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| Name: | Inoa Bobogi Ovia |
| Date of interview: | Monday, 7 July 2014 |
| Location of interview: | Depo-Karakadabu, Central Province |
| Chief interviewer: | Soda Ihania |
| Time interview concluded: | 1:58 PM |
| Duration of interview: | 15:12:43 |
| Main language of interview: | English |
| Image: |  |

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

| Time | Transcript |
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| 00:00 | [INTERVIEWER] Good afternoon, this is interview number 8 on Kokoda oral history project. Our interviewee's name is Inoa Ovia Bobogi and she'll be talking to us about her father's World War 2 experiences. Her father's name is Oga Bobogi but the name Laila Kokoni was used during his World War 2 experiences. |
| 00:42 | My father, I wasn't born during the war but my eldest brother was like a key witness to what my father went through. I'm here to step in to summarise what my father did and during my childhood days, time to time my father used to tell me about how he went through the war and how he experience what he saw in the war. Time to time he comes out with names like 'kare;', relating to carrier. Men say carrier, to our Koiaris, they say 'kare', and when he says 'anigau' meaning soldiers or the troop, the |

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| | platoon, and when he speaks of fuzzy wuzzy, when he speaks of fuzzy wuzzy these are some names he used when being very young I want to hear stories of what my father went through. |
| 01:53 | He, like my elder brother said, firstly he during that time that he went through, at a very young age, he was called to be a carrier, he had a sore on his right foot that caused him a lot of inconvenience because it hurt, it hurt, you know, sometimes he had to hide away to clean himself because these white men and soldiers are very harsh too because they want carriers to be on time and they move, and him with the sore foot, with the infection that he got, you know, he keep telling us about how he went through. |
| 02:44 | I used to ask him question about where the women were, and my father tells me that during that time it was risky for women to be hanging around. They bring all our mothers and children into the big bushes and the caves and hide them because during that time it wasn't safe for women to be hanging around. They might do anything to the women so our fathers they had to hide the women and children. He expressed it that it wasn't safe due to reasons that are sometimes he doesn't want to tell us but, soldiers they will know why. When he participated he told us stories that not only the Koiari people took part. Part of Central Province and other parts of Papua New Guinea also assisted during this war till they were like the Darus, the Rigos, the Kairukus, the Hulas, they all participated in becoming carriers. |
| 03:51 | He told me stories that I can remember that – I'm not here to offend any of my other colleagues from the other track corridor villages here but it is by right that I should say because maybe this has been hidden for so long. My father says it as we took part, the Sogeri, the southern part of Sogeri took part mostly when Mt Koiari were being the traitors. Our fathers were the ones to help assist Australian soldiers to go up the mountain, and they used this word fuzzy wuzzy, meaning, fuzzy, being 'friend', and 'wuzzy' being friend. |
| 04:43 | You can see that the logo that's on the postcard there with the Australian white wounded side by side walking with the Papua New Guinea soldier, the fuzzy wuzzy dialogue, there is the Koairi side, this is our name, this is my tok ples, it's not the Oro tok ples, it's not the Koiari tok ples, it's the Southern Sogeri tok ples, fuzzy wuzzy meaning friend. Friend, I'll take you and I'll walk you is what my father used to tell me. I remember that. As time goes and being a daughter of the southern Sogeri part and being my father a war veteran I strongly believe that, one day, one day if the government can recognise us the Sogeri, the southern side of Sogeri, we be, I mean recognised sort of, like we see currently things are going on on the one side of the ... |
| 05:44 | I work as a volunteer with Kokoda Development Health, heavily involved in advocating health and healthy community I've seen I'm off track, I'm off track the corridor, much of my villages at the back of Sogeri health centre, we miss out on much of the very needed services that we need and Australian government is really focusing, basing on the track corridor. My experience in 2010 or 11, when I step in in the presence of the Honourable Ogi David being the current president of [?] local government to go and witness the fuzzy wuzzy day in Kokoda. It was emotional for me for my father being a war veteran, when I saw the part of the program where awards were given to war veterans, I went into tears because I wish that my father had the reward or, my brother is dead now because he died in 2012, at least one of the sons or daughters could go up and get the reward of our father. |

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| 06:57 | <p>When I got back after that I compiled a report to my current president Honourable Ogi David to table this on his assembly so that a day like fuzzy wuzzy day that Kokoda celebrate, commemorate every year, should be done to the southern side of Sogeri. We the team here, we the group here today can be, we have some form of recognition of something that we had some of our forefathers that participated. That is why when Dr Jonathan came a month ago, only a small number, a hand full of us were there, but we had a lot to say but he gave today, July 7, for us to come and say.</p> |
| 07:56 | <p>We got a few things in writing that I need to go through and complete. We have a few names of our fathers that also took part, in the various clans, within Sirinumu Dam, where my brother has mentioned, or not, we have a full list that we need to be presented. Somehow when, I will be doing that. Sorry, excuse me. The spirit of friendship during the time... as a result of that spirit of friendship, we want that friendship between Australian government and Papua New Guinean government to continue by not us going too blind about it, we want them and us to be binded.</p> |
| 08:51 | <p>We want this thing I think, the remains of the war will bind us together with Australian government so it moves on so our generation to come, our children, our grandchildren, they will still see and hear and talk about what our fathers have gone through and what this World War Two really mean, mean to them. Though it has been gone years and years ago, but you know that story will still move on to our children, our grandchildren. We might not be here but the story will move on, and they'll know that once upon a time their great great father took part. The result of that, what happens to their livelihood in future it lies in the hands of God.</p> |
| 09:43 | <p>With that I want to say thank you to Dr Jonathan with your team, thank you for rescuing us, especially the southern side of Sogeri, because we have been hidden for so long I think it's about time. Thank you very much.</p> |
| | <p>[INTERVIEWER]</p> <p>One question is in relation to you looking at the contribution of the Sogeri Koiari that's important. We take note of that. Another perspective where ... can you look at it in terms of national development, like your forefathers contributed. They happen to be at a place where this fighting took place, and your area became battlefield. If you look at it from a national perspective, do you our elders contributed, your elders and my elders from the Waria side also contributed, so I happen to be from that area, just like your forefathers they took part in the battle to dispel the Japanese at Salamaua in September 1943. So looking from the national perspective, do you think that the war experience had speeded up development for Papua New Guinea and gaining independence and self government? From the national perspective rather than looking at it, it's important to look at it from the local perspective but from a national perspective how do, do you have any comment on that?</p> |
| 11:43 | <p>Not really maybe because some of the places were not exposed, like maybe they didn't know about it. Although we had war veterans at my place... the big mass of my land is covered, there's an airstrip, there's whatever right down there, there is a lot of stories about it. Maybe because of there that is why development today if you go up to Sirinumu there is hardly nothing, it's just a school. It's just a school, and still our children are struggling to transfer, to go across to the school that's on the other side of the lake. They have to go by canoe and when it's bad weather they cannot</p> |

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| | make it to school... Only education there but health services, other things, we really need that. |
| 12:43 | We really need. Maybe at the same time we have not been fairly represented, every year we have leaders in the parliament or leaders or local members in our areas maybe I don't know how they see us, ... we are still like we used to be in the colonial days. This is reality. I travel every day from my village to Sogeri to town. Right now I don't have vehicle but for the walking. All the road is a national road. Right now, it doesn't look like a national road anymore... This is real, this is real life. So much left. |
| 13:32 | Last question with the Kokoda day on November 2, do you think the name Kokoda is appropriate or because when we say Kokoda Day, the celebration is held in Kokoda, no Sogeri, do you have any comment? Why can't the Kokoda day be celebrated at Sogeri? Just the name Kokoda is there but physical location for celebrations can be done here, or even up at Efogi or Menari. |
| 14:07 | Thank you. You can call the name but because of our geographic settings, we cannot have all the Kokodas here or the Koiaris or Mount Koiaris here. So Kokoda day, really we cannot travel to Kokoda with the geography, so ... maybe the day but we give different name for the Sogeri, Koiari, and Kokoda. Kokoda is rightful because they celebrate at Kokoda. So we can have a different name for Sogeri, southern side of Sogeri we can come up with a name. But right under the name there, but Sogeri. The big name is there but Sogeri because it's going to be held in Sogeri, maybe for the same day or a different day, so we could have some Sogeris go up to commemorate the day with the Kokodas or maybe we can have the Kokodas come in here for the Sogeri one. I leave it there. Something that we need to discuss. |
| | [INTERVIEWER] Thank you very much Inoa, for your time. |