



FEATURE ARTICLE

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SDP projects update in Western Province

SDP remains focused on its development initiatives in Western Province as evidenced by the following update on new projects.

Daru Water: Following the installation of filtration systems on individual Daru water bores, SDP decided to upgrade the whole water supply system on the island. It canvassed the idea with the Provincial Administrator, Mr Robert Kaiyun and Hon. Sekie Agisa, Member for South Fly before commissioning a technical evaluation of the options to select the best solution for fixing this seriously degraded system.

An MOU was recently signed by Water PNG and orders have now been placed to purchase the equipment for the upgrade. Installation is scheduled to commence early next year.

Daru Power: SDP is also making good progress with another major and very necessary infrastructure project on Daru. It has signed an MOU with the Provincial Government to undertake a major upgrade to the unreliable power system which has plagued the community with frequent blackouts for years. SDP is currently working with potential developers who can design, build and operate the new system.

Balimo Campus: In Middle Fly, SDP is upgrading the Balimo Campus into a teacher training and health worker training facility. SDP is providing the funding and working with the Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF) and Western Sydney University (WSU) to complete the accreditation process in readiness for the first intake of tertiary students in mid-2021. The campus facilities are currently undergoing major renovations to accommodate the increase in student numbers (constructing a new dormitory, kitchen and mess hall as well as staff housing).

Mrs. Juddy Aoae, the Guidance Officer with the National Department of Education in Western Province said she is very happy with this development. “As a Guidance Officer, I always thought we should have a college in the province so when SDP and KTF came to Balimo and set up the FODE Centre with the intention of developing it into a tertiary college, I was very happy. This is really a golden opportunity for all of us in Middle Fly and Western Province, we must embrace it,” she said.

Over the coming months, SDP will rebuild the Balimo road to provide all-weather vehicle access between the campus and town. Some 30 locals are now employed in SDP’s different construction projects happening in Balimo.

North Fly Schools: In North Fly, SDP is funding the construction of new dormitories at Kiunga Secondary school and rebuilding another two at St. Gabriel’s Technical Secondary School.

St. Gabriel's principal, Br. Johnson Chacko said: "This is a timely help to the school. Most of our students come from remote villages so having additional boarding facilities will ease their burden of regular travel or having to arrange other accommodation in the township."

St. Gabriel's has an enrolment of 635 students from grades 9 to 12, including 200 boarders. With the new dormitories, the school will be able to accommodate another 200 students.

SDP is also sponsoring St. Gabriel's and Awaba Secondary School's move towards e-learning. Last month, SDP delivered 400 tablets to St. Gabriel's and another 100 tablets will be delivered to Awaba Secondary School this month.



St. Gabriel's students unpacking and checking the tablets for the e-learning trial at their school.

Aerial Health Patrols: The AHP has visited 10 remote rural communities over the past 8 weeks to deliver primary health care. The children in Kapal village, South Fly gathered around as soon as the plane doors opened and enthusiastically helped bring supplies to the health centre.



A young boy in Kapal using the tippy tap to wash his hands.

Training has become a key focus with AHP teams coaching village health volunteers and CHW's in maternal health and outpatient clinics. In Kapal, all 85 households now have tippy taps for hand washing and the whole community has been trained in village hygiene. The Community Health Worker also noted that since handwashing has become a routine practice with the whole community, there has been a significant decline in diarrhoea and related illnesses.

Health Centre Support program: SDP has launched a proof-of-concept trial providing broadband internet services for rural health clinics. This connectivity will facilitate their communications with the outside world, and enable them to seek medical support which can improve their health services. SDP is working in cooperation with the District Administrator, the management of each health clinic and expert partners (Kacific Broadband Satellites International, Emstret Holdings and Tag Energy) to implement this initiative

In the last week, the first two installations were completed successfully in Balimo and Awaba, with the installation of a 1kW solar system, a satellite dish and LED light fittings. SDP is also providing each Clinic with a mobile phone and training the nominated Clinic staff on using these devices and has arranged data usage for the first 15 months.