

A BOOK ABOUT OKSAPMIN

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The Oksapmin Sub-district is part of the Telefomin District of the West Sepik Province. It is a highland area in a 'lowland' province. It is also remote, isolated and neglected.

The Education Research Unit of the University of Papua New Guinea have recently published a book about the sub-district. The book's editor thinks that this book is the first to be published in Papua New Guinea which looks at problems of development and change in a sub-district.

The book is called OKSAPMIN DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE, and is published as E.R.U. Occasional Paper No 7. The editor is Dr Sheldon Weeks.

The book has chapters that give background information on the sub-district, notes on change, socialization, causes of sickness, how people use numbers, education, government administration, agriculture and the Baptist Mission. It is well edited and contains a lot of useful information.

The chapter on agriculture was written by Nicky Cape who was the R.D.O. at Oksapmin for two years. He is a British volunteer.

He describes the local agricultural systems and spends some time trying to understand why there is so much child malnutrition in the Oksapmin Sub-district. He concludes that the malnutrition is related to two main factors. The first is related to the character of some adult men who are unwilling to put in enough hard work to start new gardens. The second is a social system that makes it acceptable for people to have small food gardens, to be short of food and to live off other people.

There is a lot of useful information on sweet potato yields and on how the agricultural system is changing as sweet potato replaces taro as the staple food and population pressure increases.

This book is worth buying for people interested in highland agriculture and for agricultural libraries. The price is K4.40 and it can be obtained from:

Educational Research Unit,
University of Papua New Guinea,
Box 4820, University P.O.,
Papua New Guinea.