

# Gutpela Tingting na Sindaun

Papua New Guinean perspectives on a good life



**A Discussion Paper by World Vision Australia**

*June 2006*



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Gutpela Tingting na Sindaun: Papua New Guinean perspectives on a good life

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# Table of Contents

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Executive Summary.....3

Introduction.....5

Methodology .....7

Acknowledgements.....7

Papua New Guinea Today.....8

The People Come First..... 10

Relevant Education ..... 14

Livelihood..... 17

Independence ..... 20

*Kastom* and Modernity ..... 23

Violence and Abuse ..... 26

Accountable Government..... 29

A Common Thread: Leadership..... 32

To Trust Australia..... 34

Conclusion: A challenge for policy makers, and for World Vision..... 36

Recommendations: Some Papua New Guinean suggestions for action..... 38

Appendix I: Consultation List ..... 40

Bibliography ..... 43

# Executive Summary

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Papua New Guinea is a nation blessed with natural and cultural riches and great potential. Yet in thirty years of independence, the country has not achieved the levels of national progress and prosperity hoped for by both its citizens and those in Australia and elsewhere who are interested in its development. The diversity and degree of the nation's problems have led to it being frequently characterised as a 'fragile state', close to collapse.

The view of the country as a fragile state does not sufficiently acknowledge that many Papua New Guinean people in both government and civil society are working very hard and with some success to manage the challenges they face. There exists considerable scope to learn from these efforts and orient domestic policy and international assistance to the country to build on them.

World Vision Australia has, with the cooperation of its partner office in Papua New Guinea, interviewed a cross-section of Papua New Guineans and others closely associated with the country. In these interviews, the respondents were asked to reflect on the challenges their country faces and to discuss how they could be – and are being – resolved. More abstractly, they were asked to consider what, for Papua New Guineans, constitutes 'a good life' (a Pidgin equivalent of this phrase is *'guppela tingting na sindaun'*).

Their responses to these enquiries ranged widely, but common themes emerged. The respondents' perspectives on these themes are discussed, together with their suggestions for actions to address them:

**The people come first:** Papua New Guinea's constitution puts the well-being of the nation's people at the centre of its affairs. The nation's citizens want this to be reflected in their daily lives. They want their leaders to ensure that their basic needs are met, but they also wish to be able to determine their own futures. Women need to be empowered and afforded the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of life.

**Relevant education:** Education is very highly valued. Unfortunately, the education system is widely perceived as under-resourced, poor value for money, of inadequate quality and irrelevant to the situation of most young Papua New Guineans. Vocational education, currently marginalised as a 'poor cousin' within the education system, needs to be accorded equal status with literacy and numeracy in the education of most children.

**Livelihood:** The great majority of Papua New Guinean people continue to rely on their land for their livelihood. Wealth for its own sake is not a priority; instead people want to produce enough for their families' comfort, plus a little bit more for security. Achieving this, especially for Papua New Guinea's overwhelmingly rural population, requires a system of land title acceptable to the customary owners of the land. More urgently, it requires new job choices, functional infrastructure and timely access to reliable information.

**Independence:** The independent spirit of Papua New Guinea and its people has its roots in the country's long history and its cultural diversity. Yet today this also results in a lack of national cohesion. Simultaneously, traditional networks of patronage and obligation have been distorted, allowing widespread acceptance of handouts. Together, these factors have made many people and the nation overall excessively dependent on outside support. Local people suggest that the key to independence is for Papua New Guineans to overcome their disparate past and work together more effectively as a nation.

**Kastom and modernity:** As citizens of a young nation with an ancient culture, many Papua New Guineans are confused about their identity and their future. This manifests in the abuse of traditional practices and the breakdown of introduced ones. A solution may be to forge a new Papua New Guinean identity which takes the best of both *kastom* and modernity and cultivates a uniquely Papua New Guinean view of the world; a challenge being attempted by various civil society groups. The country's constitution is the platform for this endeavour.

**Violence and abuse:** A culture of silence surrounds violence and abuse in Papua New Guinea. While in some ways there is less violence than many people believe, violence (and the fear of violence) is nevertheless real and affects the most vulnerable among the population – children and women. Three developments that may help break the cycle of violence and fear are: ending the silence that protects much violent behaviour, promoting effective policing, and making poverty history.

**Accountable government:** Government in Papua New Guinea is constrained by shortages of skilled personnel and resources, and by corruption. At the heart of its problems is a lack of accountability. Politicians are not beholden to their electors; bureaucrats are often inaccessible and disinterested; and civil society – the country's citizens – is to a large degree disenfranchised. Institutional strengthening is considered valuable and necessary, but increasing the accountability of the nation's leaders and administrators to the people is crucial.

**Leadership:** Leadership emerged as a common theme across all of the issues discussed. There is a general perception that today's leaders no longer serve the people; they are seen to take from them. In the past, the 'Big Man' died poor. Today, he aims to die rich. Papua New Guineans want leaders to act first for the people, not for themselves, and have clear ideas on how this can be achieved.

**To trust Australia:** Australia is a major factor in Papua New Guinean people's lives, although perhaps not as large as Australians might believe. Most people respect Australia's contribution and value Papua New Guinea and Australia's shared past, but some wonder at Australia's commitment and motivation today. They want Australians to listen to them and to treat their country as an equal, not as a problem.

These themes offer some insight into the issues that concern Papua New Guinean people, and point the way to specific recommendations on Papua New Guinea's development and Australia's role in it. Many of these suggestions for action are presented in the Recommendations section and indicate opportunities for further research.

Three points emerging from this research are identified as its key conclusions. These could usefully be seen as 'guiding principles' for development in Papua New Guinea:

1. As is stated in the country's constitution, Papua New Guineans are responsible for their own development. The role of the Australian government and civil society is to engage in dialogue with their counterparts in Papua New Guinea, recognising both their sovereign right to determine their future and each country's respective strengths, resources and interests.
2. Strong, principled indigenous Papua New Guinean leadership, at all levels of government and civil society, is necessary to build independence, accountability and nationhood. Identifying and nurturing current and future leaders is vital.
3. Direct poverty reduction, especially for Papua New Guinea's rural population, is critical for the achievement of positive change in each thematic area addressed in this paper. All parties to Papua New Guinea's development should deliver on their stated commitment to poverty alleviation as the priority of their programs.

# Introduction

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*Papua New Guinea is a rich and diverse nation. Its human and natural resources offer tremendous potential for future growth. Its people, resident for tens of thousands of years, have developed hundreds of distinct cultures and languages, and as many diverse ways of living on the land, rivers and seas. Over the last century, they have steadily built their capacity to engage with the international community and economy. Most recently, in thirty years of independent nationhood, Papua New Guinea has enjoyed continuous popularly-elected democratic government, a rare distinction among the world's former colonies. Papua New Guinean people today are planning and working to improve life for their families, their communities and their country.*

The argument summarised above offers a positive perspective on Papua New Guinea today, of a country with significant assets working hard to improve itself. This perspective differs from that presented in much contemporary writing produced in Australia, which conversely portrays a nation poised on the brink of disaster. This writing focuses on what is not working in Papua New Guinea, citing the declining capacity of national, provincial and district governments; endemic corruption; violence against women and children; the growing HIV epidemic; the lack of job opportunities for youth; decaying infrastructure, and so on. They often recommend action by the international community, led by Australia, to resolve these problems.<sup>1 2</sup>

There is no question that the above are immense challenges for the nation and its people. Any engagement with Papua New Guinea must address them, and many current programs are doing so. Yet by promoting externally-driven, top-down solutions, these problem-oriented analyses fail to recognise what increasing numbers of Papua New Guineans understand: that the solutions to their problems must ultimately be owned by those who are affected by them – the citizens of Papua New Guinea. Ignoring this central fact limits the effectiveness of any interventions and undermines the sovereignty of the nation and its people.

Australia's current relations with Papua New Guinea appear to be founded on this perspective.<sup>3</sup> In the main, Australian institutions including government, the media and sections of academia focus on Papua New Guinea's problems and recognise neither its richness nor the ideas and actions of its people. 'PNG' becomes a problem to be fixed, not an independent neighbour that is asking us for a helping hand.

World Vision Australia suggests that Australians need to listen more attentively to our neighbours in Papua New Guinea. We include ourselves in this, and so this Discussion Paper marks a new step for World Vision Australia. Based on interviews with Papua New Guineans from all walks of life conducted in September 2005 and supported by other published material, this paper explores the question of just what it is that Papua New Guineans want from life, for themselves and for their country. It examines what they have, and what they want to be.

The paper discusses many of the problems highlighted in the media and in policy debate, but its outlook is unashamedly positive. This has been a natural effect of asking people about their ideas and aspirations, rather than their problems and fears. It is also a deliberate attempt to present an alternative perspective on contemporary Papua New Guinea, and to do this using the often unheard voices of the nation's citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Two recent examples include Helen Hughes, "Can Papua New Guinea Come Back From The Brink", Centre for Independent Studies *Issue Analysis* No. 49, July 2004; and Alan Morris and Rob Stewart, *Papua New Guinea: Analytical Report for the White Paper on Australia's Aid Program*, September 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Alternative viewpoints are being published, but are generally not reflected in the decisions of the Australian Government. Examples appear in some media (e.g. the 17 May 2005 editorial in *The Age* "PNG: when the shoe is on the other foot") and some published research, notably *Development Bulletin* No. 67 "Effective Development in Papua New Guinea" (Development Studies Network, 2005) and the Australia Institute's *Privatising Land in the Pacific: A defence of customary tenures* (Fingleton, June 2005).

<sup>3</sup> This is evident in AusAID publications such as *Australian Aid: An Integrated Approach* (2005) which positions Papua New Guinea as a fragile state.

The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness and stimulate debate in both countries. For World Vision Australia, and certainly for the author, this is the beginning of a dialogue with Papua New Guinea's people. We hope the conversation will be a productive one.



## **Methodology**

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The research conducted for this paper consisted of interviews substantiated by supplementary reading. The interview material was analysed to identify common themes raised by interviewees and forms the substance of this paper, while the documented information was used to enhance understanding of certain issues and provide some statistical and theoretical context.

The interviews took place in Papua New Guinea in September 2005 and in Australia between August and November 2005. All individuals interviewed are indigenous Papua New Guineans, naturalised citizens, long term residents or scholars of the country. Approximately 60 people were interviewed, either singly or in groups. The duration of interviews varied from a few hours to short conversations. All interviewees were advised of the purpose of the conversations and consented to having their views represented in this document.

Those interviewed included:

- Farmers, village members, and other community representatives including women, leaders and youth
- Academic researchers
- Public servants and politicians
- Elder statespeople
- NGO staff and volunteers
- Students
- World Vision staff

A full list of those consulted is at Appendix 1.

Groups not consulted for this paper due to time constraints include people in business, the urban poor and children. The voices of children in particular, while desirable, were beyond the scope of this research. Subsequent research could usefully explore perspectives of these other groups.

The interviews were unstructured, with the intent of allowing the interviewees to reflect on the issues of most concern to them. Initial questions encouraged them to discuss both the problems they faced in their lives and the ways in which they were attempting to address them. Where needed, follow-up questions sought to explore the issues already raised by the interviewees, and to encourage them to envisage means to bring about a positive future.

The interviews in Papua New Guinea were conducted in Madang, Buka (Bougainville Autonomous Region) and Port Moresby, all operational areas for World Vision, and Goroka (Eastern Highlands Province), where World Vision is not present. Most interviews were conducted in English.

The draft paper was reviewed by many of those previously interviewed.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Thanks are due to the staff of World Vision throughout Papua New Guinea for hosting me and being useful informants in their own right, and to all those who were interviewed, all of whom were very willing to devote time to these conversations. I am especially grateful for the time and candour of Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development, and Major General (retired) Jerry Singirok.

Most special thanks go to Deb Chapman, whose store of contacts, detailed knowledge and occasional company on the road were the making of this work.

# Papua New Guinea Today

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September 2005 marked thirty years since Papua New Guinea achieved full independence from Australia. For three decades, Papua New Guineans have held the right to elect governments, to raise their own taxes and build their own relations with the world. The anniversary of independence was marked by nationwide celebrations of the country's culture and achievements; and also for many people, by contemplation of the challenges that are still to be overcome. Some questioned the nature of the country's independence in view of its continued reliance on outside help, especially from Australia. Three decades on, the annual amount of assistance is increasing, both in size and in scope.

It is natural that Papua New Guinea needs development assistance. It has been an independent nation for a little over one generation, before which it existed as a collection of hundreds of independent ethnic and linguistic groups, experiencing a short period of colonial occupation.<sup>4</sup> Australia, the final colonial power, had laid the foundations of western social, economic and political infrastructure, but it was understood that long-term investment was necessary to continue the country's post-independence development. Since then, there has not been enough time for this work to be completed.

The nature and extent of the challenges Papua New Guinea faces today are not what might have been expected three decades ago. Many people find it difficult to earn a sustainable living. Education and health services are under-resourced, as is the nation's physical infrastructure. Women experience violence, under-employment and disenfranchisement; and there is increasing evidence that children are also subject to violence. HIV and AIDS has become entrenched in all sectors of society. The institutions of democracy and government are themselves under stress, and people everywhere find themselves caught between an emerging economic, political and cultural environment and the familiar world in which they and their ancestors grew up.

In contributing to this paper, several Papua New Guinean people talked about the uncertainty that they and their fellow citizens are experiencing. They are 'confused' about what to keep and what to discard, both from their traditional ways of life and from the new practices that are being introduced. They are worried about how they and their children will sustain themselves and what their communities will look like in years to come. They do not like being told that their country is on the verge of collapse, or seeing yet another report comparing their country unfavourably against others. They resent heavy-handed foreign intervention in their country.

Even as they are troubled by these various concerns, many people are proud of their country. They recognise the challenges it is facing and are working hard to control them. In Goroka, a former prisoner is reinstating customary initiation rites for boys and incorporating instruction on contemporary issues. The Autonomous Government of Bougainville is developing its own detailed plan of projects to promote to the world's development organisations. The Ombudsman's Commission has, with Australian funding, rebuilt itself to reform operations and improve effectiveness. A local NGO in Madang is quietly facilitating the efforts of local communities to find their own path out of poverty. These, and many other stories, offer a taste of what is being accomplished around the country; some will be examined further in the following pages.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The societies of pre-colonial Papua New Guinea were sophisticated and well-adapted to their environment. Major General Jerry Singirok (retired) summed this up: "We Papua New Guineans have known what we are doing for thousands of years."

<sup>5</sup> Examples taken from interviews September 2005 and from *Development Bulletin*, No. 67 (Development Studies Network, 2005).

When discussing their ideas for the future of Papua New Guinea, those interviewed for this paper had the opportunity to talk freely about the matters that most concerned them. Several overriding themes emerged from these discussions:

- The right of Papua New Guineans to participate in their own development.
- The importance of education to adequately prepare children for the future.
- The challenge of providing a living for one's self and one's family.
- The desire of Papua New Guineans to be less dependent on outside help, and to manage the impact of patronage and obligation on people's lives.
- The reconciliation of traditional and introduced ways of life.
- The need to end violent behaviour and its effects on women, children, and those who initiate it.
- Government accountability and the spread of corruption.
- The importance of investing in leadership.
- The desire to have a relationship with Australia founded on mutual respect and trust.

These themes may not be the most important ones for everyone in Papua New Guinea; however they were raised consistently throughout this research, suggesting that for most people at least some of them would be significant.<sup>6</sup> There are examples of Papua New Guinean endeavour and success in addressing each of these themes. The following pages present Papua New Guinean perspectives on these concerns, and offer examples of some of the actions being taken to address them.

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<sup>6</sup> Some issues were not touched on as much as others. HIV and AIDS is the most significant example of this exclusion, being referred to mainly by those with a direct professional interest. There are many possible reasons why it was not widely discussed, possibly including reluctance to confide in a stranger on such a sensitive subject and the stigma attached to any association with the topic.

# The People Come First

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The Independent State of Papua New Guinea was founded in September 1975. It had a large population, little perceived poverty,<sup>7</sup> a rich and diverse culture and abundant natural resources. There was hope for a prosperous future with a Papua New Guinean face, an idea that was central to the country's new constitution:

## From the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea

...WE ASSERT,

- that all power belongs to the people—acting through their duly elected representatives
- that respect for the dignity of the individual and community interdependence are basic principles of our society
- that we guard with our lives our national identity, integrity and self respect
- that we reject violence and seek consensus as a means of solving our common problems
- that our national wealth, won by honest, hard work be equitably shared by all.

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM the following aims as our National Goals, and direct all persons and bodies, corporate and unincorporate, to be guided by these our declared Directives in pursuing and achieving our aims:—

1. *Integral human development.* We declare our first goal to be for every person to be dynamically involved in the process of freeing himself or herself from every form of domination or oppression so that each man or woman will have the opportunity to develop as a whole person in relationship with others.
2. *Equality and participation.* We declare our second goal to be for all citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country.
3. *National sovereignty and self-reliance.* We declare our third goal to be for Papua New Guinea to be politically and economically independent, and our economy basically self-reliant.

The leaders of the new nation were determined to implement these exemplary principles. In an address shortly before independence, Michael Somare, the father of independent Papua New Guinea, said:

*“Equality has always been important in Papua New Guinea societies. We have had our big men and even chiefs in some societies. But we have never had the great contrast between rich and poor that you see in so-called modern societies. If we were poor, at least we were all poor together. And the big man did not forget his obligations to those less well off. Every man or woman could count on their family to provide for them. It is this spirit of sharing and equality that we must work to preserve, even as we try to gain some of the benefits of modern technology.”<sup>8</sup>*

Following the country's thirtieth anniversary, the prosperity promised three decades earlier had not eventuated for most people. In one sense this is readily explainable: Papua New Guinea is a very young country and its promise will take generations to emerge. On the other hand, many Papua New Guinean people believe that the country's National Goals – integral human development, equality and participation, and national sovereignty – are no longer driving policy making and development, that “constitutional principle has been turned upside down”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> While poor by international poverty measures, Papua New Guineans have not seen themselves as such as long as they have had access to land, enough food and strong communities.

<sup>8</sup> Somare, M. 1975. *Sana: An autobiography of Michael Somare*. Port Moresby: Niugini Press.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Ms Sangion Tiu, Teacher Trainer, Research and Conservation Foundation, Goroka, 21 September 2005.

2005 marked the beginning of a new development cycle in Papua New Guinea, as captured in the country's *Medium Term Development Strategy 2005-2010: "Our Plan for Economic and Social Advancement"* (MTDS). The MTDS sends a mixed signal as far as Papua New Guinea's people are concerned: it promotes the empowerment and improved quality of life of the people, as well as emphasising economic growth, resource mobilisation and strengthening government. All these are necessary and complementary priorities of any national government. The uncertainty lies with the MTDS's central objective of "robust and broad based economic growth" (page II), which places the strategy's focus on the economy rather than the people. The challenge is to ensure that the growth is directed to improving the lives of Papua New Guinean people. The effects of the MTDS are yet to be felt.

Meanwhile, signs that the Papua New Guinean people have been pushed from their constitutional position at the heart of the nation can be found in many aspects of life. Several respondents expressed concern that their elected representatives do not represent them as they should; that the pressures and priorities of recently introduced ways of life are undercutting long-held community values; that various forms of violence, crime and intimidation go unchecked and the wealth of the nation is not being equitably shared. Investment in large-scale activities such as mining, oil exploration and tuna production, while potentially of great value to the country and the people, is frequently implemented in ways that either provide little benefit to, or actively harm, those most directly affected.<sup>10</sup> Life is falling short of each of the National Goals: human development is uneven across the country; people are often not equipped to help themselves; many people, especially women, cannot participate in the nation's affairs; and Papua New Guinea's high debt levels and continued dependence on aid demonstrate that the nation has not yet achieved self-reliance or autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

An example of the country's limited autonomy can be seen in the experience of civil society groups in receipt of donor funds. Sangion Tiu, of the Research and Conservation Foundation (RCF) in Goroka commented that pressures from some funding schemes to scale up activities and meet imposed performance criteria "push us in directions we do not want to go", away from activities proven to be effective in dealing with problems affecting Papua New Guinean communities.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum found that the reporting formats of one international donor NGO required that "you had to [change your systems to] be with them overnight."<sup>13</sup> The scale of aid funding (including Australian funding) is often either too large to effectively address the specific needs of individual communities or too prescriptive to be effective in facilitating development in the villages.

The status of women in Papua New Guinea is a particularly potent indicator of the drift away from the nation's constitutional ideals and, more pressingly, of the effects of the interaction of indigenous and western ways of living. Violence against women, and also children, is the most urgent manifestation of this divergence from constitutional equality: especially in the cities it is not considered safe for women to go out after six p.m.<sup>14</sup> Domestic violence is also a major problem. Naomi Yupae, director of Family Voice in Goroka, told of a group of women beaten by their husbands for attending a literacy class.<sup>15</sup> The under-representation of women in politics is common internationally, but especially so in Melanesian countries including Papua New Guinea. There is only one female national level MP, Minister for Community Development Dame Carol Kidu. She commented that the laws in support of women's voices and authority need to be reviewed.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> It is not the intention to look closely at this issue in this paper. For one example, refer to Sullivan et al, *A Social Impact Study of Proposed RD Tuna Cannery at the Vidar Wharf, Madang* (2003), a detailed account of the social effects of the RD Tuna cannery, located in Madang.

<sup>11</sup> These points are explored in more detail throughout this paper.

<sup>12</sup> Interview conducted 21 September 2005. World Vision has had similar experience in Papua New Guinea, noting that some AusAID funding schemes cut across existing governance structures. In a recent review of AusAID's 'civil society engagement' in Papua New Guinea, similar points were made by a number of indigenous and international organisations. AusAID is not the only donor to be singled out, but was the example most commonly cited in interviews, reflecting its position as the largest donor.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with staff of Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum (BICWF), 27 September 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ms Sarah Garap, Kup Women for Peace, 29 September 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ms Naomi Yupae, 22 September 2005. The women were persistent: they continued to attend the class, and the beatings eventually stopped. This story is an instructive illustration not only of the extent of domestic violence and the status of women, but also of the uncertainty that many men feel about the changes in their lives.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Dame Carol Kidu, 30 September 2005.

The emergence of the generalised HIV and AIDS epidemic in Papua New Guinea is now widely recognised. It constitutes one of the greatest threats to human development that the country faces and is another indicator of the importance of putting the interests of people first. It is also one of the priority areas of AusAID's new country strategy and is equally prominent in Papua New Guinea's *Medium Term Development Strategy*. A separate HIV and AIDS strategy has also been developed. However, the issue was not often raised by those consulted in this study, and those that discussed it tended to be policymakers rather than the general public. There was one suggestion that the huge emphasis on HIV and AIDS is overshadowing the attention given to more prevalent diseases like malaria; yet it is certainly on people's minds. When specifically asked about the epidemic, one person commented that, "We talk about it in the village every night."<sup>17</sup>

HIV and AIDS has a particular impact on women in Papua New Guinea. They have by far the highest rates of infection: from the ages 10 to 29, girls and women have two to three times the prevalence rates of men. Although men are the primary carriers transferring the disease from the towns to the villages, they do not see themselves as the agents of infection. Village girls are more likely to be blamed for the rise of AIDS in Papua New Guinea.<sup>18</sup> The vulnerability of Papua New Guinean girls and women to HIV infection is an indicator of their generally limited status and power and another example of the limited progress towards meeting the ideals of the Constitution.

Papua New Guineans today describe a different country from the one they founded. People living in the village feel that they have been left to fend for themselves. Most government investment occurs in and around the larger urban centres. Many people have all but given up expecting the government to provide basic services that are accessible to them where they live, and formal economic opportunities are scarce. Even so, whether by their own efforts or with the help of the government, they remain optimistic. The country's potential persists, as does its people's hope for the future.

"If the government can do right by the people – if it can satisfy their needs – then it is not too late."<sup>19</sup> This was a commonly held view, not just in content but also in its inherent optimism. While their motivations often vary, Papua New Guineans' common wish is for the country's development to put its people first, investing in its citizens to promote their well-being and health; and empowering them to act on their determination to contribute to each others' well-being and hence to the nation.<sup>20</sup> Some invoked the Constitution as the rationale for this, others invoked human rights, others social justice. Dr Felix Bablis, of the University of Goroka, referred to the Bhutanese idea of 'Gross National Happiness', and proposed the use of a similarly people-centred index alongside more conventional measures of social and economic progress.<sup>21</sup>

The suggestions made by Papua New Guinean people to return themselves to the centre of the nation's affairs include the following:

- Meet the people's basic service needs. Retired Major General Jerry Singirok said that, "Mothers dream about toilets, safe water and sanitation. They want to generate enough income in a family setting."<sup>22</sup> This was a common theme – Papua New Guineans just want sufficient resources to enable them to live a good life and take control of their future.
- People want "health, food and the ability to understand and communicate issues."<sup>23</sup> They want a voice. They want to be empowered to act both for themselves and their communities.<sup>24</sup> In particular, they want this to happen in the villages, where most people live.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Alphonse Benny, Volunteer with Oxfam Goroka, 22 September 2005.

<sup>18</sup> From an address by Dr Katherine Lepani on HIV and AIDS in Papua New Guinea, Canberra, 13 October 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Alphonse Benny, September 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews with Ms Linda Tule, World Vision, and BICWF 27 September 2005; among others.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Dr Felix Bablis, University of Goroka, 21 September 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Major General Jerry Singirok (retired), 30 September 2005.

<sup>23</sup> BICWF, September 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mr Leslie Tseraha, Government Planning Officer, Bougainville, 26 September 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Interviews with staff of Bismark Ramu Group (BRG), 23 September 2005, and Mr Patrick Kolas, Secretary for the Economic Division Bougainville, 26 September 2005.

- Women must be given the opportunity to participate in the political life of the country, and to be free to speak and act without fear of violence. Without the full participation of women, Papua New Guinea will not emerge as a prosperous and truly unified nation.<sup>26</sup>
- There are many examples of communities and small local organisations taking the responsibility to help themselves. These should be sought out and their achievements recognised. The lessons offered by their experience should be widely shared to promote well-being in Papua New Guinea's remote areas; and where they request assistance, it should be offered with efforts made to ensure that local innovation is not swamped by donor requirements. There are many such 'little things' that donors could support to make a difference in the lives of ordinary people.<sup>27</sup>
- There is wide support for the enhancement of government service delivery, professionalism and accountability. (Refer to page 29 for further discussion.)

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<sup>26</sup> Interviews with Ms Sarah Garap, September 2005 and BRG, September 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Mr Leslie Tseraha, September 2005.

# Relevant Education

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*“We want a good education, not just any education.” – Moses, a vanilla grower in Madang*

*“Every child must be literate and able to choose what to do.” – Dame Carol Kidu*

The responses of most contributors to this paper suggest that education is highly valued by Papua New Guinean people. They recognise that literacy, numeracy and vocational skills are fundamental for today’s children to prosper as adults. As the nation has engaged more closely with the outside world, the perceived value of school-based education has increased. The significance of education is particularly acute in Papua New Guinea, a country with 41 percent of the population under 15 years of age.<sup>28</sup> However, people recognise that the value they place on education is generally not matched by the quality of education that is on offer.

Papua New Guineans value education for its potential to:

- better prepare children to access a wider selection of life choices, in the village, in town, and potentially beyond;<sup>29</sup>
- equip people with the literacy and numeracy skills that are vital for doing effective business at the local market and internationally;<sup>30</sup>
- facilitate access to government policy and other public information, and enable people to hold their elected representatives more fully to account;<sup>31</sup>
- build creative thinking, decision making skills and the ability to do research;<sup>32</sup>
- equip people with the vocational and academic skills to perform better in their working lives.<sup>33</sup>

The run-down and overstretched condition of Papua New Guinea’s public education system has been extensively documented.<sup>34</sup> There are deficiencies at all levels, especially in rural areas. The whole education system is under-funded (17.5 percent of total government expenditure in 2000-2002<sup>35</sup>), and of these limited resources it is suggested that a disproportionate amount is allocated to the tertiary sector.<sup>36</sup> This has led to disintegrating infrastructure, minimal teaching resources and few well-trained teachers. Many teachers are inadequately motivated due to irregular pay, poor housing and remote placement. Student attendance and retention rates at all levels have fallen in recent years, possibly exacerbated by increasing and volatile school fees.<sup>37</sup> It is generally the case that the quality of the educational environment worsens with the increased remoteness of a community.

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<sup>28</sup> UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*. Data is for 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development, 30 September 2005.

<sup>30</sup> BICWF, September 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Ms Flavia Arnold (Papua New Guinean citizen), AusAID Basic Education Development Project, 30 September 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews with Mr Marcus Pelto, Executive Officer, and staff Transparency International Papua New Guinea (TIPNG), 28 September 2005, Dr Paul Ngabung, Health and Education Adviser, Prime Minister’s Department, 30 September 2005, and Ms Flavia Arnold September 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Mr Patrick Kolas, September 2005.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the *Asian Development Bank Country Operational Strategy Study, 1999*.

<sup>35</sup> UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*.

<sup>36</sup> Flavia Arnold, September 2005. UNESCO (*Financing Education – Investments And Returns Analysis Of The World Education Indicators: 2002 Edition*) suggests that disproportionate funding of tertiary education is a common occurrence, however in the absence of reliable data it is difficult to verify the claim for Papua New Guinea.

<sup>37</sup> Since independence, the long term trend in enrolment, retention and literacy has been positive; however from 2000 to 2003, the primary school completion rate fell from 58 to 53 percent, during a time when school fees increased. (Source: *World Bank Global Data Monitoring Information System*)



The state of the education system directly affects the educational outcomes for children. Gerry, a parent from Gogohei village on Buka, described the effects on his son: “He was a bright boy, and even in primary school he would catch up with his teachers, who themselves only had year 10 certificates. This was very frustrating for him.” Gerry’s son’s frustration continued throughout his school years and beyond. This is a common theme for many school leavers. Furthermore, much of what is taught at post-primary levels is not considered relevant to ‘real life’, a perspective borne out in high levels of unemployment and dissatisfaction with the opportunities available after students leave school, particularly outside the towns. The education system favours academic schooling over vocational training, which, situated outside the main education stream, is seen as a second best option. The perceived lesser status of vocational education and higher status of academic education do not reflect the work opportunities available to most people.

A less recognised but related problem is a perception that education has little relevance to the lives of school-age children outside the classroom. For example, children have little opportunity to read out of school. There are no children’s books or other materials that would give the skills learned at school concrete meaning in their everyday world.<sup>38</sup>

Parents are discerning in the educational choices they make for their children. Given a choice between church and government funded schools many will opt for the former, in part because of the spiritual elements of the church education, but also because a church school is likely to be better resourced and better staffed. Increased fees for what is seen as a substandard service from the government system has lessened the commitment of many parents to send their children to school.<sup>39</sup>

Papua New Guineans want an education that will prepare them and their children for the various jobs that may be available to them. They have clear ideas about what a good, relevant education entails, and know they are not getting it now.<sup>40</sup> Those interviewed for this paper articulated a number of changes that they consider to be necessary, some of which are addressed in the government’s new National Education and National Literacy policies. The action they want to see taken includes the following suggestions:

- The Papua New Guinea Government should review the content of mainstream ‘formal’ education to ensure that what is taught is relevant to the lives of most Papua New Guineans and will contribute to the reduction of poverty. Specifically this requires that, especially in rural areas, the teaching of vocational skills be integrated into the mainstream curriculum, rather than being seen as ‘second best’. To effectively reach those who may leave school early, this should possibly be initiated at primary school.<sup>41</sup>
- Further enhance and expand existing *tok ples* (local language) education programs to build a bridge to the English language national curriculum and maintain local identity.<sup>42</sup>
- Increase investment in teacher training, teaching resources and school curricula.<sup>43</sup>
- Determine the levying of school fees at the local level. This is a contested issue, as the ideal of universal free primary education, supported by some, is challenged by others who suggest that some fee is preferable. Flavia Arnold, a community development specialist working on the AusAID funded Basic Education Development Project, suggested that, “Free education is not a good idea, as we need to demonstrate that education has a real value to increase parental responsibility for their children’s education.” To ensure affordability of education for each community, “Each school board should set their own fees.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Father Nic Degroot, Director, Melanesian Institute, 21 September 2005, and Ms Deb Chapman, September 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Reverend Hermann Spingler, Assistant Director, Melanesian Institute, 21 September 2005

<sup>40</sup> Father Hermann Spingler, September 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Interviews with Mr Jonathan Ngati, Member for Siwai, Autonomous Government of Bougainville, 26 September 2005, BICWF, Ms Linda Tule, Ms Flavia Arnold, September 2005.

<sup>42</sup> BICWF, September 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Dr Paul Ngabung, September 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Ms Flavia Arnold, September 2005.

- In order to promote a culture of learning, education needs to be brought out of the classroom and into daily life. This might be achieved by introducing access to public libraries and cost effective, relevant children's books or internet-linked computers to village schools.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Father Nic Degroot, Dr Paul Ngabung, September 2005.

# Livelihood

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*“We just want enough, plus a little bit more: good clothes, a tin roof and to be able to send our children to school.”  
– a mother, Madang province*

Papua New Guinean people are contending with two worlds: the traditional subsistence-based, rural life and the newer cash based economy; life remains predominantly rural with an increasingly significant urban segment. The traditional world prevails for most people, but for everyone the new world is becoming ever more important.

It was evident from many conversations that Papua New Guinean people see value in aspects of both ways of life. This is generally a pragmatic perspective, exemplified by the quote above. Respondents did not indicate a desire to get rich; they just want enough to live a good life. The ambitions of some are very modest indeed: “Our village is a good place to live. We have a good lifestyle and we can always get some money from selling copra,” said one young Bougainville man. Mark Kuraya, a World Vision staff member on Bougainville, observed that, “In the village, people are content with what they have - as long as they have something to eat (*kaikai*) in the afternoon, that’s enough.” There are of course extremes: some people have effectively cut kinship ties to succeed in their chosen professions as they felt they could not function effectively with the demands of their *wantoks*.<sup>46</sup>

With 85% of the population living outside towns, rural livelihoods remain the norm for most people. However, the subsistence lifestyle is becoming less viable as population pressures, the cash based economy, consumerism, private sector investment and HIV and AIDS exert their influence. The rapidly growing urban population evidences the attraction of the new, and the increasing difficulty of maintaining the old.<sup>47 48</sup> Even as these changes occur, few people in rural Papua New Guinea would describe themselves as ‘poor’; however the country’s health, education and income indicators confirm that ‘poverty’, as it is understood in development discourse, is entrenched.

The decay of Papua New Guinea’s infrastructure was commonly cited as a key contributor to the increasing difficulty of rural life. During a tour of the island, World Vision staff in Buka, Bougainville demonstrated the difficulty of access for people living only 40 minutes’ drive from town, while others noted that even where local government invested in new roads, the roads did not penetrate far from the towns themselves. An exception to this pattern occurs in the Eastern Highlands, where local government is building roads from the remote areas back to Goroka, rather than the reverse.<sup>49</sup> Poor infrastructure also has indirect costs: “The high cost of public transport really affects the villagers. It leads to higher prices for food in the markets and cuts into the amounts of money available for school fees and the like.”<sup>50</sup>

To get their ‘little bit more’, people want to sell their excess production, and many people are actively growing for market. But poor or non-existent roads and undeveloped market systems outside the major centres make it hard to earn a consistent living. A closely related concern is access to information. Market information, in the form of newspapers or on-line data, is inaccessible for most people. This is

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<sup>46</sup> The management of Kongo Coffee, a highlands coffee producer, is one organisation reported to have taken this step. One World Vision staff member stated that he had to take a similar step.

<sup>47</sup> This clash is discussed more fully in later sections.

<sup>48</sup> As the population grows, the proportion of urban and rural residents is staying roughly constant; however within the urban population the proportion of urban poor has increased markedly.

<sup>49</sup> Mr Alphonse Benny, September 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ms Monica Samutaga, Bougainville Inter-Church Women’s Forum, 27 September 2005.

compounded by the nation's low literacy and numeracy levels (63.6% for men, 50.7% for women<sup>51</sup>). The outcome is that it is difficult to know what to grow, difficult to sell it, and difficult to get a fair price.

People nevertheless do what they can; selling whatever extra produce they grow. Much of this activity occurs in the 'informal sector' and comprises the main cash income source for very many people.<sup>52</sup> The informal sector is particularly important for women, but engagement in it is not without risk. Informal sector trade was legalised in 2003, however this has not led to an overnight change from previous circumstances under which traders could be moved on by force. Whether because police are ignorant of the new law, are under orders to move people on regardless, or because informal sector trading zones have not been designated, doing business in this way continues to be unreliable and sometimes dangerous.<sup>53</sup>

**"I want information about the international vanilla market."**

Moses, an illiterate farmer, participant in the World Vision/AusAID Begasin Bugati Rural Development Project.

Underpinning almost every Papua New Guinean's livelihood is their land; the connections between people and their land are very close and very deep: "Our land is God-given."<sup>54</sup> Land is central to Papua New Guineans' identity, and to be without land is for them the truest form of poverty. People want to keep their land, and to make use of it: "Land is people's survival. It's like money in the West. The customary owners of the land should keep it, but there need not be obstacles to them leasing it to others."<sup>55</sup> Land in Papua New Guinea is not owned in the same way that it is in Australia, as just another tradeable asset. It is a long-term resource, eternal, while individual people are not.

There is considerable variation across the country in the ways land is held and exchanged. Exchanges of land do take place, but transferring ownership is not a one-off transaction. It creates long-term obligations between the giver and the recipient. Rights to land are acknowledged, and detailed systems exist to identify which individuals and/or groups have the right to use a piece of land and what is on and under it.<sup>56</sup> Money, by contrast, is widely regarded as a disposable resource – it comes and it goes, so why not spend it when you have it?<sup>57</sup>

These factors are a large part of the reason past efforts to assign formal land titles through westernised land registration systems have been strongly resisted. People want to retain their association with the land,<sup>58</sup> and fear that registration systems will turn it into a vulnerable, short-term asset (like cash). Their limited confidence in the government makes them still more reluctant to give it a role in managing land title. Nevertheless, people do want to use their land to secure a better livelihood; thus they argue that any new system of registration must retain the customary relationship with the land.<sup>59</sup> This is a high priority issue for Papua New Guineans; however it is not considered an urgent one in the sense that they are prepared to take the time needed to find the right solution to this fundamental issue and because other problems are more pressing.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>51</sup> UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*; figures are for 2003, and would be still lower in rural areas.

<sup>52</sup> Mr R Michael Bourke, "Marketed Fresh Food: A successful part of the Papua New Guinean economy", *Development Bulletin* No. 67, April 2005 (Development Studies Network).

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Mr Alois Francis and staff of the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC), 28 September 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Maj. Gen. (ret) Jerry Singirok, September 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Mr John Chitua and Mr Yanni Guman, BRG, 19 September 2005. They contrasted the successful leasing of customary land on Rabaul and the long term dispossession of landowners at the RD Tuna cannery in Madang, whose title has effectively been extinguished by arrangements made before the coming of the cannery but exacerbated since its arrival.

<sup>56</sup> For an excellent summary: Bernard Narokobi, *Concept of Ownership in Melanesia*, Occasional Paper Number 6, The Melanesian Institute Inc, Papua New Guinea 1988. BRG was also an informed source for this summary.

<sup>57</sup> This was a problem in the way revenues from the Panguna mine were distributed on Bougainville. Large payments to a small group of Bougainvilleans promoted a view that money and the things it could buy were completely disposable.

<sup>58</sup> BRG, Dr Felix Babilis, September 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Mr Patrick Kolas, Ms Linda Tule, September 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Professor Mark Mosko, a researcher with a long personal and professional association with the Mekeo people of Gulf Province, commented in Fingleton et al (2005): "In rural areas I have visited, the answers are only too clear to practically everyone on the ground: roads, education, good roads, markets, maintained roads, distribution networks, infrastructure (e.g. roads), security, quality health services, and an end to political corruption – for starters."

In summary, those consulted for this paper would like to see the following actions implemented to build a foundation for sustainable livelihoods for Papua New Guineans:

- A sufficiently researched, discussed and tested solution to the land title debate that reflects existing practice and understanding.
- Advancements in literacy, numeracy and access to information to facilitate more informed decision making in identifying markets, improving production and negotiating prices.<sup>61</sup>
- Freedom for people, especially women, to trade in the informal sector<sup>62</sup>, and for the viability of informal sector trade to be enhanced through value adding.<sup>63</sup>
- Infrastructural development – roads in the right places to facilitate market procurement, access and distribution networks that reach the people, and removal of bureaucratic obstacles to conducting business.<sup>64</sup>
- A choice of livelihood options, whether in the village, the town or overseas.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Moses and his fellow farmers, Begasin Bugati Rural Development Project, Madang, 20 September 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Mr John Valde, CIMC, 28 September 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Dame Carol Kidu, September 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Moses and colleagues; CIMC, September 2005.

<sup>65</sup> CIMC, September 2005.

# Independence

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*“We want to be able to organise our own ideas.” – Dame Carol Kidu*

*“If we hold on to our identity we will be able to reach out for information.”  
– Barclay Kaupa, Gabukuzuba Human Development Foundation, Goroka.*

Papua New Guinea, historically a region of hundreds of separate territories, is slowly becoming a single nation. After one hundred years this process is not yet complete, as loyalty to family and community continues to be a dominant influence. These thousands of clans are attempting, not always successfully, to work together; while the nation is simultaneously engaging with the global economy. The country has benefited from this process of nation building and international engagement, but this has come at the cost of some independence. Like other developing countries, Papua New Guinea now depends on development assistance, external trade, investment and skills. The establishment of such global relationships is an inevitable consequence of development; however contributors to this paper suggest that Papua New Guinea’s independence is being compromised further by domestic political, social and organisational factors.

Many respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with this situation.<sup>66</sup> They believe that Papua New Guinea needs to take the initiative and act for itself and that by acting now they can help create a more independent future for their children.<sup>67</sup> Concurrently, however, it is commonly acknowledged that the country does need help from outside – they just want it to be on their terms.<sup>68</sup> There are extremes within this perspective, such as that of the Gahukuzuha organisation quoted above. They state that, “Our vision is to be self-reliant, with a semi-permanent house, power, our own meat, fish, eggs and vegetables. We don’t want aid.”<sup>69</sup>

Gahukuzuha believes strongly in achieving better lives through their own effort. They are strongly opposed to ‘handouts’ like aid. This is a reasonable position in the Papua New Guinean context, in which past practices by government, churches and NGOs have led to the expectation of handouts, or ‘cargo’. The ‘cargo’ mentality applies not only to the country’s external relations but also to the operation of domestic politics. Largesse has always formed part of election campaigns, so that many people expect handouts from those who claim to represent their interests. Such promises of handouts are frequently made, but not always delivered.

## **‘We want to control this moment’ – Independence in Bougainville**

In mid-2005, the new government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville was sworn in; a symbolic end to years of hardship and violence. Bougainville’s people were determined to make autonomy work, and confident that they could do it, on their terms.

The people of Bougainville want to act for themselves, and to watch that their new leaders keep their promises. The leaders and bureaucrats wish to ‘sell’ their development plans to Port Moresby and the world, and to keep control of any foreign investment.

The people are also helping each other. Junior Anagu, a qualified accountant, was away from Bougainville during ‘the crisis’ but has returned to teach at a local high school and help his friends, ‘crisis people’, to adjust to civilian life. A local community organisation, the Bougainville Interfaith Women’s Forum, started working on community level peace-building during the crisis and continues to build peace, literacy and community skills today.

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<sup>66</sup> The question of independence was second only to education in discussions for this paper.

<sup>67</sup> Moses and colleagues, September 2005.

<sup>68</sup> BRG, Mr Alphonse Benny, Ms Linda Tule, TIPNG, Ms Flavia Arnold, September 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Mr Barclay Kaupa and colleagues, Gahukuzuha Human Development Foundation, 23 September 2005.

Avoiding handouts and the attendant creation of false expectations is therefore a priority for many groups active in Papua New Guinea's development. One such organisation, Madang's Bismark Ramu Group (BRG), achieves change in communities through minimal intervention. BRG characterises independence as 'development from within, aided from the outside'. It facilitates community efforts to help their own members, and they apply this principle both to their work and their internal operations. In their work, they train motivated community members in their own history and give them the space to critically assess the problems they face and develop solutions. Armed with this new perspective, BRG encourages and facilitates them to lead their communities in implementing these solutions and, if necessary, in fighting their own battles. BRG have adopted a similar approach in their internal operations and development. They make careful selection of the donors with which they work, and draw on the knowledge of only one trusted expatriate staff member. Other organisations are keen to learn from them, but again BRG is cautious about engaging in activities that distract from their core mission.

BRG works with villages to resolve concerns, including facilitating negotiation between the villages and private developers over access to resources and environmental management, as well as internal social issues. One such matter is the practice of witchcraft (*sanguma*), which was raised by several contributors to this study.<sup>70</sup> *Sanguma* is an integral part of village life and one that has changed over time, being used increasingly as a tool for payback and as a means of scapegoating. For example, accusations of *sanguma* or theft are sometimes levelled at people perceived as successful, who may then be denigrated, obstructed, ostracised or attacked by those around them. The risk is particularly high for those seen as being outside the dominant group; their good fortune, or the perceived ill fortune of others, may be labelled as *sanguma*. This can lead to escalating attacks, accusations and reprisals. *Sanguma* can thus form an obstacle to the development and independence of a community and its complex and sensitive nature means that those affected have had little recourse to formal legal defences or village arbitration.<sup>71</sup>

Access to timely, relevant and appropriate information is another key challenge in building independence, both in the village and at the national level.<sup>72</sup> Accessing information about the market and developing national and international networks for information exchange, information access is a matter of cultivating and communicating a uniquely Papua New Guinean perspective on the world, much as BRG does in its work. There is now some excellent work in this area: the University of Goroka is undertaking innovative research into the relationship between Melanesian economic and political systems and other existing systems; is cataloguing indigenous counting systems; and is developing an understanding of history in a Papua New Guinean context.<sup>73</sup> More generally, however, good data for decision-making remains in short supply.<sup>74</sup>

Corruption, breaches of the rule of law and the lack of government accountability were cited as some of the main obstacles to independence.<sup>75</sup> "Corruption is both systemic and systematic. It is everywhere and it is organised."<sup>76</sup> It is a particular problem for the new administration of Bougainville. Mr Leslie Tseraha, a government planning officer, described the administration's efforts to enforce financial accountability. A new Public Accounts Committee investigates corruption, such as the misappropriation of 5 million kina allocated by the Papua New Guinea Government, before it reached Bougainville.<sup>77</sup> There has been a tradition of silence on these types of issues in Papua New Guinea, and corruption has gone unchecked in all walks of life. However, there are growing moves to combat it in both civil society and in government.

<sup>70</sup> Several examples of the use and abuse of sorcery (*sanguma*) were described to the author, particularly as a tool for payback. "Kwaak, Witchcraft, Sorcery and Dispute Settlement" (Sam Kaima, *Catalyst*, Vol.35, No. 1, 2005) effectively illustrates the complexity of sorcery's role in communities. Sorcery, and spiritual life generally, is a central feature of life in Papua New Guinea. It is also complicated and sensitive and as such requires a more in-depth discussion than the scope of this paper allows.

<sup>71</sup> There are efforts to change this. The Highlands-based women's organisation Meri I Kirap Sapotim is attempting to mobilise the legal system to investigate the murder of one of their members, who was accused of practicing witchcraft.

<sup>72</sup> BRG, Mr Marcus Pelto, Dame Carol Kidu, Dr Paul Ngabung, September 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Dr Felix Bablis, September 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Mr Barry Lalley, BRG, 20 September 2005 and Dr Paul Ngabung, September 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Address by Mr Richard Kassman, Director TIPNG, 'Specific Directions for Research into Corruption in Papua New Guinea', National Research Institute (NRI), University of Papua New Guinea, 29 September 2005, and BRG, September 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Address by Dr Alphonse Gelu, NRI Corruption Seminar, 29 September 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Mr Leslie Tseraha, September 2005.

Transparency International, the University of Papua New Guinea-based National Research Institute, the Ombudsman's office and the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (CIMC) are leading institutions in this endeavour,<sup>78</sup> along with some courageous individuals. Corruption diverts resources from where they are most needed and comprises another illustration of the pursuit of individual self-interest at the expense the constitutional ideal of people-centred development. The fight against corruption seeks to frame the debate in this context, revisiting the Constitution as the foundation for a review of the legal system and a call for government accountability.

Development assistance is seen by some as a highly visible aspect of Papua New Guinea's dependence on the outside world, and many no longer want to wait for 'when AusAID comes'. Some, like Gahukuzuha, would like to see aid disappear completely, but as with BRG and the people of Bougainville, most just want more control over how aid is administered. Many organisations, including World Vision, have experienced the way in which donor requirements throughout the project cycle can seek to distort an organisation's approach, influence the intent of an activity, and even determine its beneficiaries. Like her counterparts on Bougainville, Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development, would like to "use donors, not just accommodate them". She would also like more coordination of NGO work, and suggests a mapping of NGO activity in the country as a first step.<sup>79</sup>

It is apparent that although there is widespread concern over corruption, cargo and injustice, many people are nevertheless making their own efforts to do things another way. Like BRG and Gahukuzuha, much of this is happening at the village level. Papua New Guinea's challenges are not insurmountable and many solutions are being pursued every day.<sup>80</sup> As one manager of a community based organisation said, "Going to the village I get very empowered because I see people doing good things."<sup>81</sup>

Papua New Guinea, while emerging as a single nation, nevertheless continues to be divided along myriad geographic, ethnic and cultural lines. As illustrated by the discussion of *sanguma*, these divisions comprise a major obstruction to cooperation and common growth, which in turn constitutes a significant underlying obstacle to achieving true independence in Papua New Guinea. The movement towards independence will only succeed when the very diverse people of the country unite more truly than they have in the past.

Some insights arising from this discussion, which may act as useful signposts on the road to independence, include the following:

- Strengthen national capacities to create and access information and communicate effectively;
- Challenge the legal and institutionalised factors that have allowed corruption to flourish;
- Coordinate the activities of NGOs and other development organisations;
- Create a social environment that recognises and supports leadership by example and success in personal enterprise.

<sup>78</sup> As an initial step, they convened the corruption seminar referenced above to begin talking more openly. As well as these organisations, representatives of the police, university students and visiting academics attended.

<sup>79</sup> Address by Dame Carol Kidu, PNG Forum on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS, Canberra, 13 October 2005, Ms Flavia Arnold, September 2005.

<sup>80</sup> *Development Bulletin* No. 67 (Development Studies Network, 2005), tells more of these stories.

<sup>81</sup> Ms Naomi Yupae, September 2005.



# Kastom and Modernity

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*“We [the people] are disoriented, marginalised and confused. We are trying to find our way.”*  
– John Chitua and Yanni Guman, Bismark Ramu Group

Like John and Yanni above, many Papua New Guinean people interviewed for this research described themselves as confused about where they are going and who they are becoming. This uncertainty, an effect of the meeting of Papua New Guinean and foreign ways of life, is nowhere more apparent than in the changes in the way Papua New Guineans relate to their culture. The underlying system of beliefs, practices and values of Papua New Guinean people is known as *kastom*, aspects of which may vary across the country. *Kastom* nevertheless “defin[es] relationships between generations, genders, island groups and communities”. It is closely linked to religion and affects the treatment of children, dispute resolution and traditional governance.<sup>82</sup> *Kastom* continues to define how most people identify with their place, their clan and life in the village, but many find that formal education, town life, unemployment and increasingly HIV and AIDS are making life more complicated and, at times, harder to manage. For example, in Madang and also in Goroka, the following cultural clashes were discussed:<sup>83</sup>

- Disputes arise in the village between traditional and modern leaders. Some older leaders do not understand the changing dynamics of the contemporary, monetised world, and younger ones fail to see the relevance to their lives of older styles of leadership and living.
- Polygamy, once an honour allowed only those men with the stature (and resources) to care for more than one wife, is now employed as a cover for adultery.
- Firearms-based violence, including roadside ambushes, is labelled ‘tribal fighting’, a title previously used for ritualised and often non lethal dispute resolution.
- Sorcery (*sanguma*) is utilised as a means to make money and as a scapegoat for every misfortune. Its use has increased, possibly exacerbated by the failure of some government services, particularly health.

These conflicts cause anger, despair and uncertainty.<sup>84</sup> “There is confusion about what is culturally right and what is cultural scapegoating.”<sup>85</sup>

## **Gahukuzuha Community Development Foundation – strengthening culture in the modern world.**

Gahukuzuha, a grassroots movement in the Eastern Highlands, has grown out of one man’s desire for change. In prison, Lutie Apo resolved to help boys and young men in his village avoid making the mistakes that had sent him to gaol. On his release, he enlisted the support of his friend Barclay Kaupa and began work. Their first step was to reinstate and revitalise the traditions of their community, their *kastom*, in a contemporary setting. Central to this was the re-establishment of the *hausman* (men’s house), in which village boys could go through an initiation process that included both relearning their *kastom* and also some training on contemporary issues.

Central to their work, and that of Gahukuzuha, the organisation they established, is the belief that it is best for the people to help themselves. They do not take government or aid money but instead are finding sustainable ways to finance themselves.

This has had some success. Gahukuzuha runs a semiprofessional men’s dancing group and is using the revenue to start small business activities such as coffee and flower growing. They are planning a major new fish farming program to further boost their independence.

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<sup>82</sup> Dorning et al. *Strongim Pikinini* (2005 Page 22).

<sup>83</sup> BRG, Mr Alphonse Benny, Ms Naomi Yupae, September 2005.

<sup>84</sup> Comment by Mr Peter Donigi, NRI Corruption Seminar, 29 September 2005, Mr Barry Lalley, Moses and colleagues, Ms Naomi Yupae, September 2005.

<sup>85</sup> Address by Mr John Collins Hevia, Papua New Guinea Ombudsman’s Commission, NRI Corruption Seminar, 29 September 2005.

Most people want to take advantage of the benefits the changing world can bring, such as schools, roads, health services and “nice things in the shops”<sup>86</sup>, but worry about the corruption, guns and violence that have arrived with them. In discussing leadership, Retired Major General Jerry Singirok encapsulated the sentiments of many others, in identifying the problem as “conflict between a superficial, imposed white man’s democracy and traditional leadership”. Singirok does not argue for democracy’s inherent incompatibility with *kastom*, nor that this is the only area of conflict, but his comment indicates that the superimposition of western concepts of democracy is representative of a broader problem.

Others articulated similar perspectives on the effects of the changes taking place in Papua New Guinea. Elias Nara, manager of a World Vision program on Bougainville said that, “The debate is between ‘traditional cultural leadership’ and ‘educated modern thinking’”. According to Richard Kassman, a Director of Transparency International Papua New Guinea, commenting on cultural contributors to corruption, “Transparency was fundamental to Papua New Guinean society. All ‘big man assets’ were known and shared. Now they have been pushed offshore.” These comments reflect a widely held view in Papua New Guinea that both *kastom* and new ways of life have good and bad features, and that one of the country’s challenges is to take the best of both.

At the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, many people expressed pride in their country: in its people, its history, its spirituality, its diversity and its natural splendour.<sup>87</sup> They valued what the outside world had to offer but wanted their own identity to remain intact. Naomi Yupae, director of Family Voice in Goroka, said, “Every time I come home I am more proud to be a Papua New Guinean. Take your gadgets away and our country will still exist.” Jerry Singirok had a similar feeling: “I didn’t realise until I went away how beautiful this country is. We have so much to offer the world, and we must reap the benefits of what God has given us.” Yupae and Singirok are not alone in the pride they feel for their country, its people, culture and environment, even as they recognise its problems.

As stated in the Constitution, Papua New Guinea’s identity and integrity are central to its development and the nation’s citizens want them to remain so. They also want to be part of the world. Various individuals and groups are striving to find a middle ground between the two. They have identified and are attempting to implement several actions which can be taken to achieve this:<sup>88</sup>

- To stop using *kastom* as a scapegoat for violent, abusive or illegal behaviour and to end the culture of silence that allows violence against women and children, the abuse of sorcery and the growth of corruption.<sup>89</sup> Related to this is the need to further develop the interaction of the official and traditional justice systems.<sup>90</sup>
- To restore cultural knowledge and practice, preserving the best of the old while adapting and blending in the new<sup>91</sup>. World Vision’s publication *Strongim Pikinini* (Dorning et al 2005) describes this process as seeking the development of a ‘new *kastom*’, “assisting people to make sense of their changing social and cultural environment and the world around them” in a specifically Papua New Guinean context. ‘New *kastom*’ also emphasises the legal and treaty context (for example child rights) to reduce the likelihood of violence and other rights abuses which may otherwise be tacitly or overtly condoned.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>86</sup> A mother, Begasin Bugati Rural Development Program, Madang Province, 20 September 2005.

<sup>87</sup> Mr Barry Lalley, Ms Naomi Yupae, September 2005.

<sup>88</sup> Mr Barry Lalley, September 2005.

<sup>89</sup> Mr Barry Lalley, BRG, Ms Naomi Yupae, BICWF, Mr Peter Donigi, September 2005.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Ms Frieda Kana, Communications Manager, World Vision Pacific Development Group, 28 September 2005, BRG, Mr Alphonse Benny, BICWF, September 2005.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Mr Apelis Benson, Capacity Building Manager, World Vision Pacific Development Group, 27 September 2005, Mr Barry Lalley, Mr Barclay Kaupa, Gahukuzuha, Ms Flavia Arnold, September 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Dorning et al, 2005 Page 37.

- To build the pride of Papua New Guinean people in their land, its symbols, culture and richness; and their commitment to develop and preserve it.<sup>93</sup>
- To cement the country's place in the world by better understanding it from a Papua New Guinean perspective, and by offering the best of Papua New Guinea to the world.<sup>94</sup>
- To develop leaders who are grounded in both *kastom* and modernity.

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<sup>93</sup> Mr Barry Lalley, Ms Sangion Tiu, Ms Naomi Yupae, Ms Linda Tule, September 2005.

<sup>94</sup> Dr Felix Babilis, Maj. Gen. (ret) Jerry Singirok, September 2005.

# Violence and Abuse

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“No more barbed wire.” – Naomi Yupae, *Family Voice, Goroka*

In Australia we often hear that ‘Papua New Guinea is unsafe’. However, perhaps due in part to the culture of silence surrounding violence and abuse, these issues did not feature as prominently in the interviews conducted for this report as might be expected. Nevertheless violence, and the fear of violence, is an important concern for many people, and one that receives a growing amount of attention.<sup>95</sup> It affects women and children as the main victims, and the young men who perpetrate much of the visible violence.

“I can’t go out after six p.m. It’s not safe any more,” said Sarah Garap of life in Port Moresby. Violent attacks against women in public places are frequently reported in the press, and it is a particularly prevalent phenomenon in the larger urban centres. A more widespread problem, however, may be domestic violence and abuse. The example of wives being beaten for attending literacy classes has already been cited. Goroka-based Family Voice addresses domestic abuse by providing support and outreach services and raising awareness of both the problem and people’s rights.

Emerging research indicates that children are especially vulnerable to violence and abuse:

- Elizabeth Cox, a researcher and Papua New Guinean citizen, has examined abuses of traditional adoption practices, reporting that in some instances adopted children are virtual slaves. It is not uncommon for children to be adopted out by parents unable to care for them. Such arrangements may often be satisfactory, but Cox reports that they are also frequently abusive; for example, involving child sexual abuse or requiring children to ‘repay’ the cost of adoption by going out to work. Court cases where parents have sought to have their children brought back from such situations have been found in favour of the adopters.<sup>96</sup>
- A World Vision study, *Strongim pikinini, strongim laef b’long famili*, has been prepared as part of a United Nations global study of violence against children. The study draws on interviews with children from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, to identify cross-cutting themes around violence against children in close-knit communities. The report recommends a coordinated response from government, NGOs and civil society organisations; a focus on families as both primary protectors and instigators of violence; ‘new *kastom*’ grounded in both *kastom* and child rights; and new fora in which children’s voices are heard and respected.<sup>97</sup>

## **Jerry Singirok on security and poverty**

Retired Defence Force chief Major-General Jerry Singirok is highly respected in Papua New Guinea, notably for his leading role in removing the Sandline mercenaries from the country in 1997.

Since retiring, he has been researching the rise of violence in Papua New Guinea, especially the prevalence of hand guns. In a recent report on the gun problem undertaken for the government, he recommended actions addressing leadership, governance, security, border control and social change.

Over and above these recommendations, Mr Singirok asserts that, “Poverty is at the centre of the whole issue. The guns will go away if people have more in their pockets.” He believes particularly that this needs to happen in the village; that empowering the rural sector will be the catalyst for lasting change.

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<sup>95</sup> For example the *Post-Courier*, one of Papua New Guinea’s leading papers, is running a campaign against handguns.

<sup>96</sup> Address by Ms Elizabeth Cox at a seminar on *Community Engagement in Papua New Guinea*, Australian National University, Canberra, 18 August 2005.

<sup>97</sup> *Strongim pikinini* (Dorning et al 2005) provides children’s perspectives on many of the issues presented in this paper and is recommended for reading as a companion document.

- Human Rights Watch interviewed many child victims in preparing its report *Making Their Own Rules*, which describes the physical and sexual abuse of child prisoners by police.<sup>98</sup> The report cites as causes the lack of training in appropriate police technique and little appreciation of national and international child protection law; however it states that underlying this rationale is a police culture which accepts this behaviour. Silence is again a key factor: the police hierarchy does not speak out on the issue, nor does it punish those who transgress the law. There appears to be little pressure from the Papua New Guinea Government for reform; it did not acknowledge the report on its release.<sup>99</sup> Aside from the sources referred to here, few other civil society voices have spoken out on the issue. Those active few want to see more people opposing violence against children.<sup>100</sup>
- Papua New Guinea's Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council and the National Research Institute released a report based on extensive consultation in urban communities in 2005. *Identification of Violence Against Children in Papua New Guinea – a community consultation* advocates human rights based training programs at various levels to respond to the high identified levels of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and drug and alcohol related issues, as part of a wider integrated solution.<sup>101</sup>

As the main focus of the original Australian funded *Enhanced Cooperation Program*,<sup>102</sup> the constraints and weaknesses of Papua New Guinea's police service have had extensive coverage in Australia. The Human Rights Watch paper outlines one effect of these problems, and Ms Cox described another: the incidence of violence among 'community police' in East Sepik. Ostensibly volunteers recruited to assist the professional police in their duties, these *kanda polis* (caning police) function more as gangs, forcing youths to either join up or get beaten. The regular police are either unwilling or unable to control them.<sup>103</sup>

The *kanda polis* gangs are one manifestation of organised youth violence in Papua New Guinea. The better-known *raskol* (criminal) gangs are another, particularly in the larger towns and on many of the nation's highways. As in many parts of the world, young men are attracted to gangs where real work opportunities are scarce. Being a *raskol* offers some group solidarity and may be seen as traditional masculine behaviour – engaging in 'payback' violence against others, for example, is a corruption of traditional systems of dispute resolution.<sup>104</sup> It is a path from which Lutie Apo and Barclay Kaupa of Gahukuzuha are now trying to divert others through their efforts to provide young men with alternative livelihoods and strong cultural values.<sup>105</sup> The gun culture and drugs trade is closely linked to the *raskol* movement.<sup>106</sup>

Many men eventually decide that there is no future in the *raskol* life and wish to return to the village. In Goroka, Alphonse Benny and Naomi Yupae also raised this issue, agreeing that where the desire is sincere it should be supported, but cautioning that such individuals should not get a free ticket back into village life. Some process of justice and/or reconciliation needs to take place. Both Alphonse and Naomi described such systems, possibly comprising an updated version of traditional processes, in which respected figures in the village play a mediating role.

<sup>98</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Making Their Own Rules: Police Beatings, Rape, and Torture of Children in Papua New Guinea*, September 2005.

<sup>99</sup> There are nevertheless individuals within government who acknowledge the problems. One senior public servant told the author that "big changes are needed in the police service".

<sup>100</sup> For example, Kup Women for Peace is a group which directly confronts the police to account for abuses of their position.

<sup>101</sup> Redwood, J and Hukula, F, *Identification of Violence Against Children in Papua New Guinea – a community consultation*. May-June 2005.

<sup>102</sup> The ECP aims to help address Papua New Guinea's development challenges in the areas of law and order, justice, economic management, public sector reform, border control and transport security and safety, primarily by placing Australian Government officers in advisory positions in the Papua New Guinea public sector, including the police service.

<sup>103</sup> Ms Elizabeth Cox, August 2005.

<sup>104</sup> Mr Alphonse Benny, September 2005.

<sup>105</sup> Detailed in the box on page 23.

<sup>106</sup> Maj. Gen. (ret) Jerry Singirok, September 2005.

Two other points need to be made about violence in Papua New Guinea. Firstly, while not uncommon and often horrifying, violence in public (as opposed to domestic violence and abuse) is not a consistent problem. It is far less common outside the main cities; moving around the smaller centres visited for this report - Madang, Goroka and Buka - is currently no more dangerous than being in small towns in developing countries around the world – although it must be acknowledged that local conditions can and do change.

Secondly, fear of violence is itself a destructive force. Especially in Port Moresby and other major centres, the daily worry about how to travel safely, especially for women, can be very stressful. Certainly it has discouraged investment in the country, and hence the creation of new jobs. Breaking this cycle of violence and fear is imperative.<sup>107</sup>

Papua New Guinean people, especially women, do not want to live surrounded by barbed wire. It reinforces fears of violence and creates an unsafe environment for children. It is time, they say, to “exchange weapons of destruction for weapons of development”,<sup>108</sup> by speaking out about violence, by retraining police and making them more accountable, and most of all by “empowering the rural sector. We need to touch the issue of poverty.”<sup>109</sup>

In summary, the emerging research into violence in Papua New Guinea, especially against children, and the perspectives of many people interviewed in the preparation of this paper suggest the following steps as means to reduce the extent and the effects of violence and abuse:

- End the culture of silence which tacitly condones violence against children and women.
- Initiate cultural change in the police, both through internal reform and the exertion of concerted pressure by a government and civil society that no longer tolerate police violence and intimidation.
- Target poverty, especially among youth, to promote viable alternatives to *raskol* activity and to short-circuit the trade in drugs and handguns.
- Implement the recommendations of the World Vision *Strongim pikinini* report:
  - a coordinated response from NGOs, civil society organisations and especially government;
  - focus on families as both primary protectors and instigators of violence;
  - ‘new *kastom*’ grounded in both *kastom* and child rights;
  - new fora in which children’s voices are heard and respected.

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<sup>107</sup> BICWF, Mr Marcus Pelto, September 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Moses and colleagues, Dame Carol Kidu, September 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Maj. Gen. (ret) Jerry Singirok, September 2005.

# Accountable Government

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*“We want to see that the government is working.” – Junior Anagu, Buka*

It was noted at the beginning of this paper that since independence, Papua New Guinea has not progressed to the degree that many had hoped. The country’s citizens have seen decades of promises unfulfilled as basic infrastructure and services have deteriorated and corruption has been allowed to flourish: “Corruption is in politics, the public and the private sector.”<sup>110</sup> As a consequence, many Papua New Guinean people today have little confidence in their government. They see political office often used as a path to wealth and out of the village, not as a path of service.<sup>111</sup> When considering the future of Papua New Guinea, some do not see a role for the government at all.

“Our accountability mechanisms are in disrepair. People feel that the government is not accountable to anyone.”<sup>112</sup> “The government does not think critically or practically for its people.”<sup>113</sup> These comments and many others like them suggest a widely held belief that “Public opinion means nothing to politicians once they are in power”.<sup>114</sup> Again, this suggests that Papua New Guinea’s people are not being put first.

The current electoral system has contributed to this situation, with the result that “People now expect government handouts, not services, thanks to campaign promises”.<sup>115</sup> Having made promises which cannot be fulfilled, politicians have little expectation of being re-elected (some provinces had 100% turnover of politicians at the last election) and are seen to use office as a chance to line their pockets. This has had a disempowering effect on the wider population. As one official in the Ombudsman’s office commented, “the fire has been taken out of civil society”.<sup>116</sup>

Much of the bureaucracy is also considered unaccountable. Public servants vary from being sincere and committed (but under-resourced) to being disempowered, disinterested and disillusioned. Most people would prefer to work with an effective government than to have no government,<sup>117</sup> but currently “the government is not seen, felt or there with the people”.<sup>118</sup>

Even so, there are people throughout all levels of government who are working hard to bring about change. The Ombudsman’s Commission and the Department for Community Development are two agencies reforming their operations and improving their effectiveness. However, access to resources and skills is a major obstacle. In 2003 the Department for Community Development launched draft child protection legislation, the *Lukautim Pikinini Act*. The draft was sent back for further work and today, two years later, that draft has not yet been reintroduced. DCD wants to complete this work; it simply lacks the resources to do it.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Comment by a Detective Chief Inspector with the Papua New Guinea Police Fraud Squad, NRI Corruption seminar, 29 September 2005.

<sup>111</sup> Elaborating on this point, one respondent told how he heard that Canberra was a terrible place: “I hear that your politicians would rather live in their own electorates than move to the city! Here, everyone moves to Port Moresby.”

<sup>112</sup> Mr Marcus Pelto, September 2005.

<sup>113</sup> Mr Alphonse Benny, September 2005.

<sup>114</sup> Mr Richard Kassman, September 2005.

<sup>115</sup> Protected source, September 2005.

<sup>116</sup> Mr John Collins Hevieta, Papua New Guinea Ombudsman’s Commission, NRI Corruption seminar, 29 September 2005.

<sup>117</sup> Address by Dr Clement Malau, PNG Forum on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS, Canberra, 13 October 2005, BRG, Mr Jonathan Ngati, September 2005.

<sup>118</sup> Mr Alois Francis, September 2005.

<sup>119</sup> Dame Carol Kidu, September 2005.

Above all, people want the government to act in their interests and to be accountable for its actions. For example, they see corruption in both the public and private sectors, but recognise that it is their elected leaders who are ultimately accountable.<sup>120</sup> It has proven difficult to put this ideal into practice, but there are signs that this is changing. The most significant development is the nationwide implementation of a preferential voting system in the 2007 elections. This will eliminate the potential for candidates to be elected with as little as 5% of the vote, and is also hoped to promote more cooperation between candidates for the allocation of voting preferences. Another encouraging development late in 2005 was the formation of a 'Community Coalition Against Corruption', which succeeded in securing the withdrawal from parliament of the self-serving Yarka/Kumbakor bills, partly as a result of their wide circulation of a public petition against them.<sup>121 122</sup>

Interviews conducted for this research yielded consistent calls for 'critical thinking' on the part of government about ways to meet the needs of the population. These calls were especially concerned with the needs of the rural population.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, some want to see the Constitution better reflected in the actions of government,<sup>124</sup> and for other key pieces of law to be reviewed. Two legal challenges cited are to review sections of the Organic Law, which establishes the legal framework for implementing the Constitution; and to close loopholes in the leadership and criminal codes as they relate to politicians.<sup>125</sup>

Financial stability is an important aspect of accountable government. Like many developing countries, Papua New Guinea has a narrow tax base and frequently suffers inefficiencies in the allocation of funds, as in the example cited earlier where around half of the initial government allocation to the Autonomous Region of Bougainville went missing before leaving Port Moresby.<sup>126</sup> Countering corruption will play a vital role in achieving financial stability; the National Research Institute and Transparency International, in partnership with other institutions and individuals, have begun a campaign to do this, having met to discuss the issue at a seminar in September 2005. In summarising the seminar's proceedings, visiting Australian National University Professor Ron May stated that, "In the village there is no doubt in people's mind about what corruption is. Information *does* get to the grass roots and people *do* care."<sup>127</sup>

"We need to build people's capacity to engage with government."<sup>128</sup> Organisations like the Bougainville Inter-church Women's Forum and Bismark Ramu Group recognise that fostering the population's capacity to demand and access effective government services is fundamental to ensuring government's accountability to and investment in its people. Papua New Guinea's population requires capacity building to effectively engage with government, and conversely the government itself needs to be better resourced to meet the requirements of its citizens.<sup>129</sup>

There were also some comments made in interviews to the effect that over several decades there has not been much change in the cohort of Papua New Guinea's leaders. There were several calls for some 'new faces' in government to facilitate new ways of doing things.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>120</sup> The addresses at the NRI Corruption Seminar were consistent in stating that corruption does exist in all layers of society, but that eliminating it from government is the fundamental step.

<sup>121</sup> Mr Alphonse Benny, Mr Leslie Tseraha, Dr Alphonse Gelu, Mr Marcus Pelto, Dame Carol Kidu, September 2005.

<sup>122</sup> The two bills would have doubled the 'slush fund' monies (commonly used to procure votes) available to sitting MPs, and strengthened the immunity of sitting members from prosecution. The use of the slush funds to procure votes is one aspect of the problems with the current electoral system, while there are already loopholes in the leadership and criminal codes, which would have been strengthened by the proposed legislation.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Mr Elias Nara, Program Manager, World Vision North Bougainville Water & Sanitation Project, 26 September 2005, Mr Alphonse Benny, September 2005.

<sup>124</sup> Ms Naomi Yupae, September 2005.

<sup>125</sup> Dr Alphonse Gelu, Dame Carol Kidu, September 2005.

<sup>126</sup> Mr Leslie Tseraha, September 2005.

<sup>127</sup> It is not a wholly domestic problem. Professor May also observed that Australian citizens have had a hand in almost all of Papua New Guinea's corruption scandals.

<sup>128</sup> Ms Monica Samutaga, September 2005.

<sup>129</sup> Mr Leslie Tseraha, BICWF, September 2005.

<sup>130</sup> Mr Elias Nara, September 2005.



The 2007 election may be a turning point. It is a chance for Papua New Guineans to elect new representatives who have been required to commit to real change in the community, while those who have worked sincerely in the interests of their electorates may have a better chance of keeping their seats. There can be no expectation that the election will magically solve all flaws in Papua New Guinea's governance, but it is nevertheless a very important moment. New faces in government and a more active electorate may create the opportunity for lasting improvements.

'Governance' is a priority of the Australian aid program to Papua New Guinea and also of the Papua New Guinea Government itself, but it is clear that many problems persist. The country's citizens are very concerned to see these challenges resolved and have suggested the following actions to achieve this. Many are already being implemented to some degree:

- Intensive support for awareness raising and capacity building of community members, candidates and government around the 2007 election.
- Legal reform for government accountability.
- 'Critical thinking' in the interests of the people, especially the rural population. The Constitution continues to be the defining instrument of people centred development.
- Public condemnation of corruption, backed up by concerted government leadership and action.
- Sufficient resourcing and capacity building of government agencies, and empowering the population to demand and access effective government services.

# A Common Thread: Leadership

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*“Good leadership is about good practice.”* – Jerry Singirok

This paper has presented a range of opinions offered by Papua New Guinean people on what is needed to create a good life for themselves, their families, and the country. Leadership has been a common thread through all these opinions. People have been able to identify examples of substandard or inappropriate leadership in their communities, in politics, in government and even in international relations. They have also articulated a vision of good leadership, which would help them to achieve their potential as Papua New Guineans.

In the past, the ‘big men’ had to work hard to keep the respect of their communities. They were rewarded with access to land, additional wives and decision-making power, but at a personal price. To accumulate respect the big man had to give of himself and his resources. The big man died poor.

Today’s big men live in a different world to that of their predecessors, and the changes have come at a cost to the community. It is likely that a major contributor to poor leadership is the tension between Papua New Guinea’s traditional ways of life and the emerging political and economic environment. Localised systems of clan leadership have proven problematic when transposed to the remote world of Port Moresby or the provincial capital. The new democratic institutions do not always sit comfortably with older styles of leadership. In the village itself, traditional and spiritual leadership is compelled to react to unfamiliar pressures. New leaders are emerging. Some have clear visions of what can be done, while others require guidance themselves.

Many of today’s leaders appear to utilise the system to escape to town and accumulate wealth and power for themselves and those close to them. Leadership has become remote from the people, which is a very new state of affairs in Papua New Guinea.

Alphonse Benny’s ideas for leadership, outlined in the box, suggest some useful guidelines for future leaders, specifically to retain contact with those they represent and to ensure that their leadership decisions are informed by sound knowledge and skills. Leaders need to prioritise the interests of those they lead. They ought to inspire people to work towards a better future. They must be accountable and accessible.<sup>131</sup> They should be able to synthesise the best of the traditional and new worlds.<sup>132</sup>

## **Alphonse Benny’s prescription for leadership**

Alphonse Benny is a young man working as a volunteer with Oxfam in Goroka. He has a village background. He believes in the importance of traditional village culture in Papua New Guinea, but also has personal experience of the abuse of tradition.

Alphonse has thought extensively about what can be done to help his country. He suggests that strong Papua New Guinean leaders should:

- be trained in the Constitution and governance;
- think about the village, as well as the town;
- make themselves available to their electorate;
- think critically and practically for the people;
- keep to ‘the Melanesian way.’

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<sup>131</sup> Mr Alphonse Benny, September 2005.

<sup>132</sup> Mr Elias Nara, Maj. Gen. (ret) Jerry Singirok, September 2005.

The men at Gahukuzuha have, like Alphonse, created a list of important traits in a leader. It is very similar:

- A leader should be trained and based in the village.
- A leader should be strong minded.
- A leader should refuse handouts (cargo).
- A leader should lead the community by thinking for the people and acting in their interests.
- A leader should maintain his/her identity.
- A leader should avoid being overthrown by pride.

These principles are being acted on every day by people throughout Papua New Guinea. Some of these leaders contributed to this paper, but there are undoubtedly many more. They hold not only formal positions of leadership, but work in any number of fields and in the home. Particularly among the female population, Papua New Guinea's current and future leaders are perhaps its greatest untapped resource.

# To Trust Australia

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*“There should be a balance of respect between Papua New Guinea and Australia.” – Jerry Singirok*

The main aim in researching this paper was to collect some views of Papua New Guinean people on their own country and its future. The interview process did not look for opinions on Australia’s role in Papua New Guinea, but this was a popular topic nonetheless. Papua New Guinean people recognise that Australia has a place in the country’s history and its future. In common with Australian perceptions of their nearest neighbour though, it seems that much of the historical relationship and understanding is being lost.

Interviews exhibited a range of perspectives on Australia: “Australia is the mother. Why should we lash out at the mother?”<sup>133</sup>; “Does Australia really want to help Papua New Guinea?”<sup>134</sup> “We don’t want Australian aid.”<sup>135</sup> Generally though, people value Australia’s role in the country, yet have some concerns about the way Australia conducts the relationship (several people joked about ‘boomerang aid’). Most Papua New Guinean people want to have confidence in Australia,<sup>136</sup> but some express uncertainty about Australia’s commitment to Papua New Guinean development.

In terms of the aid relationship, representatives of community based organisations (including World Vision) have commented that the conditions imposed under certain types of Australian (and some other donors’) assistance require alteration to existing governance and reporting structures, and problematic changes in the design and methodology of some projects. The ‘Incentive Fund’ was singled out for its very strict stipulations, which often required significant investment in various program support costs, yet included no provision to fund this outlay.

Papua New Guineans feel that Australia could ‘give with both hands’ in its management of trade relations with their country. While recognising Australia’s commitment to the Cairns group and support for the Doha negotiations, they are aware that there remain in place a number of non-tariff barriers (e.g. quarantine), which limit the access of Papua New Guinean products. They would like more capacity building to enable their country to be an equal trading partner, and many support the institution of a labour migration scheme.<sup>137</sup>

The reaction to the *Enhanced Cooperation Program* encapsulates many of the contradictory feelings that Papua New Guinean people have towards Australia. Few suggested that assistance with policing and administration was not needed, but many were not satisfied with the way the scheme had been implemented. Jerry Singirok summarised this perception: “Australia means well. You want Papua New Guinea to be stable, viable, and not corrupt. The problem is the way you deliver your intentions.” He illustrated the inequalities between the Australian personnel and their local counterparts: “To visit the Australian accommodation you had to go through three separate grilled doors with combination locks. Our own police barracks have no facilities at all.”

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<sup>133</sup> Interview with Mr Junior Anagu, 25 September 2005.

<sup>134</sup> Ms Naomi Yupae, September 2005.

<sup>135</sup> Mr Barclay Kaupa, September 2005.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Mr Fred Hombuanje, Program Manager Begasin Bugati Rural Development Program, 20 September 2005.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Ms Primas Kapi, RCF, 21 September 2005, Dr Clement Malau, October 2005.

The question of immunity for Australian personnel may have been used as a political weapon in the legal challenge to the ECP, but nevertheless reflected valid concerns about Papua New Guinean sovereignty. This solution to a real problem was seen as imposed from the outside, and its design to reflect Australian rather than Papua New Guinean interests.<sup>138</sup> “Australians are not good listeners, and you won’t be for a long time,” was Singirok’s final word on the issue.

Jerry Singirok’s last comment was echoed by many others and suggests that the most useful step to build a better bilateral relationship would be for Australians to truly listen to Papua New Guineans, and to invest more in understanding how they go about solving their own problems. It was apparent throughout the research that a great deal of this hard work goes unrecognised by Australia. New Zealand’s approach to partnership in the Pacific, informed by the relationship between that country’s white and Maori populations, was cited as a viable model from which Australia could learn.<sup>139</sup>

A vital step to achieving this bilateral relationship is to encourage more people-to-people contact – “for more Australians to walk the Kokoda Track”.<sup>140</sup> Invoking Kokoda in discussion of relations between Australia and Papua New Guinea emphasises that Australians and Papua New Guineans have been working together and learning about each other for several generations. Unfortunately though, this largely stopped after 1975. Some Australians still do business there; some still live there; very few take holidays there. Still fewer Papua New Guineans have the opportunity to visit or work in Australia.<sup>141</sup> This exchange needs to occur in two directions, allowing both Australians and Papua New Guineans to better understand each other.<sup>142</sup>

The Papua New Guinean people in general have considerable goodwill in their view of Australia and of Australians, but their amity is tempered by some concerns about how Australia behaves towards them. Australia could readily demonstrate its own good faith in the following ways:

- Implement an aid program that addresses the most pressing daily concerns of the people, and that builds on existing approaches and capacities;
- Facilitate Papua New Guinea’s access to Australian markets;
- Develop a more accessible presence in the country, including a preparedness to spend more time observing and listening to Papua New Guinean approaches;
- Encourage a variety of opportunities for contact between Australians and Papua New Guineans, in both Australia and Papua New Guinea.

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<sup>138</sup> Professor Allan Patience, *The ECP and Australia’s Middle Power Ambitions*, ANU 2005.

<sup>139</sup> Maj. Gen. (ret) Jerry Singirok, September 2005.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, Dr Clement Malau, October 2005.

<sup>142</sup> Further thinking is needed to identify new ways for Australia and Papua New Guinea to come together. More travel each way is one positive step, and round table meetings on a variety of issues may be another. It is likely that Papua New Guineans will come up with some approaches to doing this which will be unusual for Australians. This should make the interaction especially productive.

## Conclusion:

### A challenge for policy makers, and for World Vision

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*“Equality has always been important in Papua New Guinea societies... we have never had the great contrast between rich and poor that you see in so-called modern societies. If we were poor, at least we were all poor together. And the big man did not forget his obligations to those less well off. Every man or woman could count on their family to provide for them. It is this spirit of sharing and equality that we must work to preserve, even as we try to gain some of the benefits of modern technology.”<sup>143</sup>*

*- Michael Somare, 1973*

Papua New Guinea, as stated at the outset of this paper, has great potential. It has vast natural and cultural wealth and a population that wants to use these assets to live a good life. Rapid transformation across the country is making ‘a good life’ harder to attain, but many are responding to the challenges brought about by change in ways that improve life for themselves and those around them. Jerry Singirok asserted that, “We Papua New Guineans have known what we are doing for thousands of years”. Their diverse responses to today’s problems suggest that this has not changed. As new challenges emerge, they are exploring how best to overcome them.

This does not deny the scale of the problems, nor that Papua New Guinean people do want external help. However, it poses a challenge for those in Papua New Guinea, Australia and elsewhere who are serious about helping the people create a sustainable, prosperous future. Our challenge is, in deploying our resources and our experience of the globalised world, to achieve the optimal development outcomes for Papua New Guineans by recognising, enhancing and complementing their hard work and their existing achievements. It does not mean that we comply with everything they say, or that we abandon all that we are currently doing. It does mean that we take the time to listen, to observe and to learn; and that we give them the same opportunity.

The governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia, NGOs like World Vision, academics and other members of civil society all look at Papua New Guinea from different perspectives, be they human rights, security or economic development. These perspectives form the basis of a robust and ongoing debate. A failing we all share, however, is a tendency to see the forest and not the trees, to talk about some entity called ‘PNG’ and to forget about the Papua New Guinean people who live there. Theirs are the problems we are discussing, and theirs is the experience we should be seeking. In preparing this paper, this is what World Vision has set out to do.

The objective of this paper is to present indigenous perspectives on Papua New Guinean development. It is not the intent of this work to formulate policy and program recommendations, although many well-argued suggestions were made throughout the interview process. A selection of these, offered for further research and discussion, is included under Recommendations below.

Three ideas emerged particularly strongly, cutting across all of the central themes of discussion: Papua New Guinean sovereignty, principled leadership, and the continued importance of poverty reduction. These were articulated in many different ways by those who contributed to this research, and could usefully be seen as ‘guiding principles’ for those concerned with the development of Papua New Guinea:

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<sup>143</sup> Somare. M. 1975.

### **1. Sovereignty**

As stated in the country's Constitution, Papua New Guineans are responsible for their own development. The role of Australian government and civil society is to engage in dialogue with their counterparts in Papua New Guinea, recognising both their sovereign right to determine their future and each country's respective strengths, resources and interests.

### **2. Leadership**

Strong, principled indigenous Papua New Guinean leadership, at all levels of government and civil society, is necessary to build independence, accountability and nationhood. Whether leading by example, inspiration, authority or integrity, good leaders will play a crucial role in their country's future. It is vital that current and future leaders be identified and equipped to fulfil their potential, and that the social and political environment in which they work enables them to act in the best interests of those they lead.

### **3. Poverty reduction**

Direct poverty reduction is critical for the achievement of positive change in all the thematic areas addressed in this paper. Poverty alleviation contributes to a reduction in violence, corruption and the spread of HIV as surely as to improved health and educational facilities. While the increase in urban poverty is acknowledged, this is particularly vital for Papua New Guinea's rural population, 85 percent of the total. All parties to Papua New Guinea's development should deliver on their stated commitment to poverty reduction as the priority of their programs.

There are many ways in which these principles can be implemented. Some are already in progress and further actions have been suggested by those who contributed to this paper. For World Vision Australia, these ideas will form the basis of our continuing conversation with our friends to the north.

# Recommendations:

## Some Papua New Guinean suggestions for action

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The following points are a summation of the many recommendations made by the Papua New Guinean people who contributed to this paper. They suggest actions to be taken by the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia, by academics, by NGOs and other civil society organisations, and not least by ordinary Papua New Guineans themselves. Many are already being implemented, whether on a large or small scale.

### *People*

- Reconsider how best to implement Papua New Guinea's Constitution to actively support its principles of people-centred development.
- Meet the population's basic needs, and empower them to act for themselves and their communities.
- Take positive action to achieve freedom for women to participate fully in all walks of life.
- Identify, recognise and nurture excellence in all walks of life.
- Prioritise donor funding for activities that benefit those who most directly require assistance.

### *Education*

- Review school curricula to best prepare young Papua New Guineans for their future lives, in particular by integrating vocational education into the mainstream curriculum.
- Resource schools to a sufficient level to adequately educate Papua New Guinea's very youthful population.
- Bring education out of the classroom, for example by making affordable and appropriate children's books widely available.
- Promote community ownership of education services through local authority to set school fees and the further development of *tok ples* education.

### *Livelihood*

- Ensure widespread access to information through media including radio, internet, newspapers and telecommunications. Improved information flows will benefit Papua New Guineans in all aspects of life, including education, security and government accountability.
- Assist Papua New Guineans in seeking their own solutions to the land title issue.
- Increase the range of livelihood options available through means such as short term labour migration.
- Nurture the informal sector, with particular recognition of its role in promoting women's livelihoods.
- Develop infrastructure to ensure market access for remote communities.

### *Independence*

- Promote understanding of the nation's achievements and potential.
- Build national pride.
- Facilitate improved Papua New Guinean coordination of donor activity.
- End the silence on violence and corruption.

### *Tradition and modernity*

- Research and disseminate Papua New Guinean perspectives on the economy, society and politics.
- Restore positive traditional cultural knowledge and practices.
- Challenge the abuse of both Papua New Guinea's traditional way of life and the new political, social and economic systems.



*Violence and abuse*

- End social and institutional acceptance of public and private violent behaviour.
- Reform and appropriately resource law enforcement agencies, especially police and prisons.
- Minimise poverty to reduce incentives for violent action, and to strengthen the most vulnerable among the population.
- End the gun culture.

*Government accountability*

- Invest in raising awareness among voters and candidates in the 2007 election to support implementation of the new preferential voting system.
- Develop critical thinking skills for politicians and public servants.
- Support both capacity building of government and empowerment of civil society to engage with government at all levels.
- Challenge corruption.
- Review the country's legal framework to more effectively reflect the Constitution, beginning with the Organic Law.

*Leadership*

- Assist Papua New Guinea's future leaders across all fields.
- Ground leaders in the positive aspects of both their traditional values and the more recently introduced systems to optimally serve the interests of those they represent.
- Actively promote the acceptance of women in public leadership roles.

*Australia*

- Revitalise the close links that existed between Australians and Papua New Guineans prior to 1975.
- Educate Australians further about Papua New Guineans and their country.
- Demonstrate the sincerity of the Australian Government's commitment to helping its closest neighbour.

## **Appendix I: Consultation List**

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List of individuals and organisations consulted during field monitoring visit, 18 September to 1 October 2005 and persons consulted in Australia before and after the field visit:

### Madang town and province

#### *Bismark Ramu Group*

Mr John Chitua  
Mr Yanni Guman  
Mr Barry Lalley

*Begasin Bugati Rural Development Program participants (Begasin Bugati is funded by the AusAID Incentive Fund)*  
Moses and friends (another man, his wife and young son)

#### *World Vision, Madang Office*

Mr Fred Hombuanje, Program Manager, Begasin Bugati Rural Development Program  
Mr David Chika Hapoto, Project Manager, Ridim Laip Functional Literacy Project  
Ms Sharryl Ivahupa, Project Manager, Multiplication of Sweet Potato Varieties Project  
Mr Max Kuduk, Emergency Coordinator, Manam Island Rehabilitation Project  
Other staff

### Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province

#### *Melanesian Institute*

Father Nic Degroot, Director  
Reverend Hermann Spingler, Assistant Director  
Kenny, a local beekeeper

#### *University of Goroka*

Dr Felix Babilis

#### *Research and Conservation Foundation*

Ms Sangion Tiu, Teacher Trainer  
Ms Primas Kapi, Program Manager, Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area

#### *Oxfam*

Mr Alphonse Benny, Volunteer

#### *Family Voice Inc*

Ms Naomi Yupae, Director

#### *Gabukuzuba Human Development Foundation*

Mr Lutie Apo, village leader  
Mr Barclay Kaupa  
Thomas

#### *Community Justice Liaison Unit*

Ms Janice Drewe, Community Development Advisor

Buka, Bougainville Autonomous Region

*Buka town*

Mr Jonathan Ngati, Member for Siwai, Autonomous Government of Bougainville  
Mr Louis Kurika, National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) Atolls Program  
Mr Junior Anagu, teacher, Hutjena High School

*Gogobei Village*

A retired priest, Gerry, and his wife  
Various young men and children

*Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum*

Ms Monica Samutaga, Coordinator  
Glenda, Finance  
Rachel, Women's Peace Education Project  
Celestine

*Bougainville Autonomous Region Administration*

Mr Peter Tsemalali, Administrator of Bougainville  
Mr Timothy Gaimante, Executive Officer  
Mr Patrick Kolas, Secretary for the Economic Division  
Mr Leslie Tseraha, Government Planning Officer

*World Vision, Buka Office*

Mr Elias Nara, Project Manager, Wara Laip Blong Yumi Project  
Mr Mark Kuraya, Finance and Administration Coordinator, Wara Laip Blong Yumi Project  
Mr. Steven Nobli, Water & Sanitation Officer with Wara Laip Blong Yumi Project  
Other program staff

Port Moresby

*Department of Development Cooperation*

Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development  
Molly Daure, First Assistant Secretary  
Ms Marion Jacka, Community Education Adviser

Major General (retired) Jerry Singirok

*Community Development Scheme*

Mr Naiwuho Garry Ahai  
Mr Keith Tuckwell

*Basic Education Development Project*

Ms Flavia Arnold

*Stop AIDS*

Mr Richard Steele, Director

*Kup Women for Peace*

Ms Sarah Garap (also works for the UNICEF funded National Law and Justice Sector Program)

*Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council Secretariat*

Mr Alois Francis  
Mr John Valde, Informal Sector  
Barbara, Communications

Ms Jessica Redwood, policy, advocacy, strategic planning  
Gary, informal Sector

*Transparency International, Papua New Guinea*  
Mr Marcus Pelto, Executive Officer  
Secretariat staff

*National Research Institute Seminar: Specific Directions for Research into Corruption in Papua New Guinea, 29 September 2005*

Mr Albert Ayius, Research Fellow, National Research Institute  
Dr Alphonse Gelu, University of Papua New Guinea  
Mr Richard Kassman, Director, Transparency International, Papua New Guinea (also Marcus Pelto)  
A Detective Chief Inspector with the Papua New Guinea Police Fraud Squad  
Mr John Collins Hevieta, Senior Investigative Officer, Papua New Guinea Ombudsman's Commission  
Professor Ron May, Australian National University  
Professor Allan Patience, University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG)  
Mr John Karenga and other students at UPNG  
Mr Peter Donigi, CBE

*Prime Minister's Department*  
Dr Paul Ngabung, Education and Health Adviser

*World Vision Pacific Development Group*  
Mr Don Bradford, National Director  
Ms Sally Henderson, Program Manager  
Ms Linda Tule, Logistics Co-ordinator, Review and Monitoring Panel  
Ms Frieda Kana, Communications Manager  
Mr Apelis Benson, Manager, Capacity Building Project

Ms Deb Chapman & Ms Tamana Tenehoe, consultants to World Vision. Ms Chapman and Ms Tenehoe participated in some meetings in Madang, Buka and Port Moresby.

### In Australia

*Burnet Institute, Melbourne, 12 August 2005*  
Dr Clement Malau, Public Health Management Specialist

*Australian National University, Canberra, 18 August 2005*  
Ms Elizabeth Cox, HELP Resources, Wewak, Papua New Guinea; speaking at *Community Engagement in Papua New Guinea* seminar,

*PNG Forum on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS, 13 October 2005. Hosted by Australian Reproductive Health Alliance and held at Botanic Gardens, Canberra.*

Dame Carol Kidu  
Dr Richard Feachem, Director, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria  
Dr Katherine Lepani  
Dr Clement Malau

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