




Department of Higher Education Research Science and Technology

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER



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FOREWORD FROM THE SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

POSITIVE CHANGES EMERGING AS THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM UNDERGOES MAJOR TRANSITION AND REFORM

As reported in the October Newsletter, the passage by the Parliament of the Higher Education Reform Bills Package has paved the way for significant reforms in the governance, management and quality of higher and technical education in Papua New Guinea.

Expected outcomes from the reforms are enormously important to PNG. The benefits of education reforms will not accrue immediately but rather increase over time. Thus, the immediate outcomes of effective implementation of proposed strategies may not seem in themselves significant. Over the short to medium term however we will see many positive signs of emerging changes as the higher education system undergoes major transition and reform over the longer term. Some of these emerging changes are presented below for your reflection;

- ❖ We will begin to experience and appreciate how science, technology and innovation in education can assist the government, individual sectors, markets, provinces and regions to meet their economic and social targets.
- ❖ Each institution of higher learning will be equipped with a clear vision, a purpose and a strategic action plan, enabling and supporting capable leadership in the higher education sector, good governance, workable policies, reliable and affordable funding, effective planning; and clear accountability and transparency.
- ❖ There will be more coherence between levels of education so that skills taught at primary, secondary, and higher educational levels are better aligned to the needs of our social and economic sectors, national objectives and the productive areas of the economy.
- ❖ Higher Education Institutions will develop capability for research and innovation in technology development projects and initiatives and engage in multi-sector partnerships with industry and civil society.
- ❖ Increasingly effective and responsive collaboration with our donor partners will maximise value for money outcomes that support national higher and technical education strategies and initiatives.
- ❖ We will see increasing levels of female participation across the higher education sector, including science and technology related education; non-traditional and technical trade areas; and in education management and administration.
- ❖ A clearly articulated education system will evolve in which skills and employment pathways are linked and unified under the PNG National Qualifications Framework
- ❖ Through the i-PNG Networking Project there will be increasingly accessible pathways and opportunities for lifelong learning; enhancing the capacity of people, institutions and all Papua New Guineans to respond to the social and economic challenges of the 21st century.
- ❖ The increased focus on National skills development will reduce our country's over-dependence on foreign skilled workers and reduce the very significant annual leakage of off-shore repatriated funds to our economy.

ACHIEVING QUALITY, RELEVANCE AND GREATER ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education plays a critical role in our country's social and economic development. For Papua New Guinea to become globally competitive, we must ensure that higher and technical education is equally accessible to all students, male and female; and is of a quality and relevance to meet economic and social needs both at home and abroad in response to local, regional and global demands.

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN THE REALITY AND THE PROMISE OF A BETTER FUTURE

Over the short to medium 5-Year Sector Plan we must now secure the promise and the reality of a better future across the education sector as a whole; and for all Papua New Guineans coming through primary levels to secondary and for those continuing to technical and tertiary education. With the enabling Higher and Technical Education Reform Bills legislation now in place, the policies for transition and systemic change will focus on:

- ❖ offering hope and tangible support to our young people, many of whom thought a higher education was beyond them due to the ever-increasing high costs;
- ❖ securing transparent, reliable and affordable funding to the higher education institutions and reversing the declining trend in core government funding over recent decades;
- ❖ converting the previously fragmented government funding systems for institutional types into a single coherent funding model linked to HEI accountability and performance;
- ❖ linking sector policies, plans and budgets in coherent and predictable ways that support efficient sector coordination and institutional governance;
- ❖ making a sustainable difference in teacher education for the benefit of our children coming through the primary and secondary grades;
- ❖ changing the face of education access, education delivery and education quality, both on and off campus throughout Papua New Guinea;
- ❖ accelerating the digitalisation of education management, education quality and education services delivery through the i-PNG Networking Systems Project.
- ❖ achieving significant improvements in regulation and quality assurance that develop and protect quality - that most precious commodity for any of our Higher Education Institutions.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY AND BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Congratulations to all HEI's for demonstrating the type of innovation and resilience needed to complete the 2020 academic year. Working together, within and across the sector and with other sectors, the higher education reforms now available to us provide several pathways for building the resilience of the sector. Over time the resilience of the sector will be honed and strengthened through greater access and opportunity, improving quality; and aligning our institutions closely to the needs and relevance of Papua New Guinea's social and economic sectors.

I trust all readers enjoy the contents of this edition of the Newsletter. My best wishes for a joyous Christmas and New Year holiday season.

May God Bless Papua New Guinea.

Prof. Fr Jan Czuba
Secretary

Shaping the future of Higher Education in Papua New Guinea

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE NEXT HALF CENTURY.

The DHERST October Newsletter covered Higher Education milestone achievements in both the pre- and post-Independence periods up to 2016. As noted in that issue, calls for the long overdue reform of the higher education system had gathered momentum starting with the Namaliu-Garnaut Report in 2010 and continued throughout the decade.

RE-SET & RENEWAL

The recent period 2017-2020 has been a time of re-set and renewal. New policy and legislation has been developed to address long-standing issues of access, quality, institutional governance, industry relevance, gender equity as well as sustainable financing and funding reliability.

Government response over this period has been very proactive in developing long term reforms aimed at reversing three decades of declining funding, quality and relevance. Recent NEC Decisions reflect the increasing Government support in reversing negative trends and backing innovative solutions for the future of higher education. Industry groups and employers generally have welcomed the change.

RECENT NEC DECISIONS SUPPORTING DHERST POLICY AGENDA IN 2021

Over the past three years key NEC Decisions have shaped and influenced the government policy and reform agenda in higher education.

○ **2017: NEC Decision 25/2017 for reforming, transforming & unifying the higher education system in Papua New Guinea.** This landmark NEC Decision supports linking sector policies, plans and budgets in coherent and predictable ways that support efficient sector coordination and institutional governance;

making a sustainable difference in teacher education for the benefit of our children coming through the primary and secondary grades; changing the face of education access, education delivery and education quality, both on and off campus throughout Papua New Guinea; achieving significant improvements in regulation, quality assurance and investment that develop and protect quality - that most precious commodity for any of our Higher Education Institutions.

○ **2017: The Higher and Technical Education Strategic Implementation Plan 2017-2038.** This strategic implementation plan (updated annually) sets out the road map for Higher and Technical Education sector as a diverse and growing set of post-secondary education, forming a network of linked institutions that prepare students for application of knowledge at an advanced levels across all sub-sectors of Higher Education.

○ **2019 DHERST Report: Financing Higher Education in PNG - Trends and Issues 2011-2019.** This seminal report was an important evidence-based assessment of the (fragile) state of higher education in Papua New Guinea and provided valuable data for informing new policy initiatives and long-term planning imperatives for reforming, transforming and unifying the sector.

○ **2019: National Skills Development Agency.** Directed as part NEC Decision 52/2017, the launch of the National Skills Development Agency (NSDA) - a high-level multi-stakeholder engagement platform for Government, Industry, the Education sector, Training Providers, Employers and Civil Society to address national skills priorities under an ongoing national skills partnership.

○ **2019: NEC Decision 179/2019 approving DHERST's transition to a five year Higher and Technical Education Sector Plan and Budget (2021-2025)** - the sector plan and budget aims at securing transparent, reliable and affordable funding to the higher education institutions and converting the previously fragmented government funding systems for institutional types into a single coherent funding model;

○ **2019: NEC Decision 179/2019 to establish the Higher Education Loans Program (HELP)** HELP is an income contingent loan scheme offering hope and support to our young people, many of whom thought a higher education was beyond them due to the ever-increasing high costs. HELP represents an important first step in reforming the financing of higher education in Papua New Guinea as well as increasing access, quality and relevance.

○ **2020: NEC Decision 38/2020 approving proposed legislation to transfer Regulatory Oversight of Higher Education Institutions to MHERST and DHERST.** The legislation (since passed) supports the implementation of the reforms directed under NEC Decision 25/2017. Policy implementation is already well underway and embedded in the updated Higher and Technical Education Strategic Implementation Plan (2020-2038) linking sector policies, plans and budgets in coherent and predictable ways that support efficient sector coordination and institutional governance.

○ **2020: NEC Decision 129/2020 activating cost-effective roll-out of digital education.** The provision of digital education services is a key Strategic Implementation Plan priority aimed at increasing access to and quality of higher education, including the delivery of state of the art teaching and learning materials; and innovative digital solutions for higher education administration across all HEI sub-sectors: Universities, TVET, Nursing, Teacher, Specialist Colleges and Research

Institutions.

○ **2020: NEC Decision 190/2020 directing the planning, financing, construction and commissioning of 6 new Polytechnic Institutes; and 12 new Technical Colleges.** The overall program is known as the PNG Higher Technical Institute Development Program (HTIDP). The NEC Decision underscores the Marape-Steven government strategic focus on national skills development. The six (6) new Polytechnic Institutes are: Simbu National Polytechnic Institute, Enga National Polytechnic Institute, Hela National Polytechnic Institute, Kokopo National Polytechnic Institute, Manus Polytechnic Institute and the ARoB Polytechnic Institute. The twelve (12) new Technical Colleges will be located in Provinces that currently do not have an operating Technical College.

○ **2020: Passage of the Higher Education Reform Bills Package.** - On 27 August 2020, the PNG National Parliament passed a suite of eight Bills comprising the Higher Education Reform Bills Package. The legislative package implements NEC Decision NG25/2017 for reforming transforming and unifying the higher education system in PNG. The legislation transfers oversight of higher education institutions (teachers' colleges, technical colleges, nursing colleges, specialized colleges and agricultural colleges) to MHERST and DHERST).

Despite challenges and adversity in Higher Education, Papua New Guinea can be proud of what has been achieved over less than half a century since Independence. The next half-century will be a defining and challenging period in the history of Higher Education in Papua New Guinea. Our graduates are learning the necessary skills to be 21st century national, global and digital citizens, participating in a productive and competitive workforce, serving the economic and social sectors of Papua New Guinea.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Reforming, Transforming and Unifying the Sector

Building stronger links with industry, business and professional associations and donors is a cornerstone of the reforms with the development of quality demand-driven National Curriculum and National Training Packages. The long-standing alliance between the State and Church agencies and their institutions will continue and be strengthened. Registration and accreditation processes will be centralised under DHERST with the transfer of NTC registration and accreditation functions for private training institutions. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

If you would like to know and understand more about how the reforms impact on different parts of the Higher and Technical Education sector further details can be found via the following FAQ web-link:

<https://web.dherst.gov.pg/new-regulations-transition>

If you have any questions you would like to ask about the reforms please send your questions to FAQ@dherst.gov.pg

TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the reforms and particularly the transfer of institutions to DHERST regulatory oversight will take place over the next few years as institutions are prepared for transfer and budgetary arrangements settled in accordance with the Higher and Technical Education Sector Plan and Budget (2021 – 2025). Transfer dates will be determined by the Minister and published in the National Gazette. Transfer of the NTC’s registration and accreditation functions will occur over the next 12 months as DHERST and the NTC finalise transition arrangements. Existing NTC registration of private training institutions shall remain valid until these arrangements are finalised.

ADDRESSING THE CONCERNS OF TRANSFERRING STAFF

Fundamental to the process of reform in the higher education

sector is the need to address the employment rights, benefits and entitlements of those involved in and affected by the transition and reform process. Constructive engagement with representative employer and employee peak bodies has commenced on a range of issues regarding retirement benefits; allowances; levels of employment in any new structure; contracts conditions of service including salary levels and what the transition to new terms and conditions for professional and specialist staff may mean in practice.

INTER-AGENCY TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)

In order to address these shared and particular concerns across the higher education sector, an Inter-Agency Technical Working Group (TWG) is tasked with determining terms and conditions of employment for Higher Education Institution College Staff from the Country’s 14 Teacher Colleges, 11 TVET Colleges and 10 Nursing Colleges. On the passing of the Higher and Technical Education Reform Bill and once all preparatory arrangements are in place, these institutions will be first to transition to the new regulatory framework.

INTER-AGENCY TWG MEMBERSHIP

The Technical Working Group comprises representatives from the Department of Personnel Organisation Reform Team (PSORT) and the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST). Other Agency members include: The National Department of Education (NDOE); the Teaching Services Commission (TSC); and the National Department of Health (NDOH). NDOE, TSC and NDOH have provided specialist input on the existing and historical nature of Awards to inform the development of new Awards aligned to the goals and objectives of the higher education reform.

WHAT IS THE ‘NO DISADVANTAGE PRINCIPLE’?

In developing new terms and

conditions for employment, the Technical Working Group has drawn heavily on the experience of the National Department of Education (NDOE), the Teaching Services Commission (TSC) and the National Department of Health (NDOH) to ensure a ‘no disadvantage principle’ for transferring staff. This principle provides an assurance that no staff will be any worse off under new employment contracts; and in fact they will in all likelihood be much better off in terms of newly developed professional remuneration packages and increased opportunities for professional development.

TOR SCOPE OF WORK

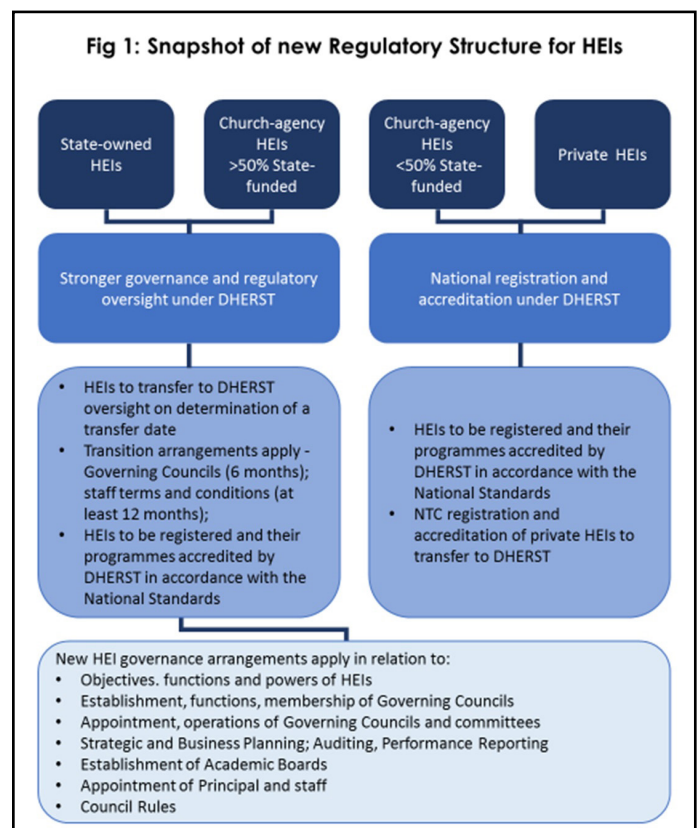
The TOR references the legislative changes in the Higher and Technical Education Reform Bills that deal with transitional arrangements for staff of public higher education institutions (including church agencies); and the preparation of contracts of employment upon their trans-

fer under DHERST’s regulatory framework. Once draft Awards are finalized for consultation, the TWG will consult with peak body staffing representatives including The PNG Teachers’ Association, The PNG Council of Nursing and the Churches Educational Council.

WHAT ARE THE CONTRACTING TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS ON TRANSFER?

On Gazetted Notice of the transfer date for TVET, Teachers and Nursing Colleges, all staff will transfer on their existing contracts, terms and conditions and for at least 12 months. After 12 months, the college must determine which staff will be offered ongoing Public Service contracts under specialist and professional categories of employment for Higher Education Institutions. Staff who are not offered contracts, or who do not wish to take up contracts, must be redeployed, retrenched, retired or as otherwise determined the transferring Agency.

TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



National Online Application (NOAS) Status and up to date NOSS instructions

The National Online Application System (NOAS) portal was once again reactivated on the 1st of Sept 2020 to facilitate the annual application process for the Grade 12 students applying for placements at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Papua New Guinea.

In its third year of implementation, NOAS has increased the number of secondary school accounts on the NOAS portal, enabling all Grade 12 students to apply online for the tertiary programs of their choice.

A total of 193 NOAS school ac-

counts are now accessing the portal, facilitating more than 30,000 Grade 12 students to apply for the 2021 tertiary academic year programs.

DHERST launched the annual nationwide NOAS outreach of student support and awareness for Grade 12 students. DHERST teams traveled to the four Regions visiting all the National High and Secondary schools in the provinces.

The outreach was aimed at explaining the NOAS system; the system timeline (highlighting important dates); how to consider and make their choices; and where to find program de-

scriptions and requirements within their NOAS accounts. A few provinces from the Islands Regions including Milne Bay province could not be visited due to Covid-19 restrictions imposed in the province.

Prior to these activities, NOAS toolkits were sent out to all secondary schools in the country to prepare students ahead of accessing their respective school accounts. The toolkits contain hard copies of the NOAS manuals for students, principals and patrons; a flash drive containing all electronic copies of the NOAS manuals; and NOAS videos as well as a dongles (Mifi) for

internet connectivity. Toolkits were sent to all Provincial Guidance Officers for distribution to the secondary schools in their respective provinces.

Despite the Covid-19 and many other logistical challenges, DHERST, was able to deliver a very successful nationwide plan for the NOAS outreach.

Currently, the 'Grace Period' is ongoing (14-18 December 2020). Students are strongly advised to login to their NOAS account to make final changes to their choices before the NOSS is launched for the selection process to begin.



Teams from DHERST visited various Secondary Schools throughout the country for the NOAS Outreach this year.

Stakeholder Partnership & Collaboration on National Youth Policy 2020-2030

STAKEHOLDERS INTERPRETATION WORKSHOP - ALOTAU, MILNE BAY PROVINCE

Background: NEC Decision 106/2020 endorsed the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2020-2030. DHERST participated in the prior consultation process to develop the policy. The NEC decision directs the Social, Law & Order Sector (SLOS) Agencies to support National NYDA in the implementation of the NYP 2020-2030. As well, the decision also directed the Constitution and Law Reform Commission (CLFC) to review the NYDA Act 2014 and to amend the Youth Age Bracket from 12-38 years old to be reduced to age bracket of 12-30 years old and other legal impediments.

Southern Region Stakeholder Workshop: The NYDA held the first of four regional stakeholders interpretation workshops for the Southern region, 26-30 October at the Driftwood Resort, Alotau, Milne Bay Province. This first regional workshop set the theme for other regional workshops to follow. With the National Youth Policy National recognising the Youth age bracket as between 12-30 years, DHERST clearly has a huge role to play in collaboration with other key stakeholders across all levels of government, the economic and social sectors, embracing the churches communities and civil society.

Collaboration and Partnership: The purpose of the workshop was to foster mutual collaboration and pragmatic partnership efforts for implementation as a way forward in creating a greater impact. In his opening address to the Alotau workshop, the Minister for Youth, Religion, and Community Development, Hon. Wake Goi, MP, said:

“Government alone cannot provide the solutions to the many youth issues facing our country. We need strategic partnerships with key stakeholders to delivering tangible results on the policy objectives.”

Strengthening stakeholder partnerships and networks: A successful outcome of the Alotau workshop was the identification and strengthening of stakeholder partnerships and networks. The potential partnership and networking coalitions across the four pillars were very encouraging. Over the five-day workshop, stakeholders representing Development Partners, Civil Society, Church Agencies, Youth Councils, Government Agencies and the Private Sector pledged their commitment and their resources to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy.

NYP Inter-Agency Committee established: At the Alotau workshop DHERST was confirmed as a member of Inter-Agency Committee of key NYP stakeholders. Under the NYP Education and Employment pillar DHERST is focused on improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the college-age population group. Annual progress against the GER measure is fundamental for improving the socio-economic development and employment indicators for Youth; as well as for reforming, transforming and unifying the higher and technical education system.

DHERST has a vital role to play in developing positive outcomes for this age cohort. Each year in our country many prospective eligible students are denied access to post-secondary education due to the lack of financial resources, classrooms, learning and teaching resources, accommodation facilities and qualified staff. Over the last two years 31,000 eligible Year 12 students have been denied access to tertiary education that would fit them with skills, competences and qualifications for employment and for life. In all likelihood, unless we do something, they will not enter the labour market. Sadly, unless we make good development choices,

increasing numbers of students will experience the same outcome each and every year unless we are able to provide greater access. PNG has very low growth in the number of students attending and graduating from our higher education institutions. Such numbers are amongst the lowest in the world and cannot adequately drive or support our rapidly growing economy.

Multi-stakeholder engagement and investment: Regional workshops planned for the other Regions will accelerate national momentum for stakeholder networking and engagement, co-investment and co-funding with donors and sources of national and global capital development. Donors and investors are keen to support nationally led programs that are well managed and capable of delivering the desired outcomes that meet sustainable Youth Policy objectives. Multi-stakeholder engagement and investment in the higher education sector is important for social and economic growth, poverty reduction, creating pathways to employment for our young men and women and for making PNG a Smart, Wise, Fair, Healthy and Happy Society as per our espoused national Vision 2050.



HELP 2020–What an Achievement!

The Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) the Government of Papua New Guinea's new initiative aimed at enhancing access to quality tertiary education. HELP addresses the increasing number of students' unable to access post-secondary education due to a lack of financial resources. HELP provides for all eligible higher education students an income contingent loan with a zero-based interest. Loan repayments commence once students graduate and on commencement of paid employment.

HELP loans were first issued to eligible students on 15th May 2020, following earlier landmark policy initiatives of the Marape Government formalized in NEC Decision 179/2019.

In the short time available and given the scope and complexity of the scheme it has been a remarkable achievement in simply establishing the regulatory arrangements for the HELP program.

DHERST acknowledges the excellent whole-of-government coordination and support received from other agencies in bringing the HELP program on stream so promptly and so efficiently through cross-agency support from our colleagues in Finance, Treasury, State Solicitor, First Legislative Counsel, Personnel Management and the IRC; and of course, the many DHERST staff working closely with the management and staff of the Higher Education Institutions and potential applicants to successfully implement the program.

Rapid start-up and the issuance of Loans in response to government directions was made possible via DHERST's i-PNG digitalization strategy linking all post-secondary institutions into a diverse network with the aim of increasing access and participation; and improving

education quality. Transparent roll-out of applications and approval processes, deployed innovative customized software solutions via DHERST's i-PNG networking system, including linked payments to all participating higher education institutions via the Department of Finance PFMS payments system. Addressing long term funding issues faced by the sector and declining participation rates, the program design utilizes a three-tiered Loan, Investment and Endowment Fund structure aimed at achieving long-term financing and economic sustainability, delivered via affordable series of 5-Year sector funding and budgeting.

HELP by name and by nature, the program offers both HELP and HOPE to the many aspiring eligible students who thought that a quality higher education was beyond their reach because of increasing costs. Despite the global pandemic Covid 19, coinciding with the start-up of HELP, DHERST responded with a massive national digital awareness program for all aspiring applicants and their respective HEIs. Over six thousand eligible students in HEIs throughout the country applied and were successful in their applications.

Funding has been made available to the students through their respective higher education institutions in three batch payments in 2020. The University of Goroka recorded the highest number of HELP applicants in 2020.

EASING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN AND CHANGING LIVES: HELP TESTIMONY FROM 2020

DHERST has received many inspiring testimonies from students regarding their HELP support. For Ms. Mollen Vannesa, a final year Business Accounting student at Pacific Adventist University, the program created an avenue for

self-reliance.

"I opted to apply for the HELP because we are large family, my parents could not afford all our fees and as the elder in the family, I thought of fending on my own." (Mollen, 2020).

Parim Mek, from the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, is doing his fifth year of medical studies at the University of Papua New Guinea; and Ere Sapen, a second year Rural Health of Divine Word University. Both Parim and Sapen described the Higher Education Loan Program as a 'great relief' to their parents who are simple subsistence farmers.

"The initiative has greatly helped us and our other friends who are doing tertiary studies, to meet the high cost of tertiary education."

Two aspiring male and female primary school teachers, Ramin Desmond and Kohoraso Zital, from East New Britain Province and attended Kabaleo Teacher's College. They described how thrilled they were to benefit from HELP in completing their studies in 2020.

"The application process was quite straight-forward and we had no difficulty applying for HELP assistance in the final year of our studies. We have now happily graduated and are eager to commence repaying our zero interest loans as soon as we commence employment in the New Year."

In future Newsletter editions DHERST will bring you more expansive human interest student profiles on the impact of HELP in providing greater access to higher education for many students who had imagined a tertiary qualification was beyond them.

COMING SOON – POST GRADUATE ROLL-OUT OF HELP APPLICATION AND SELECTION CYCLE

The 2020 roll-out of the HELP program focused on undergraduate students. DHERST is currently in the process of preparing the 2021 roll-out which will include the Post Graduate component of the HELP program. Intending candidates for the HELP postgraduate component are advised to watch the media for further information.

HELP APPLICATION AND SELECTIONS 2021

In the second year of rollout, the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) will be available to both the undergraduate and postgraduate students.

To be eligible for this loan from the government, the student must be a citizen of Papua New Guinea, be enrolled in an institution registered under DHERST, and must study a program accredited by the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB).

The NHTEB is the accrediting body operating under DHERST. All students applying for the HELP must meet the above eligibility requirements in order to proceed to the next step, which is completing the declaration form.

Enhancing the digitalization of education in the higher education sector, the HELP application is done online. Once students are enrolled and declared interest to apply for HELP, further assistance can be sought from the Registrar's or Students' Finance Offices at their respective higher education institution. Students are also advised to check <https://web.dherst.gov.pg/help> for updates on the Higher Education Loan Program.

HELP APPLICATION TIMELINE

1

January – April 2021

- Declaration forms issued by HEIs to interested tertiary students
- Students sign declaration forms
- Declaration forms collected

2

May 2021

- HELP online App launched
- SDO Accounts created
- SDOs confirm student details

3

June 2021

- Students receive credentials
- Students apply for HELP
- First semester installments paid out

Donor Partners Working in Close Collaboration to Support New TVET Initiatives for Transforming the Skills Sector in PNG

PNG – AUSTRALIA COMMITMENT ON TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

The governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia have reaffirmed their commitment to working in partnership to improve outcomes from Papua New Guinea's Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector and increase the number of skilled workers in the country.

PNG has a critical shortage of qualified workers with technical and vocational skills, with less than two percent of PNG's population holding a vocational or technical certificate. As a result, PNG has experienced a shortage of skilled labour to keep up with growing industry demand. Skills development will be essential to PNG's economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. Continued access to education and skills is vital for livelihoods, human development and national advancement. Australia, through the PNG-Australia partnership, will provide AUD45 million (PGK107 million) over the next 6 years to support the Australia Pacific Technical Coalition (APTC) to work in three locations outside of Port Moresby, starting in

the Highlands Region and Bougainville. Both governments will work to ensure more women and disadvantaged groups are able to access and complete TVET training. These efforts will enable more Papua New Guineans to grow local industries, as well as benefit from opportunities offered by Australia's Pacific Labour Mobility programs.

The joint commitment by both governments acknowledges the critical contribution that education makes to national development and the establishment of a vibrant economy, and the longstanding cooperation between the two countries in education.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK INVESTMENT TO COMPLEMENT AUSTRALIA'S INVESTMENT

Complementing Australia's investment in PNG skills development the Asian Development Bank's design team is currently finalizing project design and implementation plans for major projects across ten (10) TVET colleges under the ADB financed Papua New Guinea Improved Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Employment Project. Implementation

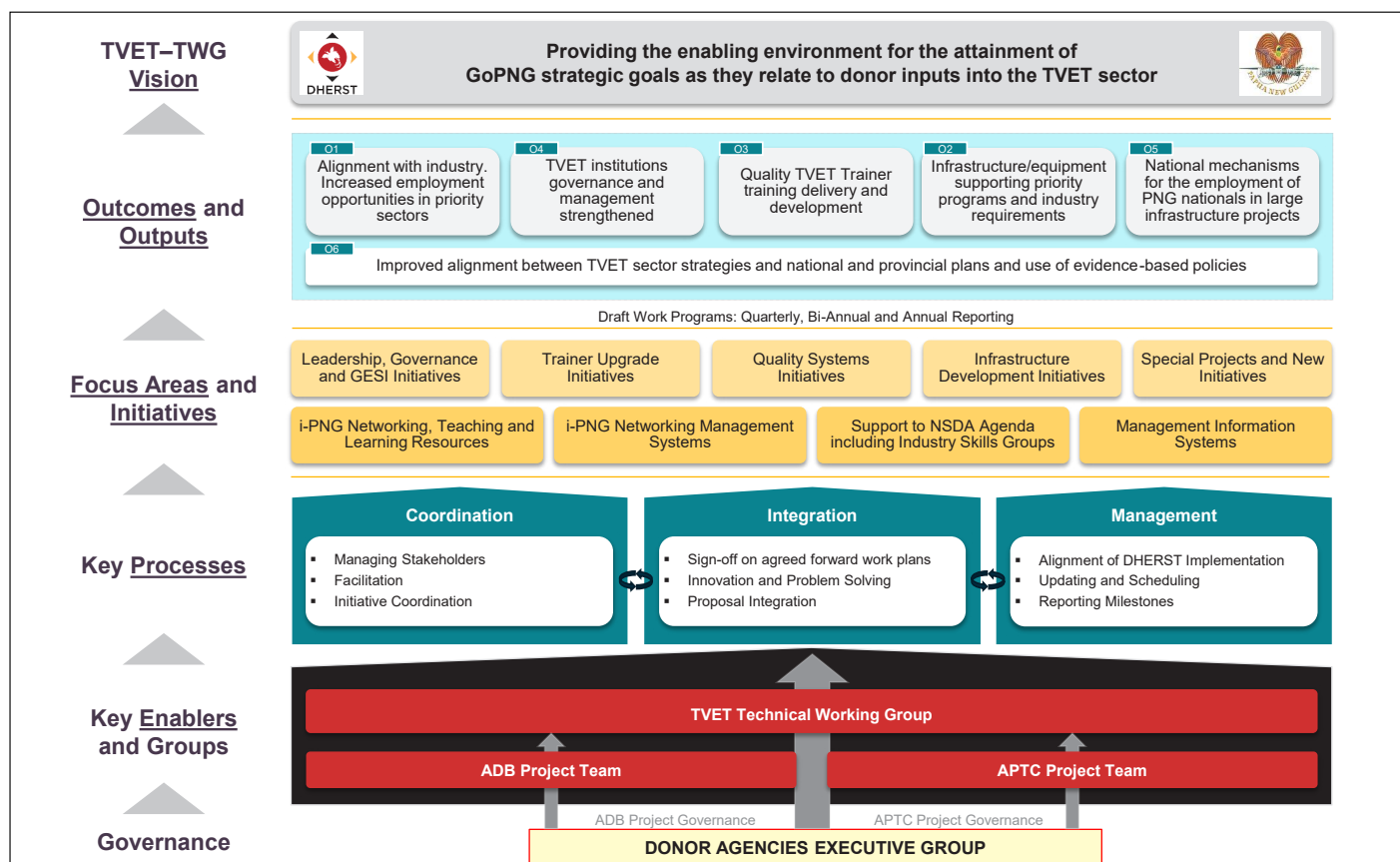
is scheduled to commence in 2022 with a total investment of USD50 million over 6 years.

The importance of Data-driven investments: Over recent months DHERST has worked in close collaboration with ADB's design team consultants to collect diagnostic data from the ten (10) targeted TVET Colleges to inform the ADB project design and implementation. DHERST assessment teams visited all ten HEI's and facilitated the collection of site-specific information for a comprehensive assessment of each institution. DHERST thanks the Leadership of the participating HEI's for their cooperation on the data collection exercise, at a time when HEI's were also managing an extremely busy close-out of a memorable 2020 academic year and preparation for 2021 enrolments.

Donor investments aligned to GOPNG Reform priorities: DHERST's rich data collection exercise with the HEI colleges over the past few months will be shared with both ADB and APTC teams to inform project implementation and work programming, closely

aligned to DHERST's reform priorities, Both the ADB and Australian Donor Partner investments support GOPNG-led reform initiatives for improved HEI governance and leadership; the upgrade of human resource and financial management systems; skills development of TVET teachers; and for creating skills pathways to employment via effective partnering with industry. The ADB program will also support TVET infrastructure development including learning resources, as well as physical infrastructure and equipment.

Coordination of Donor Partner investments at implementation level: With two large Donor Partner investments supporting skills development and other donors eager to discuss potential investments, a Technical Working Group (TWG) has been established to coordinate project implementation. The agreed TWG strategy map below captures GOPNG strategic goals as they relate to donor TVET investments, the key focus areas and initiatives, processes for consultation and coordination to achieve the stated outputs and outcomes.



Successful rehabilitation and infrastructure development in the Teacher Education and Nursing Colleges

DERST endeavors to facilitate development in the Higher Education sector to address DHERST's three (3) underpinning objectives designed to:

- help as many students as possible gain access to Higher Education Institutions throughout the country,
- offer and ensure quality education, and
- help students succeed once they have enrolled.

This edition features successful rehabilitation and infrastructure developments in Nursing and Teacher colleges throughout the country despite resource constraints.

During 2019-2020 Institutional recipients of funding under the Higher Education Sector Public Investment Program (HESPIP) included Holy Trinity Teachers College, Southern Highlands Teachers College, Madang Teachers College, Highlands Regional School

of Nursing, Mendi School of Nursing and Wewak School of Nursing. The Table highlights the infrastructure development each institution has received through HESPIP.

Infrastructure developments under the HESPIP are making a difference to the lives of teachers and students in the higher education institutions across the country by addressing issues of access and quality in education. Projected infrastructure

funding for Teacher and Nursing Colleges over for 2021-2022 is targeted to provide improved accommodation, teaching and learning environments benefiting many more students and staff and thus contributing to the sector objectives.

DERST thanks key stakeholders for your continued support and collaborative effort in successfully achieving physical infrastructure development milestones.

Institution	Infrastructure Project Components	Status
Holy Trinity Teachers College	- Administration Building - Male Student Dormitory - Mobile Equipment	Fully completed and commissioned Completed and in use. School truck to facilitate student movement during teaching practice.
Southern Highlands Teachers College	- Water purifier - 1x 40ft storage container - Mess Kitchen utensils - 50x student beds - 3x covertible containers (1x Kitchen and 2x staff offices)	All components supplied and delivered on site.
Madang Teachers College	- Administration Building - 4 in 1 classroom	Completed and commissioned Completed and commissioned
Highlands Regional School of Nursing	- Offsite Accom No1 Kompri - Offsite Accom No2 Kompri	Completed and commissioned Completed and commissioned
Wewak School of Nursing	- Quadruple staff duplex x3 - Alteration of old admin building into classroom/ stimulation room - Construction of project house	Completed and commissioned Completed and commissioned Completed and in use
Mendi School of Nursing	- Staff Duplex 2 bedroom - Demolition of 4-in-1 classroom	Completed and in use Demolition, site clearance and earth work completed



DHERST's i-PNG Networking Project: Realizing the Digital Future to increase Access and Improve Quality

A diverse and growing network of linked post-secondary institutions increasing Access and improving Quality: The i-PNG Management Information and Networking System aims to transform the higher and technical education sector into a diverse and growing network of linked post-secondary institutions that prepare students for application

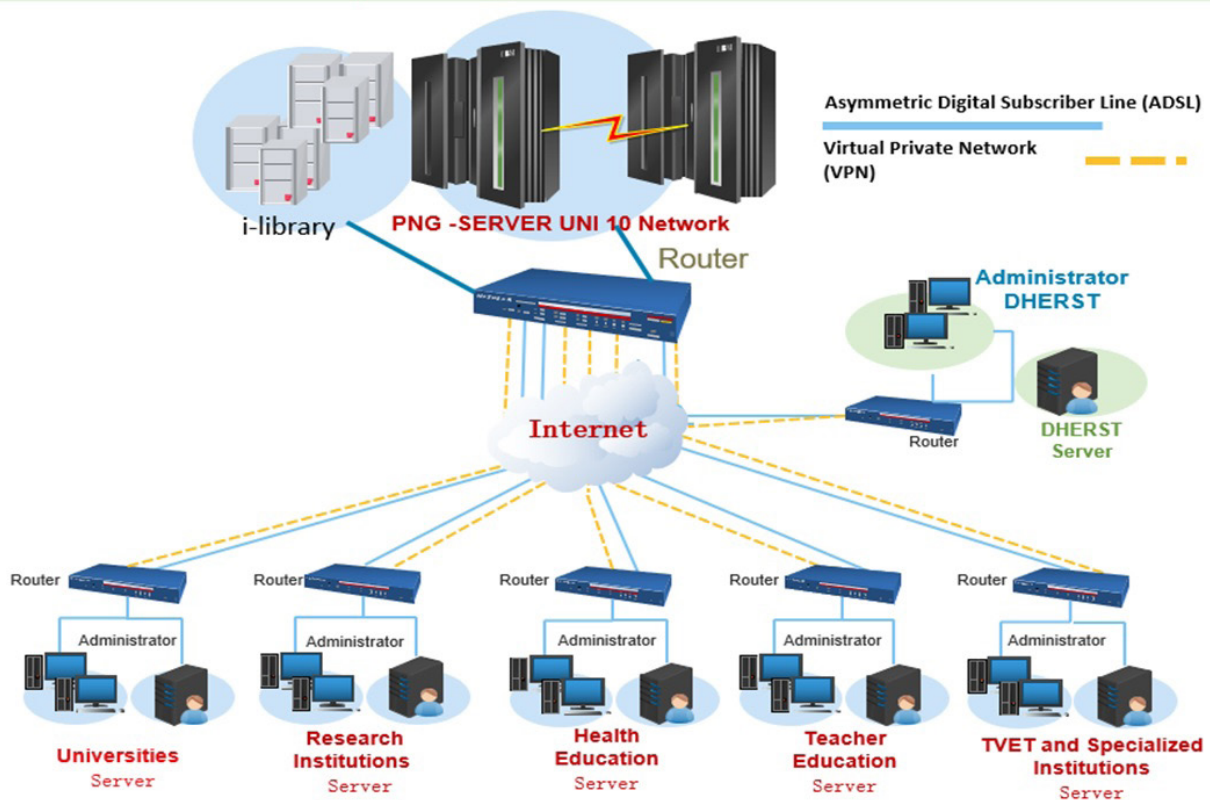
of knowledge at an advanced level. The i-PNG model includes cloud-hosted libraries that feed learning and curriculum content to routers for easy download access to higher and technical education subsectors, eliminating large internet access costs.

Linked-up National Network of HEI's: The i-PNG Management Information and Net-

working System incorporates both past and planned milestone achievements for the National Online Application System (NOAS); the National Online Selections System (NOSS); state of the art software systems for managing the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP); hosting online Learning Management Systems such as Moodle;

planned e-Library procurement with customized data bases for each Higher education sub-sector. The management information and networking system will also link to all Higher Education Institutions for online reporting, thus supporting the data collection for planning, monitoring and evaluation across all higher education institutions.

i-PNG Higher Education Sector



Customised Teaching, Learning and Research Resources: For many years Higher Education Institutions have not able to access relevant teaching, teaching and research resources to support their course offerings. DHERST has identified specialized global providers of customized databases to suit the demands of higher and technical education institutions in PNG. Customised database systems will contain comprehensive, diverse, and relevant multi-disciplinary

teaching, learning and research resources, providing access across all major disciplines and subject areas, including business, health and medical, social sciences, arts and humanities, education, science and technology, and religion. Learning platforms will deliver a modern learning experience that guides users' learning discovery, access and management of rich and varied curriculum and content sources. **Reliable low-cost bandwidth for cloud hosted learn-**

ing platforms: DHERST's Memorandum of Agreement with Pacific telecommunication company DATACOM LTD has secured reliable low-cost band-with for cloud hosted learning platforms linked by router directly to HEI servers, ensuring that every Higher Education Institution is serviced by its own cloud hosted i-library, customised with a full range of teaching and learning resources. These customised learning and teaching resources will be utilized by staff and students

alike (in contrast to 'off-the-shelf' database resources, often irrelevant to the curriculum needs of our institutions). **i-PNG roll-out already transforming HEI Education Management and Administration:** At the institutional level the management of Higher Education has been significantly transformed with the implementation and roll-out of contemporary Student Management Systems, Student Records and Student Services, Human Resource

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Management, Financial and Asset Management systems; Most importantly, DHERST and HEI staff have received parallel capacity development to lead and manage the transformation of digital solutions to long-standing endemic administrative problems across the sector.

HEI staff capacity development in utilizing digital education services: Transition to digital learning cannot succeed, without the simultaneous building of HEI capacity of HEI staff. Some PNG institutions are well advanced and making excellent progress in the delivery of course programs using digital learning resource materials to support both online and on-campus learning. The i-PNG networking project is gradually expanding skills development opportunities across the sector to support HEI staff and students to receive the skills development they need to adapt to multi-mode learning. Congratulations to the many HEI staff who are already leading sys-

temic change in program and course delivery via digital education services.

PNG Government investment - increasing digital Access and improving Quality: In 2020 the National Executive Council (NEC) approved an K8.8m investment for continuation of the roll-out of digitalisation in the Higher Education Sector in Papua New Guinea (NEC Decision 129/2020). The timely decision re-activates DHERST's strategic plan priority for the innovative and cost-effective roll-out of networking systems aimed at increasing access to higher education and improving education quality. When funding comes on stream, the quality of learning, teaching and research will be enhanced both on and off-campus through the provision of e-libraries, significantly reducing the high cost of procuring outdated paper-based teaching, learning and research materials. The new funding allows existing IT and telecommunication service providers to collaborate

with the Government in the development and roll-out of the National Higher & Technical Education Management Information System initiative, including the cloud-hosting of e-libraries, delivering up to date teaching learning and research resources and better access to quality research materials and researching processing facilities.

Improved National Research Capability: The digitalization of higher education in Papua New Guinea, addresses long-standing issues of national research capability under DHERST's core charter. Students, Teachers and Researchers will be equipped with the digital skills needed for the optimal utilization of ICT in their specialized areas of learning, teaching and research. They will have access to relevant scientific publications, and contemporary research data across all disciplines and specialty areas of learning. Students, Teachers and Researchers will have access to a full range of digital applications and support

services with sufficient resources for data storage, statistical processing analysis, and advanced user support.

PNG Digital Citizens capable of matching their skills and abilities anywhere in the world: The i-PNG Higher Education Management Information and Networking system supports a very wide range of management and learning applications servicing all Higher Education Institutions in the pursuit of teaching, learning and research, providing both relevance and excellence in both on and off campus delivery of education. Papua New Guineans are coming of age in using the new technologies. They are using them in a number of innovative ways to overcome our geography, our history and even a Covid19 pandemic. Papua New Guinea is producing talented graduates capable of matching their skills and abilities anywhere across the world. They are the new Digital Citizens of the world.

New Governance arrangements for the Teacher Education Colleges

PRINCIPALS, VICE-PRESIDENTS & DEPUTY PRINCIPALS ACADEMIC IN CONFERENCE

An invitation conference held at the Holiday Inn, Port Moresby, between 9 – 11 November brought together senior leaders from all but one of the fourteen registered primary teacher colleges in Papua New Guinea to take account of the implications for leadership, management and governance of their institutions following the passage of the Higher and Technical Education Reform Act of 2020 (HATERA).

Since the HATERA has not yet been signed and gazetted, its formal publication is embargoed. A decision was therefore made to familiarise the participants with an accompanying Governance Manual for Technical and Teachers' Colleges and Frequently Asked Questions relating to the Act. Carefully selected topics were presented over the three days designed to engage the participants in facilitated dialogue that would enable them to return to their institutions equipped to conduct similar exercises with their colleagues.

The Secretary, Professor Fr Czuba, set the scene by illustrating the need for a sound understanding of the essential thrust of the Act, which devolves autonomy to the colleges in matters of finance, staffing and governance. Balancing the prospect of autonomy with accountability, the Secretary was able to set out the new expectations of the leadership and management of change in realistic, comprehensible terms.

Well over half a day was spent in groupwork dissecting the Manual and sharing practical insights that college leaders found helpful in operational terms, particularly in being able to interpret the priorities that will dominate leadership activity during the twelve month 'period of grace', afforded by the Act, in the wake of transition.

College leaders had the opportunity to respond to the prospect of, for example by the end of the sixth month, appointing a new governing council and, by the end of the

twelfth month, setting the future staffing establishment. This latter requirement will take account of budgetary resource and the need to align staff qualifications with the expectation that possession of a higher degree is essential for those lecturers who will teach the final year of the BEd/DipT.

The Chairman and Commissioners of the Teaching Service Commission, the lecturers' current employer, were in attendance during these discussions and made their views clear on the employment options open to lecturers at the end of the 'period of grace'. Professor Fr Czuba spent time unpicking with college leaders the misunderstandings surrounding the term 'affiliation' through which the pre-service primary BEd degrees will be awarded.

This topic also sparked helpful discussion regarding the readiness of colleges to deliver the fourth year of the BEd and how suitably qualified students who wished to

proceed with the qualification, but who were at a college that was 'not ready' could transfer and continue at another institution. Teacher colleges are at varying states of readiness, mediated by size, date of establishment and leadership, to enter the higher education sector. This conference allowed the principals and deputies to appreciate the possibilities of coming together as a subsector and sharing the benefits of such an approach.

An appreciation of the advantages of aligning future strategic planning with the overarching DHERST strategic plan was not lost on principals, particularly in respect of the Department's commitment to centres of excellence. Principals valued this opportunity to connect current reality with the vision of the future enshrined in the HATERA and left the event strengthened and prepared to lay the foundations of change with their stakeholders.

Partnership between DHERST & Western Highlands Provincial Administration

THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE-CHAIN IS PROVIDING ECONOMIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES & CREATING EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEANS

In July 2020, DHERST Secretary, Professor Fr. Jan Czuba, sealed a Memorandum of Partnership (MoP) with the Western Highlands Provincial Administration (WHPA). The MoP aims at making agriculture the largest industry for economic development in Papua New Guinea.

The partnership provides a framework for both parties to work together to mobilise resources and achieve agreed development objectives.

The partnership paves way for DHERST and the WHPA to scale up the future physical, agricultural and human development of the Highlands Agriculture College (HAC). Partnership opportunities are being explored to link the HAC to current and prospective Higher Education Institutions within the Western Highlands Province, including mutually agreed education initiatives such as Agricultural Education Scholarships; participating industry networks and other business, commercial and employment initiatives along

the agricultural value chain. Professor Fr. Jan Czuba said,

“One of the common misconceptions about this field is that it is limited to farming and animal husbandry only. Contrary to popular belief, agriculture provides a wide range of career opportunities for students. Since the beginning of time, agriculture has been amongst the primary sources of livelihood for Papua New Guineans and remains so, right up to this day.”

To cater to the increasing population and market demand, agri-academic programs will be introduced and tailored to PNG needs and conditions. Demand for quality organic products is increasing and markets the world over are seeking natural and healthier food products and lifestyle alternatives. With educational qualifications in agriculture and related disciplines in the agricultural value chain, graduating students will not only secure life-long skills and careers, but more importantly, can participate in the creation of environmentally sustaina-



ble communities. Professor Fr. Jan Czuba said.

Agriculture is an essential part of the economy that cannot be neglected. Both now and in the coming years. There is a growing need for farmers, horticulturists, agronomists and other related career specialists. When some people think of agriculture, they picture a farmer working the land. Recent advancements in science and technology however have brought new machinery and farming techniques capable of value-adding agricultural production. Farming innovation has contributed greatly to the improved quality of crops, creating new plant strains immune to disease; and producing a greater range of products under varying conditions.”

Higher Education programs in Agribusiness and Agricultural Economics prepare our young people for careers across the Agricultural value-chain contributing to local, regional, national and export production. Agricultural commodity production provides us with lifelong opportunities for skills education and employment.

This Memorandum of Partnership is the first of its kind between a Provincial Government and the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology. DHERST will be further exploring such partnership arrangements with other Provincial Administrations.

Passage of the Higher Education Reform Bills in August 2020 provide the perfect reform platform to rejuvenate and transform Papua New Guinea's long-held reliance on agriculture livelihoods. A modern day “Sweet Potato Revolution” could be in the making - the phenomenon students of the pre-history of PNG use to describe the impact of the introduction of the humble sweet potato into the Highlands in the 1500's, transforming agricultural production techniques and creating vibrant sustainable societies.

The sweet potato revolution is well described in *THE NEW GUINEA VILLAGER*; Charles Rowley; Cheshire Publishing Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1965.

