The impact of the 2015-16 El Niño on high altitude places in Hela and Enga provinces

James Komengi and Brendan Jinks
Drought and Famine Relief in PNG 2015-16
Australian National University
7 June 2017
Frost and drought in high altitude places

- Drought started in April 2015
- Frosts destroyed gardens in July/August 2015
- Rains commenced again in November 2015
- Food shortages persisted in some areas until late 2016
- 140,000 people very short of food
- Lai LLG, Wage LLG, Upper Wage LLG and Pilikambi LLG and beyond
- UC/CPP assessments in Sept 2015 and Mar 2016 (including Panduaga Elementary School)
Persons Living With Disabilities

- No records in Hela and Enga province
- No consideration government funded food distribution
- Left behind with women and children
- No aids for mobility
- Secured wheel chairs – Tari hospital
Persons Living With Disabilities

Disabled woman crawls to church as she is unable to walk upright

Sisters in their 30s lost ability walk as teenagers – suspected polio
Bushfire victim

- Ruth Gibson had just saved her two small boys from burning house and ran back for possessions when the roof fell in.
- Husband was in Porgera.
Mothers took greater risks

• Mother of five left father and kids at home while she swam across the river to retrieve rice from relatives
• On her return crossing she drowned (with rice tied to her head)
• Photo dredging to retrieve late Anna Timbiya at Wage river of Tawanda village in November 2015.
During the drought, young boy died in the care of his mother while her husband was away. Her father in-law accused daughter in law for death of grandson in a community dispute settlement process.

Husband then attempted to behead wife. Using her hand to protect herself she lost right lower arm.
Impact on men
More stories...

• Single mum attempted to commit suicide by jumping into river after no-one saved home from bushfire. 30 homes were burnt down. People are still rebuilding

• We heard stories of prostitution in exchange for bags of rice
Affects of water shortages on families
Listening to children’s drought stories
8 year old boy at Panduaga Elementary School

• Abandoned by his parents during the drought
• During a fight over food his father chopped his mother’s hand off
• The small amount of green leaves in his hands are his lunch
• He is one of the few students who had lunch that day.
9 year old girl at Panduaga Elementary School

- Abandoned by her parents during the drought
- No food all day
- Now lives with aunt who has 5 other children
- Only had some boiled choko leaves for breakfast and has nothing in her bag for lunch.
8 year old boy at Panduaga Elementary School

“
My parents were fighting and my mother murdered my father during the drought, my mother now lives in Porgera and I live alone... they were angry and hungry and she murdered him” – 8 year old boy