

PEAK 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

An advisory group, Porgera Environmental Advisory Komiti was established in 1997 in response to community concerns over the environmental impact of the mine. This was also in line with PJV's concern that there be more transparency and accountability in its environmental performance.

Since its establishment PEAK has been operating successfully. While PEAK's initial activities concentrated on the recommendations of the CSIRO review of PJV's environmental impacts, the primary objectives of PEAK are to continue to assist PJV to continually improve its physical and social environmental performance and in addition, to ensure that mine closure issues are properly addressed.

Members of PEAK are drawn from external stakeholder organisations, including the Papua New Guinea Government, scientific and social research organisations and Papua New Guinea NGOs. Members have excellent qualifications and wide experience relevant to assisting PJV to improve its environmental management performance. It also reviews Porgera's annual environmental reports as well as being tasked to ensure that environmental issues raised by external stakeholders are adequately addressed by PJV.

Summary of Achievements

During the year several significant achievements were made. As reported last year, mine closure issues will play an increasing role in PEAK's future focus. Community health continues to play a significant role in PEAK's agenda. A report by the independent medical team led by Associate Professor, Tukutau Taufa, of the James Cook University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, has been completed and distributed to relevant organisations and individuals. This report revealed that, apart from Dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis, there was an epidemic of rickettsial diseases (scrub typhus and spotted fever) and further concludes that mining did not appear to be a direct causal factor for the "mysterious disease" and deaths in the area as was reported in the media in September 2000. The report said that this epidemic could explain the deaths. It was also noted by the report that the health conditions in the area were very poor and government services almost non-existent.

In the absence of government health services, the PJV Medical Centre in collaboration with the World Alliance for Community Health continues to monitor health status of the Strickland River region and administer basic health services, with an ongoing immunisation programme.

Progress continued to be made in 2002 to the recommendations of the CSIRO Report, with the vast majority of the recommendations now being completed.

Meetings

During the year PEAK had two meetings of one and half days each and both were held in Port Moresby.

Reports

Several reports were submitted for PEAK's review and information. A selection of reports and information papers are summarised in this Annual Report: -

Report on Mysterious Diseases

Associate Professor Taufa's report on the investigation, discussed above, of the so-called "mysterious disease" was completed during the year. The aim of the investigation was to determine the epidemiology and possible causes of the disease, which was of concern to the villages. Two anthropologists who worked in the area first described symptoms of the disease in a report in 1998. They were hired by PJV to do a social and genealogical study of certain villages.

Carried out in April 2001, the investigation was in the Strickland River area covering parts of the Southern Highlands and the West Sepik provinces. Nine villages were visited and 140 people were tested for a disease or diseases with symptoms described as "swelling of arms, legs and face, distended abdomen with fever and with most victims bleeding from nose, mouth and ears", a "haemorrhagic fever" type disease. Having no understanding of the causes of such a disease, it was sensationalised by the media as a "mysterious disease", with certain community leaders blaming the alleged deaths on the impact of mining at Porgera.

Specimens of blood, urine and faeces were collected for testing in laboratories in PNG and Australia.

The report concluded that malaria, TB, typhoid, urinary tract infections, helminth infections, HIV/AIDS, Ebola/Marburg virus and heavy metal were not the causes of the disease so described.

A high proportion of serums was positive for Dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis, which may partly explain the causes of deaths. However, a significant proportion of serums were positive for scrub typhus and spotted fever, the diseases whose known symptoms are very similar to those described by the people and are the possible causes of the deaths.

The report stated that mining did not appear to be “a direct causal factor” for the so-called “mysterious disease” and deaths in the area.

Community Based Health for the Nomad Region

The Nomad and Mid-Strickland River areas are among the most isolated communities in PNG. There is no vehicular road access into the area. The area of health focus is 1360 sq. km of rugged terrain. The total population is over 10,000 people living below poverty line. There is little, and often no government services in the area. Malaria, filariasis, enteric parasites are endemic.

This area is reported to have hyper-endemic malaria, endemic lymphatic filariasis, high infant mortality, high maternal mortality, malnutrition and anaemia.

PJV through the World Health Alliance for Community health runs a program with the following aims: -

- prevent filariasis and malaria through mass drug administration,
- provide primary health care services,
- provide sustainable village based diseases intervention programs through community involvement,
- provide sustained health education programs for women and children, and
- measure the burden of disease in the area.

In the long-term, and to be sustainable, the aim is to train village health volunteers to deliver basic health services. Training programs have been established and the community is receptive.

The report prepared by Dr. C. Reto of the PJV Medical Centre showed the prevalence of various diseases and plans to reduce the incidence of such diseases.

HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Although by comparison to other centres in PNG, the number of people infected with HIV is small, the trend is typical of the whole country. Sexually transmitted infections are growing fast in the Porgera area.

In collaboration with the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, PJV has initiated a pilot intervention program. A well-tested program called the Peer Mediated Risk Reduction Counselling has been adopted by the pilot project and initial training, with a selected group of community volunteers, has been carried out by the Institute of Medical Research. This pilot project will

also determine the burden and pattern of sexual transmitted infections in the Porgera valley.

Porgera District Women's Association Projects

Ms Yamis Gigimat presented a report to the Komiti on the work of women and their involvement in community development. The association was established in 1988 and since that time has vigorously pushed for changes for the recognition of the role of women in community development. The aim of the group is to promote development in women's groups, provide assistance for project and programme designs and organise education and training, particularly in legal and social rights and responsibilities.

A wide range of projects have already been initiated in agriculture, screen printing, artefacts, sewing and drapery, retailing, mini credit schemes and many others with the aim of providing the basis of sustainable development.

The Porgera District Women's Association also plays an advisory role to PJV's and acts as a link between PJV and women of the area in issues relating to gender development. As an agent of change, the association has the respect and recognition of the community.

Planning for Mine Closure and Sustainable Development

An information paper was presented to the Komiti outlining the project milestones and overall process of mine closure, the closure consultation document and the communication and consultation process.

The information paper showed that in the current mine plan mining will cease in 2006, after the milling of low grade stockpiles the operation will cease in 2012, with the final decommissioning in 2013.

The overall aim for closure is to provide a sustainable future rather than just mine closure. While to date, this process is largely an internal one, multi-stakeholder involvement is essential as far as the PJV is concerned.

The Porgera Mine Closure Consultation Document is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2002. It will be comprised of three chapters - introduction, biophysical considerations and socio-economic considerations. The introduction will consist of background information, a vision and objectives for mine closure and regulatory requirements and agreements. The biophysical section will cover a variety of physical environmental issues and the socio-economic chapter will give consideration to social, economic and community issues.

This document will be distributed early in 2003 to a wider group of stakeholders for discussion and comments. Subsequent consultation processes will be determined arising from such discussions.

Essentially PJV's vision is "Leaving behind a better future".

Membership

As predicted in 2001, PEAK has been expanded. A total of four new members joined the PEAK in 2002. The following accepted the invitation to join: -

Sir Alkan Tololo	Chairman
Lady Hilan Los	NGO (ICRAF)
Ms Elizabeth Karava	NGO (National Spiritual Assembly of Baha'i)
Mr. Wep Kanawi	NGO (The Nature Conservancy)

There have been some changes to the membership of PEAK during the year. Dr. Michael Rynkiewich of the Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio Economic Service left the country to take a new post in the United States and Dr. Philip Gibbs from the same institute joined the Komiti. Mr. Wep Kanawi resigned to stand for national elections.

The Komiti wish to thank Dr. Michael Rynkiewich and Mr. Wep Kanawi for their contributions. Dr. Rynkiewich was instrumental in the review of PEAK's terms of reference and his valued contributions were fully recognised.

Major Issues

With the review of the terms of reference, the focus will continue to be on mine closure issues without compromising its initial focus on physical and social environmental issues.

Future

PEAK will be fully involved in the review of the *Porgera Mine Closure Consultation Document*, which will be distributed to the members in the first quarter of 2003. This document will be widely circulated and PEAK's contribution will be valuable to the processes of mine closure.

Sir Alkan Tololo

Chairman