

Bougainville peace program to expand

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is setting a new horizon with the expansion of its Peace Building work.

Bougainville Peace Building Program, formerly known as the Panguna Peace Building Strategy will soon be expanding its activities into the Northern Bougainville and Buka.

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop, who visited Arawa in December 2014, officially launched the new name of the program. This signifies the expansion of the program in to other parts of the region.

"I am impressed with the achievements of the program in reunifying community factions and restoring peace in the community through its reconciliation and mediation activities in the Region. This is a reflection of the commitment and passion you have, to bring change to your communities," said Ms Bishop.

"Australia has been a close friend to Bougainville. She was there to witness the conflict and Australia will continue to support the development of this region through its support to the Bougainville Peace Building Program."

The program, which was initiated and developed by Panguna landowners, Mekamui and the Autonomous Bougainville is aimed at creating an enabling environment for social and economic development by promoting lasting peace and uniting the people of Panguna and Bougainville.

Launched in 2013 by former Australian High Commissioner to PNG, Ian Kemish, the program has carried out six major reconciliations in the Southern and Central Regions.

These included the unification of chiefs, unification of three key high ranking commanders, Kerei Daangkinang, Orami retrieval of remains, the Siwai crisis, the Panguna Daangkinang and the Bovonari Daangkinang (mediation and reconciliations). A Daangkinang is an open traditional court system adjudicated by a neutral Chief Mediator where victims and perpetrators air their grievances and negotiate a mutually satisfactory resolution leading to a reconciliation ceremony.

Traditional approaches such as the Daangkinang process are being used in resolving crisis related conflicts including locating the whereabouts of missing persons.

Apart from the reconciliations, the program has established District Peace Security Committees in Siwai, Torokina, Bana, Buin, Wakunai, Kieta and Panguna districts.

The Bougainville Peace Building Program is also assisting the Autonomous Bougainville Government to address other matters such as formulating the Higher Strategic Vision for Bougainville.

Neglected and homeless children of PNG

By Frieda Sila Kana

Forty years of independence and only in the last two years PNG is seeing tangible elements of development through educational, health and infrastructure assistance.

We commend the O'Neill-Dion led government for the changes that are taking place especially in ensuring Tuition Free Education and subsidised or free public health services being rendered.

However, I was amazed at the response of a few vulnerable children from the Life PNG Care home when they were asked about their opinion of the work of the government of the day. They just said, "the government is not doing a good job because there are still more children on the street" who need home and care. They think that the bashing up of street children by police is somewhat connected to the government's lack of good governance and justice.

Collin Pake who has been featured in the media for some time now since the passing on of one of the children who was briefly in his care in 2013, reckons there are at least 5,000 genuinely orphaned or neglected children in Port Moresby who don't have a proper home care.

I visited the home of Life PNG Care and after talking to the foster parents, I had a chat with the older children on their own. These are children who live on the street and have been exposed to all kinds of cruel treatment and have a difficult life.

Each have their own story of how they come to be on the street, with a lot of common experiences. They are either victims of a broken marriage, death of the parent or parents, abuse in the home and the likes.



Some of the 22 Children and Guardians at Gerehu Stage 4.

Part of this which has become a concern for many is the rising number of neglected children in the cities, towns and other suburban areas, but especially in Port Moresby, the nation's capital city.

They need love, feeling of be-

longing, family, shelter, food, clothing, education, health care and the other necessities of life, but not too many people are willing to take on the extra burden of caring for such whilst trying to fend for themselves and those children they already have.

Mr. Pake expressed that the strong family unit and care for the next of kin in our society of strong kinship and 'wantokism' is disintegrating in the light of modernization and urbanization.

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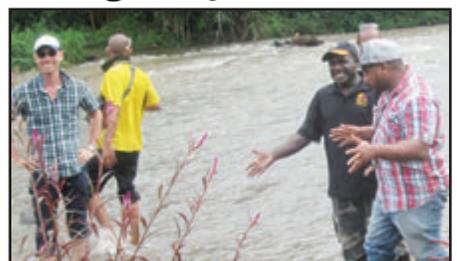
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YOUTH SAY - P2



Travelling the Bougainville highway P4



YOUTH SAY...



Empowering youth in the 21st Century...



Name: Kingston Tonges
Age: 14 years
Origin: Soringi, Enga Province
Dream Job: To be a professional musician (drums man)
Occupation: Student (Grade 6, Ward Strip Primary School)

Kingston grew up in Port Moresby and exposed to life on the streets more than in a proper home, due to separation of parents and ethnic disputes. Lack of bus fare and lunch disadvantaged him to not having a fair and continuous schooling.

About a year ago he was told by a friend about the 'Family Home Care' in Gerehu which is assisting children like him to go back to school and get a proper education. He got in and now is happily back in school.

"Teacher is a good person but when we do not behave ourselves, he corrects and disciplines us to help us learn a better way of living," Kingston says referring to his caretaker.

What does Kingston think about the government of today?

"PNG government is not good because there are too many children still on the streets, doing drugs and police are still beating up children on the streets. Besides the free education, the government must help the children on the street," he says.



Name: Roy
Sex: Male
Age: 11 years
Origin: Tapini, Central Province
Dream Job: Doctor
Occupation: Student at Light-house Christian Academy (Grade 2)

Roy's father died so he doesn't know him and doesn't know his name. His mother remarried and lives in Kuniva, around Brown River in Central

Province.

Roy dreams to become a doctor to help people because he reckons too many people are sick.

What does Roy think about the government of today?

"I see the government is not good because it is not concerned about the children in the street.

There are children still smoking drugs and police arrest them and take them to jail. More children living on the streets are smoking and getting sick with TB. For example Wanpis died last year from T.B because he used to live on the street," says Roy.



Name: Regina Yans
Sex: Female
Age: 14 years
Origin: Kairuku-Wabag
Dream Job: Brain-surgeon
Occupation: Student at Waigani Primary School (Grade 8)

Regina's dad died and she got separated from her mum who still lives in Port Moresby. She now lives in a home under 'Family Home Care' at Gerehu.

"Mum comes to visit me here but this is my home. I am happy to be in a home. Em best!" she says.

"I want to be a brain surgeon because my role model is Dr. Ben Carson. I am inspired by reading his books," Regina says.

What does she think of the PNG government?

"I think the government of PNG is not doing a good job. Because there are still too many children on the streets," she says.

"We need a lot of prayer support to have new land where we can have our own home and also, to have transport to take the children to school. My role in the house is to cook, wash clothes and play with the other kids. And my favourite dish is 'sago and fish'." Regina concluded.



Name: Moses Peter
Sex: Male
Age: (unknown)
Origin: Tari, Hela Province
Dream Job: Mobile Squad police or Dog Unit
Occupation: Student - Grade 2-New Erima Primary School (NEPS)

Moses says, "mi mangi Tari," rather proudly, but the Tari father lives at 5-Mile and his mother lives in Erima while he is living in the 'Family Home Care' home in Gerehu.

"I love school and I want to be a Mobile Squad police but if no mobile squad then I will join dog unit." Moses says.

What do you think about the PNG government?

"The government is not doing a good job because the members are stealing money from Papua New Guineans and giving it to the police and the police kill Papua New Guineans. I want to join the mobile squad so I can correct these bad actions," says Moses.

Moses is happy and enjoys his life in the Life PNG Care home, taking care of other children and helping the teacher to carry out disciplinary actions with the other children.



Gerard Ketan - A budding professional musician

By Josiah Ururu Kana

PAPUA New Guinea is a new nation and unlike most nations of the world, took its independence, peacefully back in 1975.

To confess the facts, this nation has been blessed with so many different customs, traditions, values etc. By saying this, I think it is about time to expose the upcoming resources of this nation to the world.

One of these upcoming resources is an average Papua New Guinean youth by the name of Gerard Ketan.

Gerard is a simple yet extraordinary Christian boy from Baiyer District, Western Highlands Province, who possess a very strong passion for music.

He is very talented not just in playing keyboard but also in both lead guitar and drums, and understands music really well.

Bestowed with all of the professional gifting doesn't mean that all has been well for Gerard.

Currently, there are many spiritual and physical struggles he is facing as a youth.

Growing up in a Baptist Church with both parents having parts to play in the denomination is very challenging for this young man. But despite the failures he had as a child of both the parents and the denomination issue, he still keeps the passion alive by playing music

to glorify his creator and to give him peace.

Gerard grew up in East Boroko's China Town in a family of 3, including his two brothers. Jessie the older one and Paul the younger. He started learning to play keyboard at the age of 10 on the church's old piano and every day after school, he used to rush home to play songs and sometimes compose melodies on the old piano.

As the years went by, he became more of an expert and today unlike other church musicians, he is able to play jazz & blues, and can also create his own rendition and style in any song.

This professional talents has led him to be recognised within the denomination and he is the first person they pick for keyboards when hosting crusades, functions, concerts, fellowships etc...

But as I have stated earlier, life is still a struggle for him as a youth. One struggle he mentioned during the interview is peer pressure, which is the common negative social effect affecting all young people of this nation. He says that he must try to overcome this issue and focus on his ambition of becoming a professional lawyer and a musician. He says the only road to success is by keeping himself occupied with education and commitment to music in church.

Photo: Gerard Ketan - A budding professional musician in PNG.



Gerard Ketan and his favourite instrument ...he is inspired by top musicians like the P2UIF, Ansloms, Twin Tribe, Toto and all other musicians and bands that he thinks is worth to challenge.

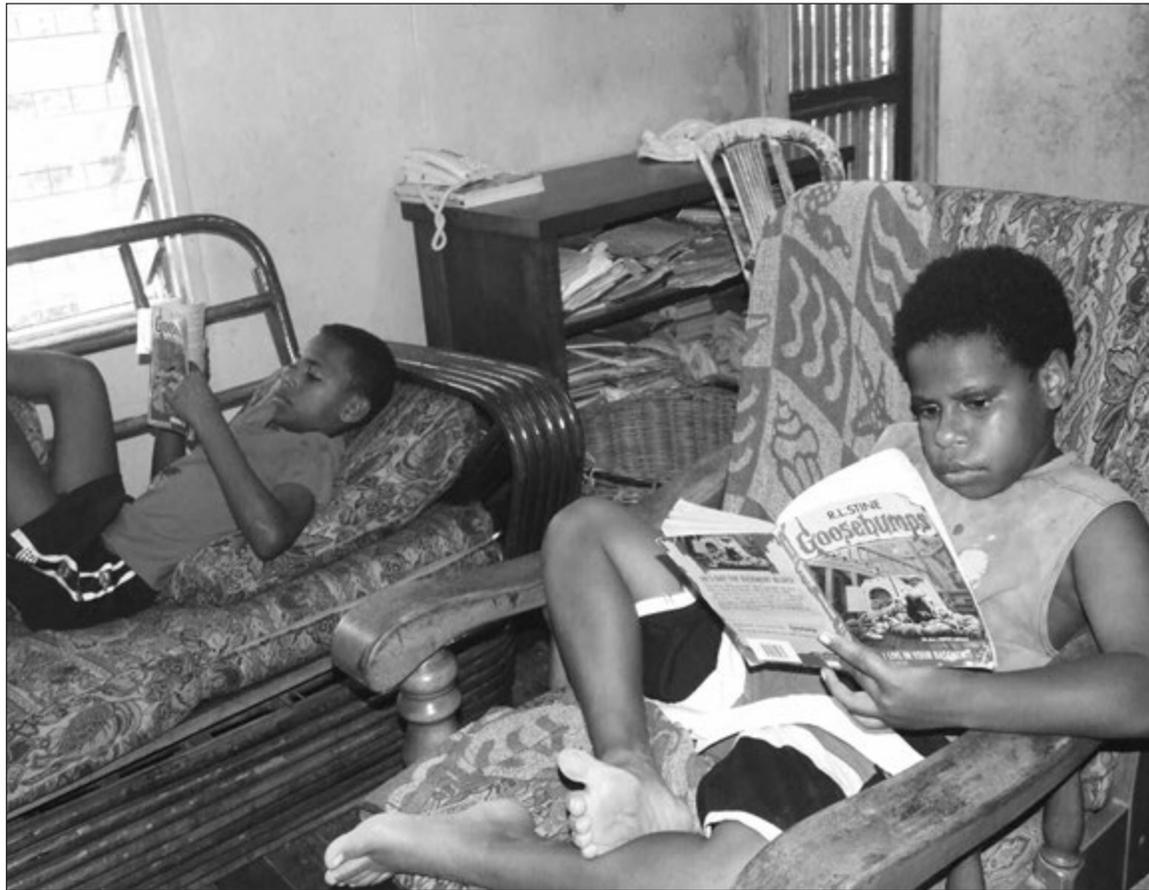
Making reading an enjoyable hobby again

Words and Pictures -
Anna Solomon

SEEING a child with a book in their hand is a rare sight these days. Most children and young adults in Port Moresby are often seen with a mobile phone clutched in their palms to an extent that one can be forgiven for thinking that it is an extension of their hand. Sadly, where books once reigned, mobile phones have now taken over the lives of the new generation of Papua New Guineans.

In most cases, it is not the children's fault that they have not taken to reading. The high cost of books, as well as a lack of interest by parents has left this once enjoyable hobby for dead. Community schools often have a room called the school library but it does not function as a library because there is no librarian or the school itself does not encourage children using the library for fear of destruction to the few books it houses. In many of the schools learning improvement program (SLIP), the use of volunteer readers in the elementary classes, is unheard of.

Many families in the city who



Damien Kelly and Khalid Talonu are lost in the world of *Goosebumps*.

enjoy reading cannot afford the exorbitant price charged by the few outlets that sell books. Thus, the next best thing is visiting the second-hand clothes shops which surprisingly stock many good novels, classics, children's books, magazines and text books. Sometimes books which had appeared on the best-seller list two or three years ago can be found at these second-hand shops for as low as K8 to K12. It is a real bargain for those with the patience to browse in the confined spaces with other interested customers.

The few public libraries in the country continue to provide a great service for the public despite their many challenges, the least of which is out-of-date books and chasing after overdue books.

It is not too late to get children into the habit of reading. Parents are not paying school fees or project fees these days. They can afford to spend money in improving the school library for a start. After all, it does make a big world of difference to see a child clutch a 'most unputdownable' book in the palm of their hand, then to see them make a mobile phone the 'most unputdownable' gadget in their life.

Neglected and homeless children of PNG

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However together with his young wife, Freda they opened their home to four children a few years back and now they have 22 school age children under their care, ages 6 to 19. Not only these but they also have other children who still live on the streets but are being assisted to get into primary schools and private schools all across the city of Port Moresby.

Children need love and care in a home more than money and material things. Therefore when the story of the death of John Wanpis went out in the media last year, some of the other children who have been living on the streets and struggling to get an education, just made their way to the Life PNG Care home, so they also can get an education.

Many a time, we walk around and see these children and we think that they are not genuine when they are loitering and begging for bread. With a closer look and conversation it was revealed to me that indeed there is a genuine problem of homelessness and neglect among Papua New Guinean children that needs immediate attention.

Recently I visited a group of women and their children down at



Children from makeshift homes but now made homeless by the system.

Waterfront, Konedobu who were made homeless when the landowner of the reclaimed piece of land next to the Waterfront Food world returned with the police and forced them out onto the streets.

The mothers I talked to did not whimper about them being hungry or them being abused. No. Just like any mother, these women were concerned about their 23 children who cannot go to school because they have no place to sleep properly and get up to go to school. They were worried for their children's education.

"It is their right to obtain education and we are depriving them," said one of the mothers.

There was one mother who has 5 children, neglected and deserted by the father, this poor woman has to fend for the 5 children and being unemployed, one can only wonder how she can send them to school, let alone find food to keep them alive. So of course none of the children are going to school.

Sometimes people are cynical when faced with children on the

streets either begging, snatching bags or loitering in rubbish dumps and on the edge of the shops.

It is genuine and true that there are homeless and unloved children who are on the streets of Port Moresby today. And please the next time you see one, do not turn your back when they ask for help.

Let us help our good friends like Collin and Freda Pake of PNG Life Care and other likeminded people and organisations to assist those children who are now on the streets. Not only that but let us

lobby and advocate with the government to form strategies that will stop this trend and give it to our mothers and their children as a 40 years Independence gift, before we go into the "land flowing with milk and honey!"

We are Papua New Guineans and let us stand proud and strong with our beautiful "Wantok System" that is not found in many other countries of the world!!

To be continued next month...

Travelling the Bougainville Highway

By Veronica Hatutasi

TAKING the Bougainville highway from the riverlands from the southern tip of the island through the mountainous central region and finally up north to the Buka islands could be a fun-filled, fascinating & breath taking experience.

The usually 8-9 hour car trip from Buka to Buin, Siwai and Bana on the southern base of the island has been greatly reduced, and thanks to the Japanese Government with the completion in 2012 of a K86.5 million Japan grant aid bridge project which saw the construction of 15 world class bridges on the Buka to Arawa trunk road. The bridges have a durability and a lifetime of 100 plus years, depending on the whims of mother nature in a place such as Bougainville where it rains all the year round.

But nowadays people enjoy a smooth ride from Buka to Arawa or vice versa in just a matter of three hours.

Gone are the days when crossing flood waters was a hazard, or vehicles and their passengers have had to wait for hours or even had to sleep on the other side of the riverbanks waiting for the floods to subside.

But from Arawa via Panguna and past the mine-site onto Bana, Siwai

and Buin and also, via the Aropa Buin road, people still experience the hazards, waits and sleepovers on the river banks during the rainy season as the road works have not been extended there.

But with a place such as Bougainville where it rains constantly, people have developed patterns on the best travelling times.

It now takes about three hours from Siwai to reach Arawa and all in all, the travelling time from south to north has been shortened to just about 6 hours.

Due to large fast flowing but mostly crystal clear and clean rivers, the journey may be rough and tough in some areas of the Arawa-Panguna-Bana-Siwai to Buin sections of the main Bougainville highway, but the scenery and heavily forested evergreen vegetation, the mountains, vales and hills and the forest life is breath taking for all travelling the highway.

Life on the island is gradually returning to normality as shown by the photographs which this reporter has taken on her recent travels on the highway which she shares of her experiences of the sights, people and places encountered along the way.

If you have lived and worked on Bougainville prior to the crisis, this could be going down memory lane.



BEAUTIFUL SCENERY: This photo taken during a stop-over at Numanuma in Wakunai shows swaying coconut palms with lined cocoa trees underneath is a typical scene along the highway, be-mourning the pre-crisis days when Bougainville had a share of a large sector of cocoa and coconut plantations in the country.



WAR BUNKER: A mother and son stand outside a Japanese bunker at Hahela Catholic headquarters, Buka Island. Such sites are common in Buka and indeed, in many other parts of Bougainville as the island was a base for Japanese soldiers during World War 2.
All Photos: Veronica Hatutasi



STRANDED: Some Port Moresby-based journalists in the likes of ABC correspondent, Liam Cochrane, Nau FM's Roland Banaba, EM TV's Augustine Killi and colleagues experiencing the reality of what it is like to be stranded by floodwaters along the Buin-Aropa section of the highway.



BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER URUVA: One of the bridges over the River Uruva at Wakunai, Central Bougainville built in 2012 by the Japanese Government in conjunction with the Autonomous Bougainville Government.



RED RIVER ROCKS: A Red River really exists on Bougainville as you can see from this fast flowing but red river gushing from the Mt Balbi volcanic mountains of Wakunai and since time immemorial, colouring red everything on its path, such as these rocks which grace the mineral and acidic waters.



A BELGIAN LASS: Bougainville is a tropical paradise for Deborah Joris, a 15 year old Belgium lass who enjoys life with her family on this far off island, away from the bright city lights and modern life in her homeland, Belgium. She attends Asitavi High school in Wakunai, central Bougainville. This reporter met her while travelling the highway from Siwai through Bana and Buka as she and her dad were going to meet her uncle at the Buka airport who was on his way to visit the family.