

**KNOW-HOW**  
**3000**

*Experience*

*IN DETAIL*

## PNG Studies – Preparing University Students for Participation in PNG's Development



**HORIZONT**  
**3000**

AUSTRIAN ORGANISATION  
FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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## List of Abbreviations

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BRG	Bismark Ramu Grou
DWA	Divine Word University
PNG	Papua New Guinea
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

## Imprint

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## 1. General Information

The “Divine Word University” (DWU) with its department for “PNG Studies” is a national university in Madang, Papua New Guinea, open to all and serving society through its quality of research, teaching, learning and community engagement in a Christian environment. The DWU is a public, government-supported ecumenical and coeducational university that is privately administered. Its primary purpose is to serve national goals. With support, partnership and collaboration from both public and private organizations, DWU commits itself to offer special training programs in response to current and emerging needs of Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. DWU’s services are offered with a high level of ethics and respect of individual rights. The University’s Vision (DWU) is achieved through:

- A Christian presence in an academic environment;
- Standards of excellence in teaching and research for all students and staff;
- Emphasis on the development of moral and ethical behavior in public, private and professional life based on Christian values;
- Dedication to social justice and offering equal opportunity to all;
- Ecumenical acceptance of all students and staff without regard to race and religion who respect the university’s vision;
- Continuous dialogue and partnership with all levels of community, business, government and culture in the life and work of the University;
- Quality academic programs relevant to the needs of students and society;
- Providing an authentic model for national unity.



Chart 1 Localization of the experience

While the university is located in Madang town, in Madang Province of Papua New Guinea, its students hail from all provinces and cultural backgrounds of PNG, with no particular group being over-present.

Within this documentation, the DWU wants to present its experience named “PNG Studies – preparing Students for Participation in PNGs development”, which is being carried out since 1999, when the university was formally established by an Act of Parliament, and the diploma-course “Communication Arts and Papua New Guinea Studies” was introduced.

## 2. Context of the Experience

PNG has been exposed relatively late to European influence. Members of the “first contact generation” in some parts of PNG are still alive. Contact and cultural exchange between the societies and communities within PNG, or even between neighbouring villages, was scarce even before European contact. The time of colonial exploitation as experienced in other parts of the world for several centuries spanned over a few decades only. Therefore the “search for a national identity” is less connected to a conflict with the former colonial powers, but more to bringing together formerly unconnected cultures and societies of PNG. For students joining a university, it is often the first time to leave their province and environment. The DWU PNG Studies Department helps to develop a sense of identity as citizens of PNG and the process of nation building. DWU helps students and future leaders to understand PNG’s unique situation, and develop Papua New Guinean solutions.

DWU saw/ sees its role also as taking the responsibility to “challenge society” and to help create an active citizenship. The PNG Studies program in earlier days was described to help students develop a deep understanding of the political, socio-economic, judicial, and religious traditions of the diverse communities of PNG, to help understand the effects of rapid exposure to the outside world, and to learn develop solutions for themselves and their communities to manage the change.

“Gender” and “HIV/AIDS” are further important aspects of the development of PNG. Currently

there are only 3 women in parliament (1 during the last term). Violence against women and girls is frequent, and girls generally have lower educational opportunities and literacy rates than boys. Addressing this is part of DWU's contribution to the development of the country.

### **3. Main Characteristics of the Experience**

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The experience helps to create “the broad intellect tapestry” necessary to enable students to think about social concerns and contribute to society and to develop a sense of identity among the students as citizens of PNG. It further seeks to understand political, socio-economic, judicial, religious traditions as well as the effects of exposure of PNG to the wider world. Moreover, solutions for the students and their communities will be developed as people with skills in demand by employers will be produced.

Besides lecture, research, and other regular university activities, the following tools and instruments have been used in order to realize the experience:

#### Community Engagement Program

The DWU program was pioneered in the PNG Studies Department and consists of two major aspects:

- Students engage in development activities around Madang or in their village/ community – as part of the official program.
- Students are encouraged to do their final research “in the community”, e.g. on socio-economic topics like “women in business” or “development assets of the urban village Krankget island”.

#### Networks and Partnerships

On the one side, many successful programs of DWU stem from cooperation with foreign organisations (e.g. Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), HORIZONT3000, Australian and other universities). On the other side, both research and community engagements make use of DWU's local network and partners especially around Madang, with a series of NGOs providing opportunities and support to students wanting to gain experience in community development.

#### Peer tutoring

Students from remote regions of PNG need special attention, and are being tutored via peer tutoring. While urban students and those of privileged secondary schools might have had exposure to computers, those coming from remote high schools might not even have had a library or access to books.

#### “Non-school leavers”

Admit those who left school years ago, worked in the civil society, and return for studies into the program where possible. This increases the level of practical experience in the student's group, as well as the link to the wider society.

#### Content of the program in “PNG Studies”

The program of the Bachelor of Arts (PNG Studies) leads students through a variety of subjects, methodology, and practical exposure. Subjects include a variety of social, economic, cultural, ethical, religious, historical and political topics as well as gender – to various degrees a mix of “Western university content” and content applied to the PNG or Pacific context. Students also learn community development and research methodologies, and apply their knowledge in their own projects. Towards the second part of the four year program also specialised “international” topics are being introduced.

#### Research of the Faculty

Much of development and cultural research in PNG has been done by overseas universities. National and international staff of the faculty researched and published to a range of development topics (e.g. gender, PNG politics), and contributed to the public debate.

### **4. Stakeholders and Partners – Roles and Responsibilities**

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Students, their communities, and employers are the main beneficiaries of the experience:

The course PNG Studies produced many key NGO-staff, also for HORIZONT3000 and its partners, and Brot für die Welt. Though, the majority of students appear to work in other areas.

The communities benefit both through student's community engagement projects, as well as through contributions of graduates later in life.

Besides the students, lecturer and development partners (NGOs and other organizations) are mainly involved in the implementation of the program. Towards the end of the studies, students work on real projects, often with organisations in and around Madang or their home province, (e.g. Bismark Ramu Group BRG, AT Projects, community organisations, VSO).

## 5. Impact of the Experience

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The major achievements of the experience can be identified as follows:

- Students get prepared for jobs in an active civil society: Former students worked with a number of NGOs (e.g. NGOPROmotion, Village Development Trust, Brot für die Welt, VSO) and partners/ programs of HORIZONT3000 (e.g. School Management Programme Bougainville, Project Sankamap)
- The number of female actors in PNG's civil society increases as the the female enrolment in the university program is significantly higher than usual in PNG.
- The experience contributes to build an active and critical civil society.

## 6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

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The main lesson learned from the experience concerns the importance of networks, as the university profits a lot from being embedded in a rich organisational environment. Many NGOs have their base in Madang: PNG headquarters of the Divine Word Missionaries (the founders of the university) (SVD); PNG headquarters of HORIZONT3000, VSO, Fred Hollows

Foundation (Hollows), Leprosy Mission (TLM); Pacific headquarters of Bread for the World (BfdW); among others; as well as successful local NGOs such as BRG, NGOPROmotion. This helps a lot in giving students the opportunity for practical exposure and applied research projects.

## 7. Challenges

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The main challenge encountered in carrying out the practice is, that there were many students who cannot read or analyse longer texts, possibly because of lacking preparation in school. Other students have to leave university because of financial/ school fee problems.

## 8. Experience Sharing/ Up-scaling

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The experience could be interesting for universities of the South, in particular those that (also) serve an indigenous community, as well as universities that wish to support the building of an active civil society.

In order to be able to replicate the experience and also to guarantee its institutional, social and economical sustainability, some conditions should to be guaranteed such as:

- A university structure that offers a variety of courses and has access to qualified (national and international) lecturers in order to be able to provide lectures in the variety of topics covered by a program like "PNG Studies";
- A reliable funding base;
- An environment of organisations outside the university that allows students to do their projects;
- Sufficient political freedom that allows universities to approach critical societal topics and and students to engage in civil society.

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