

Background on VSA in Papua New Guinea:

The Province of East New Britain (ENBP) was at one time focused on the well-known town of Rabaul. Rabaul, and the island of New Britain, has at times been controlled by the Germans, Australians, Japanese, Australians (a second time after WWII), before achieving independence as part of PNG in 1975.

Eruptions of Vulcan and Tuvuvur volcanoes in 1937, and more recently 1994, have changed the topography and also the social landscape of the Gazelle Peninsula. Previously Rabaul was the financial and business centre of the province. Since the 1994 eruption Kokopo, which lies some 20km east from Rabaul and was a small town before the eruptions, has become the centre of commercial and administrative activities in ENBP. Further east (another 20km) along the coast a new airport has been established at Tokua.

After the 1994 eruptions many of the people from the area surrounding the volcanoes fled to the southern shore of Simpson Harbour (and further eastwards) and settled on land made available by the government for resettlement. The large displaced population had a significant impact on local communities and put added stress on local infrastructure and services. The schools and other education services of the area were particularly impacted.

VSA has had volunteers on the island of New Britain since 2002. In 2003 and 2004 VSA trialled a Youth Volunteer scheme involving two groups of four school leavers and two adult mentors at Vunapope. VSA has extended volunteer assignments into different health and education sectors of the province.

The project:

Callan Services is an NGO in Kokopo, East New Britain Province.

The centre offers:

- a hearing and eye clinic
- a new preschool/playschool with an aim for a 1:1 disability to non disability ration and a maximum of 20 children
- physiotherapy services during the week for children who come to the centre for exercises.
- a Friday programme where children from the province are brought in for a coaching day
- an outreach programme involving visits to parents in villages who have children with disabilities and training and coaching on physiotherapy exercises for their children.
- training and awareness raising of teaching the disabled for teachers in mainstream schools.

The official project undertaken by Addventurers will include:

- the development of a children's playground at a pre-school being set up by Callan Services.
- some general building work at Callan including shelving and bulletin display boards
- basic IT training for staff in functions such as EXCEL, brochure-work in Word, basic document set-up etc
- the set up of a small library – which will lend out books, toys and other resources suitable for disabled and able children who attend the kindergarten.

Project length: 5 days.

Kairak Vudal Resource and Training Centre.

This is a joint facility with Vudal University, their main focus is on an integrated agricultural training programme with an aim to improve smallholder and subsistence farmer productivity, earnings and to reduce household food shortages. The Centre's work involves an outreach programme to farmers – the training is conducted with the farmers in the villages.

The training centre would educate addventurers on environmental issues in the area, including visits to villages. There is the possibility of some tree planting work one day. Also a visit to Rabaul township and the observatory. Vudal will be a good base to visit the volcano from.

Spending some time at Vudal will allow the group to learn about the effects of erosion, deforestation and relocation of people (farmers) as a result of the 1994 volcanic eruptions.

Security:

Spending time in Papua New Guinea is fun and adventurous but will undoubtedly raise concerns about safety and security. However, if a person takes good precautions, PNG can be a generally safe environment. As a rule Papua New Guineans are friendly, open and generous and will provide assistance above and beyond the call of duty.

The universal rule in PNG is that people love to 'stori'. This will involve spending time talking with people, sharing stories. The custom of 'stori' is thousands of years old and everyone does it. Locals are generally quite shy with strangers and are often used to expatriates either ignoring them or treating them as hired help, so treating people with respect and good humour and without fear will reap rewards. Becoming aware of the social and cultural codes of conduct and abiding by its rules are very important preventative measures.