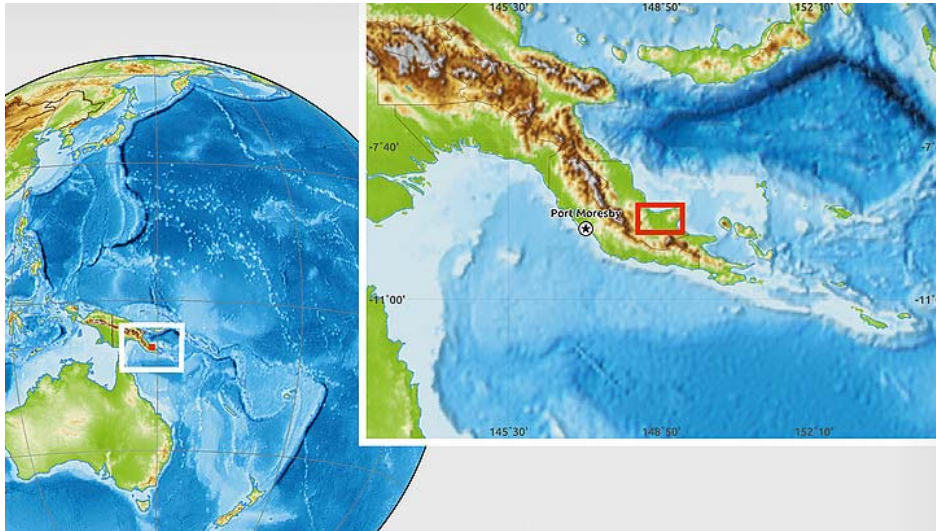


Sariri Village Project 2015



Background to the project

In November 2007, during Cyclone Guba, Oro Province on the North coast of Papua New Guinea suffered extensive flooding, the loss of hundreds of lives and significant property damage which left the survivors without access to food and clean water. In 2009, just as villagers were getting their lives back together, severe flooding hit the province again inundating food gardens in hundreds of coastal and low-lying villages. Out of this chaos has emerged a very special Oro Province man; Elijah Sarigari.



Cyclone damage



Elijah Sarigari

Elijah is a certified vocational teacher and has worked in education for many years.

After the 2007 disaster Elijah assisted in the distribution of Rotary provided relief. He also flew with ADF helicopters to direct their drops of food and relief supplies to disaster stricken villages. Through this work Elijah became known for his thoroughness, integrity and willingness to help others.

Elijah joined the Kokoda Track Foundation soon after Cyclone Guba as a Seed Multiplication Nursery Project Officer assisting communities to restart destroyed food gardens.

As was the case for many villages, Elijah's village, Sariri, on the Baregi River in the jungle 110 kms from the coast was wiped out.

After the disaster Elijah approached the nine chiefs in his area and proposed that the individual villages cooperate in developing a single, larger and safer village. Seven of the chiefs said yes. Of those seven, three donated land two kilometers from the river. This is now the site of the new 500 person Sariri village. As a result of a call for help from Elijah, Rotary has been involved from the start of the re-development of Sariri by sending equipment, materials, clothing and putting working parties on site in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015. A plan for the re establishment of the village and the implementation of sustainable forestry harvesting and improved village agriculture based income generation has been developed in cooperation with the villagers. The aim is for the village to become self sustainable as well as the centre of the villages around it, thus directly improving the lives of many people in the district.

It is hoped that the Sariri Project can become a model which will be replicated by other communities in the Region. Already the teams have been approached by deputations from other villages asking if they can also be helped. During the last mission a representative from a remote village made an approach to Anton Van Doornik, the Rotary Club of Geelong's Project Co-ordinator, saying; "... we have nothing, we need your help".

Progress to date

2011: (6 team members from the Rotary Club of Geelong)

Purchased and provided a "Lucas bush Mill"; Elijah was brought to Creswick (Victoria) for 3 weeks to be trained on the use of the saw.

The Bush Mill is used by the villagers to mill their timber to facilitate the building of "stronger houses". Planning is underway for the shipping of milled timber to Australia as an income generating project.

The Geelong team trained the villages in how to set out and build houses using what we would consider conventional methods of construction.

By the time the 2011 team left one house was completed and two more were in different stages of construction.



"Mill boys" milling timber in the jungle



From this to this-> Villagers applying taught building skills

2011/2012: In between Rotary teams leaving and coming back the villagers built a 5 bedroom, 1 bathroom, kitchen and dining room guest accommodation block.



2012: (6 team members from the Rotary Clubs of Geelong and Warrnambool Daybreak)
Continued with the 2011 house construction program
Prep work (footings and standing up of frame) for machinery shed provided by the Rotary Club of Geelong
Erected a pre-fabricated tank stand which had been provided by the Rotary Club of Geelong.
Began the process of providing the village with running water; dug a well behind the accommodation block

2013: (2 x 2 weeks with a crossover of 2 x 6 person teams, total 3 weeks)
Assembled a large pre-fabricated machinery shed which had been provided by the Rotary Club of Geelong.
Completed the water provision project; assembled a 3000 litre tank which had been provided by Andy Graham of the Rotary Club of Warrnambool East and set it onto the tank stand.

Using the timber milled by the villagers, built a 2 classroom and 1 teacher office primary school building.

Set up a solar panel array provided by the Rotary Club of Warrnambool Daybreak.

Set up an "Aussie Broadband" provided solar battery array.

Installed a well water pump powered by the solar power setup.

Provided 3 taps at either side of the village square

Provided and set up 5 water tanks

Set up a septic tank system connected to the guest house



This should not be understated, this was life changing work. It means that the villagers no longer have to walk 3 kilometers to the river each day to fetch and carry all of their water needs; now they have (limited) water on tap. This has to be considered a phenomenal achievement by 2 small teams in a remarkably brief timeframe.

2015: (6 team members from the Rotary Clubs of Geelong, Warrnambool Daybreak and Warrnambool, the Inner Wheel Club of Geelong and a Barwon Water sponsored representative)

The 2015 Aid Team from left:

Tony Austin (Warrnambool Rotary Club)
Anton Van Doornik, Team leader (Geelong Rotary Club)
David Greaves (Barwon Water)
Ian Watson (Warrnambool Daybreak Rotary Club)
Chris Preston (Warrnambool Daybreak Rotary Club)
Isobel Van Doornik (Inner Wheel Club of Geelong)



Completed 2015 Scheduled Projects

- Extended the underground water system by 1 kilometre (another 500mtrs still remains to be provided and laid)
- Fitted 10 risers and taps to the water pipe extension making water available at the front of villager's house lots
- Extended the existing solar array from 4 to 6 panels
- Upgraded the solar array control equipment
- Cleaned the solar array panels
- Installed playground equipment donated by Geelong City Council
- Set up 2 self composting toilets designed, built and provided by Barwon Water
- Replaced front wheel hubs to the Village's Toyota Landcruiser (the vehicle cannot cross the river hence it's left on the opposite bank of river, 3kms away)



Completed Unscheduled Projects

- Replaced failed tank stand bearers (As a consequence of this failure there was no water storage in the village for the previous 18 months forcing the villagers to walk 3 kms to a river for their water needs)
- Replaced a previously installed water tank (the previously installed tank had failed)
- Rebuilt the rotted tank stand deck for the replacement tank
- Cleaned out and redesigned the village well (mud had "sucked" into the bottom of the well hence water could no longer be pumped from it)
- Built and installed bookshelves previously pre-fabricated by Preston Windows & Doors (Warrnambool)
- Repaired the village chainsaw
- Dismantled a village water hand pump and brought its parts back to Australia for repair
- Showed villagers how to set up a house base (how to set up hurdles, basic geometry to ensure squareness, setting up string lines etc)

The current situation

Much has been achieved and it's not an overstatement to say that the lives of the villagers have significantly improved as a consequence. It is an example of the convergence of traditional ways and modern technologies making life better in an extremely harsh and primitive environment.



Three village chiefs at the pump house



Before: women & children(walk 3kms to river and carry all daily water requirements



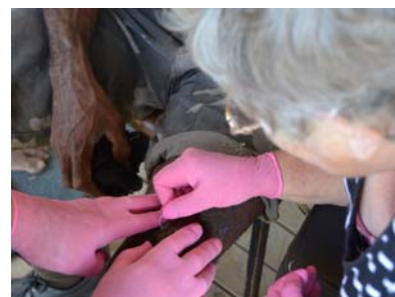
After: 1000 metres of poly pipe laid and 10 taps installed

There is much more to be done. Unfortunately this is not only about providing physical support, it takes money.

Villages like Sariri receive no financial support from the PNG government. As a result of this most villages have absolutely nothing except what they grow and cut from the jungle and everything, including water sourced from rivers, has to be carried by hand.

Work in the village is hard. There is no farming machinery or vehicle available to carry produce or the timber which is cut in the jungle several kilometers from the village.

The closest medical support to Sariri is an aid post 15 kilometres away and requires a river to be swum to get to it. The nearest hospital is a further 25 kilometres from the aid station.



Isobel Van Doornik (Inner Wheel Club of Geelong) & Chris Preston (Rotary Club of Warrnambool Daybreak) stitching the knee of a villager – 2015.



The image shows some of the village children who walked 3 kilometers to the river to get stones and then carried them back to the village well where they were used to set up a stone filter to prevent mud intrusion.

The children are carrying stones on their heads. This is typical of how all goods are carried. Both women and children either carry directly on their heads or in billum bags on their back and the straps on their foreheads.

Interestingly every evening, at the guest house, older village men would come asking for medication for back, shoulder and knee pain caused by years of carrying heavy loads.

A two class room primary school house with a teacher's office and a single room pre-school has been constructed and is well attended by the village children. The school currently receives no funding from the government. The village is optimistic that this will change. Teaching is provided by unpaid qualified and non-qualified villagers.



The village's elementary school

Currently there is no secondary school education available at Sariri. Students who attend secondary school have to walk 3 kilometres to the river, swim the river then walk an additional ten kilometres to the school.

It is anticipated that the next aid team will include educators to advise the village teacher on curriculum development.



One of the two primary school class rooms

Where to from here?

Another aid team with Warrnambool personnel will be in Sariri early 2016.

The list of work remaining is extensive. Significant "life changers" that I would like our club to be part of include:

- extending the solar battery array,
- provide and lay an additional 500 metres (more if funds are found) of water pipe with more taps for the outer areas of the village,
- show the villagers how to get ground water for their subsistence gardens and surrounding village needs,
- provide and show the villagers how to set up hand and solar water pumps
- provide the village with a reliable diesel tractor.

The team from the Geelong, Warrnambool Daybreak and Warrnambool Rotary Clubs are now in the process of planning their part of the next mission. The preliminary list of work to be undertaken and the "wish list" of aid materials has been compiled. Undoubtedly this will be refined as more conversations and planning takes place. What remains is the hard part; how to find the funds to achieve the team's ambitions.

Tony Austin
Rotary Club of Warrnambool
July 2015