



Australian High Commission
Papua New Guinea

#PNGAusPartnership

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN TREATY VILLAGES OF THE SOUTH FLY DISTRICT, WESTERN PROVINCE

TRAINING COMMUNITY RANGERS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Fig 1: Rangers preserve food on a drying platform made of natural materials in a village near Mabaduan in the South Fly District of Papua New Guinea

THE BUILDING RESILIENCE IN TREATY VILLAGES (BRTV) PROJECT IS AN INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

Managed by the Cairns-based Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), the BRTV Project commenced in September 2014 and aims to increase the self-reliance of 13 villages in Papua New Guinea's South Fly District covered under the Torres Strait Treaty. It involves the selection and multi-skilling of community rangers in construction, sanitation, first aid and leadership.

The project has three components:

- strengthening Treaty Village governance capacity
- enhancing community livelihoods and

- improving the physical and social environment.

The 13 Treaty Villages stretch along 340km of the Western Province coastline, from Sui in the Fly River delta to Bula on the Indonesian border. Villages include Bula, Mari, Jarai, Tais, Buzi/Berr, Sigabadaru, Mabaduan, Old Mawatta, Ture Ture, Kadawa, Katatai, Parama and Sui.

The South Fly District's human development index of 0.26 ranks it as one of the world's poorest regions. In 2010, Western Province was ranked lowest among Papua New Guinea's provinces for performance on service delivery expenditure.

The context is further complicated by poor infrastructure, a long dry season leading to acute water shortages and vulnerability to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change.

TREATY VILLAGES

The Torres Strait Treaty was signed in December 1978 and came into force in February 1985. It defines the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea and provides a framework for the management of the common border area.

As well as defining maritime boundaries, the Treaty protects the ways of life of traditional inhabitants in the Torres Strait Protected Zone. Free movement provisions permit the traditional inhabitants of the Torres Strait and the 13 coastal villages of Papua New Guinea's South Fly District to travel between the two countries for traditional purposes.

COMMUNITY RANGERS

Adapted from a successful Indigenous Australian Community Ranger model, the BRTV project is being used to build the resilience of South Fly District's remote coastal villages.

The project was trialled in four villages – Sui, Parama, Sigabaduru, Mabaduan and Buzi/Berr – between September 2014 and June 2016. A total of 52 rangers (12 women, 40 men) were selected and endorsed by village councils of elders and ward members, with community plans drafted for each village.

Following intensive training through RRRC, the rangers are now applying their skills in plumbing, building, sanitation, disaster response, first aid, well-digging, marine rescue, community health and leadership. Boats were provided to each village and over one million litres of water storage made available.

In June 2017, another 58 rangers were recruited as part of the three-year Stage 2 phase, taking the total number of trained rangers in the South Fly District to 110. Australia's expected investment in the project is A\$5.7 million (2014-2020).

The Project strengthens aspects of customary and local governance, while nurturing a cohort of potential future leaders. The approach aligns with the *PNG Vision 2050*, the *PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010 – 2030*, and the *Medium Term Development Strategy 2011-2015*.

REACHING REMOTE COMMUNITIES

There are no roads joining the villages, so all transportation is done by boat. Ranger groups are provided with boats and engines to conduct activities, including transporting rangers, stores and equipment, transferring patients to medical facilities and supporting local disaster response efforts. Villagers can also engage the rangers for transportation on a fee for service basis.

ROLE MODELS FOR EQUALITY

All Treaty Village communities have agreed there should be no separation of roles for male and female rangers, regardless of traditional cultural norms. There is acceptance of a 'ranger culture' when men and women are engaged in ranger activities. Consequently, female rangers have become role models for gender equality in village communities by undertaking tasks traditionally divided by gender roles.

Empowering female rangers through boat training and operations



Traditional gender roles in Treaty Villages mean most men learn to drive boats, while women do not. However, the BRTV Project aims to empower female rangers by training women to the same standard as men, including boat training. When the initial 52 rangers participated in Stage 1, 12 female rangers were trained alongside male counterparts in small craft handling, safety and maintenance.