

Whitlam Institute

WITHIN WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

PNG VOICES: LISTENING TO AUSTRALIA'S CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR

PAPUA NEW GUINEAN PERSPECTIVES ON AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD



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About the Whitlam Institute

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"...help the great and continuing work of building a more equal, open, tolerant and independent Australia."
Gough Whitlam 2010

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Cover image by Dr Hannah Sarvasy: Mr. Jio Yukyuk of Toweth village, Morobe Province models traditional dress to perform songs.

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Abbreviations and terminology

AUD	Australian dollars
Australian Aid	The Australian government’s international aid program (formerly AUSAID)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DWU	Divine Word University
GDP	gross domestic product
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
PGK	Papua New Guinean kina
PNG	Papua New Guinea
Unitech	Papua New Guinea University of Technology
UPNG	University of Papua New Guinea
WSU	Western Sydney University



Mr. John Pukau in full regalia for the regular Crocodile Festival at Ambunti, East Sepik Province, PNG. PHOTO BY MR. JAMES LAKI

Foreword

When we in Australia talk of our regional neighbourhood it can cover a large part of the globe from India through to the Pacific Rim. At other times, it will be more defined. There can be no dispute, however, that our nearest neighbour is Papua New Guinea (PNG) and that the relationship between us is unlike any other. We are bound together by history and geography, by story and mythology, by the exchanges and myriad relationships between our peoples.

Gough Whitlam's interest in PNG can be traced back to his wartime experiences but his unwavering determination to end Australia's colonial ties and to support PNG independence is evident from the time of his first speech on Foreign Policy as the member for Werriwa in 1953. He was a persistent advocate and regular visitor to PNG throughout his years in opposition.

The ALP National Conference in 1965 cleared the way for Whitlam to "speak more freely on PNG independence" and the resurgence marked by the unexpectedly close result in the 1969 election paved the way for swift action when forming government in 1972. Whitlam came to government in 1972 with Labor's commitment to "wholehearted cooperation" with the New Guinea House of Assembly to achieve its timetable for self-government and independence.

There has been some debate as to whether the Whitlam Government rushed PNG independence. However, the question of whether independence should or could have been delayed assumes that it was up to us and not the people of PNG themselves. Their will. Their efforts. Their decision. I was also struck by the comment of one informed reviewer of this paper, with a long history of engagement with PNG, that the real point is that the process could and should have started much earlier.

The Whitlam Government survived long enough for PNG's independence to be realised on 16 September 1975.

Whitlam believed that "the independence of PNG [was] an inevitable part of the working out of tremendous tides of history." Moreover, he maintained that an independent PNG was essential to Australia's own future and standing in the world. "Australia," he insisted, "is no longer willing to be a ruler of a colony."

Yet, as we have learned, the shackles of colonialism may be unlocked but the wounds are not so easily healed. It occurred to me on first reading this profoundly insightful paper that you can hear the traces of the colonial legacy among the voices of the 536 citizens from 21 of Papua New Guinea's 22 Provinces who contributed to this work.

It is striking that several of the issues highlighted by those interviewed and surveyed in *PNG Voices: Listening to our closest neighbour* echo concerns Whitlam himself raised and sought to act upon across the span of his parliamentary career: access to education and healthcare, mutual respect and genuine independence not the least among them.

The report makes for sober reading. While we can take heart from the report's findings that respondents were largely positive about Australia, it would be both foolish and a disservice to these neighbours of ours if we were not to properly listen to what they have to say and to deliberate on what it might mean for our official relationship, the aid we offer, the attitudes we bring to the table and the depth of our understanding.

Our thanks go to Dr Hannah Sarvasy, who has coordinated this important research, and to her colleagues. We are particularly grateful to the report's co-authors in PNG whose efforts have made this initiative possible and of such value.

Eric Sidoti

Interim Director, Whitlam Institute





Villagers wave to a helicopter that had delivered bags of rice to remote Toweth village, Morobe Province, in the severe drought of 2016. PHOTO BY MR. GAVIN JONES.

Executive Summary

In 2021, a broad coalition of researchers embarked on an unprecedented endeavour: to ask hundreds of ordinary Papua New Guineans about the strengths and challenges of Papua New Guinea (PNG), their dreams for PNG's future, and how they see Australia's relationship with PNG.

PNG is Australia's closest neighbour, and the single largest recipient of Australian development assistance. The two nations share a prehistory, and more recently, a colonial history. But despite this apparent closeness, few Australians today can say that they know how people in PNG feel about their own communities or about Australia, or about the impacts of Australian tax monies in PNG.

The present study, *PNG Voices*, represents the first time, to our knowledge, that an Australian institution has sought the opinions of a wide swathe of PNG citizens about their realities and their perception of Australia. We asked 536 Papua New Guineans, originating in 21 of PNG's 22 Provinces, to reflect on:

- the strengths and assets of their communities and of PNG as a whole;
- the challenges facing their communities and PNG as a whole;
- their dreams for their communities;
- Australia and Australians, and Australia's relationship with PNG;
- the types of foreign investment in PNG by different actors.

This project was conceived to draw on and support research capacity in PNG. It was thus a broad collaborative effort between Western Sydney University and researchers at: Divine Word University (Madang), the PNG University of Technology (Lae), the University of PNG (Port Moresby), and the communities of Uruwa Ward 1, a remote, road-less region in the Saruwaged Mountains of Morobe Province, PNG. Of the 536 respondents, 326 people responded to online surveys; 120 responded to an in-person survey in their own language in the remote Morobe Province villages; 44 participated in Madang-area focus group discussions; and 46 participated in semistructured one-on-one interviews in Lae and Port Moresby. The majority of online survey respondents, interviewees, and focus group participants were university-educated, in contrast to the remote Morobe Province villagers, many of whom lacked any formal education.

In this report, we present distributions and themes from responses to the surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The responses are inspiring in their detail, thoughtfulness, and depth of emotion. Many online respondents wrote entire paragraphs into the free response boxes. The 120 remote villagers' responses were, overall, terser than those of the other 416 respondents. Most villagers are not used to being interviewed about these issues, and some took two hours or more to think through their responses. But their remarkable perspectives, and the major differences from those of the more urban or educated respondents, hint at the tremendous range of experiences and stances in PNG, some of which never filter through to policymakers.

We advocate, foremost, for Australians and others to "hear" the words of the Papua New Guineans that are summarized and excerpted verbatim throughout the report, and in the Appendix. We refrain from offering policy recommendations based on them. Apart from basic background information in the beginning of the report, we do not provide in-depth historical or policy notes; nor do we fact-check or argue for or against the opinions expressed by respondents. We strive here to allow the responses to stand in their own right.

Australia's *Pacific Step-up* signals a renewed, deepening engagement with our region that demands a nuanced understanding of other Pacific nations and peoples (Stepping-up Australia's engagement with our Pacific family, 2020). In line with this, the Whitlam Institute within Western Sydney University commissioned *PNG Voices* to build on the Whitlam Institute's 2020 report *Pacific Perspectives on the World* (Peacifica, 2020). Both reports are part of a broad research initiative to build regional capacity among Australian policymakers by amplifying voices that are rarely heard in more official forums. Some of the findings in *PNG Voices* echo those of the Institute's *Pacific Perspectives on the World* report, which focused on Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. But PNG has a special relationship with Australia, even among Pacific Islands, and has a uniquely diverse population—with more languages than any other nation in the world, in a country of just nine million people—and the responses here may reflect this.

In sum, this has been the first major survey of Papua New Guinean attitudes toward PNG and Australia's role in it. The key findings of *PNG Voices* do not always make for easy reading. Some readers may find points of dissonance between how some in PNG view Australia and how the Australia-PNG relationship is framed and understood by Australian policymakers. Let those points, along with the detail and subtleties of the responses as a whole, guide renewed reflection on Australia's relationship with PNG and, perhaps, recalibration of Australian policies with our closest neighbour.

Summary of Findings

Respondents highly valued PNG's environment and natural resources. They expressed pride in Papua New Guinean cultural norms of kindness, hospitality, and respect. They further acknowledged PNG's place as the world's most linguistically diverse nation, and its vast cultural diversity. The remotest villagers expressed pride in the flowering plants of their region.

All respondents acknowledged that PNG faces major challenges. But while online respondents tended to note a broad range of challenges, including corruption, poverty, access to education, access to healthcare, and a lack of basic infrastructure, the remote villagers were more selective, focusing on law and order issues for PNG, and roads and healthcare for their own communities. Only one person in the remote community mentioned nepotism; none mentioned corruption.

When asked about their dreams for PNG, many responses involved surmounting the current array of challenges: ending corruption, building local capacity, and improving services and infrastructure. The remote villagers overwhelmingly hoped for higher education levels for their communities, beyond all other dreams.

Overall, respondents were largely positive about Australia. Respondents widely praised Australia's role in supporting PNG financially. However, some expressed concern at Australia's perceived lack of respect for PNG sovereignty and cultural norms, or opined that Australia should invest more in local capacity development. China won out over Australia as the country perceived as investing the most in infrastructure in PNG. Some respondents felt that Australian development sometimes stopped in the major cities, and that remote communities were unaware of Australian Aid. Indeed, more of the remote Morobe villagers could name types of Chinese investments in PNG than types of Australian investments in PNG.

When asked about negative aspects of Australia or Australians, perceived racism and condescension toward PNG and Papua New Guineans loomed large for all groups except the remote villagers. In some cases, respondents cited

their own experiences of racism or stories related to them by contacts. This was contrasted by several respondents with the behaviour of Asian nationals or nationals of other countries, who were perceived to treat PNG citizens as equals in business and other matters.

Belief in the existence of "boomerang aid," through which Australia pursues its own interests and employs its own consultants while ostensibly helping PNG, was widespread. Many expressed the opinions that Australia aids PNG for self-serving geopolitical or economic reasons and that Australia uses PNG's financial dependency to its own advantage, seeking to dictate PNG's policies and priorities. While most acknowledged that China and other actors were also self-interested, some expressed the perception that China did not try to meddle with PNG national policies in the same way as Australia did.

Some respondents found proof for the self-serving nature of Australian aid in asymmetries between the two countries in visa, work, and study policies. The PNG visa-on-arrival issued to Australians contrasted with the entry requirements for Papua New Guineans into Australia. Numerous respondents criticized the restrictions on subject areas for the tertiary Australia Awards scholarships. Several respondents wanted better access to markets for PNG goods in Australia, and better access to seasonal work there.

Papua New Guineans speak over 10% of the world's languages and have highly diverse cultural traditions. Despite this, the responses of educated Papua New Guineans were remarkably similar across both genders, five different age cohorts, and Province of origin. Their responses greatly contrast, however, with those of the remote villagers. *PNG Voices* thus reveals that the major division in perceptions of PNG society and of Australia's relationship with PNG lies, not between women and men, or people of different ages, but between educated Papua New Guineans living in the cities, towns, and other areas with strong internet access, and villagers in the hinterlands.



Approach by sea to a village on Manus Island. PHOTO BY MR. MAHOLOPA LAVELL.

This has been the first major study of Papua New Guinean attitudes toward their own society and Australia's role in it. Several key messages emerge as of particular note for Australian policymakers:

1. Perception of Australian Aid as "boomerang aid."

Many respondents expressed the belief that Australian Aid funds primarily benefited Australian nationals financially, and/or that Australia's investment in PNG served a broader geopolitical strategy to maintain influence in PNG and keep others out.

2. Papua New Guineans' deep connection to their lands, and the profound power of traditional landownership.

Respondents extolled PNG's natural resources, but not just as potential sources of income, to be exploited. For many, these were framed as treasures of biodiversity that both sustain life with their bounty and house ancestral spirits and connections. Beyond this, focus group participants noted that the reality of traditional land ownership throughout the nation has powerful ramifications: even "if the government is going corrupt, we own the land."

3. Major differences between remote villagers' perceptions and the ways they framed their responses, and those of educated respondents.

Aside from major differences in perceived strengths and challenges of PNG, and their dreams for their communities, the remote villagers also were much less aware of Australian Aid and Australian investment activities in PNG than were educated respondents. Only 37% of remote villagers had heard of the Kokoda Track, one of the iconic sites of Australian military history in PNG. One of the few areas in which the remote villagers' perceptions accorded with those of the online survey respondents was the perception of China as the major outside investor in PNG's infrastructure.

4. Perception of Australian racism and/or condescension toward PNG.

Racism and condescension toward PNG were the most commonly cited negative attributes of Australians for the online survey respondents and focus group participants. Some wrote that they had experienced racism themselves while studying, working, or traveling in Australia; others reported this as the experience of friends or associates. Condescension toward Papua New Guineans was couched by some respondents as a negative side of the colonial legacy, and sometimes contrasted with the demeanour of people from other countries, especially Asian nations (see below).

5. Perception of inequity in Australian visa processes and the priority subject areas funded by Australia Awards scholarships.

Australians' PNG visa-on-arrival was contrasted with the entry requirements for Papua New Guineans into Australia. Getting to Australia was described by one respondent as

like "reaching heaven." Some respondents also perceived PNG as disadvantaged in Australian visa awards, compared to other Pacific nations. Several respondents bemoaned the absence of basic/pure science, engineering, and mathematics courses from the list of priority areas supported in the Australia Awards scholarships scheme (currently limited to Agriculture, Education, Governance, Health, Law and Justice, Transport and Infrastructure). Respondents cited the importance of such study to building PNG's scientific capacity to eventually increase local production of goods.

6. Perception that Australia is a haven for the investment of corrupt PNG funds.

Some educated respondents expressed the belief that much laundered PNG money—some of it claimed to come from Australian Aid—ends up invested in Australian properties, and accused the Australian government of willfully ignoring this trend.

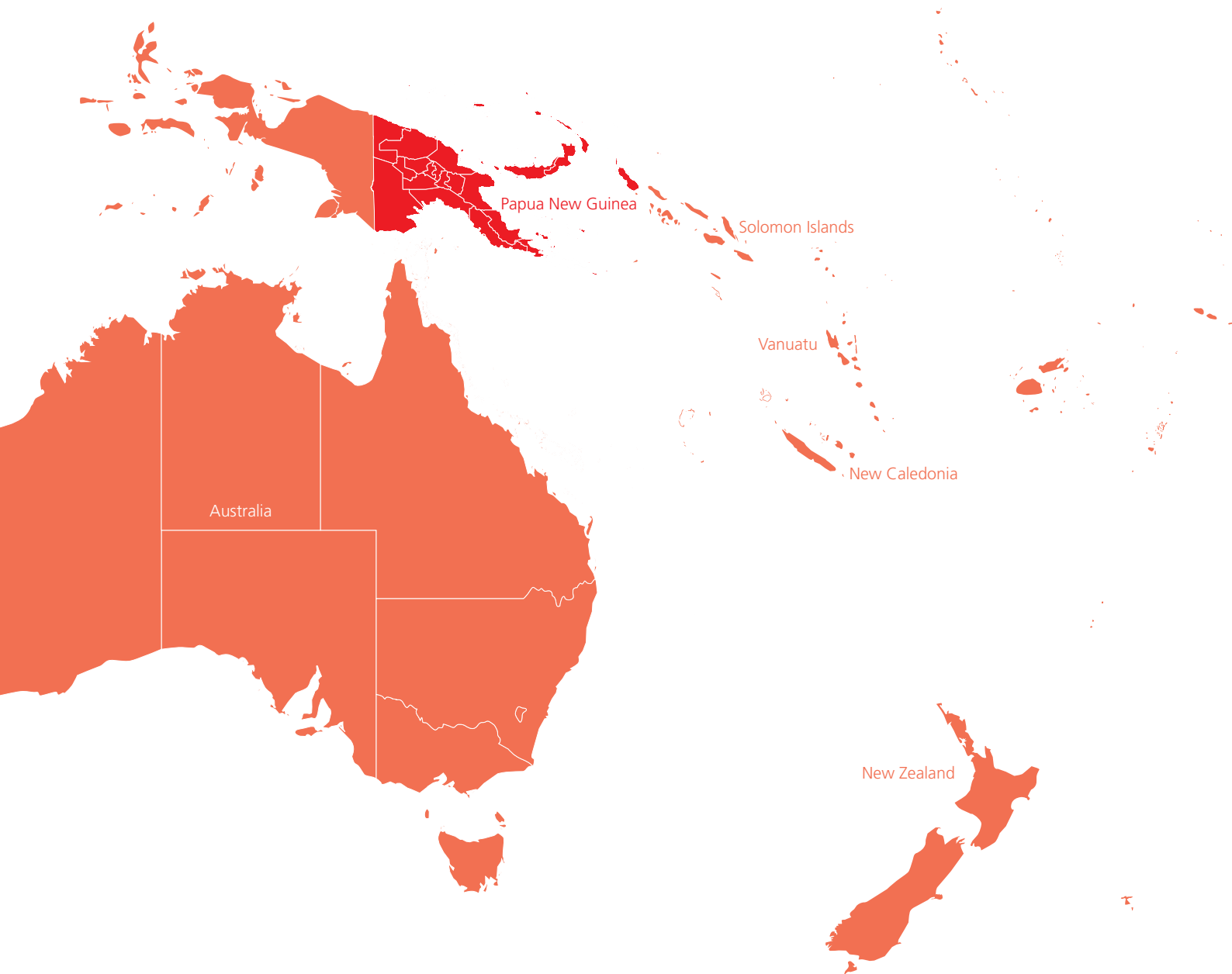
7. Perception that China and "Asian" nations are more visible than Australia on the ground in PNG, and that their governments may be more respectful of PNG sovereignty than Australia is.

Some respondents had negative views of the quality of Chinese or "Asian" work and goods compared with those from Australia, and negative impressions of Chinese or Asian employers, compared with Australian employers. But several expressed the opinion that the approach of China and other Asian nations to PNG was superior to Australia's in that the Asians approached Papua New Guineans as equals, not as former colonial masters. Such respondents described the Chinese as aiming for purely economic agreements, without also trying to dictate unrelated PNG government policies. This was contrasted with Australia, which was perceived to meddle in PNG sovereign affairs.

Infrastructure is a top concern of Papua New Guineans across regions, and China was perceived by a majority of online respondents as the major foreign investor in PNG's infrastructure, above Australia. Finally, some respondents reported that the Chinese and other Asian nationals were highly visible in PNG's urban areas, in contrast to Australians, who were said by some to help PNG "at arm's length."

8. Desire to develop in a particularly Papua New Guinean way, maintaining positive aspects of culture and language.

Many respondents affirmed the specialness and positive aspects of PNG's diverse languages and cultures. Some, especially in the focus groups and interviews, articulated a vision for PNG's future that maintained the positive aspects of PNG's languages and cultures while embracing "progress" in other areas. Some respondents beseeched Australians to invest more in understanding the diverse cultures and languages of PNG.



1. About PNG

Papua New Guinea (PNG), the nation occupying the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, is Australia's closest neighbour. The land possessions of the two nations are separated by less than 4 kilometres, and flights from Cairns, Australia, to PNG's capital, Port Moresby, take about one hour. PNG has 22 Provinces (including the National Capital District) and a population of over 9 million. With roughly 840 Indigenous languages, PNG is the world's capital of linguistic diversity: its languages comprise 12% of the world's total 7,000 living languages, and are as different among themselves as Mandarin, Russian, and Swahili (Palmer, 2017; Kik *et al.*, 2021). Languages are important as primary markers of group identity (Landweer, 2012; Wurm, 2007). Cultural practices also vary widely throughout the nation, and are often unique in the world (Aikhenvald, 2008; Amha, Slotta and Sarvasy, 2021; Sarvasy, Amha and Slotta, 2021).

The island of New Guinea is one of the world's cradles of agriculture, and the place where both sugar cane and bananas (highly important crops in modern times) are believed to have first been cultivated (Denham *et al.*, 2003). Agriculture has been practiced continuously in at least some parts of the country for thousands of years (Neumann, 2003). Of the world's islands, PNG has the most diverse flora; 5% of the world's plant species are found in PNG (Novotny and Molem, 2020). PNG's population is one of the least urbanized in the world, with 87% of the population living in rural areas (Worldometer, 2020).

Sixty years after the western portion of the island of New Guinea was claimed by the Dutch in 1828, the German New Guinea Company nominally controlled the northeastern part of the island (New Guinea), and the British claimed a protectorate over the southeastern part (Papua). The earliest foreign plantations were established in German New Guinea (Jackson and Standish, 2019).

The British passed administration of Papua to Australia in 1906. Germans were pushed out of New Guinea by Australia in World War I, and in 1921 the League of Nations recognized Australian control of that part of the island, in addition to Papua. But these two regions under Australian control continued to be administered separately. They were combined into the Territory of Papua and New Guinea in 1945 (Jackson and Standish, 2019). Australians were among the first “white” people to “make contact” with tens of thousands of inland peoples in the 1930s.

The Territory was the locus of major fighting in World War II between Australian and Japanese forces, and holds a special place in the Australian collective memory for fierce fighting and the actions of the so-called local “fuzzy-wuzzy angels” who aided Australian forces in rugged terrain along the Kokoda Track near Port Moresby.

Australian efforts to promote education and capacity building within the Territory expanded in 1960, due in part to international pressure (Standish, 2019). As Opposition Leader, Gough Whitlam had been an early supporter of self-government for PNG and had promised a timely transition to full independence during the election campaign in 1972, making two high profile visits to PNG in 1970 and 1971. After his election Whitlam continued to view Independence for PNG as a high priority for his government and set a timetable for achieving that goal. Papua New Guinea achieved self-government in 1973 and full Independence in September 1975, at which point Michael Somare became the first Prime Minister of the new PNG. He was knighted in 1990.

In 1975, Australian aid funds constituted almost half of the PNG budget (Standish, 2019). Australia’s continuing commitment to support PNG is reflected in its massive annual bilateral aid program, ongoing since 1975. In 2019–2020, Australia’s Department of Foreign Aid and Trade (DFAT) had an aid budget of \$512.3 million for PNG: the largest aid package for any single country, by far (Australian aid budget at a glance 2019–20, 2020).

Forty-six years after independence was declared, but less than 100 years after many peoples in the Highlands had their first encounters with “white” foreigners, PNG has become a major exporter of crucial natural resources: oil, natural gas—especially via ExxonMobil’s large LNG project, critiqued for not contributing enough to the PNG economy (Flanagan and Fletcher, 2018)—gold, and copper. It also exports cash crops: palm oil, coffee, coconut, cocoa, copra and fish.

Despite its wealth of natural resources, PNG suffers major structural challenges. Much of the country lacks basic infrastructure and services. Endemic corruption is said to permeate multiple levels of government and society (Transparency International, 2022). Government services in all areas (healthcare, education, infrastructure, law enforcement, capacity building) are highly inadequate. Only about 15% of children in PNG attend secondary school (National Statistical Office, 2019). In 2002, on average one of the seven salaried teachers per primary school in a World Bank sampling was a “ghost teacher”: paid, but physically absent from the school (National Research Institute and Filmer, 2013). Ghost teacher percentages were highest in Morobe Province, where this accounted for 31.3% of all teachers, and in remote regions throughout the country. Similarly, up to 70% of health

centres sampled in the same study had some absent staff on a given day, with the highest absence rates noted for hospitals and rural health centres (National Research Institute and Filmer, 2013). In 2020, the national debt of Papua New Guinea reached the highest level since 1994, relative to GDP, at 48.9% of GDP (Trading Economics, 2022).

Policy Context: Stepping up in the Pacific

While Australia has historically been PNG’s largest development partner, the framing and understanding of the bilateral relationship by successive Australian governments have shifted over time. Terms like “commitment,” “partnership,” and “friendship” have often been used to articulate Australia’s close relationship with PNG (Wallis, 2021). The Australian government’s recent Pacific Step-up initiative seeks to further deepen Australia’s regional and bilateral engagement with Pacific Island states, including PNG (Foreign Policy White Paper, 2017).

This renewed commitment is in part a response to the changing geopolitics of the region and an evolving strategic environment, in which China is perceived to be increasingly visible and active. In scope and intent, however, the Pacific Step-up is a broad unilateral agenda, covering economic and strategic initiatives, but also seeking to deepen people-to-people links and cultural ties, and to “promote healthy, educated, inclusive populations” (Stepping-up Australia’s engagement with our Pacific family, 2020). A measure of the high priority of the “step-up” in Australia’s foreign policy is the establishment of a dedicated cross-agency Office of the Pacific to better coordinate Australia’s engagement with the region across sectors of government.

The “step-up” is not only about developing stronger relationships with Pacific island states; it also aims to shift the terms of Australia’s engagement and the way it is understood within the region and beyond. Concomitant conceptual framing in terms of profound personal, historical and cultural ties and an emphasis on shared political values, such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law, have emerged to depict Australia’s engagement in the region as much more than a traditional donor-recipient relationship or one based on either security or narrow economic interests. The language of “family” and “kinship ties” sometimes used by Australia’s political leaders foregrounds an affective dimension to the relationship (Wallis, 2021) based on these shared values of mutual respect, care, equality and openness.

Within this policy context of deepening engagement, there is recognition that *how* Australia engages with its Pacific neighbours matters greatly, including the capacity to listen more and better to the evolving priorities of the diverse peoples of the Pacific region. It would be a mistake to overgeneralize about Australia’s relationships in the Pacific. These relationships are diverse, and shaped by many factors: geographical proximity; historical connections; trade and investment; cultural, sporting, and educational linkages; and diaspora communities (Newton Cain and Morgan, 2020). This report seeks to contribute to the complex and necessary work of listening more and better to the diverse voices of Papua New Guineans.



Community members listen as the research project is explained in the Nungon language, Saruwaged Mountains, Morobe Province. PHOTO BY MR. STANLEY GIRIP.



Survey-taker Ms. Emily Jacob interviews a woman, Uruwa Ward 1, Morobe Province. PHOTO BY MR. STANLEY GIRIP.

2. Project and Methods

The project aimed to capture a wide cross-section of perspectives and experiences from ordinary PNG citizens not usually included in official conversations, particularly those living in a remote part of PNG. Given PNG's vast linguistic and cultural diversity and challenging physical terrain, the project was designed to achieve both geographical reach and linguistic accessibility through a complementary qualitative and quantitative methodology that was co-designed with PNG researchers.

The project aimed to build on existing research capacity within PNG, so most members of the project team were Papua New Guinean researchers living and working in PNG, along with community members from the far reaches of the Saruwaged Mountains, Morobe Province, PNG. The project comprised a multi-institutional team from: Divine Word University (DWU), the Papua New Guinea University of Technology (Unitech), the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), Western Sydney University (WSU), and the Uruwa Ward 1 community of Kabwum District, Morobe Province, PNG.

The complementary quantitative and qualitative approaches employed in the project had four key components:

- a. online surveys in Tok Pisin (one of the lingua francas of PNG) and English;
- b. in-person survey in a local language by local researchers, in five remote villages of the Saruwaged Mountains, Morobe Province;
- c. focus group discussions in Madang and surrounding villages;
- d. one-on-one semi-structured interviews in Lae and Port Moresby.

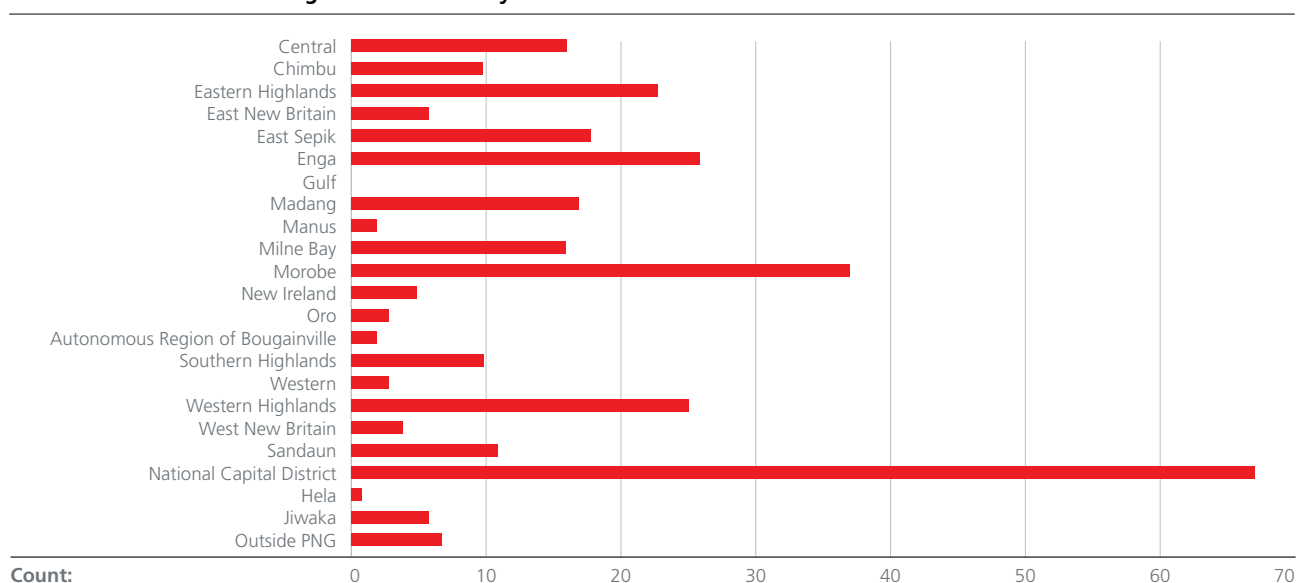
All team members participated in planning the overall project design and survey questions, with recruitment, and with data collection. Many also assisted with translation. Institutional teams took charge of analysis of the different components. **More information on the team is in the Appendix.**

In total, 536 people participated as respondents across the four components. The complementary methods deployed in the study had the advantage of allowing data to be collected through different modes, in several languages, and across diverse geographical locations in PNG. The online surveys could be freely accessed via mobile devices, allowing for geographical reach and anonymity. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews allowed for more in-depth interactions between researchers and respondents, and among respondents. In the remote Saruwaged Mountains community, data was collected via an in-person survey delivered in the local language by a local team.

Online survey (English and Tok Pisin; 326 respondents)

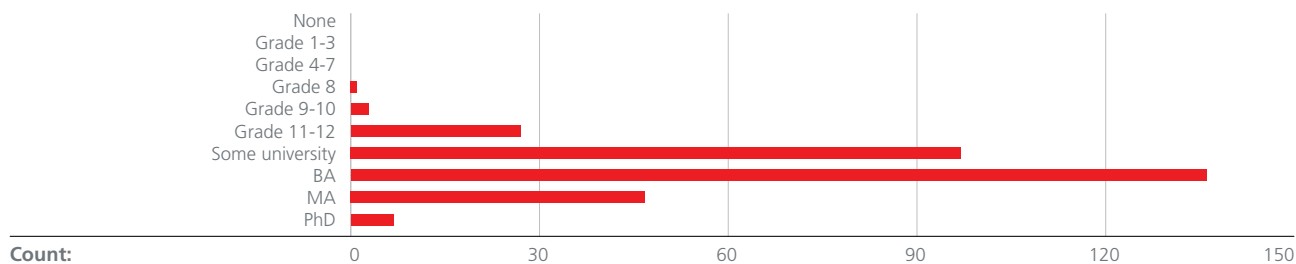
A 22-question online survey with English and Tok Pisin versions was active from 22 March, 2021, through 17 May, 2021. Of these questions, five allowed for free responses; the rest were multiple-choice, but allowed for free entry of "other" choices. The English version of the survey garnered 320 contentful responses, originating in 21 of PNG's 22 Provinces; the Tok Pisin version garnered 6 contentful responses. Free responses were coded thematically for further analysis.

2.1 Province of birth for English online survey



The population that responded to the online survey (both English and Tok Pisin versions) was overwhelmingly highly educated: 73% had at least some university, and one respondent to the Tok Pisin version, and five to the English version, had PhDs.

2.2 Highest education level obtained by the online English survey respondents

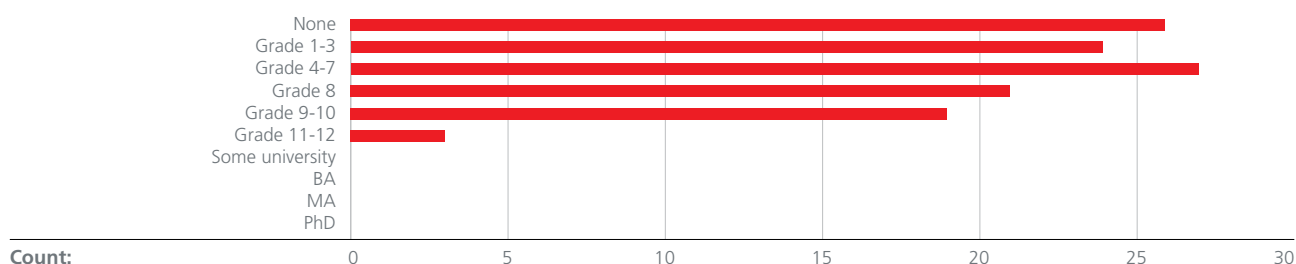


In-person remote Morobe survey (Nungon language; 120 respondents)

As noted, 87% of PNG's people live in rural areas, and only 15% attend secondary school. English or Tok Pisin are the native languages of a minority in PNG. For most people, these are their second, third, or fourth languages, and in some communities, people without formal schooling may not speak Tok Pisin or English. This is the case in five villages in the upper reaches of the Uruwa River in the western Saruwaged Range, Morobe Province, a region accessible only via a multi-day hike over the Saruwaged Mountains, or by small fixed-wing aircraft. In these villages, locals Ismael Dono, Stanly Girip, and Lyn Ögate oversaw an in-person survey of 120 villagers, conducted by nine local young people in the local Nungon language. Throughout this report, this group will be referred to as the "remote Morobe" group.

In contrast to the online survey respondents, the largest number of remote Morobe respondents had finished schooling between Year 4 and Year 7, and the second highest number of respondents had no formal education at all.

2.3 Highest education level obtained, remote Morobe survey



Focus groups and Madang interviews (44 people, Madang and surrounds)

This component of the project was overseen by Leonie Baptiste and executed by the DWU team, with assistance from two members of the Uruwa Ward 1 community. Six focus groups of 4–10 people each were run in Madang. Four of these took place on the DWU campus. The DWU team also supplemented the focus groups with six one-on-one interviews.

Focus groups and interviews followed the principle of saturation; discussion was allowed to continue until participants felt that each topic had been sufficiently discussed such that no new stances or information emerged. Focus groups and interviews alike presented people with general questions, avoiding "prompting" people directly to address particular themes. These questions fell into two major categories: (1) perspectives on PNG (positives and challenges); and (2) perspectives on Australia and other outside actors' roles in, and relationship with, PNG. Finally, participants were asked to offer recommendations to the Australian government.

The DWU team performed thematic analyses of the collected focus group transcriptions, resulting in a 44-page report, from which key messages are excerpted throughout this document.

Interviews (46 people, Lae and Port Moresby)

This component of the project, overseen by Dr. Londari Yamarak, involved semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews in Lae and Port Moresby. Six interviewees were based in Port Moresby (2 women and 4 men), and 40 interviewees were based in Lae (15 women and 25 men); interviewees hailed from 13 Provinces of PNG, and two were born overseas, but had lived in PNG for many years. Interviewees' average age was 36 years. The education level of the participants ranged from Year 6 to PhD. Interviewees were hand-selected by the Unitech and UPNG teams to represent a range of experience types with PNG business and Australian enterprise and government agencies.

These interviews had similar structure to the focus group discussions, in that general, open-ended questions were asked, without any prompting for particular themes. Dr. Yamarak distilled key information from the transcriptions into a single database, and ran thematic analyses of the collected interviews, producing a 28-page report, of which excerpts feature in the present document.

Summary of participants, by component

2.4 Participants in the study, by component

	Languages	Location	Participants	Gender	Median education level
Online survey	English and Tok Pisin	18 Provinces	326	40% female	University
In-person survey	Nungon	Kabwum District, Morobe	120	40% female	Primary school
Focus groups	English and Tok Pisin	Madang town and surrounds	44	45% female	Various
Interviews	English and Tok Pisin	Lae and Port Moresby (from 13 Provinces)	46	37% female	University
Total			536	216 (40%) female	

Limitations

In such a diverse nation, it is very difficult to claim representativeness. Thus, all results reported here should be interpreted in the context of the four participant groups above. In particular, the in-person interviews and focus group discussions reported here all took place in coastal cities, with people resident there, without any in the Highlands. But this effect was ameliorated slightly by the fact that a number of interviewees resident in Port Moresby and Lae actually claimed other Provinces, including those in the Highlands areas, as their homes/places of origins, and spoke to issues pertinent to those communities.

3. PNG today: strengths

All respondents were first asked to reflect on the strengths of their community, their Province, and/or PNG as a whole. Four major themes emerged: **environment/natural resources, ways of relating to others (friendliness, kindness, caring for family), cultural/linguistic diversity, and freedom.**

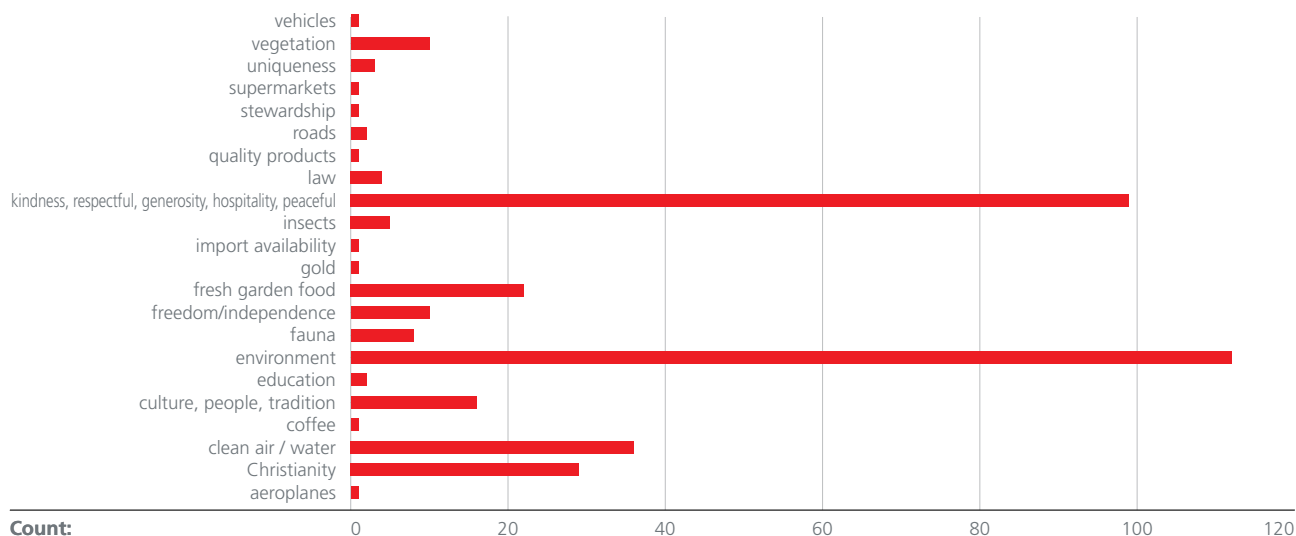
In the online and in-person surveys, this was formulated as a question with free-response answer field. The word cloud depicts words mentioned at least 10 times by respondents to the English online survey.

3.1 Word cloud from responses to “What do you love about your Province?” in the online English survey



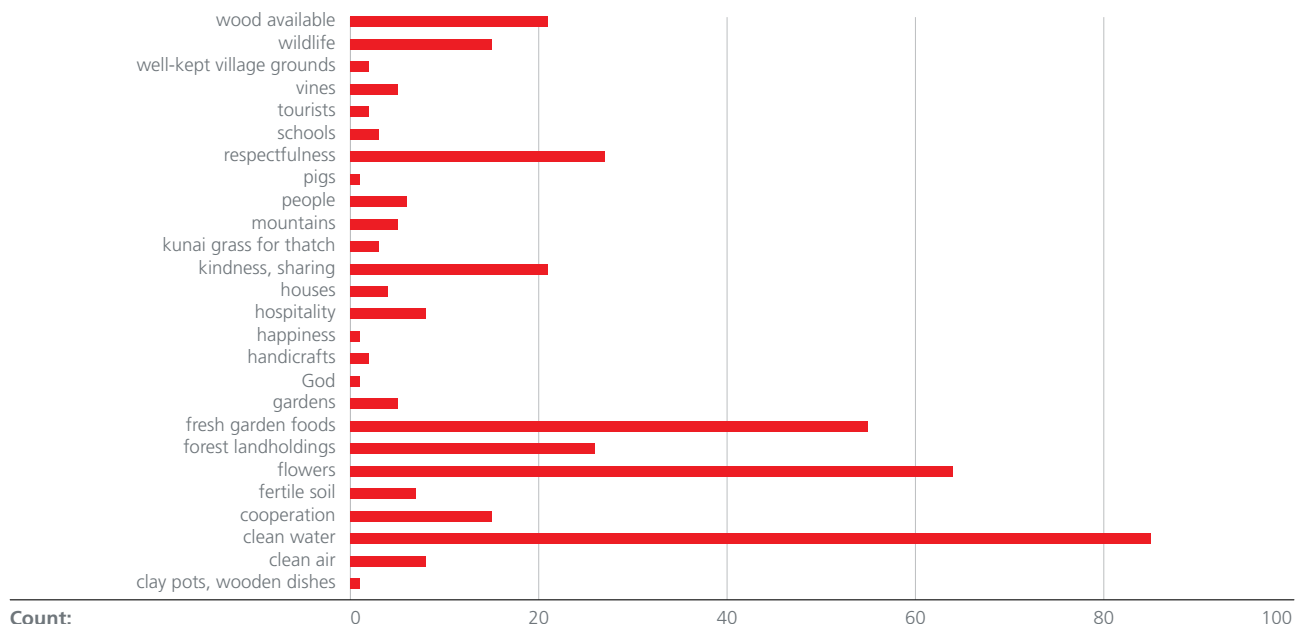
These themes are echoed in the remote Morobe responses to “What is wonderful about PNG?”: **environment**, followed by aspects of interpersonal relations (**kindness, respectfulness, generosity, hospitality, peacefulness**), followed by **clean air/water, Christianity**, then **fresh garden food**.

3.2 Themes, strengths of PNG, remote Morobe respondents



It should be noted that the remote Morobe respondents gave quite different weights to such themes when asked: “What is wonderful about your own community?”: that is, they appraised their own community differently from PNG as a whole. When assessing their own strengths, they overwhelmingly cited the theme of **clean water**, followed, touchingly, by the theme of beautiful **flowers**, mentioned by over half of respondents. **Fresh garden foods** came third, followed by **respectfulness**, then **forest landholdings**.

3.3 Themes, strengths of their community, remote Morobe respondents



In emphasizing the value of having **clean water**, these respondents may have been contrasting their community with many others in urban areas of PNG, where clean drinking water is problematic. The mention of **flowers** by over half of respondents—even more than mentioned **fresh garden foods**—speaks to local aesthetic values (people plant elaborate ornamental gardens around houses) and traditions (people are bedecked with flowers and ornamental plants in traditional dances).

Most respondents recognize **natural resources** as one of PNG’s major strengths. PNG was noted to be a major exporter of extracted resources, including **gold, copper, natural gas**, and **oil**, and of cash crops, including **palm oil, coconut, fish, coffee, timber**, and **cocoa**. A recurrent theme for respondents was that PNG’s potential lies in its natural resources, and if these are managed well, it can take care of its affairs into the future.

“**Natural resources**” here has broader and deeper connotations than just commercial exploitation. First, respondents appreciated their own power and the power of PNG citizens throughout the country as **customary landowners**. One focus group participant expressed the security of being a landowner as follows: “We own the land. If the government is going corrupt, we still own the land” (focus group participant). This is a hugely powerful fact of life in PNG.

The fertile soils, forests, and waters of PNG can be said to represent life itself for the majority of citizens—smallholder agriculturalists continuing a 40,000-year-old tradition in one of the world’s seats of agriculture. PNG’s vibrant agriculturalist tradition motivated some of the interviewees in Lae and Port Moresby to name **agriculture** as the most important area for potential investment in PNG, since farming is already an activity central to many people’s livelihoods. That said, the potential expansion of commercial farming into “raw” or “virgin” lands held by villagers, as advocated by two interviewees, could have impacts on the ecological balance maintained for millennia by smallholder agriculturalists.

That ecological balance gives “natural resources” deeper, personal and spiritual connotations for many respondents, beyond their potential to yield greater financial returns. Respondents lauded PNG’s **biodiversity, mountain and coastal vistas, and forests** with deep spiritual connections

to local landholders (special “forest languages” that aim to appease ancestral bush spirits when traveling in the forest were traditionally widespread in PNG [Sarvasy, 2019]) Remote Morobe villagers cited culturally prized **flowers** as second only to **clean water**, and well ahead of **fresh garden foods**, among the most prized aspects of their communities.

Alongside **biodiversity** and the richness of its **environment**, respondents also noted that PNG possessed **linguistic diversity** unmatched anywhere in the world, and correspondingly vast **cultural diversity**. Outsiders should recognize, as one survey respondent put it, that “one-size-fits-all” approaches would not work in PNG, called by one respondent “the land of 1,000 tribes.”

Despite this diversity, however, there may be commonalities in other aspects of culture. Respondents highly valued PNG **modes of interpersonal relations: respect, hospitality, kindness and politeness** were cited as important assets. Two focus group discussions mentioned the concept of **luksave pasin**, “a way of recognizing”: if one has a social connection to someone, that is enough to consider them family.

Finally, the theme of **freedom or independence** arose in all focus groups and surveys, including the remote survey. This was intended on at least two levels: PNG can make decisions on its own and has sovereignty over its lands, and its citizens are free to move about the country and pursue their individual needs at will.

“There is no other PNG on this planet earth.” (Focus group)

“Maano maano au Papua New Guinea dek irang ma kantri au dek maing”: “There are things in Papua New Guinea that do not exist in other countries.” (Remote Morobe survey)

“... we are very hospitable ... we are able to open our hearts and open our homes to know people.” (Focus group)

“... we look after our old, we look after our parents, it’s not something that we leave it to the government to do ... a lot of our old people they live longer ... they feel wanted and they feel loved and they are not neglected or anything like that.” (Focus group)

“... we own the land. If the government is going corrupt, we still own the land.” (Focus group)

“The land we live on for generations has its roots in us that we believe our Clan Gods and Tribal boundary fought for in our survival and existence. We hold strong our customary beliefs in Land as our most important part and strength of our life in PNG.” (Interview)

“We have very good fertile land for agriculture where we can do farming. These are raw land where you can have good production out of it.” (Interview)

“In PNG we have all the natural resources we need to develop our country, that is we have: gold, copper, gas, fish, timber, coffee, cocoa, copra, and oil.” (Interview)

“And especially in my province in Eastern Highlands, we have coffee as our main cash crop which we depend heavily on. And also, at this current stage, the coffee price is increasing and most of our people are heavily involved in the growing and harvesting of coffee to meet demand at the market.” (Interview)

“We have a lot of resources, non-renewable and renewable but if we had managed properly we would be like Dubai. Based on the oil and the gas that we have, gold and the copper that we have ... we’d be the pacific island Dubai right here, we’d be what Marape said, the richest black nation. We would be that. Australia would be getting aid from us not the other way around.” (Focus group)

“... in Papua New Guinea, as long as you are (an) educated lady or educated man, you have all the opportunities in the world here to go wherever or go whatever level you have ... there’s no certain restriction in that regard.” (Focus group)

PNG Today: Strengths Summary

When discussing the positive aspects of their Provinces, many urban and educated responses fell under the following themes:

- **environment/natural resources** (including the power local people hold because of **customary landownership**);
- **ways of relating to others** (friendliness, kindness, caring for family);
- **cultural/linguistic diversity**;
- **freedom**.

The 120 remote community members' responses fell under similar themes, when they were asked about the positive aspects of PNG as a whole:

- **environment**;
- **kindness, respectfulness, generosity, hospitality, peacefulness**;
- **clean air/water**;
- **Christianity**;
- **fresh garden food**.

But when asked about positive sides of their own villages, the remote communities' responses fell under a different collection of themes:

- **clean water**;
- beautiful **flowers** (mentioned by over half of respondents);
- **fresh garden food**;
- **respectfulness**;
- **forest landholdings**.



Mr. David Ōgate models his barkcloth painted cape in Toweth village, Morobe Province. PHOTO BY DR. HANNAH SARVASY

4. PNG today: challenges

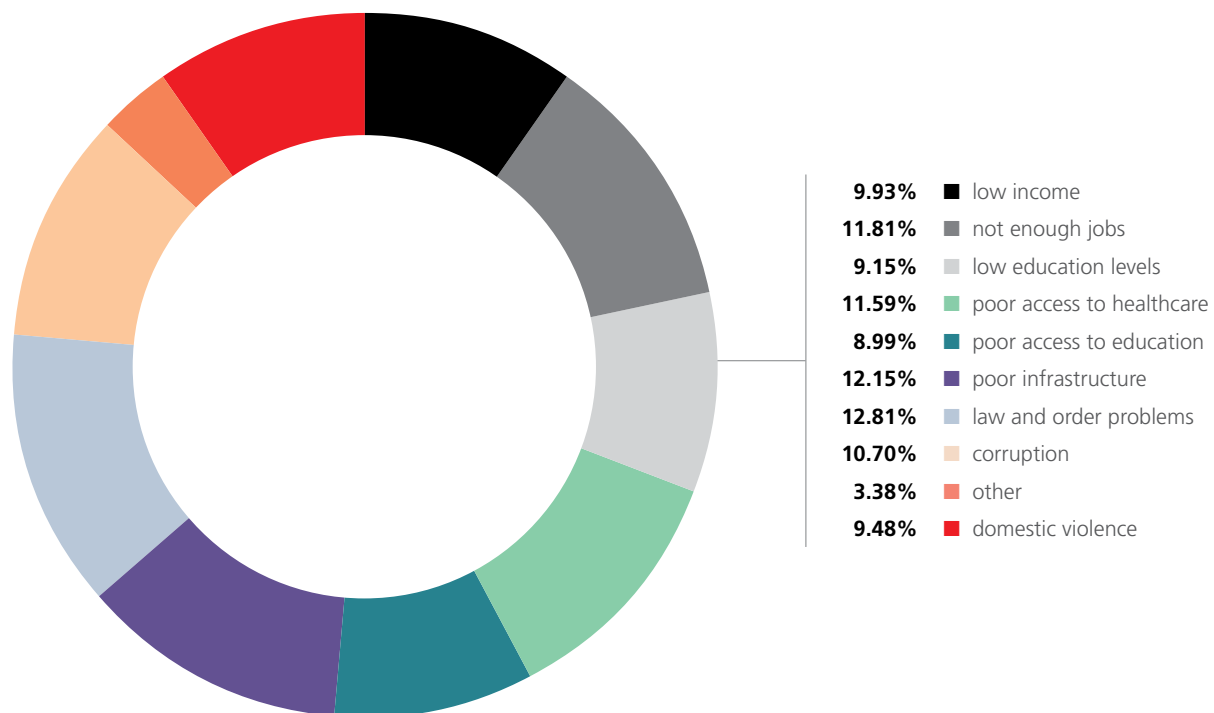
Respondents agreed that PNG today faces vast challenges. As the DWU team described the focus group discussions: “When asked about the challenges that Papua New Guinea or Papua New Guineans face, the common recurring phrase throughout the data was ‘lack of’: health services, education, education services, maintenance to existing infrastructure in education, health and general services. The lack of all of these essential services indicate a weak government.” Numerous online survey respondents expanded on these challenges in an optional free response box, discussing corruption and its effects on government and all aspects of life. One respondent wrote that s/he was describing such challenges while weeping.

Focus group participants bemoaned the frequent **loss of life from treatable diseases**, **lack of access to quality education**, and the fact that **education is not free**; **youth unemployment** is rampant, even among those few who graduate from secondary school, and then university. It is perhaps striking that focus group participants in Madang did not single out **law and order problems** or **domestic violence** as major challenges, but these were noted by online survey respondents.

For a country with such rich resources, the cost of many products in PNG is extraordinarily high. Focus group participants pointed to the need for **local production** of a much wider range of goods. **Transport** is prohibitively expensive within PNG. **Police brutality** is widely perceived. Finally, some respondents cited **our own mindsets** as a challenge.

Indeed, many respondents to the online surveys selected every problem from a dropdown list as valid for their Provinces; this yielded a very even distribution among these problems. **Law and order** was a slight leader, with a 12.81% share of all problems chosen, followed by **infrastructure**, then **not enough jobs**, then **poor access to healthcare**, then **corruption**. **Poor access to education/low education levels** received the lowest shares (8.99% and 9.15%), slightly lower than **domestic violence**. Major differences between responses by people originating in different Provinces were not apparent.

4.1 Proportions of “problems of your Province,” English online survey



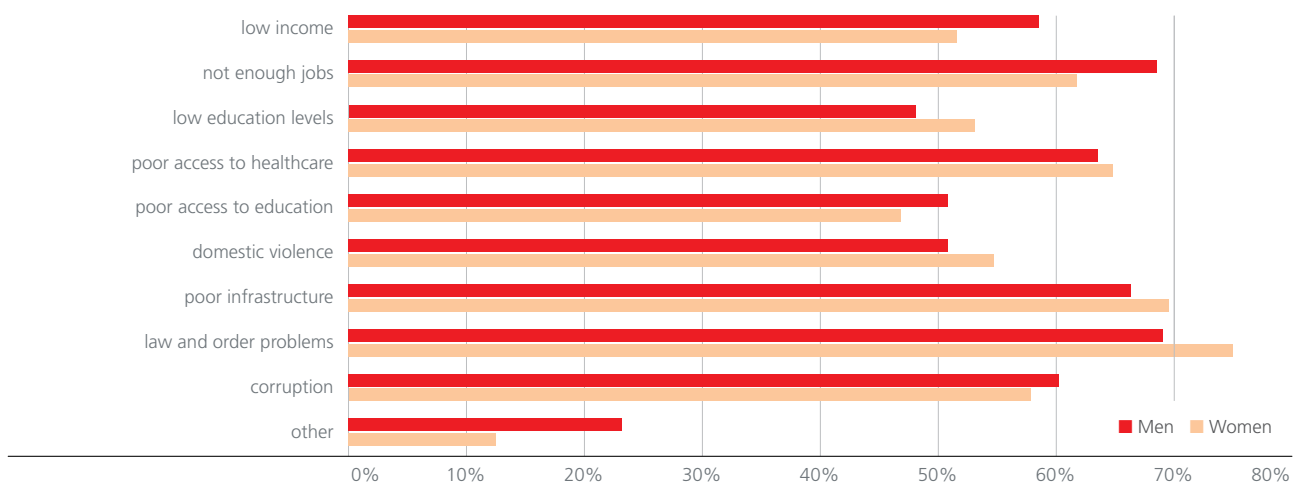
Other problems cited by survey respondents largely revolved around governance.

4.2 Word cloud for “other problems” free responses, English online survey



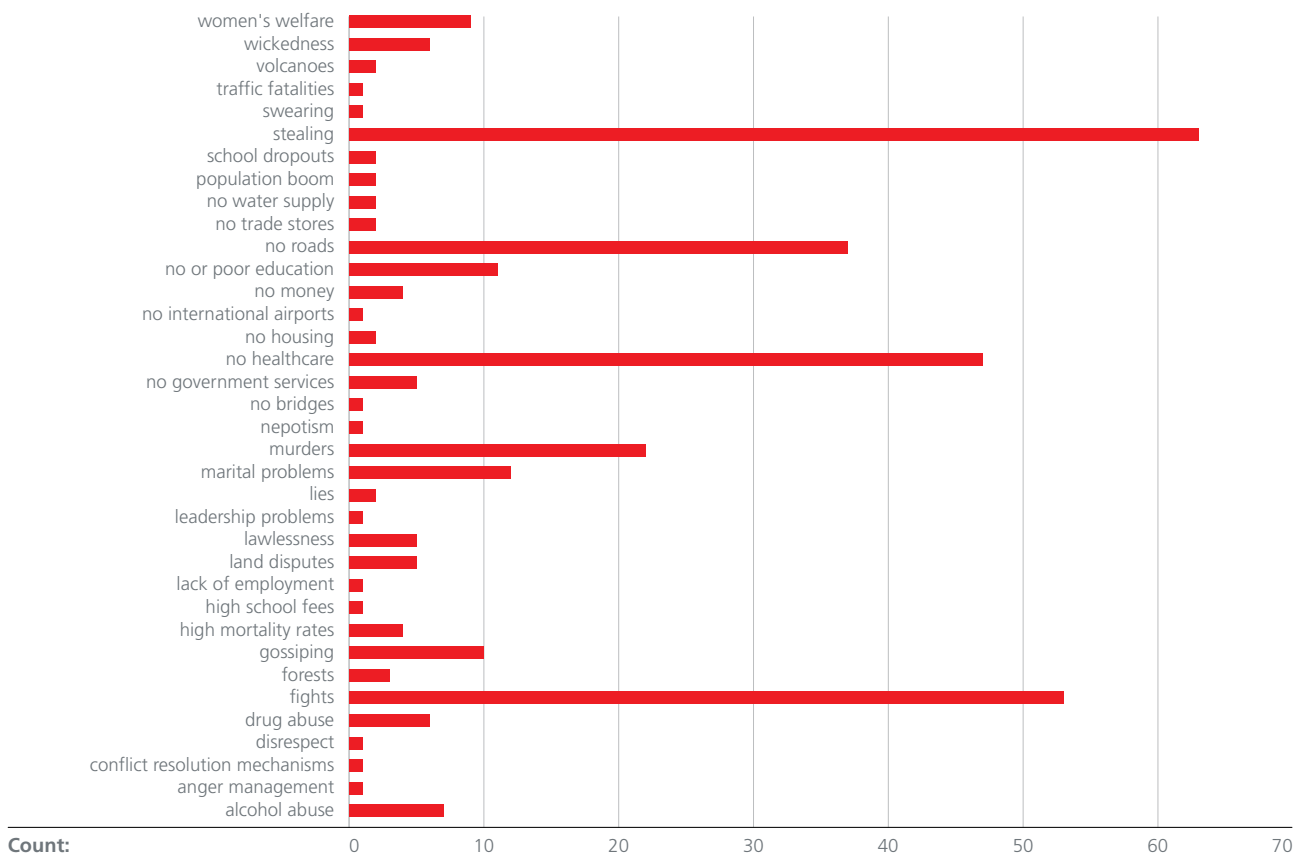
When men’s and women’s responses on PNG’s challenges in the English online survey were compared, only slight proportional differences were found. Women were slightly more likely than men to select “domestic violence,” “poor infrastructure,” and “law and order problems,” with men slightly more likely to select “low income,” “not enough jobs,” and “corruption.” Despite these small differences, major differences between male and female respondents to the online survey were not apparent; all problems were cited by over 40% of both men and women.

4.3 Problems of my Province, English online survey, by gender



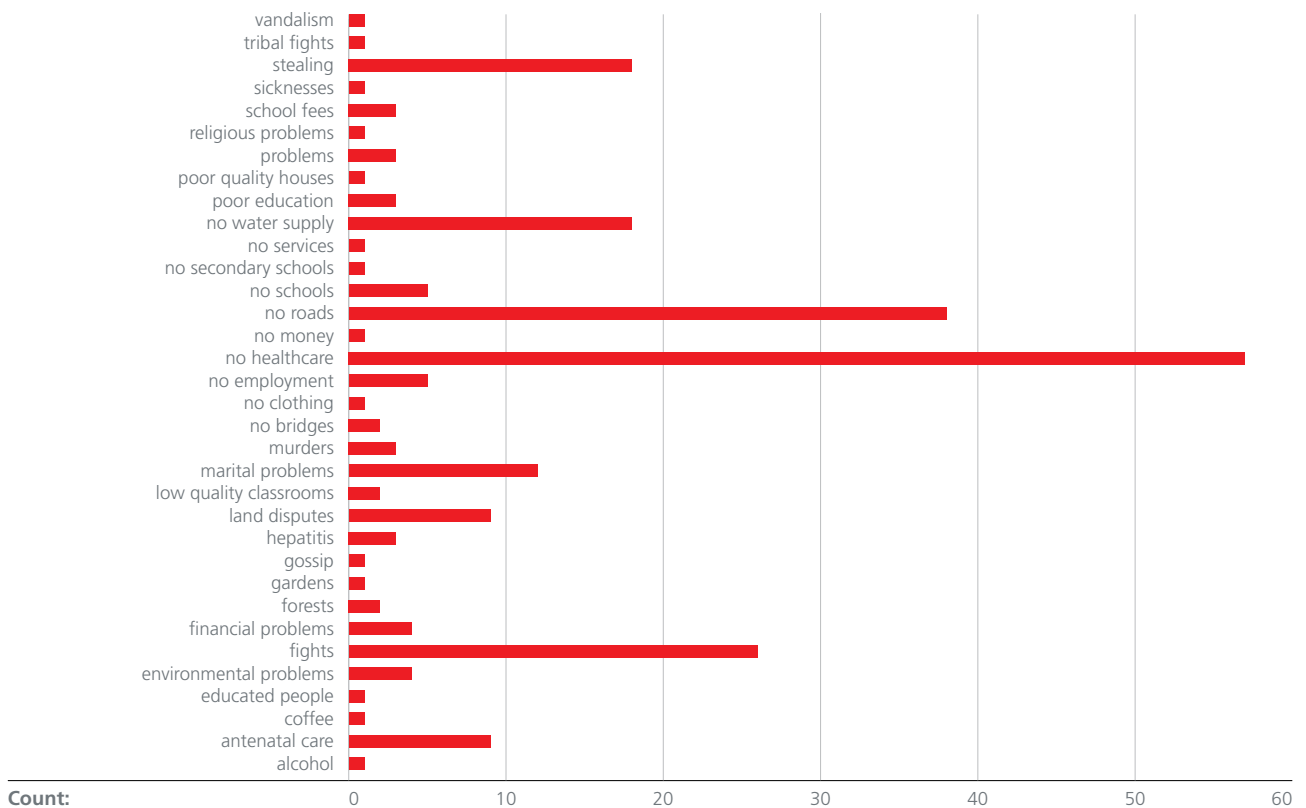
Respondents to the remote Morobe in-person survey could provide up to two free responses each for “problems of PNG” and “problems of your village.” When the villagers spoke about problems of PNG as a whole, strikingly different foci for the remote Morobe villagers and online survey respondents emerged. Only two themes were cited by at least 40% of remote respondents. Both relate to **law and order** but were formulated by the villagers using more specific language: **stealing** and **fighting**. **Lack of healthcare**, then **lack of roads**, followed these, followed by another law and order theme: **murders**. Other themes cited at least nine times (representing at least 2.7% of responses) were: **marital problems**, **poor education**, **gossiping**, and **women’s welfare**. **Corruption** was not mentioned, although one respondent did cite **nepotism**.

4.4 Problems of PNG, according to remote Morobe respondents



When villagers reflected on the problems of their own community, this followed a different pattern again. They overwhelmingly cited the **lack of healthcare** in their community, followed by the **lack of road access**. **Fighting, stealing, no water supply, and marital problems** followed these concerns.

4.5 Problems of their villages, according to remote Morobe respondents



For the remote Morobe respondents, the **lack of healthcare services** to their area was the top problem, cited by nearly half of them. The area is troubled by what seems to be endemic hepatitis. In recent years, numerous people aged 18–45 have become severely ill with distended bellies and wasted limbs, and then died in excruciating pain, presumably from liver failure. Villagers live with the worry of whether they will be the next to succumb.

This challenge was followed by **lack of roads**. When an area with thousands of residents like the Uruwa region is accessible only via a multi-day hike over the mountains, or via small fixed-wing plane, this makes many things overly expensive for local people. It costs K880 (about 400 AUD) round-trip for a local person to fly to Lae (a 30-minute flight).

Cargo charges on commercial fixed-wing flights can be about 3.00 AUD per kilogram. This makes it difficult for: a) villagers to get their cash crops (coffee, in this case) to markets with reasonable returns; b) for villagers to buy goods and materials at a reasonable price; and c) for villagers to travel to the city for advanced healthcare.

The **lack of roads** further complicates funerary arrangements, since the strong cultural preference is to bring local people who die elsewhere to be buried in their own lands. Villagers thus have to make difficult calculations when deciding to send a young person with hepatitis-induced liver failure to the city for healthcare: if the ill person dies in the city of Lae, their family will need to pay for refrigeration of the body until a charter flight can be arranged to fly it home, at a cost of thousands of AUD.

“(Australians) should know about unemployment rate of png and people like us graduated from universities but still on job hunt for 5 to 10 years.” (Online survey)

“All the fundings donated to PNG has been misused by the politicians. The hospitals in the country has run out of simple materials such as gloves and mask and urine test tubes and injections. When it comes to medicine the [hospital] has totally run out and this is in Port Moresby. Asthmatic patients are dying outside the parking lot with no medical assistance. Doctors are playing God in the hospital. Doctors are mostly ignorant alcoholic or pathedinn [sic] addicts. Doctors are not getting paid which makes them not show up at work.” (Online survey)

“As a Papua New Guinean, I believe our cultural values were what kept us honorable and respectful. With the influence of other cultures and the slowly but surely eroding cultural values, we are at a time where we are not only confused about what direction our country is headed towards but also are confused about who we want to be as a people.” (Online survey)

“PNG has some of the best laws in the world after countless amendments and reform policies however the law makers, the law protectors and the public policy implementers fail to follow themselves. In other words PNG has an attitude problem. (HOW WILL WE MAKE THE PEOPLE OF PNG FOLLOW THE LAWS?) Reforms, millennium goals and strategic plannings have failed. I see no hope in human effort. Our answer lies only in God but most of the churches have failed terribly because they don't follow the Bible but have gone off track.” (Online survey)

“Our Politicians run [the country] like their own Privately held company with no regard to established procedures and protocols. They issue contracts to their families, friends and political cronies without following proper public procurement processes. Every year Australian tax monies are squandered in PNG through corrupt means and fraudulent processes. These politicians and their cronies all benefit exponentially—building their empires overnight, some even have properties in Australia, NZ and Asia which were purchased from this dirty money.” (Online survey)

“We have disintegrated law enforcement agencies including police department, Ombudsmen, leadership tribunal or the entire criminal justice system.” (Interview)

“Police brutality, even though they're supposed to protect our rights and protect us against and stop illegal activities, in PNG they are like one of the feared, feared, because they are known for their brutality. They are inconsiderate, they are inconsiderate to other human beings. Like in other countries, most people fear like rascals and they respect the police officers, but in PNG, it's the other way around.” (Focus group)

“PNG is changing a lot in trying to develop but also is much more rising or change in killing people, fights (tribal, family, community), no access to finance for school fees.” (Online survey)

“Most of PNG population are grassroots, no proper education and basic health services which is a major concern since most of the population are in the rural settings. Many people are dying from curable diseases and nepotism and [the] bribery system also plays a major role in our society. Many students graduated from Universities and Colleges could not get into the workforce because of the motto in PNG: It's not about how much you know, it's about who you know ... Everything is corrupt.” (Online survey)

“Our Police and Army forces do not have proper housing and Discipline. Most of our people do not drink responsibly and we have too many unemployed individuals at home.” (Online survey)

PNG today: challenges Summary

All respondents agreed that PNG faces enormous challenges. Many expressed the opinion that **government corruption** underlies all other problems.

Respondents to the online surveys could select up to nine “problems of your Province” from a dropdown list; many ticked all nine, which led to an even distribution, with each of the nine problems receiving 8.99%–12.81% of all ticks. A tenth option, “other,” was ticked by 3.38% of respondents to the English survey. The top problems, in order, for English survey respondents: **law and order problems**, **poor infrastructure**, **not enough jobs**, and **poor access to healthcare**, followed by **corruption**, **low income**, **domestic violence**, **low education levels**, and **poor access to education**.

Only slight differences between men’s and women’s responses to the online surveys were apparent. For instance, for women, domestic violence ranked sixth of the nine problems (selected by 54.7% of women), while for men, it ranked seventh (selected by 50.8% of men).

Remote villagers provided free responses to both “What are problems of PNG?” and “What are problems of your village?” On the problems of PNG, **stealing** was the most-cited theme by the villagers, followed by **fighting**, **no healthcare**, **no roads**, then **murders**. **Corruption** was not mentioned by this cohort, and only one respondent cited **nepotism**.

When the remote villagers were asked about problems of their village communities, they overwhelmingly cited **lack of healthcare**, followed by **no roads**.



5. What kind of future do people want for PNG?

Focus group participants and survey respondents were asked to reflect on their dreams for their Provinces, PNG, or their communities.

In the focus groups, five themes emerged: accomplishing the goals of the government's **Vision 2050** document; **development with maintenance of culture; improved educational levels; tourism; and more transparent leadership.**

Vision 2050

Vision 2050 was a government plan published in 2009 (Papua New Guinea Vision 2050, 2009), which aimed for PNG to be ranked in the top 50 countries in the UN Human Development Index by 2050, and for PNG citizenry to be "smart, wise, fair, healthy, and happy" by then. The document contains seven pillars: human capital development; wealth creation; institutional development and service delivery; security and international relations; environmental sustainability; spiritual, cultural and community development; and strategic planning, integration and control. Many focus group participants were aware of this document. When asked how they would like to see PNG in the next 50 years, some stated that PNG should achieve all of its stated Vision 2050 goals.

Development with maintenance of culture

"Rausim morata, putim kappa." "Remove the thatched roofing, put iron roofing." (Focus group participant)

The phrase *rausim morata, putim kapa* was used in a focus group discussion in a village outside of Madang in discussing what PNG should look like in the future. This phrase implies that the waiting time is over, it is now our turn to bring development to our doorsteps. (In a rural area, a house, or aid post, or school that is made of imported material may be a primary indication of "development" to local people.)

Focus group discussions on the theme of development were optimistic, with the hope and belief that PNG can do it. **PNG can be like Australia, PNG can be like Japan.** Another commonality among focus group participants was the belief that PNG **should manufacture its own goods** within the country, which would create jobs, which in turn would contribute towards minimizing law and order issues.

"We should be developed like Australia" (Focus group)

"Ol factory i stap long here em olsem planti samting em bai kreatim job employment opportunities wea nau yumi lukim ol man raun raun natin natin displa bai helpim ol man long go stap wok, raskol pasin bai go daun ol man bikhet pasin bai lusim ol bai kisim mani." "If factories are based here, a lot of things will happen, such as more employment opportunities; where we see people just aimlessly roaming around, this will help them to find a job and work, there will be fewer law and order issues because people will now earn an income." (Focus group)

Focus group respondents tended to agree that progress or development is done at the expense of something. Some suggested that there should be a way to develop without losing any of the Papua New Guinean cultural heritage.

"We should be growing according to what our people would like PNG to look like in the future. In a way, keep our culture, and then not fully adapting, or fully taking all of the Western culture, but taking some of it that we think that goes in line with the good Melanesian culture." (Focus group)

"We are Papua New Guineans, we have our culture, we have our values ... and the values that create all PNG tribes. Values that could be preserved for the betterment of the future. So, in that sense, the values, cultural values that are noble, we should keep, and not live by the values and ideas that are coming from the outside." (Focus group)

"We should be like Japan, they are able to move forward but still maintain their culture." (Focus group)

Education/literacy rates will improve

Now more than ever, focus group participants opined, Papua New Guineans see the importance of receiving an education. Some focus group respondents expressed the opinion that the biggest challenges for education in PNG now are: a) parents cannot afford to send their children to school because of school fees; and b) schools are struggling to serve the increasing numbers of students. However, with the high school fee costs, many have opted not to further their education, dropping out to end up in the village or on the streets. Focus group participants were aware of tertiary scholarships provided by the Australian government, but some felt that **much can be done at the lower levels of education in PNG**, at the elementary, primary and secondary school levels.

"If we have all those children, you know the ones from the street and all other children better educated, then we can be able to improve our economy." (Focus group)

"(When) you educate one human being, you educate a haus lain (clan), you educate a community, you educate a nation." (Focus group)

Tourism

When a focus group participant raised the notion of tourism to PNG, the other participants in that group agreed that tourism was a way forward for the advancement of the PNG economy.

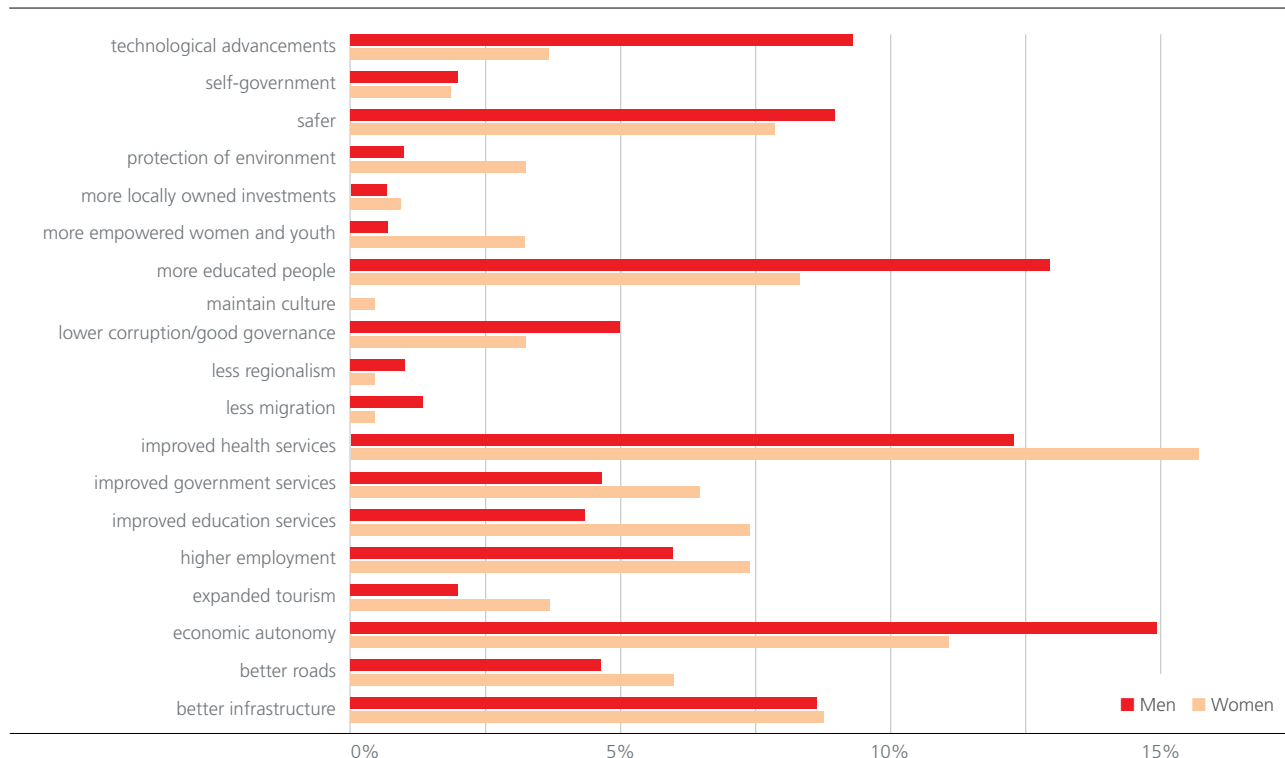
"Tourism is really a sleeping giant here ... we have so much to offer in that regard and it's sustainable and it could promote self-reliance." (Focus group)

More honest and transparent leaders

Every five years, just before Papua New Guineans cast their votes for the national elections, they hear campaign speeches promising honesty and transparency. There is still hope among focus group participants, online survey respondents, and interviewees alike that one day PNG will have truly honest and transparent leaders.

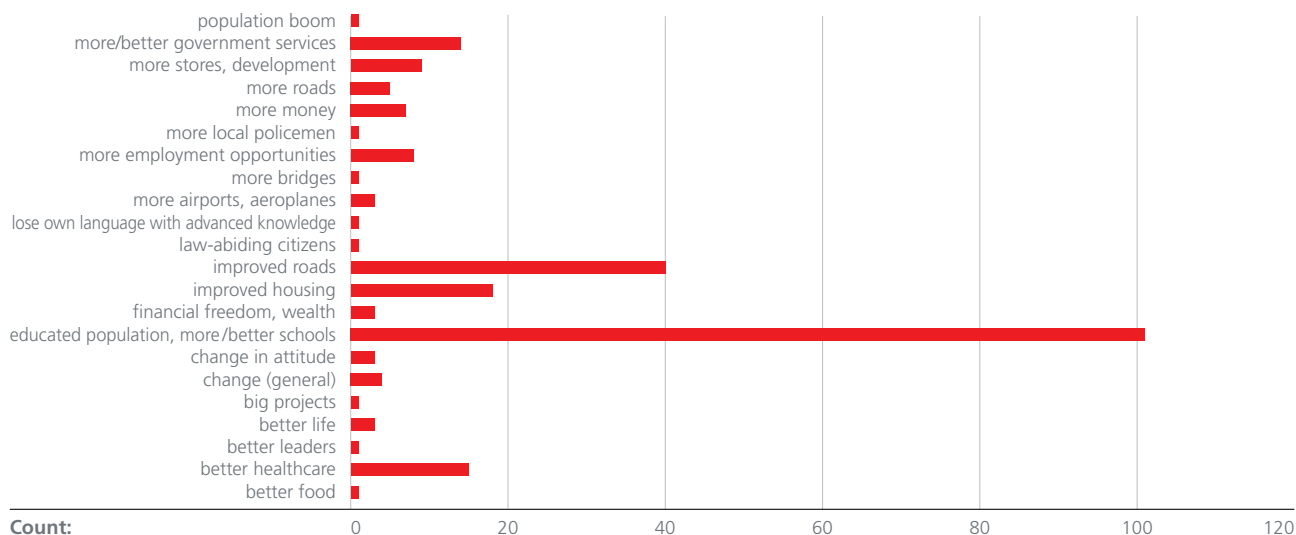
In the online surveys, respondents could enter up to two dreams for the future of their Provinces. In English, men and women expressed similar dreams. The greatest proportional difference between male and female respondents was in the theme of **technological advancements**, cited by 9% of men, but only 3% of women. Men were also proportionally more likely than women to cite **economic autonomy** and a **more educated populace**, while women were more likely than men to cite **empowerment of women and youth, improved health services, improved government services, tourism, and improved education services**.

5.1 Themes of dreams for their Province in 50 years, English online survey respondents, by gender



With the remote Morobe respondents, an **educated populace**, or the dream of their community achieving higher educational levels and having access to better, and more schools, was a theme cited by almost all of the 120 respondents. **Road access** to their community (currently only accessible by fixed-wing aircraft/helicopter, or via a multi-day hike) was the second most-cited theme. The third was of **improved housing**, which in this region refers to newer types of house construction that do not require use of *kunai* grass, since that grass is becoming scarce, due to invasive species infestation in their habitat. **Better healthcare** and **more/better government services** were mentioned by about 10% of respondents. One respondent anticipated **loss of the local language as the community's formal education levels increased**. This is in fact close to the reality in many parts of PNG (Kik *et al.*, 2021); 32% of PNG's languages are classified as endangered (Eberhard, Simons and Fennig, 2020).

5.2 Dreams for their community in 50 years, remote Morobe respondents



While the remote Morobe respondents cited **lack of healthcare** as the most pressing problem in their communities, just 12 (10%) mentioned **better healthcare** as a dream. Perhaps local people have given up on government services like healthcare ever improving? Similarly, only four (3%) cited **poor education** as a problem of their communities, but 101 (84%) cited **educated population** or **more/better schools** as dreams for their communities.

Educational attainment is deeply important to people of this region. When students are studying for their Year 8 and Year 10 examinations, mothers and grandmothers hike up to their schools (even when they are in boarding schools, many days away over the mountains) bearing bulging bags of vegetables and handicraft gifts for their teachers. The mothers and grandmothers then stay over the exam periods to cook wholesome food for the students as they study, while the mothers and grandmothers themselves fast and pray for the students' exam success.

Education level is a marker of progress locally. Local people wore traditional grass skirts and barkcloth loincloths into the 1990s, when leaders Dono and Eni Ögate (D. Ögate is one of the authors of this report) returned to the region from Lae and began a concerted effort to develop their community (recognized in 2019 by the Digicel Foundation Overall Man of Honour award to Mr. Ögate). At that time, there were no schools in the area, and people recall that they were denigrated by other groups as *bot köuk* (wild pigs), referring primarily to their ignorance.

"We have a hard working and smart youth, and if more opportunities are given to study in Australia, these youth will return to accelerate development in PNG." (Online survey)

"The Emerging talent that is facing so many challenges to be seen, heard and catapulted into spaces where they can fully impact their nation." (Online survey)

"We are not all corrupt. There is a young generation eager to bring change if invested in the right avenues. Invest in the youth programs, not just in rural areas but in all levels of education. There are agents of change eager to help but lack funds to complete their degrees. Through local scholarships that tue [sic] them to local service once education is completed. For instance, a scholarship for medical and geology students. They are the creme of the crop in PNG, by investing in them we can have them engage in rural placement. This will push the PNG government through the office of higher education to ensure essential facilities and staff accommodation are at rural hospitals." (Online survey)

"That agriculture is the main sector that can stimulate PNG's economy. Therefore, focus has to be on the improvement of roads so that transfer of goods and services can be done in a safe, timely and efficient manner. This is in part hindered by the high increase in law and order problems, hold-ups on the roads. If the PNG people saw the potential in the improvement of infrastructure, especially roads, then agriculture would be a more solid market and maybe there would be a higher surge in tourism." (Online survey)

"As a scientist, as Papua New Guineans we endeavour to create a holistic educational approach to research so that more Papua New Guineans are able to conduct research in a inclusive manner for our people, environment, economy, policy, and development across all sectors for mutual growth." (Online survey)

Dreams for the future Summary

Top themes for online survey respondents, when asked about their dreams for their Province in 50 years, were: **improved health services, economic autonomy, more educated people, improved safety, and better infrastructure.**

Remarkably, nearly all the 120 remote community respondents cited an **educated populace** as a dream for their communities in 50 years. A far second theme was that of **road access**, followed by **improved housing standards**. Although the top problem cited by these villagers was **lack of healthcare**, only 12 people mentioned **better healthcare** as a dream for their community.

Focus group respondents further mentioned the PNG government's **Vision 2050** plan, the notion of **development in a Melanesian way, expanded manufacturing within PNG, tourism, and governmental transparency.**

6. Relationship between PNG and Australia

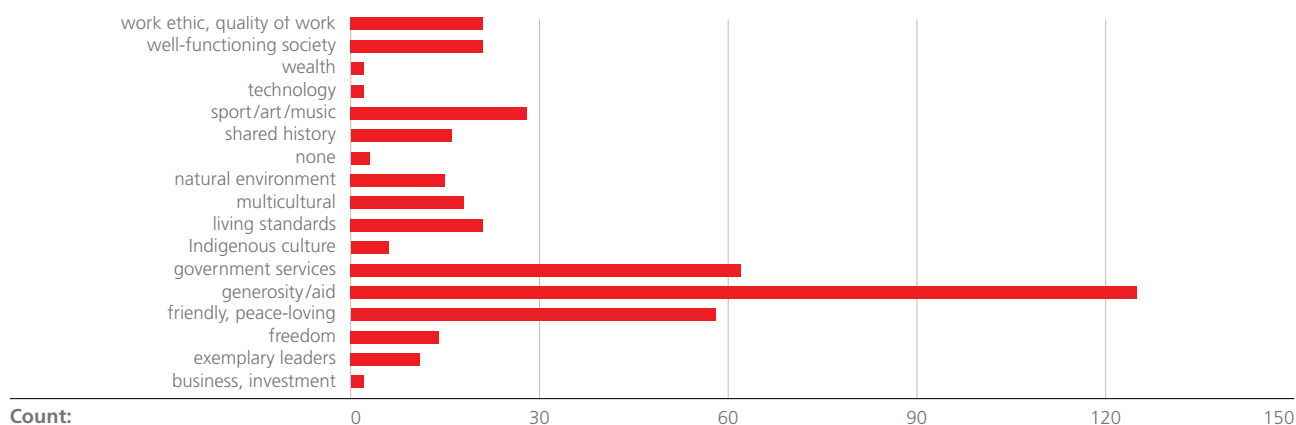
All participants were asked about perceptions of Australia and Australians, and Australia's role in the region. In contrast to the online surveys, fewer in the remote Morobe community were able to provide at least one response to the questions of either positive or negative perceptions of Australia or Australians. This is probably because of their limited exposure to Australians, and their limited experience in comparing Australians to other foreigners.

Respondents to the online surveys, and participants in the focus group discussions, overwhelmingly cited **racism** as a negative aspect of Australian culture. Several respondents traced this perception to their own experiences working with Australians or studying or living in Australia, while others had heard about such experiences from contacts.

Positive attributes of Australia and Australians

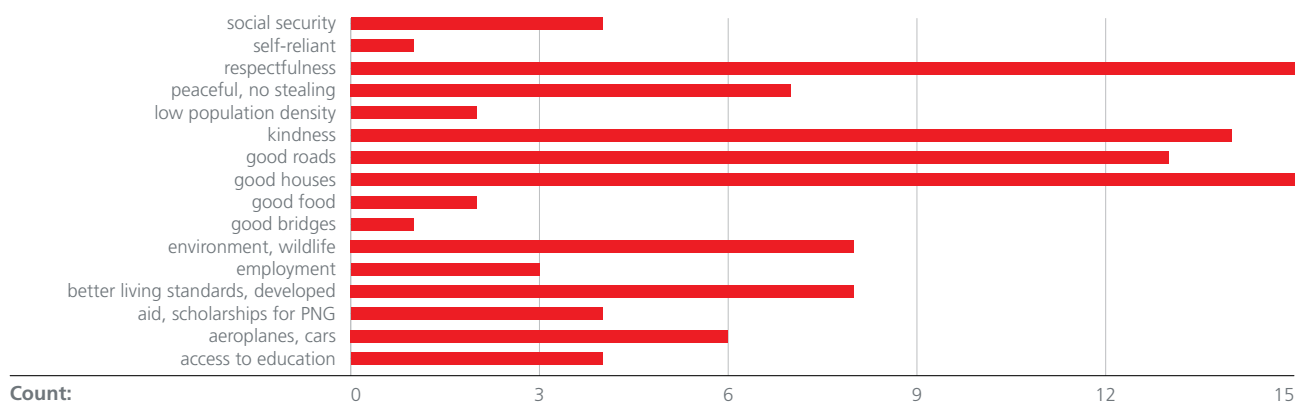
Focus group, interview, and online survey respondents overwhelmingly cited the theme of **generosity/aid** funding as a positive quality of Australia and Australians. In the online surveys, this was the most common response, followed by a distant second **government services**, referring to government services administered to Australians in Australia: seen as exemplary by respondents. The third-most-cited theme in the online survey responses was **friendly/peace-loving**.

6.1 Themes from positive perceptions of Australia/Australians, English online survey



In contrast, the remote Morobe villagers who gave any answers to the question of positive aspects of Australia/Australians appreciated Australians' **respectfulness** and **good quality houses** the most, followed by Australians' **kindness**, then Australia's **good roads**. No more than 15 respondents cited any of these themes. Only four respondents mentioned **Australian Aid or scholarships** in particular.

6.2 Themes from positive perceptions of Australia/Australians, Morobe remote survey



It is possible that the differences between the two groups stem from different conceptions of the (intentionally vague) question, with the respondents to the English online survey conceiving of Australia in light of its relationship to PNG, and the respondents to the remote Morobe survey conceiving of Australia independent of its relationship to PNG. But the rest of the themes overlap, so the most likely reason for the difference here likely lies in the remote Morobe sample's overall lack of familiarity with aid from Australia: only four people mentioned Australian aid to PNG as a positive. Indeed, the notion that **remote communities are unaware of much of Australia's contribution** was echoed in both focus groups and interviews.

One professional interviewee in his twenties noted that he found **"a natural relationship with Australian colleagues"** and **"that feeling is mutual,"** and other interviewees spoke highly of **Australian quality control and project management procedures**. Another interviewee found that he was offered **ample training opportunities** in his job with an Australian-owned business. Still other interviewees gave appreciation for the care their families received at the new **Australian Aid-funded Angau Hospital in Lae**.

Shared history

Respondents to all components of the research except the remote Morobe survey overwhelmingly acknowledged the shared history of Australia and PNG. Due to this shared history, several online respondents and one interviewee stated that **Australians understand PNG fully** already.

That said, **portions of the shared history may be better-known in some regions than others**. For instance, 63% of remote Morobe respondents (76 people of 120) said they **had never heard of the Kokoda Track**. Their area saw a Japanese incursion during WWII; Japanese burned down some of the villages in the northern Uruwa area, and a fighter plane crashed nearby (Sarvasy, 2017). But Australian troops did not pass through the area.

While one interviewee felt that **Australia's approach to PNG had evolved over time**, several online respondents expressed the sentiment that **Australia still dealt with PNG as a vassal**, rather than as an equal. Two respondents to the online survey expressed criticism of the way the country was formed, with one noting that **"No referendum was ever conducted to determine if Papua and New Guinea should be one country."**

"About their negatives side, I for one cannot think of [any] negative things they done to us the PNGans since the independence up till now." (Interview)

"The people having [fewer] dependents to spend on is one thing I admire it enables them to save and build themselves up financially [with] less debts." (Online survey)

"Australians are egalitarians, have a very diverse culture and Australia is the home to [the] old[est] civilization on the living Planet!" (Online survey)

"The Australian culture is good, but mostly I personally like the Queenslanders because they are lovely people, they have a heart to develop PNG in terms of sports, education and also they travel to PNG as tourists which gives PNG some income." (Online survey)

"I think the fact that you see us Papua New Guineans as a little brother. And despite our many differences, we still have a special place in our hearts for Australians. I mean we literally treat you like kings when you visit us. Not that that's a downside or anything. We have a favourable relationship and want to give you the best treatment we can offer." (Online survey)

"Australian culture is in fact the modern Papua New Guinean culture as well." (Online survey)

"Every time we have a heated exchange with those Chinese in their tucker shop there's always an Australian popping up from nowhere to our rescue." (Online survey)

"RUGBY LEAGUE!!! I SURE HOPE THE BRONCOS WIN THIS YEAR THOUGH." (Online survey)

"Since the birth of PNG, Australian stood besides PNG up until today, and as a PNG citizen, I see Australia as the Mother land to PNG and most of all Australia is the most peaceful place in the whole world which I feel ... is very safe for PNG also." (Online survey)

"They are more laid back people than Americans or French." (Online survey)

"From my experience, I work as a welder with IPI transport company for almost seven to eight years and one of our bosses (workshop manager) was an Australian. I came to know more about them that they were good people in terms of the supervising and managing aspect. Because apart from ... getting us paid, they were good at providing training and development of the employees so that they can enhance their skills and knowledge. We are sponsored by the company to go for a short course every time when there is a new machine and equipment arrived in workshop." (Interview)

"Very important and strategic given its location and history with PNG. On a personal level, find a natural relationship with Australian colleagues, that feeling is mutual. Australia has that comparative advantage, being that it has known PNG the longest." (Interview)

"Australia educated our forefathers in preparation for independence ... the likes of late Sir Michael Somare, late Sir Mekere Morata, Sir John Kabutin, Sir Rabbie Namaliu and others. During those times, the standard of education was so high that we were taught well. The standard of education we have adapted today are in fact not good for our future children." (Interview)

"Quality matters, and Australia is a quality country." (Interview)

"Before Independence, Australia helped us in terms of bringing in civilisation to PNG. Their input on development was great to PNG. Today Australia continue to help us in terms of supporting our development agendas, eg. Road constructions, AID money worth AU\$600 million injected into PNG's economy, AusAID Scholarship opportunities for PNGians both in-country and Australia. Australia provides us with human resources capacity building. Every government sector in PNG, Australians are providing advisory roles, Police, education, finance, treasury and many more." (Interview)

Negative attributes of Australia and Australians

Racism

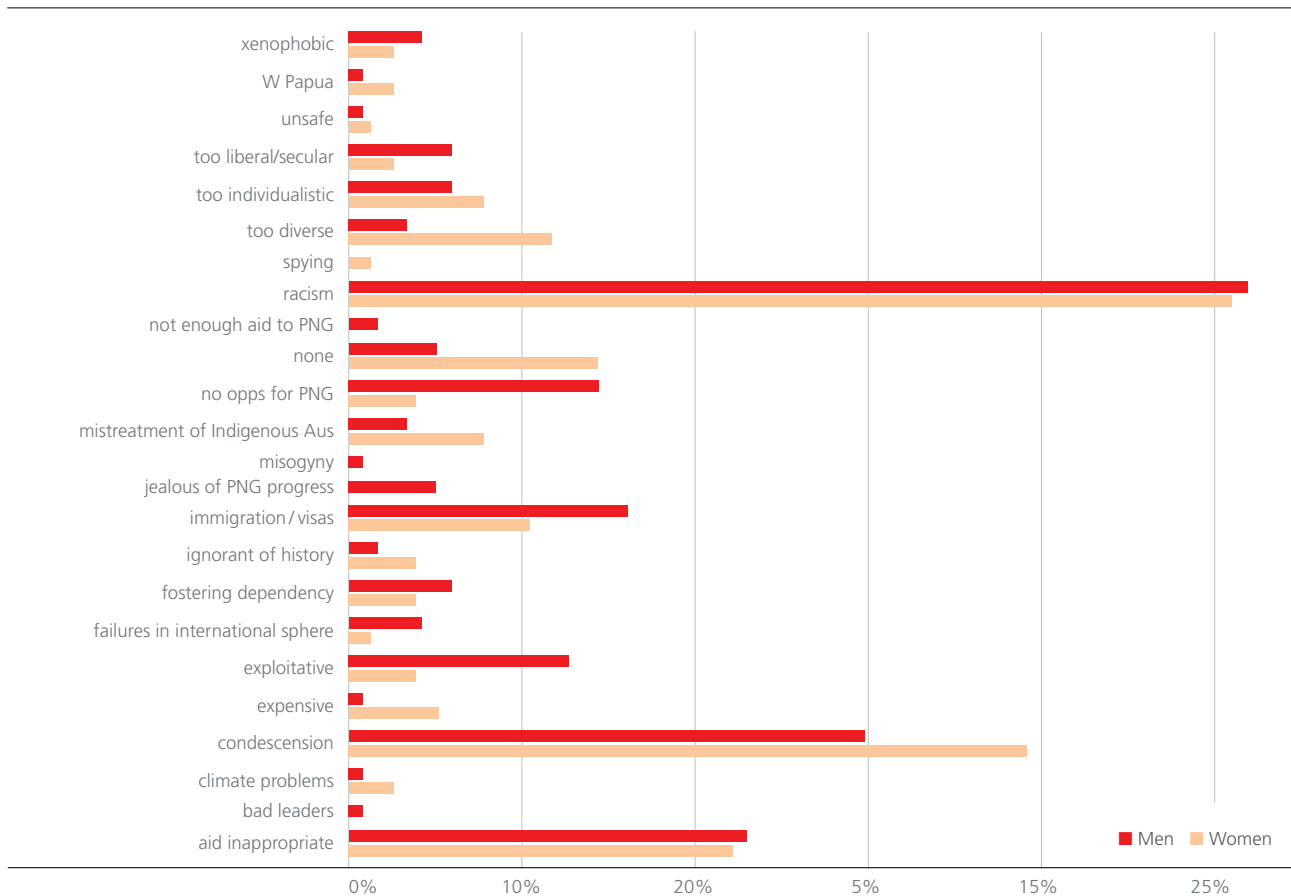
Recall that respondents to all components of the study praised qualities of **kindness, sharing, respectfulness, hospitality, cooperation, and politeness** in people of PNG. One survey respondent wrote that **Australians in PNG are treated like kings**. Perhaps the sting of perceived **racism** by Australians hurts even more, then, given the perception of **hospitality** and warmth toward outsiders by the people of PNG.

The theme of **racism** garnered the most citations of any negative theme in the online survey and focus group discussions. Over 25% of the online free responses by women and over 25% of men to the question of negative aspects of Australia or Australians concerned **racism** (note that respondents could list up to two negative aspects). This was closely related to the second major negative theme, cited by nearly 20% of female and 15% of male respondents: **condescension toward PNG**, encompassing negative impressions of PNG and cultural insensitivity. In all, racism or condescension toward PNG was cited in 42% of English online survey responses on negative aspects of Australia/Australians (170 of 405 responses; respondents could list up

to two negative aspects). The third major theme, cited by over 10% of both men and women, dealt with **problematic aspects of aid**: conditional aid; aid not addressing the right issues; reforms unsuited to PNG; and Memoranda of Understanding with unfavourable conditions.

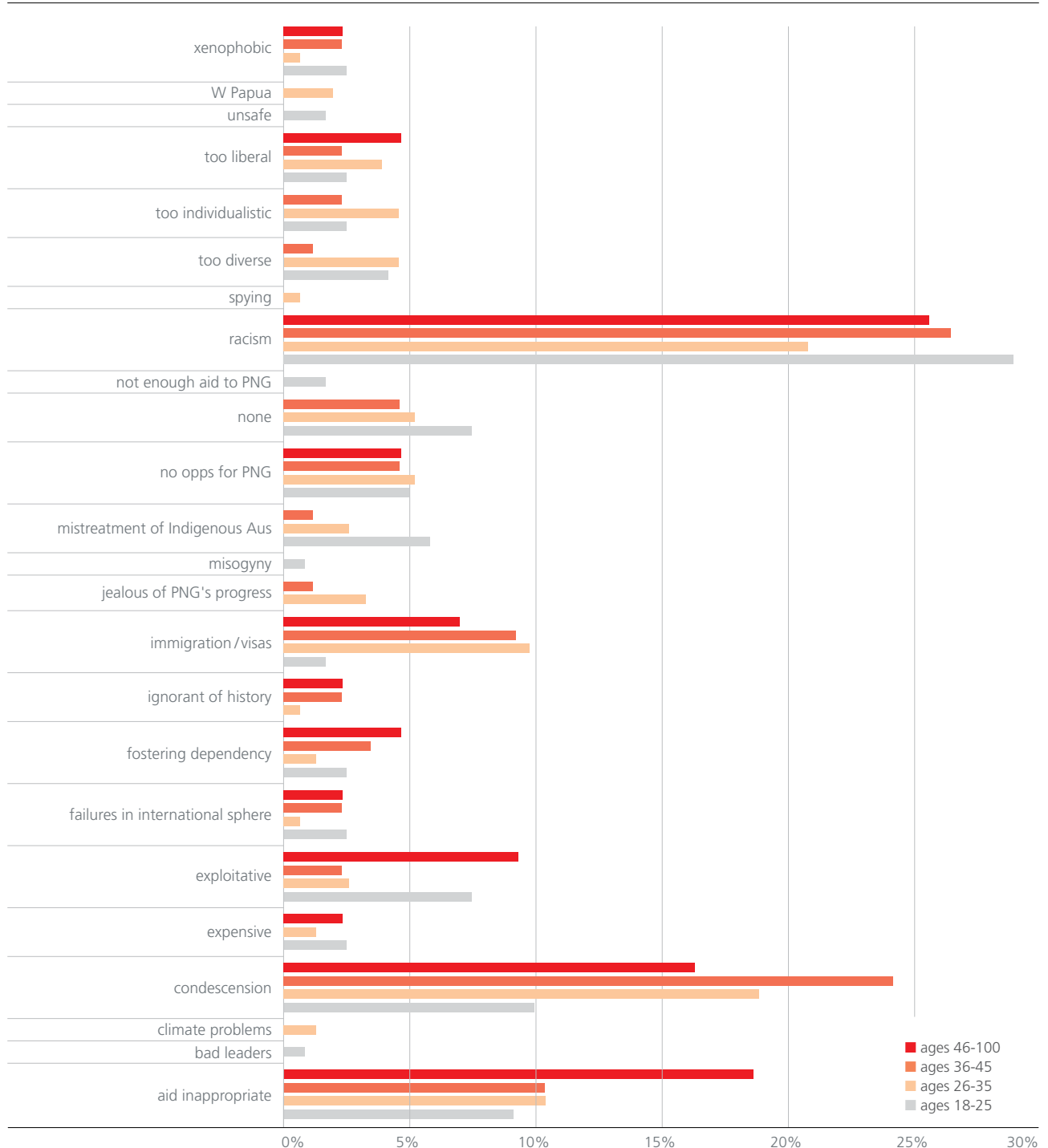
Men were slightly more concerned with the absence of opportunities for Papua New Guineans in Australia, including **inadequate markets for PNG products in Australia**, and with **visa inequities** and **difficulties immigrating to Australia**, than were women. Men, not women, commented on **misogyny in Australian society**, the notion that **Australia was jealous of PNG's progress**, and **bad leadership** of Australia. Women cited **condescension toward PNG** slightly more than men, made particular note of the **mistreatment of Indigenous Australians**, and criticized Australian society as **too diverse** and **too individualistic** slightly more than men did. One online survey respondent wrote that **"Some male expatriates tend to take advantage of young, deprived and desperate PNG women."**

6.3 Themes from negative perceptions of Australia/Australians, English online survey, by gender



When negative perceptions of Australia were examined by age group, major differences were not found. For all age groups, the top three themes were **racism**, followed by **condescension** and **problematic aspects of aid**. The major difference between age cohorts was that for people over 45, **problematic aspects of aid** ranked higher than **condescension**, while for all younger age groups, **condescension** featured proportionally more than **aid issues**. The oldest and youngest cohorts also listed **exploitation** proportionally more than the middle two age cohorts. Only members of the 26-35-year-old cohort mentioned **lack of support for West Papua** as a negative point, and only members of the 18–25 year-old cohort mentioned **unsafeness, misogyny, and bad leaders**.

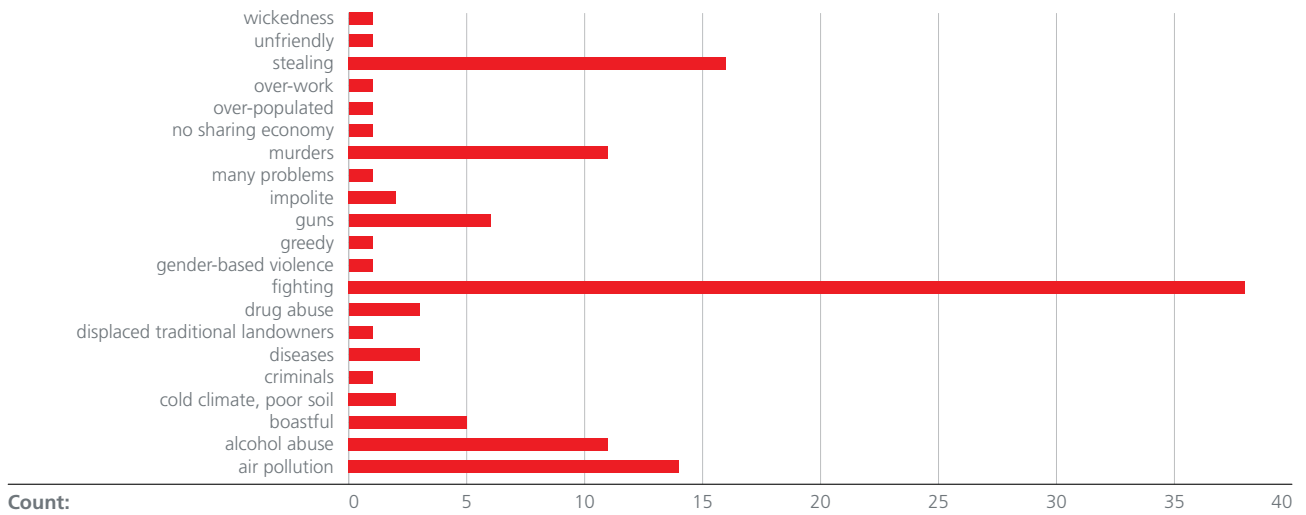
6.4 Themes from negative perceptions of Australia/Australians, English online survey, by age



A focus group participant traced her perception of racism in Australia to negative experiences related to her by friends and colleagues who had studied there, and said that this changed her mind about doing her Master's in Australia.

In contrast to the online survey responses, none in the remote Morobe community mentioned **racism** as a negative side to Australian culture or society. Instead, the major themes from negative perceptions of Australia/Australians cited by the remote villagers were: **fighting, stealing, air pollution**, then **murders** and **alcohol abuse**.

6.5 Themes from negative perceptions of Australia in remote Morobe Province



Note that for the remote Morobe sample, some of the vices attributed to Australia (**fighting, stealing, murders, alcohol abuse**) were also levelled at PNG as a whole. In this remote area, Australia may be perceived as somewhat like urban PNG in human behaviours—but with better infrastructure and government services.



"Australian news time must give factual news and not lies about PNG." (Online survey)

"Having being to Australia some people are still racist." (Online survey)

"Don't really like seeing white Australians having deep discrimination to native Aborigines whom their land was taken by foreigners who are these whites currently living in Australia." (Online survey)

"The funny thing is that the Australians do not trust us Papua New Guineans. They can be your good friends but they won't trust you because of the default settings that we are corrupt, we are unsafe, we cannot complete our jobs, social imbalances, living below the poverty line, all these factors. When they give you a project, there is a grey area in the back of their minds doubting that the project can be completed or not. First thing is they don't trust us so if they can overcome that and stop generalizing, then I think we can move forward together." (Interview)

"I would agree that there is some form of racism, you know, them having that mentality that they are superior than us. It's still there. I mean, if they can't treat their natives down there properly, what makes us think that they will treat us ... yeah, like that." (Focus group)

"Trauma of Australian indigenous stolen generation." (Online survey)

"...hearing people talk about Australia when they go down, whether it's Australian scholarships, Awards scholarships - how Australians see them... they ask them weird questions like, 'are you still cannibals?' Like this is the 21st century ... so, and then, if cannibal, then why am I attending class with you? It's more this racial thing. I think that's one reason why, if I were to get my Master's, I don't wanna go down to Australia." (Focus group)

"... it's different from me working with a German person, an American person, French person, Chinese person, Japanese person. We look at each other with the same respect, the role that we come in to play. But Australian, my goodness ... They talk to you like, they talk down on you ... you know, like condescending." (Focus group)

"There have been, during colonial days, a relationship of superiority and inferiority ... Then it took another form ... So there is this, taking new forms, new identity, to help us, but at the same time drive their agenda of control. Like an immediate supervisor." (Focus group)

"The language of communication chosen by DFAT social media pages and radio releases are English, which is impractical and demeaning given the level of illiteracy in PNG, and the large demographic that speak Tok Pisin." (Interview)

"Working with my former boss, I saw that she didn't understand PNG customs ... She did things I would say that really contradicted uh um.. that annoyed Papua New Guineans. Uh and made them feel uncomfortable and her approach to delivering service at the time was uh HIV and TB training was break down ... social norms. But I don't think she understood that social norms are ... happen because of our customs or traditions. So by trying to break down our social norms, she was trying to break down our customs and traditions and that annoyed some people I would say. How would she improve? Try to understand PNG customs and traditions and work according to that or if she wants to change it, approach in a different way. Not to come too hard and challenge our customs." (Interview)

"Not employing Papua New Guinea Graduates to work in Australia." (Online survey)

"Giving the respect the aborigines deserve. It's sad to see the 'whites'; mind you I'm not bring racist; live far more better lives than the aborigines ... Forgive me if I'm wrong." (Online survey)

"Past Australian owned Businesses, especially in the mining sector have left some unsolved controversial issues which continue to haunt Papua New Guinea today." (Online survey)

Asymmetry to the relationship

Acknowledgment of the **asymmetry in the relationship between PNG and Australia** was widespread by all groups except the remote Morobe sample. There were positive and negative sides to this. **Australia as PNG's mother or big brother country** was mentioned in the surveys and interviews. But numerous respondents to all but the remote Morobe survey described their own **distrust of Australia's motives** in continuing to invest so heavily in the country. The sense that **aid funds came with strings** was also widespread in all components apart from the remote Morobe sample. Numerous respondents felt that **Australia is too heavy-handed in dictating PNG's agenda**, and many mentioned the notion of **boomerang aid**, through which Australia's aid funds end up lining the pockets of Australian organizations and businesses, rather than benefiting PNG's populace directly.

One interviewee was more specific about **boomerang aid**. In her opinion, most PNG sectors still lacked capacity to run Australian Aid projects to the highest quality standards, so Australia was justified in choosing outside organizations to do so. But she noted that the **PNG healthcare sector does have capacity to run major projects**, and it was in that sector that she recommends that DFAT reconsider its awarding of projects—in her experience, even where PNG does have capacity to run projects, they are still being awarded to overseas groups instead.

A recurring recommendation by all respondents except the remote Morobe group was that **Australia should help more to build PNG's capacity to run such projects**, investing in HR, management, and other training for young professionals. One interviewee pointed out that **PNG citizens who are funded to undertake professional training are often middle-aged**, but that if young people were funded to undertake professional training, they could have a much greater impact on the country over the course of their careers.

Some specific protocol recommendations arose from comments on the asymmetry in the Australia-PNG relationship in interviews. In particular, one interviewee commented that **DFAT and Australian organizations are known to circumvent PNG government protocols**.

She said: “When working with various government departments, **DFAT and Australian NGOs tend to be demanding and work to shorter schedules**, whereas PNG departments need more time to review proposals and receive approval. When these proposals do not progress according to the Australians' schedule, the **Australians go over the department, and directly to the Prime Minister's office**, which then exerts pressure on getting these proposals approved. The downside with this is that the **proper process of review is not conducted within the relevant government departments, and results in little buy-in and contribution from the PNG government.**”

The notion of **local protocols** was echoed by a survey respondent, who suggested that **MOUs with local communities were as important as ones with higher-ups** in government. A potential development project would do well to be planned to include multiple meetings and discussions with all possible stakeholders and subsections of communities before going ahead.

Another interviewee agreed that **PNG government agencies were not always properly consulted** in planning development work, which then did not necessarily align with PNG's own government priorities.

Subtle messages reinforcing the asymmetrical relationship were also noted to include DFAT's **sending junior representatives to meet senior PNG counterparts**—or, in some cases, the reverse misjudgement of this, **sending senior people to attend technical meetings**: “due to their seniority, (they) do not take a record of the meetings and this leads to meetings not properly accounted for and compromises the evaluation of several projects. Action officers and technocrats must be required in all these meetings.”

Numerous respondents to the online surveys and focus group participants also noted **strict and unfair travel restrictions from PNG to Australia**, while Australians can get visas into PNG on arrival in the country. Some online survey respondents also felt that **other Pacific Islanders were granted more work and sport opportunities in Australia** than were PNG citizens.

“Assisting PNG at an arm's length, closed borders especially with work visa.” (Online survey)

“Even going down south is [as] hard as maybe going to heaven.” (Online survey)

“[Australians] pretend to be friends. Eg. PNG have to get a visa to go to Australia. NZ go to Australia with their passport and get straight on the social service payments.” (Online survey)

“PNG citizens have to wait for visas to come over. Australian citizens get visas on arrival. Just an example of how unbalanced this equation is.” (Online survey)

“Restrictions on education and jobs to PNG citizens in Australia unlike other Pacific countries.” (Online survey)

“I've heard that Israel you would just need a passport to travel there. And it's all the way there, far. But Australia is just close to PNG, and we should be able to travel to Australia without having a Visa, but the traveling conditions, and the laws and policies set in place for Papua New Guineans to go there and you know, seek jobs, and opportunities and all these down there is really ... how can I say? It's too strict.” (Focus group)

"For me as a Geologist, [I] am based in the village working the land and educating people back home on certain issues like C-19 during my break times. I'd like the Aust. Govt to ease work visa requirement, I can work in Aussie and come home (FIFO) to work on my land and with my small coffee roasting project hence, I can supply to Australia my fresh organic coffee. Our local currency is struggling and we are struggling." (Online survey)

"The challenge I would like to pass on is: Is it really for the interest of PNG that the Australian government has to suffer bearing all this challenges to provide this aid, support and everything else. Is it really for PNG's benefit? ... Could there be a hidden motive for their high involvement like are they using PNG as a buffer zone ... for security against Asia who also have their [own] interests then we will still be seen as second class or second rated. Look at Fiji, they go into Australia without any obstruction, they just go in there. But if a Papua New Guinean wants to apply for a Visa, it takes forever. Again it goes back to the real motive for why they are assisting us. We can say that Australians are trying to improve our social indicators but that is what is on the surface. They have been telling us we cannot grow rice and we have been importing rice from Australia but now we are growing rice right here in Lae so there has to be some real reason why the Australian Government has been spending so much and going through the pain. Australian people have been complaining about their tax being used to develop another country. They have their own problems to solve but their tax has been dished out to help another country whose people do not pay tax to the Australian Government. Unless we know the real reason behind, we will still be treated as second class." (Interview)

"Civil service training opportunities are awarded to older people who do not have a long time to contribute, they should however be awarded to younger workers who have more time to serve once trained." (Interview)

"Working for Australian funded projects can be difficult when Australian colleagues do not receive the same salary as local workers—a dual salary system exists between expatriates and locals. This is more of an injustice given local workers bring local knowledge/language/expertise of context. Australian workers are also dismissive of the views and opinions of local workers." (Interview)

"When working with various government departments, DFAT and Australian NGOs tend to be demanding and work to shorter schedules, whereas PNG departments need more time to review proposals and receive approval. When these proposals not according to the Australians' schedule, the Australians go over the department, and directly to the Prime Minister's office, which then exerts pressure on getting these proposals approved. The downside with this is that the proper process of review is not conducted within the relevant government departments, and results in little buy-in and contribution from the PNG government. Also, there is the problem of having senior officials attend technical meetings in which, due to their seniority, they do not take a record of the meetings and this leads to meetings not properly accounted for and compromises the evaluation of several projects. Action officers and technocrats must be required in all these meetings." (Interview)

"I would agree that we do have a one-sided relationship with Australia ... like they didn't want the Japanese to go down to Australia and New Zealand so they brought them up here to Papua New Guinea. They fought the war on our land so that the Japanese cannot go down there so they defended their land from the Japanese in Papua New Guinea. Our people lost their lives, fighting their war ... The Australians fought and died for their country. The New Zealanders fought and died for their country and they used my people to do their fighting for them to carry here and there whatnot be their guide and what not, do those little things for them while they were here. So it's obvious from the very beginning we were looked down on and we were used and we are still being used to benefit whatever political or economic reason that Australia or whatever any of those so called partners and donors have." (Focus group)

"They do contribute a lot, mostly in services and stuff like that, but then, they always have these at the back of their mind a hidden agenda in everything ... you don't give something to someone without ... expectations, like the basic even if they award road construction and that, they make sure that, that money goes back to their Australian contractors." (Focus group)

"The NRL and AFL don't recruit more players from PNG to participate in these two sporting codes. Even though we have a huge raw talent base in PNG you choose to recruit Fijians and Polynesians over PNGeans. Bearing in mind that we PNGeans shed blood with you in the WWII and not those other Pacific Island Countries. With no disrespect to these Island nations. It's time NRL scouts recruit players direct from our local competition to enter NRL." (Online survey)

"The Australian Government when discussing for agreement like the Manus Refugee centre they have to make a good MOU with the local people, in a long run it affects the local community so must make good arrangement." (Online survey)

Australia accepts corrupt PNG funds

Several online respondents wrote that **corrupt PNG money ends up invested in Australia**. They beseeched the Australian government to take a stronger tack: helping to curb corruption in PNG by refusing to accept such monies in Australia.

"Australia [is] entertaining white collar criminals from PNG to invest people's money in Australia to do private business, my question is why are PNG politicians [the] top 10 richest people in PNG?" (Online survey)

"Aust. Government must know that most of the Aid given always ends up back in Australia through the corruption, especially the MPs (PNG) who own many million dollar properties in Australia. Some of these properties were bought through Aid grants." (Online survey)

"Stop facilitating corrupt png money being invested in Australia." (Online survey)

"Every year Australian Tax monies [are] squandered in PNG through corrupt means and fraudulent processes. These politicians and their cronies all benefit exponentially—building their empires overnight, some even have properties in Australia, NZ and Asia which were purchased from these dirty money." (Online survey)

"If Australia's interest in PNG's development and progress is genuine and serious, it should help in the fight against corruption before anything else because corruption is sinking the nation. Australia can help PNG fight corruption by doing/funding the following: (I) Train officers from the Fraud and Anti Corruption Directorate; (II) Help Investigate Money Laundering between the 2 countries and prosecute those involved; (III) Stop proceeds of corrupt and stolen money from entering Australia or [being] invested in Australia." (Interview)

Tertiary scholarships

Focus group participants and online survey respondents opined that the **Australia Awards scholarships are too narrow in scope**, since they are only awarded to individuals studying in 'key priority areas.' Numerous online survey respondents and focus group participants questioned this policy: why Australia only provides scholarships from these areas, omitting, for instance, many STEM disciplines, where quality training may be hard to come by in PNG.

Focus group participants and interviewees further noted that, since so few children in PNG make it to secondary school, **investment in education in the early and secondary years is crucial**—not just education of a handful of top achievers to PhD level. One interviewee said that she would like to see **scholarships for high secondary school achievers** to pursue undergraduate studies in Australia.

"ALWAYS JEALOUSY ON US GETTING QUALITY EDUCATION." (Online survey)

"Restrictions on education and jobs to PNG citizens in Australia unlike other Pacific countries." (Online survey)

"I had someone from Australia Awards come, give a roadshow talk, and say 'Oh you can't apply for science based programs like being a rocket scientist or anything because you don't have rockets here.' Dude, you don't know that, we could build our own you know, if we went and got the training enough to do something. We could build our own, we could send our own satellites out to space. You don't know that, why are you saying, limiting me to just taking education programs or health programs in your country." (Focus group)

"If they are serious in helping us, they should let us select what we want to study, like science [and] engineering, which is needed in our country, and other programs that we don't have here, which is offered down there. In that way they can truly help us gain that education and come back and build our capacity here." (Focus group)

"That Papua New Guinea is in desperate need to access better education like those provided in Australian schools. The Australians are too hard on Papua New Guineans and other Pacific countries regarding education entry requirements. Australia and New Zealand looks to most people in my area as if they are one country using two different names. Australia and New Zealand share many benefits between them without any restrictions. Very soon the Papua New Guinea will turn to the Chinese for help." (Online survey)

"I'd like Australians to consider and give scholarships especially to our grade 12s with even standard GPA's because most of the top students get places in PNG tertiary institutions." (Interview)

“We have only six universities and much of the courses, except for the technical ones that are offered here at the University of Technology, are duplicates and they are not so technical. Anybody can get admission into those courses and graduate and do the same thing over and over again and we get nothing out of it.

We want to see changes in our country so we need more technical specialists and Australia has that, so why can't they provide us scholarships in those areas so that our people can go down to Australia, get educated, come up and develop our country.” (Interview)

“For example, sending of one PhD candidate to Australia will cost the education of 10 PNG females than educating one PNG PhD in PNG in a blended mode that will save money to educate 10 midwives in country.” (Interview)

Views of Australia Summary

All respondents were asked about their views on Australia and Australians. Online and remote survey respondents could provide up to two positive and two negative aspects of Australia and Australians. Few of the 120 remote villagers did so, such that they provided only 107 out of a possible 240 responses on positive aspects of Australia, and 121 out of a possible 240 responses on negative aspects. Those who did not respond told survey-takers that they did not know what to say here, likely due to a lack of experience with Australians and lack of knowledge about Australian Aid activities in PNG.

Positive views

Online survey respondents overwhelmingly praised **Australian Aid** to PNG; this was followed by praise for Australia's **government services** for its own citizens, then by praise for Australians' **friendliness and peace-loving nature**. In contrast, remote villagers praised Australians' **respectfulness** and their **good quality houses**, followed by their **kindness and good roads**. Only four remote villagers explicitly mentioned **Australia Aid** or **scholarships** for PNG students.

Interviewees praised Australian **quality control and project management procedures**. Two interviewees benefited directly from **training opportunities**: one in an Australian-owned business, and the other through Australian government-funded medical training.

Respondents within all cohorts except the remote villagers noted the bond forged from Australia and PNG's **shared history**. But parts of this history are clearly better known in some cohorts than others; 63% of remote Morobe villagers (76 of 120) said they **had not heard of the Kokoda Track**.

Negative views

1. Racism

In the online surveys, the most-cited theme by all age groups and both genders in responses to “negative aspects of Australia and Australians” was that of **racism**, followed by **condescension toward PNG**. In total, these two themes made up 42% of all English online survey responses to this question. These were followed by **problematic aspects of aid** (conditional aid, aid not addressing the right issues, reforms unsuited to PNG, and MOUs with unfavourable conditions). Among online respondents and focus group participants, some who cited **racism** said that they had either experienced this themselves, or heard stories from contacts about their own experiences.

No remote villagers mentioned **racism** as a negative aspect to Australia or Australians. Instead, they cited the themes of: **fighting, stealing, air pollution**, then **murders and alcohol abuse**. It thus appears that these villagers may see the ills of Australia as similar to the ills of PNG as a whole (for which **stealing, fighting, and alcohol abuse** were also cited).

2. Asymmetry to the relationship

While some respondents noted the asymmetry in the Australia-PNG relationship endearingly (with Australia as PNG's **mother or big brother country**), numerous respondents in all but the remote cohort expressed **distrust of Australia's motives** in continuing to invest heavily in PNG.

The benefits to Australian firms of so-called **boomerang aid** were proffered as one explanation for this investment.

Respectful protocol and salary asymmetries were noted by some interviewees. One recounted junior DFAT officials' being sent to meet senior PNG government officials. Papua New Guineans may be aware that the Australians employed alongside them can earn higher salaries.

Visa laws are clearly asymmetrical, several respondents noted, with PNG citizens' having to obtain a visa before traveling to Australia, while Australians can get a visa to PNG on arrival.

3. Australia's accepting corrupt PNG funds

Some respondents to the online surveys wrote that Australia was knowingly allowing laundered PNG money to be invested in Australia.

4. Tertiary scholarships

Focus group participants and online survey respondents alike found fault with the narrow focus of the Australia Awards scholarship scheme, which they felt limited PNG's potential to develop capacity by restricting scholarships to areas like healthcare and education, omitting some STEM disciplines.

7. Perceptions of Australia compared to other countries and actors

Most respondents to the online survey, and all to the in-person survey, gave “Australia” as “PNG’s best friend,” but a number of respondents qualified this or gave other nations.

Several participants in focus groups and the online surveys identified **a difference in the way that Australians dealt with them, compared to people from other countries**; often, in particular, Asian countries. One survey respondent wrote: “China and Japan don’t try to win us with some old bond of friendship and kinship long forgotten. Asians are here to do business and will look you in your eyes and deal with you as equals (unlike) ... Australia and New Zealand.” Similarly, a focus group participant commented that Australians alone, in contrast to all other nationalities she had worked with, seemed to look down on her and fail to treat her as an equal.

That said, some found favourable comparisons in the other direction, reporting that contacts found that **Australian company protocols compared favourably with those of Chinese companies**, where supervisors were overly

aggressive and did not allow second chances. The **Chinese and other Asians were accused by some respondents of spreading counterfeit and low-quality products in PNG**, and of **bringing workers illegally** to take jobs that would otherwise be filled by Papua New Guineans. Some respondents beseeched Australia to take a more active role in countering China’s influence in the region, and to assist PNG to patrol its coastlines to stop illegal activities by other countries there.

Some respondents expressed the sentiment that China’s increasing influence in PNG was due in part to the notion that **China understands PNG’s need for economic growth and infrastructural development more than the Australians do**. The Chinese were perceived by some to be **less inclined to meddle with governmental decisions of PNG than Australians**, although others stated that **China and Australia both have economic motives** in dealing with PNG. Australia was perceived by some to **use PNG as a buffer zone** against other actors (like China), while the same charge was not leveled at China or other countries.

“I don’t know why Australians do not want to build shops and invest in PNG to counter these Chinese businesses with their fake and over due products.” (Online survey)

“That PNG is experiencing increasing presence and daily interaction with Asian people and culture than Australia.” (Online survey)

“... they (Chinese) have made themselves known to the masses of population of this country.” (Interview)

“Australia should be aware that there are a lot of players within the pacific region and they should do more to show that they are the major players in this region.” (Interview)

“To me it is the Asians! Asians are coming into Papua New Guinea. They are everywhere in the country ... in cities and towns ... in all the streets in our cities and towns. They are building stores and they are selling cheap goods. I don’t like to see this happen! They are influencing all our population to think and act like our Asians ... and they are selling cheap goods ... and this is one of the things that I don’t like to see happen. They are influencing us to think and act like the Asians!

If you go to Chinese shops. For instance. Take PNG made biscuits. We are selling biscuits at that are quite higher prices than the prices at which the Asians are selling their biscuits. And when you eat the PNG and the Asian biscuits, you will feel that the tastes are quite different. Because the prices of the Asians biscuits are very cheap people will still buy those goods! Everyone is going for the price. The quality is not good.

The same is true also for clothes. PNG made clothes are of higher quality and with higher prices, than the Asian ones. But because the Asian clothes are of lower prices, with same color many PNG people are purchasing them. They then realize that after they have worn the Asians clothes for a few days or weeks, the clothes lose quality and they deteriorate. So that’s how, you know, things are happening in Papua New Guinea.” (Interview)

“The good comparison which I can compare right now is with the Asians especially the Chinese as they flooded our countries; in terms of the work they do and their behavior or attitude towards their employees. About the quality of the work they do, I think the Chinese are doing the good job but their services are not of the quality as they never last for long where as for the Australian, most of their product and services are of quality and good standard which last long. And in terms of the their conduct in the work place, I hear that Chinese were aggressive people and they never give a warning or the second chance if you are not perform to the standards while the Australian, they do give the were assertive and they do correct us and give us a second chance if did wrong.

Thus from my comparison, I think that the Australians were better in the quality of services they provided and their code of conduct in their working environment in dealing with its employees.” (Interview)

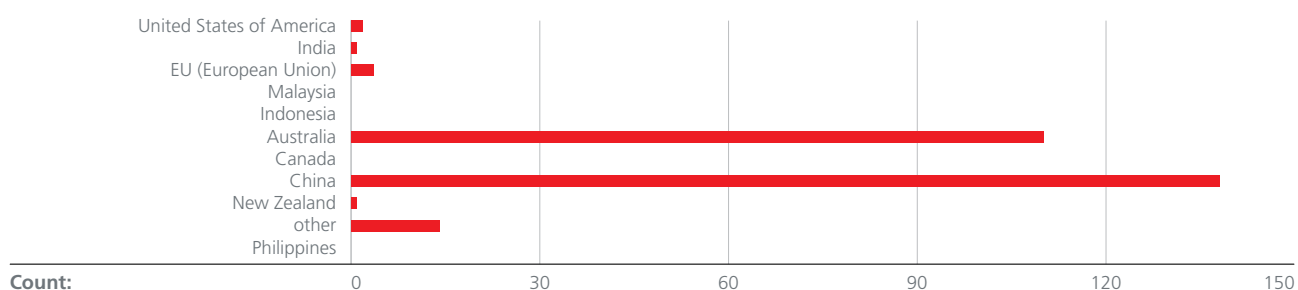
A large number of respondents had firsthand experience with a development project in their community; the majority felt that the project had a positive impact. **Projects funded by Australia (Australian Aid) produced the highest rates of satisfaction**, followed by those funded by religious organizations and by the European Union; those funded by the United States of America produced the lowest levels of satisfaction. Across all funders, **projects related to education produced the highest level of satisfaction**, with those in technical assistance producing the lowest levels of satisfaction.

One interviewee noted that **Australian Aid projects do not often incorporate contributions from other foreigners and their organizations active in PNG**. By cooperating, their collective contributions could be enhanced, she suggested.

Investment

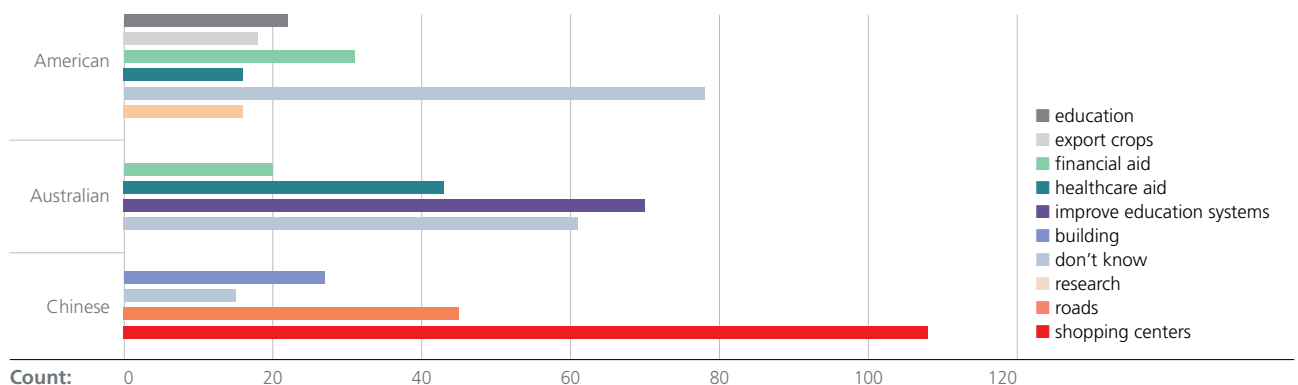
We asked participants about their perceptions of investment by different foreign nations in PNG. Respondents to the online survey rated **Australia as the top investor in education, health, and agriculture**, but **China as the top investor in infrastructure**.

7.1 Responses to “Which country invests the most in PNG in infrastructure?”, English online survey



Overall, the remote Morobe group had **weaker impressions of Australia and Australia’s type of investment than of the investments from China**, but still perceived similar patterns to those reported by respondents to the online survey: China as investing in infrastructure, and Australia as investing in education and health. Many more remote respondents perceived that **Chinese in PNG ran shopping venues** than knew what type of investment Australia made in PNG. Many people expressed “do not know” when asked “What type of work does the Australian government do in PNG?,” although there was a relatively robust awareness of Australian investment in education and health; this was greater than the awareness of Chinese investment in roads or buildings.

7.2 Impressions of different types of investment in PNG by the USA, Australia, and China, by the remote Morobe respondents

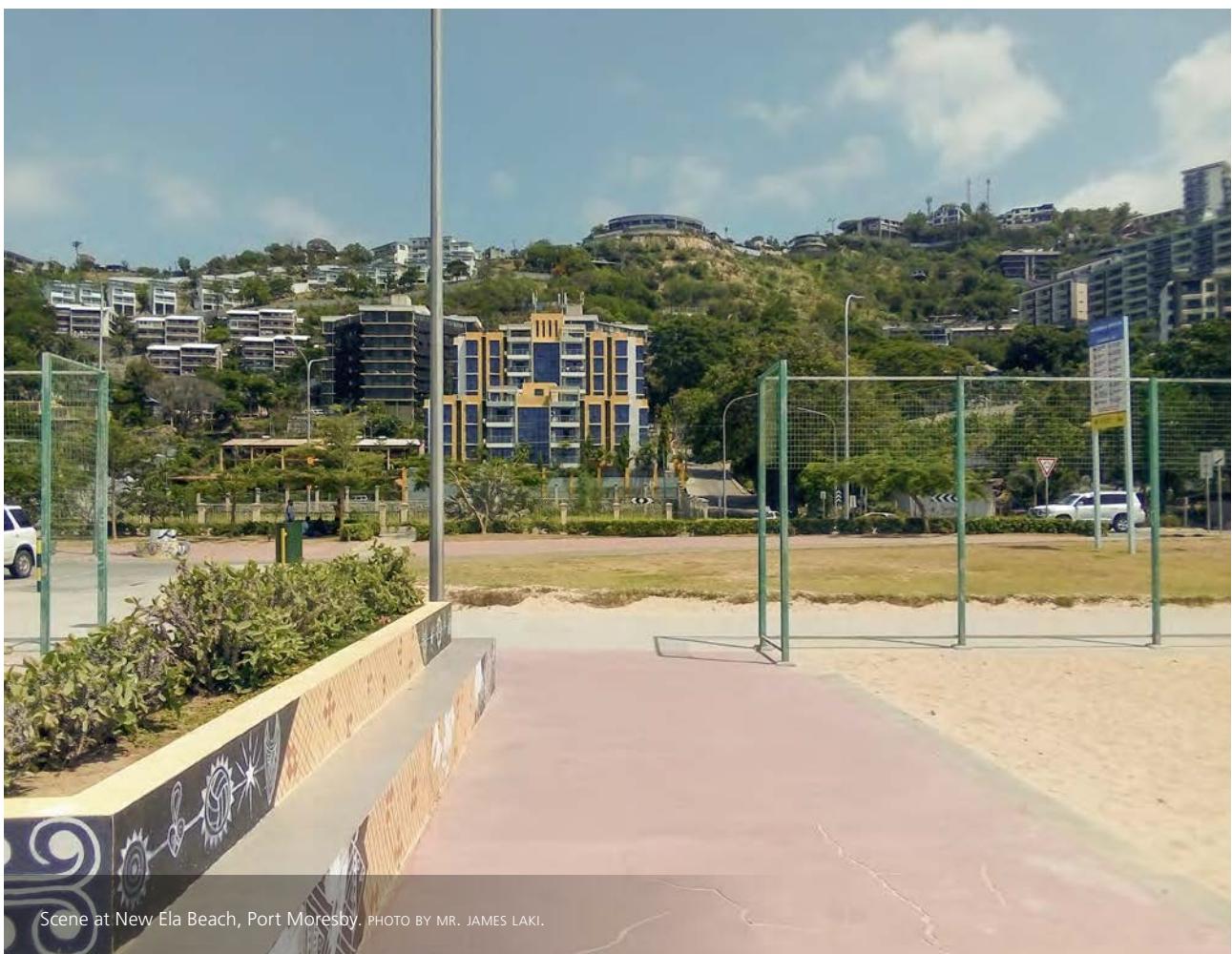


"Australian and Japanese AID are similar. But I think Japanese AID is the one that is reaching the remote areas and is giving something, especially in the schools I am with, they provide stationaries. And I see that Japanese AID is giving lots of things in the remote areas." (Focus group)

"So China respects PNG's culture, PNG's way of doing things. And you'll see the relationship that China has with PNG, they understand the need or the national interest of PNG. So when they create those relationship, they really create those relationships in a way that benefits not only themselves, but PNG as well. So for instance, if they come into our country creating a relationship because they want our natural resources, they'll try their best to make sure that PNG gets those basic service deliveries such as roads, building infrastructure, health facilities, educational infrastructures and all this. So it's like, they're not only getting our resources and benefiting, but they're also giving to us. But with Australia, I see that Australia is still in that colonialist mindset or colonialist behavior, still in that culture. So, whatever relationship we create with Australia, though PNG is an independent state, Australia still dictates and makes the decision for PNG government. So I would definitely want Australia to, not control us." (Focus group)

"Well, from my own understanding or from my own view, I like so far our relationship with the French, the Americans, the Chinese, Japanese, because they do a lot of sponsors, they send a lot of volunteers to help. In agriculture, in every area that we need ... in education, they have volunteers over. So they assist us. They're always on the ground with us. Maybe it's just me." (Focus group)

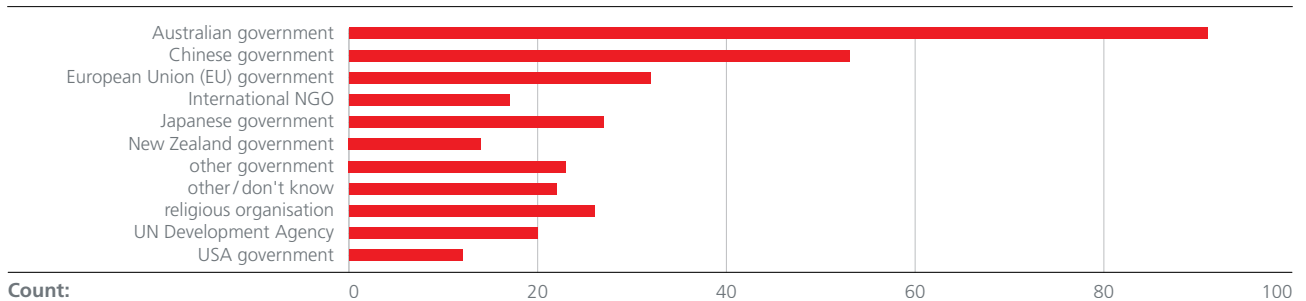
"Australia is not giving us aid so that because they need, care about Papua New Guinea, no. They are giving us aid because they can get something in turn from Papua New Guinea. China is coming in here not because they care about Papua New Guinea, because they want to get something out from Papua New Guinea likewise with Japan and US ... All of those countries have some economic motive, coming into this country trying to create those ties and those relationships. So for me, it's all about us trying to see where we can best get the biggest benefit from, who can provide us the most in terms of economic benefit that could go in line with our development plans for our country. And whoever does that, we might as well stick with them or create better ties or relations with them because in the end it's all about us developing our country ... if China is providing us better opportunities for development and Australia is not, we should stick with China." (Focus group)



International development projects in PNG

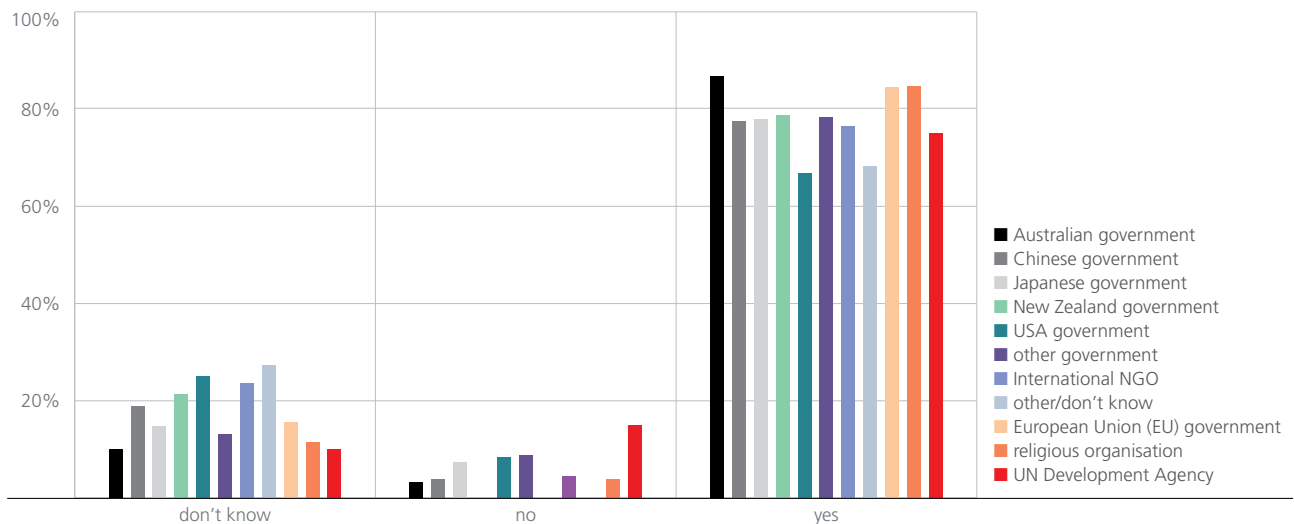
Online survey respondents were asked about their firsthand experiences with development/aid projects. Overall, most respondents who had experienced a development project in their community experienced one funded by the Australian government (91 people: 28% of all survey respondents).

7.3 Development projects directly observed, by funder, English online survey



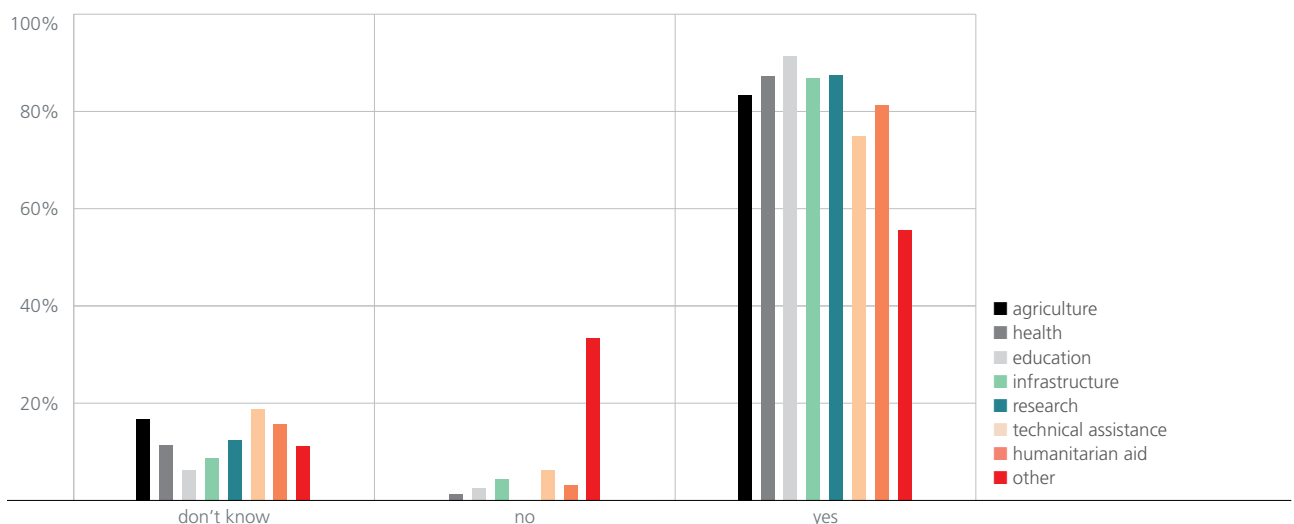
Australian-funded projects received the highest proportions of “made a positive impact” rating of all funders, followed by religious organizations, then the European Union. Those funded by the United States of America received the lowest proportions of “made a positive impact” ratings.

7.4 Percent responses to “Did the project have a positive impact on your community?” online English survey, by funder



Across all funders, projects in the **education** sector received the highest proportions of “made a positive impact” ratings, while those in **technical assistance** received the lowest.

7.5 Percent responses to “Did the project have a positive impact on your community?” online English survey, by sector



“Most people are dying with cancer so please can the Australian Government help PNG government to build a better Cancer hospital for PNGeans so we can help our cancer patients rather than seeing my people and loved ones die.” (Online survey)

“I would like to say, more research needs to be done like this study, more statistics needed to be collected, more information for them so they know where the priority areas for investment must be. I feel that they are investing on an ad hoc basis. If they are serious about PNG, they need to invest in the people, esp. these on the rural villages, that is where impact will be.” (Interview)

“Australia can ... provide us technical support for downstream processing of all our natural resources. We cannot continue to export raw materials to Australia or to China or to Malaysia. If Australia as our donor partner can help us build factories and provide us technical support so we can create more jobs for ourselves by going into downstream processing here in our country.” (Interview)

“It will also be necessary to think creatively about how challenges can be confronted. In the past the tendency has been to try to address all the various challenges Papua New Guinea faces at the same time, distributing limited financial resources all too thinly. The results have been mixed at best. It is best to deal with challenges one step at a time. For example, if the conversation is around rural electrification, clean drinking and washing water and sanitation, aid money should be spent around those social development areas besides health and education training and development should be spread within the country.” (Interview)

“There should be some other projects that many Papua New Guineans have taken up but maybe they don't have the expertise to connect to the right people in Australia to provide them with assistance to do the little projects. Australians should bring their aid straight to the villages, where the roads end. Not in the cities. Papua New Guineans are not going to kill you and eat you. I would like to invite Australians to come to Papua New Guinea.” (Interview)

“I would like the Australian government cut down on its budget Aid to PNG but use the limited funds on Key areas which are in Infrastructure and Agriculture. Papua New Guinea has vast number of resources which need to be open up to the outside International market. Australia can take advantage of this opportunity to open up the rural marine areas, hinterlands of the many districts and get the products to downstream processing products which both Countries can tie commercial partnership with the people direct in each districts.” (Interview)

“My appeal to the Australian government is that firstly I really thank you very much for the continued voluntary support to the people of the PNG since the independence till now. Secondly it is my appeal to the Australian government that If you really love and care for the PNGans, please sometimes try to give some discipline to our government agencies by trying to talk to them to be self-reliant and teach us how to utilize our resources so that we can manage and manufacture products like other countries and finally I appeal to the government to really track the process of their aid if it really serves its intended purpose because I cannot see most of the aid reach the bottom levels of people who live in the village.” (Interview)

Perceptions of Australia compared to other actors Summary

Although Australia was most often named as the biggest investor in PNG in the areas of agriculture, education, and healthcare, China was most often named as the biggest investor in PNG in infrastructure. China's role in PNG was compared to that of Australia by respondents to the online surveys, and by focus group participants and interviewees. Some said that **Chinese products and work were of lower quality than Australian products and work**, and that **Chinese employers were more “aggressive” than Australian employers**. But several respondents seemed to prefer China's approach to high-level relations between the two countries over Australia's, claiming that **China did not seek to dictate PNG's internal affairs** in the same way as Australia did, and that “Asians are here to do business and will look you in your eyes and deal with you as equals (unlike)... Australia and New Zealand,” who still rely on “some old bond of friendship and kinship long forgotten.”

Several online respondents and interviewees expressed the opinion that **Chinese and other Asian nationals were much more visible in PNG than Australians**. This notion may be supported by the remote **Morobe villagers' high degree of certainty about the sort of work that Chinese did in PNG**, and relatively low degree of certainty about the sort of work that Australia did in PNG.

Of online survey respondents who had firsthand experience with a development project, **most had experienced one funded by Australian Aid** (91 respondents), followed by the Chinese (53 respondents), then the European Union (32 respondents). **Australian Aid-funded projects received the highest proportions of “made a positive impact” ratings** of all funders, followed by religious organizations, then the European Union. The United Nations Development Fund projects received the highest proportions of “did not make a positive impact.” Across all funders, projects in the **education** sector received the highest proportions of “made a positive impact” ratings, while those in **technical assistance** received the lowest.



A fisherman near Manus island. PHOTO BY MR. MAHOLOPA LAVELL.

8. PNG Voices: Key Findings and Messages

In a country as diverse as PNG, it is impossible to claim representativeness with a single study. Despite the challenges of the global pandemic, PNG's terrain, and its overwhelmingly rural population, this study did achieve a high level of geographical reach: the 536 respondents originated in 21 of PNG's 22 Provinces.

The focus groups, interviews, and online surveys responses largely reinforced each other in themes and their relative weighting; respondents to these components were overwhelmingly highly educated. In contrast, the 120 **remote Morobe villagers' responses patterned differently from the others** in some respects, especially regarding evaluation of problems in PNG (law and order issues were primary, and corruption was barely mentioned), and perceptions of Australia (perceived racism and Australian development assistance were barely mentioned by this group).

Apart from the remote sample, no one group, nor one gender or age range, patterned differently than others in major ways. Since PNG is 87% rural, and only 15% of PNG students make it to secondary school, the remote Morobe villagers' responses could be taken as more potentially representative of viewpoints in some parts of the country than those of the highly-educated and/or urban respondents in the other components—but PNG is too diverse in culture and topography to make such inferences with any certainty.

In sum, this has been the first major study of Papua New Guinean attitudes toward their own society and Australia's role in it. The key findings of *PNG Voices* do not always make for easy reading and the nuances that emerge speak to a dissonance between how Australia is viewed from within PNG and how the relationship is framed and understood by policymakers in Australia. Hearing that dissonance with all its nuances, presented here through the voices of diverse Papua New Guineans, offers an opportunity to reconsider some long-held assumptions about Australia's relationship with PNG, and to recalibrate the policy frameworks currently shaping the bilateral relationship.

Key Findings

Asymmetry and the importance of respectful relationships.

A key finding across the data was the importance of respectful relationships, including pride in Papua New Guinean cultural norms of kindness, hospitality, and respect. One respondent referred to these shared values and modes of relating as "the PNG Way."

While many respondents spoke very positively about Australia's financial support for PNG and acknowledged the importance of a shared history, there was also a widespread perception of asymmetry in the relationship. This was evident not only in how some respondents spoke about a perceived lack of respect for PNG sovereignty at the government-to-government macro level and a perception that Australia "meddled" in PNG's affairs. It was also a common perception and indeed experience of some in their everyday dealings

with Australian companies, organisations, and Australian nationals in PNG. Racism and condescension, along with two-tiered pay schemes, were cited many times.

There was both embracing of and scepticism about the Australian framing of the Australia-PNG relationship as one of kinship and friendship based on shared history. One respondent described a persistent dynamic of inferiority/superiority. Many expressed the opinion that Australia aids PNG for self-serving geopolitical or economic reasons and that Australia uses PNG's financial dependency to its own advantage, seeking to dictate PNG's policies and priorities.

Capacity building with local agency in mind.

A strong theme running through many of the focus groups, interviews, and online responses was the desire for PNG self-reliance and economic independence through diversifying partnerships and moving away from donor-recipient modes of development. Investment in human capital through education and training, and through offering work to young professionals with the right skills, was emphasized; this was framed as key for building PNG's ability to be self-reliant in the future. For the remote Morobe group, the desire for an educated populace was cited by many more respondents than all other dreams for their communities.

Some respondents expressed the opinion that capacity building was stymied in part by Australians' lack of trust in Papua New Guineans' abilities, and concomitant failure to recognize the skills, knowledge, and expertise of Papua New Guineans. This was seen as entailing a missed opportunity; in fact, these respondents opined, Papua New Guineans' existing capabilities and deep knowledge of their own communities could be beneficial for development work in PNG.

Major differences between urban, educated respondents and those in remote communities.

Respondents to the online survey and the Lae, Madang and Port Moresby focus groups and interviews generally showed strong recognition of the Australian relationship with PNG, but this was very different in the remote Morobe cohort. The remote group showed a high degree of uncertainty about types of Australian investment in PNG and qualities of Australia and Australians. Many fewer remote respondents were able to state the types of investments Australia makes in PNG than were able to state the types of investments China makes in PNG. Indeed, China was widely identified as the most visible investor in infrastructure in PNG and was deemed to be more visible on the ground than Australia. The general uncertainty about Australian Aid activities by the remote respondents may directly relate to the perception among a number of educated respondents that Australian development assistance often stops in the cities and is unevenly distributed in rural and remote PNG (where, again, 87% of the population is found).

When considering their own communities and PNG as a whole, the remote Morobe respondents present very different viewpoints from those of the urban, educated respondents. The remote respondents tended to frame their society's strengths and challenges in terms of individuals' behaviours: kindness, hospitality, and respect, or fighting, murder, and theft. In contrast, the urban, educated respondents tended to describe such things at a systemic level in terms of "culture" or "law and order problems." While most urban, educated respondents noted rampant corruption in PNG, corruption was unmentioned by 119 of the 120 remote villagers. In terms of government service delivery failures, these villagers overwhelmingly cited the lack of healthcare services and the lack of roads, to the exclusion of most other things; this reflects the particularities of their region.

Like other respondents, however, the remote villagers prized the freedom of movement for individuals within PNG and the independence of PNG as a sovereign nation. Their appreciation for behavioural norms involving kindness, hospitality, and respect intersects with responses by the urban, educated cohorts. These suggest some degree of commonality, in terms of shared values and modes of engagement, but also strong regional identities and perspectives. As one participant put it, "a one-size-fits-all approach" will never work in PNG.

Diversifying international partnerships in PNG.

While Australia was still regarded across most of the data as PNG's "best friend," respondents also identified other countries and international actors as increasingly visible and important to PNG's development—as investment partners, through development assistance, and in trade—especially China.

A clear distinction emerged in the data between the types of investment China and Australia were perceived to be making in PNG. China was perceived by most online and remote respondents to be PNG's largest investor in hard infrastructure projects—roads and buildings, while Australia was generally perceived as the biggest investor in education, healthcare, and agriculture. A few respondents expressed the sentiment that China's increasing influence in PNG was due in part to China's understanding of PNG's need for economic growth and infrastructural development.

Several educated respondents to different components of the study opined that other countries are more willing to see PNG as an equal partner than Australia is, and that modes of bilateral engagement at the national level reflected this.

Development with maintenance of culture and environment.

PNG's cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as biodiversity, were identified as major strengths of the country. A few online and focus group respondents suggested that tourism was a promising growth area. Holding true to Papua New Guinean values while also continuing to develop economically was identified as a key concern. This included maintaining PNG's biodiversity and the ecological balance within PNG while also developing PNG's wealth of natural resources.

Key messages

1. Perception of Australian Aid as "boomerang aid."

Many respondents expressed the belief that Australian Aid funds primarily benefited Australian nationals financially, and/or that Australia's investment in PNG served a broader geopolitical strategy to maintain influence in PNG and keep others out.

2. Papua New Guineans' deep connection to their lands, and the profound power of traditional landownership.

Respondents extolled PNG's natural resources, but not just as potential sources of income, to be exploited. For many, these were framed as treasures of biodiversity that both sustain life with their bounty and house ancestral spirits and connections. Beyond this, focus group participants noted that the reality of traditional land ownership throughout the nation has powerful ramifications: even "if the government is going corrupt, we own the land."

3. Major differences between remote villagers' perceptions and the ways they framed their responses, and those of educated respondents.

Aside from major differences in perceived strengths and challenges of PNG, and their dreams for their communities, the remote villagers also were much less aware of Australian Aid and Australian investment activities in PNG than were educated respondents. Only 37% of remote villagers had heard of the Kokoda Track, one of the iconic sites of Australian military history in PNG. One of the few areas in which the remote villagers' perceptions accorded with those of the online survey respondents was the perception of China as the major outside investor in PNG's infrastructure.

4. Perception of Australian racism and/or condescension toward PNG.

These were the most commonly cited negative aspects to Australians for the online survey respondents and focus group participants. Some wrote that they had experienced racism themselves while studying, working, or traveling in Australia; others reported this as the experience of friends or associates. Condescension toward Papua New Guineans was couched by some as a negative side of the colonial legacy, and sometimes contrasted with the demeanour of people from other countries, especially Asian nations (see below).

5. Perception of inequity in Australian visa processes and the priority subject areas funded by Australia Awards scholarships.

Australians' PNG visa-on-arrival was contrasted with Papua New Guineans' entry requirements for Australia. Getting to Australia was described by one respondent as like "reaching heaven." Some respondents also perceived PNG as disadvantaged in Australian visa awards, compared to other



Mr. Hesty Maya with an interviewee in the Saruwaged Mountains, Morobe Province. PHOTO BY MR. STANLEY GIRIP.

Pacific nations. Several respondents bemoaned the absence of basic/pure science, engineering, and mathematics courses, from the list of priority areas supported in the Australia Awards scholarships scheme (currently limited to Agriculture, Education, Governance, Health, Law and Justice, Transport and Infrastructure). Respondents cited the importance of such study to building PNG's scientific capacity to eventually increase local production of goods.

6. Perception that Australia is a haven for investment of corrupt PNG funds.

Some educated respondents expressed the belief that much laundered PNG money—some of it claimed to come from Australian Aid—ends up invested in Australian properties, and accused the Australian government of wilfully ignoring this.

7. Perception that China and "Asian" nations are more visible than Australia on the ground in PNG, and that their governments may be more respectful of PNG sovereignty than Australia is.

Some respondents had negative views of the quality of Chinese or "Asian" work and goods compared with those of Australia, and negative impressions of Chinese or Asian employers, compared with Australian employers. But several expressed the opinion that China and other Asian nations'

approach to PNG was superior to Australia's in that the Asians approached Papua New Guineans as equals, not as former colonial masters. Such respondents described the Chinese as aiming for purely economic agreements, without also trying to dictate unrelated PNG government policies. This was contrasted with Australia, which was perceived to meddle in PNG sovereign affairs.

Infrastructure is a top concern of Papua New Guineans, across regions, and China was perceived by a majority of online respondents as the major foreign investor in PNG's infrastructure, above Australia. Finally, some respondents reported that the Chinese and other Asian nationals were highly visible in PNG's urban areas, in contrast to Australians, who were said by some to help PNG "at arm's length."

8. Desire to develop in a particularly Papua New Guinean way, maintaining positive aspects of culture and language.

Many respondents affirmed the specialness and positive aspects of PNG's diverse languages and cultures. Some, especially in the focus groups and interviews, articulated a vision for PNG's future that maintained the positive aspects of PNG's languages and cultures while still developing. Some respondents beseeched Australians to invest more in understanding the diverse cultures and languages of PNG.

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Appendix: Team and Methodology

The following information expands on the brief discussion of methodology in section 2 of the report.

Research team

Uruwa Ward 1 community, Kabwum District, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea: Mr. Dono Ögate (Digicel Foundation Overall Man of Honour), Stanly Girip, Lyn Ögate, and Ismael Dono oversaw this team, which also included nine young community survey-takers (Aron Wrefords, Boifa Ögate, Delila Namush, Emeli Jacob, Hessa Maya, Mothyma Arex, Tabitha James, Tilas Aisak, and Timsaol Girip). This team ran in-person surveys in five villages of Uruwa Ward 1, in the local language, Nungon; the team translated responses into Tok Pisin, entered the data into Qualtrics Offline, and then coded free responses in English.

Divine Word University, Madang, Papua New Guinea: Leonie Baptiste oversaw this team, also including Peter Nasale and Lorelle T. Yakam: conducting, transcription, and analysis of focus group discussions in Madang and surrounds.

Papua New Guinea University of Technology, Lae, Papua New Guinea: Dr. Londari Yamarak oversaw this team, also including Gomi J. Gipe and Lemuel Z. Dom; they were responsible for running, transcribing, and analysing interviews in Lae, and for supporting the Uruwa community with coding their survey data.

University of PNG, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Maholopa Laveil and Kelly Samof did online survey coding and quantitative analysis, and ran and transcribed interviews.

Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia: Dr. Hannah Sarvasy served as facilitator for the project, set up the survey in Qualtrics, collated materials from all teams for this report, and generated charts and graphics for the report. Dr. Eline Smit ran Bayesian statistical models and generated word clouds and charts from the survey data.

External Consultant, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: James Laki greatly assisted with survey design, project planning, and dissemination.

Remote in-person *tok ples* “local language” survey information

The remote Morobe community, involving five villages of the Uruwa Ward 1, is special in PNG for its rejection, under the leadership of Dono Ögate in the 1990s, of an internal market economy: the community determined that if they bought and sold staple goods such as taro among themselves, this would erode the fabric of their community. They have long grown coffee in small quantities for export. A small health outpost exists about a three-hour hike away; women must hike there for ante-natal care. There is no electricity or other services in the area. The benefit of being remote, in this case, may be that violent crime levels, and alcohol and drug abuse, are very low in the region. The region is part of the YUS Conservation

Area, established in 2009, within which landholders pledge not to hunt or harvest wood on parts of their landholdings for the purpose of conservation.

Focus group information

This component of the project was overseen by Leonie Baptiste and executed by the DWU team, with assistance from two members of the Uruwa Ward 1 community. Of these, two focus groups comprised administrative and ancillary staff at DWU, while the other two focus groups comprised undergraduate students at DWU. The last two focus groups took place in settlements elsewhere in greater Madang city (Toroboko, 12 kilometres South of Madang town; Nagada on the North Coast, 10 kilometres North of Madang town), and the participants in these sites were largely local people not involved in salaried work, except one employed as a carpenter. None of these participants had any university education.

Focus groups and interviews followed the principle of saturation; discussion was allowed to continue until participants felt that each topic had been sufficiently discussed such that no new stances or information emerged.

Interview information

Interviews were carried out by Lemuel Z. Dom, Gomi J. Gipe, and Dr. Londari Yamarak in Lae, and by Maholopa Laveil and Kelly Samof in Port Moresby. Analysis was done by Dr. Yamarak. Interviewees’ average age was 36 years. The oldest among the interviewees was 69 years old, from Enga Province, while the youngest person was 21 years, a university student in Lae. The education level of the participants ranged from Year 6 to PhD. Positions ranged from primary school teachers to university lecturers, project managers, HR officers, mining company officials, and tradespeople. Interviewees were hand-selected by the Unitech and UPNG teams to represent a range of experience types with PNG business and Australian enterprise and government agencies.

These interviews had a similar structure to the focus group discussions, in that relatively open-ended questions were asked, without prompting for particular themes. After basic demographic information was obtained, interviewees were asked for their views on PNG’s strengths and challenges, and then on Australia’s role in PNG. They were then asked to describe any experience they had had with Australian government-funded projects or work in PNG, and then to compare the work Australia does in/for PNG with that of other actors. Unlike the focus group participants and interviewees in Madang, these interviewees were asked a pointed question, “What do Australians get wrong in interacting with PNG and its people?” After this, they were asked for any further thoughts to be passed on to the Australian government and people.

Interviews were transcribed and summarized by each interviewer, then Dr. Yamarak distilled key information from the transcriptions into a single database, and ran thematic analyses of the collected interviews, producing a 28-page report, of which excerpts feature in the present document.



Ms. Fua Maya displays the crimped leaves and flowers she made as dance adornments, Toweth village, Morobe Province. PHOTO BY DR. HANNAH SARVASY

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