



BARRICK (NIUGINI) LIMITED
(Manager of the Porgera Joint Venture)
PO Box 484
Mount Hagen 281, WHP
Papua New Guinea

Tel: (657) 547 8200 (Porgera)
(675) 547 8201
Fax: (675) 547 8132
Tel: (675) 545 1288 (Mt Hagen)
Fax: (675) 545 1514

PO Box 851
Port Moresby 121, NCD
Papua New Guinea

Tel: (675) 322 4800
Fax: (675) 322 4824
Telex: 23369

29 July, 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Porgera Women learn technical skills in bilum making

PORT MORESBY, 29 JULY, 2019, 0900HRS: The Porgera Joint Venture (PJV) continues to promote capacity-building opportunities for local women in the Valley toward becoming self-reliant and sustainable.

Through its Community Development (CD) section, twenty women representing four community stakeholder groups recently attained certification in basic bilum training delivered by *Jaukae Bilum Products* trainer Florence Jaukae Kamel, and assisted by Deborah Jaukae and Nellie Miki.

Florence Jaukae is a weaving artist, commonly known throughout Papua New Guinea as the '*bilum meri*'.

She is the Managing Director and principal artist of *Jaukae Bilim Products* and founder of Goroka Bilum Weavers Co-operative established in 2002 and the Goroka Bilum Festival, which started in 2009.

The two-week training in Porgera was held last month from 17-28 June, 2019.

Participants involved women representatives from the Porgera District Women's Association (PDWA), 3rd Generation SML Youth Association, Porgera Disable Peoples' Association (PDPA) and Ipili Iwana Parane Investment.

The training is part of CD's focus to develop an art industry in the district to potentially provide sustainable income for women and youth.

The basic advance training focused on understanding the bilum product as a viable source of income and what is necessary to make a product become viable for market either internally or externally.

Ms Kamel said women know how to make bilum, what the training focused on were the obvious technicalities behind developing a decent product that a customer or buyer would want to spend money on.

The training specifics included: 1) Bilum-Tok, establishing clear communication and identifying the need for teamwork and corporation amongst weavers, 2) Leadership and roles and responsibilities, 3) Understanding customer specifications, 4) Understanding the economic value of the product, 5) Using the tape measure, 6) Learning the techniques of color, 7) Product Development and 8) Quality checks.

"The women have to know the basics of bilum making before they can get into bilum dress making and I am happy they have been able to understand that through the training. The bilum product must be developed on the terms of the customer to quality and standard required and meets demand, these are concepts the women as weavers must understand initially," Ms Kamel said.

Many described the training as an eye-opener and expressed excitement at the opportunities that now lay ahead for them.

“It’s hard to look after my kids and this training has given me new hope and I feel empowered. I’ve learnt a lot and want to continue to learn everything there is to know about the bilum industry and how I can become better with my product,” said Danlyn Petale, a single mother of four from Mungulep.

Another, Alice Six from Alipis said she has realized that she has taken her bilum making skills for granted and can now utilize what she has learnt to benefit herself and others economically.

PJV Economic Programs Superintendent, Jais Opa said the training was introduced to educate the women about the kind of market that exists for bilum products.

“We see value in the training and will continue with the advanced component later in the year, which will include, applying zips, designing and bilum dressmaking.

“You all are privileged because you have learnt from the best. The challenge now is for you to nurture what you have learnt and do something useful with it to better your livelihoods. Learn to cooperate and the opportunities exists for you to tap into and progress,” Mr Opa.

Ms Kamel has invited the Porgera group to showcase at the annual Goroka Bilum Festival in September.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Porgera Gold Mine in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea, is operated by Barrick (Niugini) Limited (“BNL”)– through an equal partnership between Barrick Gold Corporation and Zijin Mining Group Company Limited – which owns 95 percent participating interest in the Porgera Joint Venture (PJV). The remaining 5% in PJV is owned by Mineral Resource Enga (MRE) Limited – a consortium consisting of the Enga Provincial Government and the Porgera landowners.

The Porgera Mine employs over 3,300 Papua New Guineans, and over the life of the mine has produced more than 20 million ounces of gold and contributed approximately 10% of PNG’s total annual exports.



The women participants with their certificates in Basic Bilum Training with the trainers.



Cushions with bilum covers made by the participants.

PJV Media Contact Details:
Email: PJVMedia@porgerajv.com
Phone: (+675) 547 8200