

Our Land - Unlocking East Sepik for Development

How Surveyors, Law Reforms & Digital Systems
Can Reclaim Land from Gridlock

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Purpose

- **In a layman's way tell you about our province**
- **Our challenges & capacity issues**
- **And how we build partnership with ASPNG, your alliances and friends**
- **Towards achieving our development aspirations**
- **As we face challenges of unlocking our land**
- **In timely, and transparently for development**

Acknowledgement of ASPNG leadership & professionals

- ASPNG Congress running for 58th Time.
- PNG Surveyors Board
- Unitech School of Surveyors and Land Studies
- All Allied Professionals – Surveyors, valuers, Planners, GIS etc
- Great Privilege and honor to be part of you, sharing & Learning
- Our Theme is Surveyors Role in Unlocking/reclaiming/ land
- Context of Easyt Sepik's Land, people and development Challenges

East Sepik Profile

- - Landmass: 43,426 sq km (2nd largest in PNG)
- - Population: 631,791 (2024 Census)
- - Density: 10 persons/sq km (96% customary land, much swamp/marshland)
- - Districts: Wewak, Maprik, Yangoru-Saussia, Wosera-Gawi, Ambunti-Drekikir, Angoram (+ Middle Sepik emerging)
- 97% is customary and unalienated Land.
- We are 7 Districts, 28 LLGs and 667 Wards

Lands Issues per Districts

- - Maprik: 91.5 persons/sq km → land disputes, zoning needed
- - Wewak: 49.1 persons/sq km → urban expansion pressure, Banks, Commercial Centres.
- - Ambunti-Drekikir: 4.2 persons/sq km → land bank, agriculture potential
- - Angoram: Flood-prone, requires geospatial planning
- Urban planning in new Middle Sepik District
- Missions with Freehold Titles, etc

Land Administration Challenges

- Landowner Grievances – Compensation costs exceed construction
- Technical Bottlenecks – 17 signatures, 2.5 years per hectare
- Legal Cumbersomeness – Outdated laws (1975 framework, paper-based)

Legislative Maze (7 Acts to Review)

- - Land Act 1996 – SABL abuse, delays
- - Physical Planning Act 1989 – centralized approvals
- - Survey Act 1969 – ignores GNSS, LIDAR
- - Survey Coordination Act 1967 – datum conflicts
- - Land Registration Act 1981 – paper-based, fraud risk
- - ILG Act 2009 – slow, unaudited registrations
- - Valuation Act 1967 – outdated rates, rural gaps

Redefining Surveyors' Role

- - System Designers: Digital cadastral database, blockchain, e-lodgement
- - Mediators in Law Reform: Digital titles, smart contracts, time-bound ILGs
- - Guardians of Legacy Issues: Restore geodetic networks, convert mission leases

Recommendations

- 1. Endorse East Sepik Declaration on digital land systems (by 2028)
- 2. Form Land Administrative Legislative Review Committee (LALRA)
- 3. National PSMs Recovery Program (update & publish)
- 4. Devolve land powers to provinces for faster administration
- ESPA to explore venues for partnership with ASPNG and its strategic partners and alliances.

Conclusions

- - East Sepik is land-rich but system-poor
- - Need legal & technical systems delivering land in 90 days, not 9 years
- - Surveyors must lead reform into IT space
- - Wewak 2026: Turning point from manual plans to digital boundaries