

Giving RACHEL to the Underserved

Mandy Glass. Photos Nawi Mabo

"It has been a really challenging undertaking to give "RACHEL to the Underserved" but a VERY SATISFYING experience which my family and I really enjoyed." This is how Nawi Mabo, MAF PNG's Ground Operations Training Coordinator, summarised his annual leave which he spent at the southern most part of Western Province.

Christmas Traditions, Expectations and Obligations

Even though it is already middle of May, let's switch back to Christmas, because RACHEL was Nawi's Christmas present for his community. At the end of last year, when asked how Christmas is celebrated in his village Nawi shared the following:

"The Christmas season in my hometown Daru, Western Province, is a time of joy and celebration. In our language we call this time "Samo". The Samo celebrations are accompanied by traditional dancing, which can at Christmas and New Year usually go all night. Houses are decorated and preparations are made for a solemn village meeting.

The Samo period is also a time to fulfil family commitments. People who have work elsewhere return home to their families and bring money or gifts for their relatives. During Samo, workers in towns coming home also meet traditional obligations like settling up 'basket payment'. Basket payment is when people pay their mother's family's people as part of the culture. One day when Anthony and Joy are working and get their own salary, they will have to go home and have to pay Kubide's brothers and sister.

This year I will fly home with my family. But I will not bring money, I will take RACHEL to the village. RACHEL is a computer that builds a wireless network and provides educational knowledge and other valuable information. So to say it is going to be an added value for the whole village community!

Samo is also a time for in-laws, especially from the woman's side, to oppose a husband if the man is not treating his wife well enough or if he



The Mabo family: Kubide and Nawi, with their children Anthony and Joy



Traditional celebrations at Sebe village

has lots of children through her. At such a time, children can get snatched by the wife's relatives and held in their houses. In order for the man to go get his children back, he has to gather his people, collect money and produce, prepare a dance and go to the house where his children/child are held. There he has to pay the money and things, perform the dance and in doing so proves himself to be a good husband and father to look after his wife and children well.

I hope this does not happen to me this Christmas!

The Samo period is also a time to commemorate the dead. Tombs are decorated and gravestones set up.

Years back, ladies, girls and men and boys would have a challenge to paint each other with mud, each group on one side challenging the other. It's all fun, "Samo" time. If a lady or man or boy or girl is alone and caught, she/he could end up having mud all over their body. It's not practiced so much these days."

The Samo period at Nawi's place is a time when traditions are nurtured. And that's the case at Christmas in many countries across the globe, just practiced differently here and there.

RACHEL as a Christmas Present

So, there was Nawi taking his annual leave. But he was doing much more than taking time off and spending the Samo time in his village. As a Christmas present for his village he had RACHEL in his luggage, this offline education server, which he wanted to introduce in his home region.

Preparing his RACHEL campaign, Nawi sourced and secured funds from the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust of New Zealand. The \$2,690 enabled him to purchase three RACHEL servers. Via Facebook he further announced his project and guided people to an online fundraising platform describing his undertaking. This way he asked for funds to cover the purchase of compatible devices like tablets that people must own to access content from the servers.

Nawi, together with his wife and children, traveled to three villages to set up the servers where internet connectivity is intermittent, unavailable, or too costly.

After a comfortable flight in one of MAF's aircraft from Mt Hagen to Daru, the means of transport became more challenging for the Mabo family. Most of the travelling was done on "banana boats" powered by an outboard motor along the coast that runs along the border between PNG and Australia (Torres Strait).



Nawi with one of the RACHEL servers in his MAF office

RACHEL

**Remote Area Community
Hotspot for Education &
Learning**

It is an offline server with leading educational and learning sites suitable for use in schools, community centres, health centres or places of learning worldwide where there is no or limited Internet access. The server's digital content can be accessed through compatible devices such as smartphones and tablets. The information on the server is preinstalled and there is also enough space available to add additional content that may also contain videos.

More about the offline RACHEL server can be found under the following link
<https://racheloffline.org/>





Traveling on the banana boat up the Pahoturi River to deliver the RACHEL project to the Sebe community



Overcoming barriers on the ground: challenging water ways

The RACHEL project was launched in locations that Nawi is very familiar with; Sebe Village, Waidoro Village, and Morehead Station.

In total, he and his family covered over 800 kilometres when travelling to introduce the project in these places (including a medevac trip to Saibai Island in the Torres Strait). On all three of these outreaches, the group arrived late at night due to various delays which included rough seas and bad bridges on roads which caused a tyre of their car to get stuck between the bridge's timber logs. At another occasion fallen trees were blocking very narrow waters.

As quoted at the beginning, Nawi summarised his RACHEL campaign as a really challenging undertaking but a very satisfying experience which he and his family really enjoyed. During the time he was delivering the project, he posted a few snippets of his extraordinary holiday-undertaking on social media:

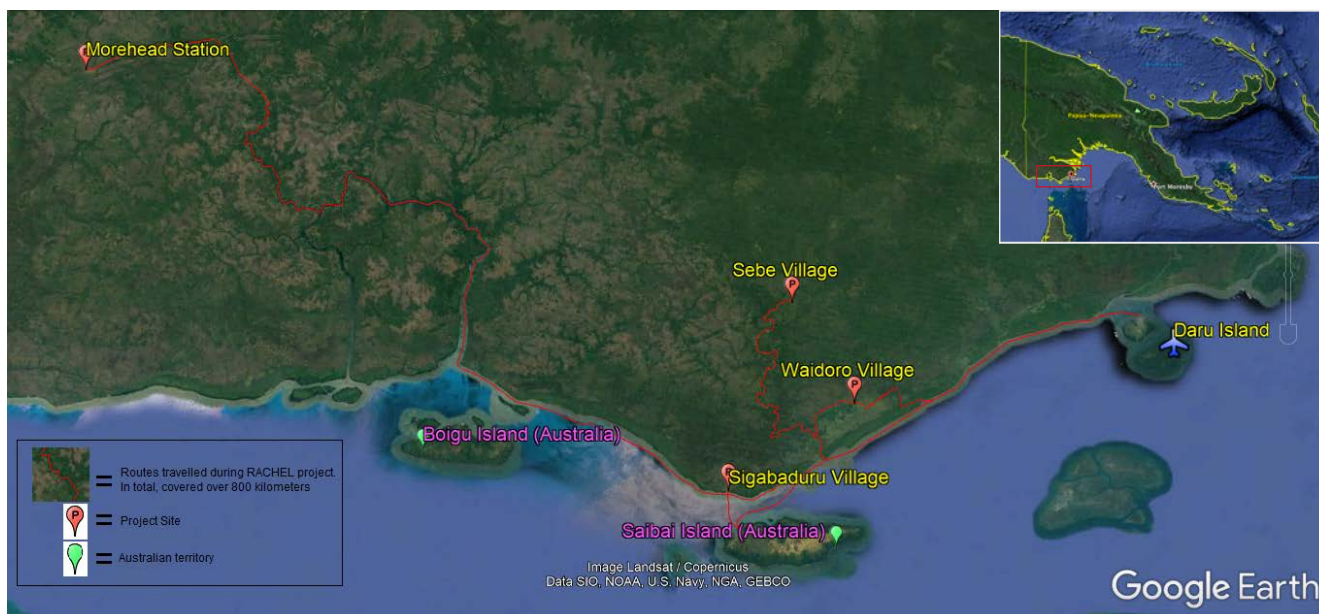
"The people of Morehead Station and surrounding villages showed overwhelming appreciation when presented with the RACHEL offline server and for receiving training on how to use it, including turning the information in it into practical actions."



Ready for another RACHEL delivery: Anthony, Kubide and Joy on the back of the truck



Overcoming barriers on the ground: challenging drive ways



The map shows Nawi's travel route to introduce RACHEL to various communities in the far south west of Papua New Guinea

Despite not everyone receiving a tablet device purchased from the funds raised, the desire for people to learn was tremendous. Even neighbouring villagers who attended the training were greatly intrigued by this innovative learning method and are now eager to have RACHEL in their villages, having realised the simplicity in learning made available through this platform."



Words of Love and Care Preached and Immediately Put into Action

As the above map shows, Nawi's home base is in the southwest of Papua New Guinea, located only a few miles from an Australian island, an advantage for people with serious medical conditions needing help.

"I'm on holiday but still doing what I enjoy doing with MAF," Nawi also posted on social media, "helping save lives by getting people to medical attention! This time not using planes but dinghies!"



Impressions from the well attended and received RACHEL training at Morehead Station (above) and Waidoro Village (bottom)



People of all generations are keen to learn about the RACHEL project at Waidoro Village

Nawi ended up twice on Saibai Island (Australia) one week, ferrying people with critical medical conditions. He shares one of the occasions:

"I was doing RACHEL training at Sebe Village and was wearing my MAF uniform because I purposely wanted to use that session to talk a little bit about MAF and what we do. My message was especially aimed at young people about choices they make when trying to find work and employment. There are possibly three sectors you can choose to work in, I said; the government sector, the private and corporate sector, and the mission field. Of the three, working in the mission field is a path filled with boundless satisfaction because even though serving others can sometimes be filled with pain and hardships, the outcomes our actions bring in Christ's name are very rewarding. I went on to explain that in MAF, one of our priorities is to attend to medevacs to help the very sick and injured get to medical attention, and this has been very rewarding for individuals and the organisation in the countless lives we as MAF have helped save.

About 15 minutes after the training, a fight broke out involving people who attended the training. A woman was hit in the lower back of her head with a stick which lead to swelling in



Nawi and his friends assisting a woman in need by taking her to a health facility in Australian territory

that area. We needed to get her to medical attention quickly. Because Daru Island was far and a trip there would mean arriving late at the hospital in the night, we decided to take her to Saibai Island in the Torres Strait (Australia) which was much closer. The community and relatives had a problem though. They did not have fuel (petrol) for the outboard motor for the trip. As I helped in doing what I could in providing first-aid for the injured woman and listened to the anxious and angry screams of the relatives (which almost lead to another fight!), I realised I had sufficient fuel for my RACHEL project travels which could be used. And having just proudly spoken about MAF and what we do in saving lives, I would have been proven wrong if I did not help this young woman when I had the means to.

I stood up and calmed the situation, and told the community that I will use my fuel to help transport the woman to the health facilities at Saibai Island. At about 7 pm that evening, we arrived at Saibai Island. The next day, the woman was checked and cleared and we returned home sooner than expected courtesy of the better medical services there.

The trip to Saibai Island also led to another good thing. Speaking to the border officials about why we requested to be there, one of the border officials saw me wearing my uniform shirt. After learning that I serve with MAF he commented "I know MAF and the wonderful work you people do". It didn't stop there. He learnt of my RACHEL project and personally pledged to support it because he saw that it helped to get young people educated which would keep them away from getting into bad things especially along the border area.

This experience emphasised that by helping others, the outcomes your actions bring in Christ's name can be very rewarding!"



Impressions from the well attended and received RACHEL training: a group of highly focussed men at Sebe, a group of women gathered around a laptop at Morehead Station



Technology in everyone's hand at Morehead Station

Volumes of Valuable Information

It has been about four months since Nawi introduced RACHEL to the three communities in the far southwest of Papua New Guinea. Just recently, Nawi received some feedback from a pastor from Morehead Station:

"Since Christmas when the RACHEL server was left here with us, students and teachers from schools as well as other people who have come and used the server to look for helpful information have been surprised to find volumes of valuable information. It's amazing that this very simple and easy to use device is able to provide lots of life-changing information that we would otherwise find very difficult and costly to get from the internet or other sources. Also, the benefits from the installation of the server here at Morehead Station has caused other nearby villages to gear up towards purchasing the devices for their communities. It's good to see that this new

technology to have access to information that you [Nawi] introduced does not only stay with us but spreads out to benefit many more communities."

Nawi is really delighted to be given such encouraging comments knowing that RACHEL has such an impact in the lives of the people he originated from.

"I'm really excited to receive this positive feedback from Pastor Robert about people of Morehead community now realising the practical benefits of having access to life-changing information through the server. Often people from underserved places are unable to overcome problems they face daily in their settings because of the lack of education and access to helpful information. I find a simple solution to this problem being the RACHEL server because not only does it enable these fundamental necessities to be available to underserved communities, but it does so in great simplicity!"

Nawi could not have done this project on his own. He shared his vision with institutions and individuals and got the support and funds he needed.

"I want to thank MAF for providing the logistical support so I could take all the RACHEL equipment with me to Daru free of charge. Another thank you goes to the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust of New Zealand as well as to colleagues and friends in PNG and abroad. Without their additional help through my fundraiser I would not have been able to present RACHEL successfully in the three locations!"

My vision is to see RACHELs installed in more communities in the future through duplications of the project "Giving RACHEL to the Underserved."

Projects like "Giving RACHEL to the Underserved" are truly at the heart of what MAF is all about - seeing isolated communities physically and spiritually transformed in Christ's name!

Thank you Nawi and family, for being willing to take your personal time to make such life-transforming and sustainable contributions to the communities of Papua New Guinea.

