



**[EMBARGO]**

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## **Team PNG plants trees to mark road to Samoa 2019**

Team PNG is planting 100 mangrove seedlings to mark the 100 days left to go before the Samoa 2019 Pacific Games in July.

The 100 days to go mark falls today (Friday 29 March) and to leave a legacy and support the message of protecting the coastlines as well as looking after the environment, Team PNG is taking this initiative.

The trees were donated by the National Forest Authority and were planted today at Gabagaba village in the Central Province by Team PNG athletes and officials.

Chef de Mission for Team PNG to Samoa 2019, Emma Waiwai presented the seedlings to the Councillor of Gabagaba village, Honourable Donald Agarobe during Team PNG's Media Blitz press conference in Port Moresby.

Planting the trees is in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which Team PNG supports. Today's activity observes three of the SDGs which are; 13 – Climate Action, 14 – Life Below Water and 15 – Life On Land.

The SDGs are a set of aims set by the United Nations that all countries are working together to achieve by 2030. Its objective is to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

Through Team PNG athletes, Chris Amini, Lua Rikis, Milton Kisapai, Tania Mahuru and Ryan Pini as the SDG Champions in PNG, awareness and activities like this are carried out to promote and contribute to the global cause of achieving the SDG objectives.

“Team PNG fully supports the Sustainable Development Goals and we thought this is a good way to show our support while also marking the number days left before the Games,” Waiwai said.

Additionally, the SDG message is also promoted with the Trukai Fun Run which is a fundraising event for Team PNG to Samoa.

Other initiatives Team PNG is taking to show its support to these environmental objectives is to reduce the use of plastic bags.

Waiwai reports that Samoa has a ban on plastic bags and Team PNG wants to make sure “we are supporting this by reducing our use of plastic bags too. We will do this primarily by using our traditional PNG ‘bilums’ to carry our shopping items.”

Team PNG water bottles will also not be plastic bottles as another way of promoting the fight against plastic materials.

She added that using the bilum also showcases traditional PNG art and craft and promotes its identity.

The 100 Days mark is a significant point in the count down to the Games as it shows that the days are getting closer and that Team PNG is looking forward to stepping foot in Apia.

President of the PNG Olympic Committee, Sir John Dawanincura said PNGOC's sport and environment programme, Love Your Coast, promotes and encourages looking after and cleaning waterways and nearby environments, and Team PNG athletes have been involved in delivering it to local communities around the country.

PNGOC encourages people to refuse or reduce the use of plastic bags and if possible reuse the ones they have and not drop them anywhere.

"I commend Emma (Waiwai) and her team for the initiative and thank Gabagaba village for being part of the programme.

"This will greatly benefit their environment and their marine ecosystem as the trees grow and I encourage other coastal communities to do the same for their environments," Sir John said.

The tree planting does not take Team PNG's focus away from its main goal which is to make an impact at the Samoa Games with the aim of finishing at the number one spot.

"We have completed the justification process for all our athletes and officials now so our teams are in full preparation mode for the Games.

"Activities like this are part of what the Games are about, and that is not only to compete but to also recognize, support and appreciate each other through environmental, cultural and social interactions with our own communities as well as that of the host country," Waiwai said.

Team PNG will be holding their Team Bonding event in May in Port Moresby where all team members from each of the sports competing will gather for orientation activities and also an introduction to other team mates.

The Team will depart Port Moresby for Apia on 4<sup>th</sup> July before the Games Opening Ceremony which will be held on July 7<sup>th</sup>.

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