



PRESS RELEASE

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Balimo College brings tertiary education to remote Western Province

The Balimo College in Western Province has welcomed its first intake of 40 students who are now enrolled in the Primary Teacher training program. It is the first ever Teachers College for Western Province (an initiative called for in the Fly River Provincial Government 5-Year Development Plan). The College is a PNG Sustainable Development Program (SDP) education initiative, managed by the Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF) with technical support from Western Sydney University (WSU).

Through this successful partnership, Balimo College will offer pre-service training for future teachers aimed at training Western Province people for employment in Western Province. The College also aims to offer in-service training for existing teachers.

Tertiary studies are an extension to successful e-learning and FODE initiatives. The Balimo College commenced operations in 2019 with its FODE program aimed at addressing the high student dropout rate in the province. Its FODE Centre opened in Balimo to give students a second chance of participating in the education system. FODE enrolments have increased each year from 105 to 210 to 316. In February this year, 40 students including graduating FODE students have progressed to become the first cohort studying their Diploma of Primary Teaching at Balimo College.



Interested candidates who wanted to register at the Balimo FODE Centre in February this year.

One of the new trainee teachers is Helen Mowagi from Kaniya village, a six-hour dinghy ride from Balimo. Having commenced her Diploma in Primary Teaching, Helen is now one step closer to becoming a teacher.

Witnessing the shortage of teachers and overcrowding of classes in Kaniya village, Helen wants to be part of the solution by helping to tackle the chronic teacher shortages in remote Western Province. Such is Helen's commitment to education that, in 2019, she gave birth on the weekend and sat her Grade 10 FODE examinations on the Monday. She was able to study due to the flexibility afforded by the Balimo College

FODE program, which provided the time, resources and teaching support which enabled her to diligently apply herself to her studies while juggling home life with four children aged between 2 and 13. Sitting her Grade 12 national examinations at the end of 2021 and scoring a GPA of 2.8 earned Helen a place at the Balimo College this year.

Helen enthusiastically embraced her first day attending College, *“I would like to teach in my province. It’s the first of its kind for us to have a teachers’ college here in Balimo. It is really exciting for me, and my family is very happy that I am going into the new teachers’ college and they are supporting me.”*

Helen is a prime example of how SDP’s education program is addressing poor access to education in Western Province by offering a pathway to secondary and then tertiary studies for aspiring teachers and, in the not-too-distant future, for nurses and other health workers. (Community Health Worker training is scheduled to start next year).

KTF CEO, Dr Genevieve Nelson, is delighted with their partnership with SDP.

“Balimo College is a vital link in the progression from Grade 12 to teaching, one that has simply not been available in Western Province until now. In the past, students graduating from the FODE Centre had to travel outside the province to pursue tertiary teaching education. SDP’s foresight and commitment to education in Western Province creates a pathway, offering students a second chance at education through their FODE studies and on to their Diploma. This finalises the pipeline of suitably qualified local teachers needed to address the shortage of teachers in remote villages, like Helen in Kaniya. More teachers mean more children in school, which is the ultimate goal for us both.”

The College, which is funded by SDP, has long been a dream of the late Hon. Roy Biyama, whose support for this initiative through his generous provision of the campus site, was an enormous help in launching this initiative.

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Media queries:

Esther Sibona Worri

Director of Communications
PNG Sustainable Development Program Ltd
esibona@pngsdp.org
+675 7176 6991

Anita Russell

General Manager – Partnerships
KTF
anita@kokodatrackfoundation.org
+61 407 515 229

About SDP

PNG Sustainable Development Program (SDP) invests in development initiatives in health, education, creating livelihoods and enabling infrastructure that provide lasting benefits for the people of Western Province. www.pngsdp.org

About KTF

Kokoda Track Foundation (KTF) is an international development organisation operating in PNG since 2003, working to improve lives, livelihoods, and futures of Papua New Guineans. KTF works in partnership with communities to identify their needs and strengths, and together implement programs in the vital areas of education, health, equality and leadership that achieve long-term change. KTF is proud to be SDP’s implementation partner for a range of education projects in Western Province. www.ktf.ngo