



PRESS RELEASE

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Balimo Women Come Together to Sew over 1000 face masks in support of SDP's COVID-19 efforts in Western Province

A group of women that PNG Sustainable Development Program Limited – Aerial Health Patrols (SDP-AHP) brought together last year, to help start a textile business have galvanised into action, sewing well over 1000 face masks last week, in support of the efforts undertaken by SDP to fight the COVID-19 challenge in Middle Fly District, Western Province.

With one goal in mind, a few manual sewing machines, and a determination to protect their friends and families against COVID-19, these women worked until they ran out of the large stock of material supplied by SDP.

Siyaleyato Andrew from the Living Torah International Ministry was in her village when she first heard of the Face Mask Sewing Project.

“When I heard about this project, I came into Balimo to learn more about it. I know how to sew clothes, but have no idea with sewing face masks. Now, I have learnt a new set of skills. Thank you, SDP for this opportunity. It’s the first of its kind,” said Ms. Andrew.

“I am very happy I came to Balimo to join these women in the Balimo Textiles Group.”



Siyaleyato Andrew on the machine with Brenda Temewa preparing the pieces for sewing.

Brenda Temewa shares the same sentiments.

“I am good at gardening, not in sewing. But this project has given me the opportunity to learn something new. I am here to support this project and be a part of this team of women sewing face masks for our community to protect our people against COVID-19,” said Ms. Temewa.

The face masks are an important part of the COVID-19 community awareness program. The group was also provided with Train the Trainer WASH (Water Health and Sanitation) training with a focus on infection control and patient-care-at-home. The training included demonstrating the correct hand washing technique, soap distribution and highly informative leaflets, along with information about how to correctly wear a face mask, and how to launder daily at home.

The home-made face masks will be distributed widely, taking pressure off the limited supplies of hospital-grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) already purchased by SDP for health professionals to use.

“We have been working with these exceptional women leaders, who are wise and talented, since last year. They have a deep commitment to serve their people by example, to be a role model to young women in particular, to give them hope and to show them that there is a better road ahead,” said Ms. Susan Allen, SDP Aerial Health Patrols General Manager.

“With the onset of COVID-19, we asked the women to help us, as we knew they would quickly understand and move to do everything they could, to not only make the face mask project a success, but to push the COVID-19 awareness, and what to do, deep into the community to help dispel fear and help minimize the spread of infection,” she added.

“We are so grateful for their unwavering support of SDP projects, such as this one, and we look forward to continuing our work together across the years ahead.”



Women from the Balimo Textiles Group with SDP-AHP Patrol Manager, Maggy Mase showing the face masks.