

Women's roles, impacts and benefits of local businesses based on customary land in Papua New Guinea

*2019 PNG Update August 8-9, 2019
University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby*

Hennah Steven
(PhD Candidate – Massey University, NZ)

Outline

- Introduction
- Study context
- Data collection method
- Research sites
- Case studies & women's roles
- Key learnings
- Business benefits for women
- Conclusion

Introduction

**“The Land has Eyes and
Teeth”:** Customary owners’
entanglements with economic
systems in the Pacific

PhD research

Women’s contribution to and
benefits of successful businesses
based on customary land.

“The Land has eyes and teeth” project

The aim of our project is to explain how communities across the Pacific have been able to establish distinctive models of economic engagement that allow them to pursue successful business development while retaining control over their customary land and upholding community processes and values.



In this presentation

Findings on women's contribution to the success of 3 case study businesses based on customary land and the benefits they receive will be presented.

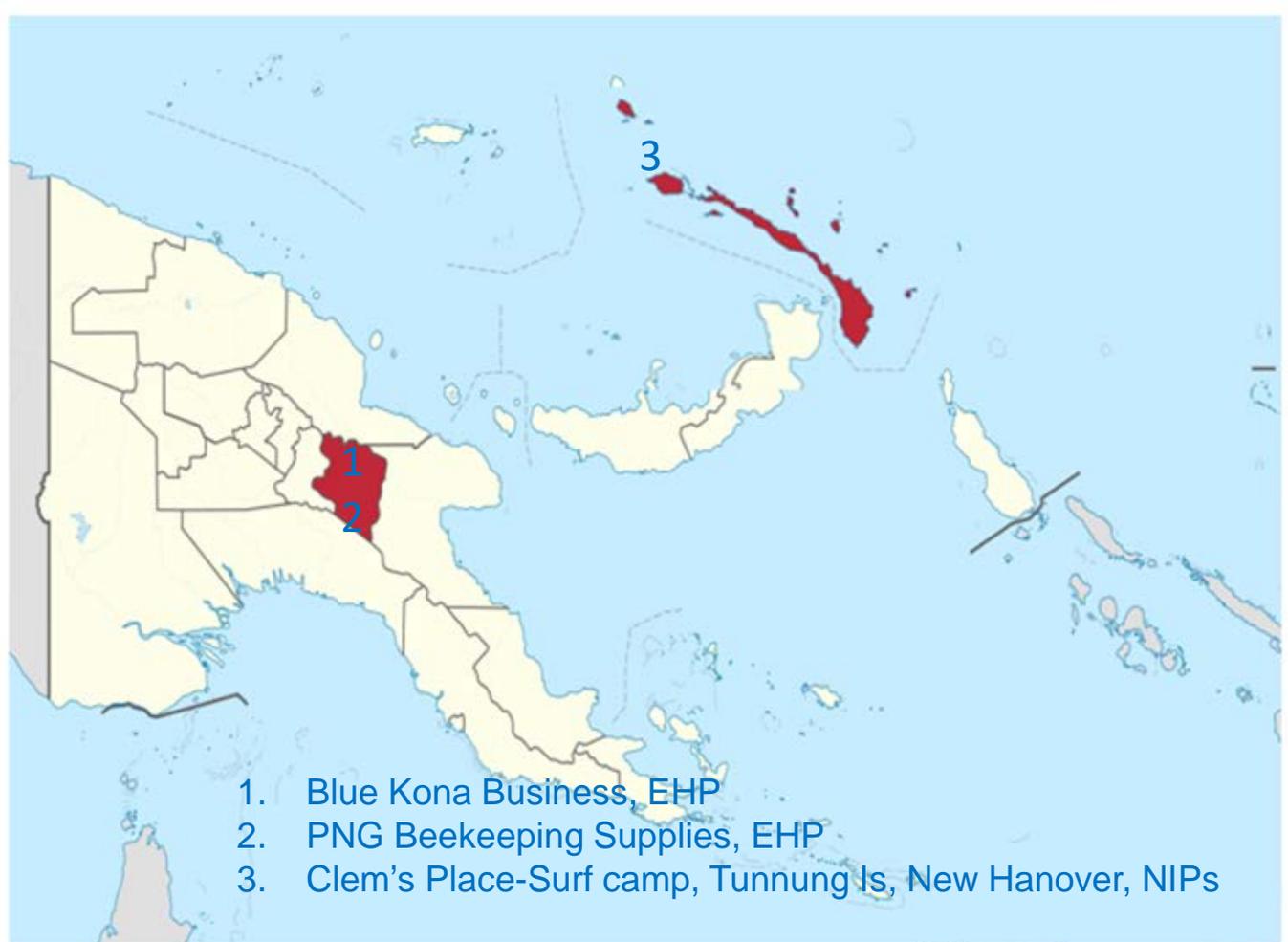
Study Context



- ❑ Customary land ownership – 97% (could be less than that).
- Diverse inheritances rules
- Supports 800 plus ethnic groups
- Supports 7.3 million people and provides jobs for 3 million farmers
- **Women work on customary land in most parts of PNG**



Research Sites



Methods of data collection

The *Vanua* Research Framework guided my research on three case study businesses utilising

- I. Stori/Talanoa sessions (informal conversations, interviews)
- II. Observation
- III. Participation
- IV. Field notes
- V. Application of business sustainability tool

Case Study 1

Blue Kona Farm activities

- ✓ Mini coffee plantation,
- ✓ commercial property,
- ✓ Tilapia fish farm
- ✓ Small scale vegetable farm and piggery.
- ✓ Currently developing a small scale sea cucumber in Manus Province.

Women's contribution to business success

Direct business roles

Initially manage and sold farm products; book keeping, manage workers' payroll; banking; book keeping; manage and supply tilapia fish for local consumption; maintain network with customers/clients; manage farm in the absence of male owner

Socio-cultural and spiritual roles

Maintain relationships within family and community; support social obligations; maintain spiritual values; manage household chores; peace-maker

I am meant to support my husband in whatever he does. That is my responsibility, my God-given responsibility...
(Maggie Pupune, 2018)



Case Study 2

PNG Beekeeping Supplies

- ✓ Construct and supply bee boxes, frames and other beekeeping materials
- ✓ Breed and sell queen bees
- ✓ Provide training for beekeeping
- ✓ Produce and supply organic honey for local consumption.

Women's contribution to business success

Direct business roles

Extract, bottle and supply honey for local consumption; manage business income; banking; make purchases for business equipment; provides home economics training for women; maintain network with customers;

Socio-cultural and spiritual roles

Maintain relationships within family and community; support cultural obligations; active participation in church activities; manage household chores; peace-maker

We share the workload and lighten each other's burden
(Damaris Loie, 2018)



Case Study 3

Clem's Place – Surf Camp activities

- ✓ Provides Lodging
- ✓ Organises
 - Diving,
 - Game fishing
 - Rafting
 - Snorkelling,
 - Surfing,
 - Biking along Boluminski H/way

Women's contribution to business success

Direct business roles

Cook and feed guests; manage surf camp in the absence of male owner; manage finance; prepare food for village participants and distribute income; organises village jewellery makers for visiting tourists; maintain general cleanliness; maintain network with customers/clients

Socio-cultural and spiritual roles

Maintain relationships within family and community; support social obligations; lead in church activities; manage household chores; peace-maker





Key Learnings

- ❖ Firm connection to church
- ❖ Constant spiritual connection to God
- ❖ Maintain connection with networks
- ❖ Support wider community needs
- ❖ Power brokers: maintain *wanbel* and wellbeing within household and businesses
- ❖ Manage household needs

While working directly in the businesses, women maintained the local concept of *wanbel* within the businesses. Keeping wellbeing/harmony gained support from workers, relatives and communities.

Business benefits for women

- ❖ Raised social status
- ❖ Able to make/influence decisions at home, in business and in the wider community
- ❖ Increased confidence and public relations
- ❖ Social benefits

Education, networking opportunities, etc.

Performing both business and socio-cultural roles along side men increased women's confidence in business matters. This allowed them to influence decisions at home, in business and in the wider community.

Conclusion

Women's unequal ownership of land and lack of decision-making power in PNG has been widely accepted as:

- A cultural challenge
- Creates gender inequality
- Barrier to economic development

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, p. 81; PNG: 2011-2012 Country Gender Assessment, p.10, 5)

However, whether women have land ownership or not, they significantly this study showed that they **influenced decisions on customary land** through strong **social, spiritual and entrepreneurial roles and connections** in the businesses based on customary land.

Thus, they help **retain land** for their families.

This also shows that customary land ownership is not a barrier to economic development. It supports different forms of developments for women and entrepreneurs in the case studies.

Thus, there is a need to understand economic-centred intentions alongside social-cultural needs to allow for relevant, context-specific development for people in rural communities in PNG.

Reference

- Commonwealth of Australia. (2008). *Making land work: case studies on customary land and development in the Pacific*. Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
- L.D. Meo-Sewabu, (2015). Tu ga na inima ka luvu na waqa':(The bail to get water out of the boat is in the boat yet the boat sinks): the cultural constructs of health and wellbeing amongst Marama iTaukei in a Fijian village in Lau and in a transnational Fijian community in Whanganui, Aotearoa (*Doctoral thesis*).
- R. Scheyvens, G. Banks, L.D. Meo-Sewabu and T. Decena, (2017). Indigenous entrepreneurship on customary land in the Pacific: measuring sustainability. *Journal of Management and Organisation*. (23) 6.
- U. Nabobo-Baba, (2006). *Knowing and learning: an indigenous Fijian approach*. Suva : Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.