

# Importance of Geographical Names and their effects on Sustainable Land Development

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# Presentation outline

- Introduction
- Objectives of the study
- Geographical Names in PNG
- Research Method
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# Introduction

- ❑ Geographical names or place names (or toponyms) are the proper nouns applied to topographical features and settled (and used) places and spaces on the earth's surface, United Nation Group of Expert on Geographical Names (UGEGN 2023).
- ❑ Consistent use of accurate geographical names is an essential element of effective communication worldwide and supports socio-economic development, conservation and national infrastructure, Lauder et al (2015).
- ❑ Geographical names are linked to sustainable development. Place naming is one of the important ways that the government, industry and communities can work together to support the sustainable development goals (SDGs), UGEGN (2023).
- ❑ Geographical names are vital to both advanced and developing countries. There are more than 100 countries under the 24 divisions of UNEG that promote standardization of geographical names globally, (UNEGN Strategic Plan 2021-2029).
- ❑ UNEG session in May 2023, strongly urged countries to integrate geographical names in SDGs.

# FUNCTIONS OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

- ❑ Functions of geographical names include preserving cultural heritage, acting as general markers and expression of space related identity, (De Lange 2017; Jordan, P. 2017).
- ❑ Geographical names were used to identify extinct of Bushman and Khoikhoi languages in South Africa, Raper (2019)
- ❑ Geographical names give rise to feelings of individual and collective identity, Helleland (2012) .
- ❑ Geographical names were used in Freetown capital of Sierra Leone in 2014 to demarcate areas that are safe and unsafe for Ebola, Hiimae (2019) .
- ❑ Integration of geographical names in sustainable land development is blur and this study delve into it.

# **Objectives of the study reported in this presentation**

1. To determine the importance of geographical names and their effect on customary land registration in PNG.
2. To ascertain the importance of geographical names and their effects on land use planning in PNG.
3. To identify the importance of geographical names and their effects on customary land acquisition in PNG.

# Geographical Names in PNG

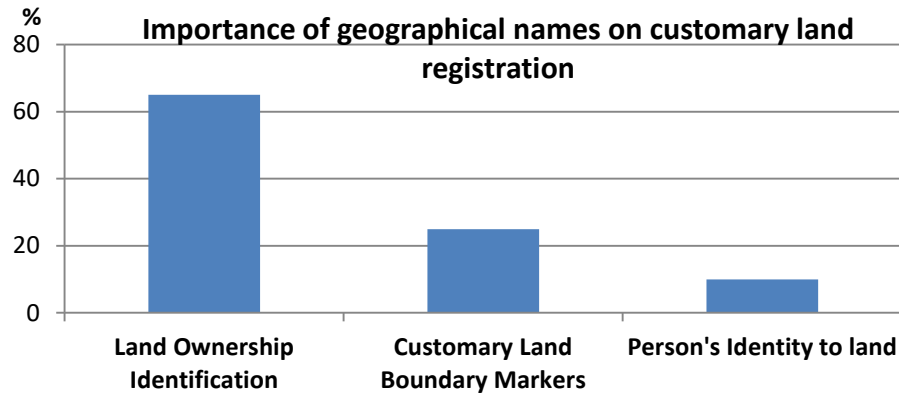
- ❑ Office of Surveyor General (OSG), the surveying division of Department of Lands & Physical Planning coordinate Geographical Names, Place Name Act (1965).
- ❑ PNG Place Names Committee not functioning , due to OSG receiving negligible to nil funding.
- ❑ Politicians have been naming national highways with other infrastructure without the approval of the committee. A classic example is the recent renaming of Nadzab international Airport to Nadzab Tomodachi, (Kalebe, 2023).
- ❑ Many newly built infrastructures and villages remained unnamed.
- ❑ Large scale maps with standardized names are outdated and does not capture current status of land
- ❑ Lack of reliable geospatial data to regulate increasing land development
- ❑ Increasing land disputes

## Research Method

- ❑ Qualitative approach is employed in this study with participatory fieldwork carried out from mid September until the beginning of November 2023
- ❑ It draws from 20 semi-structured interviews
- ❑ Interviewees were from a variety of sectors such as lands, petroleum, Land Surveying firms, road works, private sector and customary land owners over the age of 37 with more than 10 years of experience in land development in PNG.
- ❑ Interviewees were recruited using snowball technique
- ❑ Open-ended questions were designed and edited to get the in-depth experiences of individuals or organizations in PNG that involved in land development and usage geographical names.

# Results

## 1. Importance of geographical names and their effects on customary land registration



- **Quote from an officer from Incorporated Land Group(ILG) coordinating office**  
“Geographical names proves that land groups applying for ILG Registration has land. F5 of the application, sketch map and media publication requires geographical names.”
- **During LOBID excise names of clan, villages and their extent identify whether a clan is within the license area or not. These names are gazetted in ministerial determination and then Department of Lands is invited to do ILG registration.**
- **In road projects names of start and end section of the road makes it easy to establish true landowners and impacted villages within 40metre corridor to pay compensation payment to them appropriately.**

# Results cont..

## 1. Importance of geographical names and their effects on customary land registration

- ❑ Geographical names are markers that define the limits of a land boundary which is essential to land boundary demarcation for customary land registration.

Quote from a surveyor

“Geographical names are important to locals, they know the name of the existing markers like creek, sago, trees etc. and the existing boundary demarcation. Every clan has markers, it is important to label correct name on map for registration if not it will give you a lot of problem.”

- ❑ Geographical names are person’s identity to land. In PNG people are born into a clan and clan names link people to their clans and give them the ownership rights. Many people use phrase like “land is our identity” but without name to land you don’t have an actual identity

Comments from private sector;

“In resource developed areas peoples’ names are used as clans’ names instead of the original clans’ names. This has posed a risk on peoples’ losing their real identities and histories. When people change their clans’ names, they lost their identities.”

### ***Key issues due to lack of geographical names for customary land registration***

- Lack of proper verification of geographical names for ILG registration

Comments from a Senior ILG officer;

“There is no database to verify the geographical names submitted from ILG registration. The office depend on public to see the published names on media to verify. “

- Land grabbing
- It has becoming an increasing concern for both private and government sectors, and customary landowners that some names submitted for ILG registration are made up names.

# Results cont..

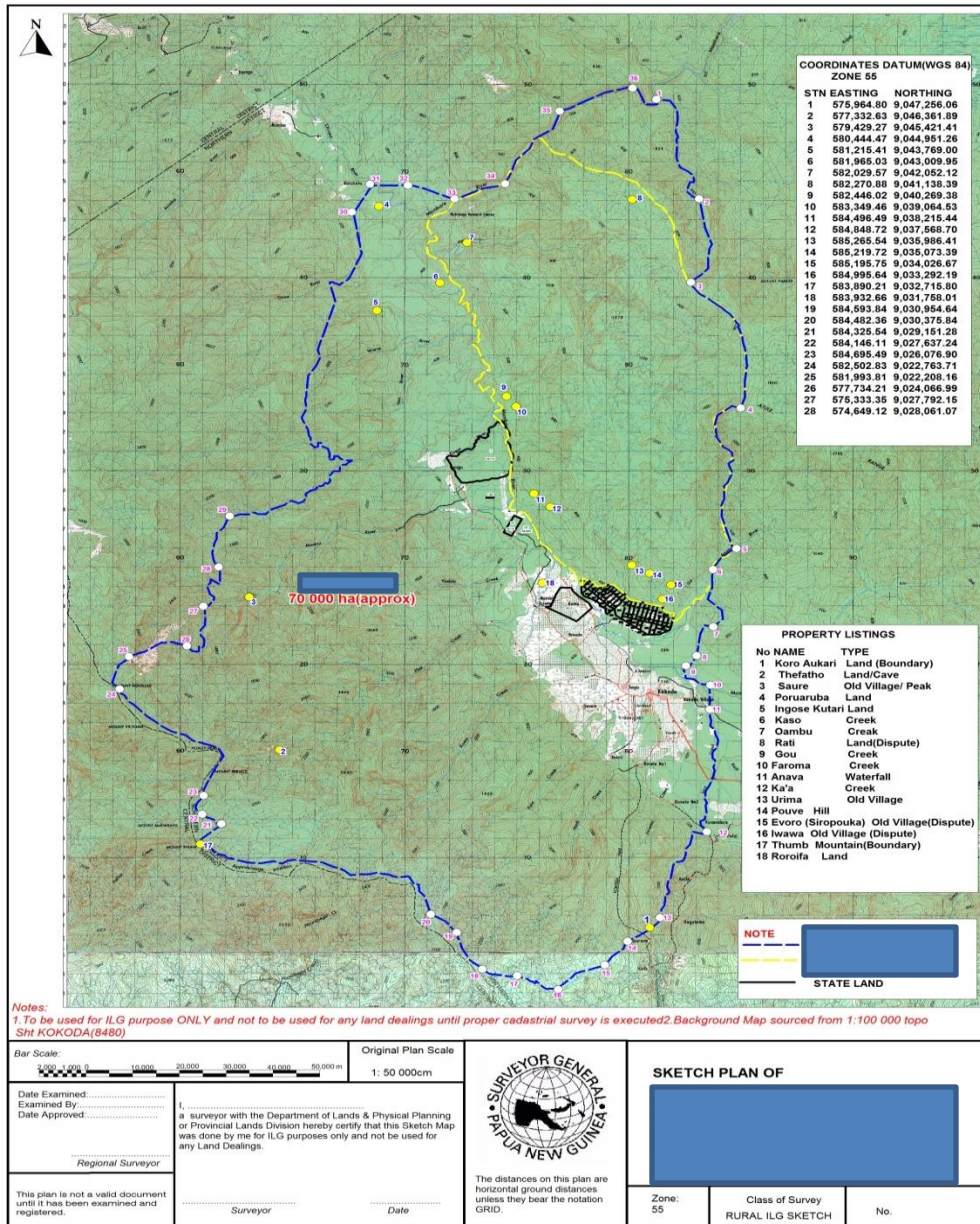


Fig 2 Sample of ILG Sketch Map



Land Groups Incorporation (Amended) Act 2009

## NOTICE OF LODGEMENT OF AN APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION AS AN INCORPORATED LAND GROUP

File No: 20080

Pursuant to Section 33 of the Land Groups Incorporation Act, notice is hereby given that I have received an Application of a customary group of persons as an incorporated land group to be known by the name of



### LAND GROUP INCORPORATED

The said group claims the following qualifications for recognition as an incorporated land group

- (1) Its members belong to Sunes Clan in Lengkamen Village.
- (2) Its members regard themselves and are regarded by other members of the said clan as bound by the common customs and beliefs.
- (3) It owns the following customary land and properties in Sentral Niu Ailan Rural Local Level Government, Namatani District, New Ireland Province.

Property	Description
1	Penkabes Mountain
2	Laxari Valley
3	Dinglaxaum Mountain
4	Lenbom Mountain
5	Liviniskun Mountain
6	Benem Mountain
7	Lavatnu Mountain
8	Lixi Mountain
9	Lavaralo Hill
10	Linau Hill
11	Dankaliet Mountain
12	Lavarivin Hamlet/Valley
13	Kanaveleven Mountain
14	Merlangas Land & Mountain
15	Larada Land & Mountain
16	Livingko Land & Mountain
17	Lasalobo Valley



Note: A person(s), a group, the District Administrator or the village court within the local level government of this particular land group may within 30 days of publication of this notice, lodge with the Registrar of ILG an objection and reason thereof not to register this land group in accordance with Section 6 of ILG (Amended) Act 2009.

Fig 3 ILG notice for publication

## Results cont..

### ***Key issues due to lack of geographical names for customary land registration***

One of the customary landowners shared his clans experience as quoted;

*“Our rival clan without our consent made up names suited to them and lodged in their application for ILG registration. Through media publication we were made aware and objected them from ILG registration.”*

- High cost of doing geographical name search for dispute settlement

Many people flew in from other provinces to do search on geographical names to settle land disputes. Mostly such cases are common in establishing ownership of land acquired under colonial administration

- Duplicate land compensation payments

Two days in every week disgruntle landowners come here and they complain by saying words like “you know this is my land boundary and these are the names”. Few months later someone else comes with the same area with different names and this has cost department a lot of money.

- Increasing courts issues on land disputes

Inaccurate recording of geographical names (esp. villages and clans) pave way for court issues.

“If clan boundaries and geographical names (property listings) are well vetted in the ward, Ilg and district level it will be very good and can be used in future for land court dispute settlement.”

# Results Cont..

## 2. Importance of geographical names and their effects on land use planning

- Coordinate land use planning
  - Geographical names provide planners comfort when doing planning.
  - Names of mountains, rivers, creeks, swamps, conservation parks, roads etc. provides clear direction for planning

### ***Key issues due to lack of geographical names in physical planning***

- Lack of reliable data for sustainable land use planning
  - The topographic maps that are used in planning are outdated and do not capture new names and the changes in landscape.
  - There are no baseline data for prefeasibility and feasibility study for road projects.
- Deflation of rare plant and animal pieces
  - There are no maps showing the names of environmental protected areas. DPE might not know and issues petroleum development license on environmental protected areas, and will lead to deflation of rare plant and animal species.
  - With Connect PNG Road Program, some of these new roads will traverse to untouched virgin environment. Where there are inhabitants we shouldn't touch, without names and location it's difficult to protect those areas.

# Results Cont..

## 2. Importance of geographical names and their effects on land use planning

- High costs for compensation of establishing roads

All survey information and names of registered land have to be updated. In order to provide clear understanding to developers to avoid establishing developments on existing registered land parcel

- Quick deterioration of infrastructure

-PNG is one of the most tectonically complex and active region in the world, straddling the Australian and Pacific plates and undergoing very rapid deformation.

-There are no series of maps showing the names of areas susceptible to disaster such as fault lines to avoid establishing developments on them.

## Results cont..

### 3. Importance of geographical names and their effects on land acquisition

- Coordinate land acquisition survey

“Geographical names give direction to land acquisition survey. The names help the surveyors to find out the current status of the land and direction to the survey site. “

- Land Investigate

Comments from senior land acquisition officer;

“With limited budget geographical names help us to mobilize required logistics to execute the tasks. While in the field and physically walking the registered land boundary the names on survey plan and ILG sketch maps help us to confirm with landowners on the ground that the clans recorded are genuine, land names are correct, features shown on the maps exists and the names are correctly spelt and every clan member have given their consent for the state to acquire the land.”

### ***Key issues due to lack of geographical names in land acquisition***

- Lengthy land search

“If there are no names it’s very difficult to get updated survey information of an area. Officers will be reluctant to help us because we are not the only clients. “

- Lack of survey direction

Without geographical names surveyors can end up doing survey on wrong location. The geographical names direct surveyors where to go, which land they are dealing with and the people that own it.

## Results cont..

- Error in survey

With lack of updated geographical names surveyors do not do proper land search and end up doing duplicate surveys or inaccurate positioning of the survey.



**Fig 4 Fasu tribe protested over land boundary encroachment by Huli at Moran PDL area. Source, DEVPOLICYBLOG by Colin Filer (2019).**

- Prolong land investigation

When names are incorrect there will be disputes so offices usually take time to consult people and establish the correct spelling and the history behind them.

“Geographical names have story behind them so it helps customary lands officers to understand how the land group got the land. It is through conquerors, tribal war fare, hereditary or birth right.”

## Results cont..

### **Lack of proper land acquisition by state caused lack of proper geographical names recording**

Quote from senior geologist DPE;

“Oil and gas sector in the past was really good where DPE interact with DLPP. Before the developer go into certain sites and start to build, the normal process is it has to go through DLPP. DLPP will have to go on site after acquisition survey, do investigation and acquire the land. “

Senior officer from DOW affirms proper land acquisition will boost geographical name recording;

“ Looking at road projects lands are not properly acquired and purchase. Now, with the new management we are trying to address the issue of duplicate compensation payments. We want to work with DLPP conduct land investigation, identify genuine landowners and purchase the land first before constructing roads.“

## Conclusions and recommendations

- ❑ Accurate recording and updating of geographical names with their definition will reduce land dispute and improve coordination of land development.
- ❑ Rescaling of topographic maps capturing names of new developments, environmental projected areas and hazard risk are needed for comprehensive land use planning
- ❑ Engagement of DLLP for proper acquisition of customary land by state prior to issuing of Petroleum Development Lease or establishment of infrastructure such as roads on land will improve recording of historical geographical names

## Conclusions and recommendation cont..

- DLPP must do more awareness to government agencies and citizens on the importance of geographical names, the processes of standardizing names and recording of the definition of names.
- Priority must be given on conducting workshops and conferences with relevant government agencies and stakeholders on naming and updating of newly built infrastructure, villages, environmental protected area, historical and agricultural sites, roads etc.
- For any land development projects, state agencies and stakeholders must engage DLPP to identify landowners and properly acquire customary land before any development take place on land.

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**THANK YOU**