
Human Rights, Business, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in PNG – A Capacity Building Program (11 – 15 November 2019, Port Moresby)

SUMMARY REPORT¹ and RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Summary

This is the report of a pilot capacity building program on *Human Rights, Business, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in PNG*. The five-day residential program took place from November 11-15, 2019. There were 30 participants from government and civil society across PNG, selected from over 120 applications for the program.

The program focused on the importance of international standards on business and human rights, and their relevance to PNG's efforts to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants discussed how these standards can be implemented by government and business, and how civil society, including faith-based organisations can use these standards, and UN mechanisms, to engage and influence the human rights duty bearers, including the private sector and to hold them accountable for harms.

Participants shared experiences, drawing lessons from past and present case studies in PNG, including the negative impacts of mining, logging and forestry on the environment, local communities and cultures. Professor Surya Deva of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights introduced the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). He highlighted the importance of addressing gender in applying the UNGPs, and linked the UNGPs to the SDGs and to commitments to address climate change.

The program was organised in the context of PNG's preparations to submit its SDG progress report in the UN Voluntary National Review (2020) in New York, and participation in the 3rd cycle of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (2021). PNG is also currently drafting its periodic report to the UN Human Rights Committee on implementation of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and will host a visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in 2020.

Participants evaluated the program very positively and there was enthusiasm in establishing a national *PNG Human Rights and Business Network*. Participants also made a number of recommendations for future activities and made a video message to be played at the *2019 UN Global Forum on Business and Human Rights* in Geneva, making sure that voices of PNG will be heard. A highlight of the program was the dialogue and networking that took place between government officials and civil society representatives.

This pilot program was a collaborative partnership between The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC), and the UNSW Institute for Global Development (IGD). The program responded to requests from DTP alumni including Jonathan Mesulam, whose commitment and hard work helped to make the program possible.

This summary report highlights key issues, outcomes, conclusions and recommendations.

Key Issues

While 90% of the land in PNG is under the customary ownership of its peoples, there is great pressure for more commercial exploitation of this land. Foreign investment is seen as critical for government revenue, to pay for government services such as health and education that are underfunded and overstretched. While PNG is very

¹ This report was prepared by DTP in November/December 2019 with input from partners and participants. Program evaluations are available on request. A more detailed report will follow.

rich in resources, there is considerable poverty and inequality. Participants, drawn from affected communities across PNG and the government identified the following as key issues:

- Environmental destruction from mining, pollution of rivers and sea by mine waste and tailings
- Lack of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from landholders/customary title-holders
- Violence, especially gender-based violence linked to security hired by private sector and increasing risks of significant community conflict
- Lack of knowledge of human rights – international and domestic law
- Impacts on livelihoods, environment and peace from deforestation, and Special Agriculture Business Leases (SABLs) issued by the Government
- Poor or limited accountability for human rights violation and abuses
- Corruption
- Lack of a strategic partnerships between government and civil society for meaningful discussion and proactive measures to prevent harms caused to people/citizens by private sector investment
- Lack of coordinated approach between civil society and faith-based organizations to ensure their voices are heard
- Complete lack of knowledge of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Specific cases of concern raised included **Ok Tedi**, the proposed **Frieda River Mine** in Sepik, **Ramu Nickel** spill (Madang), Newcrest's **Wafi/Golpu** mine and deep sea tailings plan, a proposed Australian owned **coal powered plant** in Lae, as well as the continuing impacts of the **Porgera Gold Mine**.

Outcomes

This pilot-program aimed to build the knowledge, skills and networks on human rights, the UNGPs and SDGs. Capacity building is a long-term investment, but the following short-term outcomes of this training are:

- 30 individuals working in relevant government departments and civil society with increased knowledge and understanding of human rights and the responsibilities of government and business
- Human rights knowledge and awareness taken back to communities, workplaces, organisations
- The establishment of a new national PNG Business and Human Rights Network – through WhatsApp/Email
- New collaborations between government and civil society representatives
- A compelling video message from PNG on business, human rights, culture and the environment will be played at the UN Global Forum on Business and Human Rights
- A commitment to establish a civil society human rights working group
- The promise of engagement and collaboration in the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, VNR, ICCPR Reporting and UPR

Conclusions and Recommendations

This collaboration between diverse partners worked well. It meets clear needs. All are keen to continue and grow the collaboration. The open application process showed the high level of interest, especially from affected communities in different provinces. Participants supported the following recommendations:

- Establishment of the PNG National Human Rights Commission
- The development of a National Human Rights Action Plan/National Action Plan inclusive of Business and Human Rights
- The value in having a high-level national dialogue on Business and Human Rights and SDGs involving government, business and civil society in 2020, before PNG's Voluntary National Review (of SDGs)
- Further capacity building and network strengthening – a long term capacity building strategy, including train the trainers and resources for the community level organizations working on business and human rights