



Australian Government
Aid Program



Joint Media Release

22 September 2011

Respected local NGO, Kastom Gaden Association and the Australian Government have signed a three-year agreement that will provide thousands of families throughout Solomon Islands with improved varieties of food crops and advice on more effective farming methods and family nutrition.

The SBD20.18 million (AUD 2.53 million) agreement extends previous Australian support over the past two years for Kastom Gaden's five-year program called *Strengthening Food Security for Rural Livelihoods in Solomon Islands Program*.

"Our program aims to improve the amount of quality food grown in rural areas and to support income generation activities for Solomon Islanders", said Kastom Gaden Manager, Mr Clement Hadosaia

AusAID Counsellor for Development Cooperation, Peter O'Connor, said Kastom Gaden was an organisation that improved the lives of Solomon Islanders by using local ideas and local expertise delivered at the local level.

"Kastom Gaden is helping Solomon Islands to adapt their agriculture to the changing environment through improved methods and more productive crop and livestock varieties," he said. "Importantly, it delivers its services at the village level where more than 80 percent of Solomon Islanders live."

Kastom Gaden supports Solomon Islanders through its Plant Material Network and by providing training programs for people in both rural and urban areas. The Plant Material Network provides members with improved seed and rootstock varieties and vital agricultural information.

Kastom Gaden works through partnerships with around 100 community based organisations. Some are formal organisations like churches and Rural Training Centres, Others are community-based organisations such as the Rokotanikeni Womens' Association in southern Malaita.

Kastom Gaden provides training programs to these organisations on subjects such as plant and livestock husbandry, farming methods, pest and disease management, nutrition, health and use of simple technologies suited to local conditions. Services reach some of the most isolated areas of the country.

As part of its nutritional health component, Kastom Gaden supports a child and maternal health nutrition project with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. The project is run out of Sasamuqa Hospital in Choiseul and Atoifi Hospital in central Malaita, both chosen because they service areas of several thousands of people where food security and infant nutrition is a concern.

Under the new agreement with AusAID, Kastom Gaden will provide training over the next three years to an estimated 11,000 people while increasing the number of households with access to its basic services through the planting network to at least 30,000.

“Our work is seeing young people in provincial areas across the country getting involved in farming and selling their produce to markets,” Mr Hadosaia said. “This creates a local and healthy food source, and gives young people the chance to improve their own lives with their own hands.”

Kastom Gaden also works with a range of international partners such as the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

This new agreement with AusAID continues more than ten years of Australian support to Kastom Gaden. The funding is provided under Australia’s country-to-country aid program with the Solomon Islands which is called *the Partnership for Development*.

The *Partnership for Development* is a government-to-government agreement that focuses on areas like health, education, livelihoods and transport infrastructure.

Kastom Gaden provides basic information and advice via newsletters and holds a weekly radio program on SIBC.

For more information about Kastom Gaden and to join its Plant Material Network contact Mr Clement Hadosaia on Phone 39331 or email clementh@kastomgaden.org

Photo caption

Kastom Gaden Manager, Mr Clement Hadosaia and AusAID Development Counsellor Peter O’Connor inspect seedling trays at Kastom Gaden’s main office and plant distribution center in Honiara.