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## Challenges of Establishing Evidence of Identity and Citizenship: Papua New Guinea's Experiences and Challenges

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# International Borders – Its impact on Identity and Citizenship

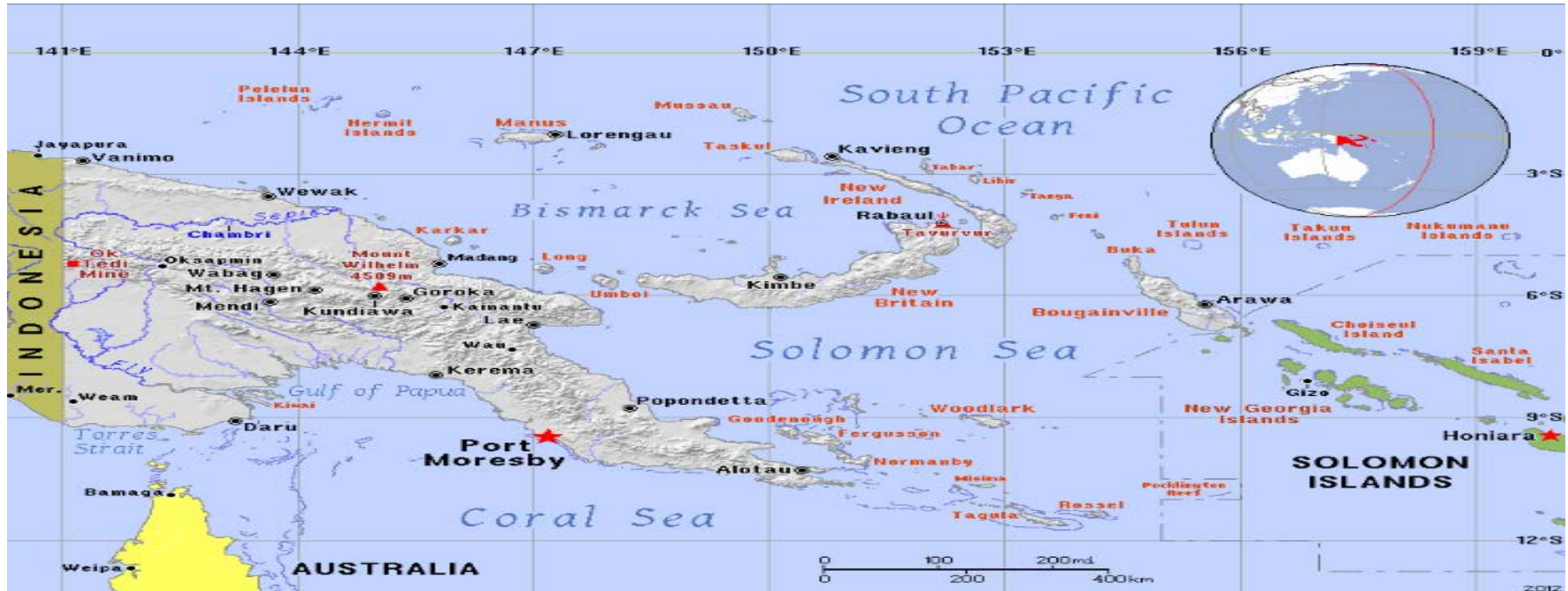
**Papua New Guinea's experiences and challenges, a Small State's *Challenges of Establishing Evidence of Identity and Citizenship* are sure to be shared by many who have similar experiences: Sharing of Common International Borders**

Papua New Guinea's cross-border areas, rivers and mountains can be natural boundary lines which cannot be divided, so this makes the ethnic groups have similar languages (with over 800 languages in PNG), culture or cultural customs.

A challenge which, as custodian of Citizenship Records and Travel Document Issuing Authority face with when trying to verify genuine citizenship identity to issue PNG travel documents



Papua New Guinea shares maritime borders with Australia and the Solomon Islands; and land border with the Republic of Indonesia.





# Experiences in Identity Management

The realities of Identity Management, including the expectations of the public as travel document customers, challenges us, the Citizenship records and travel document custodian/issuing authority, to anticipate change and to be responsive and adaptive, and at the same time, trying to establish genuine citizenship status.

The experiences may seem less of a challenge than in larger countries. Small but complex, due to our societies having its unique problems relating to ethnical and customary ties, with frequent border crossing occurrences largely due to ignorance of international boundaries, practicing traditional activities.



## Experiences cont...

- ❖ One of our main challenges is the cross border movement, largely due to practice of traditional activities (which may look more like ignorance of international boundaries).
- ❖ Strong family/customary ties and obligations (beliefs, values and commitments) which are common in the Pacific.
- ❖ Same ethnicity and languages along the borders
- ❖ Issuance of travel document to citizens across the international common border, who are PNG citizens due to their paternal or maternal blood line, customary land rights which is divided by demarcation of its land boundaries.



Traditional boundaries overlap territorial boundaries due to customary practices





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# Challenges

Challenges are inevitable:

- Identify difficulty when communities with same ethnicity and language are from the international boundary areas
- Establishing genuine citizenship identity
- Individual Risks – Citizenship/Identity Theft and Fraud
- Border security risks, terrorism and trans-border crimes (drugs, human trafficking, illegal immigration)
- Pressures to improve efficient border inspections and control
- Demand for reliable identification for illegal activities and cross-border movements
- Inability to confirm data that applicant has provided - no electronic links to other database
- Less utilisation and/or minimum assistance by country based International Organisations. Maybe due to lower level of activity in comparison.



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## Way forward

As part of the Global Village, PNG is responding to the increasing global identity challenges by registering its citizens.

We have commenced on improved birth certificates and Identity Card integrity, particularly through the use of biometrics; made better use of data, with more information being collected at an earlier stage.

In addressing identity and citizenship issues:

- Government endeavours to registering all citizens through the recently established National ID Office with issuance of improved and secured Birth Certificates





## Way forward cont...

- Remove Refugee Camps for West Papuans:
  - With the assistance of an UNHCR program, registration for cross-border persons who intend to stay in PNG ;
  - Regularisation for pathway towards citizenship;
  - Granting of Citizenship to successful applicants; and
  - Issuance of Conventional Travel Documents
- Establish presence and management of Immigration Border Posts
- Improve cross-border movement with the introduction and issuance of MRZ Traditional Border Crosser Cards (for customary obligations)
- Determine future steps that will increase inter-agency cooperation in information sharing, especially with Civil Registry and National ID Office



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## Conclusion

Establishing identity for citizenship has been challenging, especially with the inhabitants along the international borders.

PNG Government is looking forward to minimizing some of these challenges with the establishment of its presence through relevant Government Agencies and management of Immigration Border posts; and the eventual introduction and issuance of MRZ Traditional Border Crosser Cards for traditional activities.



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# THANK YOU





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