

Additional information:

**Extra Information: (Taken from Sullivan Report produced by Nancy Sullivan Pty Ltd November 2003)**

Can be viewed at: <http://www.rd.green.net.au/docs/sullivanreport.htm>

*The wastes dumped in the three ponds behind the Cannery give off a terrible smell, they run into nearby streams, next to local villages, and eventually affect their drinking water. The waste dump has no proper control or neutralization plan. Currently chlorine is dumped into the waste and run by a neutralizing machine. The water itself is black, with a very strong smell. Villagers living 5 minutes from cannery, say the smell is polluting them, most of their children have scabies and grille as a result of washing in nearby streams. They also have to cover their noses at night to sleep.*

*Kananam people agree that the condition of the working environment at the Vidar base is very unhealthy—there is smelly, stagnant water on floor mixed with fish peelings, extracts, and flies. Only the gumboots, and hand gloves are worn by the workers there; they have no masks or hats [in the cool storage area—for the weighing of fish]. Most women at the Vidar plant (fishing plant) are employed as stevedores--people who weigh and lift heavy fish trays, work which men should do only. This is affecting their health, giving them back strains, and general muscle and bone complaints. There is no Company policy for accident compensation, either.*

*Perhaps the biggest single health hazard occurred in the middle of 2003, when fishing vessel 829 spilled ammonia gas into the sea. One of the ship's crew (name withheld) admitted that in April of 2003 ship 829 poured ammonia gas into the Seg Harbor. That killed many marine creatures and also infected people in Kananam. The informant said that 2 children at the age of 14 namely Jerome Duakin and Frank Duakin were poisoned and admitted to the Alexishafen Hospital (see 30.4.2003 food poisoning admits above).*

*Some women also used to faint and fall down on the floor, injuring themselves. Those who have worked at the receiving where they used to cut the fish, many have had their fingers badly chopped or chopped off, but the company did nothing by way of compensation. They stand and work long hours and their legs swell up. During the night shift, many women have also been raped and held up in the settlement areas.*

*Leo Afkel, Chair, Committee for Iduwan Island, also says (in paraphrase): Our island is right in front of RD Vidar base where oil spills, it's smelly and rubbishy, and plastic rubbish bags visible. We feel the effects more than other villages. Dead fish stinks on our shores where people bathe. The noise factor is terrible—from ships and from the generator at night. When RD Tuna had not yet come, we were able to catch around 70 fish a day, and now we catch no more than 5-10. Noise pollution and the bright lights of the ships are scaring off fish from the reefs where a good variety of fish used to swim. Now we cannot catch anywhere near the same amount.*

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*Fish still is an important resource for the Kananam people. Apart from food, fish has been used to exchange with the inland people for other foods, and more recently, to earn cash for school and health fees. This is not the case any more, since RD has reduced the level of viable fish in Seg Harbor. As a result, women are forced to trade sex for fish with the RD ships' crew these days. Some women cannot resist because they feel it to be their only means of survival. An eye witness (name withheld) described accounts of this sex trade on the ship to us. He said these activities usually happen at night, but that when the Iduwad Association started raising the alarm about it, such activities started declining.*

*The sex trade seems to have no end. Since their sea has been polluted and over-fished, they have no choice but to exchange sex for fish from the crew. First it was vegetables and other things being exchanged, but then the crews began asking for sex. The hard evidence of this trade are the mixed children now being born. One of the women, Rosemary, said that she would testify or make herself available in court to give evidence of this 'sex trade.' It was reported that some women have been given Tanduay (the Filipino rum) and forced into group sex. This practice is common, she verifies. Unfortunately the women who have been victims of this have moved away or are too hesitant to speak out to us. (We therefore have no testimonials of women who have either asked for or been victimized by these behaviours).*

*The fish the women get from sex is much bigger than those traded for smokes, canned drinks, etc. For the fruits, smoke and drinks they get small damaged fish. But in exchange for sex they would get loads of good fish. There are ladies who always exchange sex for trade, not all women do it. These popular women have partners on board, both national and Filipino. When they see their partner's ship come in, they go out to the ships. Others go out anytime with anyone. Many people fear that Papua New Guinea will experience an exponential increase in AIDS in the coming years.*

*For local fishermen, the experience has been devastating. Those people who made their living selling fish, simply cannot do so any longer. They believe RD made an agreement to take tuna only, and no other kinds of fish; but this has not been the case. They believe RD made an agreement not to catch by nets, but this has not been the case. All the large fish are gone from the Seg Harbor, leaving nothing for people to sell, and still less for them to eat. Indeed, the result of this has been a bizarre exchange system of food for these peoples' own fish, caught by RD crewmen and thrown back to the landowners. As time has gone by, the twist on this trade has been straightforward and insulting: fish for sex.*

## **Ecological Significance**

Madang Lagoon is the largest on the north coast, at 40 km squared, serving a Madang population of 40,000. Its five landowners are: Kananam, Malmal, Riwo, Siar and Krangket people. 11% of the entire world's varieties of reef fish live in Madang Lagoon, and 17% of all of PNG's endemic fish are also here. 25% of all fish live on the reef, hence the reef is vital to fish survival, and the Madang Lagoon holds 4000 hectares of reef. More varieties of reef are found here than in Australia's Great Barrier Reef. It holds more unique endemic fish species, more fish and reef variety than elsewhere in PNG. Fish breeding grounds can be found all

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over the Lagoon. There are 4 endangered species of fish; 1 whale, 2 dolphins and 1 dugong near extinction here. It holds 2 clamshells near extinction. There are even more kinds of snails here than elsewhere in PNG. (Aaron Jenkins 2003)

*Oil spills from the fishing vessels have polluted the sea, and in the month of April, 2003, it is believed that a leakage of ammonia gas killed many sea creatures, and caused at least three people to report sick to Alexishafen Health Centre. People also add that dogs and pigs died because they ate the dead fish after this spill. All the waste from the Cannery is carried to Vidar and either burnt or dumped into the sea, sometimes being left to turn fetid in the dumping area.*

### **Working Conditions**

*Most employees of RD are outsiders and settlers, only a few locals are employed by. RD Fishing. The lowest wage at RD Fishing is K50/fortnight (although this has now been raised slightly), whereas the minimum national wage, people report, is K75.*

*People say the cannery workers work for 80t per hour, without good rest breaks. They have no time left for families. In the beginning and end of their shifts they wait for long periods of time for the RD transport; and yet, at the beginning of their shift, RD always insists they arrive on time.*

*Audrey Bihoh (Nagada ples) began work at K35/K45 a fortnight (and, with overtime K50), but left in 2000. She would finish at 12 PM—it depended not on the hours, but on when the work was done for the day. Finally she left for lack of a real wage. The smells really affect the workers, she says, especially during the rainy season.*

*Audrey Bihoh (Nagada) worked in the production area: she claims conditions are not healthy, they are unhygienic. No gloves worn for scraping fish with knives. They wear uniforms, aprons, and hairnets only. Fish skin and rubbish is often left on the floor and water thrown on it. There are no fans inside, so sweat gets mixed with the product, and flies are everywhere. Their only break is for one hour's lunch at noon.*

*Many of the women at RD get skin diseases like fungus, and still work. Sickneses include: strong coughs, diarrhea, dysentery. The smells are very strong and affect everyone, though. In Siar, 2 children have died of fever and diarrhea; 2 from 'skin bun nating'—wasting and swollen belly; and 1 from TB. We were told two women have had miscarriages from strenuous working conditions. The women also pointed out that the main sicknesses through the village in these past 6 years have been: strong cough, diarrhea, and dysentery.*

*The smell from the cannery is so strong it especially affects children. Two security guards had strong diarrhea—Bauti Adrea and Balid Imud—although it is not clear if the wastes at cannery were the direct cause. Some Riwo people have been excreting blood since last year. At present people are scared to eat fish because they believe it is contaminated.*

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*We spoke to an RD employee whom we shall call George, and who works in the Labeling section of the Cannery. He tells us that workers in the Cannery are "treated like slaves." There is no proper finish pay for the workers, he says, and no overtime pay for overtime work. There is also no proper safety equipment for the work, and the cleaners in the Production area must clean wastes from the drains with their bare hands which they then scoop into bins.*

*There are no free issues of safety equipment like safety boots, helmets, caps, and such. No mouth/ nose guards. Tavei Village woman say: The company used to deduct money for apron, hair net, gum boots, etc. they also deducted for lunch and food, and for transportation of women, even though some women lived close by and walk home. The company gives uniforms but then deducts them from the pay. There are no hand gloves –women use their own hands to skin and pack the fish.*

*Inside the Cannery building itself, it is not clean enough to produce tinned fish. Here are cobwebs on the walls, no drop ceiling, and thus it is very hot inside. Workers clean the sweat dripping from arms and brows with their hands and then hold the fish right afterwards. The floor is not tiled, and when fish fall on the cement, people pick them up, wash them lightly and continue scraping and packing them, with no thought for cement particles. This is a point corroborated by other observers. Bare hands to pack the fish. The Cannery has shower rooms and toilets, but they are not hygienic, not working. People go hungry and often faint inside the Cannery. Some women who work there are standing long hours with strong fish smell, and they faint or vomit. One woman who worked for Harbors Board says the conditions here are much worse.*

### **RD Silencing critics**

Canner takes out court order

RD TUNA canners — the local producers of Diana Tuna tinned fish — has taken out an interim court injunction preventing two non-government organisations and an American expatriate from damaging its reputation. The court order originally obtained on July 9 directs Madang-based Bismarck-Ramu Group and Iduwan Association and American Barry Lalley from publishing damaging articles or statements against RD Tuna. These groups are prevented from making any adverse statements locally or internationally against RD Tuna until the matter goes to trial in the National Court. No trial date has been set yet and lawyers for the company say it would be a while before a date was fixed. RD Tuna went to court after the NGOs and Mr Lalley reportedly published allegations locally and on the Internet claiming environmental damage and poisonous products against RD Tuna. Iduwan Association is a minority landowner group from Kananam village that gets its backing from Bismarck-Ramu Group which is led by Mr Lalley. All want to see RD Tuna closed. But the majority of the people of Madang see the operations of RD Tuna differently and want to see it remain in the province. RD Tuna employs more than 3500 Madang people. The NGO groups and Mr Lalley had gone to schools and settlements around Madang with pamphlets claiming spillage of a chemical that had already killed several people. The groups had also claimed the products of

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RD Tuna were poisonous. The multi-billion kina company had denied the claims outright and had gone to the courts to preserve its corporate image.

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