



Oxfam Working Lives

Developing Sustainable Livelihoods in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea

Oxfam is helping rural communities in the Tari district in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea to develop sustainable livelihoods by improving their health and incomes.

Background

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the largest island in the Pacific and one of the most varied areas of geographic, biological, cultural and linguistic wealth on earth. It has a population of over six million, of which 80 per cent live in rural, inaccessible areas with few or no public services.

Independent from Australia since 1975, mining and logging are major sources of revenue for the government. However, despite extensive natural resources, over 40 per cent of the population live on less than NZ\$1.30 a day.

The Highlands region is one of the poorest regions in PNG and has a long tradition of tribal clan fighting



Many people in Papua New Guinea depend on subsistence farming and live on basic staples. **Photo credit:** Oxfam

which, in recent years, has resulted in the collapse of agriculture and caused government health and education services to retract.

The challenge

The majority of the 75,000 people in the Tari district lives in basic grass-roofed huts, have no access to clean water, have very basic or no sanitation facilities, and subsist on a limited range of basic staples, such as sweet potato. As a result, infectious diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhoea exact a high death toll, and nutrition surveys show that 70 per cent of children suffer from malnutrition.

Traditional agriculture has been based around shifting agriculture, a practice that has become unsustainable due to population growth and pressure on agricultural land. Parts of the district have poor soils or are too high, swampy or steep to support agriculture. The lack of reliable and permanent sources of food, clean water, income and employment heavily affects the livelihoods of the people and the development of Tari as a whole.

Who we work with

Oxfam has been working in partnership with Community Based Health Care (CBHC) in the Tari district since 2000. CBHC works at the community level with lead families and individuals using the “Healthy Islands” approach to holistic community health. This approach relies on communities to

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mobilise and structure themselves in order to improve village living conditions and environments.

Our objectives

Through training and community outreach programmes, Oxfam New Zealand is helping the people of Tari develop sustainable livelihoods by improving the health and incomes of 300 families in 11 communities. These self-reliant lead families and farmers are able to reach out to and train other families in the community, and as such, this programme encourages capacity building and ensures that our work is sustainable.

What we are doing

We provide diverse strategies and activities in health and agricultural training, which include:

- Teaching communities to breed small livestock, such as pigs, rabbits, chickens and goats.
- Educating coffee farmers on how to market their produce.
- Providing training in diversified farming, such as mixed cropping, with the introduction of new vegetables. This helps to maximise the agricultural potential of the often poor soils, creating a more stable food supply.
- Building household rainwater catchments and sanitation facilities.
- Encouraging farmers to open bank accounts and to build up savings.



This farmer was trained by Oxfam to raise rabbits. The income generated from rabbit farming helps to pay the school fees for his children. **Photo credit:** Oxfam



Oxfam works with Community Based Health Care to train farmers to diversify their crops. **Photo credit:** Oxfam

What we have achieved so far

Currently there are 11 target communities engaged in the CBHC programme. Savings accounts have been established as part of a women's saving programme. This helps women to become lead farmers by supporting them to get loans to improve their lifestyle and livelihoods.

The experiences of the current programme have shown a strong correlation between improved livelihoods, in areas such as health and agriculture, and a reduction in tribal warfare in the communities in which we work.

The people of Tari have seen tangible and significant benefits to the community and their individual lives. They now have access to good food sources, clean water, a basic income and other vital rights that enable them to live with dignity and to build a better future.

What we need

This year, Oxfam has committed to raise NZ\$215,000 for this ambitious and important programme.

For further information please contact oxfam@oxfam.org.nz or call 0800 400 666.

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