



PRESS RELEASE

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Balimo teachers receive targeted support

The Balimo Schools project is the latest partnership initiative by international development NGO, Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF) and the PNG Sustainable Development Program (SDP), with support from the Western Province Division of Education and Western Sydney University.

This initiative aims to improve teaching, learning and access to schooling for children across the Balimo catchment area, by focusing on three critical parts of high-quality education - teacher training, targeted coaching, and improved resourcing for the schools (including the introduction of classroom TV's and digitised content. This holistic support will improve the quality of teaching and student learning in remote classrooms.



Teachers at the workshop.

More than 100 teachers, including three trainers and nine coaches from the greater Balimo region, spanning a geographical area of approximately 3,000 km², have come together before the start of classes for 2021. Over the next fortnight, the primary and elementary teachers will work with trainers and coaches to share their incredible combined knowledge in a series of workshops designed to upskill teachers on specific learning techniques for

children at the early learning and junior primary levels. These professional development workshops are delivered alongside ongoing coaching and investment of resources, aimed at providing holistic support to teachers in remote Middle Fly district.

The professional development workshops are focussed on adapting teacher's skills and knowledge towards child-centred and constructive learning for PNG's youngest learners. Teachers will build their skills in their chosen area of early childhood education or junior primary practices, including teaching skills and strategies, early childhood science, literacy, reading & writing and mathematics.

Teachers also receive a suite of educational resources tailored to their classrooms, including books from project partners' Bilum Books, author Dr Jennie Bickmore-Brand, Oxford

University Press books, PNG curriculum materials, and books about literature and culture by Melanesian and Pacific studies expert, Professor Steven Winduo.

Post-workshops, coaches and the teachers will continue to work together on weekly mentoring visits to put their learnings into action, continuing a program that started late last year.

KTF CEO, Dr Genevieve Nelson is excited about the learning opportunity the ongoing coaching program will bring.

“Our coaches and teachers have been working together since September 2020 and we are already finding the changes extraordinary! The children are engaged and enthusiastic about learning and teachers are loving applying new teaching techniques in their classrooms. We could not be more grateful to our partner SDP for their thoughtful and practical, long-term commitment to education in Western Province and we are excited to see the learnings put into practice.”

SDP’s Corporate Affairs Manager Juddy Aoae said: “SDP’s focus in Western Province is basically to complement and strengthen the existing systems in Western Province. With education, one of the many reasons why the standard in Western Province has been poor for many years, is due to lack of resourced teachers, both in terms of materials and professionally. SDP’s partnership with KTF and Western Sydney University supported by the Western Provincial Education Division and the Provincial Administration is now making it possible for the teachers to be fully equipped to give quality teaching for quality learning in the province. I truly believe this is a very good way forward for strengthening the education system in the province.”

After a fortnight of professional development, learning new teaching techniques from their coaches, trainers and peers, the teachers are set to embrace the 2021 school year.