC are just great. It's been challenging but a great journey.

How important is your role as a ranger on the track?

As a woman ranger I represent my people on the track communities and PNG in our trekking and tourism industry. I am not just a ranger conserving the track but also an educator to inform local and international trekkers about the cultural, environmental, and military history of the track and the importance of keeping the track safe, open and well managed.

