

## Haku, Bougainville Agricultural Hub & Training Project



### Aim

The project aimed to provide reliable and nutritious food for vulnerable people in Haku, Bougainville and to provide participants with the opportunity to increase their income.

### Project partner

PiCCA partnered with the Hako Women's Collective (HWC), a grass-roots organisation formed in 2006 to address the critical needs of the community.

PiCCA has worked with HWC since 2017 having worked together to build Luman Hipakoko, a community centre with kitchen and canteen facilities and also ablution facilities for women escaping domestic violence who are accommodated at a nearby "Meri Safe Haus".

### About the region of Haku

The project was based in Haku which is the northern part of Buka Island in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. It comprises many villages and hamlets. Voter registration for the Referendum held in late 2019 shows the population figures for adults in Haku totalling 6,522 as follows:

Elutupan/Hanpan	1,154
Tanreki/Lemanmanu	1,498
Lemonmanu 2	623
Lemonkoa	1,693
Lontis	1,554

Families in Haku are traditionally large and it is not uncommon for families to have 6 to 10 children (A survey of 61 locals found 28 had households with 8 or more people). While there is no exact population figure for Haku it is estimated to be at least 20,000 people.

Haku is a poor community. People are sustained through agriculture and there are very few formal jobs. Housing and food security are significant needs. A survey of 61 locals found that 22 did not always have enough food to eat, 44 were living in non-permanent housing and 15 had no immediate access to a toilet.

Despite a high annual rainfall, water shortages occur in Haku as there are no rivers or streams and most people cannot afford to buy a water tank.

There are few services and inadequate Infrastructure in Haku. There are local schools and health posts operate on an intermittent basis. It was noted that the government is struggling to fund education for the fast-growing population and recently introduced higher school fees. The road to Buka Town (60km south) is unsealed and floods during monsoon rains<sup>1</sup>. There are a small number of local shops supplying a very limited range of goods.

### What the project did

The project delivered Agricultural Skills Training (see some of the participants below) to improve the agricultural practices of 83 subsistence farmers and their families. It established an Agricultural Hub – part of the Hako Women’s Collective – where HWC mill farmers’ rice, make fertiliser and stockfeed from the chaff to sell, and assist people with farming knowledge.



### Who was targeted

Three vulnerable groups were targeted – women, especially women-headed households (42 participants), people with a disability (17 participants) and young people under 25 years (28 participants)<sup>2</sup>.

### Budget

PiCCA was successful in obtaining an Australian Government Friendship Grant of \$35,000 to support the project. PiCCA contributed \$14,449 in cash. Both PiCCA and HWC made very significant in-kind contributions.

### Impact of the project

83 participants learned new farming techniques, directly benefiting about 500 people. Back yard gardens were established with new and traditional crops. Rice milling has recommenced in Haku

<sup>1</sup> Work to seal the road has begun and ceased a number of times in recent years.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Some people identify with more than one target group.

after a hiatus of many years. Farmers are reporting higher yields and selling surpluses at local markets and earning much needed cash. Many farmers are reporting that they are using the additional cash to help pay school fees. Keeping children at school will also benefit the community long term.

HWC hosted an Agricultural Show on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to enable all the participants to bring samples of their produce to display for the broad community, to compete for prizes and to sell. More than 600 people attended the Show.

The benefits are accruing in the first instance to the vulnerable families in Haku - those most likely to endure food shortages/poor nutrition. Also, a number of farmers who did not attend training have learned from the trained farmers and are also establishing gardens using the new techniques.

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville's Department of Primary Industry has decided that it will use the Agriculture Hub as a base and to partner with HWC to provide further extension services to people in northern Buka.

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## Participants' Stories



**Susan** (pictured left) is from a hamlet called Tahum in Haku.

She said "My husband died and I had six children. I had no money to buy rice. I did the training and got rice seeds to plant. My kids helped me, we worked together as a team. I harvested rice for my family in December 2019 and sold my surplus. I was the first lady to mill rice, it was 30kg. I was very happy. Some people in my community saw my rice and they wanted to plant too. I gave them seeds and five families are now growing rice. My next rice harvest will be in March 2020. I have also planted bananas, sweet potato, taro, and other vegetables."

*Left: Susan helping to harvest Haku Women's Collective's own rice at the opening of the Agriculture Hub in June 2019.*

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**Tarin** (pictured right, about to mill her rice) lives in Tanamalo in Haku. She said “There are nine people in my family. I am 25 years old. My father has a disability. The training was very important to me. It helped me to feed my family and get income.

I learned how to make compost and I put it in my plot and mixed it in the soil to plant my vegetables. It was the first time for me to learn to grow rice. I harvested my rice crop in November and I will mill it today (8 January 2020). Some will be food for my family and some I will sell at the small road-side market.

I sold cabbage and capsicum at the small road-side stalls. I used the money to buy more cabbage to replant. I have already cleared a new field to plant new rice and this time I want to plant more. I want to grow more to earn more money.”



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*Paul in his garden*

**Paul** (pictured above) said “I live in Kukunpitala in Haku. The training encouraged me to look after my garden. I learned how to apply organic insecticide. A few years ago I had pests in my garden and the crops did not grow properly. The training boosted my knowledge on how to run a farm successfully. I have increased my income so I can sustain my family.

I planted 700 cabbages so that I would have Christmas money. The crop was very successful, and I sold my cabbages at the Hanpan market and I made 1,000 kina. I am now using crop rotation and mixed cropping. I can compost and use pesticide. I am planting taro, sweet potato, beans, capsicum, cabbages, tobacco, green onion and corn. Some of the money I make at the market I use to buy other foods to supplement my family's diet.

I am a big supporter of the Hako Women's Collective. The women have done a big job, they have transformed the community. I would like to get more involved."

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*Gimots in his house, talking to PICCA's Steve Maguire, Yvonne from DPI (red shirt) and HWC's Environment and Agriculture Team*

**Gimots** (pictured above) said "I live in Tanreki, Haku. Learning backyard farming has been very helpful to our family. Our land in the bush is a long way away. We now have good food close to the house. We save money and we have good nutrition without going to the market to spend money.

My cabbages didn't survive in the bush but they are growing very well here in my backyard garden. I share my produce with the kids at the kindergarten. We have 37 children from 15 families.

I have sold cabbages at the local market and I have bought school materials for the kindergarten. I use some to pay school fees for my son and I am saving to build a permanent home.

Some families in my community have asked if they can watch and learn how to plant a backyard garden. One family has already gone ahead. Many more people would like to be involved in backyard farming.”

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*Anna from HWC, and some of the food farmers are now growing in Haku*

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