
Oil Search supports drought relief efforts

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OIL SEARCH kicked off a major drought relief initiative that will provide much needed food, water and medicine to villages near the company's project areas yesterday.

Supplies have been sourced and will be distributed to within the company's project area in Southern Highlands, Hela and Gulf provinces.

The drought relief efforts started in the Kutubu villages of Kaipu and Sisibia today, with the distribution of rice bags, tinned fish and noodles to start off with. The Oil Search drought initiative will cover 94 villages, 851 wards, 9623 wards and more than 27,000 people in the three provinces.

People who gathered today to receive the relief supplies were grateful and expressed appreciation to Oil Search for coming to their aid in their time of need.

According to the PNG Government, up to 2.5 million people in PNG are affected by the prolonged drought that is gripping the country, with the Highlands provinces among the worst affected.

"PNG has been hit hard by the El Nino weather system and as a result, crops have failed or been ravaged by pests and many waterways that villages rely heavily on for drinking water, food and washing have stopped flowing," said Leon Buskens, General Manager PNG Stakeholder Engagement.

"This is having devastating effects and comes after parts of the country were seriously affected by frost earlier this year.

"With so many people experiencing hard times at present, we simply can't stand by and watch this terrible situation unfold in our own backyard, so we're taking immediate action to help those in need and are putting substantial resources into the drought relief effort," Mr Buskens said.

"To overcome the logistical challenges involved, we've already mobilised a dedicated team to work with our operations teams and with landowner companies in the project areas to source and help distribute provisions each week from our bases in Nogoli, Moro, Gobe and Kopi.

"We are also working with the PNG Government's National Disaster Centre and with third parties to ensure the coordination and sustained supply of water and provisions into the affected areas.

"Oil Search remains committed to PNG and we are very keen to do what we can to help communities ride out what unfortunately looks like being an extended period of low rainfall," said Mr Buskens.

Villagers in Kaipu and Sisibia thanked Oil Search for coming to their aid in their time of need. They said their traditional water sources which sustain their staple food of sago dried up over the last five months, during the drought, and their kaukau gardens has also dried up.