

JULY 2009

Suru Akari (Gyday) from the village of Waju, I have just returned from a quick trip with some success fixing of our vehicle and have made some excellent contacts for the Kokoda Angels.

A Big thanks to Airlines PNG. Manager Nancy for getting me in and out of Kokoda. Supplies to the area are limited still with all supplies crossing the Kumusi River on tyres from Popendetta or flown in at Kokoda. I experienced the difficulties of this when I took the wheel hub to a friend's workshop from the village to the town of Popendetta to remove the rear studs that keep shearing off when push starting. I went with a couple of the boys who were getting goods for the small store that services the village. We left the village at 4 am for the 5km walk out to the 'main' Kokoda track where only three trucks can pick the people for the 20 km trip from Waju village to the Kamusi. We missed a vehicle that went passed us with about 50 people and everything else were packed extra tightly even 10 boys on the roof. See pics. So we started to walk. We met a truck going up so we jumped on and went back towards Kokoda past the village turn and on, filled up with passengers and goods and started back. A rear wheel broke one of the two remaining wheel studs holding it on and as the wheel was about to come off we had to get off and start walking again past the village turn off where we started and a couple of kms on we meet another truck headed to Kokoda again so we jumped on and headed back again past the starting point and on picked up 3 dozen more and a dozen or more 60 kg bags of cocoa headed back again to the Kamusi passing the village turn off again this time in the light! Another stop with a flat tyre but finally getting to the Kamusi crossing. Crossing is a bit of fun, three of us on a large blown up truck tube one in the water drags us across the fast current starting upstream and put us right on target on the other side downstream. 10 bucks each. Some weren't so lucky or sea wise and ended up swimming with run away tubes seen heading quickly downstream! I was picked up dry with thanks on the other side by the area Digicell phone manager (thanks James) with one spare seat in his duel cab leaving the boys to wait for another Pmv! we arrived in Popendetta. I managed to find an easy out to get the broken studs out and found some new ones! The boys made it in and we did the shopping and started looking for our return Pmv! We had missed the early first lot of Pmv's so waited a couple of hours for the last days run back to the Kamusi crossing. At sunset we crossed the tube ferry leaving us to walk across the flood plan covered in huge mounds of rocks in the fading light to the where the road restarts. I went 'a' over not spilling the two boxes of store goods though. Again we had to wait with a lot of other people and mounds of goods with them and more hours waiting on the side of the track before being picked up. We were dropped with one more flat tyre stop after midnight for the last remaining 5km walk back into the village and my thin mattress shortly after!. They do this trip every week or two to bring supplies, a sick patient to cross the river is two or three hundred in fees as more men control the tubes to cross making the trip to the main Hospital impossible for most. Two village women died from treatable disease while I was there and our 'ambo' stuck on the side of the track with numerous problems. There was very few drugs left no antibiotics or malaria drugs were left and the provincial hospital announced on the radio while I was there that they had none either.

I made lots of contacts as said there and in Port Moresby and I am hoping something will come from the trip. In particular the CEO of the St Johns who is very pleased to meet us and we will be working together from now on with the hope of getting a proper vehicle and service running asap. The Kokoda Angels association received great news from the Tax office and we are a tax deductible recipient backdated as from 14th Jan. Our vehicle did numerous trips to Kokoda hospital when working and delivered supplies to the aid post and I feel the money spent on it was worth it and our village people learnt a lot about mechanics and maintenance but we are hoping to raise funding now for a better later model cruiser that will be more reliable and easier to get parts and also rebuild the aid post to upgrade it to a small clinic. We are making plans to choose four young people to work with the district nurse and planning to train them for the work there. Any help would be greatly appreciated

Cheers Jeff