



Oil Search

Kutubu Kundu & Digaso Festival - preserving culture and rebuilding lives

PNG Media Release

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Sheer strength, determination and a deep sense of identity could be felt when the powerful Kutubu Kundu (drum) began beating, signaling the start of the annual Kutubu Kundu and Digaso Festival on Friday, 21 September in the Southern Highlands Province.

The Festival provides visiting locals and international tourists alike a rare insight into the rich and diverse culture of the Kutubu people including the importance of the Kutubu kundu (drum) and the Digaso oil trade apart from an amazing display of traditional regalia, cultural practices and unique art and craft from the Bosavi, Kutubu, Samberigi, Kikori, Hela, Poroma, Nipa and Magarima regions.

Tourists and guests were also given the opportunity to visit the Kutubu human skull cave and participate in activities such as bird watching, swimming and diving. Legends were also told by the local people.

Daga village near the famous Lake Kutubu, PNG's second-largest lake provides the picturesque setting for this annual event which coincides with the country's Independence Day anniversary celebrations. Cultural dancers arrive by boat, truck and foot to take part. The Festival is also aimed at educating local communities on the importance of protecting and preserving the environment and in turn their culture as both are deeply connected.

Into its eight consecutive year, the Festival is a proud initiative of the Kutubu Foe Culture group to promote sustainable tourism, with the hope of increasing socio-economic benefits and capacity building opportunities for local communities and Oil Search has been a proud sponsor of the event since its inception in 2010.

In 2018, the Company donated more than K12,000 in kind (rations, 400L of diesel and gasoline and waste collection material) to help stage the event which was held from 21 - 23 September with the theme "*Yumi mas kirapim bek yumi ye!*" which encourages communities to support one another in rebuilding their lives and to be self-reliant following the devastating 7.5 magnitude earthquake in February.

Oil Search and Oil Search Foundation (OSF) played a critical 'First responder' role with more than K16m donated in cash and kind to support disaster relief efforts, moving over 200 tons of food and supplies to affected villages mainly by helicopter reaching over 200,000 people.

The Company remains committed to long-term recovery and restoration activities which include a major immunisation programme to combat communicable diseases, rehabilitation of health facilities, addressing water, sanitation and hygiene needs through the work of OSF.

Event organiser, Saina Jefferey Philyara thanked Oil Search and other sponsors for their continuous support. "Your assistance will ensure traditions and culture are kept alive and passed on to the next generation. The February earthquake has affected our lives, but we are here today. We will rebuild our lives and continue to embrace and preserve our culture and traditions well into the future."

According to the event organisers, funds raised from the event will go towards supporting women and children, the elderly and widows affected by the earthquake.

The Foe community is one of many isolated groups in PNG but boasts some of the country's and even the world's unique wildlife. Lake Kutubu is home to endemic fish species and has been designated a "Wetland of International Significance" by the Ramsar Convention.

Festival sponsors were also provided with information stalls to display their products and conduct awareness on the work they do. Oil Search PNG Sustainability (Environment), Safety and Risk and Stakeholder Engagement officers were on hand to answer questions and talk to locals about their activities including Oil Search's recovery and restoration activities following the earthquake.

While Oil Search's operations in PNG extend over large areas of high biodiversity value, its physical footprint is small. The Company actively work to manage any impacts it may have, recognising that these ecosystems support a variety of species and contribute to the livelihood and sustenance of local communities.

Six months on since the devastating 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck this part of Papua New Guinea, the Foe people have shown resilience, evident in the successful staging of yet another cultural spectacular.

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Photos



A rattle shaking group from Lower Faso perform to the delight of tourists and guests at the 8th Kutubu Kundu and Digaso Festival.



Oil Search's Timon Ifame meeting one of many locals who visited the Company's stall during the 8th Kutubu Kundu and Digaso Festival.



A diverse group of dancers at the 8th Kutubu Kundu and Digaso Festival take a break for a quick photo.



A Kutubu *'Fish Tail'* Kundu (drum).



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Photos courtesy of Oil Search.