

VUDAL GIRLS' FIELD WORK ON THE HOSKINS OIL PALM SCHEME

By Cecilie Benjamin, Rural Development Officer, Kimbe.

The Hoskins Oil Palm Scheme was selected as the venue for field work for the first intake of female students to Vudal Agricultural College. In the first weeks, the girls visited the oil palm subdivisions of Buvussi and Gali, the oil palm research station at Dami, and other parts of the oil palm development.

For their field work, the girls paid visits to families on the oil palm blocks.

During their first visit they measured the size of subsistence gardens and recorded varieties of crops, insect and pest attack and farming systems. They also counted pigs, poultry and fruit trees.

Their second visit to the settlers' gardens was to gather varieties of taro, sweet potato and cassava.

The girls collected about 100 varieties of taro, 40 varieties of sweet potato and 6 varieties of cassava. These specimens were sent to the Lowlands Agricultural Experiment Station (LAES) at Keravat for inclusion in their variety collections.

The third visit was to distribute corn to the women who had assisted the girls with this programme and to personally thank them for their assistance. The corn, from LAES Keravat, was also grown on demonstration plots in each of the community centres where the girls worked.

The girls also had one day with the Maternal and Child Health sisters who visit the subdivisions once a month. All the students enjoyed this day very much.

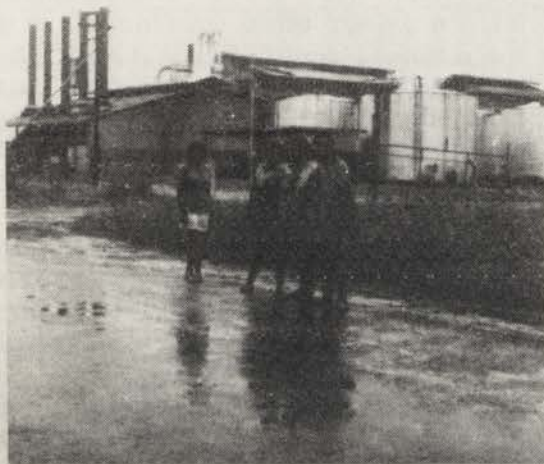
WORK PROGRAMME

An introductory course was carried out for a week before the girls actually went into the field. This course consisted of a visit to the Oil Palm Sub-division of Buvussi and Galai where basic crop technology was observed, such as cover cropping, pollination, harvesting, pruning and benching. The structure of the sub-divisions was also explained to the girls by the Department of Primary Industry officers in charge.

The Oil Palm Research Station at Dami was also visited where oil palm breeding, seed production, and laboratory work are carried out. Visits also included the Dami Forestry Station, Mosa Nuclear estate and the Oil Palm Mill. Talks and discussions were given by various departmental representatives from Health, Welfare, D.D.C., PNG Development Bank and Business Development to give the girls an idea of departmental involvement with the Oil Palm Scheme.

One day was taken up by a visit to the Hoskins Hot Springs, Megapod breeding grounds and Mora Mora Wildlife Station where crocodile recordings are carried out.

The girls also visited the international wharf where oil is pumped along pipes from nearby oil storage tanks to waiting ships proceeding to Europe.



Mosa Oil Palm Mill. Oil is extracted here for shipment overseas.



Iaka and Margaret in a Chimbu settler's food garden on Buvussi Sub-division.

FIELD WORK

The girls moved out onto 4 of the 7 sub-divisions where they were to work. Six girls on Sarakolok, 6 girls on Buvussi - Galai, 5 girls on Kavau, and 4 girls on Kapore sub-division. The girls were accommodated in IMQ's or settler's houses on the community centres. Each girl was to visit 15 oil palm blocks which supported 15 families. These families were of mixed origin, some people were from the Sepik, East New Britain, Chimbu, Morobe, Papua and West New Britain Provinces. Each girl paid 3 separate visits to each of these families. The first visit was to measure the subsistence garden size, record varieties of crops, insect and pest attack, farming systems, pigs, poultry and fruit tree statistics.

The second visit was undertaken to gather varieties of taro (*Colocasia*), sweet potato and cassava.

The third visit was to distribute corn to the women who had assisted the girls with this programme and to personally thank them for their

assistance. The corn was supplied from LAES Keravat by Mr. R.M. Bourke. This variety was also grown on demonstration plots on each of the community centres where the girls worked. The corn was approximately 3 metres high and was far in excess of the corn performance in subsistence gardens of the sub-divisions. Altogether 306 settler's blocks were visited by the girls out of a total of 1566 occupied blocks on the scheme.

RESULTS

The food garden results have since been used to confirm the reliability of results of a survey done 6 months earlier to determine pressure on the gardens in the back areas of the oil palm blocks. Statistical information has been compiled on fruit trees, pigs and poultry to determine future supplies and policies. The girls collected approximately 100 varieties of taro, 40 varieties of sweet potato, 6 varieties of cassava which were forwarded to LAES Keravat for inclusion in their variety collections.



The girls in front of a settler's house at Kavui Community centre



Aselika and Loates on field work on Buvussi sub-division. Note the bananas on Aselika's head.



Serry Loamin holding some of the taro varieties collected.