Darren Yorio is a Papua New Guinean by birth. He is a former programs director of ADRA Papua New Guinea (2012-2013). Currently (2020), he work in the Planning and Relationship of ADRA Papua New Guinea. He is married to Pauline Yorio, and they have three children.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency Papua New Guinea (ADRA PNG) office is currently based in the city of Lae, the largest shipping port in Papua New Guinea and gateway to the Highlands region of the country. Its address is Abel Tasman Street, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. It is classified by ADRA International as an implementing country office.

The term “ADRA PNG” was first used in reporting the activities of ADRA in the South Pacific Division in 1986. In May 1986, the ADRA board of the South Pacific Division voted to support water conservation projects in the South Pacific. Within a few months, water conservation projects were established in Papua New Guinea at the village of Antiragen in the Markham Valley at Sonoma Adventist College on the island of New Britain, and on Buka Island in the Bougainville Province.

ADRA PNG commenced work in 1991 under the leadership of the general secretary of Papua New Guinea, George Porter, and Warren May. May was the project officer and the first fulltime ADRA PNG employee. He was also the associate ADRA PNG director from 1991 until 1994. Most of the early projects for ADRA PNG were water projects and infrastructure assistance for Seventh-day Adventist institutions in Papua New Guinea. They were funded by ADRA Australia. The first water projects were rain catchment tanks and drilling systems.
The impact of ADRA’s work from 1991 to 1994 and the presence of water projects in a number of provinces in Papua New Guinea, including Morobe, Madang, Manus, and the New Guinea Islands region, led to the formal establishment of ADRA PNG in 1994. Peter Gwynne, an Australian was the first country director. ADRA PNG moved its offices from the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) office to the suburb of Kamkumung in Lae, although it retained PNGUM’s financial management services. ADRA PNG continued to implement water projects, infrastructure assistance for schools and communities, sawmill projects for communities, and also responded to disasters and emergencies. The twin volcanic eruptions at Rabaul in East New Britain was a case in point. The ADRA PNG response to that emergency solidified its place among the country’s disaster and emergency organizations. ADRA Australia continued to provide funding and technical support to ADRA PNG during this period. ADRA PNG recruited permanent project personnel and volunteers up until 1996 when the tenure of Peter Gwynne as country director ended.

From 1996 until 2000, Australian Royden Howie was country director, replacing Peter Gwynne. During this period, ADRA PNG focused project activities in the Morobe Province as there were insufficient staff members to manage projects in other provinces. Projects in other provinces were either completed or canceled. In Morobe, ADRA PNG established water supply projects, HIV/AIDS awareness programs, and a peer education program in 1997. Also, in 1997 it commenced adult literacy activities following a request from the PNGUM women’s ministries department. In 1998, it began small enterprise development activities, opened a Bougainville field office, and implemented relief for the large-scale drought in most provinces in Papua New Guinea as well as the Aitape Tsunami. In 1999, it commenced health education activities. Also, during this period Linward Taula, a Papua New Guinean, become the assistant director and a number of other Papua New Guineans assumed project management positions within ADRA PNG. ADRA PNG underwent significant expansion of the Kamkumung office with the introduction of IOT systems, operational structures, and the procurement of capital assets. It took the lead in establishing a network of NGOs groups in Morobe Province and built national partnerships with other international NGOs.

Between 2001 and 2005, Michelle Abel, an Australian, was the third country director of ADRA PNG. During her tenure, ADRA PNG gained greater visibility and presence beyond the Morobe Province. A website was published enhancing ADRA PNG’s communication capability. From 2001 to 2003, ADRA PNG strengthened its adult literacy activities. It also secured funding for the Bougainville Informal Education Project in 2001—a three-year program in Bougainville implementing literacy and skills training activities. In 2004, AusAID PNG Church Partnership Program, an Australian government-funded program which supported the humanitarian activities of seven large denominations in Papua New Guinea, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As the non-government organization of the Adventist church, ADRA PNG managed this program directly supporting the implementation of development activities through the Adventist church in Papua New Guinea. ADRA PNG received increased funding for its programs in literacy, economic development, water and sanitation, and HIV/AIDS activities in Morobe Province and other parts of Papua New Guinea. It was also under the leadership of Michelle Abel that ADRA PNG was recognized as a lead NGO in providing water and sanitation. Significant donor funding allowed new water projects to be implemented in many parts of Papua New Guinea. By November 2005, the HIV/AIDS Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre had been established in Lae. The center was highly regarded by government agencies and was accredited by the National AIDS Council Secretariat.

By the end of 2005, ADRA PNG had matured as an organization with eighty-five full-time staff and over 700 active volunteers. Volunteers came not only from PNG but also Canada, Uganda, Switzerland, Australia, and New Zealand.

At that time, ADRA conducted the largest water and sanitation program in the country. During the previous five years, ADRA received more than AUD $7 million in project funding to implement its programs, mainly from AusAID, the Adventist Church, and individual donations, and worked in ten of PNG’s twenty provinces. In Bougainville alone, ADRA PNG trained more than 800 volunteer literacy teachers and registered more than 4000 students.

This expansion of projects and personnel created a need for increased office space. ADRA PNG purchased a new office building in Abel Tasman Street in Lae. The old office in Kamkumung was sold and on December 5, 2005, the new office was dedicated and opened by Barry Oliver, then secretary of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and chairman of the board for ADRA in the South Pacific.

Raul Schneider, an Argentinian medical doctor, became the fourth country director serving between 2006 and 2009. During his term, ADRA PNG secured funding from AusAID and expanded its literacy program in Bougainville. ADRA PNG became a stronger NGO in the literacy sector and partnered with other NGOs, churches, and civil societies to train, resource, and certify those partners. The HIV/AIDS sector developed educational programs which were highly successful. Funding from the European Union was also secured for water and sanitation projects. The Church Partnership Program funded by AusAID continued to support ADRA PNG’s capacity to roll out education, health, and leadership programs. It also supported the development of media programs by the communication and health department of the Adventist Church addressing the stigma, discrimination, and care of people with HIV and AIDS. Through the Church Partnership Program, funding was provided for an annual seminar for Adventist politicians, organized by the PNGUM president, Thomas Davai. At the November 2009 seminar, National Education Minister James Marape commented that “these programs are beneficial, especially in the areas of governance, stress management and faithfulness to God and our fellowmen.” As of 2020, Marape was the prime minister of Papua New Guinea.

ADRA PNG expanded its economic development sector through small enterprise development targeting participation of unemployed women and men in small business and rural economic development in empowering rural communities to venture into small household and corporative society agriculture projects which was successful in building stronger
agriculture projects in several districts in Morobe province.

In mid-2010, Dr. Haroldo Cairo, also an Argentinian, was appointed the fifth country director. ADRA PNG secured funding for the second phase of the rural water and sanitation program under the European Union, implementing water projects in Morobe and Eastern Highlands. The AusAID Church Partnership Program continued to administer innovative and successful sector programs implemented by the Adventist Church and successfully transitioned into the second phase with strong support from the Australian government. The Church Partnership Program also funded 40% of ADRA PNG program sectors.

In early 2012, Filipino Jasmine Simyunn, became the sixth country director, remaining until 2015. ADRA PNG implemented programs in disaster risk reduction (DRR), sub national partnerships, social enterprise, and innovations. During this period, the adult literacy program attracted the attention of key national government stakeholders supporting ADRA PNG to review and revise the adult literacy curriculum to adopt a national literacy program and support the establishment of a national curriculum for literacy. Other ADRA PNG programs included WaSH (Water and Sanitation Help), emergency response, livelihood, health, governance, gender and youth employment projects in Bougainville targeting youth born during the Bougainville. The latter program was implemented in partnership with ADRA Australia. The Church Partnership Program supported increased health programs mobilizing volunteers and local Adventist missions to address health programs in local communities. The Adventist Church increased its implementation of development activities integrating innovation and best practice models into the programs with stronger technical support from ADRA PNG and the Adventist Church. ADRA PNG developed stronger partnership with Adventist tertiary intuitions to support development programs through research and development of curriculum.

In 2016, Indian Nitin Pappachen became the seventh country director of ADRA PNG. During this period, ADRA PNG entered into strategic partnerships with the government of Papua New Guinea to support and fund priority programs and to address development priorities. ADRA PNG received funding from the government of PNG, ADRA Australia, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Global Fund, and ADRA International. It entered into consortium partnerships with other International NGOs, such as CARE International and World Vision, to roll out early childhood, TB, and HIV programs. ADRA PNG also broadened its programs to include lifestyle health, rural electrification, and innovative agricultural methods, and expanded water and sanitation projects in partnership with the government in many districts in PNG. The Church Partnership Program concluded its third phase with stronger visibility in terms of capacity and quality programming implemented and managed by ADRA PNG. Some activities were cited for their high impact by DFAT (Australian Government) and the government of PNG. ADRA Australia continued to be a strong contributing partner of ADRA PNG supporting innovative programming and partnerships with DFAT.

ADRA PNG continues to relieve suffering in times of disaster. On February 26, 2018, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck the Southern Highlands region. ADRA was among the first respondents. Community empowerment remains high on the agenda. Preventing and stopping gender-based family violence is a major strategic platform going forward. The first Adventist safe house in the country opened in 2019.

SOURCES


“ADRA PNG recently received...” Record, June 7, 2003.


“Adventists Among First to Respond to PNG Earthquake.” Adventist Record, March 31, 2018.

“The Adventist development and Relief Agency...” Record, December 6, 2002.


“Back to Work on Bougainville.” Record, October 9, 1999.


“Funding agreement a First in PNG.” Record, May 24, 2003.

“Some 30 ADRA PNG literacy trainers...” Record, October 25, 2003.

NOTES

6. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
16. Ibid.