Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
OVERCOMING THE INEQUITY OF ISOLATION: SMALL GRANTS AND GUIDED SELF-MOBILISATION FOR MICROENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Shona Jennings
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ABSTRACT

Stimulation of an informal sector is seen as a key strategy for poverty alleviation in many parts of the developing world, including Papua New Guinea. The stimulation of microenterprises within this sector aims at enabling the poor towards 'self-help'. The two pillars on which microenterprise stands are empowerment and finance, yet very isolated communities, such as those in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea, often lack access to such enabling forces. In the absence of other financial opportunities, they sometimes apply to donor agencies for small grant funding as a means of accessing seed capital. Yet they are hampered in their efforts by low literacy, poorly developed infrastructure, the absence of organisations supporting microenterprise development, aid agency criteria, and isolation.

Using Papua New Guinea as the field of reference, this paper initially looks at aid and microenterprise development, using literature to develop best practice understandings. These best practice understandings, which concentrate on issues to do with sustainability, appropriateness, viability and empowerment, accompany three tiers of knowledge (formal, common and perceptive) to form a framework. This framework helps assessors deliberate upon key topics in a way that incorporates praxis when making decisions concerning funding.

I then propose a workbook-style application form, that: 1) feeds appropriate information from the community back to the funder for use in the framework; 2) can be completed by people with very low literacy; and 3) leads a community through participatory exercises at both the village and household/clan levels, enabling them to analyse, plan and act in the ways they choose to and value.
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There is no way I could have completed this thesis without the support of the Wharekura and Bryant families, Neville Jennings and Margaret Lipscombe. Annie and I are indebted to you.

Finally, my thoughts and thanks go to the villagers living on the Sepik River and its tributaries, and especially Elsie, the old woman on page one of this thesis, who issues the call to action.
Enough shovels of earth – a mountain
Enough pails of water – a river
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>v</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF BOXES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PLATES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### PART ONE

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   1.1 Background and aims                           1
   1.2 Thesis Structure
      1.2.1 Overview                                   8
      1.2.2 Part Two                                  8
      1.2.3 Part Three                                10
   1.3 Summary                                      11

2. **RESEARCH OVERVIEW**
   2.1 Introduction                       13
   2.2 Methodology
      2.2.1 Background                              14
      2.2.2 In-the-field research                   14
      2.2.3 Semi-structured interviews              21
      2.2.4 Participant observation                 21
      2.2.5 Historical academic research            23
      2.2.6 Literature reviews                      24
      2.2.7 Donor research                          25
      2.2.8 Application form review: issues covered  25
      2.2.9 Application form review: usability      28
      2.2.10 Focus group                             28
      2.2.11 Workshop attendance                    29
      2.2.12 Conference paper presentation           30
      2.2.13 Personal experiences                   30
   2.3 Research limitations                     31
   2.4 Summary                                   32
# PART TWO

## III AID IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND THE RURAL DILEMMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Understanding aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Aid: An historical overview</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Donor motivations for giving aid</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3</td>
<td>Aid as dependency generator</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4</td>
<td>The humanitarian objective of aid</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5</td>
<td>New concerns</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Aid in Papua New Guinea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>Setting the context for aid in Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2</td>
<td>Aid providers in Papua New Guinea – bilateral funders</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3</td>
<td>Aid providers in Papua New Guinea – multilateral funders</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.4</td>
<td>The civil sector</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.5</td>
<td>Identifying a development strategy</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Small scale enterprises in rural communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>Small-scale enterprises for self-reliance</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>The definition of 'microenterprise'</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3</td>
<td>Current support for the informal sector and microenterprise</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.4</td>
<td>National-level planning to assist the informal sector</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.5</td>
<td>Support follow-through</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.6</td>
<td>Delivery restrictions</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.7</td>
<td>The lack of support for enterprise development</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## IV EMPOWERMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Empowerment as an enabling force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Defining empowerment</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Power and empowerment</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Transformative empowerment</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Empowering whom?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Dimensions of empowerment</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The role of the aid agency in empowering communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>The importance of ‘focus’</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4</td>
<td>Empowerment from a remove</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# V THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

5.1 Introduction 92
5.2 Searching for finance in rural Papua New Guinea 95
5.2.1 Options for finance for microenterprise development 95
5.3 Bank and savings and loans schemes 97
5.3.1 Government Services 97
5.4 Microfinance
5.4.1 Description 98
5.4.2 Outreach 99
5.4.3 Rice vs. Root Crop Economies 101
5.4.4 Distorted perceptions and politics 103
5.4.5 Fungibility 105
5.5 Contestable grants
5.5.1 Types of grants 105
5.5.2 Risks and criteria 109
5.5.3 Criticisms of grants 111
5.6 Expectations 115
5.7 Summary 118

# VI SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction 120
6.2 ‘Defining’ sustainable development
6.2.1 Typologies of sustainable development 121
6.3 Sustainable livelihoods 125
6.4 The structure of sustainable development 130
6.5 Summary 131

# VII VIABLE AND APPROPRIATE

7.1 Introduction 133
7.2 The shape of microenterprises
7.2.1 The enterprise unit 134
7.2.2 Types of microenterprise opportunities 137
7.3 Defining the market 144
7.4 Determining viability
7.4.1 Introduction 144
7.4.2 SWOT analyses 145
7.5 The four ‘C’ concept
7.5.1 Description of the Four C qualities 145
7.5.2 Concepts 147
7.5.3 Competence 148
7.5.4 Connections 149
7.5.5 Capability 150
7.6 The viability matrix 153
7.7 Economic analysis 153
7.8 Appropriateness
7.8.1 Introduction
7.8.2 The symbolic
7.8.3 The societal
7.8.4 The Technological
7.9 Summary

SUMMARY, PART TWO

PART THREE

VIII THE SAVE FRAMEWORK
8.1 Introduction
8.2 The application form
8.2.1 Aim of the application forms
8.2.2 Application forms by process
8.2.3 Application forms by content
8.3 Review of application forms from funding agencies
8.3.1 Explanation of the categories
8.3.2 Consistencies
8.3.3 Women’s involvement
8.3.4 Capacity
8.3.5 Sustainability
8.3.6 Government support
8.3.7 Community earnings
8.3.8 Land and resource access and control
8.3.9 Power and control
8.3.10 Participation
8.3.11 General assessment
8.4 Application form angst
8.4.1 Literacy and language barriers
8.4.2 External ring-ins
8.4.3 Western-system intimidation
8.4.4 Cost
8.4.5 Expectations
8.4.6 Presentation
8.5 The starting point for change
8.5.1 Clarification of intent
8.5.2 Being conscious
8.5.3 Knowledge
8.6 Vertical parameters of the knowledge framework
8.6.1 Formal knowledge
8.6.2 Common knowledge
8.6.4 Perceptive knowledge
8.7 The vertical axis of the knowledge framework
8.8 Summary
IX  THE BUK SAVE

9.1  Introduction  192
9.2  Determining the medium  193
9.2.1  Focus group research  197
9.2.2  Participatory communication  197
9.2.3  Recommendations concerning the medium  201
9.3  Participant Identification  202
9.3.1  Participant structure  204
9.3.2  Participant constraints  204
9.3.3  Recommendations concerning participants  206
9.4  The Buk SAVE: a double agenda  207
9.4.1  Assessment agenda  208
9.4.2  Empowerment Agenda  209
9.4.2  Practicalities of the Buk SAVE  209
9.5  Additional Buk SAVE recommendations  212
9.6  Summary  212

X. CONCLUSION  213
XI  RECOMMENDATIONS  216

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES  220

APPENDICES
Appendix A: ‘Plotted’ content of application forms from ten small grant funders
Appendix B: Papua New Guinea funding agency matrix
Appendix C: Application form review: content grid
Appendix D: Focus group synopsis
Appendix E: Village improvement plan
Appendix F: Description of the Lik Lik Dinau microfinance scheme
Appendix G: The Honey Bee Network
Appendix H: Example of the SAVE framework in use
Appendix I: Examples of potential ideas for Buk SAVE content
Appendix J: A ‘village in trouble’.
Appendix K: Other ideas for the Buk SAVE
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Thesis flow diagram 9
Figure 2.1 Thesis methodology flow-diagram 13
Figure 2.2 Locations maps 15
Figure 3.1 The conventional project cycle 63
Figure 4.1 Forms of empowerment 78
Figure 4.2 Empowering networks 78
Figure 4.3 An empowering structure for rural villages in Papua New Guinea 81
Figure 5.1 Link between financial needs of rural communities and the assessment framework devised in this thesis 94
Figure 5.2 Cycle of opportunity / cycle of poverty and despair 96
Figure 5.2 Community Development Scheme, Papua New Guinea: Structure 107
Figure 6.1a: Weak sustainability 126
6.1b: Strong sustainability 126
Figure 6.2 Components and flows in a livelihood 129
Figure 7.1 Enterprise opportunity framework 143
Figure 9.1 The Concept Fan 195
Figure 9.2 Participants involved in each of the four parts of the Buk SAVE 203
Figure 10 Restrictions of the isolated poor vs restrictions of aid agencies 213

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Total aid flows to Papua New Guinea in 2000 - bilateral 44
Table 3.2 Total aid flows to Papua New Guinea in 2000 - multilateral 46
Table 3.3 NGO Accountability Chains 50
Table 3.4 Community priorities for poverty reduction programmes: ADB findings 51
Table 4.1: Framework for contemplating empowerment 72
Table 4.2 How people participate in development projects 87
Table 5.1 Summary: Differences between rice and root-crop economies 102
Table 5.2 Possibilities and pitfalls of proposed 'microgrants' at the family level 114
Table 6.1 Organising of concepts of sustainable development into typologies 123
Table 6.2 A sample of the spectrum of views on sustainable development 127
Table 7.1 Microenterprise ideas for isolated rural communities in Papua New Guinea 137
Table 7.2 Viability matrix 154
Table 7.3 Information required for financial assessment 155
Table 8.1 The SAVE Framework - empty grid 184
Table 8.2: Individualist and Collectivist Values 187
Table 8.3 The SAVE knowledge framework - full grid 189
Table 9.1 Conventional development communication versus participatory communication 198
Table 9.2 Communication media for development support 200
LIST OF BOXES

Box 1.1  United Nations Millennium Development Goals  3
Box 1.2  Speculating the influence of Chambers' 'six biases of rural poverty' on the determination of aid assistance for isolated communities  5
Box 3.1:  Definitions of bilateral and multilateral foreign aid  36
Box 3.2  Description of the Civil Society Sector: NGOs and CSOs  48
Box 5.1  VASS Criteria for Funding  110
Box 5.2  Case study: expectations, rationalities and grant funding – a WWF example  116
Box 7.1  Establishing viable harvesting regimes for non-timber forest products – a case study from the Sepik Community Land Care Project area  140

LIST OF PLATES

Plates 1-4  Scenes from in-the-field
Plates 5-10  Carving styles from the Sepik
Plates 11-13  Handicrafts from the Sepik
Plates 14-17  Ecotourism initiatives
Plate 18  A 'village in trouble'