



LEADERSHIP BEYOND STATE LIMITS III:

CASE STUDIES FROM
SOUTH FLY, PNG

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MARCH 2023



The **Developmental Leadership Program** (DLP) is an international research collaboration supported by the Australian Government.

DLP investigates the crucial role that leaders, networks and coalitions play in achieving development outcomes.

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Cover photo:
South Fly, courtesy of the research team



This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the authors' alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government, the Developmental Leadership Program or partner organisations.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the many female and male leaders from the public, private, and non-governmental sector in Western Province who participated in the research.

In Daru, a special thanks to Geua Gorio, for encouraging and supporting women leaders through the interview process, many of whom were agreeing to be interviewed for the first time.

Thanks also to Marilla Hesaboda from the Department for Community Development and Nancy Wobo from World Vision for their advice, especially in setting up the database for informal women's networks.

The research would not have been possible without the generous support of KTF (Kokoda Track Foundation), who employed and managed all local payments and employment of the two research assistants. Julia Zhao was tireless in her financial support, especially through some necessary variations.

Thanks also to the staff at the Developmental Leadership Program, DFAT Canberra, Australian High Commission in PNG, and Abt Associates for their advice and management support.

Mark and Baia

Thank you also to Grant Walton (ANU) for providing feedback during the peer review process.

ACRONYMS

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research	HIC	Health Islands Concept (World Vision)
ADRA	Adventist Development Relief Agency	IAI	Innovative Agro Industry
AGM	Annual General Meeting	JSS4D	Justice Services and Stability for Development Program
AHC	Australian High Commission	KTF	Kokoda Track Foundation
APSP	Australia PNG Subnational Program	LLG	Local Level Government
ARP	Analytical Review Paper	LPV	Limited Preferential Voting
CDD	Community Driven Development	NDOE	National Department of Education
CMCA	Community Mine Continuation Agreement	NFA	National Fisheries Authority
CMIC	Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council	NGO	Non-Government Organisation
CPT	Community Project Team (RSDP)	OTDF	Ok Tedi Development Foundation
DA	District Administrator	OTML	Ok Tedi Mining Limited
DDA	District Development Authorities	PEA	Provincial Education Adviser
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	PNG	Papua New Guinea
DLP	Developmental Leadership Program	PNGDF	PNG Defense Force
DMVA	Daru Market Vendors Association	RRRC	Reef and Rainforest Research Centre
DPLGA	Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs	RSDP	Rural Service Delivery Program
ECPNG	Evangelical Church of PNG	SIP	Service Improvement Program
FFT	Family Farms Teams (ACIAR)	SFRP	South Fly Resilience Plan
FRPG	Fly River Provincial Government	SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
GBV	Gender Based Violence	SLIP	School Learning Improvement Plan
		SSG	Special Support Grant
		TIM	Traditional Inhabitants Meeting

TFF	Tuition Free Funds	WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
UDDT	Urine Diverting Dry Toilet	WDCs	Ward Development Committees
UQ	The University of Queensland	WP	Western Province
VPC	Village Planning Committee (CMCA)		

CASE STUDIES

THE PROJECT

The research addressed the following questions:

1. How does formal and informal leadership interact, with a particular focus on women's leadership?
2. How do these types of leadership orientate around external funding opportunities?
3. How can village leaders and coalitions form transparent, effective and legitimate institutions, that contest and reform existing sub-national structures?
4. How can funding enter informal governance spaces, and strengthen rather than undermine informal leadership and governance structures?
5. What are the extent, scale, capabilities and aspirations of informal women's networks in South Fly, and their potential to facilitate development and reform?

This research has been published in three parts:

- [Part I](#) focuses on the political economy of subnational leadership
- [Part II](#) focuses on women's leadership and informal networks
- Part III, this paper, is the set of case studies that underpins both papers.

NOTE

This paper is a companion to part 1, [‘The political economy of subnational leadership and governance in South Fly District, Western Province, PNG’](#) and to part 2, [‘Women's leadership in South Fly, Western province \(Papua New Guinea\)’](#). You can also check out the shorter executive summary of the 3 papers [here](#).

THE TORRES STRAIT TREATY AND THE AUSTRALIAN BORDER

PNG's border with Australia is dominated by finances and services from the Australian government, and there is a near total lack of private market trade. Bilateral management of the Australian Border, via the Torres Strait Treaty, continues to be a major source of influence for village leaders in the 14 Treaty Village.

[The Treaty defines a complex layering of four different territorial zones](#), overlaid on top of each other, divided by seabed, surface waters, exclusive economic use, and a shared Protected Zone for traditional inhabitant use. Then, in 2000, a formal "exchange of letters" limited the jurisdiction of the Treaty to 14 Torres Strait Islands and 13 Treaty villages along the South Fly coast.

The Treaty Villages enjoy both impacts and privileges over the non-Treaty Villages, effectively creating a special non-contiguous zone on the PNG side. This has significantly impacted the ability of the villages closest to the border to fish. Sigabaduru village is the worst affected, and not surprisingly its leaders are often the most vocal in advocacy to the Australian authorities. The Treaty Villages in the central coastal area (e.g., Buzi/Ber, Sigabaduru, and Mabudian) relied heavily on trade into Australia, and were most heavily impacted by the COVID-19 border closure. In addition to selling their own produce, they act as middlemen for trade from non-Treaty villages (primarily in arts and crafts). They purchase food and fuel in Australia for their use and then sell these back into PNG. They also access health services at Queensland Health clinics, provide household labour for the Torres Strait Islanders, and engage in church activities.

Village leaders struggle to manage the expectations of their constituents, who make comparisons with the markedly improved standard of infrastructure and services across the border. There is a marked difference in material living conditions between PNG villages and Torres Strait Island communities. Residents of Treaty Villages see the working infrastructure, including housing, running water, electricity, supermarkets, clinics, schools, barge ramps, sea retaining walls, on the Torres Strait Islands – and want the same in their home villages (39, 8:53).

When visiting the outer Torres Strait Islands of Boigu and Saibai, village leaders feel neither recognised nor respected, nor are they afforded traditional hospitality by Torres Strait leaders (32, 8:11; 27, 27:28). This is despite their efforts to establish and enforce local by-laws to control cross-border visitation from their side, and the pressure they must resist from their own communities to manage Traditional Inhabitant passes for border crossings (34, 26:48; 31, 6:16). One village leader expressed how he felt offended at his treatment:

"We normally go for trading ... but they use me ... to work or slave. ... The activities are cutting grass, bringing sand, or throwing their rubbish, not well paid, and just sending us to do other things. [They do not] respect that we are leaders. They know that we are leaders for the community. (30, 6:09)"

The Treaty bilateral arrangements have given high-level bargaining powers to Ward Councillors from the Treaty Villages. The longstanding Co-Chair of the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting (TIM), who is also the Ward Councillor for Sigabaduru, has enjoyed more influence than successive LLG Presidents, including direct access to Australian government politicians and public servants at the national ministerial level. More broadly, Ward Councillors from the Treaty Villages at LLG level enjoy more influence over the management of the Australian border than elected district and provincial government leaders. Their collective influence is clear in the creation of the Forecoast Kiwai LLG in 2019, effectively splitting the Kiwai LLG in two, whereby the Treaty Villages were institutionalised as a discrete local level government within PNG. As observed by a key insider on the PNG side:

“...it was taken through bilateral meeting, and both Waigani and Canberra took note of it. Indirectly Australia was supporting us, because there are some obligations under the treaty arrangement for [Australia to support the] 14 Treaty villages. The PNG government accepted it, [and it took them] only about two years [to finalise it]. Australian government and Torres Strait Islander leaders supported us and put some pressure at the back of the PNG Government (12, 18:24).”

Treaty villages have also enjoyed a Special Support Grant (SSG) from the PNG government. The politics behind allocation of the SSG are unclear, but it was formalised with Prime Minister O’Neil travelling to Daru mid-2012 during an election year to deliver the cheque. Originally earmarked for flood relief, K7Million was repurposed for infrastructure projects in Treaty Villages.¹ Known locally as the Treaty Funds, people often erroneously believe it to be Australian government funds. The PNG government delivered the last tranche of this funding in late 2021. Although iron sheets, tools, sawmills, laptops, tools, dinghies and outboard motors did arrive in some Treaty Villages, a lack of transparency and accusations of misappropriation and corruption has dogged the entire grant process (28, 38:36).

1 Moran Curth-Bibb, 2020, p.154.

INDONESIAN TRADERS

PNG's border with Indonesia is the very opposite to that of Australia. Private market trade, rather than Indonesian Government public finance or services, dominate. In terms of trade, most benefits clearly come from Indonesia. As a serving Ward Councillor from Mari village described:

“Though we are Papua New Guineans, and we live close to the Australian Border and Indonesian border. Most money people have in hand right now is Rupia, Indonesian money. So, when you want to change the Rupia into Kina, we buy goods from them, and we sell [the goods] in Kina to get school fees for students [to got to] Morehead or Daru, or elsewhere. That's how we live. (20, 32:47)”

In the absence of support from their own government, villagers do what they can to help themselves. They sensibly looked for other options, through trade with Indonesia but also to Australia. As one former Ward Councillor in Bula recalled telling a prior visit by the then Australian High Commissioner:

“I'm really close to you to be ignored by you. So, early setups up here by Australia is vital because this a buffer zone for Australia. (24, 24:27)”

Along the Indonesian Border, the lack of services and opportunities in PNG and growing trade into Indonesia combine so youth are becoming more fluent in Bahasa than English. In the remote Treaty village of Bula, leaders describe how some of their youth shy away when visitors arrive from their own country (22, 40:07). There were also reports of problems emerging with prostitution among young girls (26, 17:57; 24, 37:34). The PNGDF has soldiers posted in Weam and Bula, but in the absence of any other service providers to

observe their behaviours, it has fallen to the Ward Councillors to complain to senior PNGDF officers over past misconduct (e.g., drinking, womanising)(24, 23:06). There has not been a health worker in the village since 2015 (41, 5:05, 14:14). Despite its strategic location, Bula has no phone communication. People walk for an hour or climb a high tree to get signal; one young man fell from a tree and is now permanently disabled, despite undergoing an operation in Cairns (22, 22:44). People lament the decline in services since the colonial period, even drawing comparisons between their current state to the precolonial period. As one Bula leader described: “we are still living as our ‘long-time’ people” (23, 7.23).

Indonesian traders can have long standing relationships in villages and can legally cross the border through a pass system under the PNG Indonesia Treaty that governs the Indonesian Border. A Treaty, written at the same time and similarly worded as the Torres Strait Treaty, allows travel across the PNG-Indonesian border but it is administered very differently. It too provides for ‘traditional border crossers’ who live in proximity to the border to engage in ‘customary border trade’, but there is no effective restriction placed on where people originate from within PNG or Indonesia, or whether the trade is commercial.²

Some traders have developed longstanding and trusted relationships in villages. Some have built their own houses, married locals, and contributed financially to community projects, including church upgrades. They supply much needed fuel and commodities, including fishing nets and motor bikes (20, 30:56 & 52:16). Commodities are cheaper in Indonesia than PNG, with fuel in Merauke half the cost of what it is in Daru (29, 12:59), and the distance to get Merauke is half as far as Daru (22, 21:06). Some traders have

2 Moran Curth-Bibb, 2020, p.50.

established relationships with village leaders, even obtaining traditional inhabitants passes under the Treaty, with an agreed travel approval to remain within a stipulated limit inside of PNG (26, 14:06).

Village leaders make a clear distinction between traders and poachers. Compared to traders, poachers often bypass villages, avoiding dealing with village leaders or obtaining passes, running the gauntlet, buying opportunistically and, when caught, paying fines and – allegedly – bribes to the police and fishery authorities (24, 59:16 & 1:00:31). Village leaders close to the border expressed their frustration at their failed efforts to control poachers:

“They don’t follow our rules. For many times, we have been telling them how they should be approaching us. It’s us, the leaders going and telling them the ruling, what they should do during visitation, asking them for a pass. But they just come in, unexpectedly. (34, 11:27)

... they shoot from the border straight, some in the night, some go right out past Deliverance Island. In my leadership, this makes me unhappy, very hard to stop them, how can you stop them? (26, 14:06)”

With their constituency so focused on fishing and opportunities in Indonesia, it can become difficult for leaders to maintain any authority.

Indonesian poachers often come in and deal directly with households, supplying them with food, fuel fishing nets and entering into deals, bypassing community leaders (31, 14:58).

Leaders accept that they are bending the laws by working with Indonesian traders.

While obtaining a pass offers a legal permit to cross the border, and a degree of oversight can occur informally by village leaders, much of this trade is breaking PNG laws. The government collects little revenue from this,

as the nearest customs office is in Daru. The fishing is more commercial than artisanal, and commercial fishing should be licensed by the National Fishery Authority (NFA), with adherence to their fishery management plans. Even when dealing with their most trusted traders, village leaders knowingly “bend our laws a little bit because we need assistance”. They do so to serve their community’s needs (27, 14:27), due to the lack of alternative support. PNG authorities for the most part, turn a blind eye.

One long standing village leader and former Ward Councillor recalls the risks that he took, in navigating with authorities on both side of the border, to open up trade across the border.

“People don’t travel there [Merauke] but I’m going to risk my life. On the day I left, people all gathered at the beach, they cried from me as they sent me out, because nobody returned from the place at that time. ... I stayed with _____; I wrote to him first ... in English ... he went to school in Australia ... he sent a dingy to pick me up, the way he organised to get me there was too smart ... As soon as I got there, they took me right to his place ... and then he asked me what’s your reason for coming, I said Waigani cannot help me much, Daru can’t help me much, but you’re very close. (24, 5:05)”

On his return, he told the border liaison officer in Daru of his escapade, who responded that he would go to prison for breaking international laws. The leader, however, travelled to Waigani (Port Moresby), and garnered support from a senior PNG government officer who intervened on his behalf.

THE RANGER PROGRAM

Managed by INLOC and contracted to Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), the Ranger Program pioneered a remote operation in South Fly, overcoming considerable logistical challenges. It brought overdue improvements and employment into 14 Treaty Villages, which has extended to 40 Wards across South Fly. There are now 110 male and 68 female rangers. The expansion in scope has led to a dilution of its capacity, including a decline in activity in Treaty Villages (41, 18:13). This is also due to World Vision taking the lead for WASH projects in the district. Community leaders widely acknowledge the pioneering efforts of the Ranger training program, as relayed by a senior official in the South Fly District administration:

“[During its] initial phase, the Ranger training program has given some hope, to youth and community. They impacted a lot of people along the border with the Treaty Villages. Hearing and having some discussion with the Treaty people, they appreciate how the Ranger program initially came in. (18, 21:27)”

The Ranger Program is a hybrid organisation, common to other borderlands.³ Its hybridity is a product of the three different Australian Government policy fields that it negotiates: Indigenous affairs, border security, and international aid assistance. Since it began operating in the Treaty Villages in 2014, the Program has adapted and changed over its life, in keeping with the relative influence of these policy fields.⁴ Rangers have been at various times project implementers, community facilitators, biosecurity monitors, COVID communicators, data collectors, deliverers of food aid and implementers of a livelihoods project.

Consistent with its hybridity, the rangers themselves are unique agents, as they fill both community leaders and aid worker roles. A significant contribution of the Ranger Program has been the long-term casual employment of rangers, bringing much needed wages into village economies. Rangers are recruited from their home villages, usually through a community nomination process, and enjoy considerable status. They often have visions for development in their community, which they are well placed to act on, taking advantage of their position within the Ranger Program, to broker connections. As one senior male ranger described:

“I’m connecting with a [seafood company] that was engaged by [our Ranger Program], on a seafood project with mud crab. They come to ____ and ____ [villages]. So now I’m connecting with them. I’m planning to bring this little project where our people can benefit from. (36, 28:30)”

3 Brunet-Jailly, 2005, *ibid.*

4 Initially known as the Ranger Program, it changed to the Building Resilience in Treaty Villages, and is now implementing the Food Security and Livelihoods Component of the South Fly Resilience Plan.

Rangers also role model leadership in the community, especially for women. Women Rangers are breaking gender stereotypes by learning and applying skills such as carpentry, plumbing and mechanics. The program has provided young women with a status they would not otherwise have had (21, 29:04). They act as role models to younger women, for example by providing an assurance of safety for women to travel in banana boats for trade and services. In some cases, they have also positively influenced traditional patriarchal leadership, as one senior female ranger relayed:

“The Chairman he never did this in his life, he never involved people. But when I joined this Ranger program, I started thinking I cannot change the village myself, we have to join our minds together to change it. So when I started bringing that idea, the [Chairman and Recorder] they came, and they saw me and then they just followed what I’m doing. ... Those young people [told] me and young girls, before the leaders were not doing this to us, but you are doing it, and they are following you now (33, 10:41).”

Rangers can also at times compete with and displace the WDCs. Rangers operate outside of local government structures, despite efforts to negotiate a position for Rangers to sit on the WDC. The intention has been to integrate the Ranger Program into local governance systems, strengthen the capacity of WDC, facilitate ward development planning and prioritise ‘catalyst’ projects for the rangers to implement. In some communities, this has worked well (36, 39:30). In others, their interventions have led to conflict between the rangers and the WDC (40, 9:40 & 22:20). Any displacement or competition can be explained from a political economy perspective. The WDC Members have little, if any, funding or resources, whereas the Rangers receive a

daily stipend, wear a uniform and safety boots, and they travel in ranger boats to Australian safety standards. They are uniquely placed to broker outside assistance, via the Ranger Program, and so can develop a track record of delivering community projects, crucial to the political careers of leaders.

The Ranger Program is recognised by village leaders for its participatory building and training programs in small maintenance and construction works. This includes maintaining water catchments, well improvements and toilets. Some village leaders, however, complained about incomplete projects (31, 17:44) and how some technologies and ways of working are culturally inappropriate, including UDDT toilets. Over its years of operation, the program has expanded into governance, microenterprises for women, food security and livelihoods development. It has also helped to mobilise youth with building projects (33, 7:40), as related by one senior male ranger:

“The good thing was when we were doing the maintenance on the water catchments, then we also involved the youths. They worked with us, [and learnt new] skills. [After] a month the youth started to not do other stupid business, like drinking and all those things. It brought them closer (36,9:33)”

SCHOOL BOARDS

School Boards are a successful example of how to fund village level committees. The National Department of Education (NDoE) channels Tuition Fee Free (TFF) funds directly to School Boards, via their own bank account. This requires the school boards to come up with a School Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) for how the money will be spent before it is released, and to complete acquittals before the next tranche is processed. The School Boards have responsibility for infrastructure upgrade and maintenance (classrooms, teacher housing, WASH), oversight of teaching staff (their attendance and performance, nomination for selection, and professional development), procurement and transport of school materials, and role modelling of good governance to students. All villages with schools should have a school board in place, elected to a three-year term, with new boards endorsed by the Provincial Education Board. Once the end of life of a Board has reached, Provincial DoE closes their bank account.

School Boards operated within a supportive administrative system, including controls to limit misappropriation, with visiting school inspectors providing training and extension work. This at times involved very hands-on oversight, including checking every withdrawal a School Board made from its bank account. The Department of Education also used visiting school inspectors to run training workshops for school boards. Topics included how to manage finances, acquittals, and teaching material procurement in the school system. While there were problems, there were also controls in place, as described by one former Provincial Education Advisor.

“If they came to get the materials, maybe half of the materials were picked up and then the other amount was spent on something else. They change their minds down the road, or at the shop somewhere. But again, we followed up by asking them to give us their acquittals and their receipts. Only a few schools were doing [that]. ... We emphasised in our in-service [training] programs that there must use the control measures in the school system, that they must monitor [their own] board’s movements to Daru, and what they come here for, and how they purchase things, and how they take them back. (14, 24:27)”

School Boards are now struggling to operate, due to a lack of government funding and regulations that limit their ability to charge parents project fees. Some School Boards are seeking their own funding, developing their own proposals, seeking funding from the district administration, open members, churches and NGOs (18,25:10).

RSDP (RURAL SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAM)

With financial support from DFAT, the World Bank has financed the Rural Service Delivery Project (RSDP) in South Fly District since 2013. RSDP is a community-driven development program that seeks “to improve communities’ access to basic infrastructure and services in targeted rural areas using inclusive, participatory planning and implementation”.⁵ RSDP provided direct transfers into LLG bank accounts for Ward-based small scale, mostly, infrastructure projects. In South Fly, it initially worked through Oriomo Biture Rural LLG and the Kiwai Rural LLG (that latter subsequently split into Forecoast Rural LLG and Fly Kiwai).

It worked in the five coastal villages of Berr (elementary classroom), Sigabaduru (community hall), Old Mawatta, Tureture and Mabudawan, the inland village of Kurunti (elementary classroom), and recently began to work in Koabu and Tirere in the mouth of the Fly River. Project selection occurs through expressions of interest from ward-level participatory planning processes, which are then appraised. It employs both community development workers and technical facilitators.

Its success has been mixed due a range of factors, including lack of counterpart funding, capped project budgets, and insufficient funds to complete projects due to unanticipated material and transport costs. It ceased working in Oriomo Bituri Rural LLG due to internal LLG politics, which resulted in trained LLG officers being reassigned and replaced by others without the necessary skills (15, 41:40).

Although it worked through the LLG System, the RSDP established special committees to manage project finances and implementation.

These committees were locally known as Community Project Teams (CPTs) but are referred to in World Bank documents as Community-Driven Development Subcommittees to the WDC. RSDP also allowed women’s group to submit proposals, independently of the WDC, although no expressions of interest were received in South Fly. Members of the CPTs were brought to Mabudawan for training in how to write a proposal for a community infrastructure project, subsequent project and financial management, and facilitating community participation. The training was delivered by skilled educators, and was well regarded by participants (38, 36:17). One Village Recorder who led his CPT, regarded the project as successful

“The project really strengthened the community because the idea was you, you take ownership, you take the lead. So when the community [used] their own local carpenters and skilled men, right from the community, the project was successful. (37, 30:05)”

5 World Bank, 2017.

The RSDP project management structure established bank accounts and tightly controlled procurement. There were three signatories on the account. In addition to two village representatives from the CPT (usually the Recorder and Treasurer), the third signatory was a RSDP project staff member. While the CPT had visibility of the fixed K100,000 allocation and how it was committed against the project budget, procurement occurred through the RSDP, with cheques written to approved suppliers against the budget. The village saw little of the money, and all labour was voluntary. According to an official in the district administration, some cheque books were even held in the RSDP project office, not the villages (18, 55:12). One leader recalled his observation of the project.

“The money was deposited into the LLG, and they were given the check books, but any purchases of materials or anything was not actually at the will of the Ward Development Committee, it was strictly controlled by World Bank. ... Discretion [over expenditure] was not left to them to decide. So that’s why it went smoothly because the management measures were very tough (12,40:21).”

Villages sometimes did not get their priority project, or were unable to complete a project that had been fully technical appraised, due to the strict application of the K100,000 maximum budget. One village went through a community planning process, which identified water supply and a barramundi fishing project as their top priorities, but the RSDP technical facilitators directed the community to go with their third choice of a community hall. As a member of the CPT noted, it “was not the most needed project”. Years later, it was seldom used: “people keep sitting under trees to discuss issues as our forefathers have done” (38, 22:03 & 26:32). Another village was unable to complete the project, when the transport costs for materials exceeded that allowed for in the budget, which is a common predicament in South Fly District (18, 49:32).

CMCA (COMMUNITY MINE CONTINUATION AGREEMENT), OK TEDI

In 2002, mining affected communities along the Fly River choose to live with further environmental impacts, on the condition of a comprehensive benefits and services package. Negotiating the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) resulted in the establishment of a tiered governance structure through the nine community trust regions, which then feed down into the governance mechanisms of each village through Village Planning Committees (VPC). It includes a Village Development Fund and comprehensive delivery mechanism, with budget allocations for each village. Projects are nominated by the VPCs and then agreed upon, prioritised, and resourced at the higher levels. OTDF undertake technical appraisals, project documentation, and all procurement – so that decision-making is local but supported by those with technical capabilities to advise and deliver – demonstrating the effectiveness of well-informed community decision-making (09, 21:07 to 27:24). Decision making is decentralised to the VPC. Rather than being limited to a menu, projects are prioritised according to tackling local community issues, as described by a former Trustee:

“What we really want are the issues within community. It’s the village planning committee’s role and responsibility to assess the communities, [determine] what sort of issues they have, what do they want. The project they select must suit the issues in the community. (09, 28:27)”

The Village Planning Committees under CMCA have come to overshadow the Ward Development Committees under the LLG System. This can be seen in the governance arrangements that Ok Tedi has put into place for compensation payments, whereby the CMCA Trustees (who decide on allocations of development projects) and Clan Leaders (who receive benefits on behalf of their clans), have tended to supplant the legislated local government structures. During the CMCA negotiations, community leaders deliberately set out to bypass the problems of the LLG system, as described by the same former Trustee:

“We did not want the village [Ward] Development Committees, because they will abuse the people’s right to tangible sustainable development ... There is a lot of corruption in the government system, which is why people wanted to separate these two committees. The Ward Development Committee under the government must work with the government alone under the LLG. The Village Planning Committee will be a different committee, set by the community, with the leader they prefer to take on board? (09, 32:27)”

Where the VPCs have finances to spend and a functional project management system to deliver projects, the WDCs under the LLG system are the very opposite. To improve coordination, there is a nominated position on the VPC for the Ward Councillor (09, 34:33). This demonstrates their relative lack of power, as Ward Councillor usually nominate who sits on committees under the LLG system.

During the 2006/2007 CMCA negotiations, women from the nine OTML mine affected trust regions successfully negotiated for 10% of benefits to go to a Women’s and Children’s Fund. Each CMCA village has a Women’s Social Issues Concern Group, which aggregates up to nine regional Women’s Associations, with representation on the nine Regional Trusts, and then at higher levels to the Ok Tedi Board.⁶ The Fund allowed women to prioritise development and service delivery initiatives and allocate resources to these priorities. One woman orchestrated the initial negotiations at the negotiating table, but extensive consultation occurred behind the scenes across the CMCA women’s networks.⁷ OTDF handles all the money and manages procurement and project delivery.

When given the opportunity to lead with sufficient resources and project management to effectively implement their decisions, women’s leaders can demonstrate their effectiveness. The male-dominated Regional Trusts distribute the remaining 90% of the compensation package largely as cash payments. A World Bank article noted however that there were few sustainable improvements in CMCA villages, despite the significant financial flows associated with the mine.⁸ In comparison, the Regional Women’s Associations have a track record of community development projects, closely facilitated by the OTDF, against a menu of budget items. According to their five-year action plan for 2019-2023,⁹ expenditure is earmarked for school classrooms, teacher houses, community learning centres, aid posts, water supply, energy, roads, footbridges, livelihood development, and training in literacy, finances and law and order. Different Regional Women’s Associations have also pooled their money to complete district-level projects, including secondary school libraries, hospital equipment, urban markets, and economic development projects, with clear benefit also to non-CMCA communities (16, 25:57 & 50:39)

6 Popoitai and Ofosu-Amaah, 2013.

7 Menzies and Harley, 2012, p.5.

8 Ibid, p.10.

9 OTDF, 2019.

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The **Developmental Leadership Program** (DLP) is an international research collaboration supported by the Australian Government.

DLP investigates the crucial role that leaders, networks and coalitions play in achieving development outcomes.

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This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the authors' alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government, the Developmental Leadership Program or partner organisations.

