

# Media Release

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## Literacy Libraries improving education opportunities for children across PNG

The Santos Foundation in partnership with local Buk bilong Pikinini (BbP) is improving early learning opportunities for children in Papua New Guinea between the ages of five to seven through literacy libraries.

Since 2016, the partnership has helped 1,364 children by delivering libraries in Gulf, Hela and Southern Highlands provinces in PNG.

The libraries assist children to be ready for assessment by Grade 1 with results showing that more children are likely to continue with their early childhood education.

At Habare Primary School, the impact of early learning is visible the moment the children arrive.

Habare Primary Head Teacher Jim Kilyali remembers when children started school unable to recognise letters or numbers, many not even knowing how to hold a pencil. “Teachers had to start from ground zero every year,” he says.

Since the Habare Literacy Library opened in 2018, more than 500 children have taken their first steps in learning there. Today, early learners can read basic words, count, write simple sentences and ask questions.

Thanks to stronger community awareness, better learning environments, and increased parental engagement supporting regular attendance and school readiness, the change now reaches far beyond the classroom.

Through the locally led Habare Book Lending Program, children have borrowed more than 15,000 books, to take home to read to their parents.

Younger children, aged four to six, now join gentle after-school sessions, while older children who struggle with reading receive dedicated support. Local families say their homes feel different: children talk more, read more, and believe more in what they can do.

Paua — a remote part of the Moran area on the Southern Highlands–Hela border, where access conditions can shift quickly —strong community leadership was required to navigate the conditions to construct the Paua Literacy Library, which was completed in June 2025.

Despite ongoing access challenges, three local teachers were selected and trained at the Pimaga Camp by BbP, and awareness sessions conducted which resulted in the pre-enrolment of 119 children - the highest of any new literacy library.

“We have never had early childhood education here before,” said parent Ako Embelape. “This is a first for our community.”

Paua now joins three other Literacy Libraries supported by the Santos Foundation across Southern Highlands, Hela and Gulf — each one proof that even in complex places, early learning is helping to transform education opportunities for children and their families.

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