

## Executive Summary

### Project Concept

**This project is about basic capacity building** among village people living along and adjacent to the Kokoda Track; it aims to empower villagers, by and large poor and vulnerable subsistence farmers, to take advantage of a growing tourism industry by using smallholder agriculture and land management as the most effective entry point for endogenous economic and political development. It sets out to broaden the livelihood strategies of some 12,000+ families living in the area defined by the Kokoda Track.

#### Basic Project Premises

*This project is an integral part of a development plan for the Kokoda Track area. It will enable marginalised rural people to take better advantage of the growing tourism industry.*

*Agricultural development can give rapid returns to those who exploit the emerging market opportunities, especially local women. It will also offer the quickest road to local participation in development and the establishment of effective local institutions.*

*Refinements to the farming systems also provide the most effective way to develop an understanding of environmental protection and land management, and to reduce forest clearing.*

*A project such as this will provide an efficient means of developing local capacity to become more autonomous in rapidly changing circumstances.*

*Long term stability and growth can only arise from local participation in and ownership of a development initiative.*

An initial intervention having to do with agriculture provides an ideal entry point for a longer term community development program. This project aims to firmly entrench such a program by entering the development process at an action/implementation phase because of (1) the opportunities presented by tourism, (2) the communities requested it,

(3) the quite high levels of dependency on outside powers displayed by the communities, (4) agriculture is the focus of life in subsistence communities, and (5) the long term implications for agriculture and food self-sufficiency of a rising population. This proposal seeks to build on local knowledge, entailing minimal risk, to offer greater opportunities to a marginalised rural population.

A farming systems approach is the quickest way to enable villagers to earn more money from tourism and other activities which may take place on their land, while at the same time improving their food security. There is already a feeling that foreigners are profiting more from their resources; that local people are being ignored. An engagement such as is proposed here will help them become active partners in their own progress.

Such villagers are keen to participate in 'development' and to earn cash. One of the problems with conservation/sustainable development programs to date

has been that opportunities for earning cash have been presented in rather nebulous terms (such as ecotourism, with no specific plans), whereas some of the alternatives (such as large scale logging), offer more immediate and tangible outcomes, like instant cash, roads, aid posts, schools and so on.

It would be fair to say that most rural Papua New Guineans have been left behind, and in some cases severely disadvantaged, by 'development'. The people living along the Kokoda Track are among the most disadvantaged in the Central and Oro Provinces (except around Kokoda itself) of Papua New Guinea. A recent rapid rise in tourism, sparked by a greater interest in Australia's military achievements, has brought some rapid changes to the area.

This proposal aims to take advantage of increased tourism along the track to improve the lives of villagers, by means of developing with them their local farming systems. Markets made available by the increase in tourism provide a rapid way for villagers to earn a cash income from the sale of fruits, vegetables, poultry products, fish and cooked foods. Much of the income derived in this way will go to women.

Simply increasing cash incomes will not necessarily lead to improved living standards in the village. That is why capacity building forms a focus of this proposal. Capacity building however, is not an entry point for development, but rather a stepping stone along the way. It can only be learned by participation and experience in the evolving circumstances, and grow in the light of new knowledge and application.

The project is proposed as an integral part of an overall tourism strategy for the Kokoda Track and surrounding area. Tourists will have a richer experience if they can obtain food and hospitality that is to their taste during their trekking; there is a demand for greater and more discriminating production, as well as techniques of meal preparation, if the new market is to be satisfied.

### || Agriculture

**A number of key issues puts pressure on the current agricultural systems.** In addition to these, tourism itself will place a significant and as yet not well understood strain on agricultural production, most obviously as regards the availability of labour at appropriate times. The fallowing of garden land under forest has been the traditional way of restoring fertility to the soil, and controlling pests and diseases of crops. The project aims to use organic agricultural techniques to gradually reduce this forest fallow, leading towards continuous cropping on the same parcel of garden land.

While fertility and pest control are issues, of equal importance is the

**Current agricultural systems under pressure because of:**

- Lack of suitable labour at crucial times;*
- A rising population;*
- The need for cash to meet some basic needs.*

biological diversity of organisms living in the soil , which seem able to maintain a soil structure extremely resistant to erosion on the very steep

slopes cultivated in the mountainous areas of the track.

By raising the capacity of villagers to participate in the markets offered by tourism, it should be possible to reduce tensions and rivalries which are common in situations of rapid change, increase the likelihood the track will remain open and safe for tourists, and allow the local people themselves to acquire new understanding enabling them to benefit from the orderly development of this new market.

As local production grows, it is planned to seek a market for fresh produce in Port Moresby. Air freight is prohibitively expensive, but special arrangements may be possible on backloading flights which have been booked for tourists on outward journeys.

**|| Forest Clearing**

**Each family along the track will clear a garden area of around 1.2 hectares each year,** largely from secondary forest which has developed as a fallow for 15-25 years. There is an approximate population of 12 000 families in the area. If we can initially reduce this rate of clearing from annually to

**Forest clearing and carbon sequestration**

*It should be possible over time to reduce forest clearing for agriculture by some 9 600 hectares annually, saving over three million tons of carbon emissions each year.*

perhaps one year in five by better managing soil fertility and pests, we will have reduced carbon emissions due to forest clearing by

3 500 000 tons annually, assuming each hectare of forest sequesters 250 tons of carbon.

**|| Project Design**

**The project has been designed** as a two phase project with the following overall goal: Improve the livelihood of some 12 000 families living along and adjacent to the Kokoda Track, through agricultural development leading to less risk-prone populations; increased food security, better health, expanding livelihood strategy options, the capacity to gain and use new knowledge and the ability to form effective local groupings able to progress village development.

**Health**

**Village development cannot be successful without health** being an integral part of a program. AusAID has already required that AIDS education be integrated into its agricultural programs. However, there are a number of other major health concerns with the potential to critically impact rural populations. Malaria and gastroenteritis are two of these.

It is of little use just to “tack on” AIDS education. The only chance of the community coming to grips with this problem, along with other health issues, is for the community itself to take charge of this threat in its midst, and map out a locally appropriate course of action.

**Tourism in Context**

**At the present, ‘tourism’ is being treated as a single issue**, amenable to technical tweeking and manipulation. Single issue interventions are usually unsuccessful. They try to abstract the issue, (in this case tourism) from its context and deal with it in isolation, free of the complications of its embedded environment. Such an approach will most likely consolidate the practice of “rent seeking” as an appropriate form of political behavior. While not denying the importance of the issues currently being addressed, this proposed intervention is an attempt to place tourism rightfully in its complex socio-ecological context, and work to secure its sustainability into the future.

The first phase, lasting 13-15 months, plans to (1) ‘kick-start’ agricultural development with core groups of farmers in selected areas, and (2) pass control of the project over to the client groups, i.e. ‘put them in the driver’s seat’, as it were. The second phase will have community development and agricultural goals which must wait for more precise (especially client i.e. villager, tourist and business) definition based on the experience of phase 1.

**Monitoring & Evaluation**

**The outcome of the project will be empowered communities** engaged in harnessing the forces of change for their own benefit, with the capacity to apply new insights for a holistic approach to community wellbeing.

Hence the success or otherwise of this project can only be judged by the actions of the communities, especially in the first instance those core groups who will form the nucleus of a development process.

**Evaluation**

*“Implementation is not primarily what the professionals do, it is what the community does”*

Bopp, M & J: “Recreating the World” p 170.

On such outcomes will ultimately depend the success of a sustainable tourism industry along the Kokoda Track.

**OBJECTIVE HEIRARCHY**

