

# HOPE *worldwide* (Australia)

## UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES IN PNG NOVEMBER 2004

Very few schools in PNG have computers. Probably half of school students in PNG have never seen a computer, let alone used one. We are only aware of one non-private school in the country that has internet access. Aiming to start addressing this need, we have expanded our school library program to include provision of computers for schools:



Typical PNG school classroom

### **Gumine High School Computer Classroom**

Most of you will be familiar with our work in the Gumine District of Simbu Province in the Highlands. Around 40,000 people live in this rugged isolated mountain valley. The largest of the two high schools in the area is Gumine High. For the last eight years, we have helped the school community by supporting the education of numerous students who come from impoverished backgrounds, and providing many books for the school library. We have dreamed of providing computers for the students - there were only two old computers at the school, and they were only available for teacher use. There were many obstacles to establishing a computer classroom - there is no mains power in the whole district, the road into the area is 4WD only and often wet, and security is always a problem.



Solar power was the clear answer to the power situation, but there was a large start-up cost, and the effectiveness of solar in a mountain climate could only be guessed at. There was no precedent for such a classroom in PNG.

We were awarded a grant by the AusAID-funded Community Development Service. 16 solar panels were installed, as well as a battery and inverter etc. Eight new networked Pentiums as well as a scanner and printer were installed. A teacher from the school came down to Port Moresby for further training. The classroom was opened in September, with the Provincial Governor and over 2,000 others in attendance. The whole community was agog at the computers. At the ceremony, it was necessary to play the PNG and Australian and US national anthems (the latter because Brian Perkins and others from Detroit were visiting). This was a problem, until it occurred to someone to use Encarta, which has all the anthems, and to plug the sound system into the solar power!

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I would like to acknowledge the sterling efforts of two of our PNG staff - Martin Timothy and Kumani Kuman, and also volunteers who provided advice and assistance - Michael Cameron, Hugh and Mark deBurgh, Richard Main, John Atkins, Tracy Wawefa, and others. Hugh visited Gumine to train staff and help with installation. Despite a hold-up on the road, and catching malaria, he came back in high spirits!



Students on parade at Gumine High School

### **Further classrooms to be established**

In recent weeks, computers have been donated to two primary schools in Port Moresby - Evedahana and Moitaka Wildlife schools. We have longstanding relationships with both - Evedahana is near the Nine Mile Clinic, and we sponsor many students there, and Moitaka was the first school to accept children that we had identified in the Six Mile settlement that had lost their place in the formal education system. The plight of these four children that we managed to place in 1998 was one of the key factors in inspiring the non-formal education class we now have at Six Mile. Both schools also benefited from our school community capacity building workshops earlier this year. Each school received four computers, donated by Options Community Care in Sydney.

A further 50 computers were donated by Technical Aids for the Disabled (Western Australia). These computers were packed by our volunteers in Perth, and trucked to our shippers in Sydney, courtesy of Keys Brothers and Nuss Removals. They will be used to replace older computers in our Port Moresby office, and also to establish at least four computer classrooms in schools in Port Moresby and the provinces.

Funding for this program has been generously provided by the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID). The program is being coordinated by Tracy Wafewa, who has just completed a computer science degree at the University of Papua New Guinea. Tracy joined our staff in October, along with Waiya Yagoma, who is a graduate from our school sponsorship program. We also thank the Brisbane Church of Christ, who have undertaken to fund the Australian costs of the program.

We have no doubt that the program will expand and develop in coming years.

*Thank you for your support of this crucial work.*