LESLIONS FROM THE 2015 and 1997 DROUGHT/FROST IN PNG

MATT KANUA, PNG UPDATE 2016
Impacts

• End of 1997 - 1.2 million villagers affected (Allen and Bourke 1998)
• In 2015 – 2.7 million people were affected (GoPNG)
• By December 2015, 770,000 people affected (ANU report)

1997
• Increased death rates published

2015
• Many people died quietly
• Numbers not known
Impact on Agricultural industries

- Traditionally agriculture built on managing excess water
- In 1997 and again in 2015 – La Nina (heavy rain) follows El Nino (drought)
- Food shortages in PNG often occur in pairs
- In 1997 - Robusta coffee and all other export tree crop – yield greatly reduced in 1998.
- Arabica coffee production – bounty crop in 1998 =1.3 million bags.
Triumph of the citizenry

• In 1997 and 2015 - most people were kept alive by their own efforts or those of their relatives (K30 million remitted)
• In 1997 and 2015 - many villagers lived off ‘bush foods’. People also killed domestic animals and either ate them, or sold the meat
• In 1997 over 80% of the additional rice was purchased by PNGeans
Migration
What did the Government do?

- GoPNG spent K258 Million (compared to K10 million in 1997)
- Members of Parliament spent some funds on rice relief (K178 DSIP)
- Favouritism, politicization of relief and lack of accountability
- GoPNG did not declare a State of Emergency. This meant foreign governments could not assist
- Due to lack of leadership, UNDP/NDC coordinated stakeholder response
- In 2015 the vulnerable people in remote inaccessible areas did not get the food (in contrast to with ADF efforts in 1997)
What did Australia do?

1997
• AusAID’s roles was visible, direct, significant due to formal request from GoPNG (contributed $30 Million)
• AusAID flew rice in military helicopters into isolated areas
• AusAID also funded the nationwide assessments.

2015
• DFAT role was invisible, indirect, but significant
• No GoPNG request made to Australia for help
• Funded Church Partnership Program 2015 drought response
  Funded agricultural projects – e.g. NARI
• Funded transport relief food delivery in Western Province
Private Sector Response
(Some example only)

1997-98
• Leadership and coordination in private sector
• Visible, direct, significant contributions
• Trukai
• Meltours

2015-16
• Lack of leadership
• Private sector confused
• Ok Tedi Development Foundation, ExxonMobil, Digicel
Lessons

1997-98
- Some leadership and international partnership
- Triumph of the citizenry
- Failure of governance

2015-16
- No leadership
- Failure of government
- Chaotic response
- Lessons from 1997-98 were not learned
- Triumph of the citizenry... again
Going forward

- Demonstrate strong leadership
- Identify at risk communities for mitigation
- Rice production in rural areas
- Target resources to those in greatest need
- GoPNG and Churches alliance through Church Partnership Program
- Private sector engagement
- Better bilateral policy engagement between PNG and Australia for disaster management