



PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

2025

On the Progress of Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals



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Published by the Department of National Planning and Monitoring
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

July 2025

ISBN: 978-9980-910-22-6

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AROB	Autonomous Region of Bougainville
CART	Classification and Regression Tree
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
D-index	Dissimilarity Index
DNPM	Department of National Planning and Monitoring
DSIP	District Services Improvement Program
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoPNG	Government of Papua New Guinea
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MTDP III	Medium Term Development Plan III (2018 – 2022)
MTDP IV	Medium-Term Development Plan IV (2023–2027)
NEC	National Executive Council
NRI	National Research Institute
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PGK (K)	Papua New Guinea Currency Kina
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PSIP	Provincial Services Improvement Program
SDES	Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIP	Service Improvement Program
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
StaRS	National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

Acknowledgement

The preparation of Papua New Guinea's second Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been a collaborative effort made possible through the support and cooperation of numerous organizations and individuals. We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this report.

Firstly, we sincerely thank all central government departments and agencies, provincial governments, development partners, private sector entities, research and academic institutions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), vulnerable groups, and their respective SDG VNR Focal Points for their contributions toward the development of this second 2025 VNR Report.

Secondly, our heartfelt appreciation goes to the United Nations system for their ongoing technical and financial support. Special thanks are due to the United Nations Resident Coordinators Office (UNRCO) in Port Moresby and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand, for their expert guidance in shaping this report.

The United Nations remains a crucial partner in achieving our localized SDG indicators, helping facilitate the integration of SDG indicators into our national planning frameworks. The use of the SDG Tracker to monitor Papua New Guinea's progress on the implementation of the SDGs and the Leave No One Behind analysis exemplify this collaboration's impact. This report has identified critical areas that require focused attention and presents opportunities for investment to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within the remaining five years.

We also extend our gratitude to the Papua New Guinea Permanent Mission in New York for their consistent support and strategic guidance, ensuring PNG's effective representation on the 2030 Agenda at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), including the delivery of key messages for the PNG presentation.

Fourthly, we appreciate the leadership and support provided by the Office of the Minister for National Planning & Monitoring, led by the Secretary of the National Planning & Monitoring, and the senior management team. Their guidance has been instrumental in ensuring that this report meets the standards required for presentation at the 2025 HLPF.

Finally, we acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the SDG VNR Core Group members, comprising of representatives from DNPM, DFA, PMNEC, NSO, DPLGA, UNRCO, ESCAP and the VNR Secretariat. Their diligent work was critical in finalizing this second 2025 VNR Report, ensuring alignment with the UNDESA and UNECOSOC guidelines, and successfully positioning Papua New Guinea to present at the 2025 HLPF in New York.



Foreword by the Prime Minister



It is my distinct privilege to present Papua New Guinea's Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on our progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), coinciding with a truly significant moment – the celebration of our nation's 50th Anniversary of Independence. This milestone is not only a time for reflection but also an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the aspirations of our founding fathers and to a future of sustainable and inclusive development.

As we prepare for the 2025 High-level Political Forum in July at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, this VNR serves as a vital tool for taking stock of our commitment to the 2030 Global Agenda. It enables us to strengthen and expand initiatives aimed at implementing the SDGs so that present and future generations can enjoy a quality of life that is equitable and sustainable.

Over the last five decades, Papua New Guinea has undergone substantial transformation. Our infrastructure landscape has evolved significantly, enabling greater connectivity across our diverse and challenging geography. Strategic investments through initiatives such as the Connect PNG Program have enhanced transport infrastructure such as roads, bridges, airports, and ports, strengthening our economy and linking remote communities more effectively to essential services and markets. The Connect PNG Program is a key investment that my government undertakes to connect the remotest parts of PNG, guided by the Public-Private Partnership Act and the Connect PNG Bill.

The growth in our national capacity has been remarkable, with increasing numbers of Papua New Guineans acquiring specialized skills and expertise across all sectors. Education has expanded considerably, building a knowledgeable workforce capable of driving economic and social development. However, significant efforts must continue, particularly in strengthening our education systems to ensure quality learning and inclusive opportunities from early childhood through to tertiary education. My government recognizes that education is a fundamental human right, we are committed to a policy of leaving no child behind.

Our government systems have also seen critical reforms aimed at improving governance, transparency, and efficiency at both national and sub-national levels. Institutional reforms, including decentralization initiatives and the introduction of the District and Provincial Services Improvement Programs are continuously enhancing accountability and service delivery to better meet the needs of our people. We recognize the importance of a human rights-based approach and good governance in advancing the 2030 Agenda, empowering individuals -- particularly women and girls – to improve their lives as part of a wider strategy to alleviate poverty and promote gender equality.

The strength of Papua New Guinea lies in our diversity – home to more than 800 distinct languages and cultures. Despite the complexities inherent in this diversity, we have maintained national unity and identity through a shared vision of collective prosperity. Even amidst historical and contemporary challenges, including those posed by Bougainville's autonomous journey, we remain committed to unity through dialogue, mutual respect, and the peaceful resolution of differences, embodying the spirit of national solidarity.

Our journey toward achieving the SDGs has undoubtedly encountered significant challenges, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, economic hardships, and persistent social issues such as law and order concerns. However, through resilience, innovation, and strong partnerships with international stakeholders including the IMF and World Bank, we are steadily rebuilding our economy, enhancing public services, and improving our citizens' welfare. Recognizing persistent gaps, especially in employment opportunities, sanitation, clean energy, and affordable housing, my government remains determined to intensify our efforts to ensure that development is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable for every Papua New Guinean.

Under the Medium-Term Development Plan IV (2023–2027), we have strategically integrated 94 key SDG indicators into national planning frameworks, demonstrating our steadfast commitment to a holistic and measurable approach toward sustainable development. This approach includes implementing the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda: People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnership, through various national programs my government is undertaking at all levels. Policies such as the Development Cooperation Policy, Public-Private Partnership Policy, and Civil Society Organizations and State Partnership Policy further reinforce our dedication to fostering inclusive, effective partnerships to accelerate SDG implementation.

As we commemorate 50 years of independence, we reaffirm our commitment to the transformative vision of the SDGs and our Constitution's promise of prosperity, dignity, and equality. The lessons we have learned over the past five decades have positioned us to make necessary adjustments in policy, institutional, and legislative settings for improving service delivery and promoting good governance.

With collective determination, transparency, and accountability, we look forward to an empowered future where no one is left behind – ensuring that Papua New Guinea continues to thrive as a vibrant, resilient, and united nation for generations to come. We promise to collectively seize the opportunities before us, striving to translate economic growth into improved human development outcomes, and achieve a smart, fair, and happy country by 2050, as envisaged in our Vision 2050.

Hon. James Marape, MP
Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

Statement by the Minister for National Planning



As a member of the United Nations Convention and the 2030 Agenda, the Government of Papua New Guinea, through my Ministry, plays a pivotal role in the coordination, monitoring, and reporting of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Papua New Guinea is currently experiencing unprecedented population growth rate of 4.8 per cent, placing us at a critical juncture in our economic development. Recognizing that the population must be at the center of all development efforts, my department supports the Marape-Rosso Government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as we strive to achieve Vision 2050. By integrating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) IV (2023–2027), we anticipate improving our Human Development Index (HDI) ranking from 154th place (2022) among United Nations member countries to 50th place by 2050, ultimately transforming Papua

New Guinea into a middle-income country. Sustainable Development across social, economic, and environmental dimensions, along with effective means of implementation, remains a priority and plays a significant role in shaping our subsequent policies, including MTDPs III and IV.

The MTDP IV, with its twelve Strategic Priority Areas (SPAs), aligns closely with the priorities of the 2030 Agenda and the overarching theme of national prosperity through economic growth. The Plan articulates the Government's policy intent to enhance downstream processing of our natural resources while empowering our citizens through the promotion of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. We are committed to creating an environment that attracts Foreign Direct Investment and establishes Exclusive Economic Zones. MTDP IV also emphasizes the importance of building highly skilled human capital by investing in quality education at all levels and leveraging research and technology.

The Plan clearly outlines strategic sector priorities, measurable targets, and indicators. My department serves as the overarching coordinating body, working closely with all stakeholders to ensure greater collaboration underpinned by a holistic approach to meet their respective SDG development targets. All sectors, provinces, and districts, along with international development partners, the private sector, and civil society organizations, have aligned their development plans and assistance strategies to MTDP IV. This alignment ensures that all available resources are effectively utilized to create significant development impacts that will benefit our people.

The second Voluntary National Review (VNR) process has brought together diverse stakeholders to report on the implementation of the SDGs, culminating in this second VNR. The report highlights the progress made over the past five years since our first VNR in 2020, detailing actions taken and identifying cross-cutting development challenges and investments. While notable progress has been achieved in some areas, particularly in reducing poverty, we recognize that many of the 17 SDGs remain unmet, and significant challenges persist.

I would like to commend the UN systems both domestically and internationally for their invaluable role in fostering national and regional policy dialogues and exchanges that advance our development aspirations. This includes the current theme of the 2025 High-Level Political Forum: "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind."

Hon. Sir Ano Pala, KBE, CMG, ISO, MP
Minister for National Planning and Monitoring

Remarks by the Secretary for the Department of National Planning and Monitoring



I am pleased to announce that my department has conducted extensive consultations with stakeholders and development partners to compile Papua New Guinea's Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report for 2025. This initiative is part of our preparations for the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) scheduled to take place in New York, in July 2025.

The groundwork for this second VNR process commenced in February 2024, following the approval from the President of UN ECOSOC of PNG's intention to present its second VNR at the 2025 HLPF. This review is a critical mechanism for PNG to effectively follow up on and evaluate the implementation of the SDGs since our first review in 2020. This process fosters renewed interest, commitment, and action among both government and non-government actors towards achieving the SDGs.

The 2025 VNR process employed a variety of methodologies and engaged multiple stakeholders to assess the localized SDGs integrated into the implementation of the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) IV 2023-2027. This effort was greatly supported by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) in-country and ESCAP based in Bangkok, Thailand. High participation from all levels of government and non-government entities was encouraged, promoting national ownership, transparency, and inclusiveness throughout the process.

This review serves as a pivotal opportunity to gain insights into our development progress over the past five years since our first VNR in 2020. It enables us to understand our country's development investments and identify areas where our efforts to implement localized SDG indicators in the MTDPs and other national policy frameworks may have fallen short.

Regular reviews conducted by my department are essential for the healthy development of our country, allowing us to track progress towards the established targets and indicators in the MTDPs. These reviews are instrumental in holding leaders and their bureaucrats accountable for the effective management of our limited resources in financing the SDGs and other socio-economic development.

Through our review, we have assessed whether we are on track to achieve the localized SDGs as mainstreamed in MTDP III (2018-2022) and MTDP IV (2023-2027), utilizing our national sectoral, provincial, and district plans and programs. This process also aims to identify what various actors can do to prevent future development failures, establish best practices, and help improve our third VNR in 2030.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all stakeholders and development partners for their invaluable contributions to this review. The report not only highlights critical issues and lessons learned but also serves as an important resource for us to consider in future investment strategies and policy reviews.

Koney Samuel
Secretary
Department of National Planning and Monitoring

Executive Summary

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is actively working towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrated by its commitment to delivering its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2025. This review highlights the nation's efforts to localize, mainstream, and implement the SDGs since the first VNR in 2020. The country's strategy is guided by national frameworks, including Vision 2050 and the Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) III (2018 - 2022) and IV (2023 - 2027), which outline strategic pillars and Key Result Areas (KRAs) aligned with the SDGs. However, substantial challenges remain, including data gaps, negative trends in crucial areas, and the need for enhanced partnerships and resource mobilization to accelerate progress on the SDGs.

Progress and Achievements

PNG has made significant progress in integrating the SDGs into its national policies, emphasizing economic growth and social protection. The government has increased funding for health, education, and welfare sectors from 12 per cent in 2020 to 20 per cent in 2024, reflecting a strong commitment to these priorities. The establishment of the Labour Mobility Unit aims to enhance employment opportunities, while supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and investments in infrastructure work to alleviate poverty. Additionally, the adoption of national strategies for disaster risk reduction and a rise in official development assistance contribute to poverty alleviation efforts.

To address hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (Goal 2), PNG has implemented the National Food Security Policy 2018-2027, which focuses on sustainable agricultural practices and support for smallholder farmers. The launch of the Agriculture, Food, and National Nutrition Policy Support Program in 2024, alongside strengthened collaborations with development partners, is designed to bolster food security. The country is also making progress toward conserving genetic resources for food and agriculture.

In the recent past, the Government of PNG has demonstrated improved political and financial commitment towards addressing the challenges of malnutrition in the country. The Government has been leading multisectoral coordination and championing the implementation of the National Nutrition Policy (NNP) 2016 -2026. A Child Nutrition and Social Protection (CNSP) Project in PNG received US \$90M in financing from the World Bank. This financing is a significant investment towards child nutrition. GoPNG has also increased access to nutrition by adopting relevant policies, legislation and other supportive strategies. This upstream work is contributing towards addressing the high levels of malnutrition in the country characterised by about half (Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/2010) of children under five years being stunted.

To achieve healthy lives and to promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal 3), significant advancements in health and well-being

have been achieved through the National Health Plan (2021-2030), which prioritizes primary health care and universal health coverage. Notable improvements include maternal and child health, combating communicable diseases, developing decentralized health systems, and introducing digital health surveillance. There have been reductions in harmful alcohol consumption, adolescent pregnancies, and unintentional poisoning, along with a reduction in maternal and child mortality rates.

To achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4), there has been a rise in net enrollment in primary education and improvements in adult literacy. The implementation of a Standards-Based Curriculum and the expansion of the Flexible Open and Distance Education program, coupled with strong public-private partnerships in education delivery, have facilitated this progress.

To achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls (Goal 5), PNG has taken steps to strengthen policy frameworks that address gender-based barriers and promote women's empowerment. The rollout of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy across public agencies, along with the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence, represents positive progress, even as there is some evidence of regression in women's representation in parliament.

To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal 6), significant progress has been made in clean water and sanitation, with enhanced access for both rural and urban populations. The introduction of District Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) Plans aimed at improving water and sanitation services, along with the formal recognition of WaSH as a fundamental human right in national policy, are important milestones.

To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (Goal 7), renewable energy development is prioritized within national policies, supported by ambitious targets in the PNG National Energy Policy 2017 - 2027 for electricity access. Collaborative efforts with development partners are focused on bolstering energy infrastructure. There has also been an emphasis on building economic resilience and expanding financial services, leading to increased access to banking services in rural areas. A reduction in the number of youths not engaged in education, employment, or training, alongside a decline in the overall unemployment rate, has also been recorded.

There is progress in building resilient infrastructure, innovation and industry (Goal 9) through the implementation of the Connect PNG Infrastructure initiative which aims to improve connectivity throughout the country, while investments in research and innovation seek to address various socio-economic challenges. Advancements have also been made in university infrastructure projects designed to enhance educational quality, backed by increased international support for infrastructure improvements.

Persistent Challenges

Despite these achievements, PNG continues to face significant challenges in achieving the SDGs. Data gaps hinder the ability to assess progress across numerous goals, particularly Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10), Life Below Water (Goal 14), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16). Consequently, only 87 out of 169 targets can currently be measured. Negative trends persist in critical areas, including Climate Action (Goal 13), Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11), Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17), and Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8), signaling an urgent need for corrective action. Additionally, stagnant progress is evident in access to education (SDG 4), gender equality (Goal 5), and clean energy (Goal 7), underscoring a lack of effective strategies or resources to drive change.

PNG faces significant environmental challenges, including rising greenhouse gas emissions (Goal 13) and ecosystem degradation (Goal 15), which threaten sustainable development. High rates of malnutrition (Goal 2), stagnant social protection coverage (Goal 1), and increasing violence and crime rates (Goal 16) reflect ongoing social issues. While there has been some progress in infrastructure development (Goal 9), challenges persist in diversifying resource mobilization and ensuring debt sustainability (Goal 17).

PNG is grappling with multidimensional poverty, particularly in rural areas where access to essential services such as education and healthcare is limited. Financial constraints and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate these challenges. Food insecurity and malnutrition remain prevalent, compounded by difficulties in agricultural productivity and access to nutritious food. Systemic health issues include high maternal mortality rates, insufficient access to healthcare services, and a dual burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases, with rural health facilities often lacking essential resources.

Although access to education has improved, significant disparities persist, especially for children with disabilities and those living in remote areas. The quality of education and early childhood services still requires enhancement. Gender-based violence and economic inequality are widespread, with women underrepresented in leadership and formal employment, while cultural norms continue to impede progress toward gender equality. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation services remains low, particularly in rural areas, where institutional gaps and inadequate infrastructure hinder progress in WaSH services. Reliable and sustainable energy access is limited, especially in rural areas, highlighting the need for investment in renewable energy sources to address infrastructure challenges. High levels of informal employment and youth unemployment, coupled with gender disparities in the workforce, require economic resilience to support inclusive growth.

Infrastructure development is crucial but faces obstacles related to governance and resource allocation. Investment in research and innovation is essential for achieving sustainable industrialization. Income inequality and unequal access to opportunities are significant challenges, exacerbated by slow economic growth and a reliance on extractive industries. Urbanization has caused issues related to

housing, waste management, and service delivery, with affordable housing remaining a critical concern. Strategies to promote sustainable consumption and production, particularly in waste management and resource efficiency, are urgently needed.

PNG is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, necessitating urgent action and effective policies to mitigate environmental risks. Marine resource management is vital for livelihoods, yet unsustainable practices threaten biodiversity and coastal communities. Biodiversity loss and habitat destruction are pressing issues, compounded by inadequate funding and management of protected areas. Corruption continues to be a significant barrier to development, undermining trust in public institutions and hindering effective governance.

Attention to Vulnerable Groups

Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, including women and girls, children, internally displaced persons (IDPs), people living with disabilities, those living with HIV/AIDS, and youth. Women and girls face socio-economic barriers such as limited access to land, financial services, and education. Children encounter critical challenges in food security and education, particularly in rural areas, exacerbated by child labor and health issues. IDPs experience loss of homes and access to services, leading to psychological distress and food insecurity. People with disabilities often face systemic exclusion from employment and education due to insufficient policy support and social stigma. The situation for individuals living with HIV/AIDS remains urgent, highlighting the need for a comprehensive response, while young people experience high dropout rates and limited vocational training, necessitating a more job-oriented education system.

Individuals with disabilities in PNG face systemic exclusion from employment, education, and essential services, compounded by limited accessibility in public spaces. Addressing these issues requires the promotion of inclusive education, increased employment opportunities, and the implementation of disability-friendly infrastructure and policies.

SDG Acceleration Pathways

The acceleration pathways for PNG to achieve the SDGs are defined by several key targets that address critical national issues. These pathways leverage interlinkages between different SDGs to create comprehensive policy choices aimed at fostering sustainable development. Key policies and programs include the National Population Policy (2015 – 2024), National Nutrition Policy (2016-2026), the National Food Security Action Plan (2018-2022), the National Education Plan (2020-2029), initiatives to sustain per capita economic growth, and policies aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and girls. The government also plans to enhance the recruitment and training of police officers, correctional services personnel, rehabilitation and reintegration staff, and court officials, while improving infrastructure and building capacity across all law and justice sector agencies. To achieve higher standards of good governance, the government will promote Open Government Partnership initiatives and strengthen the role of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Next Steps and Way forward

Chapter 7 outlines the Means of Implementation to achieve the SDGs across various sectors by 2030. Key initiatives include integrating infrastructure and nutrition sensitive social protection into district planning, enhancing data collection and monitoring systems, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure inclusive policy design and implementation. The government aims to strengthen national policies related to food security, health, education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability while promoting community ownership of projects. Investments in renewable energy, skills development, and infrastructure will be prioritized to support economic growth and resilience. Additionally, local engagement and collaboration with development partners will be emphasized to address challenges and ensure equitable access to services for all citizens.

Recommendations include enhancing access to services, expanding women’s rights and opportunities, and addressing the needs of each vulnerable group in alignment with the SDGs. For displaced persons, recommendations include providing adequate housing, healthcare, education, and other essential services; implementing culturally sensitive psychosocial support programs; and ensuring their participation in decision-making processes. For people with disabilities, promoting inclusive education, increasing employment opportunities, and developing disability-friendly infrastructure and policies will be essential.

To achieve higher standards of good governance, the government will continue to promote Open Government Partnership initiatives and strengthen the role of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Investing in quality, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure is also crucial for supporting economic development and addressing infrastructure deficits to improve access to services and markets.

By integrating infrastructure and social protection into sub-national and district planning, establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships for policy design and implementation, implementing real-time tracking systems for data collection and monitoring, and empowering local communities, PNG can work towards the long-term sustainability of infrastructure projects and social protection initiatives. Other critical steps include incorporating food and nutrition security into annual budgets and strategies, mobilizing investments in accordance with national policies, enhancing data collection and monitoring, expanding partnerships, adapting strategies for sub-national needs, and empowering local communities.

Papua New Guinea has shown a strong commitment to achieving the SDGs, and there has been notable progress in multiple sectors. However, significant challenges persist, including data gaps, negative trends in critical areas, and the need for stronger partnerships and resource mobilization. By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted strategies, PNG can accelerate progress towards a more sustainable and equitable future for all its citizens.



1. Introduction

1.1 Background: SDG localisation, integration and implementation

In September 2015, Papua New Guinea (PNG) – as one of the 193 Member States of the United Nations – committed itself to the transformative 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since then the country has demonstrated its commitment towards the localization, integration, and implementation of the SDGs across the national development frameworks. This commitment is aligned with the government's efforts to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability and social concerns.

Even before the global adoption of the SDGs, PNG laid important groundwork through the National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development (StaRS) in 2014. The StaRS was a visionary policy is aimed at recalibrating PNG's development philosophy, advocating for a paradigm shift away from unsustainable, Western-style economic models driven by capitalist and consumerist ideologies. This approach is rooted in our traditional wisdom and ecological harmony. These values provided a culturally relevant foundation for welcoming the SDGs.

Following the global endorsement of the 2030 Agenda, PNG undertook rigorous national consultations and reviews to localize the SDGs. This process included identifying the most relevant global targets and indicators and adapting them to PNG's unique socio-cultural and economic development contexts. This process ensured that the SDG framework would be more than a symbolic commitment, instead becoming a practical development blueprint across all sectors of society.

To ensure policy coherence, the localized SDG indicators were incorporated into the then MTDP III 2018–2022. This plan became a central vehicle for implementing the SDGs, embedding 46 key indicators that were used to guide priorities. The MTDP established clear linkages between national priorities and global commitments, acting as a reference point for sectoral and provincial development efforts.

The current version, MTDP IV 2023–2027, builds upon the progress of its predecessor by integrating an even broader scope of 94 SDG indicators. This reflects the growing institutional capacity and political will to deepen the implementation of the SDGs in a more inclusive, structured, and results-oriented manner. The expansion indicates a refinement in PNG's ability to track and manage the complexity of sustainable development objectives.

A key institutional reform supporting this process is the enactment of the National Planning Monitoring and Responsibility Act 2016. This legislation ensures that the capital investment component of the Annual National Budgets is directly linked to the objectives of the MTDP. It also synchronizes the national planning cycle with the government's/political cycle, fostering policy continuity and better implementation outcomes. This legal framework enhances strategic alignment across planning and budgeting processes.

Both the MTDP III and IV are anchored in PNG's long-term strategic frameworks, including the Development Strategic Plan (DSP)

2010–2030 and the Vision 2050. These overarching plans provide the directional thrust for PNG's national development trajectory and ensure that medium-term interventions contribute towards long-term societal transformation. The strategic alignment reinforces the SDGs as an intrinsic part of national progress.

Effective implementation of the SDGs in PNG requires coordinated action across different levels of government and sectors. Through the decentralization of planning, monitoring, and evaluation, the MTDP IV ensures that provincial and district administrations are actively engaged. The Act makes it mandatory for subnational governments (provincial and district administrations) to have relevant development plans aligned to the MTDP. This approach enhances ownership, local relevance, and responsiveness to regional disparities, thereby strengthening the national SDG effort.

To monitor progress, PNG has institutionalized the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Service Delivery Framework and Annual Budget Framework Paper in line with the Planning Act. This allows for systematic tracking of SDG implementation, the identification of performance gaps, and informing of policy adjustments. The establishment of baselines and periodic reporting is helping PNG meet its commitments under the global SDG review mechanisms, including VNRs.

Papua New Guinea's journey toward sustainable development is characterized by a blend of cultural resilience, institutional reforms, and strategic planning. By grounding global agendas within traditional knowledge systems and aligning them with national frameworks, PNG is both fulfilling its international obligations and crafting a sustainable path forward for the benefit of future generations. The continued evolution of development planning through the SDGs remains central to PNG's broader vision for equitable and environmentally sound progress.

1.2 Development Context in Papua New Guinea

Over the past five years, PNG has navigated a complex development landscape shaped by its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its preparation to celebrate 50 years of independence in 2025. The pandemic exposed major vulnerabilities in the country's health, education and economic systems, but it also prompted a shift toward more resilient and inclusive development strategies. Key investments have since been made in public health, education access, and small business support, laying the foundation for long-term recovery and growth.

PNG's political landscape has undergone significant transition. The loss of several of the country's founding leaders, including Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare (founding Prime Minister), Grand Chief Sir Julius Chan (second Prime Minister), and other former Prime Ministers Sir Mekere Morauta, and Sir Rabbie Namaliu, marked the end of a foundational era. Their passing has prompted a national reflection on leadership, identity, and the unfinished work of nation-building.

In 2022, the general election resulted in the re-election of the Pangu Party-led government, signaling continuity. However, over the past few years, there have been repeated attempts to vote-of-no-

confidence that have generated uncertainty. The government finally secured its position in April 2025 which is expected to bring much-needed stability through to the next general election cycle in 2027.

While PNG is showing signs of economic recovery, the country continues to face structural challenges. High inflation, combined with fiscal tightening and austerity measures inflicted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has dampened economic confidence and strained household budgets, particularly in rural and remote areas where access to formal employment and markets remains limited. Fuel shortages and supply chain disruptions have at times constrained productivity, while intermittent law and order breakdowns, often fuelled by youth unemployment, domestic grievances, and weak service delivery have disrupted progress in several provinces.

Despite these issues, the government is committed to advancing its core development agenda. The Connect PNG initiative is a flagship program aimed at enhancing national connectivity through major road, sea, and air transport infrastructure, helping to connect isolated areas and improve market access for rural communities. At the same time, investments in healthcare, education, and the agriculture sector are being prioritized to improve human capital and food security. The government is also pushing reforms and expansion in the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector, alongside a more strategic and assertive approach in the minerals and resources industry to boost the domestic value chain.

In the face of economic pressure, the government's focus has shifted toward building long-term resilience rather than short-term relief. This includes strengthening institutions, improving public financial management, and ensuring that public investments are better aligned with national priorities. While the challenges are significant, there is also growing recognition that inclusive growth, access to infrastructure, and better resource governance will be central to transforming PNG's development trajectory.

Corruption remains a major barrier to development in PNG, diverting public resources away from essential services and undermining trust in government institutions. The recent establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) is a long-overdue step forward in strengthening the country's anti-corruption framework. For ICAC to be effective, it has to be fully resourced, operationally independent, and protected from political interference. Its success also depends on its ability to work in close coordination with other accountability bodies such as the Ombudsman Commission, the Office of the Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee, and law enforcement agencies and the Judiciary. While these institutions play a vital role in promoting transparency and good governance, they often face capacity and funding challenges, particularly at the subnational level. PNG continues to rank poorly on global corruption indices, reflecting the deep-rooted and systemic nature of the problem, including weak enforcement mechanisms, opaque procurement processes, and the weakening of Public Finance Management Act. Tackling corruption will require not only strong institutions and legal tools but also political will, public sector reform, and sustained citizen engagement. Partnerships approach such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP), are essential in driving transparency, accountability, and reforms that can rebuild public confidence and trust in ensuring development funds are used effectively.

PNG has made major strides in resource nationalism. The government has taken decisive steps to renegotiate better terms in key extractive resource projects. Notably, it now holds 100 per cent ownership of the Ok Tedi Mine and 51 per cent state equity in the new Porgera Gold Mine with other mines in the negotiation stages. This signals a more assertive stance in ensuring that resource and wealth translates into national development outcomes.

On the regional and international stage, PNG is taking a more proactive role amid growing geopolitical tensions in the Pacific. It has positioned itself as a key strategic development partner, deepening ties with major bilateral partners and multilateral development partners. This approach reflects a careful balancing act between economic opportunity and sovereign interest, as the country seeks infrastructure investment, trade cooperation, and defense partnerships that align with its national priorities.

PNG is at a critical juncture ahead of its 50th independence anniversary in September 2025. While the road ahead is marked by persistent socio-economic challenges, there are clear signs the country has learned from its past and is resetting its development trajectory based on its political maturity, economic ambition, and regional leadership. The next phase of development will depend on the country's ability to consolidate stability, expand equitable growth, and ensure that the gains from its natural resources and international engagement benefit all of its people.

1.3 COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the healthcare system in PNG, as well as its economy and social structures. With limited healthcare infrastructure, the country faced challenges in testing, treatment, and vaccination. Health facilities were overwhelmed, and the delivery of essential services, including maternal and child health, were disrupted. The pandemic exposed gaps in the health sector and highlighted the urgent need for investment in primary healthcare, health workforce capacity, and public health preparedness.

Economically, COVID-19 triggered a sharp downturn. Border closures, restrictions on movement, and global supply chain disruptions affected key sectors such as agriculture, mining, and small-scale trade. Many Papua New Guineans working in the informal economy lost their income sources, pushing more households into poverty. The government's revenue also declined, limiting its budget for essential services and infrastructure investment during a time of heightened need.

In response, the Government rolled out a series of emergency and recovery measures. These included economic stimulus packages, support for small and medium enterprises, and targeted assistance to the most vulnerable. Public health campaigns were launched to improve awareness and promote vaccination uptake, while international partners provided technical and financial support to strengthen the national COVID-19 responses. The government also prioritized continuity of education through alternative learning platforms.

The country's efforts are now focused on rebuilding a more resilient and inclusive economy. Investments in digital infrastructure, local

food systems, and social protection are being scaled up to mitigate future shocks. The government has also committed to strengthening health systems and improving data collection to better respond to emergencies. While the pandemic set back development progress, it also created momentum for reforms that could support long-term resilience and more inclusive growth.

1.4 Summary of SDGs Achievements, Progress and Challenges

The following gives a summary of achievements of each of the SDGs since the first VNR in 2020.

Goal 1: No Poverty

- Integration into national policies, focusing on economic growth and social protection;
- Increased funding for health, education, and welfare sectors from 12 cent in 2020 to 20 per cent in 2024;
- Establishment of the Labour Mobility Unit to enhance employment opportunities;
- Support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and infrastructure investments to reduce poverty;
- Adoption of national disaster risk-reduction strategies and increased official development assistance for poverty reduction.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

- Implementation of the National Food Security Policy (2018 – 2025) and the National Nutrition Policy (2016-2026);
- Focus on sustainable agricultural practices and support for smallholder farmers;
- Launch of the Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition Policy Support Program in 2024;
- Strengthened collaborations with development partners to enhance food security
- PNG is on track for the conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture, with increased official flows towards agriculture.

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

- Implementation of the National Health Plan 2021–2030, prioritizing primary health care and universal health coverage;
- Improvements in maternal and child health and combatting communicable diseases;
- Development of decentralized health systems and digital surveillance;
- Progress in reducing harmful alcohol use, adolescent births, and unintentional poisoning, along with improvements in maternal and child mortality rates.

Goal 4: Quality Education

- Increased net enrollment in primary education and improved adult literacy;
- Implementation of the Standards-Based Curriculum and expansion of the Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) program;
- Strong public-private partnerships in education delivery;
- Progress in formal and non-formal education and the reduction of inequalities in education.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

- Strengthened policy frameworks addressing gender-based barriers and promoting women's empowerment;
- Implementation of the GESI Policy across public agencies and the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence 2016-2025;
- Continued advocacy for women's political participation despite challenges.

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

- Significant advancements in several indicators related to clean water and sanitation;
- Incremental progress in water access for both rural and urban areas;
- Launch of District WaSH Plans to improve water and sanitation services;
- Recognition of WaSH as a fundamental human right in national policy.

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

- Prioritization of renewable energy development in national policies;
- Ambitious targets set in the National Energy Policy 2017-2027 for electricity access;
- Partnerships with development partners to enhance energy infrastructure.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- Launch of targeted technical and vocational education and training programs and improvements in market infrastructure;
- Increased access to banking services in rural regions;
- Focus on building economic resilience and expanding financial services;
- Reduction in youth not in education, employment, or training and a decrease in the unemployment rate.

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

- Implementation of the Connect PNG Infrastructure initiative to enhance connectivity;
- Investment in research and innovation to address socio-economic issues;
- Development of university infrastructure to improve education quality;
- Improvement in official international support for infrastructure and increased mobile network coverage to 70 per cent of the population.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

- Set up programs aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering vulnerable groups;
- Collaboration with development partners to address income inequality and promote inclusion.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- Investment in urban development projects to enhance service delivery and housing;
- Establishment of a specific office to manage customary land for urban development;
- Formulation of the PNG National Housing Policy 2023-2033 and the review of the NHC Act 1990.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

- Development of strategies for sustainable consumption and production;
- Implementation of policies to promote responsible and sustainable development.

Goal 13: Climate Action

- Implementation of policies to combat climate change and its impacts;
- Commitment to achieving 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030;

Goal 14: Life Below Water

- Integration of SDG 14 indicators into national policies for marine conservation;
- Initiatives to promote sustainable use of marine resources and protect biodiversity.
- Signing of Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement at the UNCO3 as a show of great commitment by PNG.

Goal 15: Life on Land

- Emphasis on sustainable forest management and collaboration with development partners;
- Recognition of the need for protected areas to conserve biodiversity;
- Notable progress in the mountain green cover index, policies for invasive species prevention, and biodiversity assistance.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- Improvements in public sector management and judiciary system;
- Establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

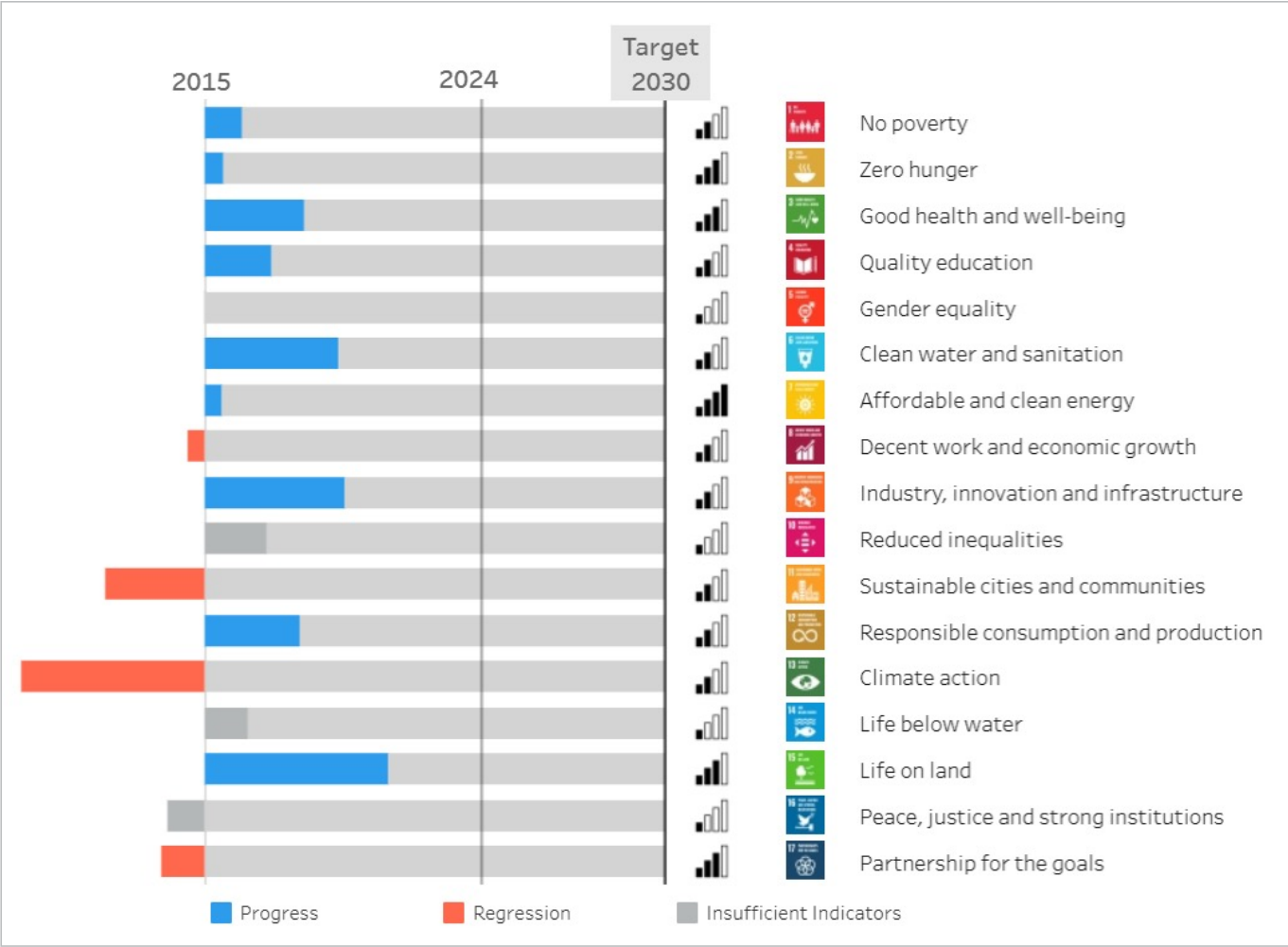
Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Increased personal remittances and multistakeholder development effectiveness in support of the SDGs.

¹ <https://data.unescap.org/resources/progress-assessment-methodology>

1.5 Overview of Progress

Figure 1. Snapshot of Progress developed with ESCAP Methodology

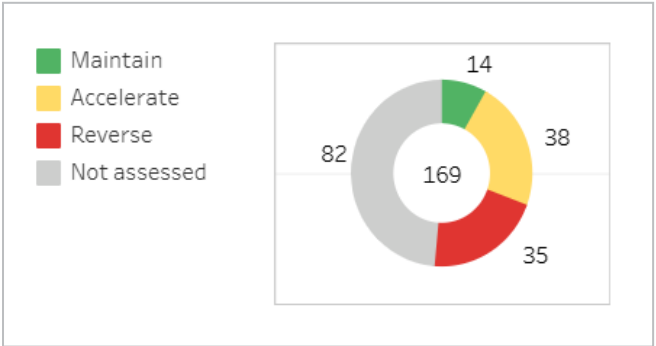


The snapshot of progress for PNG was developed by applying the ESCAP methodology¹ and utilizing all available data for relevant SDG indicators complemented by national proxy indicators (Appendix I). The results show a mixed picture of progress and areas for acceleration.

Although the country is not on track to fully achieve any of the 17 goals, notable progress has been made in Life on Land (Goal 15), followed by Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (Goal 9), and Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6). Negative trends are seen with three goals: Climate Action (Goal 13), Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11), Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17), and Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8). On other goals, when sufficient data is available, we can see that progress is too slow or stagnant. To achieve sustainable development, Papua New Guinea needs to reverse these negative trends and intensify efforts to accelerate progress on stagnant goals.

Timely and quality data is essential for the successful implementation of the SDGs in Papua New Guinea. Progress on four out of 17 goals cannot be assessed reliably due to insufficient indicators with available data: Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10), Life Below Water (Goal 14), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16). Out of the 169 targets, only 87 could be measured due to data gaps and lack of reasonable target values. On the current trajectory, 16 per cent (14 targets) of the measured targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, while 44 per cent (38 targets) need acceleration and 40 per cent (35 targets) must have the trends reversed. Detailed results by target are found in Appendix II (reference to the annex with the Dashboard of progress).

Figure 2. Current Trajectory of 169 targets measured



1.6 SDG Acceleration Pathways

The acceleration pathways for PNG towards achieving the SDGs are outlined through several key targets that focus on addressing critical issues affecting the nation. These pathways leverage interlinkages between different SDGs to create comprehensive policy choices aimed at fostering sustainable development. The identified acceleration pathways focus on Target 2.2, Target 4.1, Target 5.1, Target 8.1, Target 9.1, Target 16.3, and Target 16.6.

Key policies and programmes include:

- The National Nutrition Policy and National Food Security Action Plan aims to promote the production of staple foods, livestock breeding, inland aquaculture, and apiculture programs with nutritional values;
- The National Education Policy 2020-2029 focuses on increasing literacy rates and vocational skills and equitable access to education, especially for women and rural populations. The government also aims to increase the national literacy rate and equip the population with professional, technical, and vocational skills;
- Policies to sustain per capita economic growth include diversification into new sectors, business climate policies, and better-calibrated demand-side policies;
- The government will increase recruitment and training of police officers, correctional services officers, rehabilitation and reintegration personnel, and court officials;
- The government will also enhance infrastructure and engage in capacity-building for all law and justice sector agencies;
- To achieve higher standards of good governance, the government will promote Open Government Partnership initiatives and strengthen the role of the Independent Commission Against Corruption;

- Policies to end discrimination against women and girls, including economic empowerment, reducing gender-based violence and improving access to education for girls;
- Investment in quality, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure to support economic development and address infrastructure deficits to improve access to services and markets;
- The government will continue to allocate resources for data collection, especially nationwide surveys and censuses given that data gaps have been identified as a key challenge nationwide and across sectors.

1.7 Fiftieth Independence Anniversary for PNG: A Legacy of Development Planning

PNG will celebrate its 50th Golden Jubilee on September 16th 2025, and it is crucial to reflect on the evolution of development planning in the country. The anniversary will mark a significant milestone for development planning and investment.

The Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM) has been playing a pivotal role in anchoring the development road maps through the five-year rolling plans through the Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS) and subsequent Medium Term Development Plans (MTDPs). This timeline highlights key periods, drawing upon the MTDS and MTDPs, to illustrate PNG's developmental trajectory.

1.7.1 Key Milestones and Timeline

1975 – 2000 (Initial Development): Post-Independence focused on nation-building and resource management. Early development budgets prioritized infrastructure and education. The Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan (PNG DSP) 2010-2030 laid the groundwork for long-term goals, subtly echoing elements now seen in Vision 2050.

2000 – 2010 (MTDS Era and Vision 2050): Marked by the implementation of the MTDS, which aimed for fiscal stability and private sector growth. The Introduction of Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEF) aligned annual budgets with strategic priorities. Initial engagement with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Foundation for strategic planning, setting priorities for resource allocation. Vision 2050 was first published in 2009, and is both a visionary statement and development strategy to guide socio-economic development in order for PNG to become a smart, fair, healthy, and happy nation, when they are articulated, institutionalized, and implemented effectively.

2011 – 2015 (MTDP 1): Focused on infrastructure development, education, health, law and order, and economic diversification.

2016 – 2017 (Bridging MTDP 2): Emphasized sustainable economic growth, service delivery improvements, sustainable development, and infrastructure.

2018 – 2022 (MTDP 3): Concentrated on inclusive growth, strengthening governance, and rural development and aligns with 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

2023 – 2027 (MTDP 4): Targets sustainable resource management, digital transformation, and empowering communities and aligns with Vision 2050 and the SDGs.

These plans are instrumental in translating the PNG DSP and PNG Vision 2050 into actionable strategies with annual development budgets directly aligned with MTDP Targets and ensure resource allocation supports the national development priorities. They guided annual development budgets, shaped investment strategies, and contributed to PNG’s progress.

1.7.2 Global Agendas

Throughout this period, PNG has actively engaged with global development agendas, integrating the Millennium Development Goals and subsequently aligning with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This approach demonstrates a commitment to achieving international standards in poverty reduction, health, education, and environmental sustainability.

1.7.3 Looking Ahead

As PNG enters its next 50 years, a recalibration of development planning is vital to effectively translate Vision 2050 and the SDGs into tangible outcomes. Building on the lessons learned from past MTDPs and the embrace of innovation will be crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. The Department of National Planning and Monitoring remains committed to guiding this journey, fostering effective development planning, good governance, sustainable resource management, inclusive growth, and strategic investment for a prosperous future.

2. Methodology & Process of the Review

The Government of PNG started the initial work on the VNR process in February 2024 after the President of the UN ECOSOC approved PNG’s intention to present its second VNR at the 2025 HLPF. The VNR process was a critical component for PNG to effectively follow-up and review the SDGs implementation since the first review in 2020. This process stimulates interest, commitment, and renewed action to progress the SDGs achievement by government and non-government actors. This process also keeps leaders and their bureaucrats accountable in order to effectively manage available resources to finance SDGs and other socio-economic development.

The VNR process employed different methodologies and stakeholders in assessing the localized SDGs and the MTDP IV 2023 - 2027 implementation. This process involved a high level of participation from all levels of government and non-government entities by encouraging national ownership, transparency, and inclusiveness. Below is an outline of key phases and processes.

Table 1: PNG’s Voluntary National Review Process

VNR PHASES AND KEY PROCESSES		TIMELINE
Phase 1: Initial Preparation and Organization		
PNG’s intent for VNR transmitted to UN ECOSOC		23 February 2024
Scoping meetings and stakeholder mapping		23 February 2024
Revisiting Governance Structure, Drafting TORs, VNR Roadmap, and VNR Secretariat		March 2024
National institutional arrangements (structure & TORs) and VNR report structure finalized		19 June 2024
Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement		
Introductory VNR Inception workshop held with national stakeholders		18 -19 September 2024
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy embedded in VNR report preparation		20 March 2024
Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Analysis Workshop		26 – 28 November 2024
Stakeholders (sectors, departments, agencies & other state authorities) consultation		6 March 2025
CIMC, civil society, church, academia consultation		26 – 28 November 2024
Private/business sector focused consultation		20 February 2025
Development partners, youth, and marginalized sector consultations		January – February 2025
One day In-house (DNPM) Workshop		3 March 2025
SDG Tracker meeting and Workshop		4 - 6 March 2025
Draft VNR report presented to Central Agencies Coordinating Committee and National Executive Council for endorsement		June 2025
Phase 3: VNR Preparation		
Workshop for focal points		17 – 21 February 2025
Data gathering and validation for the zero draft of the VNR Report		13 December 2024 – March 2025
National VNR Validation Workshop		21 May 2025
Provincial inputs to VNR through reporting template		13 December 2024 – March 2025
Frame the VNR’s second draft		Start of June 2025
Delivery of the Main Messages		23 April 2025
Submission of VNR main report to UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)		17 June 2025
Phase 4: HLPF Presentation		
Complete UNDESA questionnaire		19 May 2025
Audio/visual materials submitted to DESA		24 June 2025
VNR presentation to the New York Ministerial Segment		18 – 23 July 2025
Consolidation of findings and feedback		August – September 2025
Determination and implementation of next steps		July 2025 onwards
Plan and prepare for September Golden Jubilee Celebrations to share results, learning and priority opportunities identified in the 2nd VNR		September 2025



2.1 Phase 1: Initial Preparation and Organization

Phase 1 focused on key groundwork activities after the ECOSOC approved GoPNG’s intention to present its second VNR in February 2024. During this phase, the VNR reporting structure and templates were discussed with key government stakeholders and initial data was generated from the UN, National Statistical Office (NSO), national CSOs, the private sector, development partners, and other stakeholders.

The preparation process was managed by the DNPM Secretariat in collaboration with the SDG VNR Core Members comprising of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Prime Ministers & NEC, Department of Provincial Local Government, National Statistical Office, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO), and the various focal points from government agencies and the private sector. Initial engagement with the private sector, civil society, academia and research institutions, development partners and other stakeholders was also conducted through one-on-one consultations, workshops, and peer reviews from June to September 2024. Most government agencies, along with members of the private sector, were involved in these consultations. The VNR Secretariat under DNPM collected initial data and drafted the report with assistance from UNRCO.

2.2 Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement

Phase 2 mobilized all levels and sectors of government, as well as the private sector, civil society, academia, private/business sectors, provincial and other reporting committees, to drive discussions on the collective efforts to meet the targets. During this phase, a series of consultative awareness and workshops were held to:

1. Review and assess the national goals and targets and validate the progress of SDG Implementation;
2. Enhance the institutional coordination arrangement and stakeholder engagement strategy;
3. Engage the private sector, CSOs and development partners in the VNR process;
4. Determine the huge economic challenges faced by PNG in meeting SDG targets;
5. Analyze Leaving No One Behind data with all stakeholders by ESCAP;
6. Measure SDG targets and indicators through National SDG Tracker Project by ESCAP.

2.3 Phase 3: Voluntary National Review Preparation

Phase 3 focused on collating and validating agency progress reports in line with the MTDP III and IV localized SDG indicators and targets. Other data sources were also drawn from the NSO, SDG Tracker Dashboard & LNOB (ESCAP) as well as reports from the private sector, development partners, civil society, academia, and research institutions reports, and provincial offices. These data sources were used to assess PNG’s progress in achieving the SDGs and to arrive at the zero draft of the VNR. DNPM also hosted one-on-one agency consultations to validate the SDG reports with government agencies and the private sector.

Questionnaires were developed using the following questions as guides for discussions:

- As a crucial SDG stakeholder, what are your key contributions or achievements associated with the SDGs that you wish to highlight in the VNR report?
- Which of the 17 SDGs should be given in-depth analysis in the VNR report?
- What innovative or successful programs and projects, or best practices can you share?
- What are the key challenges, issues and lessons learnt in SDG implementation?
- In pursuit of the SDGs, how can the overall implementation, management, and engagement of stakeholders be further improved?

2.4 Phase 4: Report prepared for presentation at the 2025 High-level Political Forum

Concise VNR main messages were drawn from candid assessments of the SDGs and the MTDP III and IV, as well as stakeholder inputs during the VNR consultations. PNG’s VNR process was highly participatory and inclusive and recognized all stakeholders’ roles, including the vulnerable groups’ contributions in implementing the SDGs. It captures the mainstreaming of SDGs into national development plans, describes its implementation mechanisms, and produced the country’s overall SDG achievements.

The SDG review process was managed by core members of the SDG Technical Working Group with representatives from DNPM, NSO, DFAT, DPLGA, UNRCO, UNDP, and ESCAP. The VNR Focal Points played a vital role in overseeing the review of PNG’s SDG progress, as well as providing technical inputs and quality assurance during the VNR report preparation.

2.5 Post High-level Political Forum Activities

Part of maintaining SDG and VNR work after the VNR presentation is national ownership, inclusiveness and maintaining of interest, so post-HLPF SDG Stakeholders Engagement Workshops are critical.

This will include SDG Progress disseminated in various communication channels such as SDG Progress posted on SDG websites, TV, radio, and print media outlets.

The SDG website will be enhanced and expanded to accommodate an SDG Tracker for PNG, and SDG Training for key stakeholders and M&E and enhanced SDG reporting. The annual SDG/MTDP IV Summit will be conducted showcasing SDG/MTDP IV achievements, challenges and gaps.

PNG’s SDG Tracker dashboard for PNG will be implemented, supported by ESCAP, and more capacity building training will be conducted in preparation for the third VNR.

A post-mortem will be conducted for the second VNR 2025, which will include an examination of the SDG VNR process to help identify what went wrong and what needs to be improved in the next VNR process.

In May 2021, the DNPM undertook a post-mortem of the 2020 VNR. The post-mortem report was produced only for internal use as a learning tool to improve on the second VNR process and the SDG implementation. The following recommendations were made:

- Currently, implementation of the SDGs is the responsibility of the Infrastructure Policy Branch in the Policy and Budget Division of DNPM; there must be a separate SDG Coordination and Management Unit set up. Another recommendation is that the DNPM sets up an SDG/Population Management Unit to effectively support the implementation of the MTDP-SDG Governance Structure. The Governance Structure to be endorsed by the NEC to formalize implementation and reporting of the SDGs quickly. The SDG/Population Unit will also serve as the Secretariat of the SDG Governance and follow up on matters arising from the VNR report;
- The Papua New Guinea Strategy for the Development of Statistics (PNGSDS) instruments be fully utilized to address data gaps, which hinder development pathways;
- The Central Data Management Information System and Monitoring & Evaluation Framework be immediately established and executed;
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs should be legislated by the country’s political leadership;
- The capacity of all agencies and stakeholders’ focal points be built for each of the SDG’s implementation, monitoring, and reporting;
- SDGs need to be fully financed by the Public Investment Program (PIP) Project Cycle;
- SDG Dissemination Workshop for all Provinces or Regional Consultations - a national dissemination workshop to distribute and share information about the latest report to all sectors and sub-national agencies should be undertaken immediately after the report launch.

3. Policy & Enabling Environment

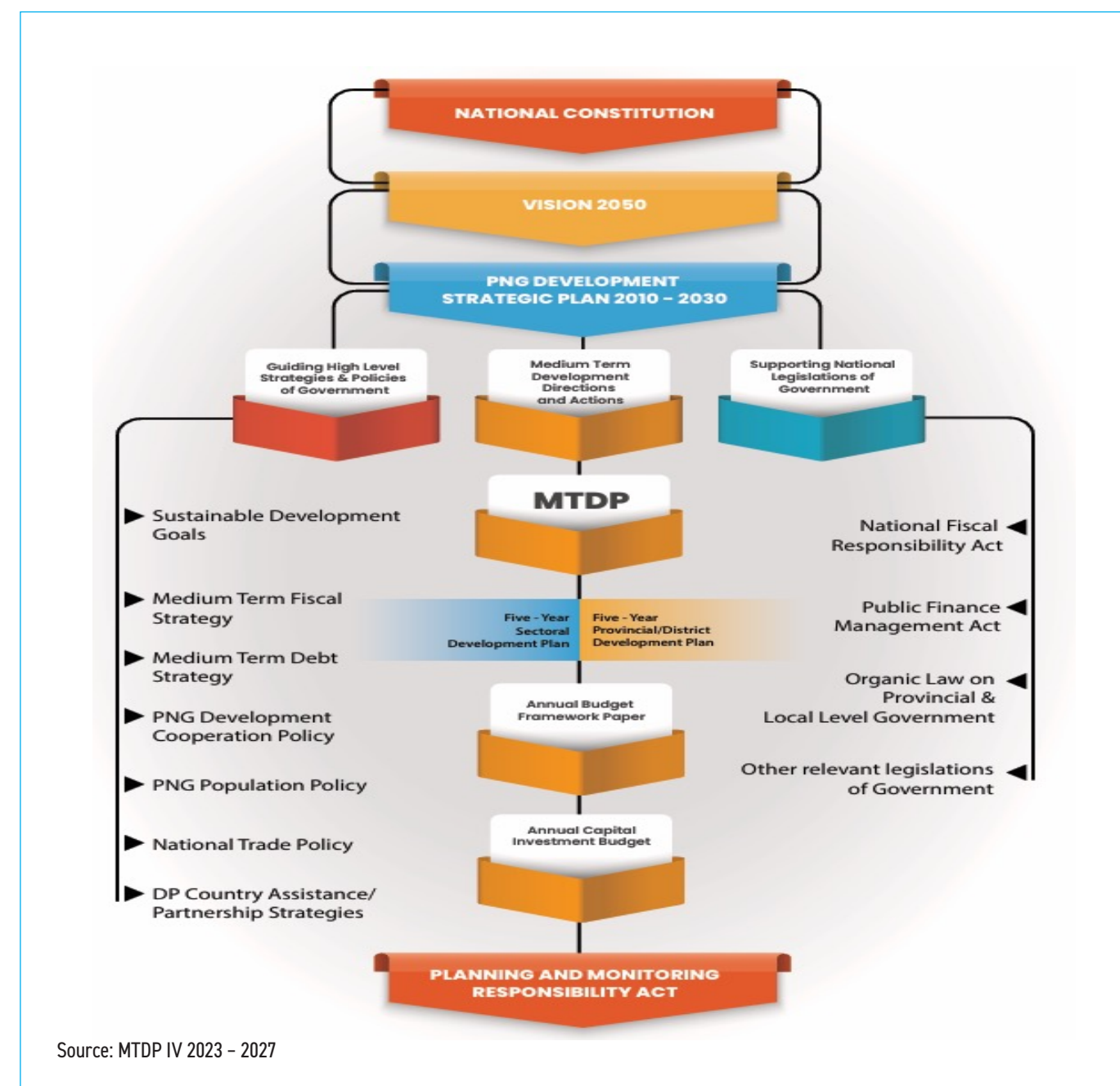
3.1 Ownership of SDGs in Papua New Guinea

Sustainability has been a PNG priority well before the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development came into effect in 2015. This can be clearly seen in the establishment of Vision 2050 in 2009. Vision 2050 has seven main pillars. These pillars have a direct link the SDGs as highlighted below:

- Pillar 1 focuses on human capital development, gender, youth, and people empowerment, with the aim of developing the “best and productive human resource”. Human capital development, gender development, youth development, and empowering people will all contribute to SDG 1: eradicating poverty; SDG 3 (good health and well-being); SDG 4 (quality education); SDG 5 (gender equality); SDG 9 (promoting innovation and infrastructure development); and SDG 10 (reduced inequality).
- Pillar 2 focuses on wealth creation by developing a dynamic and competitive economy. Wealth creation involves using factors of production, including labor, capital, technology, and land. This pillar contributes to SDG 1 (No poverty); SDG 2 (Zero hunger); SDG 5 (Gender equality); SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth); and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities).
- Pillar 3 focuses on institutional development and service delivery using appropriate political and effective service delivery systems. The implementation of strong institutions and effective service delivery mechanisms will achieve effective service delivery mechanisms, good health/well-being, and quality education. This pillar contributes to SDG 3 (Good health and well-being); and SDG 4 (Quality education).
- Pillar 4 focuses on security and international relations by making PNG a united, secure, and trade-oriented country. It promotes social security, national security, and international relations. This pillar contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions); and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals).
- Pillar 5 addresses environmental sustainability and climate change by making PNG a resilient country using sustainable development measures. This pillar contributes to SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation); SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production); SDG 13 (Climate action); SDG 14 (Life below water); and SDG 15 (Life on land).
- Pillar 6 focuses on spiritual, cultural and community development by creating a respectful, humane society and inclusive and enabling environment. The role of faith-based organisations, culture, and community development contribute to enhancing people's spiritual and mental well-being, which is part of SDG 3 (Good health and well-being). In addition, the development of communities addresses SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities).
- Pillar 7 focuses on strategic planning, integration, and control, to contribute to the sound and clear development plans to address the rest of the Pillars. This Pillar is the coordinating function of Vision 2020. We can achieve this pillar's objectives and all the SDGs through proper planning and implementation which addresses SDG 17 (Partnership for the goals).



Figure 3 illustrates a cascading flow of development planning in PNG starting from the National Constitution and Vision 2050.



Papua New Guinea's National Planning Framework provides a clear development path and direction for the country. The country's sovereign independence and its development aspirations are envisioned in the National Constitution and expressed its aspirational goal set out in Vision 2050, the PNG DSP 2010-2030 and the SDGs.

Figure 4: PNG's High Level Policy Targets



The diagram above shows the High-Level Policy Targets which integrates SDGs. PNG's long and medium-term policies and plans are interlinked and articulate critical targets over their respective periods of time.

Papua New Guinea first integrated its 46 localized SDGs indicators into its previous MTDP III 2018 – 2022 after the SDGs were adopted in 2015. The country prepared its first VNR in 2019 for the 2020 HLPF. After implementing the MTDP III and the current MTDP IV 2022 – 2027 which has 94 localized SDGs indicators, PNG is now preparing for its second VNR for the 2025 HLPF.

The four consecutive MTDP's are five-year development plans that translates Vision 2050 into action. The previous MTDP III was organized around eight Key Result Areas (KRAs).

- KRA 1 was focused on economic growth and employment generation to create revenue and wealth for Papua New Guineans. By increasing revenue and wealth, KRA 1 reduces or eradicates poverty (SDG 1); reducing or eliminating hunger (SDG 2); increases opportunities for gender participation (SDG 5); provides decent job opportunities and economic growth (SDG 8) and reduce inequalities (SDG 10).
- KRA 2 was focused on providing quality infrastructure and utilities vital for economic and social development. In addition, the development and maintenance of quality infrastructure and utilities drive industrial development and innovation, which the focus of SDG 9.
- KRA 3 was concerned with sustainable social development. Changes in health and education regarding access and quality are vital for social development on a sustainable basis. In addition, sustainable social development is vital for reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and sustainable development of cities and towns (SDG 11).
- KRA 4 was focused on improving law, justice, and national security. The security and safety of people and property are vital for social and economic development and improved welfare. This KRA was linked to Peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16).
- KRA 5 was centered on the crucial area of service delivery of two essential services health and education. The practical and efficient delivery of these social services is an essential driver of economic and social development which are directly linked to Good health and well-being (SDG 3) and Quality education (SDG 4).
- KRA 6 was focused on improved governance. Governance is concerned with the exercise of power and authority to drive positive change. In the context of the KRAs, governance is like the glue that holds the KRAs together and drives progress towards desired outcomes directly linking to Partnership for the goals (SDG 17).
- KRA 7 was focused on the responsible sustainable development that covers Clean water and sanitation (SDG- 6); Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7); Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12); Climate action (SDG 13); Life below water (SDG14); and Life on land (SDG 15).
- KRA 8 (sustainable population) cuts across all the SDGs because all the SDGs reflect the results of human action (population) either from the supply side or demand side. After all, labor is a factor of production and the base for consumption demand.

3.2 Mainstreaming of localized SDGs into the current MTDP IV 2023 – 2027

The Government of PNG launched its MTDP IV 2023-2027 in July 2023, focusing on National Prosperity through Growing the Economy. This theme captures the GoPNG's intent to deliberately invest in strategic priority areas to trigger national growth, transformation, and prosperity. The five-year MTDP is the fourth in succession, incorporating lessons learned from previous MTDPs. It reflects the government's development agenda and the current Marape-Rosso Government official pronouncements.

The objectives of the MTDP IV are to grow GDP by K164 billion towards the 2030 target of K200 billion by doubling PNG's internal and export revenues and creating one million new jobs by 2027. The MTDP IV has 12 Strategic Priority Areas (SPAs). Within each SPA are Deliberate Intervention Programs (DIPs) assigned to the responsible sector agencies to deliver over the MTDP IV period. The DIPs are high-level sectoral programs that will guide the government's investment plans, budget, programming, and implementation. They are aligned with the work programs of the national and sub-national governments and development partners in PNG.

Figure 5: MTDP IV Strategic Priority Areas (SPAs) and Deliberate Intervention Programs (DIPs)



Source: MTDP IV 2023- 2027

The localized SDGs are captured in the MTDP IV, which contains the SPAs fundamental to national objectives, goals, and aspirations of the Vision 2050. Government investments are aligned and are supported through the DIPs where programs and projects are financed through the national budget. They are implemented by respective sector agencies, sub-national governments, and Development Partners. All the stakeholders are aligned and coordinated within the SPAs and the DIPs.

The table below shows each SPA's link to the SDGs and the overall objectives of SPAs.

Table 2: MTDP IV Strategic Priority Area and SDG link

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	FOCUS	RELEVANT SDGS
SPA 1 – Strategic Economic Investment	The critical economic sectors where PNG has the most significant potential to meet its development aspirations and targets.	
SPA 2 – Connect PNG Infrastructure	Improve country-wide connectivity through the development of critical infrastructure.	
SPA 3 – Quality and Affordable Health Care	Primary health care, specialized health care, and health care infrastructure	
SPA 4 – Quality Education and Skilled Human Capital	Deliver accessible, affordable, and quality education.	
SPA 5 – Rule of Law and Justice	Effective policing, enhancing public safety and extending initiatives for crime prevention, facilitating restorative justice, improving access to justice systems, promoting community peace, and capacity building for effective delivery of justice services.	
SPA 6 – National Security	Improve the capabilities of the National Defence systems.	
SPA 7 – National Revenue and Public Finance Management	Support tax and non-tax revenue mechanisms.	
SPA 8 – Digital Government, National Statistics and Public Service Governance	Digitalization and integration of public service systems.	
SPA 9 – Research, Science and Technology	Strategic investments in research, science, and technology.	
SPA 10 – Climate Change and Environment Protection	Build an economy that is resilient to the impacts of climate change.	
SPA 11 – Population, Youth, and Women's Empowerment	Sustainably manage the population, empowering youths, and addressing issues affecting women, PWD, and other vulnerable populations.	
SPA 12 – Strategic Partnerships	Strengthen partnerships to advance PNG development and strategic interests.	

4. Leaving No One Behind

Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is the central and transformative pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated SDGs. Monitoring progress on this commitment is essential for the VNRs. With technical support from ESCAP, Papua New Guinea undertook a comprehensive analysis using 16 SDG indicators and applied innovative empirical methodologies. This analysis provides robust quantitative evidence and visualizations that illustrate both the progress made and the persistent challenges in ensuring that no one is left behind in the national development context.

The preliminary analysis finds wide gaps between the furthest behind and the furthest ahead individuals and households across many SDGs with the notable exception of unemployment. In some indicators – such as access to clean fuel and durable housing – furthest behind groups are completely excluded. Literacy is among the best performing SDGs with high literacy rates and lower inequality. From early childhood education onwards, gaps start widening in education completion and attendance at higher levels. Women living in poorer households are at a disadvantage when it comes to quality education and employment. Those living in poorer households where household members have lower education levels are key indicators when identifying the furthest behind group. Given the sampling design, the results are only available at a national level. As other sources of data become available, ESCAP will support the Government of PNG with deeper analysis of LNOB at regional or provincial levels.

PNG, with the support of ESCAP, has undertaken a comprehensive analysis to assess inequality of opportunity and monitor its commitment to LNOB, using recent and nationally representative household surveys such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2016–18, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), and the Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey 2022. The analysis applied two empirical methodologies – the Classification and Regression Tree (CART) and the Dissimilarity Index (D-index)² – to examine disparities across 16 proxy SDG indicators. The CART methodology identifies the gaps between the furthest behind and furthest ahead, offering insights into shared characteristics among the most disadvantaged groups. This is further complemented by detailed binary regression tree analyses for selected SDG indicators. The D-index provides a measure of inequality in access to opportunities. By comparing trends across the DHS 2016–18 and SDES 2022 datasets, the analysis offers valuable visualizations and evidence to inform inclusive policy actions and track progress toward achieving the SDGs in Papua New Guinea. Sections 4.1 – 4.4 presents results from CART methodology, which provides an overview of the gaps between the furthest behind and furthest ahead. The overview is complemented by a discussion of the shared characteristics of the furthest behind groups across 16 indicators and a detailed overview of selected SDG indicators using binary regression trees. Section 4.5 presents D-index results. Section 4.6 compares trends for selected indicators based on DHS 2016-18 and SDES 2022. Section 4.7 concludes with a way forward.

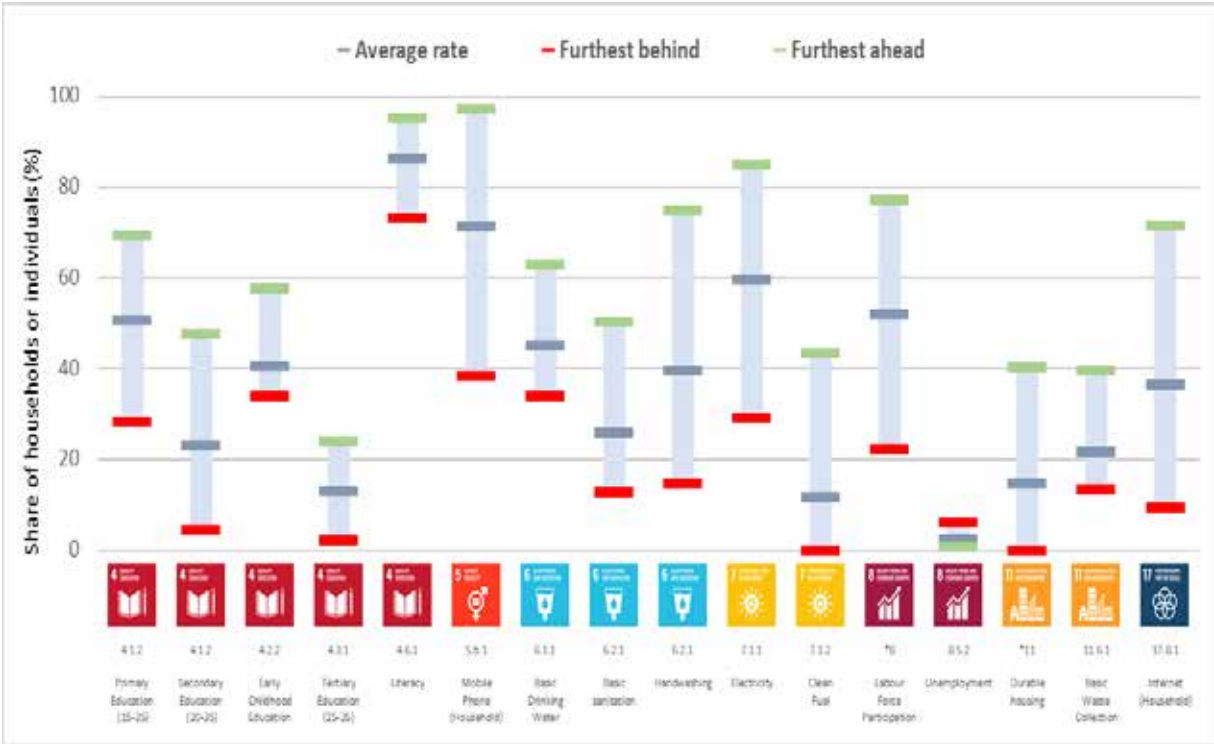
4.1 CART Methodology

The CART methodology uses a machine learning algorithm that identifies the shared circumstances of mutually exclusive groups in a country with different rates of access to opportunities or prevalence of barriers. One end of the range would be the furthest behind households or individuals among whom access to opportunity is the lowest, or the prevalence of a barrier (i.e. negative indicators such as unemployment) is the highest. The other end would be represented by the furthest ahead among whom access to an opportunity is the highest or prevalence of a barrier is the lowest. This methodology also identifies other groups between the furthest behind and furthest ahead groups. By disaggregating multiple circumstances simultaneously, this methodology captures unique and context-specific intersectionalities, which could inform policies to reach the furthest behind first.

4.2 Overview of Inequality of Opportunity and Gaps in SDGs

Figure 6 presents an overview of inequality of opportunity in Papua New Guinea with a focus on 16 proxy SDG indicators including SDGs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 17. All but one represents opportunities (i.e. unemployment).

Figure 6: Gaps in access to opportunities in Papua New Guinea (2022)



Note: ESCAP elaborations based on Papua New Guinea’s SDES (2022) collected by the National Statistics Office in collaboration with UNFPA. SDES 2022 contains information on 4,598 households and 23,548 individuals. All results are weighted using final household weights.

Each column in light gray shows the range of access to an opportunity or prevalence of a barrier. The dark blue marker represents the national average, the red marker represents the furthest behind, and the green marker represents the furthest ahead. Ideally, all three groups would have 100 per cent access to an opportunity or zero per cent prevalence of a barrier, implying that no one is left behind. This can be seen in the unemployment column, with shows that only 2.6 per cent of the labour force are unemployed. As of 2022, no other SDG indicator is close to universal access. Literacy comes close with 86 per cent of the population being literate in at least one language. Overall, Figure 6 displays significant variation across the 16 indicators analyzed, not only in terms of average access to opportunities but also in terms of gaps between furthest behind and furthest ahead groups.

Among the opportunity indicators, the gaps between the furthest behind and the furthest ahead groups range between 22 percentage points in tertiary education completion among the 25–35-year-olds, to 62 percentage points in internet access. In five indicators – including access to handwashing facilities, internet, mobile phone and electricity and labour force participation – gaps are more than 50 percentage points, implying that furthest behind groups are 2 to 6 times less likely to access these opportunities. There are also two indicators – access to clean fuels and durable housing (based on the materials used in

the roof, external wall, and floor) – where the furthest behind groups have no access at all. In addition, less than half of the furthest ahead groups have access to clean fuels and durable housing. Finally, there are two indicators – secondary education completion and tertiary education attendance rates – where those furthest behind individuals are on average 10 times less likely to complete the respective level.

4.3 Who are the furthest behind in Papua New Guinea?

So far, the emphasis has been on the gaps between the two extreme groups representing the furthest behind and the furthest ahead. Since they are already identified by the LNOB algorithm, it is possible to uncover the shared circumstances of individuals and households in these groups. The standard model of disaggregation for indicators measured at household level includes wealth (i.e. bottom 40 and top 60 per cent of the asset-based wealth index); residence (rural or urban); sex of household head; age of household head³; and education (highest education attainment of household members). For individual indicators, wealth, location, age, sex, number of children in the household and level of education are included. Naturally, education circumstances are omitted when analyzing SDG 4 related indicators. In the case of early childhood education, the education level of the mother is used.

Table 3 below presents an overview of the shared circumstances that identify the furthest behind groups for each SDG indicator. The size of furthest behind group is also specified as a share of

² For technical background on these methodologies, please see the Technical Appendix.

³ The standard model for disaggregation changes across SDG indicators. For a detailed list of SDG specific circumstance list, please see Table 2 in the technical appendix.

reference population, be it households or individuals in specific age groups. Firstly, being poor in terms of ownership of assets is the most common shared characteristic of furthest behind households and individuals. Being poor does not feature in employment-related indicators where other circumstances such as age, sex, location, and number of children under five years of age matter. Lower education is another frequently shared circumstance that intersects with poverty. In some indicators, the algorithm found households with secondary education in similar situations to those with lower education. The notable exception is the indicator on waste collection whereby relatively higher educated yet poorer households living in rural areas are furthest left behind. Thirdly, women are being left behind in education and employment related indicators. Women living in poorer households are furthest behind in literacy as well as in primary and secondary education completion. The existence of these gender gaps in education is concerning for gender gaps in labour force participation

in the future. The gender gap in labour force participation is currently evident despite the fact that the factors that usually curtail women's labour supply – such as being married and having children under five – are not among the shared characteristics of women with lower female education. Finally, location matters in only three out of the 16 indicators analyzed. This may be partly driven by the relatively lower share of households living in urban areas. While rural and poorer households are left behind when it comes to access to clean fuels for cooking and basic waste collection services, individuals living in urban households with children have the highest unemployment rate as a group.

Table 3's final column reveals the size of the furthest behind groups in each indicator. When the shared characteristics include the bottom 40 per cent of wealth distribution and lower or secondary education then the size of the furthest behind group reaches 30 to 40 per cent of all households.

Table 3: Overview of Shared Characteristics of Furthest Behind Groups

Indicator	Wealth	Location	Education	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Number of children	Share of Reference Population (%)
Basic Drinking Water	Bottom 40							40%
Basic Sanitation	Bottom 40		Secondary or lower					39%
Handwashing	Bottom 40		Lower					26%
Basic Waste Collection	Bottom 40	Rural	Secondary or higher					14%
Clean fuel	Bottom 40	Rural	Secondary or lower					38%
Electricity	Bottom 40		Lower					26%
Mobile Phone (Household)	Bottom 40		Lower					26%
Internet (Household)	Bottom 40		Lower	head under 40				11%
Durable Housing	Bottom 40		Secondary or lower					39%
Primary Edu (15-35 yrs)	Bottom 40				Female			18%
Secondary Edu (20-35 yrs)	Bottom 40				Female			18%
Tertiary Edu (25-35 yrs)	Bottom 40							36%
Early Childhood Edu (5-6 yrs)	Bottom 40		Lower maternal education					37%
Literacy	Bottom 40				Female			13%
Unemployment		Urban					1 or more	10%
Labour Force Participation				15-24,65+	Female	Never married		11%

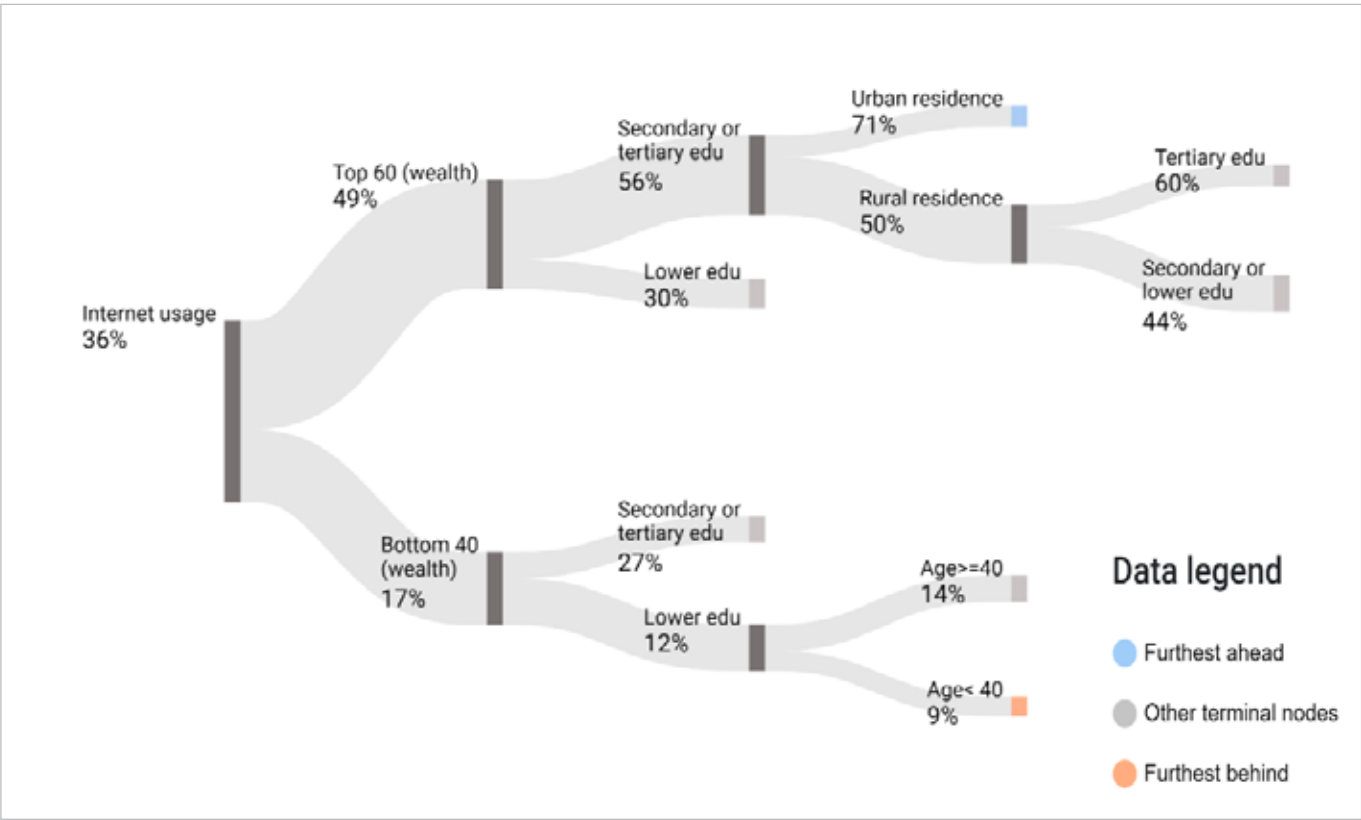
4.4 CART Visualization for Specific SDG Indicators

The LNOB methodology offers an innovative and user-friendly visualization of how multiple circumstances intersect and put certain groups of households and individuals at a disadvantage. This section focuses on two indicators: labour force participation measured at the individual level and access to the Internet measured at the household level. Neither are measured in line with the definition of SDG 8 or SDG 17⁴. However, they are both highly relevant to both SDGs and demonstrate interesting variation in access to opportunities.

Figure 7 below presents a binary regression tree focusing on access to the Internet among households. The four circumstances used to disaggregate this variable are household wealth (i.e. bottom 40 and top 60 percentile); residence (i.e. urban, and rural); and highest level of education in the household (i.e. primary, secondary, and tertiary education) and age and sex of household head. Figure 7 starts with a root node which captures the average access to internet among households at the national level. Roughly 36 per cent of the households in Papua New Guinea have access. In other words, 64 per cent of households or slightly lower than two-thirds of households do not have internet access.

In disaggregating this national average, the binary regression tree – or LNOB tree – explores the statistical power of each circumstance in explaining the variation in access to internet. After simultaneously and separately disaggregating access to internet with all four circumstances, it reveals that household wealth is the most important variable in explaining who does or does not have internet access. While 17 per cent of poorer household have access, 49 per cent of richer households have internet access. The LNOB tree continues exploring variation in access to internet within poorer and richer households separately in order to find the furthest behind and furthest ahead households respectively. Among poorer households, those with only lower educated household members are worse off, with 12 per cent having internet access. Poorer households with at least one secondary or tertiary educated member are in a much better situation with 27 per cent having access. Among poorer and lower educated households, the LNOB tree identifies the furthest behind group, which consists of households with relatively younger heads. While 9 per cent of poorer and lower educated households with a head of household aged under 40 have access, this figure increases to almost 14 per cent among relatively older household heads who are still poorer and have lower education.

Figure 7: Binary Regression Tree for access to internet



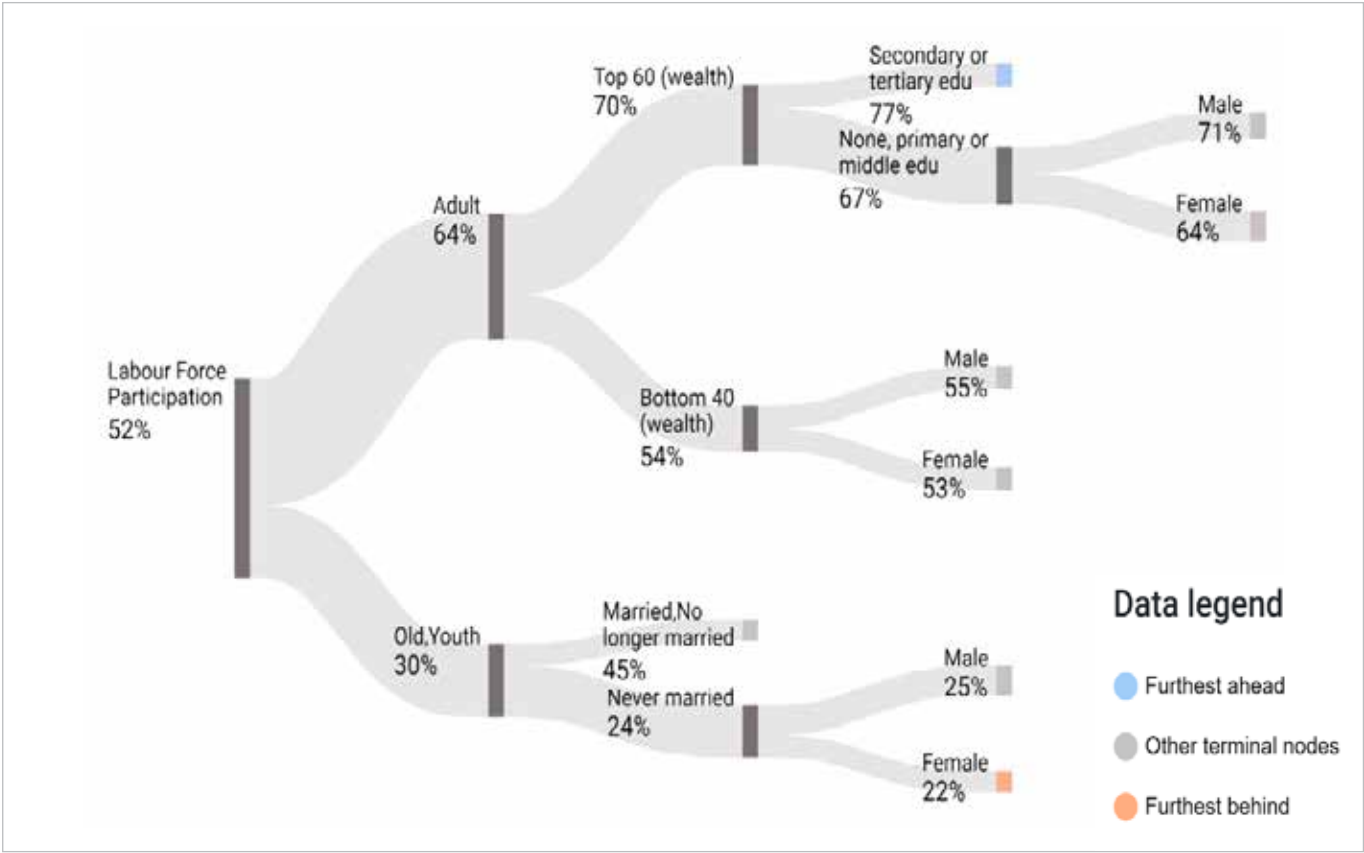
Note: ESCAP elaborations based on Papua New Guinea's SDES with 4,598 households. Weighted results are presented.

⁴ Labour force participation is not an SDG indicator per se but and is closely related to SDG 8. SDG 17.8.1 measures individual-level usage of the Internet, but the survey only collects information on whether the household has Internet access at home.

Among richer households (on the top-side of the LNOB tree), education is the second most important variable as well. While 30 per cent of richer yet lower educated households have access to the internet, 56 per cent of richer households with secondary or tertiary educated household members have internet access. Finally, residence location can explain some variation among richer and secondary or tertiary educated households. Furthest ahead are urban and richer households with secondary or tertiary education. Among them 71 per cent have internet access compared to 50 per cent of rural and richer households with similar level of education. Notably, among richer and rural households there is a sizeable gap between those with secondary and tertiary educated household members. Consequently, the national average of 36 per cent internet access masks significant variation and gaps among households. While less than 10 per cent of the furthest behind households have internet access, more than 70 per cent of furthest ahead households have access. The gap is over 60 percentage points or sevenfold.

Figure 8 below presents another LNOB tree at the national level focusing on the labour force participation rate for everyone aged 15 and above. The most important variable is the age group of individuals as it explains the largest variation in participation rates in the first split. While almost two-thirds of adults aged 25-64 are in the labour force, less than one third of youth and older people are in the labour force.

Figure 8: Gaps in labour force participation rates in Papua New Guinea



Note: ESCAP elaborations based on Papua New Guinea's SDES with 23,548 households. Weighted results are presented at regional level.

Normally, this result is consistent with the fact that younger people are likely to be attending school while older people are likely to be retired from work.⁵ The furthest behind group are women who have never been married and are either under 25 years of age or above 64 years of age, with 22 per cent of this group in the labour force. Furthest ahead are adults aged 25-64 with secondary or tertiary education who live in relatively rich households. In this group, more than three-quarters are in the labour force. Notably, gender gaps exist in different parts of the tree, which indicates that even within different groups, women are at a disadvantage. Yet, the gaps are not too wide except among richer individuals with lower than secondary education. Women are on average 7 percentage points behind men in this group. Interestingly, participation rates are significantly lower among poorer households (54 per cent) relative to richer households (70 per cent).

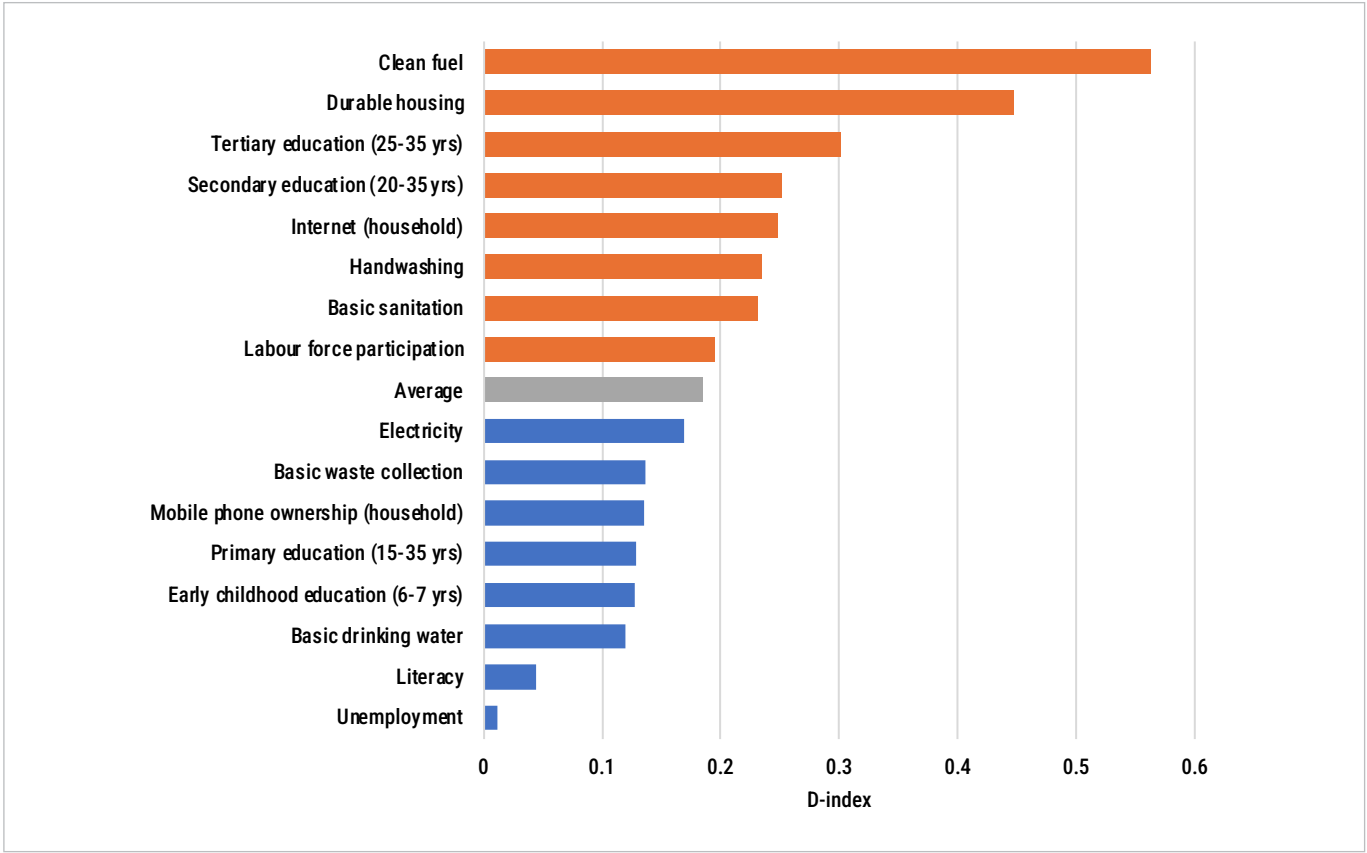
⁵ Further investigation with an alternative model where age of individuals enters the specification as a continuous variable finds that individuals under 23 have the lowest labour force participation rate overall at 24 per cent. Within this group, youth aged 15-18 have the lowest participation rate at 17 per cent while 33 per cent of youth aged 19 to 22 are in the labour force.

4.5 Dissimilarity Index

The Dissimilarity index (D-Index) is the second empirical methodology that helps quantify inequality of opportunity. It offers a demographic perspective and estimates how different groups in a given country – such as women living in poorer households in rural areas – fare in terms of access to an opportunity or the barriers they face relative to the national average. Like the Gini coefficient, the D-Index ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no inequality, and 1 indicates that the access to a service is entirely reserved to a specific group of people (e.g., men from urban areas). D-index values, when applied to SDG indicators from DHS and MICs data, often range between 0.01 and 0.30. There are however instances when values reach beyond 0.6 highlighting substantial inequality of opportunity.

Figure 9 below shows the D-index for the same set of 16 indicators from SDES. The D-index values range from 0.01 for unemployment to 0.56 for access to clean fuel. Inequality is highest in access to clean fuel and durable housing, with a D-index value of over 0.4. Inequality is also relatively high in tertiary education participation, secondary education completion, access to the Internet, hand-washing facilities and basic sanitation services, and labour force participation, with a D-index value above the average.

Figure 9: Dissimilarity Indices for access to opportunities/prevalence of barriers



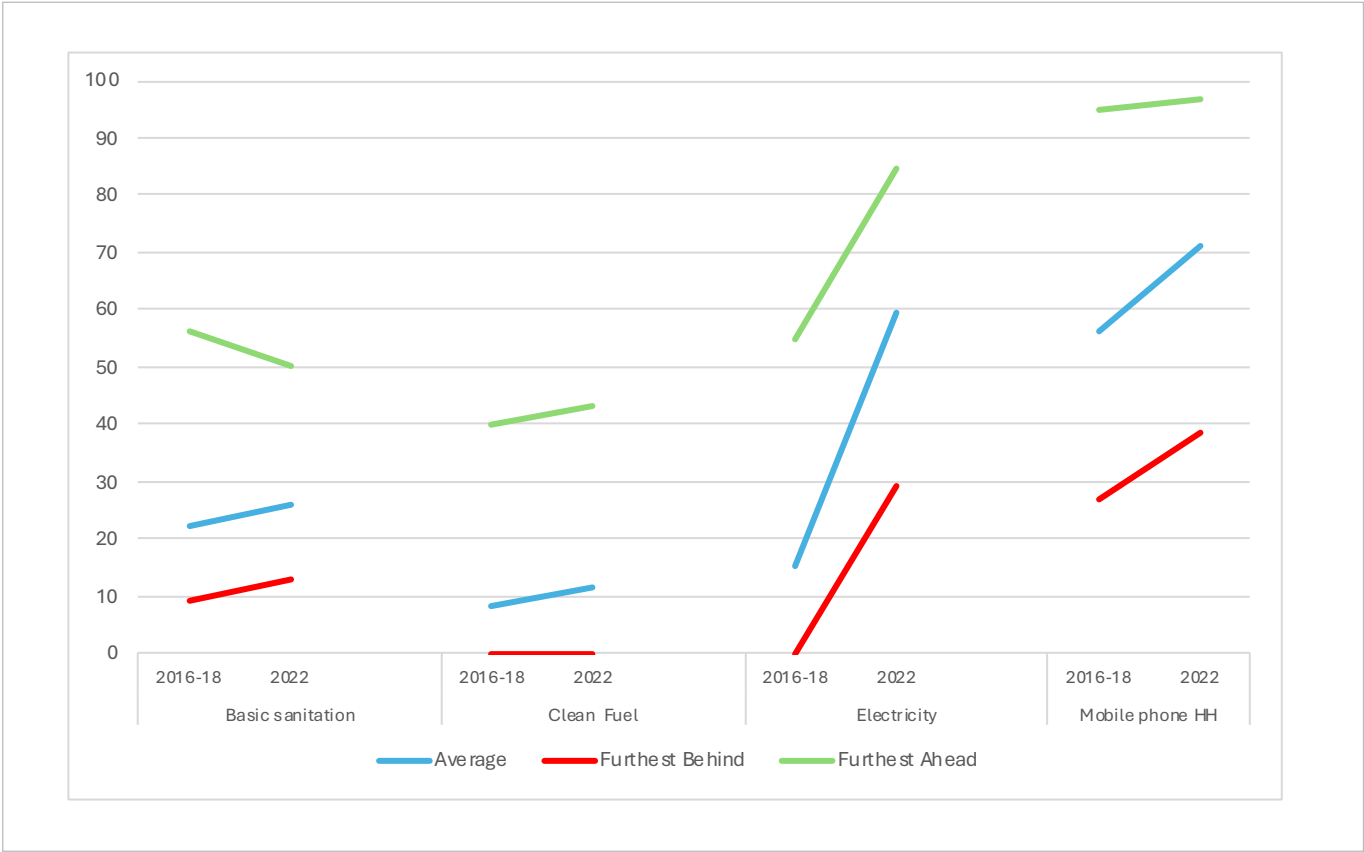
Note: ESCAP elaborations based on Papua New Guinea's SDES (2022) collected by the SDES contains information on 4,598 households and 23,548 individuals bringing together All results are weighted using final household weights.

Overall, Figure 9 tells a similar story to Figure 5 which depicted the gaps between furthest behind and the furthest ahead. Indicators with the largest gaps are mostly captured in the top segment of the bar chart in orange. There are however some nuanced differences. For instance, the D-index finds much higher inequality in access to clean fuels and durable housing than simply looking at the gaps between furthest behind and furthest ahead. This is partly because the furthest behind groups are large and have zero access while the furthest ahead groups are small. D-index not only considers all eligible groups in disaggregation, but also discounts the gaps by the relative population of each group.

4.6 LNOB trends overtime

Given the national representative nature of DHS 2016-2018 and SDES 2022, it is possible to analyze trends over time in certain indicators. The main restriction is that variable definitions should be similar over time and across two survey types. Figures 10 and 11 present trend lines from 2016 to 2022 in eight comparable indicators, with Figure 10 focusing on household level indicators. Significant progress is visible in electricity access and mobile phone ownership over time. While all three groups have improved access, gaps are not necessarily closing between the furthest behind and the other two groups. Progress has been much more limited in access to basic sanitation and clean fuel. In fact, the furthest behind groups remain without access to clean cooking fuels from 2016 to 2022. Gaps between the three groups remain relatively intact except for basic sanitation where gaps are closing due to a regression in access among furthest ahead households.

Figure 10: LNOB Trends in Selected Indicators (Household)

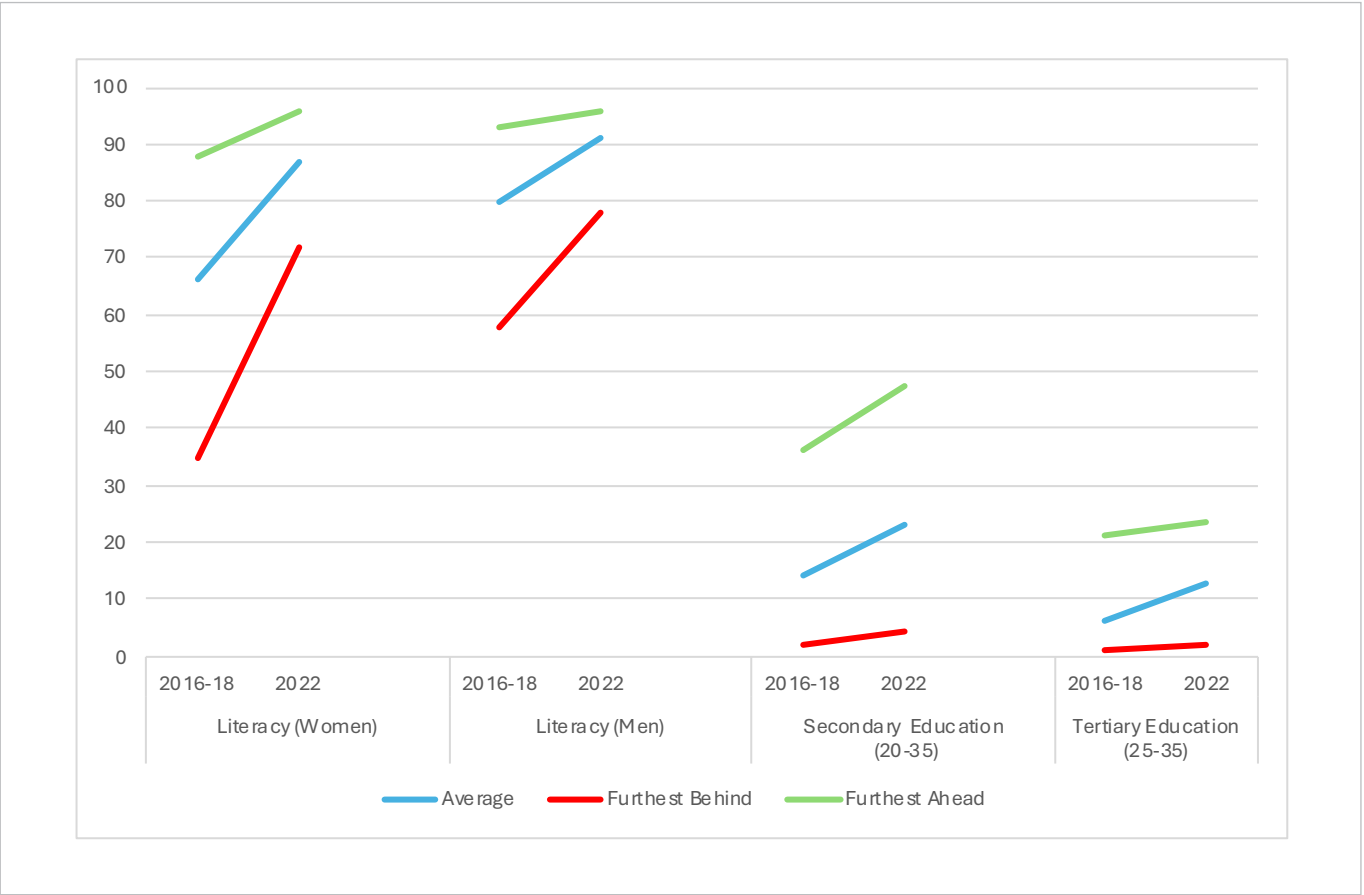


Note: ESCAP elaborations based on Papua New Guinea's SDES (2022) and DHS (2016-2018). All results are weighted using final household weights.

Figure 11 focuses on individual level indicators. Literacy among men and women has increased significantly from 2016 to 2022. The results may be driven by slight differences in definitions and measurement of literacy between the two surveys⁴. Notably, progress has been more pronounced among women compared to men. In secondary education completion and tertiary education attendance, there is progress on average among specific age groups, but progress is far slower among furthest behind individuals – women living in poorer households – in both years.

⁴DHS counts individuals who have attended secondary or higher education and those who can read a typed sentence shown to them as literate. SDES asks if individuals can read and write with understanding in any languages.

Figure 11: LNOB Trends in Selected Indicators (Individual)



Note: ESCAP elaborations based on Papua New Guinea's SDES (2022) and DHS (2016-2018). All results are weighted using final household weights.

4.7 Conclusion

This Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Analysis aims to provide a comprehensive overview of inequalities in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from an LNOB perspective in the context of Papua New Guinea. The technical methodology used to process the data – specifically the application of the Classification and Regression Tree (CART) and Dissimilarity Index (D-index) – is detailed in Annex III. Aligned with the theme of the 2025 High-Level Political Forum: Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind, PNG acknowledges the valuable collaboration with ESCAP and national stakeholders. This partnership with ESCAP has not only enriched the country's Voluntary National Review (VNR) but has also contributed to strengthening inclusive, data-driven policymaking in the post-VNR period.

4.8 SDGs Progress Among Selected Vulnerable Groups

This section provides an overview of PNG's progress toward achieving the SDGs among various vulnerable groups. It highlights key challenges, areas of progress, and recommendations for advancing the well-being and empowerment of women and girls, children, internally displaced persons (IDPs), Persons Living With Disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, and youth. The chapter synthesizes information from focus group discussions, consultations with civil society organizations, government reports, and other relevant data sources to present a holistic picture of the current situation in PNG.

Women and girls face significant socio-economic barriers, including limited access to land, financial services, and education, which restricts their economic independence. However, it also highlights positive developments, such as a perceived reduction in gender-based violence (GBV) since 2020, attributed to increased awareness and community engagement through initiatives like the Spotlight and Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) programs. The government's increased funding and the establishment of the National GBV Secretariat are also noted as positive steps toward addressing GBV more effectively. Key strategies for empowering women include expanding land rights, enhancing financial literacy, and mainstreaming gender-responsive budgeting.

Children face critical challenges in food security, health, and education. Food insecurity disproportionately affects children, with high rates of underweight. Many children are engaged in child labour, reflecting household reliance on subsistence farming. Efforts to improve vaccination coverage, reduce stunting, and promote exclusive breastfeeding are making a difference. However, the education system continues to leave behind vulnerable populations, particularly children in rural and remote areas and those affected by disasters and conflicts.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs), face multiple negative impacts of displacement, including access to essential services, and overall well-being. IDPs often experience loss of homes, properties, and a sense of belonging, leading to emotional and psychological distress. Food security and access to basic services are critical challenges, with many IDPs struggling to access adequate food, clean water, healthcare, and education. Safety and security are major concerns, with women and children particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence.

People with disabilities have been systematically excluded from employment, education, and essential services. Limited accessibility, insufficient policy support, and social stigma further hinder their economic participation. The consultation with Persons with Disabilities highlighted the inadequacy of social protection measures, gender inequality, and the need for more inclusive education and employment opportunities. Key recommendations include providing support to obtain population data on PWDs giving attention to children with multiple disabilities and their caretakers.

People living with HIV/AIDS is a major concern, particularly given the uncontrolled rate of HIV infection in PNG. The consultation with a network of PLHIV highlighted the urgent need for a revitalized and comprehensive approach to services, including re-establishing proven management modalities, enhancing government engagement, and fostering collaboration with private enterprises and civil society organizations.

Young people are facing both huge challenges and opportunities in PNG. High dropout rates and a lack of vocational training programs limit employment opportunities. The focus group discussion with young people revealed limited access to social services, cultural barriers to discussing sexual and reproductive health, and persistent gender disparities in opportunities. The chapter emphasizes the need for a practical, job-oriented education system and digital literacy programs to empower youth and enable them to contribute to the country's development.

4.8.1 Women and Girls

Women and girls in PNG face significant socio-economic barriers that impede their progress and contribute to poverty and inequality. These barriers include limited access to land ownership, financial services, and market opportunities, all of which restrict their economic independence. Many women depend on informal economic activities, such as small-scale farming and trade, to support their

families. However, systemic gender discrimination, unpaid domestic labour, and limited educational opportunities continue to hinder their financial advancement.

In rural areas, women and adolescent girls face significant barriers to accessing reproductive and sexual health services, especially those who are out of school. They are also disproportionately affected by water collection burdens and school absenteeism due to poor menstrual hygiene facilities. Indigenous women in isolated communities often lack access to essential services such as birth registration, healthcare, and education. At the same time, adolescent girls face heightened risks of early pregnancy, gender-based violence, and exploitation.

Expanding women's land rights, increasing financial literacy programs, and improving access to credit and entrepreneurship opportunities can play a vital role in alleviating poverty. Policy efforts must institutionalize gender- and disability-disaggregated data systems and expand inclusive services, including sexual and reproductive health care, shelters, and legal assistance, especially in provinces with limited infrastructure. Mainstreaming gender-responsive budgeting at all levels of government is crucial for funding targeted initiatives. Conducting time-use surveys will also help recognize and redistribute unpaid care work that falls heavily on rural women. Finally, implementing legal reforms to activate special temporary measures for political representation, alongside tailored programs for adolescent girls and women with disabilities in education, health, and leadership, will be pivotal in delivering on PNG's SDG 5 commitments. The Rural Service Delivery Project, supported by the World Bank, also emphasizes inclusive, participatory planning, ensuring that at least 50 per cent of beneficiaries are women.

4.8.2 A perception of a reduction in Gender Based Violence

During the focus group discussion, there was a growing consensus among participants that GBV is reducing as more people become aware of it and take steps to prevent and report its occurrence.

"Before 2020, street fighting among intimate partners, such as a husband and his wife were so common, and the police would do nothing about it, as this was deemed a family affair. However, as more and more people are becoming aware of GBV, we rarely experience spousal fights on the street nowadays... and the bickering and cries that were so common in the homes are rare, as there is relative peace in the homes nowadays. ut this does not mean that violence has ended, we are just saying that comparatively it has reduced." - Femili PNG FDG.

GBV in Papua New Guinea has seen a significant reduction since 2020, a positive sign of progress. Prior to this, street fighting among intimate partners was common and often ignored by law enforcement. This lack of intervention likely contributed to the perpetuation of GBV. As awareness of GBV increases, so does the understanding of how to address it and break the cycle of violence. Strengthening law enforcement's response and providing survivors with proper support, including legal, psychological, and social services, is crucial.

Key factors contributing to the perceived reduction of GBV include awareness, accountability, and support.

4.8.3 Increased awareness of Gender-Based Violence

PNG has been implementing targeted community awareness campaigns, including the Spotlight and Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) programme, to reach more than 51,680 people. These campaigns have helped shift social norms and societal attitudes towards GBV. Public education initiatives targeting 852 youths, including 550 females and 302 males, have challenged long-standing traditions, and educated both sexes about the importance of gender equality. This grassroots movement is not only raising awareness but also actively changing behaviors and attitudes within communities. As more communities embrace these changes, PNG is undergoing a cultural transformation that is promising for future generations, benefiting from a more equitable society.

"As a result of these awareness campaigns, we see more and more men and boys actively standing up for women's rights. The notable change in attitudes and behavior can be attributed to public awareness raising, communication activities through local and social media tackling different forms of violence, parenting, and child protection, conducted through various media interventions, but also the more diverse groups of people involved, such as politicians, church leaders, youth, and community leaders, has likely helped normalize the idea of positive masculinity and gender equality." - **Community Development Agency, PNG.**

"Due to community awareness, women who were once marginalized or silenced are now finding their voices in discussions about gender equality. The awareness campaigns, particularly under the Spotlight initiative, have also worked closely with men and boys, recognizing that a shift in cultural norms requires the active participation of all members of society." - **Change 4 Life PNG.**

Through heightened community awareness of GBV, Papua New Guinea now boasts a growing movement of men and boys advocating for women's rights, including politicians, church leaders, youth, and community leaders.

"While it was not common for a man to give a seat to a woman on a bus, it is so common nowadays. For instance, one day on a bus, I saw a man give his seat to a young girl who was standing. I am a man, I have strength to stand, please take my seat. We also see men supporting and helping their wives and sisters, taking care of the children, giving them a bath, clothing them, and walking with them and their wives to church. This is an area that has been heavily transformed" - **Voice for Change PNG.**

4.8.4 Strengthened national and provincial structures and funding mechanisms for GBV response

In 2023, the government has increased its budget to PGK 8.9 million to tackle GBV. This has led to the creation of the National GBV Secretariat (NGBVS), a central body overseeing and coordinating GBV interventions across PNG. The NGBVS ensures alignment of national strategies with local needs, improving the impact of interventions

and ensuring accessible and practical support for survivors. The government has also established GBV committees in all 22 provinces, addressing unique challenges faced by women and girls in different regions. These committees foster a more localized approach to GBV prevention and response, allowing for more tailored interventions that reflect the cultural, social, and economic realities of each province. This decentralized structure ensures that solutions are more relevant and effective in addressing the specific needs of local communities.

"In the reporting period, we have also seen government increasing funding allocated towards GBV and gender equality issues particularly through the national budget. This shows how much the government is committed to promoting gender equality and to end violence against women and girls" - **KUSWA, PNG.**

4.8.5 Improved coordination between national and subnational actors and service providers

The government's increased investment in GBV programs have improved coordination among national and subnational actors and service providers. The Department for Community Development and Religion has strengthened partnerships with local CSOs, government agencies, and international development partners through the NGBVS. This has led to more harmonized GBV interventions, enhancing the effectiveness of the government's GBV programs, ensuring efficient resource utilization and more impactful interventions.

4.8.6 Strengthening the Capacity of Local CSOs

The Spotlight Initiative and the WPHF have been working together to break down barriers and dismantle cultural norms that have historically hindered women in PNG. These projects have also reshaped gender roles, emphasizing shared responsibility for equality. The results are tangible, with more women in leadership roles and incidents of gender-based violence being addressed. Thirty-three civil society organizations (CSOs), primarily women's organizations, have formed networks and increased their capacity to advocate for women's rights. The Bung Wantaim CSOs Alliance for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, led by CS-NRG, has been a key achievement in strengthening CSOs' capacity. This movement has gained significant traction in PNG, shifting societal attitudes towards gender equality, and advancing policies that protect women from violence. CSOs continue to influence policy decisions and are actively involved in the CEDAW Reporting processes.

"Over time, we have also noted the strengthened capacity of CSOs, particularly grassroots women organizations and networks, particularly under the Spotlight initiative and the WPHF. These two programmes have been very instrumental in awareness raising and providing critical services to women in need." - KUSWA PNG, Femili PNG.

4.8.7 Legal and Policy reforms towards GBV response

The National Gender-Based Violence Strategy (2020) is a comprehensive framework for responding to GBV, focusing on prevention, protection, and support for survivors. The Family Protection Act (2013) has been revised to improve accessibility

of protection orders, streamline domestic violence intervention processes, and enhance penalties for perpetrators. The Lukautim Pikinini (Child Protection) Act Review (2021) strengthens legal protections for children, enhances coordination between sectors, and addresses gaps in enforcement. The National Safe Cities Program (2021-2025) aims to address violence against women and girls in public spaces. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy Review (2023) aligns with international commitments and addresses systemic drivers of GBV. The updated Policy emphasizes women's participation in political, economic, and social decision-making processes, addressing discriminatory practices, promoting equal access to justice, and providing better resources for GBV prevention and response programs.

“The awareness campaigns spearheaded by the Spotlight initiative and the WPHF have encouraged the development of new laws and policies that protect women and girls, reflecting a broader societal commitment to gender equality. During the Spotlight project implementation, we have noted significant government efforts on legal and policy reforms, aimed and promoting GEWE and addressing GBV” - **Community Development Agency, PNG.**

4.8.8 Improved provision of services to GBV survivors

“Due to strengthened and more coordinated CSOs, we have observed improved service provision for GBV survivors. For instance, in the Highlands, we have seen a quick response to reported cases of GBV by police, courts, health service providers, and safe houses. While this is important, we note a huge risk when we handle cases of sorcery accusations related violence, as people want to kill us together with the victims. Even though in most cases we are given security, we consider such cover as unsustainable, and something more fundamental change needs to happen” - **Highlands Women Human Rights Defenders Network, PNG, Voice for Change PNG.**

The collaboration between civil society organizations, government entities, donor partners, and service providers has significantly improved the delivery of timely and quality services to survivors of GBV and sexual assault, particularly within the National Capital District. Key mechanisms contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of responses to GBV cases include the development of the Standard Operating Procedure for the functioning of Family Support Centres, which covers essential aspects of GBV case management, such as disclosure procedures, referral processes, safety protocols, and data management.

The National Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategy (SBCC Strategy) by the GoPNG has been integrated as a key strategy for preventing VAWG and SARV in the NOCFS' first corporate Strategy document. The strategy also establishes parenting/SBCC positions in its human resources organogram, committing to addressing contributing social norms and harmful practices to VAWG and SARV.

The Spotlight initiative and the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund have provided various services to 30,426 victims, including psychosocial support, healthcare, and legal support through various referral pathways. Additionally, 15 safe houses have been established in 13 locations across PNG's 22 provinces, supporting more than 6,500 survivors. These programs have strengthened the capacities of police, village court magistrates, and other government officials to apply the law and assist survivors of family and sexual violence in achieving law and justice services.

4.8.9 Leaving No-one Behind

The Spotlight Programme in PNG collaborated with various CSO groups, including national, local/grassroots, women's rights, feminist, and LGBTIQ groups, to address intersecting forms of violence. Grassroots organizations like the Community Development Agency of PNG, Mustard Seed Global PNG, Save PNG, Rural Women's Development Foundation, and the Human Rights Defenders Association of PNG received grants to implement outreach programs and institutional strengthening. The program successfully reached challenging and inaccessible communities, benefiting 150 women living with HIV/AIDS and 5,400 people facing multiple forms of violence in 2023. The first cohort of 10 counsellors completed a professional counselling curriculum following Spotlight's intervention in increasing the capacity of provincial health authorities and family support centres.

4.9 Women's Economic Empowerment

PNG has made significant progress in women's economic empowerment, with improvements in access to financial resources, business opportunities, and leadership positions. These developments contribute to national growth and social change. Initiatives, both local and international, have played pivotal roles in this transformation, including programs focused on increasing credit access, enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities, and providing financial literacy training.

Historically, women in PNG have faced significant barriers in accessing financial services, including limited access to credit, loans, and banking services. As of 2020, women were 29 per cent less likely than men to have access to formal financial services, marking the highest gender gap in the South Pacific region. Traditional gender norms and financial systems favour male entrepreneurs, contributing to this disparity. However, between 2020 and 2025, a growing number of financial institutions, both public and private, have taken steps to address this issue.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund and Mama Bank have been instrumental in promoting financial literacy and facilitating women's access to financial products. Through microfinance programs and financial inclusion campaigns, more women now have the tools to start and grow their businesses, specifically targeting women in rural and remote areas.

With better access to financial resources and entrepreneurial support, women are now starting businesses that contribute to local economies and make informed decisions about business and investments. This shift represents a significant cultural change, as women are beginning to occupy spaces previously reserved for men, challenging long-standing gender norms.

However, 29 per cent of women entrepreneurs remain less likely than men to have access to formal financial services, highlighting the need for continued efforts to provide women with better access to financial resources and business support.

“In the past women were not allowed to and be economically independent. However, with the coming of the Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade (STREIT) Joint Programme, most women have started doing business and are being supported by their husbands and family members. This has been made possible with a couple of training courses and adoption of household methodologies (GALS methodology)⁷, which promote shared decision-making and resource management between spouses in a household. These methodologies encourage equitable distribution of labor and financial resources, leading to enhanced household welfare and economic resilience.” - **Enga Women in Agriculture, PNG.**

“We have also seen more women are also moving into industries that were previously male dominated, such as construction, engineering, and technology.” - **Care International, PNG.**

“While in the past social and cultural norms did not allow us to own businesses, a shift in cultural norms is helping us to start and grow businesses. For instance, the adoption of household methodologies, which promote shared decision-making and resource management between men and women, has further contributed to women's economic empowerment. These methodologies encourage equitable distribution of labor and financial resources, leading to enhanced household welfare and economic resilience.” - **Women in CC, PNG.**

“Mama Bank has provided us the skills to save money, to form groups through which we have access to financing, to start, grow and sustain our businesses.” - **Toulele Peisa Inc, PNG.**

4.9.1 Gender equality in the workplace

Despite the challenges faced by women in traditionally male-dominated work environments, there has been a significant increase in women holding leadership roles in PNG's private sector. The number of women directors in PNG has risen from 19 per cent to 23 per cent, and the proportion of women CEOs has risen from 5 per cent to 9 per cent. Women's representation as directors on state-owned enterprise boards has also increased from 6 per cent to 18 per cent. However, women's representation on boards and senior executive positions remains lower than regional averages. Women are particularly underrepresented in board chair positions, with only 7 per cent of board chairs occupied by women and only 9 per cent in CEO roles.

A steady upward trend in female leadership representation has been observed in senior management positions within PNG's private sector. The shift towards gender equality in the workplace has been supported by the adoption of gender equality policies by private sector companies. These policies have become integral to improving the representation of women in leadership, ensuring they are not only hired but also supported in their professional growth. Programs aimed at leadership training and mentorship have also gained traction, contributing significantly to the rise in women in senior leadership roles.

4.9.2 Women in political leadership

PNG, with more than a 50 per cent female population, has a low representation of women in political leadership positions. Since 1975, women have not been elected to more than 5 per cent of the total number of candidates or elected three out of 118 parliamentarians. Cultural and systemic barriers prevent women from participating in leadership and political life. In October 2021, there were no women among the 111 members of the National Parliament or Cabinet Ministers, and only 120 women held positions in national and local-level government. Additionally, women's presence in senior management and executive appointments remains low. In the 2022 national election, only 2.7 per cent of the total seats were held by women, representing a significant gender gap.

“Despite these challenges at national and provincial levels, there is a growing interest among women to stand for public leadership positions. For instance, in my constituency, we have three women counsellors, and I am standing for mayorship in Vanimo. I have a lot of young people behind me, male and female who are fundraising for me to have the nomination fees and I have strong hope that I will win. While lack of interest and limited knowledge among women was a major hindrance for their political leadership participation, we are slowly overcoming these barriers and seeking public leadership positions.” - **Highlands Women Human Rights Defenders Network, PNG.**

4.9.3 Women's access to and use of ICT in Papua New Guinea

PNG is transforming its digital economy through improved access to new technologies, internet connectivity, and communication initiatives. The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is leading these initiatives, resulting in increased online social and commercial activities. Despite this progress, women own only 16 per cent of 50 per cent of mobile penetration in PNG, with 35 per cent of phone owners unable to make calls and 51 per cent unable to send SMS. Additionally, 30 per cent of women who own a handset receive it as a gift, and almost all who do not have one cannot afford to buy one. Women are 23 per cent less likely to use mobile Internet and 10 per cent less likely than men to own a mobile phone. Broadband internet access remains limited, particularly in remote regions where women experience lower levels of access compared to men. Men dominate the Facebook landscape, with 64 per cent active male users and 36 per cent active female users, particularly

⁷GALS (Gender Action Learning System) is a participatory methodology that empowers individuals and communities, particularly women, to take control of their lives and improve their socio-economic status. It is a community-based, gender-sensitive approach aimed at addressing gender inequality and promoting social and economic empowerment. The methodology involves a series of tools and activities that encourage reflection, analysis, and action, with a focus on gender relations, and it empowers individuals to identify and solve problems in their own lives.

among younger users. This could imply increasing access to mobile devices for men over women, as 96 per cent of social media access is facilitated through mobile devices.

4.9.4 Key Prospects for Women’s ICT Advancement

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly impacted women in PNG, providing opportunities for personal and professional growth. Digital learning platforms have enabled women to access quality education, improve healthcare outcomes, and foster economic independence. Programs such as e-learning and digital literacy initiatives have grown, offering flexible and affordable opportunities for women to learn essential skills in fields like coding, entrepreneurship, and business management.

Digital platforms have also enabled women to run small businesses remotely, with mobile money services enabling secure financial services and savings management. ICT has also enabled women to access health information, particularly reproductive and maternal health services, through mobile health apps and telemedicine services.

Social media and online platforms have provided women with an unprecedented opportunity to engage in advocacy, raise awareness on social issues, and promote gender equality. This has helped amplify women's voices, particularly in addressing domestic violence and child rights, contributing to a broader social movement for gender equality.

However, women in PNG continue to face several barriers that hinder their full participation in the digital revolution. One of the most pressing challenges is the significant digital literacy gap between men and women, with women often underrepresented in ICT training programs. Traditional gender roles and cultural expectations limit women's mobility, access to education, and opportunities to use technology. Access to affordable, high-speed Internet remains limited in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas where electricity and internet connectivity remain sparse. Additionally, the online environment in PNG is not always safe for women, with concerns such as cyberbullying, harassment, and online abuse.

4.9.5 Consolidation of the CEDAW Report by GoPNG and its Shadow Report by PNG CSOs

The Government of PNG has consolidated its report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2024, reflecting significant changes in the country's legal, political, and social landscape. The 2024 update also includes a shadow report prepared by CSOs, which provides an independent, critical perspective on the government's actions towards gender equality and women's rights. CSOs play a crucial role in highlighting areas where the government may not be fully compliant with CEDAW and advocating for improved policies and practices. The CEDAW report typically outlines legislative and policy measures supporting women's rights. However, the shadow report often provides a more critical view, addressing gaps in CEDAW implementation and calling for more robust actions to address women's rights issues.

4.9.6 Key Challenges and key recommendations for promoting Gender Equality and Managing GBV and Women’s Empowerment in Papua New Guinea

The Focus Group Discussions revealed that despite the legal and Policy frameworks aimed at addressing gender-based violence, it still poses threats to survivors, particularly women and girls. They suggested that while community awareness of GBV and gender equality has improved attitudes and shifted social norms, there is still a need to sustain momentum. To effectively benefit from the expanding ICT footprint in PNG, several actions need to be implemented. Firstly, increased investment in digital literacy programs, particularly targeting rural women, is crucial. Government and private sector partnerships should focus on providing women with the skills needed to thrive in the digital world, such as ICT training for entrepreneurs, access to coding courses, and digital financial literacy programs. Secondly, expanding internet access, especially broadband, is essential for women to benefit from ICT fully. Government and corporate stakeholders should prioritize infrastructure investment in rural areas to bridge the digital divide. Third, robust measures to protect women from online violence and harassment, such as better cyberbullying mechanisms and online privacy regulations, are also necessary. Finally, programs encouraging women to enter ICT-related fields and take leadership roles can foster a more inclusive environment.

“Currently the law on GBV has been revised to allow women and girls to testify against their abusers even if they are close relations such as partners, or blood relations. This has made it very difficult for women to report cases of GBV such as rape. In most cases, victims have been targeted again and victimized for testifying in court. As such, while the review of the law is positive in itself, strong mechanisms should be put in place to protect the victims who testify.” - PNG Counsellors Association, PNG.

“Once we relapse, we risk going back to violence. This time around, it will be worse as such funding programmes that promote community awareness of gender equality and women's empowerment need to be sustained so that GBV interventions at community levels can be sustained overtime. This is because while there is tremendous change, widespread acceptance of GBV is a norm in many communities, harmful traditional practices such as child marriage continue to subjugate women, and there is a strong resistance to change, especially in rural isolated areas.” - Femili PNG.

“Even though there is a rise in women's access to financing and business and financial management skills, many women in PNG still do not have access to financial services. As such there is need to have more government and partners in the space of providing financing and business management skills to women and to connect them to both domestic and international markets.” - Care International. PNG.

4.9.7 Children

Children in Papua New Guinea (PNG) face several critical challenges, particularly in the areas of food security, health, and education. Food insecurity disproportionately affects children and infants, with

underweight prevalence reaching up to 23per cent in some provinces. Many children aged 10–17 are engaged in child labour, predominantly in agriculture or on family farms, reflecting household reliance on subsistence farming and highlighting the intergenerational links between food insecurity, school attendance, and economic vulnerability.

In terms of health, children under five remain a high-priority group for immunization, nutrition, and early childhood care. Efforts to improve vaccination coverage, reduce stunting, and promote exclusive breastfeeding are making a difference in child survival and development rates, particularly in communities where health promotion and awareness efforts have expanded. The CNSP supports integrated interventions targeting the first 1,000 days of life, including child nutrition grants and expanded treatment for severe acute malnutrition.

Despite progress, PNG’s education system continues to leave behind several vulnerable populations, including children in rural and remote areas who often lack access to schools due to distance and poor infrastructure. Children in disaster-prone or conflict-affected regions also face repeated disruptions to their education due to natural hazards and tribal conflicts. Furthermore, children in rural schools are impacted by poor school WaSH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) conditions, which affect attendance and health. Emerging inclusive education pilots aim to expand hubs and assistive learning tools in semi-urban areas, offering scalable models for rural adaptation.

4.9.8 Child Population Snapshot

In PNG, although there is a high fertility rate of 3.52 births per woman ages 15 to 49, due to low life expectancy rates and a high degree of emigration to other countries, the annual population growth rate has been declining from 2.2 (2010) to 1.9 (2022)⁸. Based on the United Nations group population projections (2015-2030) from the 2011 Census, PNG remains demographically young: 43 per cent are children (under age 18); 14 per cent are in the 0 to 4 age group; 13 per cent are ages 5 to 9; and 17 per cent are 10 to 17 years. Children in the aged between 10-19 comprised 21 per cent of the total population in 2022, a percentage higher than the global average for that age group (16 per cent). The increasing numbers of children, including adolescents, have important implications for the types of social services required, including child and adolescent-friendly mental and physical health and nutrition, schools with WaSH facilities and vocational training and protection.

In PNG, 75 per cent of children experience some form of violence in their childhood. Six per cent of children under 18 have one or both parents dead, and 14 per cent are not living with either biological parent.

About eight per cent of girls are married before the age of 15, and 27.3 per cent are married before 18. Out of all partnered females 15 and older, 26 per cent have been subjected to physical, sexual, or

psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner over the past 12 months.⁹

4.9.9 Key Child-Related Indicators

Health indicators are among the poorest in the Pacific region, with PNG falling short of SDGs related to maternal and child health. Maternal and child mortality rates remain high. The under-five mortality rate is 41 deaths per 1,000 live births, with neonatal and infant mortality rates at 21 and 33 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Maternal mortality stands at 192 deaths per 100,000 live births. PNG is the only country in the region which has not achieved the Maternal Neonatal Tetanus Elimination target. The third dose of Pentavalent vaccine coverage remains below 50 per cent in the past decade (2015-2024). Many women give birth at home due to barriers such as access to health facilities and the lack of basic amenities like running water and electricity or understaffing in health facilities. Financial constraints, including the cost of health services and a lack of transportation, further hinder access to health care¹⁰.

Child malnutrition is a pervasive issue, with PNG recording the fourth-highest stunting rate globally. Approximately 48.2 per cent of children under five are stunted. Stunting is most prevalent among the poorest households (55 per cent) but remains significant even among the wealthiest quintile (36 per cent). This condition severely impacts children’s physical and cognitive development, leading to poor educational outcomes, reduced productivity, lower lifetime earnings, and long-term health challenges.¹¹

Educational outcomes reveal significant disparities and systemic challenges. Primary school completion rates are critically low, with only 62.8 per cent of students (Female: 69.59) completing primary education. In rural areas, the rate drops further to 27 per cent. Approximately 23 per cent of children aged 6 to 18 are out of school, with girls disproportionately affected (25 per cent in 2024). Transition rates from primary to secondary education have also declined sharply (64 per cent in 2019). In 2024, net enrolment rates are not available. However, enrolment rates in 2019 were 58 per cent at the primary level and 20 per cent at the secondary level. Compounding these issues, many schools lack essential infrastructure, including clean water, functional toilets, and adequate classroom space¹².

Access to WaSH services in PNG is among the lowest in the Pacific region. According to the 2019 Joint Monitoring Programme update, only 41 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and just 13 per cent has access to improved sanitation facilities. Approximately half of all households rely on unimproved water sources, such as surface water, dug wells, or springs, which are often contaminated. More than 80 per cent of the population lacks access to basic sanitation, resulting in widespread open defecation and heightened vulnerability to waterborne diseases, including diarrhoea, affecting primarily children.

⁸ GALS (Gender Action Learning System) is a participatory methodology that empowers individuals and communities, particularly women, to take control of their lives and improve their socio-economic status. It is a community-based, gender-sensitive approach aimed at addressing gender inequality and promoting social and economic empowerment. The methodology involves a series of tools and activities that encourage reflection, analysis, and action, with a focus on gender relations, and it empowers individuals to identify and solve problems in their own lives.

⁹ Source: Demographic Health Survey 2016-2018

¹⁰ Source: electronic National Health Information System

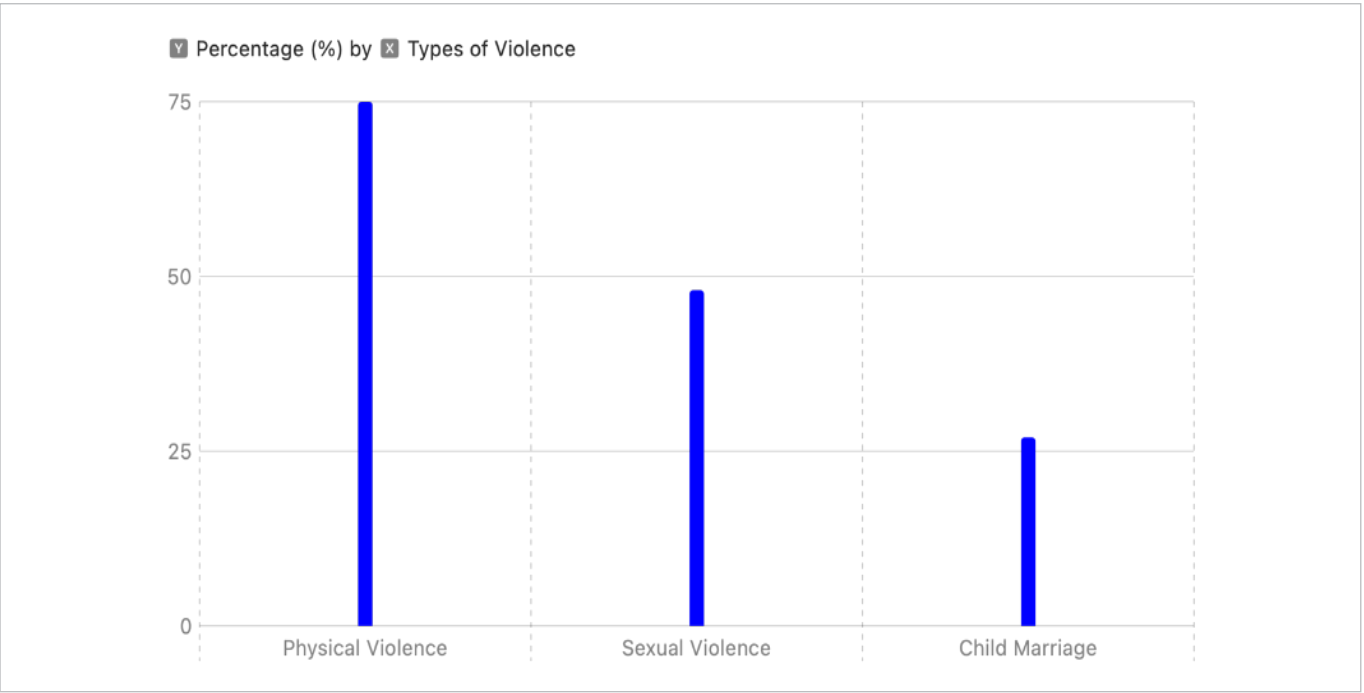
¹¹ Source: Household Income Expenditure Survey 2009-2010

¹² Sources: sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org, and 2019 Education PNG Indicators EMIS

4.10 Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women

Violence against children is pervasive, with 75 per cent of children experiencing physical violence and 85 per cent of fathers admitting to hitting their children (DHS 2016–2018). The absence of robust birth registration systems further complicates child protection efforts, with only 13 per cent of children under the age of five registered at birth. This lack of documentation undermines their access to essential services and legal protections. Protection systems and services for children and vulnerable populations are severely constrained in PNG due to limited financial and human resources and weak coordination mechanisms. Access to preventive and responsive services is inadequate, as is reliable data on child protection issues.

The intersection between Violence Against Women (VAW) and Violence Against Children (VAC) is borne out in the PNG context. According to the most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), approximately 60 per cent of women with one or two children have experienced physical violence in contrast to 41 per cent of women not living with any children, indicating an increased risk of VAW for women with children. Data also suggests that VAW and VAC in the home often co-occur. For instance, around 60 per cent of children who went to a women's shelter in Port Moresby had been abused.



In PNG, children face elevated levels of violence with devastating consequences for their health, well-being, and development. Although the country lacks recent and systematic data, the rates of violence against women and children are estimated to be among the highest in the world. For instance, according to the recent Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2018 (DHS 2016-2018), 56 per cent of women aged 15-19 years have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and 28 per cent in the same age group have experienced sexual violence. In the DHS 2018-2018, a majority of both men and women said that violence against a wife by a husband was justifiable. Unfortunately, there is no representative data that would indicate possible recent changes in attitudes.

There is a well-studied relation between childhood experiences of violence and violence and other criminal behaviors displayed by children. In PNG, a 2015 UNICEF study estimates that children in contact with the law as victims, witnesses, or offenders rarely enjoy the benefits of child-focused justice, including diversion and alternatives to detention. Little is known regarding the extent to which children with mental and/or physical disabilities have equitable access to justice in PNG. In addition, humanitarian disasters have the potential to disrupt development gains and render women and children further at risk of violence due to scarce resources. The COVID-19 pandemic also represented a threat to not only the physical health of children in PNG but to their protection.

4.10.1 Juvenile Justice¹³

In 2019, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a General Comment on Children's Rights in the Justice System that, among other things, promotes key strategies for reducing the especially harmful effects to children of contact with the criminal justice system. These include: 1) setting the minimum age of criminal responsibility of children to 14 years in line with the CRC; 2) scaling up the diversion of children away from formal justice proceedings and to effective programs; 3) expanding the use of non-custodial measures to ensure that detention of children is

¹³ Source: Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)

a measure of last resort; 4) ending the use of corporal punishment, capital punishment and life sentences; 5) for the few situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a last resort, ensuring that its application is for older children only, is strictly time limited and is subject to regular review; and 6) to promote the strengthening of systems through improved organization, capacity-building, data collection, evaluation and research.

In PNG, strong efforts are being made in law, policy, coordination, and practice towards establishing, maintaining, and implementing a child justice system that complies with the CRC.

The CRC, which was ratified by the Government of PNG in 1993, sets out principles of child justice for state parties to respect, uphold and implement. Article 40 of the CRC holds that every child alleged or recognized as having infringed the law must be treated in a manner consistent with the child's dignity and worth. Article 37(b) holds that children can only be detained as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time. When coupled with PNG's ratification of other core human rights treaties, all children within the jurisdiction of PNG are guaranteed the right to protection from all forms of violence as well as non-discrimination, the right to participation, the right to survival and development, and the right to have their best interests as the primary consideration in all actions concerning them.

Closely linked to children's right to protection, the CRC and its accompanying international standards convey a vision of how the justice system in PNG should protect children's rights. This includes a justice system that operates with full respect for children's dignity, monitors the quality of their interactions with the judicial system, includes due process guarantees, and ensures that the best interests of the child are considered and that children have access to child-focused justice.

The Juvenile Justice Act 2014 established the Juvenile Justice Service within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, which is overseen by a National Director and services provided to children in conflict with the law in the provinces and communities by trained Juvenile Justice Offices (JJO's). JJOs play a case management and advocacy role for children in conflict with the law in line with their best interests, including supporting children, preparing assessments for the police and courts, advocating, and facilitating diversion measures for children.

4.10.2 Birth Registration¹⁴

The Child Registration Amendment Act was passed in 2014. According to the 2016-2018 PNG DHS, only 13 per cent of children under age five were registered with the civil authorities. Among those registered, approximately seven per cent had birth certificates. The proportion of children with registered births was higher in urban than in rural areas (25 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively). The registration also varied across regions, ranging from 7.5 per cent of children in the Momase region to 19.2 per cent in the Southern region. The DHS found that birth registration increases with wealth quintile, ranging from 9 per cent in the lowest quintile to 24 per cent in the highest quintile.

¹⁴ Source: administrative data from PNG Civil and Identity Registry (PNGCIR)

4.10.3 Alternative Care and Adoption

The Adoption Law is outdated (having been passed in 1968), and there are many gaps. There is no designated competent authority to oversee the adoption system and processes. There are no detailed standards of care for different forms of care such as guardianship, foster care and adoption.

In PNG, there is no detailed guidance or tools for the inspection of alternative care providers. There is also no mechanism for legal complaints regarding children in care and no system for the assessment of prospective adopters. The law also does not apply to customary adoptions, which are widely practised.

4.10.4 Child Labor and Armed Conflict

Papua New Guinea has ratified key international conventions regarding child labour. These include ILO C. 138, Minimum Age, ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Although the government has also instituted laws and regulations related to child labour, gaps exist in the legal framework to sufficiently protect children from the worst forms of child labour. Laws and regulations that meet international standards include Article 103 of the Employment Act, which stipulates the minimum age (16) for work; Articles 23 and 43 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea; and Section 208 of the Criminal Code that prohibits forced labour; and Section 30 of the Defense Act that establishes a minimum age for voluntary state military recruitment.

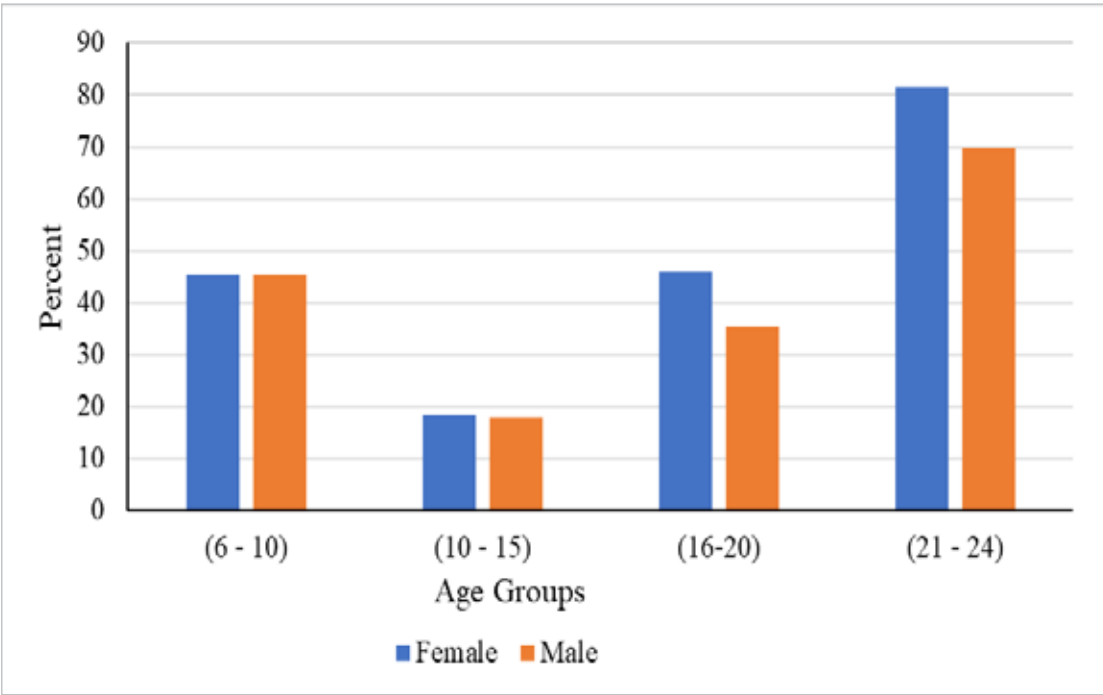
The government has also established policies related to child labour. These include the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea (2017–2020), the Papua New Guinea Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan (2015–2020), Universal Basic Education Plan (2010–2019), National Child Protection Policy (2017–2027) and Tuition Fee-Free Policy.

Children in PNG are vulnerable to some of the worst forms of child labour, including dangerous tasks in mining. Some children from rural areas live with relatives or “host” families in cities, where they are coerced to carry out domestic work to pay off family debts. An ILO study found that 34 per cent of children involved in sex work in Port Moresby began at 15 years, and approximately 41 per cent began sex work before the age of 15 years. Around 61 per cent of the children involved in commercial sex exploitation were living with immediate or extended family members.

4.10.5 Education

For girls and boys, a significant loss in transition from one year to the next occurs from upper primary to lower secondary, when only 63.1 per cent of boys and 55.1 per cent of girls continue to lower secondary. Loss in transition from one year begins very early in PNG. For example, only 84 per cent of boys and 81 per cent of girls transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3.

Figure 13: Household Population aged 6 – 24 years currently not attending school.



Lack of education hampers children’s transitions to modern sector employment as adults. The percentage of women and men with no education generally increases by age group, indicating an improvement in educational access over time. About 30 per cent of girls and boys aged 6 – 14 years have not attended school, and the disparity increases with age between the boys and girls. For instance, only nine per cent of the boys aged 15 – 24 years have not attended school compared to 13 per cent of the girls. More women (44 per cent) above 25 years have no education compared to men (30 per cent). The situation has greatly improved over time - the proportion of women with no education decreased from 70 per cent of those aged 65 and over to 11 per cent among those aged 15-19. Disparities by residence area are reflected in urban and rural areas: 34 per cent of the women living in the rural areas have not attended any school compared to 13.6 per cent in urban areas. Fewer women in the Islands region (16.2 per cent) did not attend school compared to women in the Highlands region (43 per cent). The percentage of women having no education declines as the household wealth quintile increases, with 54.4 per cent in the lowest quintile having no education compared to 12.7 per cent in the highest quintile.

Figure 14: Gender parity index and percentages of girls to boys at all levels of education in PNG, 2019

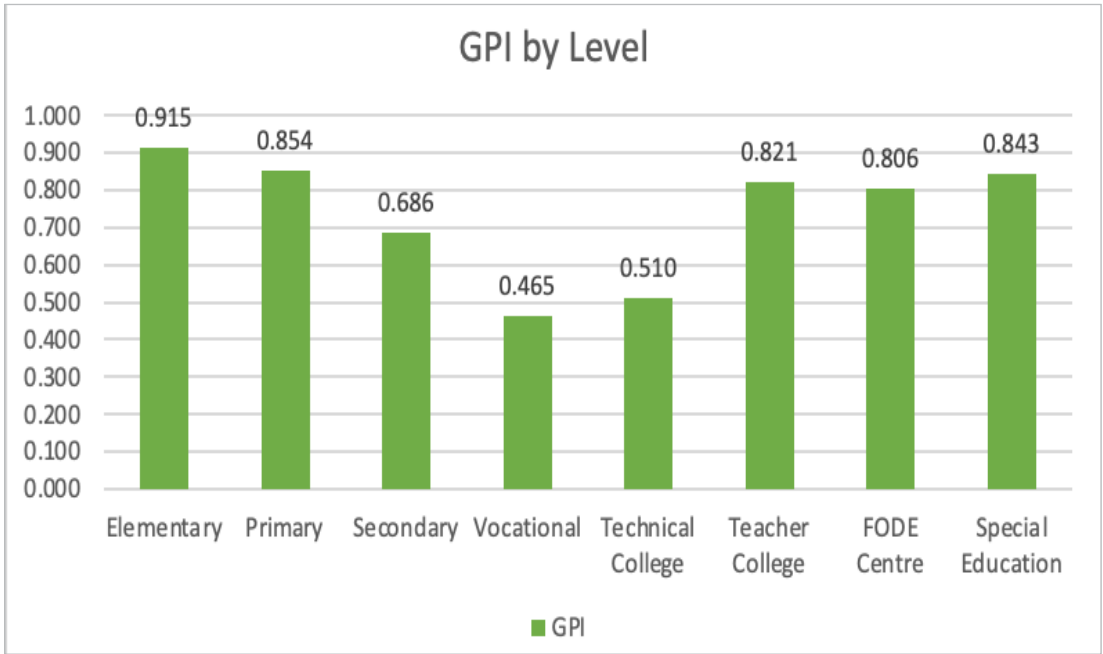
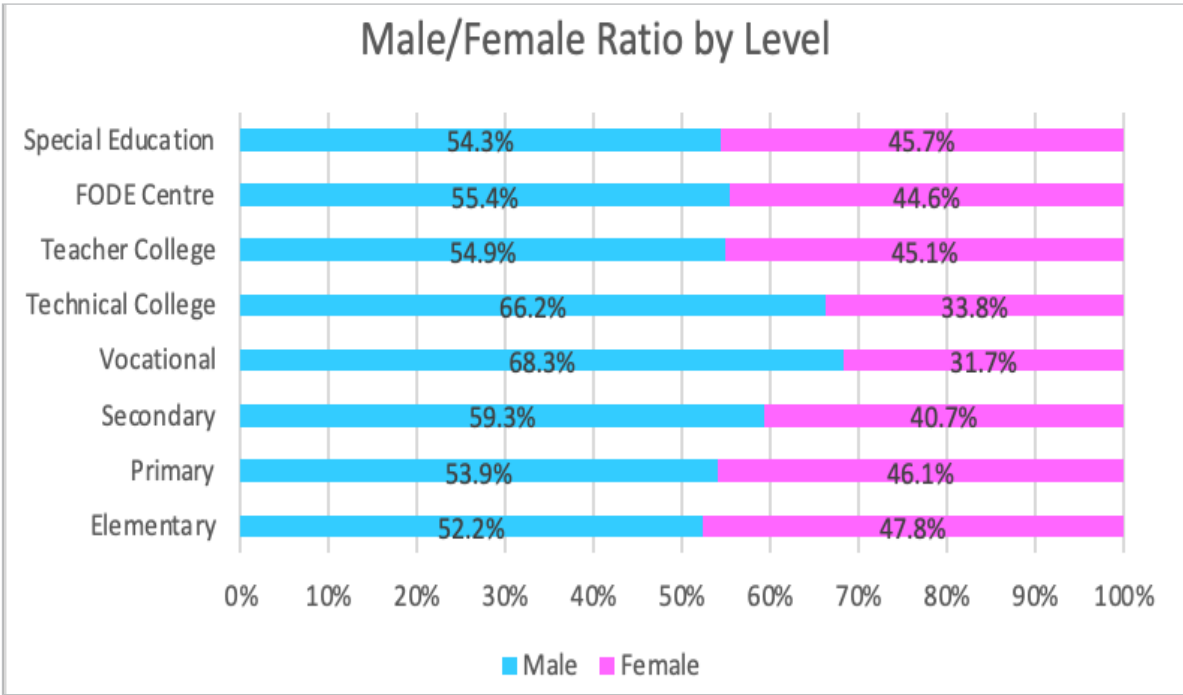


Figure 15: Male/female ratio at all levels of education in PNG, 2019



4.10.6 Recommendations

Given the alarming prevalence of violence against children, it is imperative that the government and relevant stakeholders take immediate and decisive action to protect the rights and well-being of children. To effectively address this critical issue, we strongly recommend the following measures:

- Strengthen the collection, analysis, and use of disaggregated child-related data, focusing on intimate partner violence (IPV), youth vulnerability, sexual violence, children in conflict with the law, birth registration and the links between GBV and children. Robust data will drive targeted, evidence-based action to protect children and uphold their rights.
- Strong leadership and accountability: Strong leadership and accountability is vital for turning promises into tangible progress. It is therefore crucial to establish and reinforce multisectoral coordination to ensure a unified and comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to violence against children. Maximizing resources and expertise by strengthening collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations and international partners is particularly important for the development and implementation of the National Action Plan to End Violence Against Children.
- Establish a Parliamentary Committee to End Violence against Children (EVAC): Establish a specialized parliamentary committee focused exclusively on violence against children. This Committee will monitor the Lukautim Pikinini Act (2025) and international commitments on children's rights, strengthen child-related legislation, oversee child-focused budgets, and prioritize ending violence against children. It will coordinate efforts across agencies and civil society, serve as a reporting platform, and develop recommendations to enhance child services. The establishment of this committee would be a historic and meaningful step as Papua New Guinea celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence in 2025, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.
- Increased budget allocation for children in the social sector: It is crucial to allocate more budget resources to the social sector, focusing on both infrastructure and human resources to ensure the well-being and development of children. Investing in the construction and maintenance of facilities such as schools, healthcare centres, and recreational spaces, as well as hiring and training more teachers, healthcare professionals, and social workers. This will provide children with the necessary care, guidance, and support they need to reach their full potential.

4.10.7 Internally Displaced

The focus group discussions and questionnaires across field offices in Papua New Guinea reveal a complex and challenging situation for internally displaced persons (IDPs), highlighting significant impacts on their daily lives, inability to access essential services, and low overall well-being. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and targeted interventions to address the multifaceted issues faced by displaced communities.

One of the most pervasive findings is the profound negative impact of displacement on the daily lives of individuals and communities. Participants consistently report a loss of homes, properties, and a sense of belonging, leading to significant emotional and psychological distress. This displacement often results in the disruption of social networks, family support systems, and traditional community structures, leaving individuals feeling isolated and vulnerable. The loss of livelihoods, including farming, fishing, and small-scale business activities, exacerbates financial insecurity and contributes to a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break. For instance, Kadovar villagers who were relocated to the Dandan Care Centre have experienced a severe disruption in their ability to sustain themselves, relying heavily on limited and inconsistent food supplies from the Wewak District Authority. The desire to return to their places of origin is a recurring theme, emphasizing the deep cultural and economic ties to their land. However, the feasibility of return is often hindered by ongoing security concerns, land disputes, and a lack of resources.

Food security and access to basic services emerge as critical challenges for IDPs across different regions of Papua New Guinea. Many displaced persons struggle to access adequate food and nutrition, leading to malnutrition and related health problems. The lack of clean water, healthcare, and education further compounds their vulnerability. For example, in the Wewak District, a damaged water supply system has remained unrepaired for an extended period, forcing families to rely on unreliable and often unsafe water sources. Access to healthcare and education is often limited by distance, financial constraints, and discrimination, particularly for those living in remote or underserved areas. These challenges are not only detrimental to the immediate well-being of IDPs but also have long-term implications for their health, education, and prospects.

Safety and security are significant concerns for displaced populations, who often face conflicts with host communities, landowners, and even internal disputes within care centres. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse. The lack of adequate protection mechanisms and support services for GBV survivors further exacerbates their vulnerability. In many IDP communities, GBV cases are addressed through community mediation and customary practices without the involvement of external authorities or specialized services. This reliance on traditional methods may not

always ensure the safety and well-being of survivors, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive and effective GBV prevention and response programs.

Limited access to land and natural resources is a recurring issue for IDPs, restricting their ability to engage in agriculture, build shelters, and sustain their livelihoods. Displaced persons often face restrictions on using land belonging to host communities, leading to conflicts and further hardship. In the Kiunga region, for example, IDPs have been allocated land parcels for gardening by community leaders, but the long-term security and sustainability of these arrangements remain uncertain. The lack of secure land tenure and access to natural resources not only undermines the economic self-sufficiency of IDPs but also contributes to social tensions and conflicts with host communities.

Humanitarian assistance, while provided by organizations such as the Red Cross and IOM, is often reported as inadequate and inconsistent, leaving many IDPs without the support they need. Concerns are also raised about the lack of government intervention and support, with some participants expressing frustration over unfulfilled promises and a perceived lack of prioritization of IDP issues. Barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance include deteriorating road infrastructure, security concerns, a lack of information, and neglect by local leaders. These barriers highlight the need for improved coordination, communication, and accountability in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to ensure that it reaches the most vulnerable populations in a timely and effective manner.

Social protection and support networks are often strained or non-existent for displaced persons, who rely on relatives and extended families for assistance. However, this support is often insufficient to meet their basic needs, and discrimination and social exclusion by host communities further exacerbate their vulnerability. The lack of adequate social support contributes to feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and despair, particularly for those who have lost their homes, livelihoods, and social connections. Strengthening social support networks and promoting community-based solutions are essential for fostering resilience and promoting the well-being of IDPs.

Gender inequality is a significant concern in IDP communities, with women and children facing increased risks of sexual exploitation, abuse, and domestic violence. Gender-based violence is often addressed through community mediation and customary practices without adequate external support. There is a lack of awareness about policies that support gender equality, and their impact is limited due to societal norms and male-dominated structures. In the Mt. Hagen region, participants reported that policies supporting gender equality are not well-implemented at the community level due to the prevailing societal male dominance. Addressing gender inequality and preventing GBV requires a multifaceted approach

that includes promoting gender equality in education, employment, and decision-making, as well as strengthening law enforcement and justice systems to hold perpetrators accountable.

Displaced youth face significant challenges in accessing education and employment opportunities. Many are unable to attend school due to financial hardships, discrimination, and security concerns. Those who are employed often face verbal abuse, ill-treatment, and low wages. The lack of education and employment opportunities not only limits the economic prospects of young people but also contributes to social unrest and instability. Investing in education, skills training, and employment programs for displaced youth is essential for empowering them to become productive members of society and contribute to the long-term development of their communities.

Accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities (PWDs) are significant concerns in IDP communities. PWDs often face barriers to accessing public spaces, transportation, and services. There is a lack of community support and special attention for PWDs, and their rights are often limited. Ensuring the accessibility and inclusion of PWDs requires addressing physical and social barriers that prevent them from fully participating in community life. This includes providing accessible transportation, infrastructure, and services, as well as promoting awareness and understanding of disability issues.

Despite the many challenges they face, displaced communities demonstrate resilience and a strong sense of community. They support each other through family networks and resource sharing. Some positive changes include increased engagement in church activities, participation in community work, and the allocation of land for gardening. These community-based initiatives highlight the importance of empowering local communities to take ownership of their development and build on their existing strengths and resources.

Most displaced persons express a desire to return to their homes and rebuild their lives. However, significant challenges are preventing durable solutions, including a lack of political will, security concerns, land issues, and a lack of resources. To rebuild their lives and achieve long-term stability, displaced persons need support in the form of resettlement assistance, economic opportunities, peace and reconciliation programs, and disaster preparedness training. In the Wewak District, participants emphasized the need for urgent government action to find land for resettlement and improve living conditions, highlighting the importance of addressing the root causes of displacement and creating conditions conducive to safe and sustainable return.

The discussions also touched on the importance of ocean resources for livelihoods and the threats to marine conservation. Pollution from mining, logging, and industrial waste are significant concerns, as are destructive fishing practices that deplete valuable marine resources. Protecting ocean resources is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of coastal communities and preserving biodiversity.

Cultural preservation is another critical issue for displaced persons, who face challenges in maintaining their language, customs, and traditions. Modern lifestyles and external influences can erode traditional customs and languages, leading to a loss of cultural identity and cohesion. Supporting cultural preservation is essential for maintaining community identity and fostering social cohesion.

Finally, displaced persons often lack involvement in decisions affecting their land, resources, and cultural practices. They are often excluded from decision-making processes related to settlement, assistance programs, and durable solutions. Ensuring the participation of displaced persons in decision-making is essential for promoting their rights, addressing their needs, and fostering their empowerment.

In conclusion, the focus group discussions and questionnaires reveal a complex and challenging situation for IDPs in PNG. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that includes providing humanitarian assistance, promoting access to basic services, ensuring safety and security, addressing gender inequality, empowering youth, promoting disability inclusion, supporting community-based solutions, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring the participation of displaced persons in decision-making. By implementing these recommendations, the government and other stakeholders can help to improve the lives of displaced persons and create a more just and equitable society for all.

4.10.8 People Living with Disabilities

People with disabilities in PNG experience systemic exclusion from employment, education, and essential services. Limited accessibility in public spaces, insufficient policy support, and social stigma further hinder their economic participation. Health statistics in PNG continue to insufficiently reflect the experiences of marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities.

To address these issues, the promotion of inclusive education, increased employment opportunities, and the implementation of disability-friendly infrastructure and policies are vital to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. There is a growing emphasis on inclusive service design and accessibility for people with disabilities in national health planning. Their inclusion in health decision-making processes reflects a broader commitment to equity and human rights in PNG's health sector. Policy efforts must institutionalize gender- and disability-disaggregated data systems and expand inclusive services, including sexual and reproductive health care, shelters, and legal assistance, especially in provinces with limited infrastructure. Furthermore, tailored programs for adolescent girls and women with disabilities in education, health, and leadership will be pivotal in delivering on PNG's SDG 5 commitments.

Emerging inclusive education pilots aim to expand hubs and assistive learning tools in semi-urban areas, offering scalable models for rural adaptation. However, inclusive education is still largely urban-centric and underfunded. A recent household survey indicates that only

67.8 per cent of persons with disabilities have ever attended school. Persons with disabilities often encounter compounded challenges due to physical accessibility issues and the limited availability of tailored energy solutions. Without supportive policies and environments, they are often excluded from meaningful economic participation.

The consultation on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Papua New Guinea (PNG), held on January 9, 2025, revealed several key findings that highlight the challenges and opportunities in implementing the SDGs for this marginalized group. The nine participants, representing diverse disabilities, shared their perspectives, which underscored the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy changes to ensure the inclusion and well-being of PWDs in PNG.

One of the primary findings was the inadequacy of social protection measures for PWDs in PNG. Participants reported a lack of access to essential benefits, such as those provided by the Australian pension system, which they attributed to the absence of specific policies protecting and promoting the rights of PWDs. This lack of social protection leaves many PWDs vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, hindering their ability to participate in society fully. While there were mentions of some support provided by the Provincial Government of New Ireland, these instances were considered exceptional rather than the norm. The consultation emphasized the need for a comprehensive social protection framework that ensures PWDs have access to the resources and support they need to live with dignity and independence.

Gender inequality was identified as another significant challenge, with female PWDs facing additional barriers compared to their male counterparts. These barriers include disparities in employment opportunities, increased vulnerability to harassment and abuse, and limited access to support services. The participants highlighted the fear women with disabilities experience when using public transportation alone at night, as they are more susceptible to attacks and have limited means to defend themselves. They also noted that women with disabilities often find it difficult to trust strangers offering help due to concerns about potential exploitation or offensive behavior. The consultation underscored the importance of addressing gender-specific challenges and ensuring that women with disabilities have equal access to opportunities and protection from violence and discrimination.

Youth employment and education emerged as critical areas requiring attention. Participants noted that access to education, health, and employment can differ significantly between men and women with disabilities, depending on factors such as the choice of education, the location of health facilities, and working hours. They also pointed out that programs often fail to address the specific needs of women with disabilities, making it difficult for them to access education, healthcare,

and other essential services. The consultation revealed that schools are not fully inclusive or accessible, and specialized schools often close due to a lack of funding. The need for more inclusive education teachers was emphasized, as well as the importance of supporting children with disabilities beyond Grade 8. The lack of free tuition fees for youth with disabilities further limits their income opportunities. The consultation highlighted the need for inclusive education policies and practices that ensure all young people with disabilities have access to quality education and the skills they need to secure meaningful employment.

Accessibility and disability inclusion were identified as significant obstacles for PWDs in PNG. Participants reported challenges related to accessibility in workplaces and transportation facilities, as well as ongoing stigma and discrimination. The lack of community leaders supportive of PWDs and the absence of emergency hotlines were also noted as significant concerns. While some improvements were acknowledged, such as the availability of a few employment opportunities and family support, the consultation emphasized the need for greater efforts to promote accessibility and inclusion in all aspects of society. The group recognized that, despite a few achievements, most challenges persist, and they saw the need for a collaborative approach during a pandemic, including the establishment of small and medium-scale enterprises for persons with disability. The declaration of sign language as the fourth official language in PNG is an improvement that allows improved accessibility to information for deaf and hard-of-hearing people, especially in banks and hospitals. Also, the visually impaired welcomed the introduction of PNG currency with braille dots at the corner of the PNG official paper bills. The most significant frustration is that until now, there is no legislation for persons with disability, given that the PNG Disability bill remains pending. The consultation highlighted the need for the PNG Parliament to pass the PNG Disability Bill as soon as possible.

The consultation also explored the concept of community strength and future aspirations for PWDs in PNG. Participants expressed a desire for improved advocacy, more projects, and an improved space for the disability sector. They emphasized the importance of contextualizing international commitments for PWDs in PNG and utilizing UN agency networks to explain international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The need for a Disability Focal Point within the UN in PNG to provide guidance and advice to the disability sector was also highlighted. Participants advocated for more voice for PWDs, including their local NGOs, and emphasized the importance of paying volunteers due to the lack of social safety nets. Attention to PWDs in rural areas was also deemed essential, as there is little awareness among them in the LLGs or the wards, leading to their exclusion from decision-making. More representation of persons with disability in the public sector where they are engaged in decision-making should be prioritized.

The consultation underscored the importance of empowering PWDs to speak for their rights and providing them with opportunities to work together and network with each other.

In addition to these key findings, the consultation generated several recommendations for addressing the challenges faced by PWDs in PNG. These include providing support to obtain population data on PWDs, giving attention to children with multiple disabilities and their caretakers, promoting the rights of PWDs through a national advisory body, and establishing a yearly Disability Walk to raise visibility and support for disability rights. The consultation also emphasized the need for training tailored to the disability sector and prioritized coordination among organizations for people with disabilities to strengthen efforts and increase overall awareness in society.

Overall, the consultation provided valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by PWDs in PNG regarding SDG implementation. The findings underscored the urgent need for comprehensive and targeted interventions to address the multifaceted issues faced by this marginalized group. The recommendations generated during the consultation provide a roadmap for policymakers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to work together to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all PWDs in PNG. The need to synthesize the insights gathered, share the report with relevant stakeholders and follow up on the recommendations made during the consultation was highlighted.

4.10.9 People Living with HIV/AIDS

The consultation with a network of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on March 3, 2025, revealed critical insights into the challenges and required actions for SDG 3, focusing on health and well-being, specifically HIV/AIDS. The discussions – prompted by concerns over rising infection rates and the impact of economic constraints on HIV/AIDS management – highlighted the urgent need for a revitalized and comprehensive approach. The findings underscored the importance of re-establishing proven management modalities, enhancing government engagement, and fostering collaboration with private enterprises and civil society organizations.

One of the most alarming findings was the uncontrolled rate of HIV infection in PNG, which participants attributed to the dismantling of effective management systems and prevention programs due to economic austerity. Attendees expressed deep concern over the disconnects in the government's management paradigm over the past 13 years and the potential for PNG to be categorized as an HIV/AIDS epidemic country. They emphasized that the current infection rate could wreak havoc on PNG's economy, workforce, border security, health, and education within the next 20-50 years, with projections estimating that 1 to 1.5 million people could be infected with HIV at the current rate. The urgency of addressing this issue was a recurring theme, with participants calling for immediate action to reverse the trend and mitigate its long-term consequences.

Attendees underscored the importance of the government's role in HIV medication (ART) procurement and distribution, particularly in light of the US shutdown of aid assistance to low- and mid-income countries. They voiced concerns about the cost of ART, hiccups in procurement, importation, storage, and distribution, as well as the ability and affordability of users to obtain ART. The participants also expressed concerns about the fast-growing number of unborn and infant-positive babies and those lost to treatment, contributing to the perception that HIV/AIDS is here to stay. To address these challenges, they called on the government to take over the overall management of ART, coalesce ART needs with private enterprises, and dialogue with bilateral partners and donors. They also advocated for exempting the entire procurement process from the Supply and Tenders Board ambit to expedite procedures and prevent drug shortages.

The need to restructure the National AIDS Council (NACS) and re-establish Provincial AIDS Committees was another key finding. Participants emphasized that these committees were dismantled 13 years ago as part of a cost-cutting exercise, which has had detrimental effects on HIV/AIDS management. They argued that rebuilding and refinancing NACS programs and re-operationalizing its Council to the level of operations and efficiency that brought down the incidence rate from 1.3 per cent to 0.6 per cent 15-20 years ago is crucial. The participants called for the government to re-include Provincial AIDS Committees and get its Council functioning again as a matter of urgency. They also emphasized the need to structurally and financially empower NACS to undertake aggressive prevention programs in partnership with private enterprises, CSOs, and churches.

Attendees highlighted the importance of prevention programs that were customized to PNG cultural and employment conditions and staunchly supported by private enterprises, churches, and communities nationwide. They lamented that these programs were dismantled and allowed to fall by the wayside as part of downsizing NACS. The participants called on the government to structurally and financially empower NACS to undertake aggressive prevention programs in partnership with private enterprises, CSOs, and churches. They also emphasized the need to reintroduce a single stand-alone HIV/AIDS major cross-cutting policy formulation with input from all stakeholders.

The consultation revealed concerns about the accuracy of official reports regarding the number of PLHIV, with attendees suggesting that the actual number is higher than indicated and that there is a serious case of underreporting. They claimed that there are between 80,000 and 90,000 infected people, a number that has risen significantly over the past 10-13 years. The participants called on the government to re-establish the once reliable M&E program within NACS and Provincial AIDS committees to enable reliable data on PLHIV and ART to be collected and collated as part of its purchasing planning and budgeting policies management. They also emphasized that the absence of this tool has put HIV/AIDS planning, budgeting, and forecasting into total

disarray and has affected global inter-agency partnership information sharing for assistance purposes.

Participants also raised concerns about the deficiencies in HIV/AIDS support service facilities, noting that a number of the original 120 facilities have closed since the last SDG report. They called on the government to establish one-stop shops in provinces and larger district. They recognized that the 200+ church facilities needed to be supported by the government and its bilateral partners and donors. They suggested that government support should be provided through its decentralized sources of funding. At the same time, bilateral partners, donors, and state enterprises should be requested to provide an annual assistance budget to support church-run facilities.

In addition to these key findings, attendees volunteered other critical issues, including the mental health of PLHIV, social welfare, provision of economic means, and capacity building. They wanted the government to know that many of their PLHIV and KP friends took their own lives, but they remained silent on this for fear of being stigmatized, ridiculed, and traumatized. They called for the government to take this matter seriously as it is increasingly marginalizing them. The participants also emphasized the need to provide economical means for PLHIVs through a small survival/business grant and to provide specialized training alongside mainstream training modules for PLHIVs.

Overall, the consultation with Igat Hope members provided valuable insights into the challenges and required actions for addressing HIV/AIDS in PNG within the context of SDG 3. The findings underscored the urgent need for a revitalized and comprehensive approach that includes re-establishing proven management modalities, enhancing government engagement, fostering collaboration with private enterprises and civil society organizations, and addressing the social and economic factors that contribute to the spread of HIV. The recommendations generated during the consultation provide a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to work together to reverse the rising infection rate and improve the lives of PLHIV in PNG. The call for the government to recognize and admit that it has made a mistake in its long-term HIV/AIDS management, planning, and budgeting modules reflects the urgency and gravity of the situation and the need for immediate and decisive action.

4.11 Youth

High dropout rates and a lack of vocational training programs limit employment opportunities for children and youth in PNG. Many young people leave school without the essential skills needed to enter the formal workforce, resulting in a growing number of unemployed youth. Expanding technical education, encouraging youth entrepreneurship,

and increasing access to scholarships and vocational training programs can help tackle this challenge and create pathways out of poverty. Youth and out-of-school adolescents are being increasingly supported through school-based health programs and youth-friendly clinics, providing education, preventive care, and support services that enable them to make informed decisions about their health and future.

Youth and school leavers, particularly those in urban and peri-urban areas, are at risk of being left behind due to limited job opportunities and a mismatch between available skills and labour market demand. Therefore, expanding vocational training and encouraging entrepreneurship is vital.

The focus group discussion (FGD) conducted in January 2025, with ten youth in Papua New Guinea (PNG), as part of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) on SDGs, revealed critical insights into the challenges and opportunities facing young people in the country regarding social protection, gender equality, youth employment and education, and digital literacy. Facilitated by UNFPA, the session highlighted the lived experiences of youth in PNG, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and policy changes to address the specific issues they face. The significant findings from the FGD underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach that involves government, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners, and the youth themselves in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs aimed at achieving the SDGs.

One of the primary findings of the FGD was the limited access to social services among youth, particularly in rural areas. Participants attributed this lack of access to inadequate road infrastructure and facilities, such as healthcare centres. They also noted the poor representation of youth voices in professional spaces, such as local and international conferences, which hinders their ability to influence policy decisions. The group emphasized that key stakeholders, including youth and people with disabilities, should be included in discussions on national policies and laws. They also agreed that access issues are compounded by a lack of resources from the PNG government, which further limits the availability and quality of social services. The discussion highlighted the urgent need for the government to prioritize social protection and ensure that youth have access to the basic services they need to thrive.

Cultural barriers were identified as a significant impediment to open discussions about sexual and reproductive health, particularly in conservative communities. Participants emphasized the need for culturally sensitive approaches to address these topics and provide accurate information to young people. One participant shared how their group had to integrate the topic of menstrual health with religion

and culture to effectively communicate the importance of menstrual health for young girls across the community. The consultation underscored the importance of tailoring awareness campaigns to specific cultural contexts and engaging community leaders to promote open dialogue and dispel misinformation.

The lack of adequate social protection in PNG was another primary concern raised during the FGD. Participants defined social protection as the government's provision of basic social services, such as food, clothing, and shelter to marginalized communities, including youth. They observed that social protection has not been adequately prioritized by the government and is not yet institutionalized in PNG. The group noted that PNG's young people have not been raised in a society that encourages youth contributions to positive societal impact and that government institutions in social services do not engage youth in awareness sessions on national issues. The need for the PNG Department for Community Development to prioritize social protection and for the government, CSOs, and development partners to develop and provide programs that raise awareness of social protection, especially for youth, was also emphasized.

Persistent gender disparities in opportunities for young people were a central theme in the discussion on gender equality (SDG 5). Participants noted that cultural expectations often prioritize male participation, making it difficult for young girls to access the same opportunities as their male counterparts. One participant shared her struggle to convince young girls to participate in information sessions to reach an equal number of males and females in a community program. However, positive changes were also noted, such as increased awareness of women's health issues and the nomination of women to leadership roles. The participants also acknowledged instances of backlash against women in leadership, particularly in patriarchal societies, highlighting the ongoing challenges to achieving gender equality. The consultation emphasized the need to promote initiatives that support women and young girls' leadership and participation in community decision-making processes, conduct community workshops to challenge cultural perceptions regarding gender roles and ensure equal representation in higher places, such as the National Parliament, to develop a balanced view in nation-building.

The lack of job opportunities for youth, particularly in rural areas, was a significant concern raised in the discussion on youth employment and education (SDGs 4 and 8). Participants noted the disparity in development between urban and rural areas, with many students lacking access to proper learning facilities due to underdevelopment in rural areas. The need for a practical, job-oriented education system was strongly emphasized, with one participant stressing the importance of educating children on life skills starting at home.

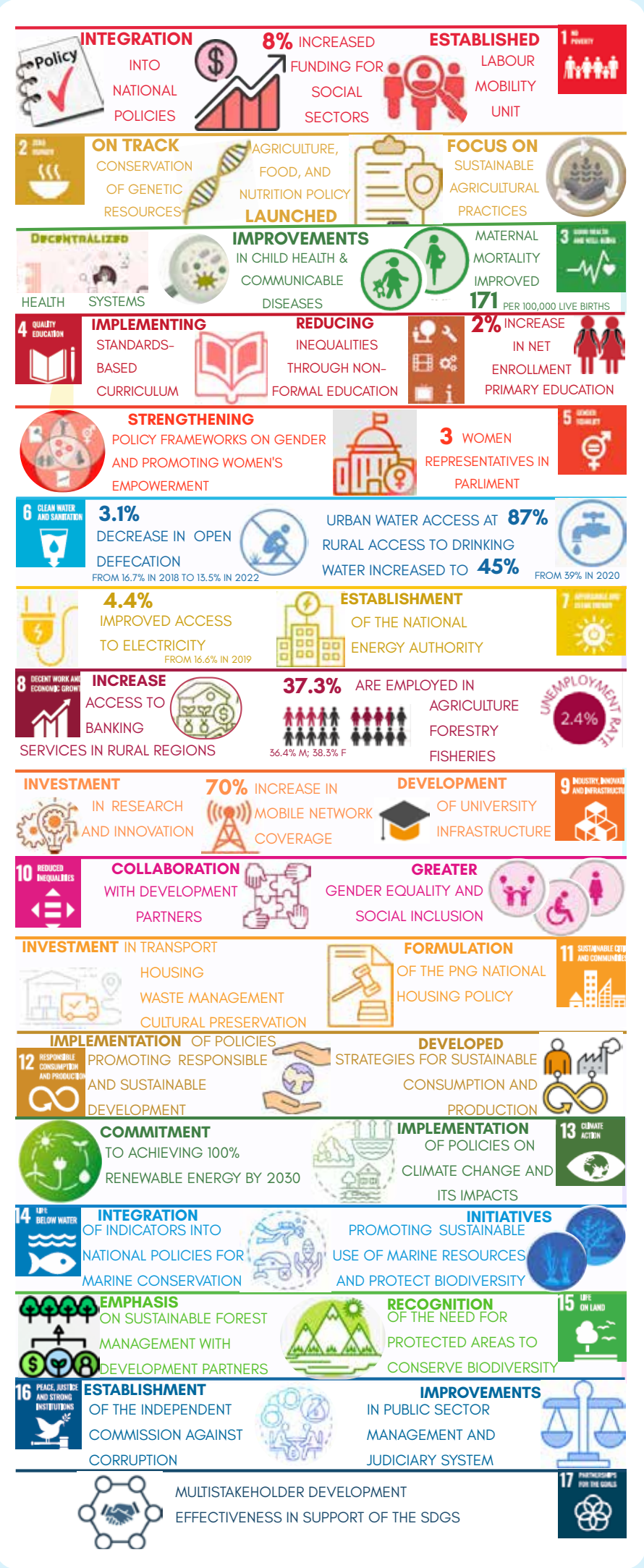
While job opportunities are available for youth in the informal sector, they often lack the necessary training and skill sets to succeed. The consultation highlighted the need to revise educational curricula to include job-oriented training and entrepreneurship education, like Technical and Vocational Education and Training, establish partnerships with local businesses to create internship and apprenticeship opportunities for young people, educate parents about available opportunities, and encourage youth who have graduated from tertiary institutions to return to their communities and create opportunities there.

The group discussed the potential of technology to enhance access to information, but it was noted that many PNGs youth lack the necessary skills to use digital platforms effectively. Concerns were raised about the misuse of technology, emphasizing the need for education on the responsible use of technology, such as the Internet, to prevent adverse outcomes. Two participants shared the ongoing efforts of their families to introduce homeschooling to the community, highlighting the potential of technology to support alternative education models. The consultation emphasized the need to implement digital literacy programs targeted at youth and their families to promote responsible and effective use of technology and provide access to digital tools and resources to facilitate learning and skill development.

Participants expressed a collective aspiration for prosperity, change, and collaboration in the future. They desired economic growth and improved living standards for all youth in PNG, a commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity and empowerment for marginalized groups, particularly women and youth with disabilities, and the importance of partnerships between youth, government, and non-governmental organizations to create platforms for dialogue and action.

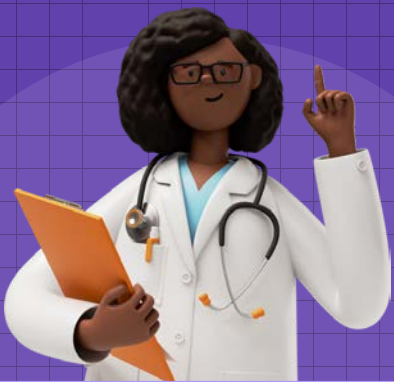
The focus group discussion provided valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by youth in PNG regarding SDG implementation. The findings highlighted the need for a multifaceted approach to address issues related to social protection, gender equality, youth employment, and digital literacy. The recommendations generated during the consultation provide a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to work together to create a more inclusive society for all youth in PNG. The consultation highlighted the importance of providing platforms for youth to contribute to the identification, design, implementation, and monitoring of programs for youth. It emphasized the need to synthesize the insights gathered, share the report with relevant stakeholders, and follow up on the recommendations made during the consultation. By implementing the proposed actions and recommendations, PNG can make significant progress in achieving the SDGs and creating a brighter future for its young people.

5. SDG Overview



PEOPLE

Empowering lives through health, education, equality, and essential needs.



98%



Of recipients of PNG's nutrition-sensitive child grant were women as of June 2024.

PGK 239M



Government funding for recruitment & training. Doubling the health workforce between 2023 & 2024.

60%



Of health facilities across 4 provinces, exceeded quality standards, signalling stronger frontline care.

Urban Youth Employment Project II (UYEP II):



- ✓ 1,800+ participated.
- ✓ 81 enrolled in short-term accredited TVET courses.
- ✓ 57 retained employment after internships.

National Education Policy 2020 to 2029:



Targets literacy, vocational skills, & rural education.



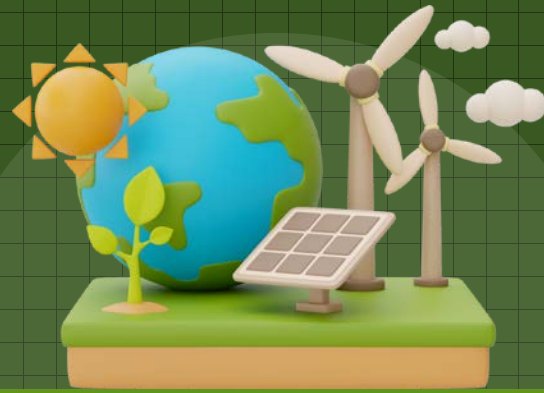
1.33M+



Childhood vaccinations administered between 2020 & 2024, supported by the Australian Government.

PLANET

Protecting our environment for a sustainable and thriving future.



Global Tuna Contribution

Papua New Guinea's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) produces ~18% of the world's tuna catch.



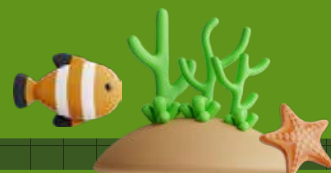
K3 Return

For every K1 invested in WaSH—driven by better health, productivity & school attendance.



Safeguarding Our Seas: Expanding Marine Protected Areas

Papua New Guinea is working to grow marine protected areas from 3.98% in 2020 to 8% by 2027. This ambitious target supports sustainable ocean management & protects marine biodiversity.



83%

Secondary schools had safe drinking water in 2023 – on track for 100% by 2030.



3%

PNG land is developed; unlocking 20% could significantly boost national GDP growth.



PROSPERITY

Driving inclusive growth through innovation, infrastructure, and opportunity.



90% of SMEs to access finance by 2030.

Efforts include agri-funding, risk tools, & business hubs. **Goal:** boost local ownership of the formal economy from 10% to 70%.



80–85% Informal Jobs

Most employment remains unregistered, especially in agriculture, trade & services—despite national efforts to formalise the economy.



111,000+

New financial accounts opened (2020–2023) in rural areas.



174,000+

Workdays generated by STREIT PNG's rural infrastructure projects.

Empowerment Program:

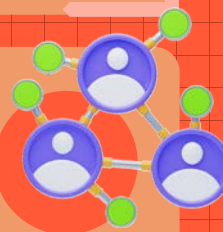
To uplift vulnerable groups – street children, people with disabilities, elderly, widows & disaster victims. The program aims to drive inclusive growth & dignity.



70%

Connected by 2027

Connect PNG is a K20B, 20 year plan to link 70% of people to services via roads, ports, energy, ICT & 14 key corridors.



PEACE

Building safe, just societies through strong institutions and transparency.



Community Peace & Restorative Justice Strategic Plan:

A 20 year framework emphasizing community-based, culturally aligned conflict resolution.

K418.7M

Investment allocated in the 2024 Budget to Law & Justice Sector.

- K341M from PNG Government
- K77.7M development partners



AUD \$90MILLION

Justice Reform Investment

Justice Services & Stability for Development (JSS4D) program launched with AUD \$90M over 4 years.

Focussed on strengthening legal services, anti-corruption & safer communities.



Justice System Outreach Strategy

80% facilitation & 20% technical assistance approach in JSS4D.

Focussed on community-driven, locally-led justice solutions.



National Village Court Revitalisation Program

Revitalising justice with better courts, land & youth tribunals & restorative pathways across villages & districts (2021–present).



PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration, global and local partnerships, capacity building



\$1.06B

Aid was received by PNG in 2021, up during COVID-19. Australia contributed 43% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2022.



48% OF GDP

PNG's projected debt in 2023 puts it at high risk of distress, say the World Bank & IMF.



Med Term Revenue Strategy:

- ✓ Modernize its tax system.
- ✓ Expand the tax base.
- ✓ Increase registration of Taxpayer Identification Numbers (TINs).



K55M

Invested in digital platforms:

- ✓ e-ID & voting systems.
- ✓ Government portal.
- ✓ Internet content filtering
- ✓ Blockchain data transfer systems.



PNG-Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP):

Supports long-term collaboration through in-agency personnel, joint training & study tours.



Trade Integration & Infrastructure:

Boosting trade through global agreements & improved border infrastructure like the Wutung Post.



6. Review of SDG Implemenation in Papua New Guinea



1

NO POVERTY

SDG 1. NO POVERTY

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Overview

In a country with a rich cultural heritage and natural wealth, ending poverty in all its forms remains PNG's most urgent and defining challenge. SDG 1 - No Poverty aims to eradicate extreme poverty for everyone, everywhere, by 2030. Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than \$2.15 (or K8.00) per day. The goal also encompasses reducing national poverty rates, as defined by country-specific criteria. In PNG, poverty is a multidimensional issue characterized by financial constraints and broader human development indicators, including income deprivation, literacy rates, employment opportunities, and limited access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas where most of the population resides. The GoPNG has incorporated SDG 1 into its national development policies, including the MTPD III & IV and Vision 2050, with a focus on economic growth, social protection, and inclusive development.

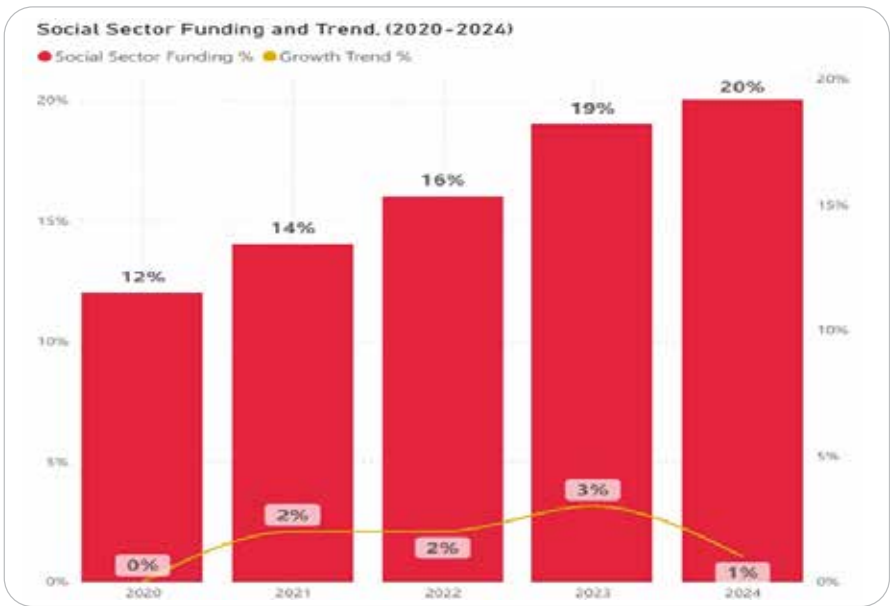
PNG has made notable strides toward reducing poverty under SDG 1, and while challenges persist, there are significant opportunities to accelerate progress through targeted, inclusive actions. The informal economy remains a vital source of livelihood, particularly in rural areas, and expanding formal employment and financial services can enhance economic security for many. Improving infrastructure such as roads, transport, and digital connectivity will help bridge geographic gaps and increase access to essential services and markets. Strengthening governance, enhancing coordination across government levels, and empowering women and marginalized groups through equitable access to resources is critical to ensuring inclusive development. While climate-related risks and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have posed setbacks, they have also underscored the resilience of communities and the need for adaptive, people-centered approaches. By investing in inclusive growth, climate resilience, and social protection systems, PNG is well-positioned to make more impactful progress in its efforts to reduce poverty.

The GoPNG has undertaken various initiatives to address poverty and advance SDG 1 (No Poverty) through inclusive economic growth and social welfare programs. Key strategies include supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through the SME Development Strategy¹⁵, which aims to enhance financial accessibility and entrepreneurship opportunities, particularly for women and youth.

Labour mobility schemes are integral to PNG's social protection initiatives, aiming to enhance employment opportunities and economic well-being for its citizens. In 2019, the GoPNG established the Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) within the Department of Treasury to facilitate and coordinate participation in international labour mobility programs to generate employment and improve economic security in disadvantaged areas¹⁶.

Infrastructure investments such as Connect PNG Program, which builds and upgrades roads, jetties, airports and rural airstrips, and invests in electrification, and digital connectivity projects, have been implemented to reduce the rural-urban divide and facilitate greater access to markets and essential services. Additionally, climate resilience strategies, encompassing sustainable agricultural practices and disaster preparedness programs are being pursued to strengthen communities' ability to adapt to climate change and mitigate economic vulnerabilities. By integrating poverty reduction measures across multiple sectors, PNG continues to work towards ensuring that economic growth is both inclusive and sustainable, with a focus on supporting its most vulnerable populations. Achieving these goals requires collaborative efforts between the government and stakeholders to ensure effective implementation and long-term impact.

Figure 16: Social Sector Funding



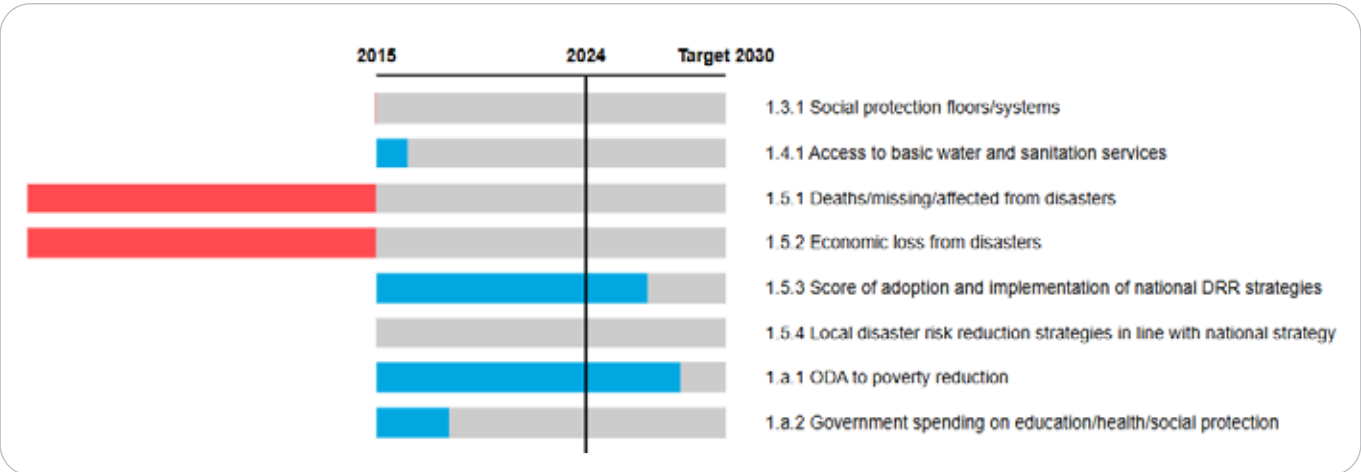
¹⁵ SME Policy and Master Plan 2016-30

¹⁶ <https://www.treasury.gov.pg/special-projects/labour-mobility-unit/>

Since the first VNR in 2020, PNG has made significant progress in social development and poverty reduction, particularly in achieving SDG 1. The government strengthened partnerships with CSOs, churches, and the private sector. Public-Private Partnerships and donor support expanded in the areas of health, education, and infrastructure. As shown in Figure 16, from 2020 to 2024, funding for social sectors increased steadily. In 2020, 12 per cent of the capital budget was allocated to health, education, and welfare, rising to 14 per cent in 2021, 16 per cent in 2022, and nearly 19 per cent in 2023. By 2024, it reached 20 per cent, with K712.9 million for health, K334.4 million for education, and K99.0 million for welfare and cultural services¹⁷. These investments aim to improve access to essential services in rural and vulnerable areas. A mid-term review of the National Population Policy (2015–2024) was undertaken in 2023. Awareness programs on early marriage and delayed pregnancy were introduced, targeting women and girls. Despite progress, challenges remain in coordination, financing, and reaching remote communities.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 17. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 1



There is notable progress in the adoption and implementation of national disaster risk-reduction strategies (1.5.3) and increased official development assistance towards poverty reduction (1.a.1). The coverage of social protection (1.3.1) and access to water and sanitation (1.4.1) remain stagnant. Government spending on health and social protection has increased, although the share of government spending on education has decreased (1.a.2). The human and economic impact of disasters caused an increased toll (1.5.1, 1.5.2), whereas local strategies for coping with and mitigating disasters are lacking (1.5.4).

An analysis of poverty indicators over the past five years reveals persistent challenges despite targeted interventions. According to the 2022 Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES), PNG's labour market reflects a complex and fragile structure. Although the unemployment rate is relatively low at 2.4 per cent, this figure conceals widespread underemployment and a heavy reliance on informal livelihoods. Over 54 per cent of workers have paid wages or jobs while about 33.8 per cent are employed individuals are self-employed in agriculture, fishing, or informal trade highlighting the economy's structural vulnerabilities. The labour force participation rate stands at 51.8 per cent, with an employment rate of 97.6 per cent, indicating that only about half of the working-age population is actively engaged in economic activity. Notably, 37.3 per cent of individuals claimed that school or training is the main reason they are not participating in the labour force. This barrier disproportionately affects women and contributes to persistent gender gaps in economic inclusion.

These labour market dynamics are further compounded by limited access to education, health, and basic infrastructure, which restrict both economic participation and upward mobility. Despite 42 per cent of individuals completing primary school, literacy rates remain low, particularly among women at 51 per cent. Access to electricity is limited, with only 6 per cent of households connected to the grid, while 66 per cent rely on solar energy and 7 per cent lack electricity. Food insecurity is a persistent issue, affecting 79 per cent of households, with the New Guinea Island's region experiencing the longest shortages, lasting up to 5.2 months¹⁸.

Multidimensional Poverty and Economic Disparities: Around 40 per cent of PNG's population lives below the national poverty line, while 56.6 per cent face multidimensional poverty, with an additional 25.3 per cent classified as vulnerable. Women and marginalized groups encounter more significant economic barriers, as many women primarily engage in informal economic activities with limited financial support, further restricting their economic opportunities and resilience.

¹⁷ Department of Treasury and National Planning (2020–2024). Public Investment Program Budget Books: Volume 3A (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). Independent State of Papua New Guinea. Retrieved from official national budget documents detailing annual sectoral allocations for health, education, and community development programs.

¹⁸ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). (2023). PNG Rural Household Survey Report 2023.

54.5%

of workers are employed in paid or wage-earning jobs. This includes 60.3% of employed men and 48.3% of employed women.

33.8%

of workers are self-employed, working on their own farm or garden, or in fishing. This includes 38.7% of employed women and 29.3% of employed men.

To address multidimensional poverty holistically, the Child Nutrition and Social Protection Project incorporates cash transfers, health and WASH interventions, and a national social protection framework. In addition to financial support, the project promotes positive parenting, early stimulation, and behaviour change through monthly Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) sessions. By integrating health, nutrition, and social protection services, the initiative strengthens human capital and lays the foundation for a national safety net system that targets PNG's most vulnerable populations.

Between 2019 and 2022, PNG's Human Development Index (HDI) showed a modest upward trend, increasing from 0.562 in 2019 to 0.568 in 2022, indicating incremental progress in key development areas¹⁹. This improvement is attributed to slight advancements in health outcomes and educational attainment. However, the country's HDI ranking remained relatively stable, moving from 157 in 2019 to 154 in 2022, indicating that while progress has been made, it has been modest compared to global standards²⁰.

Life expectancy rates in 2022 were 69 years for women and 63 years for men, both below the average for countries with medium human development. Educational attainment also lagged, with the average male completing around six years of schooling and the average female only four years. These persistent challenges underscore the need for targeted policies to enhance health services, educational access, and economic opportunities, particularly for women and marginalized communities, to foster more substantial human development in the years to come.

In PNG, it is widely recognized that the adult population holds some form of customary rights to land. Ownership is typically communal and organized through clans, where primarily male members with higher status possess decision-making authority regarding the allocation of land among their members or to others. Some matrilineal communities have a tenure system that grants women ownership rights, especially in coastal regions. Women in male-dominated societies can utilize their father's or husband's land. In PNG, there are two distinct categories of land rights: first, land ownership rights, and second, land user rights. Individuals with land ownership rights can issue land usage rights to members of their group or others. The ILG database shows that approximately 1,312 ILGs are registered in PNG²¹. ILGs are formal legal entities or body corporates that can be recognized formally. However, ILGs are not a title to specific land but rather a certificate of recognition for certain groups of people. Without clear land titles, many rural households are unable to access credit or invest in productivity-enhancing infrastructure, further entrenching poverty.

Progress on Poverty Reduction

Infrastructure development has been a key strategy in PNG's efforts to reduce poverty. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other development partners have made significant investments in road and bridge construction, particularly in the highlands and rural areas, to

improve access to markets, education, and healthcare services. For instance, the Sustainable Highlands Highway Investment Program aims to rehabilitate 430 km of national highways and bridges, linking rural farmers to urban markets. Improved transportation networks have reduced travel time, increased trade opportunities, and facilitated access to essential services. However, maintenance remains a significant challenge, with poor governance and budget constraints hindering long-term sustainability.

The GoPNG's Child Nutrition and Social Protection Project, represents a significant step toward integrated poverty reduction and child welfare in PNG. The project piloted a nutrition-sensitive child grant in Madang and East New Britain, targeting households within the first 1,000 days launched between 2021 and 2024. As of June 2024, approximately 80 per cent of eligible households received the grant, with 98 per cent of beneficiaries being female, promoting both child nutrition and women's economic inclusion. Furthermore, 60 per cent of grant recipients became first-time owners of bank accounts or mobile wallets, strengthening financial inclusion and household resilience. The program also includes community actions for nutrition supporting positive practices around WASH, nutrition, positive parenting, nurturing care and appropriate child care practices. Early findings indicating improvements in dietary diversity, service utilization, and immunization rates among young children.

Access to finance is essential for poverty alleviation and economic resilience. Initiatives like the Microfinance Expansion Project, backed by Australia and ADB, have increased the number of active deposit accounts by 165,000 and enhanced financial literacy among small business owners. Women-led businesses have benefited from training and access to small loans, enabling them to expand their income-generating activities. Nonetheless, many rural businesses still face financial exclusion, as banking services are concentrated in urban areas, and loan interest rates are often excessively high.

The Government has implemented a series of progressive, pro-poor fiscal measures aimed at alleviating the economic pressures associated with the rising cost of living, particularly for low-income earners. As part of ongoing tax relief reforms, the Government has exempted individuals earning less than PGK 20,000 per annum from paying personal income tax – providing critical financial relief to a significant portion of the population. And effective June 2025, the Government further removed the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 13 essential household items, including staple foods and hygiene products. These measures are designed to directly reduce the cost of everyday goods and provide immediate support to vulnerable households. Together, these initiatives reflect the Government's commitment to inclusive economic policy and targeted interventions to protect livelihoods and improve living standards amid ongoing socio-economic challenges.

PNG's social protection programs are significantly underdeveloped, reaching only a small portion of the population. During the COVID-19

pandemic, the COVID-19 Rapid Response Program, valued at \$200 million, provided temporary relief through price subsidies for small-scale farmers and targeted financial support for women entrepreneurs. However, the impact was short-lived, as the program lacked a sustainable framework for poverty reduction. Expanding cash transfer programs, pensions for the elderly, and unemployment benefits would enhance economic stability for vulnerable communities.

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) initiatives, supported by development partners, aim to equip young people with job-ready skills. These programs have trained thousands of students in trade skills, entrepreneurship, and technical fields. However, job opportunities remain scarce, especially in rural areas where industrial and commercial activity is minimal. The government must develop policies that link vocational training to job placement programs and foster employment growth driven by the private sector.

Despite these efforts, significant obstacles persist. Rural isolation, weak governance, and insufficient social protection systems continue to hinder progress. Gaps in infrastructure restrict economic participation, and bureaucratic inefficiencies delay the execution of poverty reduction programs. To achieve substantial progress, the government and development partners must concentrate on sustainable, long-term investments in economic empowerment and inclusive growth.

Next Steps

- 1. GoPNG will integrate infrastructure and social protection in sub-national and district planning to ensure that all poverty reduction programs align with broader development goals.
- 2. Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships: Involve government agencies, private sector actors, development partners, vulnerable populations, and local communities in policy design and implementation.
- 3. GoPNG will enhance data collection and monitoring by implementing real-time tracking systems to assess the impact of investments and adjust strategies accordingly.
- 4. GoPNG will encourage community participation by empowering local communities to take ownership of infrastructure projects and social protection through wantok system initiatives for long-term sustainability.



¹⁹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2023). Rich countries attain record human development while half of the poorest have gone backwards, finds new UNDP report.
²⁰ Country Economy. (2023). Papua New Guinea - Human Development Index (HDI).
²¹ DLPP Reporting Template



SDG 2. ZERO HUNGER

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Overview

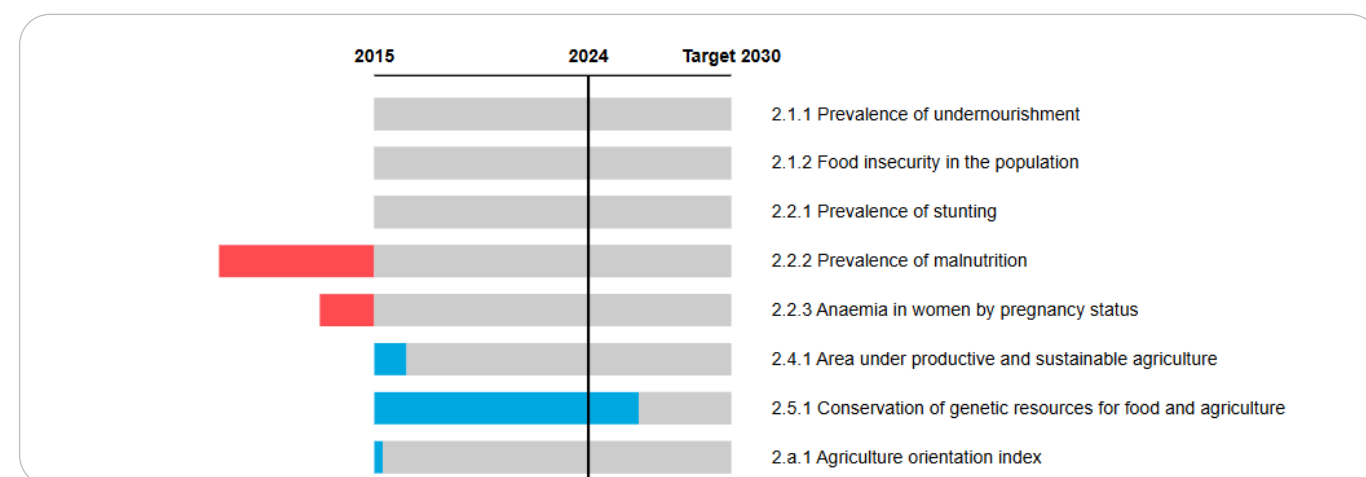
From the fertile highlands to the coastal plains, the promise of Zero Hunger in PNG lies in harnessing local resilience to transform food systems and nourish every child, family, and community. SDG Goal 2: Zero Hunger aims to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 while promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The GoPNG is committed to achieving this goal through strategic policies and targeted interventions, such as the National Food Security Policy 2018–2027 and the National Nutrition Policy 2016–2026. These frameworks guide national efforts to enhance food production, improve nutrition, and strengthen food security for vulnerable populations. In collaboration with development partners, the government is investing in agricultural productivity, promoting climate-resilient farming practices, and supporting smallholder farmers who significantly contribute to the country's food supply. Initiatives focused on food fortification, improved market access, and community-based nutrition programs are being implemented to combat malnutrition and ensure access to nutritious food. These efforts align with global strategies to create inclusive and sustainable food systems essential for long-term food security and economic stability. Building on this strategic framework, PNG has translated these commitments into targeted actions since its first VNR in 2020.

Since 2020, the country has made significant progress in enhancing food security and addressing malnutrition. The agricultural sector, which employs over 85 per cent of the population, has been crucial to national food production. Efforts have concentrated on reducing stunting, implementing nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and enhancing value chains. Collaborations with development partners, academia, sub-national governments, and other stakeholders have been strengthened, resulting in targeted interventions to mitigate stunting and prioritize food and nutrition security across all levels of government. The GoPNG launched the Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition Policy Support Program in 2024 to support the development and implementation of policies in these crucial areas. Building on the insights gained from its first VNR, PNG has refined its approach to food and nutrition security by adopting more integrated, community-focused, and evidence-based interventions.

Key lessons from the 2020 VNR – such as the importance of WASH integration, maternal and antenatal care, and decentralized nutrition governance – have informed the current multi-sectoral approach. These initiatives reflect PNG's commitment to achieving SDG 2 by 2030, with a focus on sustainable agriculture, improved food security governance, and research-driven solutions to combat malnutrition at all levels.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 18. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 2



The country is on track for the conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture (2.5.1) and received increased official flows towards agriculture (2.a.2). However, the increased fluctuation of food prices (2.c.1), and the prevalence of malnutrition (2.2.2) and anemia (2.2.4) threaten the achievement of this goal. Accelerated progress is needed in all the other indicators, including on undernourishment (2.1.1), food security (2.1.2), stunting (2.2.1), and sustainable agriculture (2.4.1).

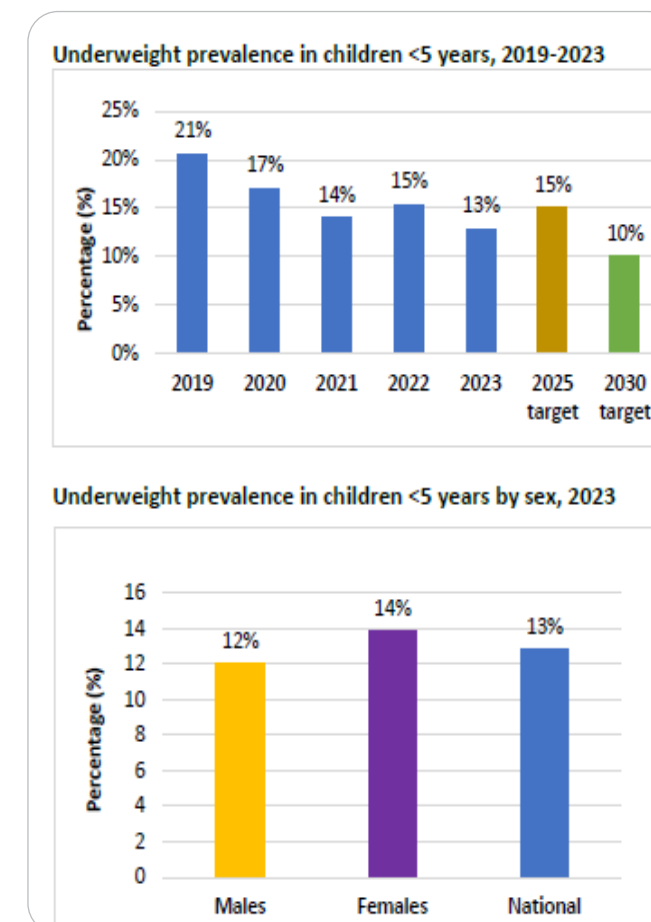
The National Department of Health's 2023 Sector Performance Annual Review (SPAR 2023) highlights various health indicators, particularly concerning child nutrition, maternal health, and disease-related vulnerabilities.

One primary indicator is the prevalence of underweight children under five, which directly reflects the effectiveness of early childhood nutrition and healthcare. Encouragingly, the national underweight rate steadily decreased from 21 per cent in 2019 to 13 per cent in 2023²³, achieving the 2025 national target as early as 2021. Sex-disaggregated data shows a 14 per cent prevalence in females and 12 per cent in males, with 15 provinces reporting declines between 2022 and 2023. The highest rate was recorded in Gulf (23 per cent), while the lowest was in AroB (5 per cent)²⁴.

Beyond nutritional indicators, progress in preventing diseases that exacerbate malnutrition such as diarrhoea, demonstrates the broader impact of cross-sectoral health interventions. Closely related to nutrition, the incidence of diarrheal disease in children under five significantly dropped from 182 cases per 1,000 children in 2019 to 126 cases in 2023, well ahead of the 2025 national target, which was surpassed in 2021. This decline reflects improvements in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) programs, crucial for preventing illnesses that impair nutrient absorption.

Figure 19: Underweight prevalence in children under 5 years.

Source: SPAR 2023



According to the 2022 Socio Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES), only 18.5 per cent of households had access to safe drinking

18.5%
of households have
access to safe
drinking water.

water, while 47.3 per cent reported an insufficient water supply, which significantly affected food preparation, hygiene, and overall nutrition. Furthermore, only 8.2 per cent of households used safely managed sanitation services, while over 50 per cent relied on pit latrines without slabs or open pits. These deficits exacerbate vulnerability to diarrheal diseases and hinder progress in improving child nutrition outcomes (SDES 2022).

Additional progress is being driven through the Government funded Child Nutrition and Social Protection Project (CNSP), launched in collaboration with DFAT, the Department for Community Development and Religion, and UNICEF. As of June 2024, the CNSP introduced PNG's first nutrition-sensitive social protection child grant in Madang and East New Britain provinces, targeting the first 1,000-day households to combat stunting. Accompanying this is a modular Management Information System (MIS) to track grant delivery, improve targeting, and monitor outcomes. Key components include behaviour change communication, village health assistant training, community-level scorecards, and early stimulation programs, all of which contribute to stronger local nutrition governance and improved child health outcomes.

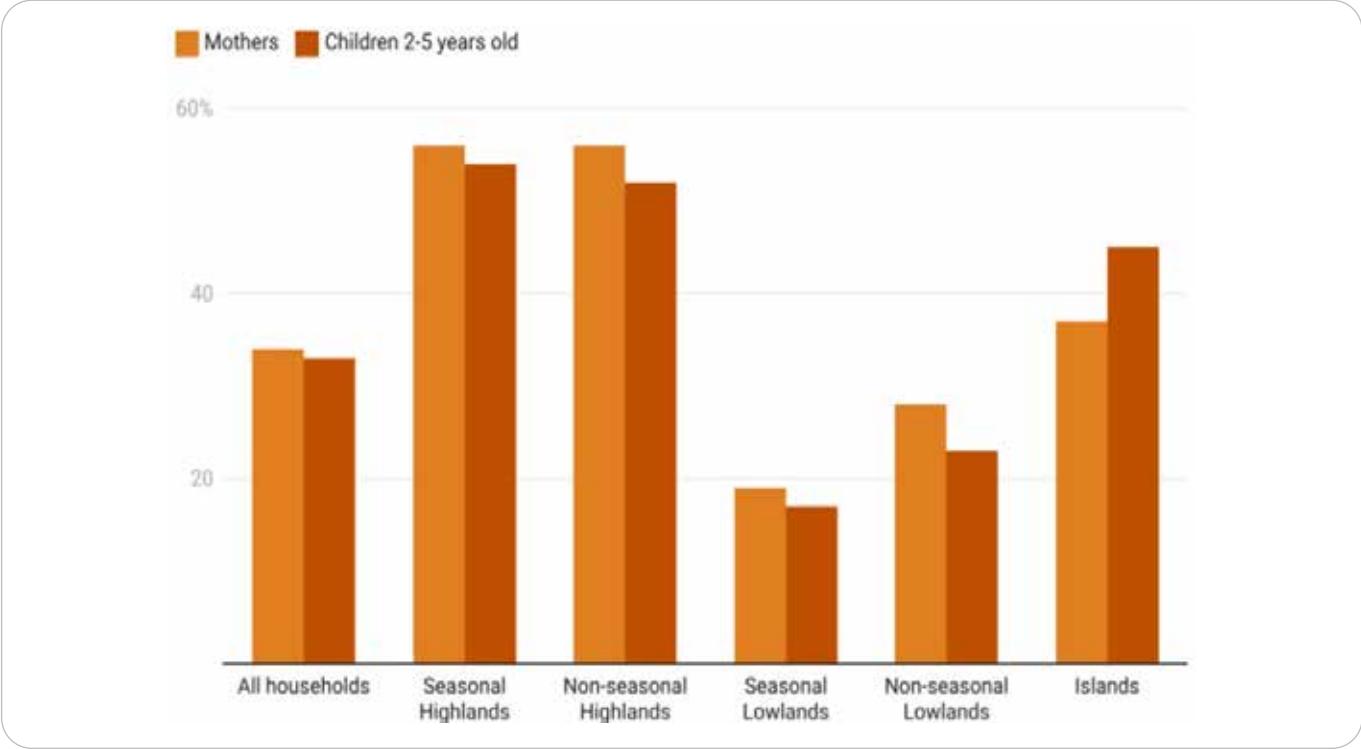
However, not all indicators show similar progress. The case of pneumonia-related child mortality highlights ongoing gaps in clinical care. Likewise, the case fatality rate for children under five hospitalized with pneumonia remained above 2 per cent from 2019 to 2023, with a rate of 2.3 per cent in 2023. Although this is more than double the national target of 1 per cent, the data highlights the urgent need to strengthen facility-based care and early intervention, particularly for female children, who had nearly 20 per cent higher fatality rates than their male counterparts.

Maternal nutrition and prenatal care also play a critical role in determining newborn health outcomes, as reflected in trends related to low birth weight. Low birthweight rates, a key indicator of maternal nutrition, averaged 8 per cent nationally in 2023. Rates were highest in West Sepik (16 per cent) and Milne Bay (14 per cent), while Chimbu (2 per cent) and Southern Highlands (4 per cent) reported the lowest. Encouragingly, 16 provinces saw improvements or stability compared to 2022. These outcomes link directly to antenatal care coverage and nutritional support for pregnant women.

²³ SPAR Report 2023 (Sector Performance Annual Review) National Department of Health, Papua New Guinea

²⁴ SPAR Report 2023 (Sector Performance Annual Review) National Department of Health, Papua New Guinea

Figure 20. Mothers and children who achieve minimum dietary diversity (Source: 2023 PNG Rural Household Survey)



Additional health indicators, such as malaria treatment rates and bed net use, impact child nutritional outcomes. While malaria control primarily focuses on disease prevention, its role in reducing malnutrition is significant in rural areas with high exposure and limited access to healthcare.

Maternal health indicators such as the percentage of pregnant women receiving at least four antenatal visits and the proportion of births that occur in facilities also contribute to early-life nutrition outcomes. The 2023 SPAR confirms substantial progress driven by cross-sector coordination in health, agriculture, and education.

Education access also affects food and nutritional outcomes. SDES 2022 revealed that only one in five children of upper-secondary age are enrolled in school, with attendance dropping significantly in grades 11 and 12. Limited educational attainment restricts awareness of nutrition, reproductive health, and sustainable agriculture, particularly in rural areas.

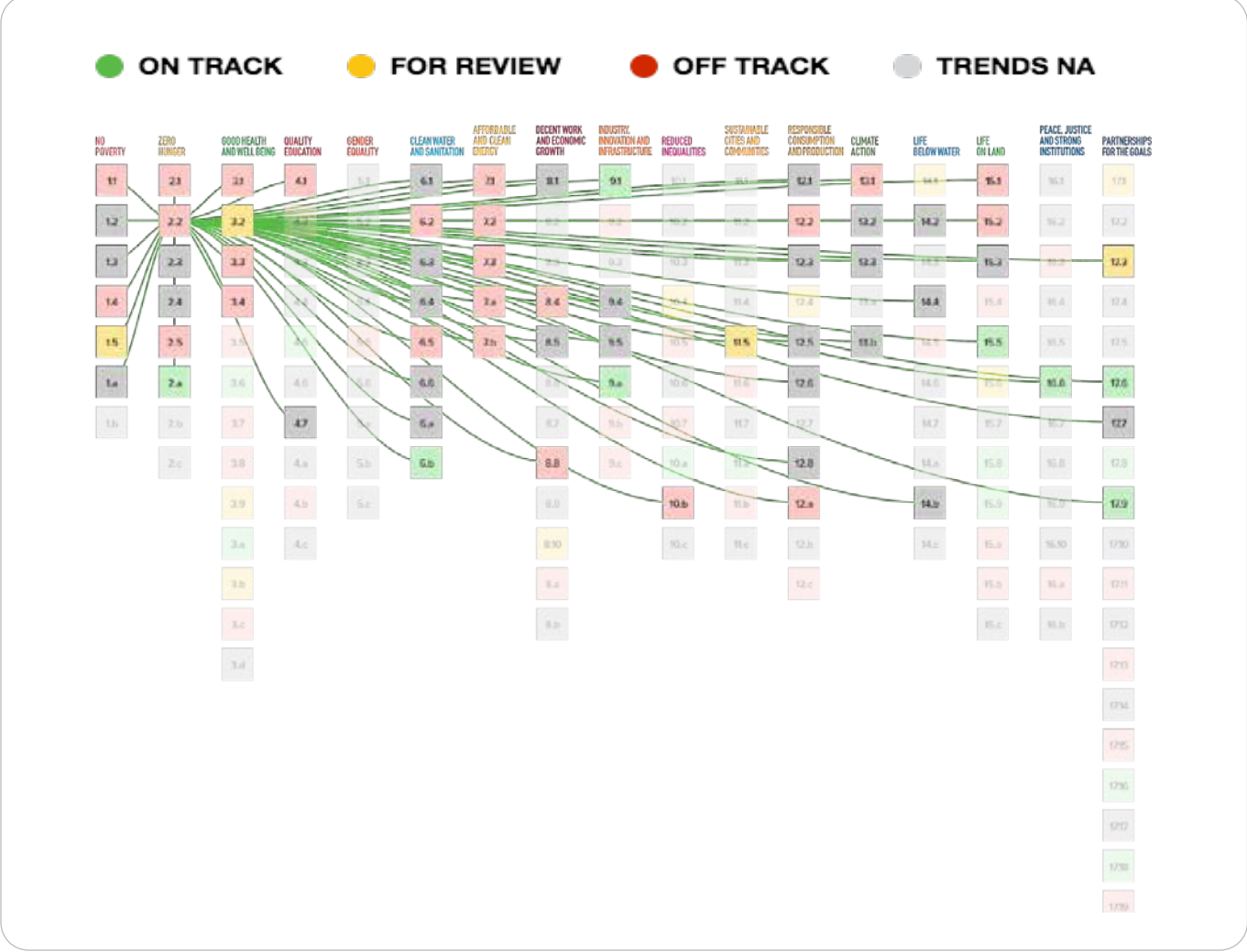
SDG Interlinkages and Strategic Impacts: Focus on Target 2.2

The strategic importance of Target 2.2 ending all forms of malnutrition – extends well beyond SDG 2, with proven interlinkages across health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), economic growth (SDG 8), and poverty reduction (SDG 1). Evidence shows that early childhood stunting, which affected 37 per cent of children under five in PNG as of 2020, significantly impairs cognitive development, reduces school completion, and lowers lifetime earnings, translating into an estimated 11 per cent loss in GDP annually due to reduced adult productivity²⁵. Rural populations are particularly vulnerable, with food insecurity rates as high as 58 per cent²⁶. Through integrated strategies – including inland aquaculture, livestock breeding, and honeybee farming – under the National Nutrition Policy and the National Food Security Action Plan, the Government aims to combat malnutrition using climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive agriculture. The cross-cutting nature of Target 2.2 is further demonstrated by its alignment with SDG 1 (Target 1.5), where nutrition resilience reduces vulnerability to shocks, and with SDG 3 (Targets 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4), highlighting nutrition's role in maternal and child health. Its contribution to SDG 4 (Target 4.2) emphasizes improved early childhood learning through better nutrition, while its link to SDG 5 (Target 5.5) reflects the empowerment of women as critical to nutritional outcomes. Further connections to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), and SDG 17 (Partnerships) reinforce the multisectoral value of investing in nutrition. As such, investments in nutrition are not only critical to achieving SDG 2 but also serve as catalytic enablers for broader SDG progress, offering compounding returns in human capital development, institutional efficiency, and equitable economic transformation. These synergies underscore the importance of integrating nutrition-focused interventions into multi-sectoral policy planning and local development efforts to accelerate progress across the SDGs.

²⁵ SUNICEF PNG, Country Programme 2018-2022: Nutrition Programme Strategy Note, 2016

²⁶ PNG Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2018

Figure 21. This illustrates the interlinkages of SDG 2, Target 2.2—which focuses on ending all forms of malnutrition—with other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 2.2 is visually connected via green lines to multiple targets across different goals, demonstrating how addressing malnutrition contributes to broader development outcomes. Source: <https://sdgdiagnostics.data.undp.org/PNG/synergies-and-tradeoffs>



Next Steps

- 1. Strengthen National Policies and Investment:** Embed food and nutrition security in annual budgets and national strategies (e.g., MTDP IV 2023–2027). Mobilize investments in line with the National Food Security Policy 2018–2027 and the National Nutrition Policy 2016–2026. The 2024 Capital Investment Budget provides key allocations to agriculture, health, and rural services.
- 2. Enhance Data Collection and Monitoring:** Strengthen national and provincial data systems to regularly capture key nutrition indicators, including child growth, food insecurity, and dietary diversity. Use disaggregated, real-time data for informed decision-making and accountability (SDES 2022).
- 3. Expand Partnerships and Coordination:** Deepen collaboration across government agencies, development partners (such as the World Health Organization and the European Union), civil society, and research institutions. Formalized platforms and data-sharing systems will increase impact and reduce duplication.
- 4. Adapt Strategies for Sub-National Needs:** Empower provinces and districts to localize programs through context-sensitive approaches. Combine infrastructure investments (e.g., water, health posts, storage facilities) with localized agricultural and nutrition interventions.
- 5. Empower Local Communities:** Further strengthen community actions for nutrition especially through the engagement of Village Health Assistants (VHA). The VHAs provide nutrition services at household level through monthly household visits. This model has been trialed under the CNSP project and early results indicate very strong prospects in contributing to optimal nutrition outcomes. In addition, train community leaders to monitor progress using participatory methods and merge traditional knowledge with technical expertise. Ownership of food and nutrition programs at the local level will strengthen sustainability and inclusion.



SDG 3. GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Overview

Health is the heartbeat of national development and strengthening the well-being of every citizen in PNG is both a moral imperative and a pathway to lasting prosperity. PNG has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to improving health outcomes, aligning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, mainly through SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. From June 2019 to June 2024, this commitment has been reflected in the implementation of the National Health Plan 2021–2030, which prioritizes primary health care, universal health coverage, and the strengthening of health systems. Alongside the MTDPs, these frameworks have guided strategic policies and targeted investments aimed at expanding access and enhancing service delivery. With robust support from multilateral and development partners including bilateral commitment, efforts have focused on improving maternal and child health, combating communicable diseases like tuberculosis and malaria, responding to emerging health threats, and expanding the health workforce. Despite these advancements, PNG continues to face systemic challenges, including a dual burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases and persistent disparities in health outcomes and access, particularly for rural populations, women, children, and people living with disabilities.

Insights from PNG's 2020 VNR and the COVID-19 response have highlighted the need for resilient, decentralized health systems. These experiences informed the design of the National Health Plan 2021–2030, particularly its emphasis on strengthening provincial governance capacity, implementing digital surveillance, and developing inclusive service models.

The Government's long-term Vision 2050 and the PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030, require a transformation of the current health delivery system to meet the health SDGs and the improvement of the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of PNG. The National Health Plan 2021-2030 is aligned to PNG DSP 2010-2030 and Vision 2050. The NHP 2021-2030 focus is to strengthen health systems to ensure sustainable level of service delivery at the primary health care level.

The MTDP IV 2023-2027 identifies priorities, deliverables and targets for the service delivery enabling sectors as a strategy and guide to the governments resourcing in the next five years. The NDOH as the key agency coordinating the implementation of the NHP 2021-2030 and health sector MTDP II (2023-2027) is further translating the

Government MTDP IV priorities for the Health Sector into "Health Sector MTDP aligned projects and programs" to focus on deliverables over the next five years, to address the health needs of the people.

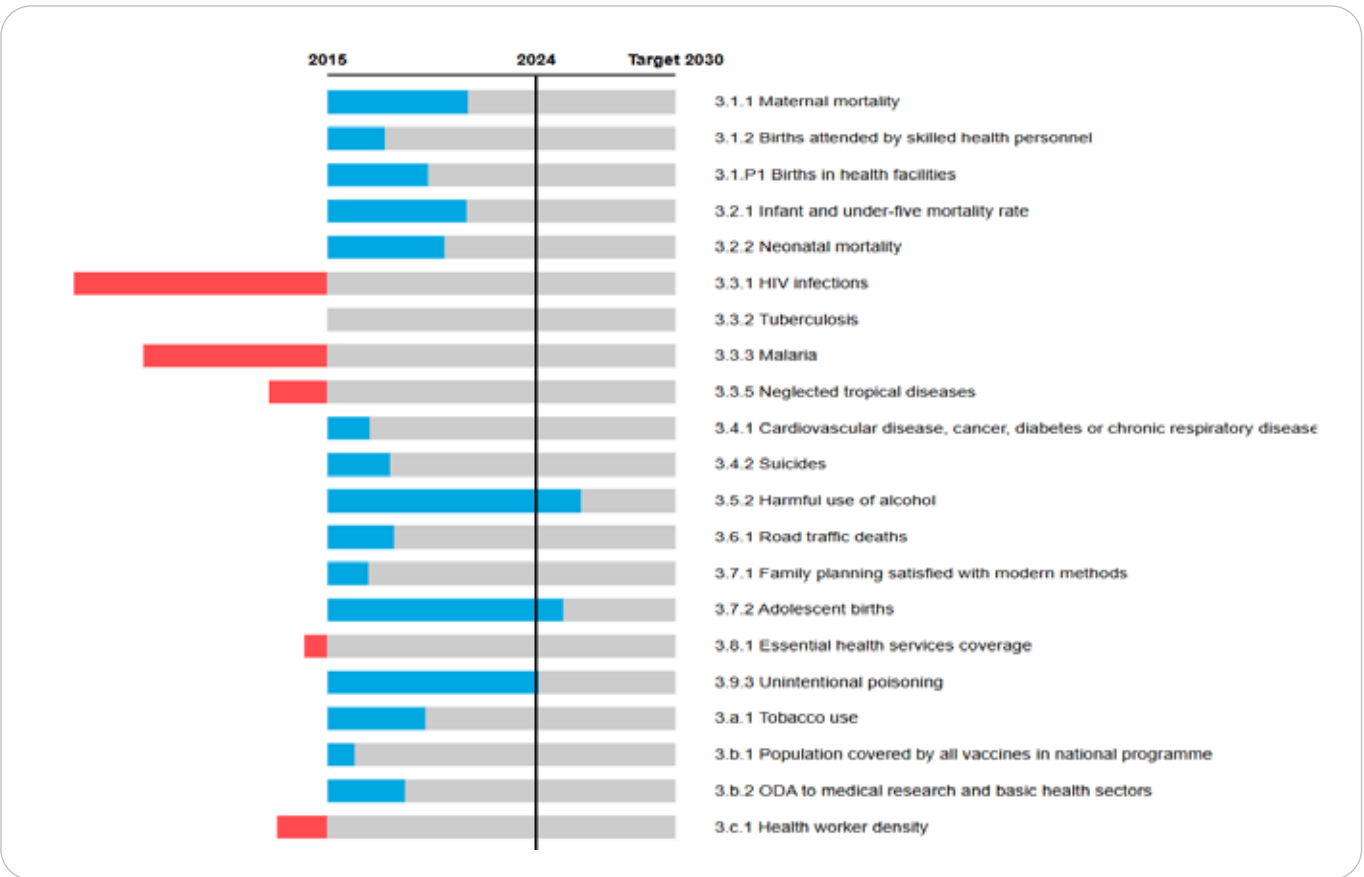
The rehabilitation of rural aid posts and health centres has posed a persistent challenge. Although some Community Health Posts (CHPs) are operational or under development, an estimated 40–60 per cent of rural health facilities remain closed or partially operational, thereby restricting access to essential services for the majority of the remote and those in hard-to-reach population. Similarly, although significant investments have been made in public health emergency preparedness in response to COVID-19, including staff training and equipment procurement, these efforts have often been reactive and have not yet yielded long-term resilience or robust disease surveillance systems.

Efforts to strengthen maternal health have yielded modest gains, though significant service gaps persist. Maternal mortality rates continue to be high, and antenatal coverage and skilled birth attendance remain inaccessible to large portion of the population, particularly in remote areas. While 63 per cent of existing facilities provide some level of birthing care, there has been no new establishment of Emergency Obsteric and Newborn Care (EmONC). While national policies emphasize partnerships with Provincial Health Authorities, churches, and NGOs, the actual implementation of these partnerships varies significantly across provinces due to inconsistent governance capacity and financing. Preventive care for non-communicable diseases, including interventions targeting tobacco and alcohol use and poor diets remains insufficiently prioritized despite its increasing burden on public health.

Although recognized as critical, progress in the medical supply chain and workforce development has been limited. Chronic stockouts of essential medicines have persisted, with health facilities in 2023 reporting adequate stocks for only 4.8 months of the year, falling short of the target. While tools like mSupply have been introduced to enhance inventory management, inadequate logistics and delayed deliveries from central warehouses continue to undermine availability. On the workforce side, rural areas continue to be severely understaffed. Although some provinces have met staffing targets, many such as Central and Jiwaka Provinces fall short of the necessary health worker densities. This disparity highlights the need for more substantial incentives, training programs, and deployment strategies to ensure equitable health service delivery nationwide.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 22. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 3



This goal has shown significant progress in several indicators. Notably, reduction in harmful use of alcohol (3.5.2), adolescent births (3.7.2), and unintentional poisoning (3.9.3) are on track, therefore progress should be sustained to achieve the 2030 targets. Targets on maternal and child mortality rates (3.1.1, 3.1.2, .3.1.P1, 3.2.1, 3.2.2) have also shown substantial improvements, with current efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality rates being effective but need to be accelerated. Initiatives to prevent suicides (3.4.2), reduce tobacco use (3.a.1), and increase vaccination rates among children (3.b.1), along with measures to reduce road traffic deaths (3.6.1), have also yielded encouraging results. However, accelerated efforts are required on non-communicable and communicable diseases (including HIV, TB, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases), health workforce (3.c.1), and health services coverage (3.8.1) to meet the 2030 targets.

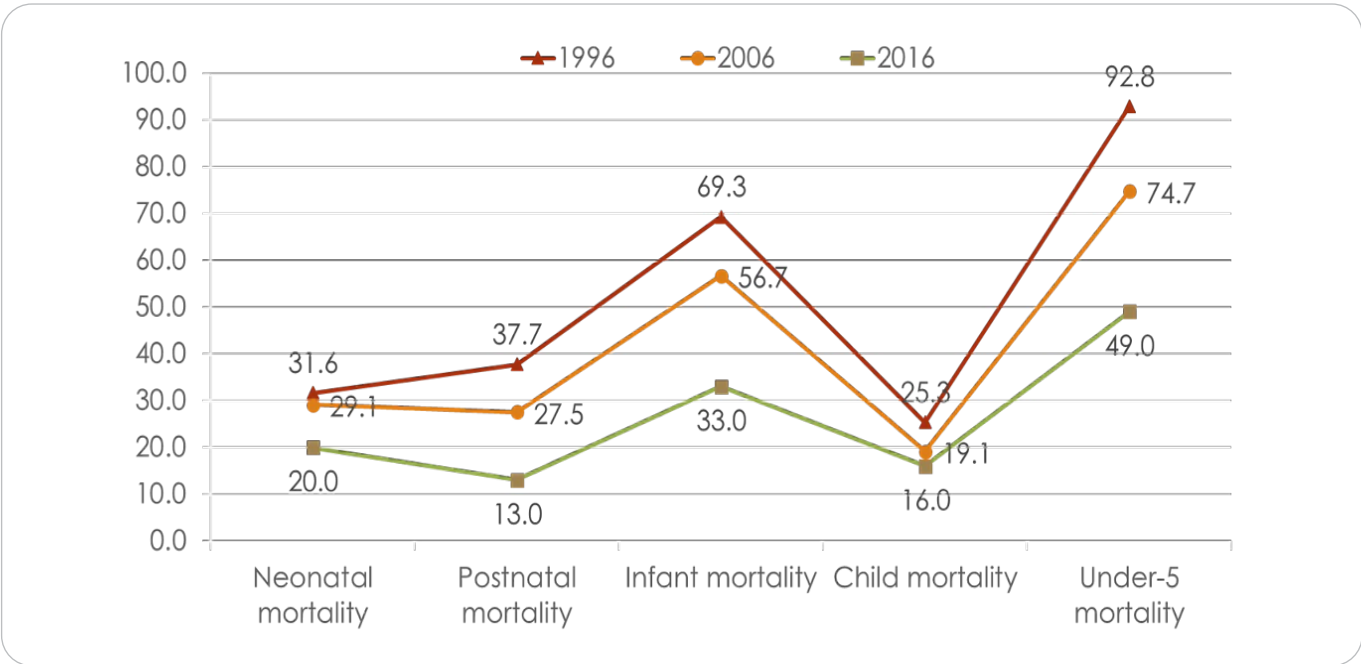
PNG has made commendable progress in advancing SDG 3 despite systemic challenges such as geographic isolation, limited resources, and workforce shortages. The National Health Plan 2021–2030 has played a crucial role in laying the foundation for universal health coverage (UHC), emphasizing people-centred care, prevention, and service integration across all levels of the healthcare system. PNG's response to public health emergencies, such as COVID-19, demonstrated the resilience of its health infrastructure while maintaining its focus on improving maternal and child health, controlling infectious diseases, and ensuring access to essential medicines. The efforts of development partners have significantly strengthened PNG's health system through funding, technical assistance, infrastructure support, and workforce training initiatives.

Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health

Maternal mortality remains a significant concern, with the most recent estimate at 171 deaths per 100,000 live births (2016–2018 DHS). As previously noted, the absence of updated data underlines the need for real-time maternal health surveillance to assess the impact of post-2019 interventions. In the interim, community health monitoring, facility-based birth records, and periodic assessments using proxy indicators such as skilled birth attendance and ANC coverage should be institutionalized to supplement national estimates. While maternal health remains a critical national concern, it is essential to acknowledge that the underlying data are outdated. Despite the release of the 2022 Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES), this nationally representative effort did not capture updated measurements for core health outcomes such as maternal mortality, neonatal mortality, or skilled birth attendance. As a result, national reporting continues to rely on the 2016–2018 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), limiting the ability to assess the effectiveness of post-2019 interventions and pandemic-period responses. Future surveys should include comprehensive health modules aligned with SDG indicators and the National Health Plan monitoring framework to enhance evidence-based planning and real-time monitoring of SDG 3 progress.

It is observed that at the highest level of indicators or impact indicators measuring the development status of health in PNG had shown some improvement (evidence in 2016-2018 DHS). Children are better nourished and are more likely to survive the threatening environment of their early years. There is improvement in neonatal mortality, postnatal mortality, infant, mortality, child mortality and under-5 mortality since 1996. More generally, the community is living longer, although significant expectation exist depending on where one lives and resources and educational opportunities are at their disposal.

Figure 23: Neonatal mortality, postnatal mortality, infant, mortality, child mortality and under-5 mortality since 1996 (Source: MTDP IV indicators and Targets for the Health Sector, NDOH)



Health services to the people need substantial strengthening as the determinants of health continue to have an impact on the service delivery to the population. Much of the decline is deteriorating availability and performance of many of the public health facilities and this is further attributed to the neglect of the health system, especially in rural areas. Many of the rural health facilities have either closed or are not fully functioning. Limited resources, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate and declining accessibility to basic health services are among core issues which undermine the health status of the PNG population. More than 80 per cent of health problems can be addressed properly and at less cost through effective delivery of primary healthcare, while others', particularly maternal health complications, require effective and accessible hospital services at the district level.

Table 4. The key performance indicators aligning to the MTDP IV and SDG for the health sector.

No.	Indicator	Sources	Base-line (2020)	Annual Targets				
				2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	DHS 2016-2018	171	149.7	142.6	135.5	128.4	121.3
2	Infant mortality rate (up to 12 months) per 1,000 live births	DHS 2016-2018	33	28.2	26.6	25	23.4	9
3	Under 5 Mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	DHS 2016-2018	44	36.8	34.4	32	29.6	27.2
4	Life Expectancy Rate	DHS 2016-2018	64.73	66.31	66.84	67.37	67.89	68.42
5	Total Fertility Rate	NHIS	3.50	3.37	3.33	3.29	3.24	3.20
6	TB incidence per 100,000 population	NHIS	432	430.4	400.2	391	362.8	327.6
7	Incidence of reported malaria patients per 1000 population	NHIS	108	105.3	104.4	103.5	102.6	101.7
8	Proportion of children under 1-year old immunised against measles (%)	NHIS	46	48.7	49.6	55.6	51.4	52.3
9	Proportion of 1-year old children immunised with doses of DTP Hep B Hib (%)	NHIS	47	49.4	50.2	51	51.8	52.6
10	Proportion of population accessing essential health services (Level 4-6) (%)	NHIS	1.08	15.8	20.6	25.5	30.4	35.3
11	Number of health facilities per 1,000 population	NHIS	0.002	0.007	0.009	0.01	0.01	0.01
12	Cancer incidence rate per 100,000 population (%)	POMGH/ANGAU/NHIS	To decline over time (Total Admissions between 2018-2022: 940)					
13	Number of Cardio incidences per 100,000 population	POMGH/NHIS	To decline over time (Total Admissions in 2022: 450)					

Source:
Health MTDP II 2023-2027

In addition to national-level challenges, subnational disparities are also evident. The 2022 UNFPA DFAT – supported Health Facility Survey indicates that provinces in the Highlands Region face notably poorer maternal health outcomes, with limited availability of trained midwives and emergency referral systems underscoring the importance of tailoring interventions to provincial contexts, where gaps in infrastructure and staff coverage exacerbate risks for women and newborns. The maternal mortality ratio has shown no improvement since 2019, signaling a critical need for a renewed focus on maternal health services. Only 29 per cent of pregnant women attend at least four antenatal care visits, and 42 per cent of deliveries occur in health facilities often without a skilled birth attendant. However, projects such as the Rural Primary Health Services Delivery Project, supported by development partners like ADB, have expanded access to maternal health services in remote areas²⁷.

The World Bank-supported Child Nutrition and Social Protection Project (CNSP) has made significant contributions to enhancing essential health service delivery, particularly in maternal and child health. The project also introduced village scorecards and expanded Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) activities, further increasing maternal participation and satisfaction with health services. As of June 2024, 96 per cent of eligible health facilities (151 out of 157) across East New Britain, Simbu, Central, and East Sepik Provinces were assessed for Minimum Service Quality using the Integrated Supervision Checklist. Among these, 60 per cent of facilities surpassed the 60 per cent minimum quality threshold, indicating strengthened readiness and performance of frontline services.

The 2022 UNFPA's DFAT – supported Health Facility Survey found that just 63 per cent of facilities offered birthing care, and only 25 per cent had reliable electricity, which significantly impacts emergency response capacity and vaccine storage.

In child health, the under-five mortality rate declined modestly from 60 to 58 deaths per 1,000 live births between 2019 and 2024. This improvement is linked to integrated health interventions, public awareness campaigns, and expanded immunization programs. Malnutrition remains a challenge, contributing to 45 per cent of child deaths, particularly among rural and low-income children²⁸.

Neonatal mortality has remained static at 23 deaths per 1,000 live births since 2019. Contributing factors include limited access to emergency obstetric and neonatal care, especially in rural regions. Prioritizing facility-based births, early essential newborn care and exclusive breastfeeding, and access to skilled care is crucial to reversing this trend²⁹.

²⁷ ADB Reporting Template
²⁸ PNG National Nutrition Policy, 2023
²⁹ PNG National Nutrition Policy, 2023

Development partners have played a vital role in supporting maternal and child health outcomes. ADB's health project portfolio supported the formulation of 14 national policies and the development of rural health infrastructure³⁰. The Australian Government funded over 1.3 million vaccinations and reached 400,000 individuals with integrated health and family planning services³¹. The WHO Primary Health Care intensification initiative in Bougainville doubled childhood vaccination coverage between 2023 and 2024³².

Communicable Diseases

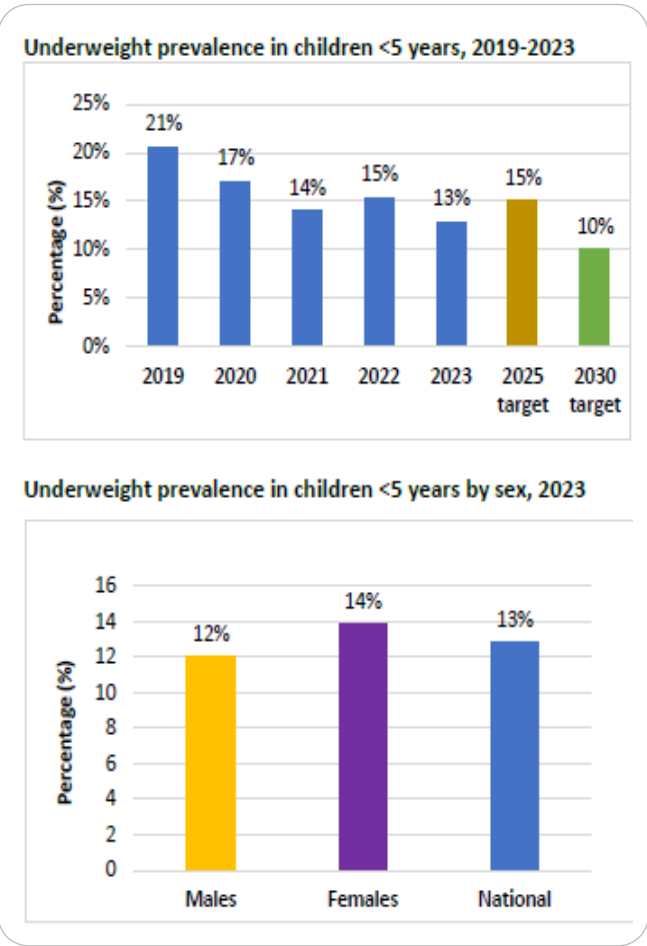
HIV incidence in PNG has risen, with approximately 6,700 new infections per year, or 0.39 per 1,000 uninfected individuals. Only 50.4 per cent (NDOH estimate, 2024) of people living with HIV who know their status receive antiretroviral treatment. Vulnerable populations include adolescents, key populations, and children. There were estimated 790 new child infections in 2023. The National HIV Strategy 2024 – 2028 and partner-led interventions such as condom distribution and PrEP are pivotal in reversing these trends³³.

PNG continues to battle one of the world's highest TB burdens, with around 40,000 new cases reported annually, equivalent to 432 per 100,000 population³⁴. Systematic screening in high-burden regions, combined with the introduction of the BPaL/M regimen, has improved case detection and treatment outcomes³⁵. However, 80 per cent of hospitals lack proper TB infection control, and 50per cent lack dedicated wards for TB treatment³⁶.

Malaria incidence dropped by 14 per cent, from 112 cases per 1,000 population in 2019 to 96 in 2023, with a notable decrease observed in 2021, likely due to disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the detection and reporting of cases. Regionally, the New Guinea Islands recorded the highest malaria incidence, closely followed by the Momase, with rates of 173 and 166 per 1,000 people. Achieving the 2025 target is possible if current malaria control strategies are enhanced and maintained, particularly by increasing the availability of testing and treatment services and ensuring the continued effectiveness of insecticide-treated bed nets. The highest malaria incidence in 2023 was observed among children under five years, highlighting serious concerns about their vulnerability to severe disease.

Control efforts include distributing bed nets, increasing access to diagnostics, and conducting community outreach. However, Morobe experienced a 70 per cent rise in malaria cases from 2022 to 2023, emphasizing the importance of province-specific interventions and surveillance³⁷. Australia's funding of outbreak response in Simbu Province enhanced prevention and treatment efforts³⁸.

Figure 24: Incidence of malaria per 1000 population, 2019-2023 and by age group, 2023. SPAR 2023



While there is no officially published hepatitis B incidence rate, the hepatitis B birth dose immunization coverage remains at 35 per cent, indicating significant room for improvement³⁹. Over 1.33 million childhood vaccinations were administered between 2020 and 2024, supported by the Australian Government⁴⁰.

Non-communicable Diseases (NCD)

Emerging data from the Sociodemographic and Economic Survey (2022) and the National Nutrition Policy indicate that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) particularly those associated with lifestyle risk factors, such as poor diet and tobacco use are on the rise. However, screening and preventive care for conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and obesity remain limited.

The limited attention given to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in health service delivery contrasts with their rapidly increasing burden. While the National Nutrition Policy highlights diet and lifestyle-related concerns, there is no dedicated national policy for NCD prevention or integrated NCD service delivery model across primary health care facilities. Data on NCD-related morbidity and mortality remain sparse, and community awareness of risk factors such as tobacco use, alcohol

consumption, and physical inactivity is low. To reduce the long-term strain on the health system, PNG must prioritize the development of an NCD policy and scale-up of integrated prevention, screening, and treatment at the primary care level, especially in urban districts.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

The unmet need for family planning remains high, with a contraceptive prevalence rate of only 24 per cent for modern methods⁴¹. Factors include geographic inaccessibility, cultural norms, and supply gaps. The NDOH, UNFPA and several NGOs, such as Marie Stopes and faith-based organizations support integrated family planning programme services in the country. World Vision's SRH program, with an annual budget of USD 50 million, supports integrated family planning services across 12 provinces⁴².



Planning for the Future: A Miner's Choice
November 16th, 2024, Yanaga Top, Bulolo, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea.

50-year-old alluvial miner Nopy Asam was panning in the Wau River when a noise interrupted him. It was the sound of a voice over a loudhailer announcing that the Marie Stopes PNG outreach team would be in the area to provide Family Planning services, including vasectomies.

As parents of seven children, Asam and his wife had already decided that they did not want to have any more, as it was a lot of work to provide for the children they already had. "My wife and I did not use family planning [services] before because we were afraid. Now, I worry about my wife, who works very hard to look after our children. I, too, work very hard to find money and food, and it is a struggle, so I agreed to stop having children permanently," he said.

After consultation with the MSPNG outreach team, Asam said he felt more comfortable with the service and consented to receive it once he understood it better. It was important to Asam and his family that he get a vasectomy so that they could be healthier for longer for their children. Asam highlighted the simplicity of the procedure. "It didn't take long - it was easy. I didn't need to go to a big hospital, and I felt comfortable talking to the MSPNG staff. After the procedure, I was given something to eat and drink, and then I went home."

Asam said he was mocked when discussing his choice to have a vasectomy with his family and friends but took it in his stride, telling them they could watch him get one first and decide if they wanted one too. Asam now encourages others to visit family planning centres.

"All men and women can take up family planning. It is not just for mothers. Us men must get a vasectomy when we have a lot of children and let our wives take a break from giving birth and taking contraceptives."

Note: Story & Picture Consent given by Nopy Asam

³⁰ ADB Reporting Template
³¹ AHC Reporting Template
³² WHO Reporting Template
³³ UNAIDS
³⁴ WHO Reporting Template
³⁵ Burnet Institute
³⁶ <https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-2383743/v1>
³⁷ SPAR 2023
³⁸ AHC Reporting Template
³⁹ Health World Vision 2023
⁴⁰ AHC Reporting Template

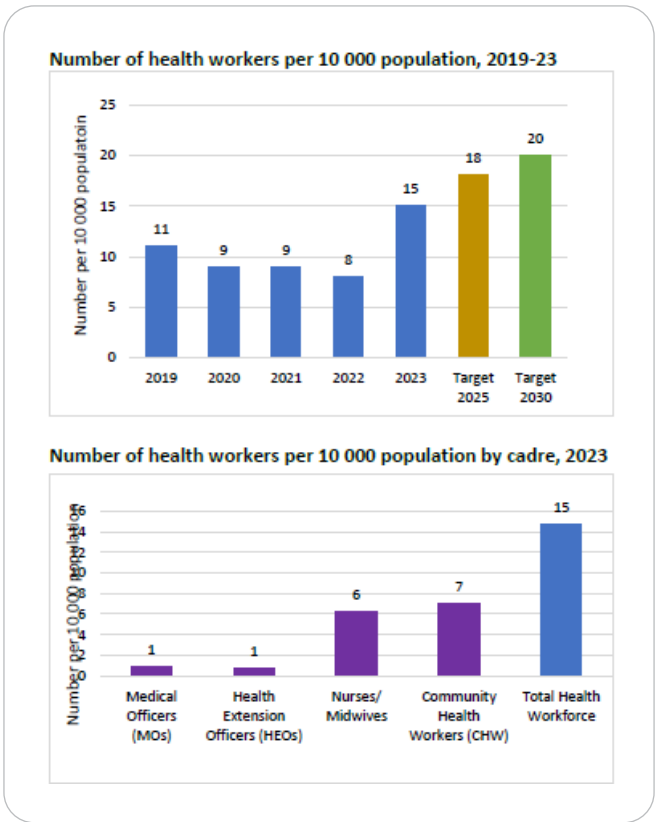
⁴¹ National Reproductive Health Policy
⁴² Country Fact Sheet World Vision PNG

The adolescent fertility rate remains high at 68 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19, with 12 per cent of adolescent girls having begun childbearing and adolescents accounting for 30 per cent of maternal deaths⁴³. Socio-cultural drivers and limited youth-friendly services contribute to this rate.

The injury rate from road traffic accidents and other causes declined from 35 to 23 per 1,000 population, a 34 per cent reduction between 2019 and 2024⁴⁴. Major investments like the PGK 627 million Highlands Highway Program and the PGK 90 million Rural Bridge Program have improved road safety and access⁴⁵. Young males and rural pedestrians remain the most affected groups.

Health Infrastructure and Workforce

Figure 25: Number of health workers per 10,000 population, 2019–2023 and by cadre, Health worker density declined from 11 per 10,000 population in 2019 to 8 in 2022 but rebounded sharply to 15 in 2023, nearing the 2025 national target. This increase reflects prioritization by the GoPNG and improved workforce funding. Community health workers and nurses/midwives constitute most of the workforce. Source: SPAR 2023



Hospital infrastructure remains limited, with only 23 national and provincial hospitals yielding a ratio of 0.0023 per 1,000 population⁴⁶. Major capital projects include the K156 million Enga Hospital,

the K50 million PMGH Specialist Program, and the K10.4 million Central Provincial Hospital, all of which highlight the government's commitment⁴⁷. From 2020 to 2024, PNG allocated between K518 million and K712 million annually to the health sector. Notably, K209.1 million was directed toward capacity-building in 2024⁴⁸. Investments in CHW and nursing schools, as well as in the School of Medicine, support long-term workforce development.

The health workforce doubled between 2023 and 2024, with PGK 239 million allocated for recruitment and training. Despite this, rural staffing gaps and gender imbalances remain⁴⁹.

Medical Supply and Health Security

Access to essential medicines improved through WHO-supported logistics reforms, but shortages persist, particularly in rural areas⁵⁰. WHO and ADB investments are addressing supply chain bottlenecks and weaknesses in health infrastructure.

According to the SPAR 2023 and the WASH in Healthcare Facilities Report, only 27 per cent of health centres had access to piped water, and just 18 per cent had functioning hand hygiene stations, which limits infection control and patient safety in rural facilities.

Health security capacity has improved, with increased training and planning in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR). PNG's IHR score reached 45 per cent, still below the regional average of 54 per cent but improving⁵¹. The National Health Plan 2021–2030 highlights that provinces such as Central and Jiwaka fall significantly below national staffing benchmarks, reinforcing the need for targeted deployment incentives and strengthened Community Health Worker (CHW) training programs.

Overall, PNG's progress under SDG 3 between 2019 and 2024 showcases a positive trajectory characterized by strategic investments, collaborative partnerships, and systemic reforms. To maintain momentum, continued investment in human resources, infrastructure, and essential health services – particularly for vulnerable populations – remains critical.

Gaps in Tracking Mental Health Indicators:

Mental health in PNG is in a dire state, with significant gaps in tracking and addressing mental health indicators. Despite rising psychosocial stress – particularly among youth and populations affected by displacement, violence, or economic insecurity – mental health remains notably absent from core health reporting frameworks. Yet there has been substantial support to mental health interventions, especially during humanitarian emergencies provided by a variety of stakeholders. Currently, there are no standardized national surveys, registries, or routine monitoring for prevalent disorders such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. PNG's Mental Health Act

2015 was designed to enhance mental healthcare services but has faced criticism for its implementation⁵². Concerns have been raised about its alignment with other health laws and its impact on facilities such as Laloki Psychiatric Hospital. In response, the Health Ministry has committed to reviewing the Act and considering amendments or potential repeal to address these challenges⁵³. To address these issues comprehensively, PNG must develop a national mental health policy framework that integrates services into primary care, implements school-based psychosocial support, and promotes community-led interventions. Establishing clear targets, investing in mental health surveillance tools, and integrating psychosocial indicators into broader health information systems aligned with SDG 3.4 and the MTDP IV's resilience goals will be crucial steps toward strengthening PNG's mental health infrastructure.

Many SDG 3 indicators focus on service outputs (e.g., immunization rates or skilled birth attendance) but do not fully capture foundational system-building investments such as governance, supply chain performance, health workforce equity, or digital health readiness. While tools like mSupply are being rolled out, broader digital health adoption – including electronic health records and telemedicine – remains fragmented. Incorporating system performance metrics into national dashboards and SDG reporting frameworks would promote better alignment with the National Health Plan 2021–2030 and support sustainable delivery of essential services across all regions.

Several health indicators – including maternal mortality and neonatal health – continue to rely on outdated data sources such as the 2016–2018 DHS. The absence of updated health metrics in the 2022 Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey further highlights the risk of relying on lagged data to guide policy. PNG's ability to track progress on SDG 3 would benefit from the institutionalization of regular, timely, and integrated health surveys that include SDG-aligned modules and are disaggregated by sex, age, geography, and disability status.

Next Steps

Building on the foundations of the National Health Plan 2021–2030, lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing support from development partners, the GoPNG will implement a coordinated suite of policy and investment interventions across all levels of government to advance progress on SDG Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being.

1. Infrastructure and Access to Services

Policy Interventions:

- Finalize and enforce provincial infrastructure investment to ensure equitable distribution and quality of health facilities;
- Embed climate-resilient and inclusive design principles in rural health infrastructure policies and strategies;
- Improve social health infrastructures, information and digital health.

Investment Actions:

- Rehabilitate and reopen closed or underutilized aid posts and health centres, prioritizing the rehabilitation of facilities highlighted in the national health overview as being closed or underutilized;
- Construct and equip Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EmONC) units in high-need provinces, with PGK 447.8 million allocated to health infrastructure in 2024;
- Partner with Provincial Health Authorities, church-run networks, and NGOs to upgrade health posts with essential utilities, including solar power and water supply;
- Enhance capacities to analyse and use data at all levels of the health system to inform program planning and decision-making, strengthen digital health enabling environment as per the National Digital Health Strategy 2025–2030, and strengthen health research governance and capacities at the national and sub-national levels.

2. Health Workforce Development and Distribution

Policy Interventions:

- Implement a national health workforce deployment framework that includes rural incentives and provisions for gender equity;
- Establish provincial quotas and continuous professional development mandates for community health workers (CHWs), midwives, and nurses.

Investment Actions:

- Maintain and increase investments in health workforce development, building on the PGK 239 million allocation in 2024 for recruitment and training;
- Scale-up training programs in nursing colleges, CHW training institutions, and the University of Papua New Guinea School of Medicine;

⁴³ Maternal Mortality in PNG 2023

⁴⁴ SPAR 2023

⁴⁵ ADB Reporting Template

⁴⁶ SPAR 2023

⁴⁷ 2023 Budget Volume 3A

⁴⁸ 2024 Budget Volume 3A

⁴⁹ WHO Reporting Template

⁵⁰ SPAR 2023

⁵¹ WHO Reporting Template

⁵² <https://www.postcourier.com.pg/government-to-review-mental-health-law-following-concerns-about-hospitals-downgrade>

⁵³ <https://www.postcourier.com.pg/government-to-review-mental-health-law-following-concerns-about-hospitals-downgrade>

- Deploy additional staff in underserved provinces, such as Central and Jiwaka, aligning with provincial staffing benchmarks outlined in the National Health Plan.

3. Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health

Policy Interventions:

- Strengthen enforcement of maternal and child health service delivery standards, including maternal and perinatal death surveillance reviews in all districts;
- Integrate adolescent maternal health into provincial health planning.

Investment Actions:

- Expand antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and facility-based deliveries, especially in rural areas where only 42 per cent of deliveries occur in health facilities.
- Enhance nutrition and immunization programs, with a focus on achieving a 35 per cent hepatitis B coverage rate and reducing the high stunting prevalence rate (43.7 per cent);
- Strengthen outreach immunization efforts using mobile clinics and cold chain logistics, particularly in Highland and border regions.

4. Communicable Diseases: HIV, TB, and Malaria

Policy Interventions:

- Operationalize the National HIV Strategy 2023–2028 across provinces, with targeted approaches for adolescents and key populations;
- Expand integration of HIV/TB services into primary care and school health programs.

Investment Actions:

- Scale up access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) to achieve coverage beyond the current 62 per cent;
- Improve TB case detection and infection control infrastructure, in order to address the current gaps in 80 per cent of hospitals;
- Sustain malaria prevention through increased bed net distribution, community health outreach, and outbreak preparedness in regions like Morobe.

5. Strengthening Medical Supply Chains and Logistics

Policy Interventions:

- Decentralize medicine procurement to enhance responsiveness and efficiency at the provincial level;
- Institutionalize digital inventory systems (such as mSupply) in all districts.

Investment Actions:

- Address chronic stockouts by strengthening distribution hubs and investing in logistics capacity, especially for TB, HIV, and maternal health supplies;
- Ensure the sustainable supply of essential medicines in all 22 provinces and 89 districts by increasing warehousing, transportation, and cold chain coverage;
- While mSupply represents an important step forward in digital supply chain tracking, the broader potential of digital health technologies remains significantly underutilized. PNG has yet to adopt scalable telemedicine models, electronic health records, or mobile health platforms that could extend service reach in remote areas. These tools can help mitigate workforce shortages, facilitate remote diagnosis, and enhance patient tracking – particularly in regions with limited road access. Investing in digital health infrastructure, training, and governance frameworks would strengthen service delivery resilience and promote more equitable access to care in the long term.

6. Non-Communicable Diseases and Health Promotion

Policy Interventions:

- Introduce a National NCD Prevention Policy focusing on diet, physical activity, alcohol, and implement the Tobacco Control Act 2016;
- Integrate NCD screening into routine care at aid posts and CHPs.

Investment Actions:

- Expand community-based NCD programs supported by health education campaigns and partnerships with civil society;
- Establish mobile screening clinics and health literacy campaigns in schools, workplaces, and market centres.

7. Youth and Adolescent Health

Policy Interventions:

- Institutionalize youth-friendly service guidelines across all health facilities;
- Embed comprehensive reproductive and mental health education into the school health curriculum and for out of school youth;
- Additionally, the government will increase investment in mental health support systems for adolescents through school-based counselling, mental health awareness initiatives, and early intervention programs, aligning with MTDP IV's emphasis on community-level resilience and well-being. Despite increasing recognition of youth mental health challenges, – especially in post-conflict areas and among adolescents facing social pressures – mental health services remain fragmented and under-resourced. There is no national mental health strategy or formal integration of mental health into primary care or school-based health services. Mental health data are also scarce, limiting the government's ability to design evidence-based interventions. School counselling programs and stigma reduction campaigns will be essential to address this growing public health issue and Strengthen community-based psychosocial services. As part of PNG's commitment under SDG 3.4, integrating mental health into the broader UHC agenda should be prioritized within the National Health Plan 2021–2030 and provincial planning frameworks.

Investment Actions:

- Roll out mobile clinics and school-based health programs in at least 12 provinces in partnership with youth networks and development partners;
- Expand sexual and reproductive health services, mental health support, and counselling in informal settlements and rural districts.

8. Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Health Security

Policy Interventions:

- Update the National Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (NH-EPRP) to align with International Health Regulations (IHR);
- Establish provincial public health emergency coordination units.

Investment Actions:

- Improve surveillance infrastructure and training in high-risk zones to increase PNG's IHR score above the current 45 per cent;
- Invest in emergency stockpiles, laboratory capacity, and digital disease surveillance platforms.

The GoPNG is committed to accelerating progress on SDG Goal 3 by aligning policies and investments across national, provincial, and district levels. Through targeted infrastructure upgrades, workforce scaling, and inclusive service delivery, PNG aims to ensure equitable, accessible, and resilient health systems by 2030. Sustained engagement with development partners, civil society, and subnational governments will be central to this ambition.



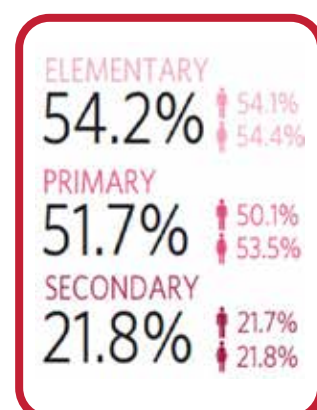
SDG 4. QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Overview

Education is the bridge between tradition and transformation in PNG, empowering every child to shape the nation's future. As a fundamental human right and cornerstone of sustainable development, quality education unlocks individual potential and drives national progress. SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In PNG, improving access to and the quality of education is vital for building a knowledgeable, skilled, and resilient population through delivering education at all levels: elementary, primary, secondary, tertiary, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

The GoPNG continues to prioritize education as a central pillar of national development, as outlined in Vision 2050, the National Education Plan (NEP) 2020–2029, and MTDP III and IV. Since the first VNR in 2020, progress has been made in expanding access to education, improving retention rates, and enhancing the quality of learning outcomes, including investments in teacher training, digital transformation, and flexible learning pathways such as the expansion of the Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) program.



Between 2019 and 2024, key education indicators improved. Net enrollment in primary education increased from approximately 60 per cent to 68 per cent, while the Gender Parity Index (GPI) rose from 0.89 to 0.94, narrowing the gender gap in basic education. Grade 8 completion rose from 51 per cent to 58 per cent, and adult literacy increased from 63

per cent to an estimated 68 per cent. Net attendance at secondary school level increased from 20.6 per cent in 2018 to 21.8 per cent in 2022 with an equal proportion of males and females. FODE enrolments increased from 101,865 in 2020 to over 122,000 in 2023, reflecting greater access to non-traditional education pathways⁵⁴. These advances were supported by increased capital investment in

education, which rose from K260 million in 2020 to K334.4 million in 2024⁵⁵.

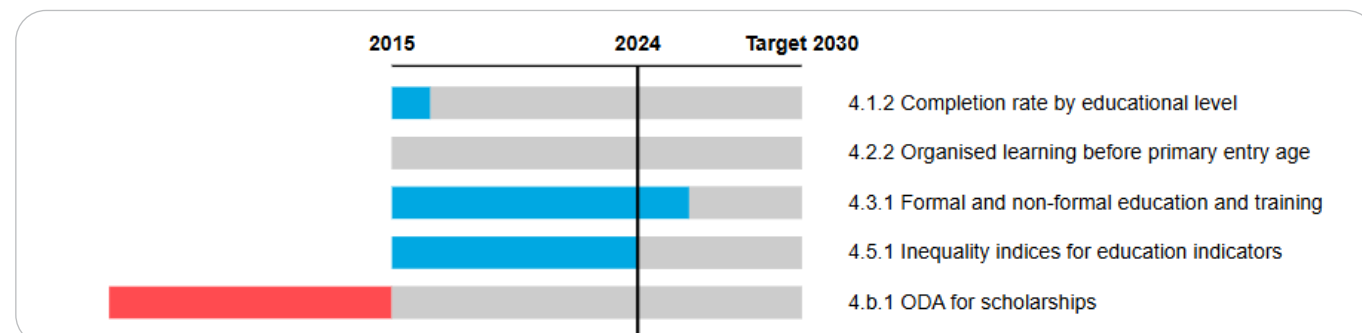
The government has implemented the Standards-Based Curriculum nationwide, with a focus on enhancing student performance in mathematics, science, and literacy. Teachers have received targeted in-service training, and Schools of Excellence have been re-established to serve high-achieving students with enriched academic programs. The TVET sector has also improved – with support from development partners such as the ADB – with upgraded training institutions and improved alignment with labour market needs.

The education sector in PNG continues to exemplify strong public-private partnerships (PPPs), which are central to the delivery of education services nationwide. Of the country's more than 12,000 operational schools, approximately 52 per cent are government-run, while church education agencies manage 47 per cent, and private education providers manage 1 per cent⁵⁶. This collaborative framework reflects a long-standing tradition of shared responsibility in the education system, where churches have played a pivotal role in extending access to remote and underserved communities. These partnerships enhance the government's capacity to reach national education targets and ensure continuity of service, especially in regions where government presence is limited. Development partners, including the Australian Government, UNICEF, and faith-based organizations, have supported initiatives in teacher capacity development, WASH in schools, inclusive education, and early childhood development.

While there has been progress in areas such as gender parity and basic education access, challenges remain in rural and remote areas, among students with disabilities, and in early childhood education. Most services for children with special needs remain urban-based, and ECE continues to rely heavily on private providers. Nonetheless, with stronger policy alignment, increased investment, and active collaboration among stakeholders, PNG is laying the foundation for achieving SDG 4 by 2030

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 26. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 4



⁵⁴ National Education Plan 2020–2029

⁵⁵ 2020 – 2024 Budget Volume 3A

⁵⁶ DOE 2023 Annual Report

Notable progress has been made in formal and non-formal education (4.3.1) and in reducing inequalities in education (4.5.1). However, there has been no progress on pre-primary organized learning (4.2.2) and a small increase in completion rates (4.1.2), which requires collective focus to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and meet the 2030 targets. Official development assistance for scholarships (4.b.1) has been reduced since 2015.

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education (ECE) remains one of PNG's most underdeveloped areas within the education system. Despite being prioritized in the National Education Plan (2020–2029) and referenced in MTDP IV as a policy focus, ECE has not yet been fully formalized as part of the national education structure. Enrollment in ECE remains low and is concentrated mainly in urban areas where private operators dominate service delivery. The absence of public funding, trained ECE teachers, and regulatory oversight has led to inconsistent quality and unaffordable fees for many families. Government efforts, initiated in 2021 in partnership with development actors and non-state providers, have focused on piloting early learning centres in select districts. However, the lack of a standardized national ECE framework continues to constrain equitable access and long-term impact. As a result, many children in PNG begin formal education without foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills, which have long-term implications for their performance and retention in basic education.

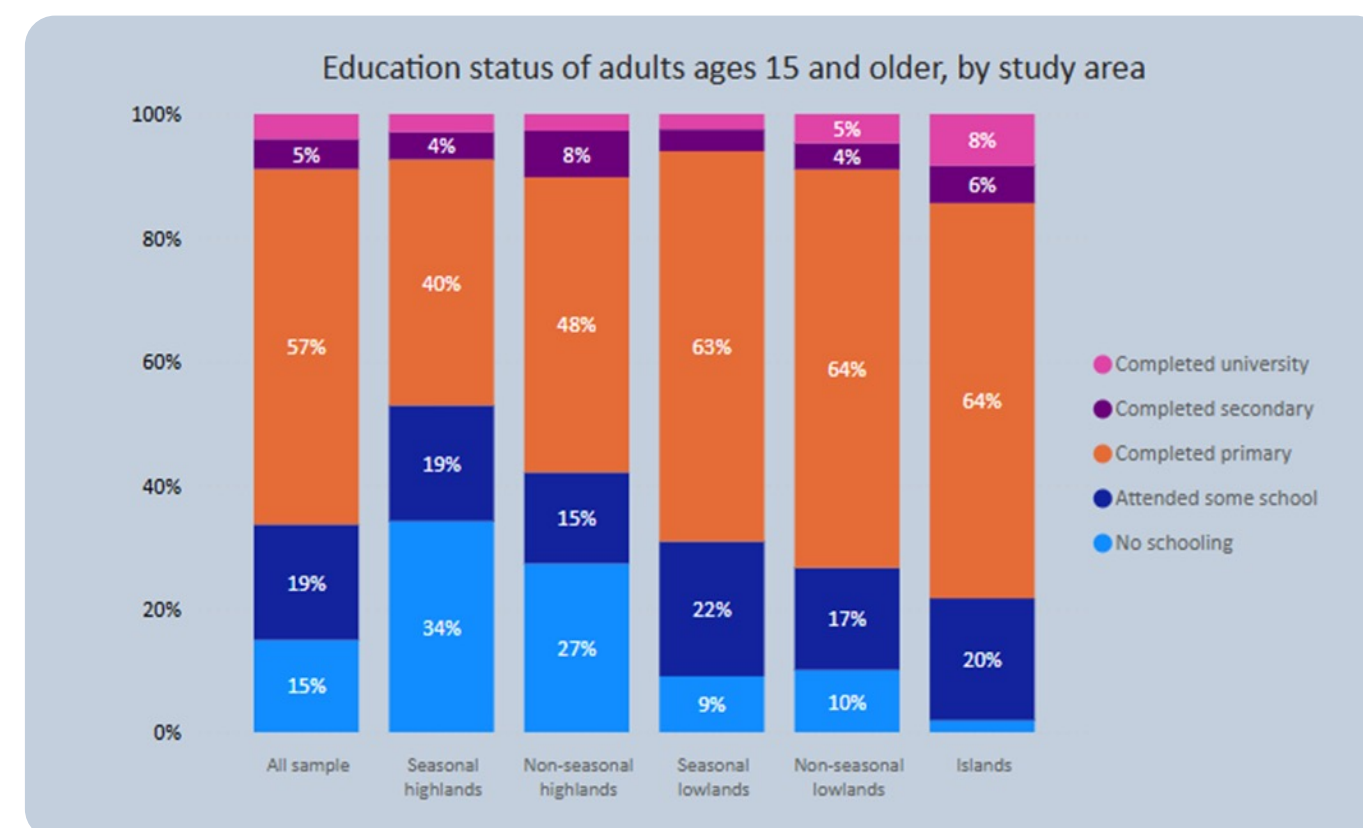
Free Primary and Secondary Education

Since mid-2019, PNG has sustained efforts to expand access to free primary and secondary education through its flagship Tuition Fee Free (TFF) policy. The policy significantly improved enrollment rates,

particularly in elementary and primary schools. Net primary enrolment increased from around 60 per cent in 2019 to approximately 68 per cent in 2024, a favourable outcome supported by government and donor investments in school infrastructure and operational grants. However, this increase in access did not translate into significantly improved retention and transition rates beyond Grade 8. According to the DOE 2023 Annual Report, only 54.2 per cent of upper secondary school-age children were enrolled in school, and approximately 90 per cent of 17- and 18-year-olds were not in Grades 11 or 12, indicating a steep attrition rate after junior secondary school.

While access has improved, foundational learning outcomes continue to be a concern. According to the 2022 Sociodemographic and Economic Health Survey, PNG's adult literacy rate stands at 63.4 per cent, with notable disparities between urban and rural populations, as well as between genders, marking a slight increase from 2016 estimates but remains well below regional averages. Many students, particularly in rural and underserved areas, complete primary education without attaining functional literacy, thereby undermining their ability to transition effectively through the education system or into the workforce. Recent reforms, including the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), targeted in-service teacher training, and the expansion of FODE, have provided alternate pathways and remedial support for youth and adult learners. Nonetheless, without intensified investment in early-grade literacy and community-based adult education, progress is likely to remain incremental. Literacy, as both an outcome and driver of lifelong learning, must remain a core focus within PNG's SDG 4 trajectory.

Figure 27. Education status of adults ages 15 and older by study area (Source: 2023 PNG Rural Household Survey)



Technical, Vocational, and Higher Education

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG made modest yet important strides in the expansion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Enrollments in vocational training centres increased due to demand-driven reforms and targeted donor support. The ADB played a key role in its TVET sector development project, which focused on upgrading infrastructure and curricula in 10 technical institutions across the country, particularly in the agriculture and construction sectors. These efforts aligned training with labour market needs, thereby enhancing employability for youth who exit the formal education system early. Despite these improvements, participation in TVET remains unequal, with rural populations and women underrepresented. Female enrollment in vocational and technical programs is lower than that of males, often due to cultural biases, a lack of gender-responsive facilities, and limited access in rural areas. Furthermore, pathways between secondary education and TVET are still fragmented, limiting student mobility and progression opportunities within the education system.

In addition to support from the ADB, the World Bank's Urban Youth Employment Project II (UYEP II) has also contributed to expanding vocational skills development and employment-linked learning for young Papua New Guineans. As of June 2024, the project had reached over 1,800 urban youth (47 per cent female) in the National Capital District, providing foundational skills training, urban works activities, and short-term internships. Specifically, 81 trainees were enrolled in TVET courses, and employers retained 57 following their internships. The expansion of the program to Lae in 2024 highlights its potential to enhance SDG 4.4 outcomes by increasing youth access to practical skills training and employment opportunities.



Empowering Urban Youth through Skills and Opportunity⁵⁷

Urban Youth Employment Project II (UYEP II) Supporting SDG 4.4: Increase the number of youth and adults with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship

The Urban Youth Employment Project II, supported by the World Bank, is transforming the lives of unemployed youth in Papua New Guinea's urban centres. Launched in the National Capital District and now expanding to Lae, the project targets vulnerable young people aged 16–35 with structured learning pathways and employment-linked opportunities.

By 2024, over 1,800 urban youth – 47 per cent of whom are female – had participated in life skills training, temporary public works programs, and internship placements with local employers. The project also provided short-term TVET courses, enrolling 81 trainees in accredited programs. Encouragingly, 57 young people were retained in formal employment following their internships.

Beyond direct employment outcomes, UYEP II promotes civic responsibility and develops essential soft skills, which are crucial for lifelong learning and economic participation. The initiative also generated over 27,000 labour days, contributing to urban infrastructure while supporting income generation for low-income households.

“UYEP gave me my first job experience and taught me confidence. Now I know I can work, I can learn, and I can build a future.”

– Trainee, National Capital District.

⁵⁷ From World Bank Reporting Template

Gender Equality and Inclusion

PNG has made measurable progress toward gender equity in education. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for secondary education improved from 0.98 in 2020 to 1.00 by 2024, indicating nearly equal participation between girls and boys at this level of education, reflecting the success of efforts to increase female enrollment and retention, especially in urban areas. However, national-level figures mask regional disparities. In rural and Highlands provinces, girls continue to face significant challenges – such as early marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), and domestic responsibilities – that drive high dropout rates after primary school. Cultural norms that de-prioritize girls' education, coupled with the lack of female teachers and gender-sensitive facilities, reinforce structural inequities. While policies promoting inclusive and gender-responsive education have been adopted, implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in isolated regions where the education system is already overstretched.

Education Facilities and Learning Environment

Access to safe, inclusive, and high-quality learning environments remains a persistent challenge, especially in rural areas. Many schools continue to operate without adequate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities. According to MTDP IV, a significant number of schools lack access to clean drinking water and single-sex toilets, which disproportionately affects adolescent girls' attendance and overall well-being. The Department of Education, with support from the Australian Government, has made progress through the installation of over 1,300 handwashing stations benefiting more than 100,000 students, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these improvements, the overall condition of classrooms, teacher housing, and sanitation infrastructure in many districts remains inadequate, limiting the ability of schools to provide conducive learning environments, especially in areas vulnerable to climate-related hazards and displacement.

Teacher Training

Teacher quality and deployment remain key concerns for achieving SDG 4. PNG has made efforts to improve teacher qualifications and training, especially under the NEP 2020–2029, which emphasizes in-service professional development and standards-based teaching practices. However, a substantial proportion of teachers, particularly in rural and remote schools, continue to work without access to updated pedagogical training or ongoing support. The shortage of trained teachers in STEM subjects and the underrepresentation of female teachers in rural areas have a direct impact on student learning outcomes and retention. The government has introduced teacher training targets across primary, secondary, and vocational levels, but meeting these targets has been hindered by financial constraints, uneven access to teacher training institutions, and limited incentives for rural deployment. A growing reliance on volunteer and untrained staff in some areas threatens the quality of education being delivered.

SDG Synergies and Strategic Role of Target 4.1:

Target 4.1 – ensuring all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education – is a linchpin of PNG's broader SDG agenda. Access to quality foundational education not only enhances individual life outcomes but also generates positive spillovers across poverty reduction (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), and economic growth (SDG 8). According to SDG Diagnostics for PNG (2023), Target 4.1 demonstrates strong synergies with 10 other SDG targets, especially those linked to literacy, nutrition, and employment. Investments in basic education amplify returns in maternal and child health, reduce early marriage rates, and improve resilience to shocks. Conversely, trade-offs exist where weak infrastructure or insufficient public funding constrains equitable education delivery, particularly in remote areas. Strategic focus on Target 4.1 – through enhanced learning assessments, curriculum alignment, and equitable teacher deployment – can serve as a high-impact lever to accelerate multi-sector development in PNG.

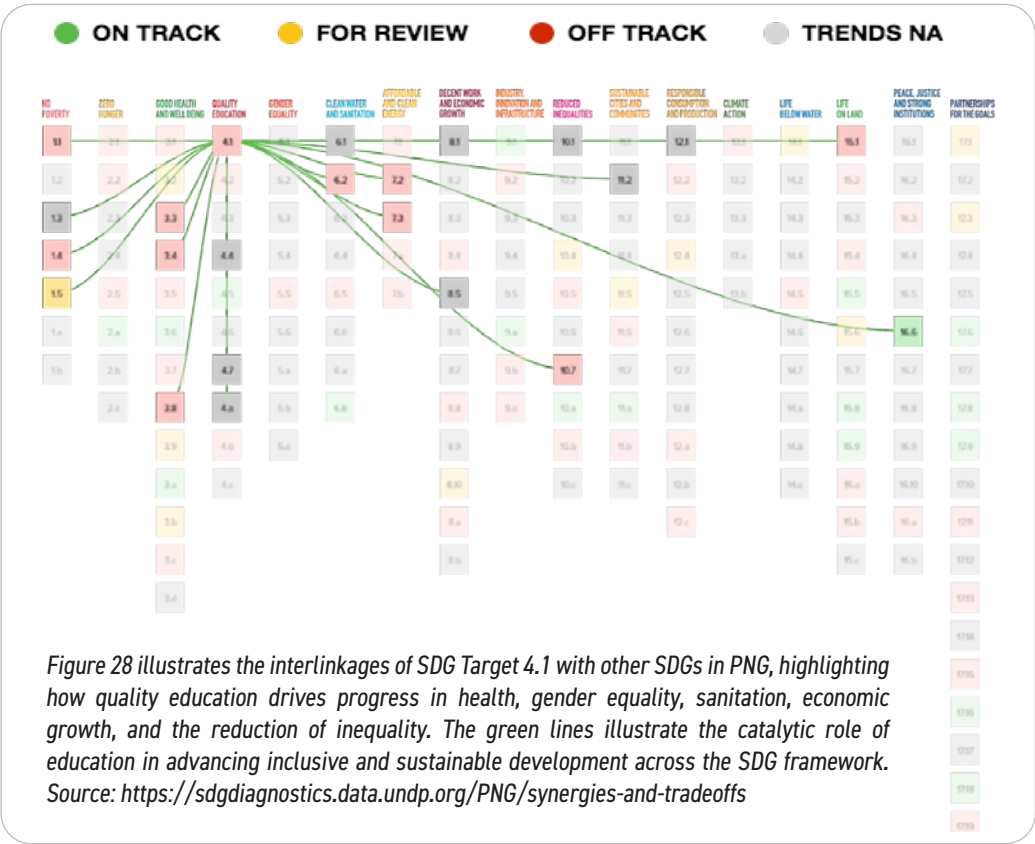


Figure 28 illustrates the interlinkages of SDG Target 4.1 with other SDGs in PNG, highlighting how quality education drives progress in health, gender equality, sanitation, economic growth, and the reduction of inequality. The green lines illustrate the catalytic role of education in advancing inclusive and sustainable development across the SDG framework. Source: <https://sdgdiagnostics.data.undp.org/PNG/synergies-and-tradeoffs>

Next Steps

Building on the progress made since 2020, the GoPNG has continued to advance its commitment to improving the quality, accessibility, and inclusivity of education across the country. Increased investments in the education sector have been accompanied by structural reforms aimed at strengthening foundational learning, advancing equitable access, and aligning education pathways with national development priorities.

Recent years have seen continued expansion of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), reinforced by national teacher upskilling programs and curriculum reviews in core subjects such as maths and science. Additionally, the revitalization of Schools of Excellence has provided enriched learning environments for high-performing students, reinforcing academic excellence as a strategic priority. These reforms are complemented by increased capital allocations to the education sector, growing from K266.7 million in 2023 to K334.4 million in 2024, demonstrating sustained financial commitment to sector growth.

Nonetheless, several challenges persist, particularly in delivering inclusive education services to marginalized groups. While the policy framework for inclusive education has been integrated into MTDP IV and the NEP 2020–2029, implementation remains uneven – especially in rural areas, where access to specialized services, trained teachers, and assistive technologies remains limited. Most learning centres for children with disabilities remain concentrated in urban areas, creating a significant access barrier for those in remote regions. To address these inequities, the government is developing a national inclusive education strategy, focusing on teacher training, infrastructure standards, and accessibility tools.

Early Childhood Education (ECE), while recognized as essential to lifelong learning, remains largely unformalized and financially inaccessible to many families. Currently dominated by private providers, ECE services lack a national standard or regulatory framework. As part of the education sector’s next phase, the government aims to institutionalize ECE by 2026 through public-private partnerships and targeted investments in teacher training and early learning facilities.

The TVET and FODE sectors continue to serve as critical alternate pathways for school leavers, out-of-school youth, and adult learners. Recent investments by development partners, including the ADB, have helped upgrade TVET infrastructure and expand technical training opportunities in priority sectors such as agriculture and construction. However, further alignment of TVET programs with labour market needs, particularly in rural areas, will be key to realizing the full potential of vocational education as a driver of economic empowerment.

Looking ahead to 2030, the government’s priorities for the education sector will be to:

- Accelerate the integration of ECE into the national system to ensure children receive foundational support from an early age;
- Improve teacher recruitment, retention, and quality through enhanced rural deployment incentives and continuous professional development;
- Expand inclusive education by developing and implementing a national strategy that ensures children with disabilities have access to quality learning environments;
- Strengthen TVET and FODE pathways to provide flexible, employment-linked options for students exiting the formal education system;
- Scale up digital and climate-resilient infrastructure to ensure safe, equitable, and adaptive learning spaces for all students, especially in disaster-prone and remote areas.

As PNG moves closer to 2030, realizing SDG 4 will depend not only on continued investment but also on strategic policy execution, strong intergovernmental coordination, and the meaningful inclusion of communities, churches, and development partners in education planning and delivery.



SDG 5. GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Overview

From rural mothers to urban entrepreneurs, gender equality in PNG means no one is left behind – regardless of geography, status, or ability. PNG envisions a society where women and men share equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities to thrive and contribute meaningfully to national development. This vision is anchored in the foundational principles of the country’s Constitution, which upholds the dignity, empowerment, and equal participation of all citizens. Gender equality impacts every aspect of society from education and employment to leadership and justice, and is crucial for achieving sustainable development, peace, and inclusive economic growth.

Despite efforts to improve equity, gender inequality persists in various forms across PNG’s rural and urban landscapes. Deep-rooted cultural norms, such as bride price and traditional gender roles, often marginalize women’s voices in decision-making processes and reinforce barriers to opportunity. Disparities are evident in health, education, political participation, and economic empowerment. PNG currently ranks among the lowest globally on the UNDP Gender Inequality Index, underscoring the urgent need for accelerated, system-wide action.

Between 2019 and 2024, the GoPNG, in collaboration with development partners and civil society, has strengthened its policy framework to address gender-based barriers. Legislative and institutional milestones include the mainstreaming of the GESI Policy across public agencies, the introduction of the GESI Policy for Microfinance Institutions, and the continued implementation of the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence (2016–2025). These measures aim to promote inclusive governance, safer communities, and financial inclusion for women.

However, while strides have been made in policy, their translation into tangible improvements for women and girls remains inconsistent. Gender-based violence remains widespread and underreported, particularly in remote areas where access to justice and support services is limited. Economic inequality also persists, with women overrepresented in informal and unpaid work and underrepresented in formal employment and leadership roles. Political participation has regressed, with no women elected to the National Parliament during the last electoral cycle, despite active advocacy and a record number of female candidates.

Efforts to integrate gender equality into national development strategies, such as Vision 2050, the PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010–2030, and successive MTDPs demonstrate a strong commitment to political will. However, translating policy into action continues to be hindered by underfunding, weak institutional capacity, and fragmented implementation at subnational levels. As PNG moves toward 2030, targeted investments in data systems, justice reform, women’s economic empowerment, and inclusive leadership will be crucial to advancing SDG 5 and creating a society where every woman and girl can realize her full potential.

Status and Trends of Progress:

Figure 29. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 5

2015	2024	Target 2030
		5.1.1 Legal frameworks on gender equality
		5.5.1 Seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments
		5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

This goal currently lacks sufficient indicators to assess progress fully. The three indicators with data show no progress since the baseline, including the number of seats held by women in parliament (5.5.1) and the proportion of women in managerial positions (5.5.2). Implementing legal frameworks for gender equality (5.1.1) also remains stagnant.

Despite the lack of sufficient data for SDG 5 as shown in Figure 28, there are strong evidences of work being done to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Target 5.1), to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres (Target 5.2), and to eliminate harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage (Target 5.3). For indicator 5.1.1 - Legal framework for gender equality – violence against women, the government has worked on various strategies and legal framework such as National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (2016– 2035), Gender Policy, Sorcery Accusation Related Violence National Action Plan (2015), and Women’s Health Protection Bill.

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For indicator 5.2.1 – Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months – in 2025, 64 per cent of women reported experiencing intimate partner violence. Eight-three per cent (from 78 per cent in 2016) of men believe men have the right to physically harm their spouses, and 77 per cent of women believe men have the right to physically harm their spouses. It is also seen that for indicator 5.3.1 – the proportion of women aged 20 – 24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18 – 11.5 per cent of women aged 15 – 19 were currently married (PNG DHS 2016 – 2018)

PNG’s national legal framework prohibits gender-based discrimination, yet enforcement remains weak, particularly in rural areas. The GESI Policy has been adopted across government departments; however, operationalization at the provincial and district levels remains uneven. Traditional practices, such as bride price, continue to reinforce patriarchal norms and affect women’s autonomy. Cultural barriers, combined with low legal literacy, prevent many women from accessing legal recourse.

While policy momentum has grown in recent years, gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in multiple sectors of PNG’s development landscape. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) for PNG has shown persistent challenges from 2019 to 2024, indicating significant gender inequality. In 2019, PNG’s GII was approximately 0.725, ranking it 155th out of the assessed countries, which reflects deep-seated issues in reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation. By 2024, PNG’s ranking declined to 169 out of 191 countries, exacerbated by high maternal mortality rates and low female labour force participation. This trend highlights the pressing need for targeted initiatives to enhance women’s rights and conditions in PNG, as the GII remains a stark indicator of gender-based disparities in the country (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Gender-based violence remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations in PNG. According to the DHS 2016–2018, 59 per cent of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical or sexual violence,

with rates peaking among women aged 30–39 (65 per cent). Despite the rollout of Family and Sexual Violence Units (FSVUs) and Family Support Centres in major hospitals, access to survivor services is limited in remote provinces. The GBV Strategy (2016–2025) provides a national response framework; however, coordination challenges and underfunding hinder effective implementation. The leave-no-one-behind principle is challenged here, as women in remote, conflict-affected, and climate-vulnerable regions face compounded barriers to protection.

Between 2019 and 2024, GoPNG allocated consistent funding toward gender equality through the Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) program (PIP Code 03125), managed by the Department for Community Development with support from the Australian Government. This initiative focused on capacity building, awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and survivor services. Key components funded included the establishment and maintenance of Meri Seif Haus safe shelters, Family Support Centres, GBV referral pathways, leadership training for women, and the establishment of a National GBV Secretariat. The expenditure under this program reached approximately K128.7 million between 2021 and 2024, with allocations such as K40.7 million in 2023 and K22 million in 2024. These investments aligned with PNG’s GBV Strategy (2016–2025) and supported the operationalization of protective laws, such as the Family Protection Act of 2013. Despite this progress, funding gaps and subnational implementation challenges persist, highlighting the need for more robust, localized budgetary mechanisms to ensure inclusive service delivery and accelerate the achievement of SDG 5 across all provinces.

Harmful practices, including early and forced marriage and sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV), persist in some provinces. Adolescents remain particularly vulnerable – PNG’s adolescent birth rate was 52.7 per 1,000 girls aged 15–19. Legal frameworks exist to address child marriage, but enforcement remains inconsistent. Community education programs, often led by churches and civil society, play a critical role in shifting norms but require scaling up and sustained funding.

There are no formal mechanisms to value or reduce the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work carried by women. Women in rural areas spend significantly more time in subsistence farming, water collection, and household labour than men. The National Population Policy Review (2023) emphasizes the need for time-use surveys to inform gender-responsive policies and budget allocations. Recognition of this labour remains limited in both policy and practice.

As of 2023, three women hold seats in the National Parliament (5.5.1) but equal political representation remains out of reach and there has been no significant change in the percentage of women in parliament with low representation. In the public service, women constitute approximately 38 per cent of the workforce but are underrepresented in senior roles, with only 18 per cent in managerial positions. Provincial leadership is also male dominated. Special temporary measures (STMs), such as reserved seats, have been debated but not implemented. Capacity-building initiatives led by civil society and

development partners have strengthened women’s political agencies at local levels, yet systemic barriers persist.

Access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services remains uneven. The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2023) emphasizes rights-based approaches; however, coverage is limited, particularly in rural provinces. Contraceptive use among married women is low approximately 35 per cent and unmet need for family planning remains high. The maternal mortality rate, although reduced to 145 per 100,000 live births (2019), still reflects substantial geographic and socioeconomic disparities. Adolescents and women with disabilities face higher barriers to accessing SRH information and services. The National Department of Education’s (NDOE’s) support for institutionalizing a rights-based comprehensive sexuality education integrating life skills for Grades 7 to 12 is underway.

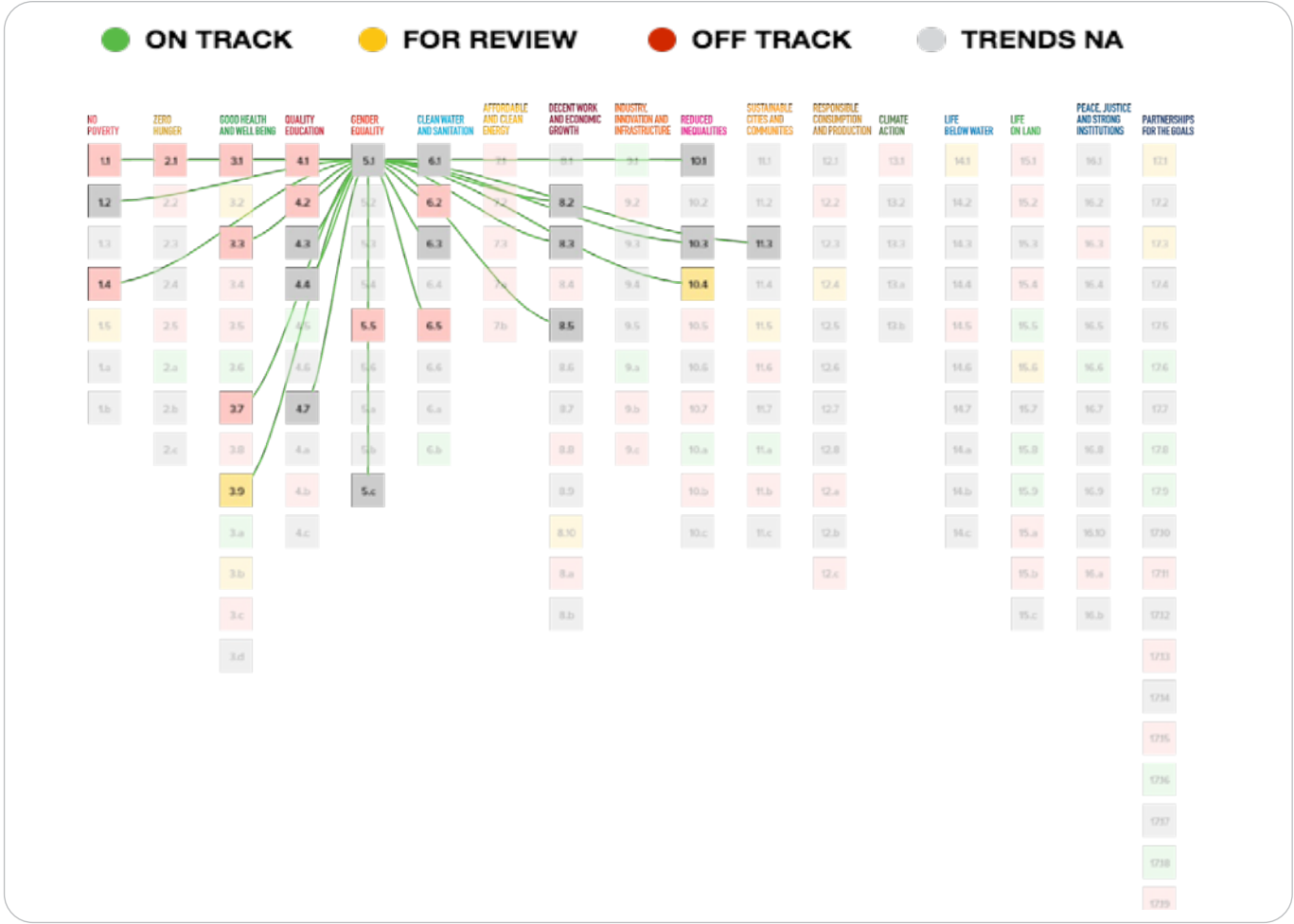
SDG Synergies and Strategic Role of Target 5.1 in PNG

Gender equality in Papua New Guinea is not only a fundamental right but also a powerful enabler of sustainable development across the 2030 Agenda. As emphasized in the UNDP’s SDG Synergies analysis, Target 5.1 – which calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls – has strong systemic linkages with key targets in SDG 3 (health), SDG 4 (education), SDG 8 (economic growth), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). The advancement of women’s leadership under Target 5.5 further enhances institutional inclusivity (SDG 16.7) and reduces inequalities (SDG 10.2), suggesting that gender-responsive governance contributes to more equitable

outcomes. However, persistent gender-based violence (Target 5.2) continues to produce adverse ripple effects undermining health indicators, decreasing school retention rates for girls, and limiting women’s economic participation. Additionally, the intersection of gender and climate vulnerability reveals that failing to integrate gender into climate action (SDG 13) can exacerbate risks for women and girls, especially in disaster-prone and rural communities.

This multidimensional dynamic is visually reinforced in the Target 5.1 Interlinkage Graph for PNG, which maps out the extensive network of SDG targets influenced by or influencing anti-discrimination efforts. The graph displays all 17 SDGs with vertical target breakdowns, using a colour-coded scheme to indicate performance (e.g., green for on track, red for regression, grey for insufficient data). Green lines trace the interlinkages from Target 5.1 to specific targets – such as 3.1, 4.1, 8.5, and 16.6 – illustrating how gender equality is woven into the development fabric. It becomes evident that gender equality is not a siloed goal but a strategic lever: progress on Target 5.1 acts as a multiplier across sectors ranging from poverty alleviation (SDG 1.5) to clean energy access (SDG 7.1) and institutional effectiveness (SDG 16.3). This integrated approach makes advancing SDG 5 a cornerstone strategy for PNG’s broader development ambitions.

Figure 30: Target 5.1 interlinkages in PNG reveal that eliminating gender discrimination is foundational to progress across multiple SDGs, impacting sectors from health and education to infrastructure and governance. Source: <https://sdgdiagnostics.data.undp.org/PNG/synergies-and-tradeoffs>



Next Steps

Implement Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB): Scale GRB across all levels of government to ensure targeted financing for women's empowerment, GBV prevention, and inclusive services.

- 1. **Strengthen Subnational Implementation:** Provide technical and financial support to provincial governments to operationalize gender policies, including the rollout of GESI and GBV strategies;
- 2. **Advance Political Representation:** Fast-track the adoption of special temporary measures (STMs) to guarantee women's representation in parliament and provincial assemblies;
- 3. **Expand Access to Justice and Protection Services:** Increase the number and capacity of Family and Sexual Violence Units, shelters, and mobile outreach services in rural and remote areas;
- 4. **Boost Data and Accountability Systems:** Institutionalize sex- and disability-disaggregated data collection to inform targeted interventions and monitor SDG 5 progress;
- 5. **Invest in Adolescent Girls:** Integrate life skills, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, and leadership training in secondary education and youth programs, particularly for marginalized and out-of-school girls;
- 6. **Support Women in the Green and Digital Economies:** Promote women's participation in climate-resilient agriculture, renewable energy, and digital entrepreneurship by providing skills training and access to innovation hubs.

As PNG moves toward 2030, achieving SDG 5 will require a shift from policy to implementation anchored in equity, resilience, and local ownership.



SDG 6. CLEAN WATER & SANITATION⁵⁸

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Overview

By 2030, we aim to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all. By 2030, we aim to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

PNG continues to have some of the lowest levels of access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) services in the Pacific region. The 2020 VNR highlighted that in 2017, only 41 per cent of the population had access to safe drinking water, and just 13 per cent had access to improved sanitation, according to estimates from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP).

Since 2017, incremental progress has been made. Under the MTDP III 2018–2022 and the current MTDP IV 2023–2027, the GoPNG has intensified efforts to implement the National WaSH Policy 2015–2030. This policy recognizes WaSH as a fundamental human right and outlines national targets for universal access to safe, reliable, and equitable WaSH services.

Progress since the 2020 VNR has been mixed:

- Urban water access remains high at approximately 87 per cent in 2023;
- Rural access to drinking water increased from 39 per cent in 2020 to 45 per cent in 2023;
- Rural sanitation access remains stagnant at 15 per cent, while urban sanitation access declined from 58 per cent to 49 per cent, attributed to growing urban populations and overburdened infrastructure.

Significant institutional gaps persist, particularly in health and education facilities. As of 2023, only 38 per cent of health facilities had running water in delivery rooms, a decline from 49 per cent in 2019, while many schools still lack adequate sanitation and handwashing facilities.

In response, the Government and development partners launched District WaSH Plans in 13 districts, piloting localized, co-financed interventions with growing community involvement. These are coordinated under the WaSH Project Management Unit (PMU), housed within the Department of National Planning and Monitoring.

However, the four key “Next Steps” commitments made in the 2020 VNR remain largely unfulfilled:

Table 5: Next steps commitment for WaSH

2020 VNR Commitment	Status (2024)	Remarks
1. Establish a National Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Authority (NWAHA)	Not yet achieved	The authority remains in the planning stage, with delays persisting in formalization and resourcing.
2. Expand WaSH services to all rural households/businesses	Partially achieved	Rural water access improved to 45%, but sanitation access remains very low at 15%.
3. Expand WaSH services to all urban households/businesses	Mixed progress	Water access is stable, but urban sanitation has declined due to rapid urbanization.
4. Improve WaSH in health and education facilities	Limited progress	Institutional WaSH remains weak; under-resourced schools and clinics face recurring water shortages.



The proposed National WaSH Authority is viewed as a crucial reform to address fragmented governance, overlapping mandates, and inefficient resource utilization in the sector. Its establishment is prioritized under MTDP IV and is crucial to accelerating the delivery of SDG 6.

Despite persistent challenges, PNG's WaSH sector has demonstrated encouraging innovations through Open Defecation Free (ODF) community campaigns, faith-based health partnerships, and school-based programs led by NGOs such as WaterAid and World Vision. The percentage of household practicing open defecation has decreased to 13.6per cent according to findings in the 2022 SDES.

⁵⁸ Most of the sources for SDG 6 write up is from the DNPM WaSH PMU Reporting Template

However, achieving SDG 6 by 2030 will require accelerating the institutionalization of the NWaSHA, expanding community-led solutions, directing targeted investments into infrastructure and long-term maintenance, enhancing the monitoring of water quality and equitable access, and reinforcing coordination and partnership frameworks. While progress remains fragile, the sector is not without momentum; achieving universal access to safe water and sanitation will demand more decisive leadership, sustained financial commitment, and inclusive planning that ensures no one is left behind.

Status and Trends of Progress

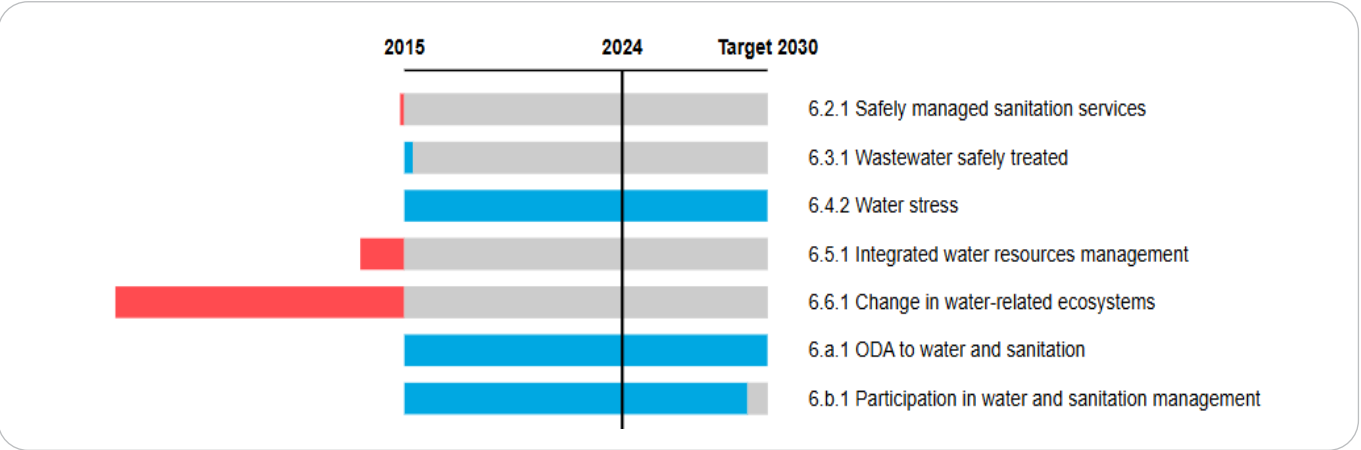


Figure 31: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 6

The country has made significant progress in three indicators (6.4.2, 6.a.1, 6.b.1), demonstrating commendable achievements toward clean water and sanitation. However, there is a need for accelerated progress in other critical areas to prevent negative trends in water-related ecosystems (6.6.1), particularly for mangroves and reservoirs, which have been reducing year-on-year, as well as reversing trends in integrated water resources management (6.5.1) and access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all (6.2.1).

Indicator 6.1.1 – Safely Managed Drinking Water Services: Access to drinking water in rural communities increased modestly from 39 per cent in 2020 to 45 per cent in 2023, suggesting progress driven by localized infrastructure investments. Urban access remained high at 87 per cent, indicating that service levels were maintained. However, the urban-rural disparity is underscored by in-service distribution. Those most affected by limited access are rural and remote communities, particularly in the Highlands and Momase regions, where the topography and weak infrastructure complicate delivery. Women and girls in these areas face significant burdens due to the extended time and physical strain associated with water collection.

Indicator 6.2.1 – Safely Managed Sanitation Services: Sanitation access presents a more worrying trend. Urban coverage declined by nine percentage points, from 58 per cent to 49 per cent, reflecting the growing pressure of urbanization and insufficient expansion of sanitation infrastructure. In rural areas, access remained at 15 per cent, revealing a systemic stagnation. The impacts are felt most acutely by low-income households in informal settlements, women-headed households, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. Inadequate infrastructure, combined with poor enforcement of building standards and a lack of inclusive sanitation designs, contributes to exclusion.

Indicator 6.3.1 – Ambient Water Quality: PNG lacks a national monitoring system for water body quality, creating a substantial data gap for Indicator 6.3.1. Anecdotal and local-level reporting suggests significant pollution concerns, particularly in communities downstream of mining and logging activities. The lack of baseline data or regular assessments leaves vulnerable communities exposed and without recourse. Downstream populations often rely on contaminated rivers and streams for drinking, washing, and cooking, compounding health risks and reinforcing cycles of poverty.

Institutional WaSH – Health and Education Facilities: Institutional WaSH has experienced a decline since 2020. The proportion of health facilities with water in delivery rooms declined from 49 per cent to 38 per cent, raising serious concerns about maternal and neonatal health outcomes. Schools similarly remain under-equipped, with fewer than half providing piped water and proper sanitation, directing implications for school attendance, particularly for adolescent girls during menstruation, and for broader education outcomes. Children in rural schools are most affected, exacerbating disparities between urban and rural educational environments.

Table 6: Progress on SDG 6 - Clean Water, Sanitation & Hygiene in PNG

Indicator	Wealth	Location	Education	Age	
Targets	Indicators	Baseline (2019)	Targets for 2030	Progress to date (2023)	Trend *
Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all	Proportion of population with access to safe drinking water sources by Urban/Rural sector of residence	86% (Urban) 39% (Rural)	95% (Urban) 70% (Rural)	87% (Urban) 45% (Rural)	▲ ▲
	Proportion of population (or households) with access to safe and secure toilet facilities by Urban/Rural sector Residence	58% (Urban) 15% (Rural)	85% (Urban) 70% (Rural)	49% (Urban) 15% (Rural)	▼ ▲
	Proportion of DDAs/Provinces with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management (District WaSH Plans)	18%	60%	22%	▲
	Proportion of elementary and primary schools with access to basic clean drinking water	34% (Elementary) 46% (Primary)	100%	30% (Elementary) 49% (Primary)	▲ ▲
	Proportion of secondary schools with access to basic clean drinking water	65% (Secondary)	100%	83% (Secondary)	▲
	Proportion of elementary and primary schools with access to single-sex basic sanitation facilities	46% (Elementary) 45% (Primary)	100%	46% (Elementary) 45% (Primary)	▶ ▶
	Proportion of secondary schools with access to single-sex basic sanitation facilities	68% (Secondary)	100%	69% (Secondary)	▶

Table 5 presents key indicators aligned with MTDP IV (SPA 2: DIP 2.6) and the Connect PNG - National WaSH Framework, tracking progress from 2019 baselines toward 2030 targets. It highlights disparities between urban and rural access, the slow uptake of community-led planning through District WaSH Plans, and mixed results in school-based water and sanitation coverage – highlighting the need for accelerated and inclusive interventions to ensure equitable and universal WaSH access.

***Green** - Progress is on track or increasing at the rate needed to achieve the SDG & MTDP IV targets by 2030; **Yellow** - Progress is increasing at the rate of 50 per cent at the required growth rate but below the rate needed to achieve the SDG and MTDP IV targets by 2030; **Red** - Progress remains stagnant or not improving and below 50 per cent of the targets needed to achieve the SDG and MTDP IV targets by 2030.

WaSH is a cross-cutting enabler that directly and indirectly supports the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Investment in WaSH infrastructure and services is not only critical for achieving SDG 6 but also has a significant impact on health, education, gender equality, economic productivity, and institutional strengthening across PNG.

Improved WaSH systems contribute significantly to public health by reducing the prevalence of waterborne diseases, supporting SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Access to adequate WaSH in schools supports SDG 4 (Quality Education), particularly by improving attendance rates for girls and creating a safer, more hygienic learning environment. Additionally, reducing the burden of water collection on women and girls frees up time for education and economic participation, aligning with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

WaSH also yields a substantial economic return. Studies show that every 1 Kina invested results in a 3 Kina return through reduced healthcare costs, improved productivity, and higher school attendance. These impacts underscore WaSH's contribution to inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

Looking ahead, the DNPM WaSH PMU, in collaboration with provincial governments, district administrations, and local-level governments, will scale these practices nationally. With WaSH now embedded in most provincial and district investment priorities, institutional and legislative frameworks are being strengthened to support effective service delivery.



Transforming WaSH Planning in PNG

In the heart of PNG's development journey, a quiet revolution has been unfolding in the WaSH sector, which is rooted in policy, collaboration, and community empowerment. Guided by the National WaSH Policy 2015–2030, the Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM) has been instrumental in reimagining how WaSH services are delivered across the country. Among its most transformative initiatives is the District WaSH Planning Model, a grassroots-centered approach that emerged from early lessons learned during policy rollout. Recognizing the need for strategic coordination and local ownership, DNPM, alongside key partners, developed a model that not only aligns with the seven core strategies of the national policy but also operationalizes them through tangible district-level action.

Anchored in the priorities of the Medium Term Development Plan IV (2023–2027), this planning model has elevated WaSH as a critical investment area in five key service domains – urban, peri-urban, rural, schools, and health facilities – with growing emphasis on public amenities such as markets. The progress has been remarkable. The National WaSH Management Information System was rolled out, improving data tracking and planning across provinces. The WaSH in Schools Policy was reviewed and enhanced, while national standards for WaSH in Health Care Facilities were developed. A robust national-level Technical Working Group now drives coordination. Thirteen districts have signed MOUs with DNPM to co-develop District WaSH Plans under a 70/30 national-to-local funding model, promoting not only financial sustainability but local accountability.

The inaugural National WaSH Symposium in 2024 marked a milestone in sector learning and exchange, drawing participants from government, education, and health sectors. These achievements reflect seven years of perseverance and learning, with PNG now poised to accelerate progress further under the MTDP IV framework. This story is more than just a policy implementation – it is a narrative of how national vision and local commitment can come together to ensure every Papua New Guinean has access to safe water and sanitation.

Next Steps

To accelerate progress on SDG 6 and align to the MTDP IV targets to increase rural water access to 70 per cent (from 48 per cent), improve rural sanitation to 60 per cent (from 33 per cent), and achieve 100 per cent access to clean water in urban areas by 2027, the following steps are proposed to guide PNG's strategic direction from 2024 onward:

1. Policy and Institutional Strengthening

- Legislate and operationalize the National WaSH Authority (NWAHA) to serve as the central coordinating body, driving inter-agency alignment, enforcing regulations, and standardizing services;
- Ensure the Joint WaSH Sector Program Implementation and Monitoring Committee (JWSPIMC) recently established is functional to enable cross-ministerial governance and high-level oversight;
- Finalize and adopt the National WaSH Sector Plan and the National WaSH Standards and Guidelines to ensure harmonized implementation across all sectors;
- Strengthen provincial and district-level policy frameworks to reflect WaSH priorities aligned with MTDP IV.

2. Investment Interventions

- Scale the District WaSH Plan model to all provinces, prioritizing areas with low access and high vulnerability;
- Secure increased capital and recurrent budgets for WaSH infrastructure, maintenance, and human resource development;
- Expand investments in rural water systems and inclusive sanitation infrastructure for schools, health facilities, and public spaces;
- Integrate WaSH into national climate resilience and disaster response planning, particularly for flood-prone and drought-affected areas.

3. Monitoring and Learning

- Fully implement the UMBEN - a platform for evidence-based planning, resource allocation, and accountability. It strengthens transparency and supports the development of District 5-Year WaSH plans align with the national priorities;
- Fully implement the WaSH Management Information System (MIS) at national and sub-national levels;
- Develop a national water quality surveillance program with annual reporting to inform evidence-based interventions;
- Institutionalize community-led monitoring and feedback mechanisms to ensure transparency and responsiveness.

4. Partnership Consolidation

- Formalize long-term financing partnerships with donors under a common results framework aligned with SDG 6;
- Strengthen collaboration between DNPM, NDOE, NDOH, Water PNG, CEPA, CCDA, DPLGA, DIRD, and sub-national authorities;
- Continue engaging NGOs, CSOs, and the private sector to pilot innovations, support capacity building, and ensure community ownership.

To close the equity gap and accelerate progress on SDG 6, the Government must expedite the formalization of the National WaSH Authority. Simultaneously, targeted investments are needed to expand and maintain water and sanitation infrastructure, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Restoring WaSH services in health facilities and scaling school sanitation programs should be prioritized. Implementing a comprehensive water quality monitoring system will be essential for ensuring long-term safety and sustainability.





SDG 7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Overview

SDG 7 aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. Having access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy is a global priority aimed at addressing climate change, environmental degradation, and economic challenges. Renewable energy sources, including solar, hydro, geothermal heat, tidal, natural gas, biomass, biofuel, and wind, offer significant benefits such as environmental sustainability, economic stimulation, poverty alleviation, and enhanced energy security.

The GoPNG has prioritized renewable energy development as part of its broader effort to enhance economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve social outcomes. This commitment is embedded in national policies and strategic development plans, notably the MTDP III, which aimed for 33 per cent household electricity access by 2022, an increase from 17 per cent in 2017. However, PNG has faced considerable challenges, including the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, infrastructure degradation, and geographical constraints, which have significantly hindered progress toward achieving these targets.

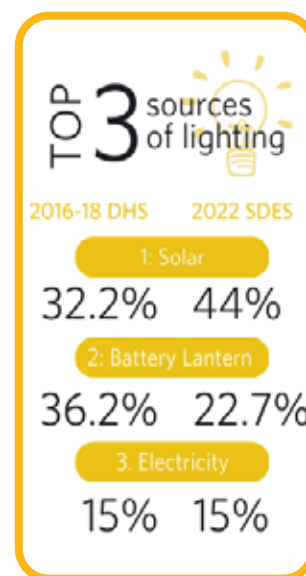
Since PNG's first VNR in 2019, the country has prioritized expanding energy access through renewable sources, strengthened infrastructure, and enhanced energy policy frameworks. Key partnerships with development partners, including the European Union, the Australian Government, and the World Bank, have significantly contributed to advancing SDG 7 goals through infrastructure support, renewable energy projects, and capacity-building initiatives.

PNG's National Energy Policy 2017-2027 has played a critical role, setting ambitious targets to achieve 70 per cent electricity access by 2030 and full access by 2050, primarily through renewable energy resources. This policy framework addresses historical challenges of fragmented and inadequate energy sector coordination. It also emphasizes renewable energy sources such as hydropower, solar, and geothermal

energy, along with institutional reforms to streamline energy sector governance and oversight. These include the establishment of the Energy Regulatory Commission, which aims to foster competition, ensure compliance with energy policies and legislation, and promote fair market conditions.

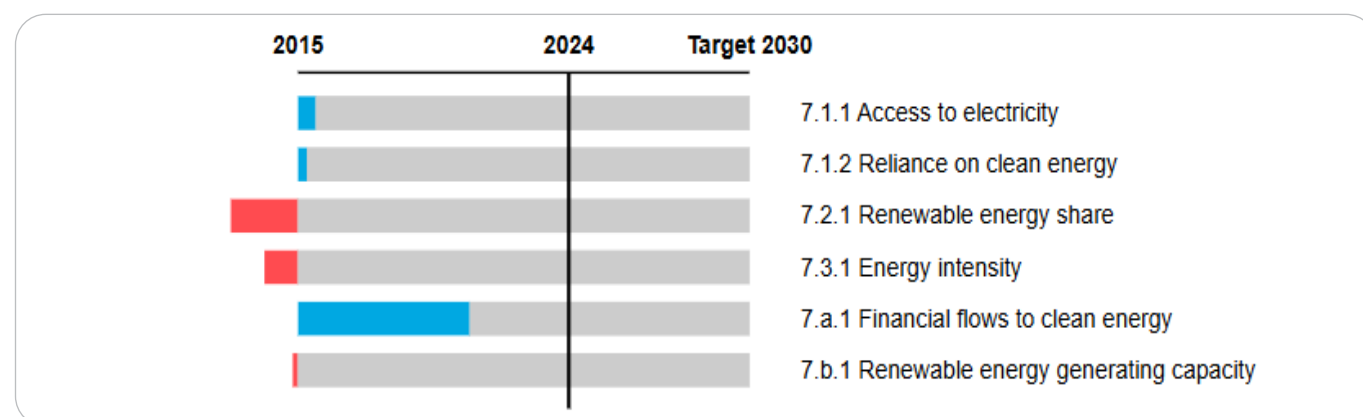
PNG is endowed with abundant energy resources, offering significant opportunities for both domestic and industrial energy needs. The country's energy mix primarily includes renewable resources such as hydropower, solar, geothermal, wind, and biomass, alongside non-renewable resources like oil, natural gas, and coal. Hydropower is the dominant renewable energy source, contributing significantly to the national grid, mainly through major projects like the Ramu Hydropower Station. PNG also has substantial potential for solar energy, given its tropical climate and high sunlight intensity, making it a promising option for rural electrification.

The country is also rich in natural gas reserves, with liquefied natural gas (LNG) forming a cornerstone of PNG's energy exports, driving economic growth. While coal deposits remain underutilized, there is interest in exploring their potential for energy generation. Despite these resources, access to energy remains a challenge in rural areas, highlighting the need for sustainable investments in renewable energy and infrastructure development to create a more inclusive and reliable energy system across the country.



Status and Trends of Progress

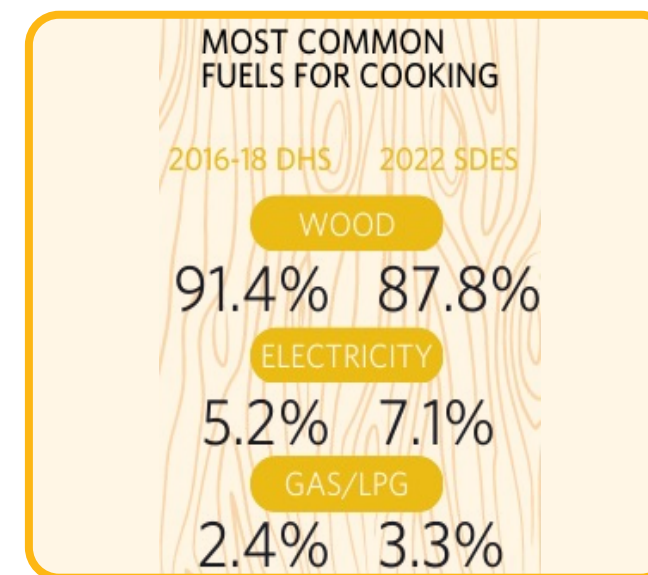
Figure 32: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 7



There are positive trends in the increased financial flows to clean energy (7.a.1), however, access to electricity (7.1.1) and clean cooking fuels (7.1.2) remain stagnant. The assessment shows a reduction in renewable energy capacity (7.b.1) and modestly rose for share in consumption (7.2.1), coupled with increased energy intensity (7.3.1). An urgent collaborative acceleration is required to reverse these negative trends.

PNG's access to electricity improved slightly from 16.6 per cent in 2019 to approximately 21 per cent by 2024, remaining significantly behind the National Energy Policy target of 70 per cent by 2030. Key obstacles include insufficient funding, limited technical capacity, and persistent socioeconomic barriers, particularly in rural areas that heavily rely on non-grid energy sources. These rural populations continue to face inadequate access to energy, underscoring the urgent need for increased efforts in rural electrification and infrastructure investment (PNG Rural Household Survey Report, 2023).

The share of renewable energy in PNG's national energy mix modestly rose from 12.8 per cent in 2019 to 14 per cent in 2024. This incremental progress indicates slow movement toward the ambitious target of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. This progress suggests an urgent need for greater investment and emphasis on renewable infrastructure development to realize this goal.



Access to clean cooking fuels and technologies marginally increased from 9.3 per cent in 2019 to 9.7 per cent in 2024, revealing limited progress towards universal clean cooking access. Persistent reliance on traditional cooking fuels significantly contributes to health issues and environmental degradation, underscoring the need for comprehensive interventions and investments in cleaner cooking alternatives.

PNG has taken a significant step forward in energy sector governance through the establishment of the National Energy Authority (NEA) a transformative institutional reform that centralizes oversight, strengthens regulatory compliance and enhances investment

coordination. The NEA was created to replace and streamline the functions previously held by the Department of Petroleum and Energy, offering regulatory capacity to implement national energy policies, monitor sectoral performance, and facilitate the transition to clean, reliable energy. It oversees key initiatives such as the Power Supply Monitoring System and renewable energy profiling and ensures the collection of levies from Independent Power Producers and PNG Power Ltd. These interventions align with strategic frameworks, such as the National Energy Policy (2017-2027) and MTDP IV 2023-2027, which prioritize electrification and sustainable energy access. However, while national-level governance has improved, challenges persist at the subnational level. Local governments often lack the authority, resources, and technical expertise to support the rollout of decentralized energy, resulting in fragmented implementation and limited community ownership, particularly in rural, off-grid areas. Addressing this gap will require targeted institutional capacity-building, clearer mandates for provincial actors, and stronger coordination mechanisms to ensure that the benefits of NEA's reforms translate into equitable and sustained energy access for all.

Awareness campaigns highlighting the socio-economic benefits of renewable energy have had moderate impacts. Despite these efforts, a substantial gap remains between awareness and practical adoption, necessitating further targeted, culturally relevant, and sustained outreach programs.

National electricity rollout initiatives, including grid extensions and off-grid solutions, have advanced slowly due to persistent implementation gaps, particularly in remote areas. Efforts to develop supportive renewable energy policies and provide targeted training for local professionals are progressing at a slower pace than anticipated, reflecting ongoing constraints related to technical capacity and resource availability.

The PNG National Energy Access Transformation Project (NEAT), funded by the World Bank and implemented by the National Energy Authority (NEA) and PNG Power Limited (PPL), represents a significant step towards achieving national energy access targets. The NEAT project focuses on enhancing the reliability and capacity of existing grid infrastructure, promoting the development of sustainable renewable energy mini-grids, and stimulating private-sector participation in off-grid market growth. Its comprehensive approach includes rehabilitating and modernizing PPL infrastructure, expanding household connections through grid densification, and piloting public-private partnerships in the development of clean energy mini-grids. NEAT focuses on rural electrification through renewable micro-grid installations and solar home systems, aiming to address energy gaps in remote areas unserved by PPL. This initiative also places substantial emphasis on institutional capacity building for the NEA and PPL, supporting strategic planning, policy development, and technical training necessary for sustainable and widespread improvements in energy access.

Budget Analysis (2020–2024)

Between 2020 and 2024, PNG’s national budget allocations consistently recognized the energy sector as vital for economic growth and infrastructure development. Notably, the 2024 National Budget emphasized investment in infrastructure and utilities, reflecting the government’s prioritization of the energy sector as critical to achieving broader economic and development goals⁵⁹. However, the subsequent reduction in budget allocations to the utility sector in the 2025 National Budget, decreasing by K376.1 million (20.7 per cent) compared to the previous year, underscores ongoing fiscal constraints⁶⁰. Additionally, significant funding gaps remain, with more than USD 700 million needed by 2030 to meet electrification targets⁶¹. The challenging fiscal environment highlighted by rising debt levels and budget deficits exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic limits the government’s ability to increase energy sector funding without incurring further fiscal strain (BTI Project Report, 2022). Addressing these constraints will require exploring alternative financing mechanisms, strengthening public-private partnerships, and ensuring efficient budgetary management to achieve PNG’s ambitious energy access and sustainability goals.

Next Steps

To accelerate progress toward achieving SDG 7, strategic and coordinated interventions are necessary across all levels of government, addressing identified challenges and leveraging existing opportunities.

At the national level, the GoPNG should prioritize the full operationalization and resourcing of the National Energy Authority (NEA) and strengthen the regulatory capacity of the Energy Regulatory Commission, including formulating policies for renewable energy sources and ensuring regulatory frameworks support private sector participation. Nationally coordinated public-private partnerships should be expanded, with a focus on renewable energy infrastructure investments and rural electrification projects. Adequate funding

allocations and fiscal incentives for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency programs, including Minimum Energy Performance Standards and Labelling, should be ensured. The establishment of a national energy data management system for comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of sector progress is critical.

Provincial governments should integrate the National Energy Policy into their provincial development plans, emphasizing local ownership and active collaboration with NEA. Provinces should prioritize investments in renewable mini-grids, solar home systems, and off-grid solutions tailored to their local resource availability and community needs. Establishing provincial-level technical support units can facilitate local capacity-building programs, strengthening the technical skills of local energy service providers and public officials. Furthermore, provinces should actively engage with development partners to leverage additional financial and technical resources in support of their energy priorities.

Local governments – including District Development Authorities and local-level governments – should prioritize enhancing community engagement and participation in energy projects to ensure sustainability and ownership. They should actively facilitate local awareness campaigns highlighting the socioeconomic and health benefits of renewable energy and clean cooking solutions, driving behavioural change and technology adoption. Targeted interventions in remote and vulnerable communities should be prioritized, including the provision of affordable clean cooking technologies and solar-powered lighting systems. Local governments should also establish local energy committees to coordinate planning, implementation, and monitoring at the grassroots level, ensuring energy initiatives effectively address specific local challenges and opportunities.

By effectively aligning and coordinating these policies and investment interventions at national, provincial, and local government levels, PNG can substantially enhance its capacity to achieve sustainable, inclusive, and reliable energy access for all citizens, thereby accelerating progress towards meeting SDG 7 targets.



⁵⁹ PNG Treasury 2024 Budget
⁶⁰ PNG Treasury 2025 Budget
⁶¹ IPA Energy Sector Investor Guide 2022



SDG 8. DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

Overview

Since presenting its first VNR in 2020, PNG has strengthened the employment sector and supported inclusive economic growth. Five years ago, the Government committed to prioritizing key actions expanding vocational and technical training for youth, promoting the formalization of the informal economy, and enhancing access to finance for MSMEs. In 2022, the Government adopted the National Employment Policy 2021-31, providing a comprehensive framework for policy action in the area of employment.

While progress has been made in selected areas such as the launch of targeted TVET programs, improvements in market infrastructure, and increased access to banking services in rural regions, some commitments remain partially fulfilled. The National Employment Policy (2021-2031) is yet to be fully operational, and the informal sector continues to dominate employment, with limited legal protections for workers. Youth unemployment remains high, and gender disparities persist in workforce participation and access to productive resources.

In response to the economic challenges intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic – which had a severe impact on informal workers, youth, and microenterprises – the Government of Papua New Guinea, with the support from development partners, advanced initiatives to strengthen economic resilience. These included expanding access to financial services, enhancing technical and vocational education, and promoting inclusive growth to support recovery and long-term stability.

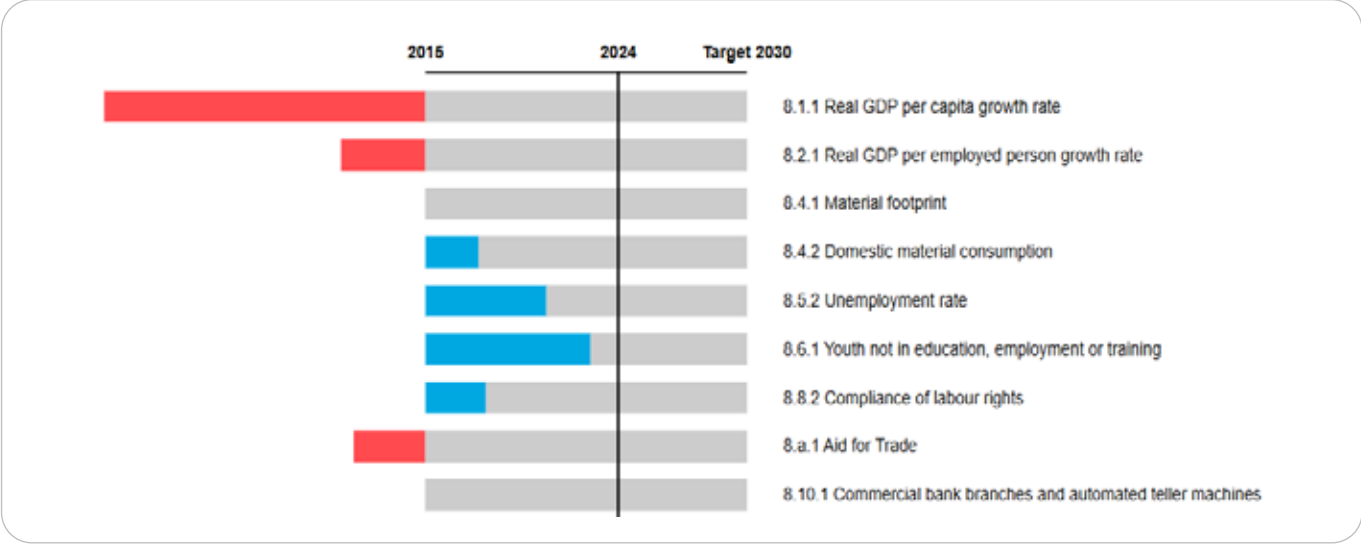
Key national frameworks, including Vision 2050, the PNG Development Strategic Plan (2010–2030), and the MTDP IV 2023–2027, identify job creation and economic diversification as central to achieving sustained growth. These policies emphasize the importance of human capital development, promoting MSMEs, and enhancing productivity in both rural and urban areas.

Since the last VNR, progress has included the rollout of targeted skills training programs, significant investments in market infrastructure, and the promotion of women’s economic participation. Initiatives such as the STREIT PNG Program and DFAT-supported TVET expansion have created employment opportunities, improved mobility, and opened new income-generating avenues, particularly in rural regions.

Nevertheless, PNG continues to face challenges, including high levels of informal employment, youth unemployment, and gender inequality in the labour market. While financial inclusion has improved in selected provinces, nationwide disparities in access to jobs, markets, and formal protections persist. Addressing these structural gaps remains crucial to achieving the SDG 8 targets.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 33: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 8

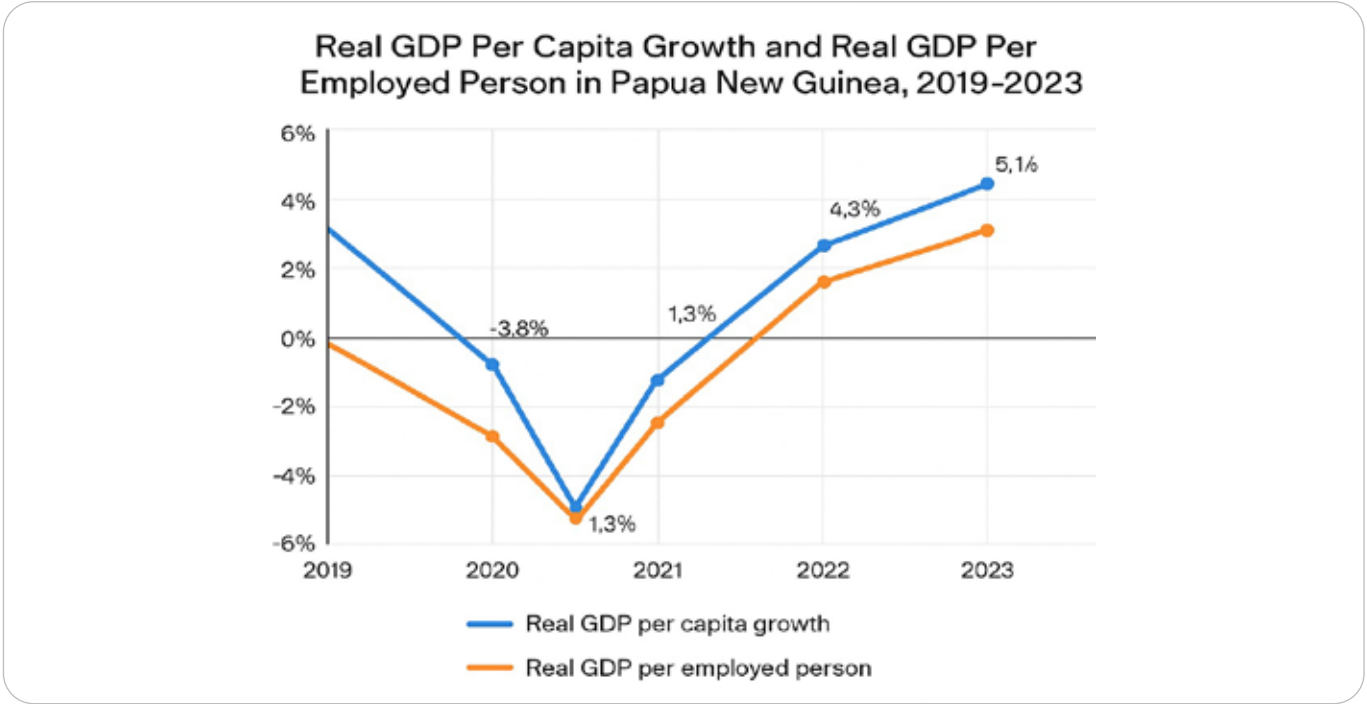


In this goal, there is commendable progress in reducing the share of youth not in education, employment or training (8.6.1), lowering the unemployment rate (8.5.2), and decreasing the domestic material consumption (8.4.2). The negative trends in growth rates of GDP per capita (8.1.1) and productivity (8.2.1) show the extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which started to show signs of turn-around in the latest available data for 2023. The level of material footprint (8.4.1) remains stagnant.

Papua New Guinea's real GDP per capita growth from 2019 to 2023 has been marked by volatility, underscoring structural vulnerabilities in the economy. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a sharp contraction of -3.8 per cent in 2020⁶², followed by a moderate rebound with growth rates of 1.3 per cent in 2021 and 4.8 per cent in 2022, largely driven by improved non-mineral sector performance and easing of pandemic-related restrictions⁶³. Despite a stronger overall GDP growth of 5.1 per cent in 2023, gains in per capita terms remained subdued due to high population growth, limiting the extent to which economic expansion translated into improved individual wellbeing⁶⁴. This underscores a critical challenge: economic growth in PNG has not been inclusive enough to yield broad-based per capita benefits. To address this, the government's MTDP IV prioritizes diversified growth through investments in agriculture, infrastructure, and MSME development, aiming to improve productivity and income generation at the community level⁶⁵. Moving forward, sustaining per capita GDP growth will hinge on the effective implementation of these strategies alongside deeper structural reforms to enhance economic resilience and equitable development.

Papua New Guinea's real GDP per employed person has shown modest growth between 2019 and 2023, reflecting limited improvements in labour productivity amid broader structural challenges. While the economy recorded a significant increase in real GDP, employment growth remained sluggish – rising only 2 per cent over a decade compared to a 50 per cent GDP increase – indicating that economic gains were concentrated in capital-intensive sectors such as mining and petroleum with minimal impact on broader job creation⁶⁶. This trend continued through 2023, with output per worker constrained by the dominance of low-productivity informal employment and underutilization of the labour force in the formal sector. The PNG Development Strategic Plan 2010–2030 and Vision 2050 both identified this productivity gap and emphasized the need for economic diversification and inclusive employment policies (PNGDSP, 2010; Vision 2050). In line with these priorities, MTDP IV introduces targeted reforms including the expansion of special economic zones, SME development, and infrastructure investments under the Connect PNG initiative to stimulate sector-wide productivity. However, realizing meaningful gains in GDP per employed person will require the effective execution of these initiatives and alignment with workforce capacity and demand.

Figure 34: Real GDP Per Capita Growth and Real GDP Per Employed Person in PNG 2019 - 2023



Proportion of informal employment in non-agricultural employment (Indicator 8.3.1) in Informal employment remains a key feature of Papua New Guinea's labour market, particularly outside the agricultural sector. While recent national data on the proportion of informal employment is limited, various programs have contributed to supporting livelihood opportunities. The EU-supported STREIT PNG Program, for example, facilitated rural employment through short-term job creation, delivering thousands of workdays via rural road rehabilitation activities. Complementary efforts by DFAT and the Australia High Commission between 2020 and 2023 also provided business literacy and enterprise training to women entrepreneurs, helping to strengthen micro and small-scale business activity in rural areas.

⁶² BPNG Annual Report 2020

⁶³ BPNG Annual Report, 2021; 2022

⁶⁴ BPNG Annual Report 2023

⁶⁵ MTDP IV 2023 - 2027

⁶⁶ MTDP IV 2023 - 2027

it difficult to accurately assess trends or progress when it comes to the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) (Indicator 8.6.1) as there is a lack of up-to-date national data on the NEET rate. However, efforts have been made to expand access to skills development for young people. For instance, DFAT-supported Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs have trained 458 individuals in various trades. Despite these initiatives, women represented only around 30 per cent of participants, highlighting the need for more inclusive approaches to youth training and workforce entry.

The number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults (Indicator 8.10.1), allowing access to financial institutions has expanded significantly in targeted areas. The STREIT program helped establish 218 new banking access points, including mobile and agent banking, in East and West Sepik provinces.

The proportion of adults with an account at a financial institution or mobile money service (Indicators 8.10.2) rose between 2020 and 2023, with over 111,000 new accounts (including bank and mobile money accounts) opened in STREIT-supported regions. This particularly benefited rural women and informal traders, creating pathways for the growth of small-scale enterprises and improved income security.

Budgetary Alignment

- Budget data from 2023 indicates renewed attention to inclusive economic development;
- K80 million was earmarked for MSME credit support to help formalize micro-entrepreneurship and reduce informal sector reliance;
- Market infrastructure upgrades in locations such as Wabag and Kimbe have enabled women-led enterprises to flourish in safer, regulated spaces. These initiatives align with SDG 8 targets to promote productive employment and equitable labour environments;
- Youth unemployment remains high, particularly in urban centres. Limited access to vocational training and a skills mismatch with market needs are critical barriers;
- The informal economy represents a substantial share of employment in Papua New Guinea, with most economic activity occurring outside formal registration, particularly across the agricultural, trade, and service sectors. Although precise figures are unavailable, the dominance of informal livelihoods highlights the need for targeted support and greater integration of these activities into broader economic planning;
- MSME Growth has seen policy support through the Australian Government and ADB-funded programs. However, access to finance and financial literacy remain constraints;
- Women in the Workforce remain underrepresented, particularly in leadership roles and higher-wage sectors. Barriers include cultural norms, limited access to education, and workplace discrimination;

- Economic recovery post-COVID has been gradual, with inflation and external shocks continuing to pressure vulnerable households and small businesses.

SDG Synergies and the Strategic Role of Target 8.1 in PNG

While PNG has taken deliberate steps to stimulate economic growth, it has struggled to consistently meet the 7 per cent annual GDP growth target outlined under SDG Target 8.1. The economy remains heavily reliant on the extractive sector, which contributes approximately 28 per cent of GDP and 88 per cent of total exports, followed by agriculture at 19 per cent. This dependence on commodity exports exposes the country to external market volatility and undermines inclusive growth, particularly in the formal employment sector. The result is a persistently narrow economic base that limits productive job creation, deepens inequality and reinforces geographic disparities in income and services. In response, the government has prioritized economic diversification through support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), investment in enabling infrastructure, and an expansion of vocational and technical education. Despite these efforts, achieving sustained and inclusive per capita growth will require a stronger policy alignment that also addresses environmental sustainability, as the projected 1.7 per cent annual rise in fossil fuel intensity poses risks to progress on SDGs 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land).

The Target 8.1 Interlinkage Graph for PNG visually reinforces this integrated development challenge. The diagram maps synergies between economic growth and a wide range of SDG targets, particularly those related to poverty eradication (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), clean energy (SDG 7), infrastructure (SDG 9), inequality reduction (SDG 10), and sustainable cities (SDG 11). The green connectors highlight the bidirectional influence between economic performance and development outcomes, underscoring that inclusive growth is not merely an end goal but also a catalyst for broader social, environmental, and governance reforms. Notably, the connections to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) stress the importance of regulatory integrity and sustainable resource use in sustaining long-term growth. However, the colour-coded progress indicators many marked in red or pink signal challenges in meeting targets across the board, particularly in innovation (Target 9.2), employment (Target 8.5), and equitable access to infrastructure (Targets 9.c, 11.6). In the future, PNG's pursuit of Target 8.1 must be rooted in an integrated approach that addresses structural economic vulnerabilities, strengthens institutions, and aligns growth pathways with the imperatives of environmental and social sustainability.

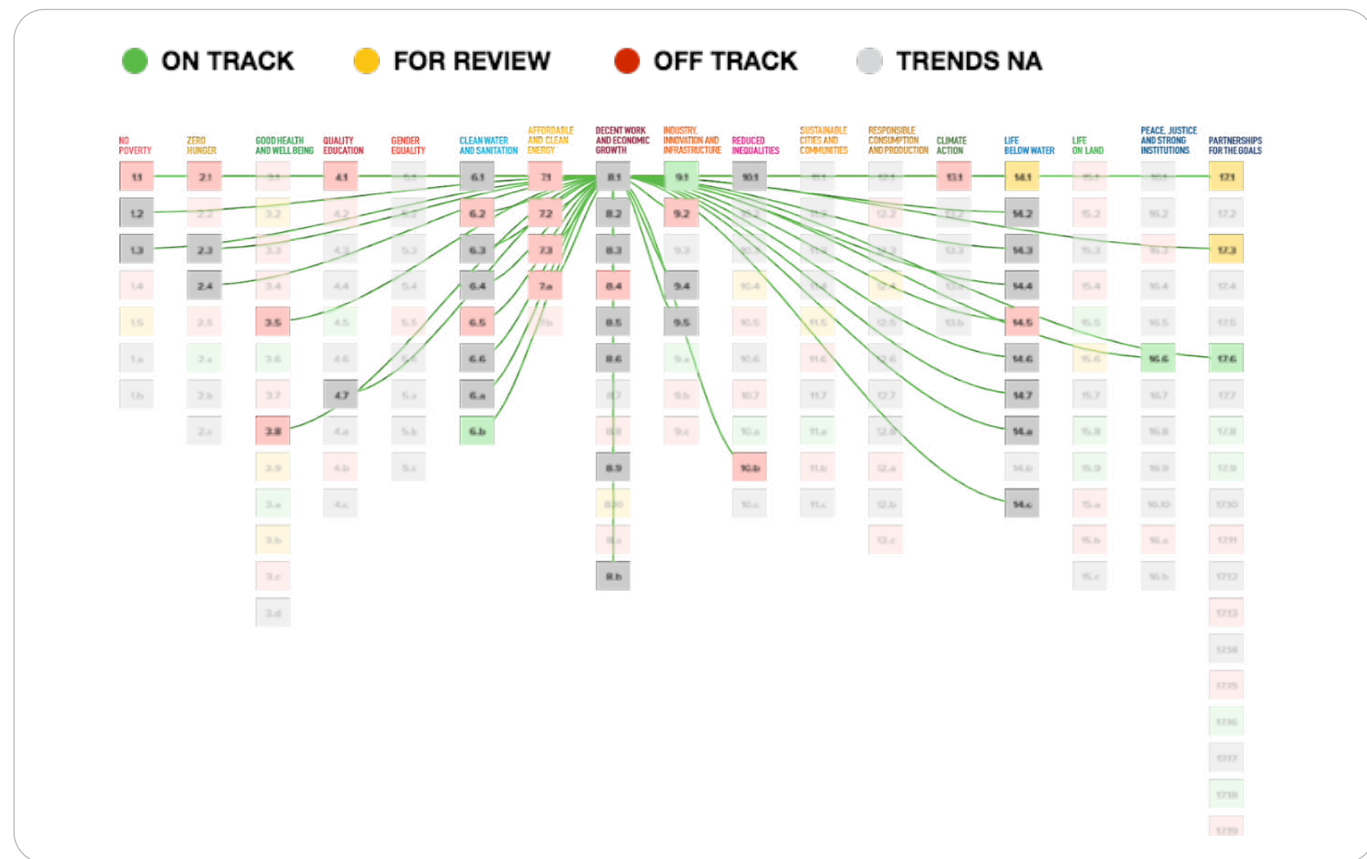


Figure 35: Target 8.1 Interlinkage Graph - PNG: This visual map illustrates how SDG Target 8.1 (sustained per capita economic growth) interconnects with multiple SDG targets across various sectors, including infrastructure, education, energy, climate action, and inequality. The green lines indicate synergies where economic growth is both influenced by and influences progress in related areas, highlighting the integrated nature of sustainable development. The colour coding reflects PNG's progress across targets green (on track), yellow (moderate), red/pink (off track), and grey (data unavailable) underscoring the importance of a coordinated approach to advance inclusive and resilient economic development. Source: <https://sdgdiagnostics.data.undp.org/PNG/synergies-and-tradeoffs>

Next Steps

To accelerate progress toward SDG 8 targets, PNG must adopt a dual strategy of enabling policy reform and targeted investment.

Policy Interventions should focus on fast-tracking the full implementation of the National Employment Policy and aligning it with the MTDP IV priority areas, including formalizing informal employment through regulatory incentives, introducing enforceable labour standards across all sectors, and institutionalizing gender-responsive labour market policies. Strengthening the enforcement of minimum wage laws, occupational safety, and inclusive hiring practices will be critical. Additionally, the establishment of a National Labor Market Information System will enable evidence-based planning, mainly to track youth employment and regional disparities. In this regard, the National Statistical Office, with ILO's technical support, is about to conduct its first-ever stand-alone Labour Force Survey.

Investment Interventions should prioritize expanding access to skills development programs, particularly TVET, targeting youth and women in underserved regions. Increased budgetary allocations are needed to scale MSME financing schemes and support start-up incubation centres. Infrastructure investment should also prioritize enhancing connectivity to markets, particularly for rural entrepreneurs. Incentivizing private sector job creation through tax relief, public-private partnerships, and support for green and digital economies can stimulate diversified and sustainable employment.

Greater collaboration between national and sub-national governments, development partners, and the private sector will be essential to mobilize resources and implement these priorities effectively.



SDG 9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Overview

PNG is advancing SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure through a coordinated suite of policy reforms, infrastructure investments, and innovation programs to address long-standing geographic and economic disparities. The flagship Connect PNG initiative targets 70 per cent population connectivity by 2027, with a strong fiscal commitment reflected in national budget priorities⁶⁷.

In parallel, the Transport Sector Support Program (TSSP), delivered in partnership with the Australian government, has strengthened the governance and operational performance of PNG's Road and transport services, enhancing resilience and service delivery capacity⁶⁸. The National Shipping Services Program (NSSP), another key enabler, is improving maritime connectivity for rural coastal populations, addressing the country's reliance on sea transport for inter-island trade and mobility⁶⁹.

Access to clean water and sanitation a critical infrastructure domain for public health and human development has also seen targeted investment through the WaSH Program. In 2023 and 2024 alone, this program received over K10 million in direct financing, supporting project management, feasibility studies, and the rollout of services in 29 districts and 2,037 communities⁷⁰. These allocations signal a robust policy commitment to reducing waterborne disease, improving school and healthcare hygiene, and uplifting rural living standards.

Digital and research ecosystems are being strengthened in tandem. Over K81 million was allocated in 2023 to expand e-governance platforms, while the government committed to increasing R&D investment to 0.5 per cent of GDP by 2027, supporting institutions such as the PNG Knowledge Hub and NRI⁷¹.

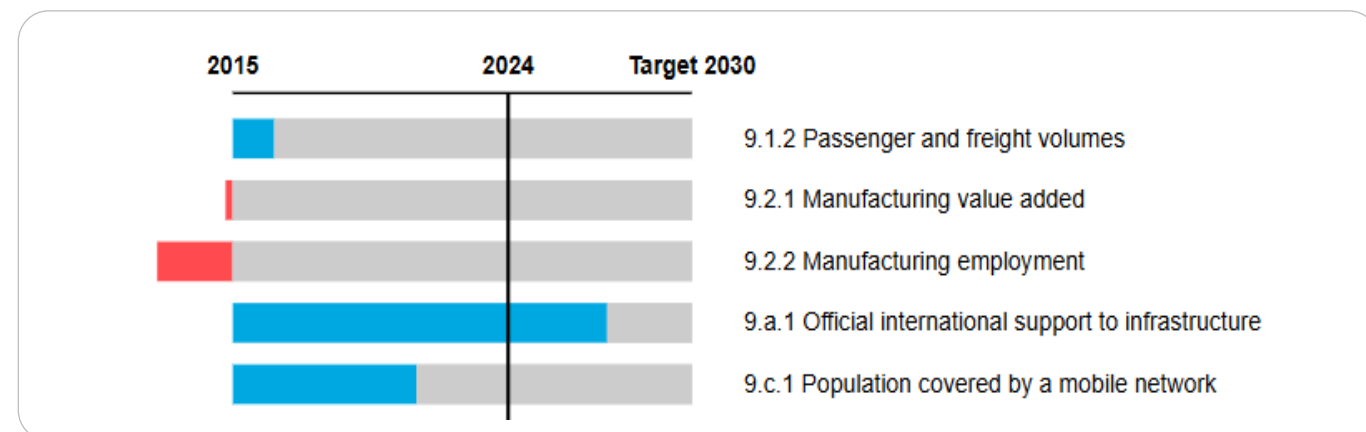
Significant infrastructure partnerships noted in PNG's 2020 VNR have advanced as well. The ADB's Bridge Replacement for Improved Rural Access Program has continued to enhance rural connectivity⁷², while the Civil Aviation Development Investment Program has successfully modernized regional airports, improving safety and accessibility⁷³. The World Bank- and China EXIM Bank-supported road works in the Highlands, which have facilitated trade and movement in PNG's most populous and agriculturally productive region⁷⁴.

These developments underscore PNG's strong trajectory towards SDG 9, supported by strategic alignment under the MTDP IV (2023–2027) and a fiscal framework prioritizing resilient, inclusive, and climate-adaptive infrastructure. While challenges persist including delays in project execution, institutional capacity constraints, and rural connectivity gaps the overall momentum is positive. PNG's investments in digital infrastructure, research ecosystems, and subnational service delivery present a transformative opportunity to shape a more innovative, connected, and industrially vibrant future.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 36: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 9

There has been some notable progress on official international support for infrastructure (9.a.1), which has been instrumental in improving infrastructure in PNG, mainly from bilateral and donor partners. The population covered by mobile network (9.c.1) has also seen improvement as PNG expanded the network into rural areas, now reaching 70per cent of the population. The manufacturing sector has seen a small contraction in value-added (9.2.1) and employment (9.2.2).



⁶⁷ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 5

⁶⁸ AHC Reporting Template, 2024.

⁶⁹ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 7

⁷⁰ 2023 Budget Volume 3A, p. 6; 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 8

⁷¹ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 11

⁷² ADB Reporting Template, 2024. The National Transport Strategy Policy is in place for developing the transport sector over the next 20 - 30 years, outlining the use of sustainable energy in the transport sector.

⁷³ MTDP IV, 2023–2027, p. 37

⁷⁴ WB Reporting Template, 2024

Indicator 9.1.1 – Proportion of the rural population who live within 2 km of an all-season road: PNG's rugged terrain and geographic fragmentation continue to pose significant challenges to rural accessibility. However, recent developments under the Connect PNG initiative have marked an inflection point. With an estimated K20 billion investment plan across 20 years and 2024 budget allocations exceeding K1.7 billion for transport infrastructure, road access is being expanded through 19 major corridor projects, including maintenance, construction, and rehabilitation of feeder routes⁷⁵. These road upgrades are reinforced by the World Bank's Resilient Transport Project, which targets climate-resilient corridors such as Ramu and Hiritano.

Indicator 9.1.2 – Passenger and freight volumes by mode of transport: Although national data on transport volumes remains limited, infrastructure upgrades across roads, airports, and ports indicate increased passenger and freight flows. The National Shipping Services Program (NSSP) backed by K250 million over five years supports rural maritime connectivity, with an additional K15 million allocated in 2024 and K20 million annually planned until 2028 for continued expansion⁷⁶. The Civil Aviation Development Investment Program, supported by ADB, has also advanced the modernization of 22 regional airports, improving safety and facilitating inter-provincial mobility.

Indicator 9.2.1 – Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita: PNG's manufacturing sector has experienced a mild contraction, with value-added contributions declining marginally. Structural dependence on extractive industries, limited infrastructure, and input costs constrain growth. In response, the government is promoting Special Economic Zones (SEZs) with K20 million allocated annually through 2028 to stimulate manufacturing hubs across East Sepik, NCD, and Gulf⁷⁷. These zones aim to attract domestic and foreign investors, drive export-oriented processing, and diversify industrial output.

While manufacturing's share in employment and value-added has declined slightly, PNG is pursuing recovery through targeted investments in SEZs and SME development.

Indicator 9.2.2 – Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment: Formal employment in manufacturing remains low but is a focus for future growth. The SEZ program is expected to generate jobs, particularly in agro-processing and export industries. Meanwhile, the SME Funding for Agriculture program allocated K200 million in 2023 has financed over 3,000 SMEs through BSP, NDB, and Women's Micro Bank, indirectly supporting employment and value chain integration across multiple sectors⁷⁸.

Indicator 9.4.1 – CO₂ emissions per unit of value added: Though data on industrial carbon intensity remains sparse, investment in sustainable infrastructure is gaining traction. The PNG Electrification Partnership and EUPRIP projects aim to transition isolated communities from diesel to solar and hydroelectric power, thereby reducing emissions from value-adding sectors⁷⁹. The Connect PNG program emphasizes climate-resilient road and bridge design, aligning with national adaptation commitments.

PNG continues to benefit from significant international infrastructure support, including USD 627 million for the Highlands Highway upgrade. Mobile coverage has also expanded to 70 per cent, supported by national broadband rollout and digital transformation programs.

Budget Analysis (2020–2024) – SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Between 2020 and 2024, the GoPNG significantly scaled up infrastructure, industry, and innovation investments, aligning closely with the national development agenda articulated in MTDP IV. The Connect PNG Infrastructure Program has been a cornerstone of this effort, with cumulative budget allocations reflecting a steady rise in priority to transport, energy, water, and ICT systems.

The 2024 National Budget committed K3.31 billion to infrastructure under Strategic Priority Area 2 (SPA2), comprising K1.7 billion for road development, K627 million for electricity access, K218 million for water and sanitation, K208 million for air transport, and K121 million for sea transport⁸⁰. This historic budget allocation signals a strategic shift toward infrastructure-led growth and national connectivity.

Support for industrial growth and value addition also grew, particularly through funding for special economic zones (SEZs) and downstream processing. From 2020 to 2024, annual SEZ allocations rose to K20 million, with projected annual increases continuing through 2028. Complementary to this were SME development funds, including a K200 million SME Agriculture Facility in 2023 to stimulate domestic enterprise, industrial employment, and rural value chains⁸¹.

In the ICT and digital transformation space, capital investments exceeded K100 million annually from 2022 onward, with programs led by DataCo, DICT, and NICTA delivering on the Digital Government Infrastructure and Services Program. By 2024, mobile and broadband network coverage expanded to reach approximately 70 per cent of the population, a critical enabler for innovation, e-commerce, and public service delivery⁸².

Despite these gains, challenges remain. Manufacturing value-added and employment declined slightly between 2020 and 2023, reflecting persistent structural barriers such as high logistics costs, limited access to industrial inputs, and insufficient scale in domestic

production. While substantial resources have been allocated, execution gaps, terrain-related logistics issues, and delayed disbursements, especially under Connect PNG and NSSP have impacted implementation timelines.

PNG must address these constraints by improving inter-agency coordination, enhancing procurement efficiency, and scaling up public-private partnerships to sustain progress. Furthermore, leveraging concessional loans and grant financing totaling K2.2 billion in 2024 alone will be essential to bridge funding gaps and deliver high-impact infrastructure⁸³.

PNG's budget trajectory from 2020 to 2024 prioritizes SDG 9. It lays a strong fiscal foundation for infrastructure-led development, industrial diversification, and digital transformation. Maintaining this momentum will be crucial to unlocking inclusive growth, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

The expansion of infrastructure funding reflects PNG's intent to decentralize service delivery, stimulate industrial zones, and digitize public systems. However, successful implementation will depend on improved inter-agency coordination and continued private-sector partnerships.

SDG Synergies and the Strategic Role of Target 9.1 in PNG

Target 9.1 (Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure) is one of the most cross-cutting goals in the SDG framework. This target catalyzes progress across multiple sectors, as shown in Figure 9. As visualized in Figure 9, infrastructure under Target 9.1 supports health, education, energy, mobility, and resilience services.

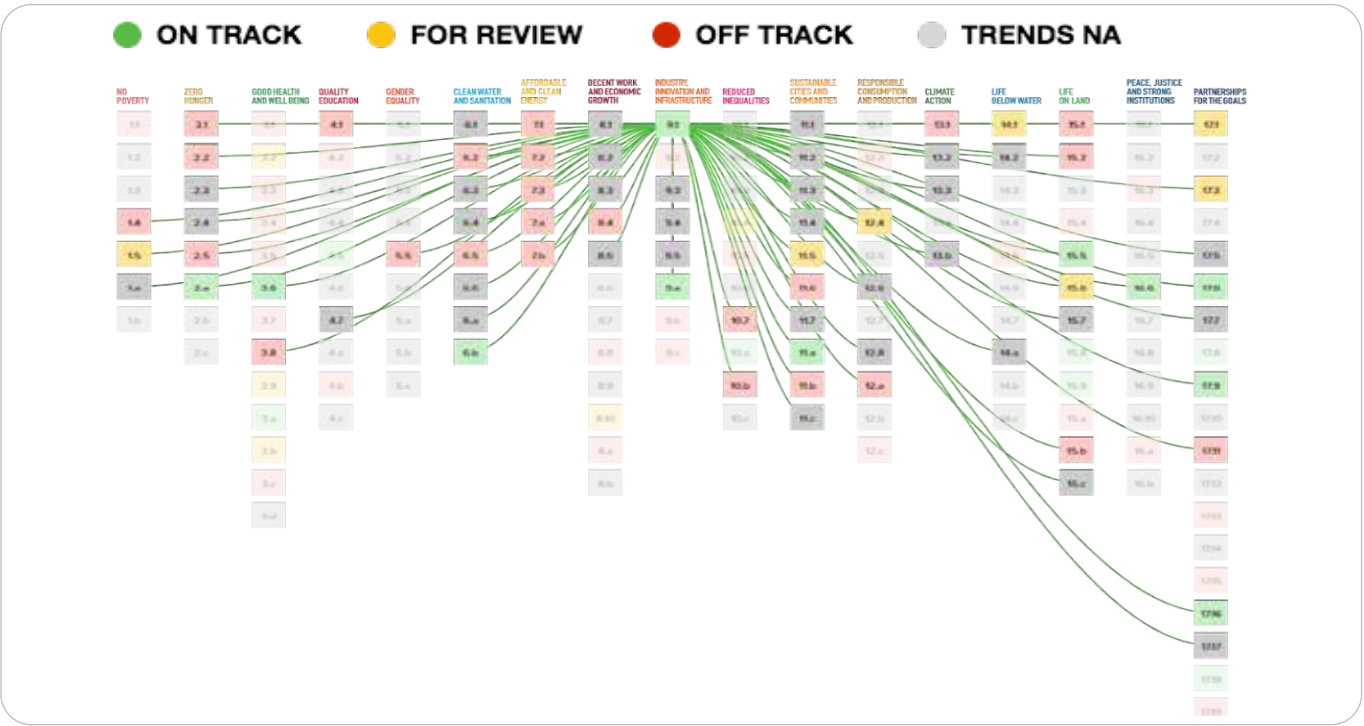
This interconnectedness is particularly significant for PNG, where infrastructure deficits are a binding constraint on inclusive development. Investments in roads, energy, telecommunications, and water systems directly influence productivity, mobility, and access to basic services. For instance, road upgrades under Connect

PNG not only enhance economic activity (SDG 8) but also facilitate timely access to healthcare (SDG 3.8), education (SDG 4.1), and clean water (SDG 6.1), therefore contributing to multiple outcomes in parallel. Infrastructure also supports climate resilience (SDG 13.1) by improving disaster response capacity and reducing community vulnerability to climate shocks.

The graph also highlights trade-offs. Infrastructure development may pressure forest ecosystems (SDG 15), particularly in regions undergoing road expansion without strong environmental safeguards. Furthermore, enhanced connectivity may accelerate rural-to-urban migration, strain urban services and raise challenges for urban management (SDG 11.1) and social cohesion (SDG 16.1). These risks necessitate integrated planning approaches, including land-use zoning, sustainable procurement, and community-driven development models.

The interlinkage graph underscores Target 9.1's pivotal role as an enabler and amplifier of broader development outcomes in PNG. If designed with equity, climate resilience, and sustainability in mind, strategic infrastructure investments can serve as the foundation for achieving most of the SDGs, demonstrating the transformative potential of well-targeted infrastructure policy.

Figure 37: Interlinkages between SDG Target 9.1 and Other SDG (SDGs) in PNG. This diagram illustrates how Target 9.1—developing quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure—interacts with and influences a broad array of other SDG targets. Green lines represent positive synergies across sectors, demonstrating how infrastructure investments in PNG contribute to progress in areas such as poverty reduction (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), water and sanitation (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and climate resilience (SDG 13). This visualization underscores the central role of infrastructure in driving inclusive and sustainable development outcomes throughout the country.



⁷⁵ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 5
⁷⁶ 2024 Budget Volume 3A. The National Transport Strategy Policy is in place for developing the transport sector over the next 20 - 30 years, outlining the use of sustainable energy in the transport sector.
⁷⁷ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 6
⁷⁸ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 8
⁷⁹ WB Reporting Template
⁸⁰ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 8–10
⁸¹ 2023 Budget Volume 3A, p. 6–8
⁸² PNG Digital Transformation Policy, 2020; 2024 Budget Volume 3A

Next Steps

PNG should advance the following priorities to sustain momentum and close existing gaps.

- 1. **Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Coordination:** PNG has made important progress in infrastructure delivery through programs such as Connect PNG and TSSP. To sustain momentum, strengthening institutional coordination and regulatory oversight is essential for improved implementation. Aligning MTDP IV with the SDGs and fostering collaboration between government, private sector, and development partners will ensure transparent and accountable infrastructure outcomes.
- 2. **Accelerate Inclusive and Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Delivery:** Expanding climate-resilient infrastructure across rural and remote areas presents a powerful opportunity to enhance livelihoods and reduce poverty. Projects should incorporate renewable energy and environmentally sustainable designs to maximize long-term impact. By leveraging cross-sector coordination and programs like WaSH and Connect PNG, PNG can deliver infrastructure that is both inclusive and future-ready.
- 3. **Enhance Investment in Innovation and Research Capacity:** Increased investment in research, technology, and innovation will unlock local solutions to national development challenges. Strong partnerships between universities, government, and the private sector can translate research into practical, commercial applications. These efforts support the shift toward knowledge-based, green growth.
- 4. **Revitalize Industrialization through SEZs, SMEs, and Green Jobs:** Expanding SEZs and supporting SMEs will boost manufacturing, agro-processing, and job creation across the country. Enhancing access to finance and facilitating partnerships with international companies will accelerate inclusive industrial development. Emphasizing clean technologies and sustainable practices will position PNG as a regional leader in green growth.
- 5. **Scale Up Digital Connectivity and Promote Digital Inclusion:** Rapid expansion in digital infrastructure offers an opportunity to bridge the digital divide and reach underserved communities. Prioritizing rural broadband, affordable access, and digital literacy will promote inclusive participation in e-government, education, and economic activity. Guided by the Digital Transformation Policy, digital inclusion will unlock innovation, youth employment, and service efficiency.
- 6. **Localize Infrastructure Planning and Foster Local Partnerships:** Empowering District Development Authorities (DDAs) and Provincial Planning Boards will align infrastructure planning with community needs. Supporting locally driven tools such as WaSH plans and rural transport maps will improve service delivery and sustainability. Strengthened engagement with civil society, academia, and the private sector will ensure that infrastructure development is equitable, transparent, and community owned.



SDG 10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Reduce inequality within and among countries

Overview

PNG is making steady progress toward reducing inequalities through coordinated policy action, inclusive programming, and strong cross-sectoral partnerships. While challenges persist, approximately 57 per cent of the population remains multidimensionally poor, with another 25 per cent vulnerable⁸⁵. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened these inequalities, putting the poorest 40 per cent of families in danger of being left behind. The government has prioritized addressing these disparities through targeted interventions. Despite historically low per capita income growth averaging 1.6 per cent between 2019 and 2025 new investments and inclusive reforms create pathways for broader economic and social development participation.

Structural barriers such as limited access to quality education, healthcare, and wage employment continue to affect marginalized groups, especially women, youth, persons with disabilities, and remote communities. Nonetheless, PNG has advanced inclusive human development through targeted programs and grassroots empowerment initiatives that uplift vulnerable groups. Programs such as the Empowerment Program for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People, Gender-Based Violence Response Initiatives, and the Inclusive Human Development Program are helping to reduce exclusion and improve livelihoods at the grassroots level.

Strong policy frameworks such as the National Financial Inclusion Strategy and the GESI Policy for Microfinance Institutions further reinforce this commitment to inclusive development, which has expanded access to finance for women, youth, and low-income earners. With support from development partners including Australia, the UN, and the European Union, PNG has advanced social protection, GESI mainstreaming, and inclusive service delivery through responsive budgeting and institutional reforms.

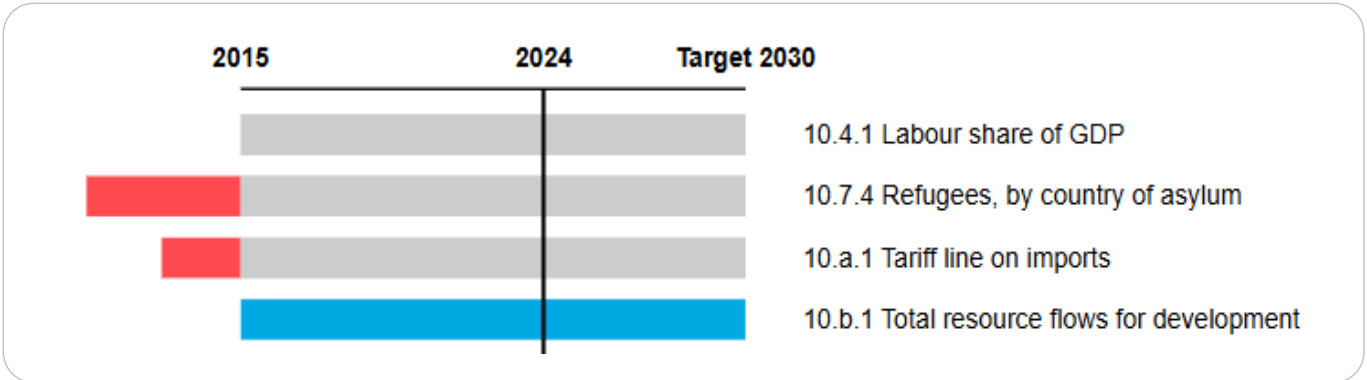
Encouragingly, several of the strategic actions outlined in PNG’s 2020 VNR have been implemented. The Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) rollout has enhanced fiscal transparency at the subnational level, while the K200 million SME Agriculture Facility is supporting informal workers and microentrepreneurs to grow into the formal economy. Establishing the National Trade Office and operationalizing the National Trade Policy 2017-2032, supported by the EU-funded Trade Assistance Program, have laid the groundwork for more equitable and competitive trade practices. These efforts and continued institutional capacity-building are positioning PNG to achieve more inclusive and resilient development outcomes.

Strategically, Vision 2050 and the MTDP IV 2023–2027 emphasize equity and inclusion as national development priorities. With initiatives in gender-responsive budgeting, decentralization of services, and inclusive governance, PNG is building a policy and institutional foundation to reduce inequality across all regions and population groups. While there is still work to expand formal employment and deepen political inclusion for underrepresented groups, the trajectory is promising, and momentum is growing.

PNG’s commitment to SDG 10 is evident through its inclusive programs, expanding financial and social protections, and progressive reforms to ensure no one is left behind. With continued investment, strong partnerships, and sustained policy leadership, PNG is well-positioned to achieve more equitable and inclusive development outcomes for all its citizens.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 38: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 10



⁸⁵ SDG Insights Report

There have been increased resource flows for development (10.b.1). However, tariffs on imports from PNG (10.a.1) have increased, harming the country's ability to export. The labor share of GDP (10.4.1) remains the same as the baseline. Finally, the number of refugees from PNG seeking asylum abroad (10.7.4) has increased⁸⁶.

Indicator 10.1.1 – Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 percent of the population: Income growth among the bottom 40 per cent of PNG citizens has seen modest but meaningful gains, driven by financial inclusion initiatives and targeted economic empowerment programs. According to the 2023 PNG Rural Household Survey, engagement in non-farm enterprises and wage employment is expanding in regions such as Bougainville and South Fly, aided by microfinance and informal sector support schemes. The SME Agriculture Facility providing K200 million in concessional finance has laid a strong foundation for inclusive growth and long-term resilience among low-income households.

Indicator 10.2.1 – Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income: Inequality remains a persistent challenge. However, expanded access to decentralized public services and local-level cash transfer programs has begun narrowing the poverty gap. Initiatives such as nutrition-sensitive support in Madang and East New Britain, district development funding, and responsive budgeting under MTDP IV are helping lift vulnerable communities closer to the national income median. These interventions have been especially impactful in rural and peri-urban areas where multidimensional poverty rates have historically been highest.

Indicator 10.3.1 – Proportion of the population reporting discrimination or harassment: PNG has steadily promoted social inclusion and reduced discrimination, especially through institutionalizing the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy across public agencies and microfinance institutions. National programs like PNG Women Lead, Equality for Women and Girls, and Women Make the Change have contributed to changing perceptions and improving access to leadership, finance, and justice services for women and girls. These programs emphasize legal reforms, capacity building, and awareness campaigns to combat gender-based violence and strengthen the protection of all citizens' rights.

Indicator 10.4.1 – Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers: While formal wage employment remains limited, particularly in rural regions, the government's continued investment in SEZs, MSME development, and youth employment programs is expected to boost labor's contribution to GDP over time. These efforts are complemented by targeted upskilling, SME incubation, and the National Youth Policy, which aims to empower young people through entrepreneurship and job-readiness programs. Expanding social protection transfers, including community grants and disability support, also improves household resilience.

Indicator 10.6.1 – Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations: PNG has actively strengthened its global and regional presence through

participation in WTO, APEC, and Pacific Islands Forum mechanisms. The EU-supported Trade Assistance Program has helped operationalize the National Trade Office and align PNG with international trade protocols such as the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement. At the same time, PNG has engaged in developing a National Migration Policy in partnership with the International Organization for Migration advancing the country's alignment with the Global Compact for Migration and working toward reducing the cost of remittances to under 3 per cent.

Social Inclusion and Empowerment

The PNG government has prioritized inclusive development through national programs targeting gender equity, disability inclusion, and protection of marginalized groups. The Empowerment Program for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People provides financial support, training, and rights-based services to groups such as persons with disabilities, street children, and disaster-affected communities. This is coordinated by the Department for Community Development and Religion and supported by civil society and faith-based organizations nationwide. The National Office of Child and Family Services also continues to deliver programs focused on child protection and family welfare.

Empowerment efforts are further bolstered by youth-focused frameworks such as the National Youth Policy, which promotes training, innovation, and self-reliance for young people. These programs are instrumental in addressing PNG's youth bulge and fostering meaningful participation of young citizens in nation-building.

Migration, Trade, and Development Cooperation

PNG increasingly leverages migration, trade, and aid partnerships to reduce structural inequalities. The government has partnered with the IOM to develop a comprehensive migration policy, focusing on safe and orderly migration, and reducing remittance costs through regulatory reform and capacity building. The Bank of PNG and the National Statistics Office are now tasked with monitoring remittance corridor efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Trade remains a vital pillar of PNG's inequality reduction agenda. Through engagement in WTO and APEC processes and domestic reforms under the National Trade Policy 2017–2032, PNG is working to expand market access and diversify exports. However, challenges in e-commerce capacity and WTO compliance continue to constrain competitiveness. PNG is upgrading trade-relevant technologies and actively negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to strengthen competitiveness and promote inclusive trade.

On the development cooperation front, PNG is strengthening partnerships to align aid flows with its SDG commitments. The Australia-PNG Development Partnership Plan 2024–2029 and UNDP-supported SDG implementation platforms focus on empowering lower-income earners and improving access to economic opportunity for all, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or geographic location. Meanwhile, the government's K4.4 billion COVID-19 recovery and

stimulus package has helped cushion vulnerable households from the pandemic's socio-economic impacts. At the same time, PNG's projected debt remains broadly in line with LIDC averages at 48 per cent of GDP in 2023.

Budget Analysis (2020–2024)

Between 2020 and 2024, PNG gradually increased its budgetary allocations to address social inequalities aligned with SDG 10, focusing on youth empowerment, gender equality, and inclusive human development. In the 2024 National Budget, the government committed K241 million toward youth-focused initiatives, including the Girls Education Support/Scholarship Program, the establishment of 61 Youth Development Centers, and support for 436,000 youth involved in MSMEs, coordinated through the Department for Community Development and Religion and the National Youth Development Authority. These investments are expected to reduce youth disengagement, strengthen social cohesion, and foster inclusive economic participation among young people across all provinces.

In parallel, sustained funding for gender and social inclusion programming has helped reinforce the implementation of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy, mainstreamed through the Department of Personnel Management. In 2020, the GESI Capacity Building and Systems Roll-out Project received K1 million, enabling the setup of GESI Help Desks, advocacy campaigns, and leadership development training for women in the public sector. Meanwhile, the National Office for Child and Family Services was allocated K12 million in 2022 and K17 million in 2023 to support child protection case management systems, provincial child councils, and services for vulnerable children and families. This reflects the government's intent to address structural barriers to inclusion and to translate Vision 2050 and MTDP IV into action that leaves no one behind.

Next Steps

- Strengthen Inclusive Policy Implementation and Coordination (National Level):** To build on recent progress, PNG should prioritize the full operationalization of inclusive policies such as the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy, the National Youth Policy, and the Empowerment Program for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People. Strengthening coordination between the Department for Community Development and Religion, the Department of Personnel Management, and key sector agencies will be essential for mainstreaming inclusion across all development programs. Integrating these policies with MTDP IV targets and Vision 2050 will ensure coherence with SDG 10 objectives, while strong regulatory oversight and financial sector reform will enhance stability and public confidence.
- Expand Targeted Investments in Social Protection and Economic Empowerment (Subnational Level):** Social protection should be leveraged as a transformative tool to reduce inequality. Through district-level grants, inclusive budgeting, and the District Services Improvement Program (DSIP), subnational governments can fund cash transfer schemes, support for persons with disabilities, and livelihood projects for women and

youth. Expanding the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) and promoting good governance at all levels will increase accountability, reduce corruption, and enhance equitable service delivery.

- Scale Inclusive Financing, Diversification, and Digital Access (District and Local Levels):** PNG must broaden access to finance and digital infrastructure to address income disparities. Expanding the SME Access Risk Financing Facility and MSME credit programs will help integrate the informal sector into the formal economy, promoting equitable growth. Digital financial inclusion – through mobile banking, digital literacy, and community-based internet centers – will increase market access and productivity. Promoting economic diversification beyond the extractive sector will help generate more inclusive and sustainable livelihoods.
- Foster Inclusive Trade and Investment Practices (National and Regional Engagement):** PNG should upgrade trade-relevant technologies and business processes to reinforce fair trading and enhance its competitiveness in regional and global markets. Strengthening the National Trade Office, operationalizing the Trade Policy Implementation Strategy, and improving compliance with WTO and iEPA standards are essential next steps. Simultaneously, reviewing mining and petroleum sector legislation to improve landowner participation and local equity in resource development will promote inclusive growth. PNG must also enhance investment promotion to attract responsible investors while safeguarding local interests.
- Institutionalize GESI and Community Safeguards (Subnational and District Levels):** Establishing and strengthening GESI Committees within districts and provinces will ensure that gender and equity are embedded in development planning. Local governments should be empowered to run anti-discrimination campaigns, support survivors of GBV, and ensure the active participation of underrepresented groups in budget planning and monitoring. Partnering with civil society and faith-based groups will expand reach and build local trust.
- Advance Human Capital Development and Social Mobility:** PNG should prioritize investments in education, vocational training, and health to close inequality gaps in human capital outcomes. Expanding scholarship programs, youth leadership training and early childhood services will empower the next generation and reduce intergenerational poverty. A stronger focus on quality service delivery and learning outcomes, particularly for girls and children in rural areas, will ensure long-term socio-economic transformation.
- Improve Data Systems and Monitoring for Equity (National and Provincial Levels):** Robust data systems are essential to track discrimination, income inequality, and the impact of policy interventions. In coordination with provincial bureaus, the National Statistics Office (NSO) should be supported in disaggregating data by sex, age, location, and disability. These systems will improve evidence-based planning, foster transparency, and allow timely interventions to reduce inequality.

⁸⁶ There have been increased resource flows for development (10.b.1) as reported in the SPAR 2023 report (SPAR, 2023). However, tariffs on imports from PNG (10.a.1) have increased, affecting the country's ability to export competitively (WB Reporting Template, 2024). The labor share of GDP (10.4.1) remains consistent with baseline levels (PNG LNOB Country Brief, 2023). Finally, the number of refugees from PNG seeking asylum abroad (10.7.4) has seen a marginal increase in recent years (UNHCR/IOM Brief, 2023).

Overview

PNG is undergoing a transformative urbanization process driven by population growth and rural-to-urban migration. This has placed increasing pressure on urban centers to provide inclusive infrastructure, affordable housing, and essential public services. As of 2023, the urban population continues to expand, with over 28 per cent of urban residents living in informal settlements, often underserved by basic utilities and plagued by poor living conditions.

The country has made a number of efforts to improve urban resilience and sustainability to address these challenges. The District Development Authority (DDA), established in 2014, has played a central role in facilitating local governance and ensuring service delivery in districts. Since 2017, the government has invested more than USD 100 million in cities and districts to enhance their liveability, stimulate economic opportunities, and strengthen governance through integrated urban development.

Urban growth has brought pressing challenges, particularly with regard to housing, waste management, unemployment, and law and order. Recognizing the need for institutional and regulatory strengthening, the government implemented several programs to guide urban transformation:

- Settlement to Suburb Program to formalize informal settlements;
- Smart City Development Program, launched in 2022 to create technology-enabled and sustainable urban environments;
- Solid Waste Management in the Pacific Islands, a multi-phase initiative to strengthen waste infrastructure and environmental health in key urban centers, including Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, Kokopo, and Goroka;
- Connect PNG, Urban Townships and District Growth Centres, which link infrastructure expansion with economic development.

Customary land constituting approximately 97 per cent of land in PNG has increasingly been made available for urban expansion. A dedicated office within the National Housing Corporation (NHC) now manages customary land transitions, ensuring landowner rights and enabling access to land for housing development.

When the National Housing Policy 2023–2033 is launched and implemented will become a cornerstone of PNG's urban strategy. The policy focuses on:

- Expanding affordable social and public housing for low- and middle-income earners;
- Upgrading informal housing to modern standards;
- Partnering with districts and local governments to deliver housing under the Rural Housing Development Programme;
- Launching the Triple VVV Program, which includes a National Housing Facility Audit;

- Promoting strata titling to improve homeownership access;
- Implement modular housing with integrated trunk infrastructure – water, electricity, and sewerage – before construction.

Other government agencies' housing policies, projects, and schemes are also being developed, contributing towards providing affordable housing in PNG's urban centers for low and middle income earners. The draft Public Service Housing Policy currently being developed by DPM and PNG NRI is targeted towards providing affordable housing for low and middle income earners in the public service. This policy is tied to a public service housing project that is being developed at Bomana Section 12:12. Once piloted in Bomana, the project and policy will be rolled out into the provinces and districts which aims to attract public servants back to the provinces and districts. DNPM has also implemented its Affordable Housing Scheme at Gerehu Stage 3B for its staff and other public servants.

PNG has taken steps toward policy coherence and stakeholder coordination. Although the disbanding of the Office of Urbanisation (OoU) in 2018 stalled progress on the National Urbanisation Plan 2010–2030, recent momentum suggests a renewed focus. Calls to re-establish an Urban Development Authority to regulate all urban development remain pertinent. Additionally, finalizing and implementing the Urbanisation Management Bill are essential to creating a clear legal framework for urban growth.

Several recommendations from PNG's 2020 VNR have been partially achieved:

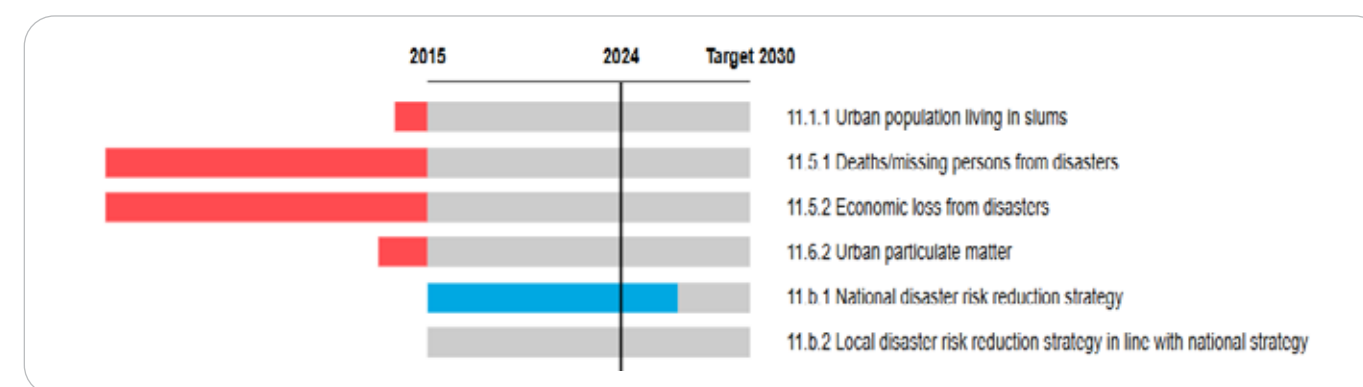
- Coordination among stakeholders like the NHC, DLPP, NCDC, and state utilities has improved, especially in land administration and trunk infrastructure planning;
- The re-establishment of the OoU and the passage of the Urbanisation Management Bill remain pending;
- A lot of recommendations and suggested reforms that emerged from the 2005 and 2019 National Land Summits on land administration that is supposed to be carried out by DLPP have all not been accomplished making land registration process both lengthy and costly.

Effective implementation of the MTDP IV 2023–2027 is critical. The plan aims to deliver 2,000 new houses by 2027, supported by a K640 million investment across institutional, provincial, and national housing programs. Emphasis is also placed on improved access to clean water and sanitation in urban areas, aiming for 100 per cent coverage by 2027.

PNG's progress toward SDG 11 demonstrates a growing institutional commitment to sustainable urban development. Still, addressing infrastructure bottlenecks, enforcing urban land policies, and fostering multisectoral coordination remain vital to transforming cities into inclusive and resilient spaces for all.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 39. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 11



The country has made good progress in establishing the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017–2030 (Target 11.b.1), which aligns with the global Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. However, localization of this strategy at the subnational levels (11.b.2) remains challenging. There is a regression in deaths or missing persons from disasters (11.5.1) and the economic impact (11.5.2). Recent events, such as the catastrophic landslide in Enga Province, highlight the ongoing challenges in reducing disaster-related fatalities. At the same time, urban population living in slums (11.1.1) and air pollution (11.6.2) are increasing.

PNG has made steady progress in implementing SDG 11 through a wide range of national and sub-national programs focused on urban resilience, housing, transport, waste management, and cultural preservation. While major urban centres like Port Moresby, Lae, and Madang have benefited from infrastructure investments, rapid urbanization and unregulated settlement growth continue challenging sustainable urban development across the country.

Access to Housing and Basic Services and Upgrading Slums (Indicator 11.1.1): Approximately 28 per cent of PNG's urban population live in informal settlements. The Settlement to Suburb Program, launched in 2020 with a K5 million annual budget, aims to transform squatter settlements into planned neighborhoods. In partnership with Provincial Authorities, the Department of Lands and Physical Planning leads this initiative to promote inclusive growth and access to basic services⁸⁷.

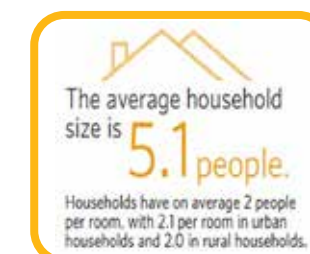
Smart Urbanisation and Technology-Driven Development (Indicators 11.3.1, 11.3.2): The Smart City Development Program – began in 2022 with a K5 million budget – promotes the strategic integration of infrastructure and technology to enhance urban living. Although direct civic participation structures are still evolving, stakeholder consultations have expanded, particularly in areas such as the National Waste Management Strategy and urban planning projects⁸⁸.

Solid Waste Management and Clean Environments (Indicators 11.6.1, 11.6.2): PNG has made tangible improvements in solid waste management through the Solid Waste Management in the Pacific Islands Project, now active in NCD, Lae, Madang, Kokopo, Alotau, and Goroka. The Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA) leads this initiative, which includes a National Waste Management Policy, waste audits, and urban local government (ULLG) capacity-building⁸⁹.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Urban Resilience (Indicators 11.5.1, 11.5.2, 11.b.1, 11.b.2): The country has shown good progress in establishing the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017–2030, aligning with the global Sendai Framework (Indicator 11.b.1). However, localization of this strategy at the subnational level (Indicator 11.b.2) remains limited. The recent catastrophic landslide in Enga Province reflects a regression in efforts to reduce disaster-related deaths and economic loss (Indicator 11.5.1, 11.5.2). Projects such as the Landslides Hazard Mapping, Highlands Highway Project, PLANET, and Building Resilience to Climate Change continue to improve hazard preparedness and risk governance⁹⁰.

Transport Infrastructure and Mobility (Indicator 11.2.1): Sustainable transport systems have seen investment through the Transport Sector Support Program (TSSP) and the National Shipping Services Program (NSSP). These initiatives, backed by the Australian government and the Department of Transport, aim to ensure safer, more affordable connectivity across provinces. The Freight Subsidy Policy Development complements this by seeking to reduce transportation costs and improve access.

Urban Land and Housing Policies (Indicator 11.1.1): The forthcoming National Housing Policy 2023–2033 launch will mark significant progress on a key VNR 2020 recommendation. The policy is expected to promote



⁸⁷ 2024 Budget Volume 3A/IIII

⁸⁸ DLPP Reporting Template, 2023

⁸⁹ National Waste Management Strategy, 2023

⁹⁰ AHC Reporting Template, 2024

affordable housing, land mobilization, and coordinated urban development elements critical to addressing PNG's urban housing crisis and transforming settlements into thriving suburbs⁹¹.

Cultural and Natural Heritage Conservation (Indicator 11.4.1): Cultural heritage preservation has been strengthened through infrastructure rehabilitation programs led by the National Cultural Commission (NCC) and the National Museum and Art Gallery (NMAG). Key projects include the Permanent Archive & Storage Facility, Cultural Events and Festivals, and the National Museum Rehabilitation Project, all supporting cultural preservation and tourism. Simultaneously, CEPA's Protected Areas and Lukautim Graun Project aim to conserve biodiversity and natural ecosystems against climate change and deforestation threats⁹².

The VNR 2020 called for the reinstatement of the Office of Urbanisation (OoU), passage of the Urbanisation Management Bill, and finalisation of the National Housing Policy. PNG has addressed these recommendations, including drafting a new housing policy and expanding urbanization programs through initiatives like Connect PNG. However, the Urbanisation Management Bill remains pending, and the OoU has not yet been formally reinstated.

PNG has made commendable strides in strengthening its urban planning systems, improving access to housing and services, building resilience, and preserving heritage. Continued efforts are needed to bridge institutional gaps, localize disaster frameworks, and enhance data systems for more responsive urban development strategies.

Budget Analysis

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG allocated significant resources toward urban development, disaster resilience, and basic services to advance SDG 11. According to the 2024 Budget Volume 3A, initiatives such as the Settlement to Suburb Program received consistent annual allocations of K5 million since its inception in 2020, highlighting the government's commitment to upgrading informal settlements and expanding access to utilities. The Smart City Development Program was allocated K5 million in 2022 to initiate infrastructure-tech integration in major cities. The Solid Waste Management in the Pacific Islands Project – targeting urban cleanliness and capacity building at local government levels – was also backed with multi-year funding to align with the National Waste Management Strategy. These programs have visibly impacted urban centres such as Port Moresby, Lae, and Madang, helping improve planning, waste disposal, and civic engagement⁹³.

In transport and urban mobility, the government scaled up investment under Connect PNG, with K1.7 billion committed to transport infrastructure in 2024, – part of a broader strategy to connect urban townships and rural growth centres⁹⁴. Programs such as the Transport Sector Support Program and the National Shipping Services Program jointly supported by the Australian government

have focused on maintaining road and maritime infrastructure critical to enhancing urban accessibility and sustainability. However, while allocations have increased over time, challenges persist around the finalisation of key legislative frameworks such as the Urbanisation Management Bill and the formal reinstatement of the Office of Urbanisation. Furthermore, although the National Housing Policy 2023–2033 has been developed, its implementation is still pending, leaving a critical gap in coordinated housing and land-use planning. Continued prioritisation of these frameworks and increased funding for climate-resilient urban planning and disaster risk reduction is vital if SDG 11 gains are to be sustained.

Next Steps

1. National Level Interventions

- **Reinstate Urban Governance Institutions and Legal Frameworks:** Finalize and enact the Urbanisation Management Bill and consider reinstating the Office of Urbanisation (OoU) or establishing a new Urban Development Authority. This is crucial to regulating and guiding urban growth in line with the National Urbanisation Plan 2010–2030 and supporting the National Housing Policy 2023–2033 implementation.
- **Operationalize the National Housing Policy 2023–2033:** Accelerate the rollout of housing programs, including the Triple VVV Program, modular housing with trunk infrastructure, and strata titling reforms. Prioritize low-and middle-income housing in urban and peri-urban areas, and link this with land mobilization strategies⁹⁵.
- **Strengthen Interagency Coordination and Policy Coherence:** Foster collaboration among key urban stakeholders, including the NHC, DLPP, DPM, CEPA, NCDC, utility service providers, and financial institutions. A national task force or coordination unit under DNPM could streamline implementation and monitoring across the urban development portfolio⁹⁶.
- **Enhance Resilience and Early Warning Systems:** Fully localize the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017–2030 across all provinces and urban districts. Strengthen early warning systems and hazard monitoring infrastructure. This includes tools like the PNG Disaster Loss Database and the Landslide Hazard Mapping Project along the Highlands Highway⁹⁷.
- **Invest in Urban Data Systems and Smart Planning Tools:** Develop a national urban data system with disaggregated data on slum populations, land use, pollution, and disaster vulnerability. This would guide inclusive and climate-responsive urban planning and enable transparent monitoring of SDG 11 indicators⁹⁸.

2. Subnational Level Interventions

- **Scale Up Sustainable Urban Programs:** Provincial Governments should expand the implementation of the Settlement to Suburbs,

Smart Cities, and Solid Waste Management Projects, particularly in high-growth towns such as Kokopo, Alotau, and Wewak. Emphasize community-led planning and alignment with environmental laws⁹⁹.

- **Improve Urban Waste Management Infrastructure:** Strengthen municipal solid waste systems by equipping ULLGs with planning tools, technical capacity, and financial resources. Implement waste separation, recycling hubs, and landfill upgrading, building on CEPA's national waste strategy¹⁰⁰.
- **Promote Inclusive and Green Urban Planning:** Subnational authorities should incorporate green public spaces, pedestrian infrastructure, and climate adaptation measures into urban design. Ensure plans include women, persons with disabilities, and informal residents to enhance social cohesion and liveability.
- **Strengthen Disaster Preparedness:** Establish urban resilience units in provincial planning divisions and include DRM activities in provincial budgets. Support subnational training on emergency response, evacuation planning, and climate-smart zoning.

3. District and Local Level Interventions

- **Empower DDAs in Urban Service Delivery:** Align District Development Plans with SDG 11 targets through projects that address housing, water and sanitation, clean energy, and public

amenities. Use District Services Improvement Program (DSIP) funds for resilient and inclusive urban infrastructure.

- **Localize Housing Programs and Support Customary Land Use Transitions:** District-level implementation of the Rural Housing Development Program should be prioritized with clear links to landowner agreements, ensuring fair and transparent access to land for housing expansion. Customary land use transitions can only be made possible through the Voluntary Customary Land Registration process. To strengthen this process, the Customary Land Policy needs to be passed through NEC, and the Customary Land Authority established.
- **Encourage Civic Participation in Urban Development:** Promote participatory planning processes and local stakeholder engagement, particularly in the context of the Settlement to Suburb and Smart City initiatives, ensuring responsiveness to community needs.
- **Protect Local Cultural and Natural Heritage:** DDAs and ULLGs should integrate cultural preservation in development plans through support for festivals, conservation education, and heritage tourism infrastructure, coordinated with the National Cultural Commission and CEPA¹⁰¹.



⁹¹ National Housing Policy, 2023

⁹² AHC Reporting Template, 2023

⁹³ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, pp. 6–9

⁹⁴ 2024 Budget Volume 3A, p. 5

⁹⁵ National Housing Policy, 2023

⁹⁶ VNR 2020; DLPP Reporting Template, 2023

⁹⁷ AHC Reporting Template, 2024

⁹⁸ MTDP IV 2023 – 2027

⁹⁹ 2024 Budget Volume 3A; National Waste Management Strategy, 2023

¹⁰⁰ Solid Waste Management in the Pacific Islands, 2023

¹⁰¹ AHC Reporting Template, 2023

12

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

SDG 12. ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Overview

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG made considerable progress in laying the groundwork for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) practices, recognizing them as integral to economic stability, environmental health, and social well-being. Central to this effort is the National Strategy for Responsible and Sustainable Development (StaRS), which advocates for a green economy and emphasizes cost-effective and resource-efficient approaches to development. The government adopted a multi-sectoral framework through this lens, embedding SCP principles into policies and programs across agriculture, waste management, ocean governance, and energy security.

Key among the strategic documents is the draft of the National Waste and Chemical Management Policy, which aims to strengthen the capacity of urban local-level governments and township authorities to regulate waste disposal, sanitation, and chemical hazards. Initiatives such as the Solid Waste Management in the Pacific Islands Project – active in cities such as Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, and Kokopo – have focused on landfill upgrades, municipal waste audits, and the development of local Solid Waste Management Plans aligned with the National Waste Management Strategy. This program is supported by CEPA and JICA and is vital for reducing the environmental footprint of growing urban areas.

In the agricultural sector, efforts have targeted reducing resource-intensive practices through the promotion of modern agro-ecological farming, genetic resource conservation, and sustainable land use. These approaches are guided by the Agriculture National Agriculture Sector Plan (NASP) 2024-2033, Agriculture Medium Term Development Plan (AMTDP) 2020-2022 and the Agriculture, Forest, and Other Land Use Mitigation Plan 2022-2025, which underscore the importance of sustainable production in mitigating emissions and preserving biodiversity. These policies advocate for improved land tenure systems and encourage integrated farming models that maintain ecological balance.

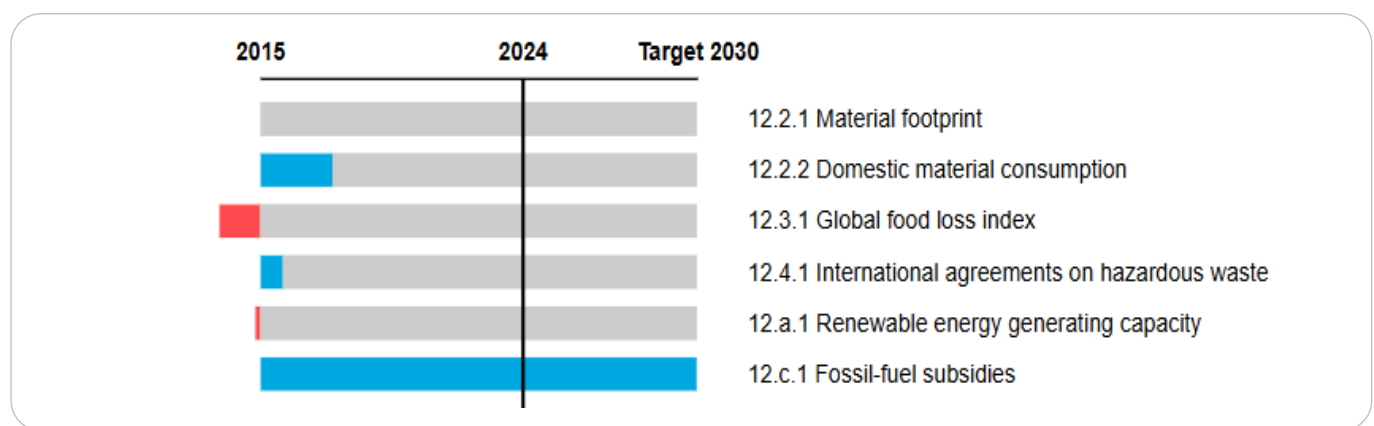
PNG has also advanced its legislative and institutional efforts in climate-sensitive production, including the development of the National Oceans Policy 2020-2030, which addresses land-based sources of pollution, marine litter, and overexploitation of coastal resources. The draft Sustainable Land Use Policy – currently in progress with the Department of Lands and Physical Planning – aims to guide environmentally sound planning and reduce land degradation.

Importantly, the country's commitment to low-emission development is supported by strategies to reduce waste and emissions in the industrial and extractive sectors. Actions include regulating tailings disposal in mining, enforcing environmental safeguards, and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions. Complementary measures include the anticipated implementation of an emissions offsets policy and enhancing enforcement mechanisms for pollution control.

Overall, PNG has set a firm policy foundation for achieving SDG 12, with ongoing implementation of strategic interventions that reflect its unique ecological, economic, and cultural contexts. Continued investment in local capacity building, stakeholder coordination, and policy operationalization will be essential for scaling up responsible production and consumption systems nationwide.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 40. Progress of selected indicators in Goal 12



The progress in reducing domestic material consumption (12.2.2) and eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels (12.c.1) is remarkable in this goal. At the same time, no progress has been witnessed in terms of the material footprint (12.2.1) or the adoption of international agreements on hazardous waste. The goal indicators show regression in the food loss index (12.3.1) and the installed capacity for renewable energy (12.a.1).

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG demonstrated an increasing commitment to sustainable consumption and production (SCP), recognizing it as foundational to national resilience, climate adaptation, and inclusive growth. PNG has advanced policy efforts through the Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development (StaRS) and the National Energy Policy 2017-2027, providing a framework for aligning national development with climate and resource-efficiency goals. StaRS promotes cost-effective, resource-efficient development while encouraging green growth pathways¹⁰².

PNG has made considerable progress in reducing domestic material consumption (12.2.2) and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies (12.c.1). These advances signal a positive shift toward more sustainable economic models. However, progress has been slower regarding material footprint (12.2.1) and the adoption of international agreements on hazardous waste. Moreover, regression has been recorded in the food loss index (12.3.1) and installed renewable energy capacity (12.a.1), indicating the need for stronger alignment with food systems and energy sector priorities¹⁰³.

To support waste management (12.4.1/12.5.1), PNG began a Draft National Waste and Chemical Management Policy to strengthen urban and mining township authorities to regulate sanitation and chemical disposal. In line with this, the Solid Waste Management in the Pacific Islands Project has delivered positive results through waste audits, separation initiatives, and institutional strengthening across NCD, Lae, Madang, Kokopo, and Goroka.

Sustainable mining practices have also gained traction. The Department of Mineral Policy and Geohazards Management is leading a comprehensive review of outdated mining legislation to align with responsible mining standards. In addition, CEPA's Mine Cleaning Program is being implemented to mitigate environmental damage. The Gold Bullion Reserve Policy facilitates the retention and processing of gold onshore. At the same time, the Women in Mining Program supports greater participation of women in mining-linked livelihoods¹⁰⁴.

PNG has taken decisive action in addressing illegal wildlife trade to combat poaching and trafficking of protected flora and fauna. This aligns with broader biodiversity goals and strengthens its contribution to SDG 15. PNG is also advancing renewable energy and energy efficiency. The National Energy Policy (2017-2027), the

National Electricity Roll-Out Plan, and the Off-Grid Renewable Energy Project target expanded household connectivity, particularly in rural communities. The government aims to reach 70 per cent electrification by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050.

The country is also addressing food security and sustainable agriculture through the National Agriculture Development Program, Commodity Price Support, and SME Funding for Agriculture. These initiatives focus on income generation, domestic food security, and export promotion. The Research and Development Program, driven by NARI, enhances innovation and resilience in food systems. However, unsustainable agricultural practices such as forest clearing, and mismanaged hazardous waste remain key environmental risks.

PNG has set up a satellite land monitoring system and developed a National Forest Inventory methodology to better report and manage forest degradation under REDD+ initiatives. While implementation has faced funding constraints, these tools represent important steps toward sustainable land and forest governance.

The 2020 VNR recommended finalizing SCP-related regulations, enhancing SCP-related data systems, and developing SCP education and awareness campaigns. PNG has partially achieved these through strengthened institutional frameworks, targeted investments in green development, and mainstreaming SCP principles across energy, agriculture, and waste sectors. However, progress will depend on continued capacity building, SCP indicator monitoring, and operationalizing key policies like the Waste Management and Sustainable Land Use Policies.

PNG has made meaningful strides in embedding SCP principles across multiple sectors. However, continued effort is needed to enhance data systems, address performance gaps in food systems and renewable energy, and scale sustainable practices nationwide.

Next Steps

1. National-Level Interventions

- Set up and Enforce Key Environmental Policies:** Finalize and implement the National Waste and Chemical Management Policy and update the Environment Act 2000 to enhance regulatory compliance and effective environmental management. This should include strengthening enforcement mechanisms, expanding pollution monitoring, and introducing penalties for non-compliance to hold companies accountable.
- Advance Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency:** Secure long-term funding for implementing the National Energy Policy (2017-2027), NEROP, and Off-Grid Renewable Energy Projects. These programs are essential for reducing dependence on fossil fuels and achieving the national electrification targets of 70 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050.

¹⁰² NMTDP IV, 2023-2027

¹⁰³ AHC Reporting Template, 2023

¹⁰⁴ AHC Reporting Template, 2023

- **Promote Transparent and Responsible Mining:** Increase transparency in the mining sector by mandating public disclosure of annual environmental reports and strengthening compliance under the Gold Bullion Reserve Policy. Require mining and gas companies to reduce or offset greenhouse gas emissions and manage mining waste in alignment with updated environmental conditions and CEPA's Mine Cleaning Program.
- **Enhance Governance of Natural Resource Sectors:** Review the National Development Council to address policy fragmentation and data gaps. Improve stakeholder coordination across forestry, mining, agriculture, and energy sectors to support SCP-aligned planning. Strengthen legality and participation in forestry to promote sustainable timber trade and biodiversity protection.
- **Mainstream SCP into National Planning and Education:** Invest in interagency task forces and technical working groups to integrate SCP into sectoral strategies, including agriculture, fisheries, and industry. Expand SCP education through school curricula, national awareness campaigns, and behavioural change programs targeting urban and rural populations. This will include indigenous knowledge education which is vital for environmental protection, and adaptation and mitigation of impacts.
- **Strengthen Environmental Data Systems:** Establish systems for routine data collection on waste, emissions, consumption trends, and SCP indicators. The National Statistics Office should be able to develop SCP dashboards and provide disaggregated data to inform targeted interventions.

2. Subnational-Level Interventions (Provincial and Regional)

- **Develop Provincial SCP Action Plans:** Support provinces in drafting SCP action plans aligned with the StaRS framework and MTDP IV (2023–2027). Plans should include sustainable agriculture, waste reduction, energy transition goals, and coordination with CEPA and DNPM.
- **Integrate SCP in Waste and Land Use Planning:** Promote integration of SCP principles into provincial land-use and waste management plans. This includes upgrading landfills, implementing waste separation and recycling programs, and ensuring provincial compliance with the National Waste Strategy.
- **Foster Eco-Industrial Development:** Encourage provinces to pilot eco-industrial parks that minimize waste through industrial symbiosis and shared resource use. Provide incentives for sustainable businesses to co-locate and collaborate in these zones.
- **Enhance Provincial Capacity for Renewable Energy Rollout:** Invest in capacity building for provincial departments to support off-grid renewable energy deployment, energy profiling, and local infrastructure maintenance.

3. District and Local-Level Interventions

- **Empower DDAs and Local Governments for SCP Implementation:** Align District Services Improvement Program funds with SCP goals, enabling DDAs to invest in clean water, sanitation, recycling centres, and sustainable farming demonstration plots.
- **Promote Behaviour Change and Awareness:** Launch localized education and awareness campaigns on sustainable consumption, food waste, plastic use reduction, and renewable energy. Engage schools, churches, women's groups, and youth networks to build a community-wide culture of sustainability. Support NGOs who are already carrying out some of these activities in local communities.
- **Integrate SCP into Local Economic Development Plans:** Encourage district planners to develop business cases aligned with the SDG Climate Action Road Map to attract green investment and promote local circular economies.
- **Enhance Local Data and Reporting:** Train local officials in routine data collection on SCP-related indicators and support digital tools to report on progress in waste management, emissions reduction, and environmental health outcomes.

PNG is progressing toward SDG 12 by embedding sustainable consumption and production practices into national policy, local programs, and sector-specific frameworks. Stronger governance, transparent reporting, multi-level coordination, and targeted investments are needed to accelerate progress. Scaling SCP will require collaboration across all levels of government and the engagement of communities, civil society, and the private sector to build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development model for all Papua New Guineans.



SDG 13. CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Overview

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG has demonstrated increased commitment to integrating climate action into national policy, planning, and investment frameworks. Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and ecosystem degradation are some of the urgent environmental threats that PNG faces as a climate-vulnerable island state. Through the Climate Change and Development Authority (CCDA) leadership, the country has pursued ambitious climate mitigation and adaptation goals aligned with the Paris Agreement and its Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2020–2030.

Key frameworks underpinning PNG's climate response include the National REDD+ Strategy (2017–2027), Climate Action Roadmap 2030, and the Enhanced NDC Implementation Plan 2020, which sets a pathway to achieve 50 per cent carbon neutrality by 2030 and full neutrality by 2050. These initiatives emphasize emissions reductions in agriculture, forestry, transport, and infrastructure, alongside climate resilience actions such as coastal protection, climate-smart agriculture, and resilient infrastructure development.

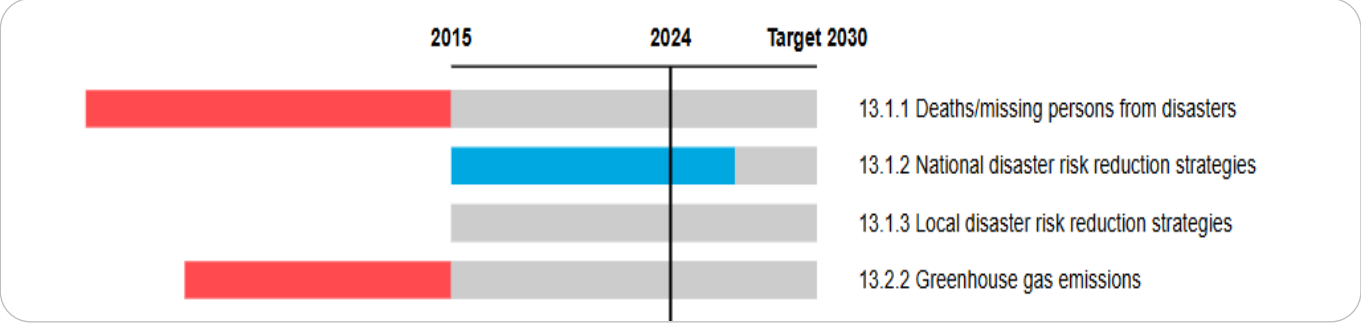
National programs such as the Building Resilience to Climate Change (BRCC) project and the Climate Change Portfolio have expanded community preparedness through ecosystem management, early warning systems, and adaptive capacity building at the local level. PNG also launched the GHG Inventory Project to strengthen emissions monitoring, reporting, and verification in line with its UNFCCC commitments.

Climate action is further embedded in the MTDP IV, with more than PGK 170 million earmarked for climate resilience, disaster risk management, and green infrastructure. These efforts highlight PNG's evolving climate governance architecture and alignment with international climate goals.

The 2020 VNR recommended developing a business case for climate financing, reviewing the NDC, and strengthening climate data systems. PNG has since established a Climate Finance Business Case and enacted the Climate Change (Management) (Nationally Determined Contribution) Regulation 2021 to guide implementation. Technical systems for GHG data and resilience monitoring are now embedded within the NDC framework and MTDP IV tracking mechanisms. Climate finance is still inaccessible by forestry resource owners and other stakeholders. The Climate Finance Business Case needs to be reviewed.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 41: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 13



Increased greenhouse gas emissions (13.2.2) in recent years have caused this goal to show an overall regression. The increasing impacts of climate change, as measured by the human impact of disasters (13.1.1), also demonstrate the urgency of addressing this global challenge.

Indicator 13.1.1 – Number of deaths, missing persons, and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population: Climate-related disasters have continued to impact vulnerable communities, with recent landslides and extreme weather events highlighting gaps in preparedness. PNG has scaled up disaster risk reduction through the Natural Disaster Program, Integrated Early Warning Systems, and Disaster Resilient Infrastructure projects, all supported under MTDP IV. By 2027, the government aims to fully operationalize early warning systems across 22 provinces.

Indicator 13.1.2 – Adoption of national disaster risk reduction strategies: Progress has been strong, with disaster management formally integrated into national planning instruments. The National Disaster Risk Management Plan and the Disaster Risk Reduction Framework for Action have guided the establishment of Provincial Disaster and Emergency Operation Centres and updated SOPs.

Indicator 13.2.1 – Integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning: PNG has achieved major milestones in mainstreaming climate action. Climate change is now a cross-cutting theme in Vision 2050, the Development Strategic Plan 2010–2030, and MTDP IV. The Enhanced NDC Implementation Plan 2021–2030 and the National Climate Compatible Development Policy provide operational frameworks to track progress toward sectoral mitigation targets.

Indicator 13.2.2 – Total greenhouse gas emissions per year: PNG has seen increased emissions from land-use change, energy use, and logging. Despite efforts under the REDD+ and Forest Inventory initiatives, net GHG emissions remain high, with average emissions from the Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) sector at over 10,000 Gg CO₂ equivalent annually. However, national targets aim to reverse this

trend by turning the Agriculture, Forest and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector into a net GHG sink by 2030. The government has taken some decisive action to phase out the use of ozone-depleting substances. Effective January 2025, the importation of hydrochlorofluorocarbon-22 (HCFC-22), also known as Freon R22, was officially banned. HCFC-22 is recognized both as an ozone-depleting substance and a potent greenhouse gas.

Indicator 13.3.1 - Number of countries that have integrated mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning into primary, secondary, and tertiary curricula: While formal curriculum reforms are developing, public awareness and climate education initiatives have expanded. The BRCC project and World Vision initiatives have trained youth, farmers, and teachers in climate risk mitigation, including mangrove restoration, sustainable agriculture, and early warning dissemination.

Indicator 13.3.2—Number of countries that have communicated strengthening institutional, systemic, and individual capacity-building: Capacity building has intensified through establishing Technical Advisory Committees, GHG Inventory systems, and a carbon trading regulation framework. The CCDA, supported by global partners, is leading training programs on MRV systems, sustainable land use, and emissions reporting.

Budget Analysis

Between 2023 and 2027, PNG has committed approximately K569.5 million across multiple climate-focused programs under the MTDP IV, reflecting significant progress in integrating climate action into national financing strategies. This includes targeted investments in the REDD+ Safeguard Information System (K8 million), the Enhanced NDC Implementation Plan (K20 million), and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Programs, each receiving K45 million. These allocations signal a shift toward climate-resilient and low-carbon development pathways, aligning with the country’s Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the goals of the Paris Agreement.

In addition to national budgetary allocations, the Environment and Climate Change Program under the 2024 National Budget is backed by an estimated K63.1 million in expenditure, focusing on technical assistance, goods and services, and project administration. This program, coordinated by the Department of National Planning and Monitoring, aims to support climate-resilient infrastructure and environmental sustainability in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024–2028. Furthermore, international partnerships under the FCCB Nexus (Forestry, Climate Change, and Biodiversity) are set to mobilize more than €54 million for forest conservation, capacity building, and green livelihoods through multilateral platforms such as Expertise France, CIFOR, and FAO.

Next Steps

1. National-Level Priorities

1. **Strengthen Climate Governance and Regulatory Frameworks:** Finalize and enforce the Carbon Trade Regulation and update the National Climate Change Management Policy to improve emissions accounting, transparency, and compliance monitoring. Establish provincial coordination mechanisms through CCDA to localize climate policy enforcement and reporting.

- 2. **Scale Up Climate Financing:** Operationalize a national financing framework as outlined in the Enhanced NDC Implementation Plan, leveraging private sector partnerships and international climate funds. Improve access to financing under the Green Climate Fund (GCF), AFOLU climate finance windows, and blended finance instruments.
- 3. **Expand Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** Prioritize the Natural Disaster Resilient Infrastructure Program (K170 million) and Integrated Early Warning Systems (K20 million) to safeguard critical assets from climate-induced hazards.
- 4. **Accelerate Implementation of AFOLU Roadmap:** Strengthen GHG monitoring in agriculture and forestry sectors, institutionalize REDD+ safeguards, and scale community-based reforestation programs in alignment with the AFOLU Mitigation Plan 2022–2025.
- 5. **Mainstream Climate Risk in Development Planning:** Ensure that all new public investments undergo climate risk screening. Update national planning instruments to reflect climate vulnerability assessments, particularly in health, transport, agriculture, and urban development.
- 6. **Strengthening Partnerships:** Enhancing partnerships with other countries for technical knowledge transfer and collaborative research. This should include the establishment of a mechanism for regular data and information sharing, as well as the development of regional early warning systems and other cooperative climate initiatives.

2. Subnational and Local-Level Actions

- 1. **Provincial Climate Action Plans:** Support provinces in developing and implementing climate action plans aligned with MTDP IV and the Enhanced NDCs. Establish provincial disaster response centers and mainstream climate data into development indicators.
- 2. **Capacity Building for Local Governments:** Train district and ward-level officers in climate risk mapping, early warning response, and GHG data collection. Enhance the capacity of DDAs to integrate climate priorities into DSIP projects.
- 3. **Community-Based Adaptation Programs:** Expand initiatives like the BRCC and mangrove replanting through public-private partnerships and civil society support. Promote climate-smart agriculture and ecosystem-based adaptation in vulnerable communities.
- 4. **Promote Climate Education and Awareness:** Roll out national campaigns in local languages to raise awareness about the impact of climate change, the importance of emissions reduction, and adaptation strategies. Engage schools, faith-based institutions, and youth groups. This include Indigenous Knowledge in climate education and awareness. Locals in communities will relate better and too, indigenous knowledge is more sustainable towards addressing climate change.

Through these actions, PNG can accelerate its transition to a climate-resilient economy, deepen institutional coordination, and unlock the financing and partnerships necessary to meet SDG 13 and its long-term NDC targets.



SDG 14. LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Overview

PNG is in the ecologically rich Coral Triangle and is home to some of the world’s most diverse marine ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass meadows. These ecosystems are critical for coastal protection, climate regulation, and supporting livelihoods, particularly for coastal communities whose cultural identities and economies are closely tied to the ocean. In alignment with SDG 14, PNG has taken proactive steps to conserve and sustainably use its ocean and marine resources.

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG made tangible progress through policy, legislative, and programmatic interventions. The National Oceans Policy 2020–2030 (NOP) was a landmark development aiming to enhance integrated governance of marine resources and acknowledge Indigenous ownership and stewardship of ocean spaces. The NOP promotes ecosystem-based management, sustainable marine development, and the creation of marine protected areas (MPAs) with a target of securing 8 per cent of maritime areas under protection by 2027, up from 3.98 per cent in 2020¹⁰⁵.

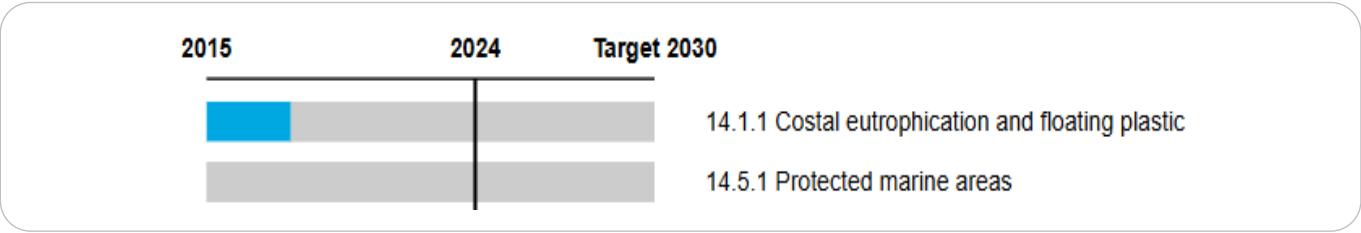
PNG’s participation in global initiatives – including the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNCLOS, and the Nagoya Protocol – further strengthens its commitment to marine sustainability. Noteworthy local initiatives include the Sea Women of Melanesia Program, the Coral Triangle Initiative, and the Hawksbill Turtle Conservation Project, all of which support biodiversity protection, community engagement, and sustainable livelihoods.

PNG has also aligned its ocean governance strategy with national development priorities such as MTDP IV and the StaRS Strategy, integrating environmental sustainability into its economic planning. The Integrated PNG Oceans Policy promotes cross-sectoral coordination via a National Oceans Office, supporting evidence-based marine management through research, monitoring, and partnerships¹⁰⁶.

PNG has made considerable progress on the VNR 2020 recommendations. The National Oceans Office adopted and coordinated the National Oceans Policy (2020–2030), but it still requires further institutional strengthening. PNG has shown a strong commitment and sign the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, in June 2025, at the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNCO3) in Nice, France, a treaty focused on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This signing represents a significant milestone for PNG, aligning with the agreement adopted in June 2023¹⁰⁷.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 42: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 14



Despite existing data gaps, efforts have been made to address coastal eutrophication and floating plastics (14.1.1) around PNG’s coastlines. Initiatives to manage and reduce organic waste, which causes coastal eutrophication, have improved water quality in coastal areas. However, the proportion of key marine biodiversity areas covered by protected status has remained stagnant at 2 per cent in the country.

Indicator 14.1.1 – Marine Pollution (Nutrient and Plastic Waste): National and regional programs such as ATSEA-2, which emphasizes sustainable natural resource use, biodiversity conservation, pollution control and oil leakage and wastes from ships, have supported efforts to combat marine pollution. While comprehensive marine waste audits are still evolving, localized interventions, including awareness campaigns and plastic reduction strategies, have been initiated through CEPA and non-governmental actors. Coastal communities actively participate in clean-up activities, but stronger monitoring systems are needed to understand long-term trends.

Indicator 14.2.1 – Sustainable Marine Ecosystems Management: PNG has implemented various initiatives to ensure the sustainable use of marine ecosystems, including the National Marine Plan of Action and ecosystem-based management strategies supported by the NOP. The Protected Areas Policy recognizes more than 1,000 Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs), contributing significantly to biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation. Community stewardship remains a cornerstone of this indicator, although enforcement capacity varies across provinces¹⁰⁸.

Indicator 14.3.1 – Ocean Acidification: Data on ocean acidification remains limited in PNG; however, the National Oceans Policy calls for enhanced ocean monitoring, including pH levels and coral bleaching incidents. Ongoing collaboration with research institutions under the Ocean Science for Sustainable Development Decade (2021–2030) is expected to fill critical data gaps.

Indicator 14.4.1 – Sustainable Fish Stocks: The fisheries sector is a cornerstone of PNG's economy. Efforts to promote sustainable fisheries have included certification programs, such as the Marine Stewardship Council certification for tuna fisheries, participation in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing through legal reforms and enhanced monitoring. Although inshore fisheries face depletion risks, PNG promotes community-based fisheries management and sustainable aquaculture to relieve pressure on wild stocks.

Indicator 14.5.1 – Marine Protected Areas: Progress toward expanding MPAs has been steady. From a 2020 baseline of 3.98 per cent, the goal is to reach 8 per cent of maritime areas protected by 2027. Updated frameworks under the NOP, community conservation areas, and donor-supported projects such as ATSEA-2 and CTI drive this.

Indicator 14.6.1 – Elimination of Harmful Fisheries Subsidies: There is limited direct evidence on harmful subsidies; however, PNG's efforts to phase out unsustainable fisheries practices and align with international best practices suggest early alignment with this target. Continued policy alignment with global trade agreements will be essential.

Indicator 14.7.1—Sustainable Use of Marine Resources: PNG is leveraging marine resources for sustainable economic development through community-led ecotourism, crab and shark value chains, and gender-focused initiatives like the Sea Women of Melanesia. The Aquaculture Development Program supports food security while reducing pressure on wild fisheries.

Indicator 14.a.1 – Marine Research: PNG is strengthening marine science through partnerships with academia and international research organizations. However, challenges remain in terms of domestic research funding and infrastructure. The NOP emphasizes science-based decision-making, and the country's participation in the UN Decade of Ocean Science is a step in the right direction.

Indicator 14.b.1 – Access for Small-Scale Artisanal Fishers: Artisanal fishers are granted exclusive access to coastal fishing zones, and several policies support their participation in decision-making and market access. However, capacity building and improved infrastructure are needed to ensure equitable benefits.

Indicator 14.c.1 – Implementation of International Ocean Law: PNG continues to domesticate international ocean laws through legislation such as the Maritime Zones Act 2015 and Environment Act 2000 as well as ongoing efforts to ratify the Nagoya Protocol. Establishing the National Oceans Office has enhanced coordination and legal oversight¹⁰⁹.

Budget Analysis

From 2019 to 2024, PNG's financing for marine conservation was largely housed within broader environmental and fisheries programs, rather than structured as SDG-specific allocations. While the National Oceans Policy 2020–2030 introduced a clear policy direction, its

implementation faced significant resource constraints due to limited earmarked national funding. Budget execution reports suggest that recurrent operational costs for key implementing institutions such as CEPA, the National Fisheries Authority, and subnational environment offices were prioritized over capital investment in marine research infrastructure, surveillance, and community-based conservation efforts. These factors led to fragmented program delivery, particularly in remote maritime provinces.

The 2024 Budget Volume 3A highlights increased capital investments in fisheries productivity and climate resilience, yet dedicated funding for integrated ocean governance or marine biodiversity monitoring remains modest. For example, there was no distinct budget line for expanding Locally Managed Marine Areas, despite their recognized potential in safeguarding ecosystem services and livelihoods. Donor-supported initiatives such as ATSEA-2 and the Coral Triangle Initiative have shouldered a substantial portion of PNG's marine conservation financing, raising concerns about long-term domestic ownership. To meet its goal of protecting 8 per cent of maritime territory by 2027 (up from 3.98 per cent in 2020), PNG will need to significantly scale public investment, including through the strategic integration of marine priorities into the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy and the Public Investment Program.

Next Steps

1. National-Level Interventions

- **Establish and Operationalize the National Oceans Office:** Finalize and institutionalize the National Oceans Office under the Department of Justice and Attorney General to coordinate ocean governance across sectors. This body will serve as the central hub for implementing the National Oceans Policy 2020–2030 and oversee marine conservation, sustainable resource use, and compliance monitoring.
- **Accelerate the Creation of Large-Scale MPAs:** Prioritize the designation of large-scale Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), especially within the ecologically rich Coral Triangle region. These MPAs will contribute toward achieving the MTDP IV target of 8 per cent marine protection by 2027, up from the 2020 baseline of 3.98 per cent.
- **Boost Financing for Ocean Conservation:** Mobilize domestic and international financial resources to support the creation and management of MPAs, enforcement operations, blue economy initiatives, and climate resilience in coastal zones. Align financing efforts with global mechanisms like the Global Environment Facility and Blue Carbon Funds.
- **Strengthen Fisheries Enforcement and Legal Compliance:** Enhance national capacity to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing through improved fisheries monitoring, surveillance, and licensing systems. Leverage partnerships with WCPFC and PNA for coordinated enforcement and regional data sharing.

- **Expand Governance and Legal Reforms:** Advance the finalization of the Marine Protected Areas Policy, ratify the Nagoya Protocol, and broaden legal mandates to recognize Locally Managed Marine Areas under the Protected Areas Policy. Promote transparent negotiations between national, provincial, and local governments to define clear roles in marine resource management.
- **Promote Blue Carbon and Ocean Science:** Establish permanent monitoring stations for coral and seagrass ecosystems to measure and monitor blue carbon. Support long-term data systems through partnerships with universities and marine science institutes to guide policymaking and conservation.

2. Subnational-Level Interventions (Provincial and Regional)

- **Strengthen Provincial Marine Spatial Planning (MSP):** Enable provinces, particularly coastal and island regions, to develop and implement MSP strategies that balance conservation with economic development. Ensure alignment with the NOP's ecosystem-based management principles and customary marine tenure systems.
- **Recognize and Scale LMMAs:** Work with provincial governments to legally recognize and support more than 1,000 LMMAs under the Protected Areas Policy. Provide capacity building, legal tools, and community conservation agreements to empower local stewardship and sustainable practices.
- **Promote Sustainable Aquaculture and Livelihood Diversification:** Support eco-friendly aquaculture programs, including crab and sea cucumber farming, and promote ecotourism as an alternative income stream for coastal communities. Ensure

services such as health, education, and finance are integrated to sustain these initiatives.

3. District and Community-Level Interventions

- **Empower Coastal Communities in Marine Resource Management:** Foster participatory decision-making by involving local fishers, traditional leaders, women, and youth in the governance of marine areas. Support local management plans for fisheries, mangrove conservation, and habitat restoration.
- **Enforce Sustainable Fishing Practices:** Promote community enforcement of sustainable fishing methods through gear restrictions, seasonal bans, and no-take zones. Offer training and resources to help local fishers comply with regulations while sustaining their livelihoods.
- **Enhance Public Awareness and Ocean Literacy:** Conduct education campaigns and marine stewardship programs in schools and local communities. Using culturally relevant approaches, encourage behaviour change regarding marine pollution, overfishing, and ecosystem protection.
- **Invest in Monitoring and Data Collection:** Train community rangers and local government officials to gather regular data on reef health, fish stocks, and coastal pollution. The results will feed into national reporting systems and inform adaptive management.
- **Facilitate Community Access to Markets and Services:** Ensure marine-based livelihoods are supported with value chain investments (such as in cold storage, transport, and processing), along with improved access to basic services such as water, health, and education in coastal areas.



¹⁰⁹ VNR 2020; National Oceans Policy, 2020



SDG 15. LIFE ON LAND

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Overview

PNG is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world and is globally recognized as a key biodiversity hotspot. The nation's rich natural endowment of forests covering over 70 per cent of its landmass, diverse flora and fauna, and unique ecosystems are critical for its climate resilience, food security, cultural heritage, and economic development. PNG's commitment to conserving this biodiversity is embedded in its Constitution and Vision 2050, both of which uphold environmental stewardship as a national priority.

Between 2019 and 2024, PNG made substantial progress in implementing SDG 15. The government strengthened biodiversity protection frameworks and promoted sustainable land and forest use, with an emphasis on improving environmental governance and institutional capacity. Strategic policies such as the National Forest Plan, the National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development (StaRS), and the Agriculture, Forest and Other Land Use (AFOLU) Mitigation Plan 2022–2025 have been instrumental in directing efforts toward conservation, emissions reduction, and sustainable production practices.

At the community level, reforestation, agroforestry, and sustainable land use projects are being scaled up with support from our development partners, including UNDP, the World Bank, and GIZ. PNG's REDD+ activities and its forest monitoring and carbon reporting systems are now operational through the Climate Change Development Authority (CCDA) and the PNG Forest Authority, advancing emissions mitigation and sustainable forest management goals.

As of 2020, PNG had 61 formally gazetted protected areas totaling just over 2 million hectares, or 4.6 per cent of the national territory. Although this total is short of the CBD Aichi Biodiversity Target and the goals in PNG's own Policy on Protected Areas, steps have been taken to expand community-based conservation networks, Locally Managed Forest Areas (LMFAs), and integrated ecosystem restoration programs. However, limited funding, minimal staffing, and weak enforcement continue to hamper the effective management of many protected areas.

The 2020 VNR identified several critical next steps under SDG 15,

including enhancing biodiversity conservation, improving waste management, strengthening monitoring systems, and promoting sustainable use of forests and natural assets. Many of these areas saw progress between 2019 and 2024. For example, PNG advanced biodiversity conservation through ecosystem-based programs such as the Livelihood Resilience and Economic Development Program, implemented forest governance reforms, and finalized the draft National Waste and Chemical Management Policy, which awaits NEC endorsement.

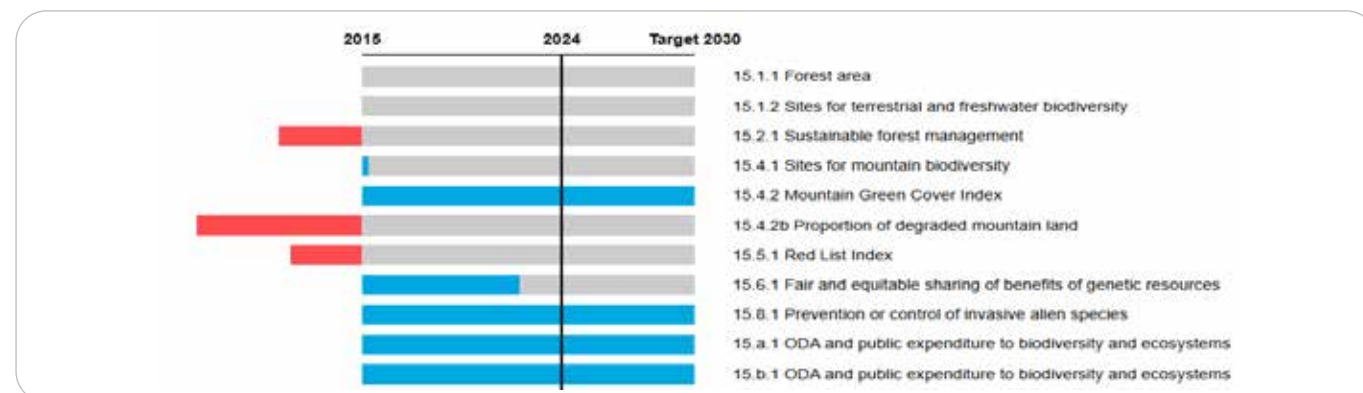
The GoPNG also scaled up compliance mechanisms for environmental regulations and improved partnerships with academia for climate and environmental research. It implemented the StaRS principles by incentivizing polluters to internalize environmental costs through licensing and penalties. However, the proposal to conduct the National Agriculture Census every ten years remains overdue. There are still critical gaps in strengthening land-use data systems and implementing the census alongside the National Population Census.

PNG's land ecosystems remain under pressure from illegal logging, unsustainable hunting, invasive species, and extractive industry activities. The most vulnerable populations – particularly women, children, elderly and people living with disabilities in rural and forested communities – are disproportionately impacted by biodiversity loss, food insecurity, and ecosystem degradation. Future progress will therefore depend on scaling inclusive conservation financing, enforcing ecosystem protection laws, and mainstreaming nature-based solutions into development planning.

PNG has demonstrated strong political will, policy alignment, and cross-sectoral collaboration in advancing SDG 15. Continued progress will require targeted investments in data, monitoring, enforcement, and community-based restoration to ensure that terrestrial ecosystems are sustainably managed for current and future generations.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 43: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 15



In this goal, there is commendable progress on the mountain green cover index (15.4.2); policies for the prevention of invasive alien species (15.8.1); and official development assistance for biodiversity (15.a.1, 15.b.1). There has also been good progress on legislation and adoption of treaties in the area of plant genetic resources (15.6.1). However, the Red List index (15.5.1), the proportion of degraded mountain areas (15.4.2b), and the share of forest area under sustainable management (15.2.1) have regressed. Forest areas (15.1.1) have not increased since 2015. There is a slight reduction from 79.5 per cent to 79 per cent of the country's land area. At the same time, the protection of sites for terrestrial and freshwater (15.1.2) and mountain biodiversity (15.4.1) has not increased.

Indicator 15.1.1 – Forest Area as a Proportion of Total Land Area: PNG is home to more than 70 per cent of forest cover, among the highest globally. However, this coverage is increasingly threatened by commercial logging, agricultural expansion, and infrastructure development. To counter this, the country is implementing major reforestation programs led by the PNG National Forest Authority, including reforestation and tree planting programs. These initiatives emphasize income generation, ecosystem restoration, and carbon sequestration and align with PNG's REDD+ commitments and Vision 2050 targets for sustainable forestry management.

PNG has also made progress in maintaining green cover in its mountainous regions, as reflected by improvements in the Mountain Green Cover Index (15.4.2). This progress highlights the country's natural forest resilience, particularly in the Highlands, and demonstrates the indirect benefits of land-use planning and reforestation efforts in vulnerable upland areas.

However, some mountain areas have been degraded, particularly due to encroaching agricultural expansion, extractive industries, and road development. This regression in Indicator 15.4.2b calls for targeted soil stabilization, erosion control, and mountain ecosystem restoration strategies in high-risk provinces such as Chimbu and the Eastern Highlands. To mitigate ongoing degradation in upland and montane regions, PNG should prioritize targeted interventions such as soil erosion control, afforestation in high-altitude areas, and new mountain-specific protected areas. Particular attention should be paid to biodiversity hotspots in Chimbu, Eastern Highlands, and Enga Provinces, which host unique ecosystems that are increasingly vulnerable to extractive industries and shifting agriculture.

Indicator 15.1.2 – Protected Areas Coverage: As of 2020, PNG had 61 formally announced protected areas, covering approximately 4.6 per cent of its land area, well below global benchmarks such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In response, the government has scaled up investments in the Protected Areas Program through CEPA and JICA. The program includes consultations with landowners, site demarcation, and local conservation planning, with the goal of

significantly increasing conservation zones across provinces.

While PNG has designated terrestrial protected areas covering 4.6 per cent of its land, there has been limited progress in expanding protection for mountain-specific biodiversity (Indicator 15.4.1). Further conservation planning is needed to safeguard montane ecosystems, which host unique species and provide critical watershed functions.

Indicator 15.2.1—Sustainable Forest Management: The National Forest Plan, Reforestation Program, and Community Forestry Initiatives are central to advancing sustainable forest practices. Efforts are focused on promoting landowner involvement in downstream processing and forest inventory assessments, reviving provincial nursery programs, and using agroforestry as a climate mitigation strategy. The plan includes establishing 10,000 hectares of new forest plantations annually and increasing the share of processed timber exports.

Indicator 15.5.1 – Red List Index PNG's biodiversity is among the richest in the world: PNG's biodiversity is declining due to the illegal wildlife trade, unsustainable hunting, invasive species, habitat fragmentation, and the erosion of traditional knowledge. Conservation efforts such as the Lukautim Graun Project and the Protected Areas Program aim to reverse this trend by targeting critical ecosystems and supporting enforcement mechanisms. Recent CEPA and partner organizations assessments have identified critical declines in endemic bird species, amphibians, and forest mammals, including the long-beaked echidna and several tree kangaroo species. Integrating species-specific recovery plans and habitat restoration into provincial conservation strategies is essential to reverse these trends.

Indicator 15.6.1 – Access to Genetic Resources and Fair Sharing: The government is working towards implementing the Nagoya Protocol through its Environment Act revisions and the proposed Protected Areas Policy 2015, which would formally recognize more than 1,000 Locally Managed Areas. This approach ensures equitable benefit-sharing with Indigenous landowners and aligns with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. PNG shows positive progress on legislation and treaty adoption in this area.

Indicator 15.8.1 – Invasive Alien Species Management: To combat biological invasions, PNG has instituted quarantine protocols, coordinated responses under CEPA, and promoted early detection systems. The country has also advanced policies to prevent and manage invasive alien species through cross-sectoral collaboration. However, capacity gaps in data collection and enforcement persist, requiring greater regional and international cooperation to enhance biodiversity safeguards.

Indicator 15.9.1 – Integration into National Planning: Land use planning has been mainstreamed through the National Land Development Program (Phase II) to formalize access to customary

land for sustainable development. The GoLands system has been launched to streamline land registration and improve spatial planning for conservation and agriculture. The process of registering ILGs through the Voluntary Customary Land Registration is still very lengthy and costly for ordinary landowners, which discourages them from registering. To make it easier for customary landowners in the future, the draft Customary Land Policy will be passed and the proposed Customary Land Authority will be established.

Conservation Programs Implementation

CEPA-led programs such as the Protected Areas Programme, the Tree Planting Program, and the Lukautim Graun Project provide site assessments, capacity building, nursery establishment, and partnerships with local communities in order to protect biodiversity. The PLANET Program – implemented across 21 provinces – supports ecosystem resilience, disaster risk reduction, and environmental education.

Despite notable progress, persistent challenges remain, including underfunding, weak monitoring systems and enforcement constraints, which hinder the scalability and sustainability of these efforts. Nevertheless, PNG's ambitious targets and integrated land and forest management approach demonstrate a clear trajectory toward achieving SDG 15. Expanding financial, technical, and legislative support will be essential to fully realize these goals.

International partnerships have played an increasing role in supporting biodiversity conservation through official development assistance (Indicators 15.a.1 and 15.b.1). Initiatives backed by CEPA-JICA, the Global Environment Facility, and the PLANET program reflect growing donor confidence and financial commitment to PNG's conservation agenda. Expanding and reporting on such financing mechanisms will be crucial for scaling protected area networks and biodiversity monitoring efforts.

Official Development Assistance has been instrumental in sustaining PNG's biodiversity agenda, with more than PGK40 million in cumulative external support between 2019 and 2024. Key donor-supported initiatives include the CEPA-JICA Biodiversity Corridor Mapping Project, the GEF-funded Protected Area Expansion Initiative, and the UNDP-supported REDD+ Readiness Program.

Budget Analysis

Between 2019 and 2024, the GoPNG maintained moderate yet strategic investment in biodiversity protection, sustainable forestry, and land-use governance. According to budget data from Volume 3A of the national budgets (2020–2024), allocations were often embedded within the budgets of sectoral implementing agencies such as the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA), the Department of Lands and Physical Planning, or the

Department of Agriculture and Livestock. While direct program allocations toward SDG 15 were not always tagged under this specific goal, critical funding was channeled toward reforestation, forest inventory systems, protected area development, and customary land registration interventions.

From 2021 to 2023, CEPA received annual PGK 5–8 million funding for programs, including the Protected Areas Network Expansion, the Tree Planting Program, and conservation site upgrades. The National Forest Authority's Reforestation Programme was supported with over PGK 10 million annually, prioritizing forest nursery rehabilitation, sustainable logging practices, and downstream timber processing facilities. In addition, PGK 8 million was allocated in 2023 for the PLANET Program, a multi-sectoral initiative promoting sustainable environmental resource management, biodiversity protection, and disaster resilience. The DLPP was supported through the National Land Development Program Phase II (NLDP II), which was allocated PGK 5 million for land digitization systems like GoLands and the incorporation of more than 1,300 Landowner Groups (ILGs), enabling clearer land-use planning aligned with environmental sustainability.

While PNG has laid a solid financial foundation for land and forest sustainability, total allocations remain below what is required to meet Aichi Biodiversity Targets or fully implement the National Forest Plan and Protected Areas Policy. A clear opportunity exists for PNG to integrate SDG 15 more explicitly into national and provincial budgets and to explore blended financing models, including climate and biodiversity funds, green bonds, and public-private partnerships. Moving forward, enhanced transparency in SDG-aligned budget tagging and stronger alignment between CEPA's conservation priorities and fiscal planning will be essential to meet long-term ecological and community resilience goals.

Next Steps

1. National-Level Policy and Institutional Strengthening

- **Finalize and Implement the Protected Areas Policy (2015, Proposed):** Expedite NEC endorsement and operationalize the policy to recognize more than 1,000 Locally Managed Areas, including forested, terrestrial, and biodiversity-rich regions. This initiative will strengthen in-situ conservation and indigenous stewardship of biodiversity.
- **Strengthen CEPA and PNG Forest Authority Capacity:** Increase budgetary allocations and human resource capacity to enhance enforcement of conservation laws, conduct regular biodiversity assessments, and manage protected areas more effectively.
- **PNG Forest Authority Capacited for downstream Processing of Logs:** Stop round log exports by concentrating on downstream processing which is one way of reducing large scale logging operations.

- **Enhance Monitoring and Reporting Systems:** Institutionalize environmental monitoring through CEPA and the National Statistics Office to enable regular reporting on biodiversity status, invasive species, and land-use changes. This effort includes setting up a biodiversity and forest dashboard under SDG 15 indicators.
- **Enforce Polluter-Pays Principles and Environmental Compliance:** Through implementation of the StaRS strategy, shift environmental costs to polluters via user fees, impact assessments, and enforcement of penalties for habitat destruction and biodiversity loss.

2. Subnational and Provincial Actions

- **Develop Provincial Biodiversity Action Plans:** These plans should align with the Protected Areas Policy and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and be supported by provincial environment and forestry divisions.
- **Promote Integrated Land Use Planning:** Expand the rollout of the GoLands system and ensure district and provincial planners use spatial mapping tools for conservation zoning and land allocation, minimizing deforestation and encroachment into ecologically sensitive areas.
- **Support Community Forest Management Schemes:** Empower customary landowners through training and incentives to participate in forest management and reforestation programs, including agroforestry and income diversification activities. Provide support to local NGOs who are already doing conservation and forest management work.

3. Local-Level and Community-Based Interventions

- **Expand the Tree Planting and Reforestation Programs:** Scale up these programs in vulnerable and degraded areas, especially island provinces and highlands. Involve schools, churches, and youth groups to embed conservation into local culture. The funds for these programs should come directly from logging and other development levies.

- **Improve Environmental Education and Awareness:** Integrate biodiversity conservation into school curricula, community awareness programs, and media campaigns to build grassroots support for SDG 15.
- **Invest in Sustainable Livelihoods:** Provide alternative income sources such as eco-tourism, value-added timber processing, and organic agriculture for communities near protected areas to reduce pressure on natural ecosystems.
- All local conservation initiatives, including tree planting and community forestry, should incorporate gender-responsive strategies that empower women and youth in forest-dependent communities. This includes facilitating women's participation in training, conservation leadership, and benefit-sharing arrangements, aligned with PNG's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion policy frameworks.

4. Financing and Partnerships

- **Leverage Climate and Biodiversity Financing Mechanisms:** Mobilize international funding through GEF, GCF, REDD+, and private sector partnerships to support protected area management, forest regeneration, and biodiversity conservation.
- **Institutionalize Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Use the National PPP Policy to involve private actors in afforestation, conservation tourism, and sustainable forestry enterprises.

5. Data, Research, and Innovation

- **Conduct a National Agriculture and Environmental Census:** Align this with the next National Population Census to support better land-use planning, forest conservation, and natural resource monitoring.
- **Promote Research in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services:** Partner with universities and research institutes to strengthen the evidence base for decision-making and encourage innovation in nature-based solutions.





SDG 16. PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Overview

PNG is making significant strides toward achieving SDG 16, which promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions. As a diverse and geographically dispersed country, PNG faces complex governance challenges. Yet, it continues demonstrating commitment through key reforms and programmatic initiatives at the national and local levels.

Between 2019 and 2024, GoPNG has strengthened institutional accountability, enhanced public sector management, and promoted transparency across governance structures. Key priorities of the MTDP IV include fiscal planning, expenditure management, judicial reform, and service delivery improvement. Notably, efforts to professionalize the public service have included raising standards in financial accounting, digitalizing court case management systems, and reducing the backlog of judicial proceedings.

Substantial improvements have been made in the judiciary system, including a significant increase in the number of judges and magistrates from 2017 to 2024. The National Court (Number of Judges) Act 1984 has also contributed to more efficient case handling and access to justice. Digitization of court systems and improved registration processes modernize the legal infrastructure and enhance judicial transparency and accountability.

Between 2019 and 2024 (PNG DHS 2016 – 2018), notable progress was made in implementing the key governance-related next steps identified in its first VNR 2020. The Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) rollout was extended to additional provincial and district centres, reinforcing fiscal discipline and transparency in public finance management. The government also advanced the professional development of police personnel by investing in modern ICT tools to support community policing initiatives, particularly in urban and high-crime areas. Public awareness of accountability mechanisms improved through targeted outreach under the Whistleblower Act 2019, led by the Law and Justice Secretariat. A significant milestone was the passage of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act 2017, which reinforced whistleblower protections and demonstrated PNG's resolve to combat corruption, following its previous low ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. The government also renewed its focus on national security by mobilizing resources for defense infrastructure, surveillance systems, and institutional strengthening, with ongoing efforts to update the PNG National Security Policy 2013 in alignment with evolving security challenges.

PNG has also taken bold steps to combat corruption. The country ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in 2007, and the subsequent establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) marks a landmark achievement in anti-corruption enforcement. Supported by technical assistance from the development partners, ICAC's formation is a response to widespread public concerns: 96 per cent of recent survey respondents believe government corruption is a serious issue. Complementing this, PNG has implemented several key frameworks, including the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2010–2030), the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Act 2015, and amendments to the Criminal Code related to financial crimes.

Complementary to these governance initiatives, PNG has embraced the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative, reinforcing government transparency and citizen engagement. This aims to improve responsiveness, fostering inclusive dialogue, and building accountability through data sharing and participatory decision-making. Law and justice sector reforms have focused on scaling up recruitment and training of police, correctional service personnel, and court officials. The government has also committed to expanding physical infrastructure and capacity-building for these institutions, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

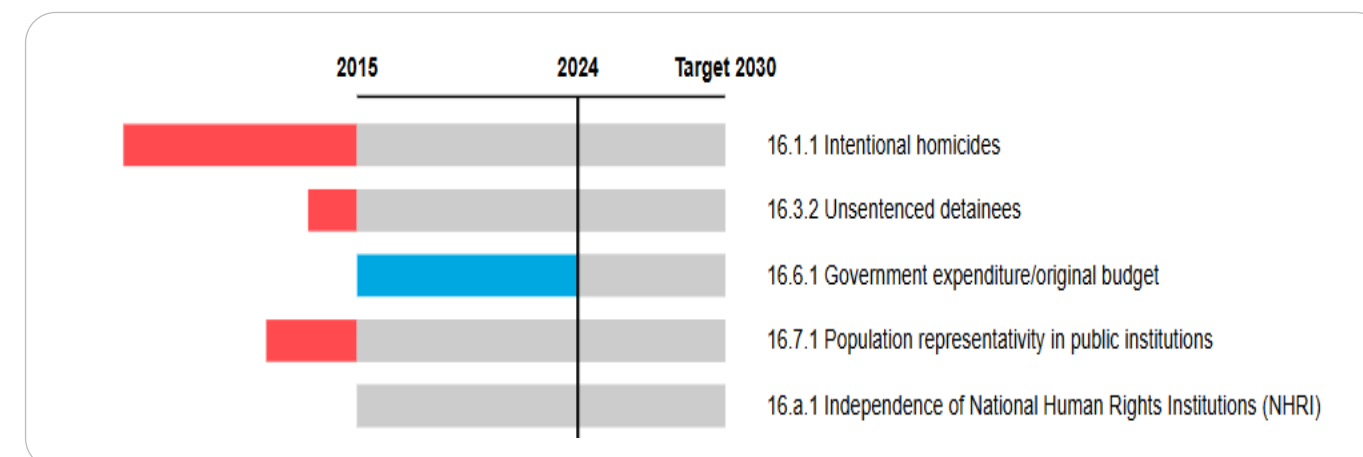
Gender representation in governance is gaining momentum. With the election of three women to Parliament in 2022 – the highest number since independence – PNG is beginning to reverse long-standing under-representation in national politics. This success is underpinned by interventions such as mentorship programs for female candidates run by the Registry of Political Parties and support from the UNDP and other development partners.

Through World Bank-supported projects and regional cooperation, PNG has strengthened its institutional resilience, particularly in public health and emergency preparedness. Initiatives like the PNG COVID-19 Emergency Response Project embedded participatory governance and built local capacities in crisis communication and service delivery.

PNG's trajectory under SDG 16 reflects increasing political will, growing institutional maturity, and strategic use of partnerships to address governance gaps. Expanding civic engagement, safeguarding the rule of law, strengthening subnational institutions, and ensuring adequate financing will be critical to building peace, justice, and accountable governance across all provinces.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 44: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 16



There has been commendable progress in keeping government expenditures within budget (16.6.1), indicating improved adherence to the national budget process. Regressing trends are seen in the number of homicides (16.1.1) and unsentenced detainees (16.3.2), both indicators related to the rule of law. It is essential to note that homicide data is available only until 2010. Better data is therefore needed to provide an up-to-date assessment. The representation of women and youth in parliament (16.7.1) has decreased, particularly for young people, hindering the diversity of population representation in public institutions. No national human rights institution (16.a.1) has been established in the country.

Indicator 16.1.1 – Crime Reduction and Public Safety: PNG continues to face high levels of crime, particularly in urban centers and resource project areas. However, under the MTDP IV, the government has targeted crime reduction with measurable goals. National Crime Statistics indicate that reported serious crimes, such as murder and armed robbery, are projected to decline from over 1,000 annually in 2019 to fewer than 600 by 2024. Despite these efforts, the crime victimization rate remains high at 9.7 per cent. To improve public safety, more than 800 new community police officers have been recruited between 2020 and 2023, which had aimed to create a police-to-citizen ratio of 1:1,400 by 2024.

Indicator 16.3.2 – Access to Justice and Judiciary Reform: Significant judicial reforms have been undertaken, including the recruitment of additional judges and magistrates and the digitization of court systems. The backlog of national court cases declined from 24,724 in 2019 to an estimated 15,000 in 2024. Community-based legal access has expanded through court circuits and legal aid outreach, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Additionally, the Village Courts Revitalization Program launched in 2021 has enhanced grassroots legal services, infrastructure, and community peacebuilding. With over PGK 35 million allocated across 2022–2024, this program has constructed

village court houses, reviewed legal frameworks, and supported traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

Indicator 16.5.1 – Anti-Corruption Measures: The operationalization of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in 2020 represents a landmark achievement in PNG's anti-corruption drive. Supported by the EU, ICAC complements ongoing efforts under the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2010–2030), the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Act (2015), and amendments to the Criminal Code. However, corruption perceptions remain deeply entrenched 96 per cent of citizens surveyed see it as a serious concern. PNG's Transparency International ranking has not significantly improved despite legal reforms, signaling a continued need for enforcement and public confidence-building.

Indicator 16.6.1 & 16.6.2 – Government Effectiveness and Budget Transparency: PNG has expanded the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) to provincial levels, supporting better public finance tracking and accountability. Under MTDP IV, the government has prioritized routine audits and performance reporting. By 2023, 100 per cent of national departments and nearly 80 per cent of subnational entities had submitted audited financial statements, improving transparency and institutional performance.

Indicator 16.7.1 – Inclusive Representation: The 2022 general election marked a turning point with the election of three women to Parliament—the highest since independence. This was facilitated by many partners through mentorship and awareness programs and the implementation of the Registry of Political Parties' Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework. Ongoing efforts are needed to sustain this momentum and institutionalize women's political participation across all levels of governance.

Indicator 16.10.1 – Access to Information and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms: The Open Government Partnership (OGP),

PNG's National Censorship Strategy, and ongoing digital reforms have expanded citizens' access to information. Biometric voter registration is being piloted to improve electoral transparency, while over 70 per cent of government agencies have launched public-facing digital portals. Gaps remain in access to real-time judicial data, grievance redress systems, and media protections.

- i. The Government needs to address policy and capacity gaps in relation to regulation of access to Facebook and other social media platforms, in order to forestall negative impact on access to information, free expression and other fundamental freedoms while preventing crime and other harmful behaviors.
- ii. As part of the overall efforts to strengthen human rights protections, the Department of Justice and Attorney General is spearheading inter-agency efforts to adopt a National Human Rights Policy which will include enhanced recognition of and protection for human rights defenders. The UN notes that under SDG indicator 16.10.1, there have been no killings, enforced disappearance and kidnapping of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in the country since the last VNR. There have been reports, however, of harassment and threats against environmental human rights defenders and those supporting supporters of gender based violence and sorcery accusation related violence. The Government needs to work with the media sector, human rights defenders and other concerned stakeholders to address the increasing use of strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP).

Indicator 16.a.1 – National Institutions Capacity: Three major programs have strengthened PNG's institutional foundations:

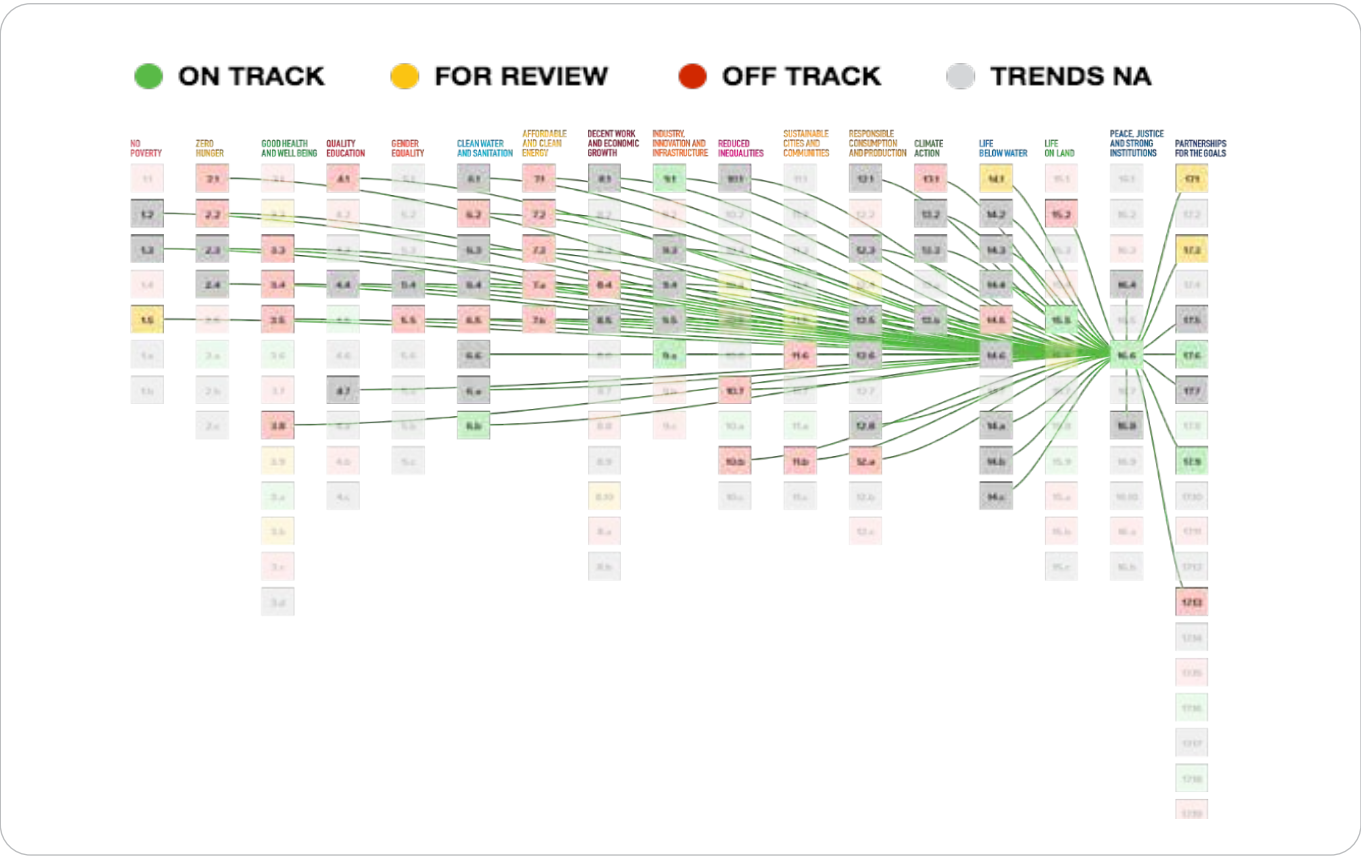
- i. The Justice Services & Stability for Development (JSS4D) program (valued at AUD 90 million, primarily funded by DFAT) has improved law and justice services in target provinces, facilitated community empowerment, and introduced innovative local-level justice models. JSS4D funding from 2021–2024 exceeded PGK 114 million, with significant technical assistance components.
- ii. The Restorative Justice Initiative Program (since 2019) focuses on crime prevention, youth rehabilitation, and reintegration. Activities include agricultural skills training, community engagement, and sorcery-related violence response across nine provinces. With PGK 11 million allocated in 2023 alone, this program aligns with the Community Peace and Restorative Justice Strategic Plan 2010–2030.
- iii. The Village Courts Revitalisation Program revitalizes customary justice systems, builds legal infrastructure in remote areas, and addresses localized crime through a restorative lens. Implementation challenges, such as land access and coordination, persist but are being addressed through site-specific interventions in Central, Morobe, and West Sepik provinces.

- iv. With the support of the European Union and the United Nations Human Rights Office, the Department of Justice and Attorney General is coordinating the work of a Technical Working Committee to establish a national human rights institution (NHRI). The most recent decision endorsed the development of a legal framework, institutional structure, and initial budget for the NHRI. It also directed that a suitable government department be identified to host the NHRI during its early stages.
- v. In response, the Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG) established the Human Rights Secretariat under its 2018–2023 Corporate Plan, which became operational in 2023. Since the establishment of the Human Rights Secretariat, the government has prioritised developing a National Human Rights Policy which will address four objectives: a. Establishment of a national human rights institution; building a culture of human rights through human rights education; strengthening protection of human rights defenders; and enhancing reporting, implementation, and follow-up on international human rights commitments.
- vi. The Government has directed the DJAG to expedite efforts to establish a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF) to take carriage of all human rights treaty monitoring matters and engagement with international human rights mechanisms. With UN support, the operationalization of an NMIRF is being led by DJAG through the Human Rights Secretariat, working in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

These investments reflect a holistic approach under SPA 5 of MTDP IV to bolster the rule of law and justice systems. However, sustainability challenges remain, especially in coordination, inter-agency capacity, and monitoring. PNG's 2024 budget earmarked PGK 418.7 million for the Law and Justice Sector, with PGK 77.7 million sourced from development partners. This reinforces the importance of fiscal discipline and donor alignment to deliver justice and security outcomes across the country equitably.

SDG Synergies and Strategic Role of Target 16.6 in PNG

Figure 45: Interlinkages of SDG Target 16.6 with Other SDG Targets in PNG. This graph illustrates the systemic synergies between SDG Target 16.6 (effective, accountable, and transparent institutions) and other SDG (SDGs) in PNG. Each green line represents a direct or indirect pathway through which institutional quality influences outcomes across poverty reduction, health, education, economic growth, climate action, gender equality, and beyond. The visualization emphasizes the foundational role of good governance in enabling holistic, cross-sectoral progress toward Agenda 2030. Explore the interlinkages at: <https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/PNG/synergies-and-tradeoffs>



Target 16.6 - focused on developing effective, accountable, and transparent institutions is central to PNG's sustainable development journey, serving as both a foundational pillar and a catalyst for progress across the SDG framework. Recent institutional reforms, such as the establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and newly establishment of the Financial Analysis and Supervision Unit (FASU) that aims to address AML, and efforts to strengthen the Auditor General and Ombudsman Commission, signal the government's intent to enhance governance. However, challenges persist governance indicators from the World Bank have declined since 2015, PNG ranks 130 out of 180 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2022), and 96 per cent of surveyed citizens view corruption as a major issue. Addressing these governance deficits is essential to restoring public trust and ensuring that public resources are allocated efficiently and equitably.

Strong institutions under Target 16.6 have far-reaching synergies with other SDGs. Central to this agenda is the ongoing commitment to decentralisation, aimed at devolving functions and resources to subnational administrations. In 2022, the government increased the number of districts from 89 to 96 and established 11 new Local-Level Governments (LLGs), bringing the total to 337 LLGs. These new administrative units are in the process of developing operational structures to support planning, budgeting, and service delivery. This structural expansion reflects a strategic effort to strengthen provincial and district-level governance as critical platforms for the delivery of education, health, infrastructure, and other essential services to communities across the country.

Improved governance directly influences poverty reduction (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), and economic growth (SDG 8) by enabling more efficient public financial management, equitable service delivery, and policy enforcement. It also enhances domestic resource mobilization (SDG 17.1), urban resilience (SDG 11.5), and inclusion (SDG 10.4). Through commitments to Open Government Partnership initiatives and institutional reforms, PNG can embed transparency and accountability into its development model, maximizing sectoral impact and public confidence in national development outcomes.

Next Steps

1. National-Level Interventions

Policy Priorities:

- Fully operationalize the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) by finalizing its staffing, systems, and regional offices, supported by sustained national budget allocations and donor partnerships (e.g., EU Technical Assistance);
- Accelerate IFMS rollout to all provinces and integrate real-time budget and expenditure tracking to enhance transparency and accountability;
- Finalize and implement the updated PNG National Security Policy, integrating civil protection, border security, and response mechanisms for internal conflict or natural disaster-related threats;
- Enhance legislative frameworks around gender-based violence, whistle-blower protection, and anti-money laundering enforcement;
- Promote human rights and justice system reforms by ensuring parliamentary support for institutional budgets, judicial independence, and oversight capacity;
- Strengthen intergovernmental coordination mechanisms such as the PLLSMA to enhance oversight, alignment of national priorities, and the effective delivery of services at the subnational level

Investment Needs:

- Allocate dedicated annual funding (PGK 5–8 million) to ICAC operations, judicial reform, and anti-corruption awareness;
- Expand infrastructure funding for central judiciary, correctional institutions, and digitization of legal records;
- Increase national-level budget support for the Justice Services & Stability for Development (JSS4D) and Restorative Justice Initiative.

2. Subnational-Level (Provincial) Interventions

Policy Priorities:

- Develop Provincial Justice Sector Development Plans aligned with MTDP IV 2023–2027 and SPA 5 to coordinate efforts across policing, judiciary, and correctional services;
- Support recruitment and deployment of provincial police, court officers, and correctional service staff, including training in gender-sensitive and restorative justice practices;
- Strengthen provincial partnerships for law and order through interagency coordination among provincial administrators, police commands, and civil society actors;
- Ensure provinces adopt and localize the Whistleblower Act 2020 and anti-corruption charters.

Investment Needs:

- Construct and rehabilitate provincial-level facilities: courts, rural lockups, legal aid centers, and juvenile rehabilitation units;
- Fund establishment of mobile courts and provincial law enforcement ICT systems to support rural outreach;
- Increase provincial budgets for public awareness campaigns on legal rights, corruption reporting, and community justice.

3. Local-Level (District & Community) Interventions

Policy Priorities:

- Empower District Development Authorities (DDAs) to prioritize rule of law, peacebuilding, and community-based dispute resolution in their five-year development plans;
- Strengthen Village Courts Revitalisation Programs, ensuring alignment with customary law and accessible local justice delivery;
- Promote inclusive local governance by engaging women, youth, and marginalized groups in local security and development decision-making processes;
- Institutionalize community peacebuilding mechanisms, including the Restorative Justice Program, through partnerships with churches, schools, and community-based organizations.

Investment Needs:

- Allocate DSIP funds to safe houses, victim support centres, village courthouses, and community mediation hubs;
- Fund training programs on gender-based violence prevention and child-focused justice for village court officials, community police officers, and peer counsellors;
- Support grassroots civic education on law, governance, and anti-corruption through media, churches, and youth networks.

Cross-Cutting Actions Across All Levels

- Institutionalize disaggregated data systems (by gender, age, and region) to track justice access, crime trends, and institutional performance;
- Foster multi-stakeholder partnerships involving government, development partners and civil society to sustain momentum;
- Promote digital innovation, including biometric voter registration, e-court systems, and digital grievance redress platforms.

Through coordinated policy and investment efforts across all levels of government, PNG can significantly advance peace, justice, and institutional integrity. Strategic interventions in justice access, anti-corruption enforcement, and civic inclusion – especially in underserved provinces and rural communities – can help realize the vision of a “just, safe, and secure society for all” under SDG 16.



SDG 17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Overview

In a geographically diverse and institutionally complex country like PNG, achieving the SDGs requires robust and inclusive partnerships. SDG 17 emphasizes the importance of strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development. In PNG, this goal is crucial as the country relies on technical support, financial cooperation, and capacity-building from a broad range of development partners, including bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

From June 2019 to June 2024, PNG made notable progress in institutionalizing and operationalizing development cooperation frameworks, enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships, and improving national coordination mechanisms. The GoPNG continues to collaborate with regional and global institutions – such as the European Union (EU), World Bank, United Nations agencies, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) – to advance sectoral reforms in health, education, climate resilience, infrastructure, and governance. Under the MTDP IV, SDG 17 serves as a foundational pillar to strengthen institutional capacity, technology transfer, financing mechanisms, and statistical systems.

Development cooperation in PNG is aligned with the national priorities outlined in Vision 2050 and PNG's Development Cooperation Policy 2015, which calls for harmonized, predictable, and transparent aid management. Through improved coordination with development partners, sectoral implementation plans – such as the EU's WaSH and governance programs, the World Bank's health and nutrition support, and ADB's infrastructure and institutional strengthening projects – have had measurable impacts.

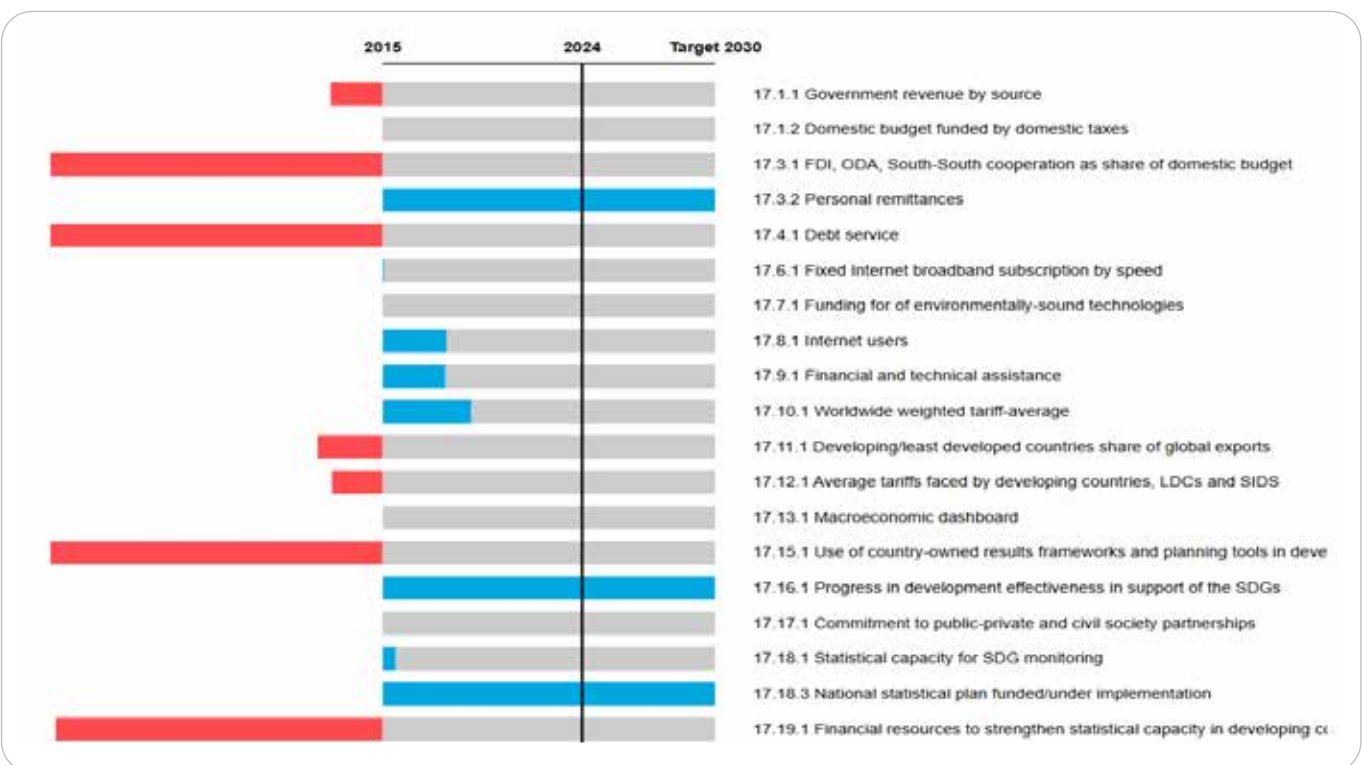
PNG has also reactivated the Aid Information Management System (AIMS) and taken steps toward fully implementing the Development Aid Policy (2018). These systems provide transparency and accountability in tracking aid use and aligning with SDG objectives. As part of the 2020 VNR next steps, these platforms are now being used to streamline reporting from all Development Partners (DPs), linking aid effectiveness to results-based planning.

At the sub-national level, partnerships are being reinforced through decentralized planning and coordination structures, allowing provinces and districts to align their programs with SDG targets. PNG's engagement in South-South cooperation and regional bodies such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) further enhances its voice in global dialogues on sustainable development.

PNG's success in achieving SDG 17 will hinge on deepening its relationships with its development partners, empowering national institutions, and investing in integrated data systems and monitoring frameworks. The Government's commitment to evidence-based planning and inclusive partnerships reflects a promising path toward resilient, people-centered development.

Status and Trends of Progress

Figure 46: Progress of selected indicators in Goal 17



This goal requires combined efforts to make progress towards the 2030 target. Progress has been made to increase personal remittances (17.3.2) and multistakeholder development effectiveness in support of the SDGs (17.16.1). Nevertheless, indicators related to diversifying domestic and international resource mobilization (17.1.1, 17.1.2, and 17.3.1), debt sustainability (17.4.1), and increased investment in statistical development (17.19.1) require urgent actions.

Indicator 17.3.1 – Resource Mobilization and Development Financing: PNG has made considerable strides in strengthening its domestic resource mobilization (DRM) frameworks to reduce its dependence on external financing. Implementing the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy 2024 – 2028 aims to modernize PNG’s tax system, expand the tax base, and improve compliance with practical reforms such as introducing the Taxpayer Identification Number. At the same time, the country has pursued transparency in natural resource revenues through its membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Additionally, PNG has set up an Integrated National Financing Framework to better align development priorities with budget allocations.

Despite these efforts, PNG relies heavily on Official Development Assistance (ODA) to supplement domestic funding. In 2021, ODA reached approximately USD 1.06 billion, with Australia providing 43 per cent of this total in 2022. However, systemic challenges such as inconsistent government leadership, shifting policy directives, and slow procurement and administrative processes have often delayed project implementation. The Development Cooperation Policy, referenced across the MTDPs, provides a framework to integrate partner-funded activities into national plans and improve aid alignment.

Debt sustainability remains a pressing concern. PNG’s gross government debt was projected to reach 48 per cent of GDP in 2023, with the IMF and World Bank assessments classifying the country as having a high risk of debt distress. In response, the Government amended the Fiscal Responsibility Act to facilitate borrowing for infrastructure while applying the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy (MTFS) to manage overall debt. The Public Investment Program (PIP) (2020–2024) exemplifies a blended financing model that leverages domestic and external sources to support infrastructure, health, education, and governance investments.

Indicator 17.6.1 – Access to Technology and ICT Infrastructure: Access to technology and ICT infrastructure has become central to PNG’s development strategy, particularly under MTDP IV Strategic Priority Area 4. In 2024, more than PGK 627 million was allocated to expanding ICT systems across education, health, governance, and national connectivity. Key initiatives include the Smart School Rural Community Technology program by PNG DataCo, the Turn-It-In Antiplagiarism System led by the Department of Higher Education, and the NHTE-MIS digital health platform. These programs aim to expand digital inclusion, academic integrity, and health service access in underserved areas.

Government-wide initiatives, such as the Critical Infrastructure for Digital Government (Blockchain) Project, promote secure digital data transfers across government systems. These efforts are supported by the Digital Government Act 2022, which legally established the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to safeguard digital infrastructure and implement cybersecurity standards.

Indicator 17.9.1 – Capacity-

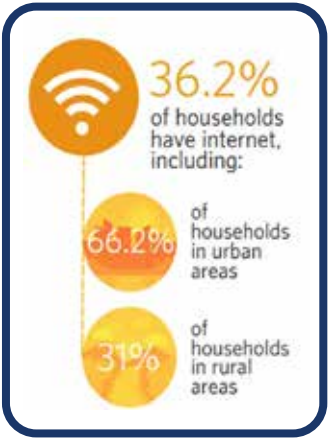
Building Support: PNG has prioritized institutional and technical capacity building for effective development delivery. Programs such as the PNG–Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP) have facilitated knowledge transfer through deployments, joint missions, and training workshops between the two governments. Technical assistance from UNDP, ADB, and DFAT has bolstered public sector efficiency, particularly in planning, budgeting, and performance monitoring. The government has institutionalized the Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and is advancing the PNG Strategy for the Development of Statistics to support data-informed decision-making.

Efforts to mainstream Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) across the public and financial sectors have gained traction, primarily through policies like the GESI Framework for Microfinance Institutions supported by the Bank of PNG and AFL.

Indicator 17.10.1—Trade and Market Access: PNG views trade as essential for economic diversification. It has taken steps to improve its international trade standing by implementing Trade Related Assistance Phase 2, establishing a National Trade Policy, and launching the Trade Facilitation Program to simplify border procedures. These initiatives have aimed to increase market integration and lower transaction costs for importers and exporters.

PNG is a signatory to several regional and global trade agreements, reinforcing its commitment to a multilateral, rules-based trading system. Infrastructure projects such as the Wutung Border Post Development Project and the State Marketing Option Development Program enable more significant trade and investment, particularly in forestry and agriculture.

Indicator 17.14.1 – Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: PNG has taken significant measures to strengthen policy coherence across government. The design of MTDP IV integrates SDG-aligned SPAs, supported by reforms led by the DNPM. Legislative and institutional changes – such as the Planning & Monitoring Responsibility Act 2016 and the implementation of the



NSDF – aim to ensure that all national and subnational planning frameworks work in tandem.

The government’s participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and formulation of national frameworks, such as the GoPNG-CSO Partnership Policy and the National Action Plan, have further reinforced inclusive policy-making and fiscal transparency.

Indicator 17.16.1 – Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: PNG’s commitment to collaborative development is evident in the growing role of CSOs, FBOs, development partners, and the private sector. SPA 12 of MTDP IV emphasizes long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. The GoPNG–CSO Partnership Policy has formalized mechanisms for the joint implementation of development programs, while the PNG Health and HIV Multilateral Partnerships platform has coordinated funding from ADB, GFATM, WHO, and UN agencies.

Bilateral programs such as PIPP, alongside the Development Cooperation Policy, have strengthened dialogue, coordination, and resource alignment across sectors. These engagements improve service delivery and ensure a people-centered approach to development.

Indicator 17.18.1 – Capacity for Data Monitoring and Availability: Data monitoring, digital governance, and statistical capacity have become central to PNG’s development planning. The NSO, supported by DFAT and UNFPA, conducted the Sociodemographic and Economic Survey (2022) to improve the national evidence base.

The Government has allocated PGK 55 million to expand digital platforms, including biometric registration, the Government Portal, and electronic ID and voting systems. The National Cyber Security Centre, established under the Digital Government Act 2022, supports inter-agency cyber resilience and data protection. Additionally, the Commissionship Information and Intervention Program, addresses the risks of uncensored digital content by integrating an Internet Content Filtering System via DataCo’s transmission network.

Next Steps

Cross-Cutting National Priorities

- Develop robust systems for monitoring partnerships, ensuring inclusive and meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement in planning and implementation;
- Increase localization of SDG implementation by integrating transformative, inclusive, and climate-resilient elements into national and sectoral policies;
- Explore innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, diaspora bonds, and green/climate funds to supplement traditional ODA and close SDG financing gaps.
- Enhance coordination and accountability mechanisms across SDG-related programs and investments, ensuring alignment between government, development partners, and CSOs;

- Strengthen the national data ecosystem, including statistical capacity, open data infrastructure, and budgetary support for data-driven decision-making;
- Ensure that development programs are inclusive, particularly targeting marginalized groups, including women, persons with disabilities, and remote/rural populations;
- Deepen strategic partnerships with key development partners such as the European Union, Australia, and multilateral agencies to mobilize resources and technical expertise;
- Foster South-South cooperation and peer learning by engaging with other developing countries on best practices in SDG implementation and monitoring;
- Invest in infrastructure for essential services, particularly health, education, ICT, and roads, to enhance development reach and efficiency;
- Strengthen local governance frameworks to embed SDG priorities into provincial and local planning systems through capacity-building and policy alignment.

National Level

- Implement the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) and deepen tax reform under the Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS) 2024 – 2028;
- Strengthen debt sustainability through tighter fiscal management under the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy (MTFS) 2024 - 2028 and responsible infrastructure borrowing;
- Expand national digital infrastructure and cybersecurity systems, and fully implement the Digital Government Act 2022 and blockchain data security solutions;
- Resource and operationalize the National Statistical Office (NSO) to deliver high-quality, timely, disaggregated SDG data through the PNG SDS;
- Institutionalize multi-stakeholder coordination through CACC and the National Development Cooperation Committee, improving aid effectiveness and SDG alignment;
- Fully mainstream GESI frameworks and SDG integration into all public sector institutions, national plans, and monitoring systems.

Sub-national (Provincial) Level

- Align Provincial Development Plans with MTDP IV 2023 – 2027 and SDGs, and implement subnational financing strategies, including localized DRM.
- Invest in ICT infrastructure in provincial government offices, schools, and health centers through Public Investment Programs (PIP) and development grants;
- Deploy digital access projects in semi-urban and rural areas using co-financing models with national agencies and development partners;

- Set up GESI frameworks and promote inclusive budgeting, especially for women, young people, and vulnerable populations at the provincial level;
- Strengthen provincial trade infrastructure and customs services, especially in border provinces, to align with national trade facilitation goals;
- Build formal partnerships with CSOs and FBOs to deliver health, education, and climate resilience services;
- Coordinate with NSO and DNPM on data collection and SDG indicator monitoring using provincial-level SDG dashboards.

District and Local Level

- Enable District Development Authorities (DDAs) to pilot local revenue tracking systems and support the formalization of community-level economic activity;
- Invest in Smart Schools, ICT Hubs, and Rural Connectivity Projects, prioritizing access for youth, schools, and SMEs;
- Launch cyber safety awareness programs and expand digital literacy campaigns targeting youth and marginalized communities;
- Recruit and train local enumerators for household-level data collection linked to NSO and SDG monitoring systems;
- Establish district-level multi-stakeholder platforms to include CSOs, churches, women's groups, SMEs, and traditional leaders in local planning;
- Implement the National Service Delivery Framework (NSDF) at ward and LLG levels to ensure grassroots priorities are reflected in higher-level planning;
- Use community development scorecards and participatory audits to improve service delivery transparency and accountability at the local level.



7. Means of Implementation

SDG Financing

Effective implementation of the SDGs requires significant financial resources and robust mechanisms for partnership, coordination, and capacity development. Under the MTDP III 2018-2022, the Government of PNG has spent more than K30 billion through the Public Investment Program (PIP). These investments were directed towards vital infrastructure, education, health, and other priority sectors to accelerate development and achieve SDG targets. However, substantial gains made from these investments were significantly undermined by the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely disrupted the national economy, deepened inequalities, and impeded progress across critical indicators.

In addition to government expenditures, PNG acknowledges the critical role international development partners play through grants and concessional loans. Foreign assistance has contributed to targeted interventions in health, education, environmental sustainability, and infrastructure. Despite substantial external funding, sustainability and scalability of these initiatives remain a challenge, reflecting gaps in alignment with national systems and priorities. Effective aid coordination through the Department of National Planning and Monitoring is therefore crucial, requiring partners to strictly adhere to the Development Cooperation Policy framework to optimize development outcomes.

PNG recognizes the positive strides made by development partners, particularly in environmental sustainability, disaster response/preparedness, and climate resilience. Nevertheless, the government emphasizes the need for increased investment in peacebuilding, governance, institutional strengthening, and local capacity development. Such investments are essential to ensure sustained development and must form an integral part of foreign assistance, ensuring that programs initiated through external resources remain effective and sustainable long-term.

Recent shifts in the global economic and geopolitical landscape have introduced additional complexities. The global economic downturn and strategic geopolitical shifts, including aid policy revisions and funding cuts – such as those recently enacted by the United States – have significantly constrained PNG's ability to sustain key development initiatives. Particularly affected are critical sectors including healthcare programs, environmental protection projects, and essential infrastructure developments that previously benefited from sustained international funding.

In navigating these external challenges, the PNG Government calls upon its development partners to actively observe and reinforce their normative roles. This includes prioritizing genuine national capacity-building efforts, strengthening governance structures, and enhancing

local institutions for sustainable service delivery. Development partners are encouraged to transition from project-based, resource-driven approaches towards systemic support that bolsters long-term resilience and institutional effectiveness.

The government strongly advocates for the principles of Locally Led Development (LLD) and genuine gender equality in all development interventions. Partners must ensure these principles are set up meaningfully, moving beyond mere compliance to actively empowering local communities and women, so as to create conditions for equitable and sustainable development.

Despite active engagement in international partnerships, PNG has yet to fully benefit from specialized international funding mechanisms designed explicitly to accelerate SDG implementation, such as the global SDG funds. Greater advocacy, effective planning, and strategic alignment at the national level are required to leverage these resources and bridge current funding gaps effectively.

PNG reaffirms its commitment to strengthening the effectiveness of domestic resource mobilization, enhancing donor coordination, improving transparency, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships. By actively addressing identified weaknesses and leveraging opportunities, PNG aims to ensure robust means of implementation, driving sustained progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Strengthening Decentralization Reforms and Service Delivery

The Government recognizes that decentralization is a critical strategy to enhance effective service delivery and achieve sustainable development at sub-national levels. Under the District Development Authority (DDA) Act 2016, it is envisioned that decentralization will be significantly expanded, empowering districts and Local-Level Governments (LLGs) with greater authority, resources, and autonomy. In the past five years, the government has established seven new Districts and ten additional LLGs, with further expansions planned to align governance structures more closely with local realities and community needs.

Despite these administrative expansions, ensuring robust service delivery mechanisms remains a critical challenge. The government must reinforce implementation of the Minimum Priority Areas (MPAs) guidelines to guarantee consistent delivery of essential public services such as health, education, infrastructure, sanitation, and basic administrative support at every governance layer. This requires clear standards, adequate resources, and robust accountability frameworks that reinforce local governments' capacities to effectively manage and deliver these services sustainably.

For decentralization to succeed, additional efforts and resources must focus on local capacity building. Investments should prioritize training, infrastructure, and strengthening institutional capabilities at district and LLG levels. Ensuring alignment between national priorities, provincial development plans, and district-level interventions will help achieve better coherence and tangible outcomes at the grassroots, significantly enhancing equitable service delivery.

Accountability and Transparency in Subnational Funds

Accountability and transparency in the use of public funds at subnational levels is key to achieving development outcomes. Approximately PGK 2 billion is allocated to districts and provinces through the District and Provincial Services Improvement Programs (DSIP and PSIP) annually. However, reporting and accountability mechanisms around these substantial investments are inadequate, leading to inconsistent outcomes and heightened risk of corruption or mismanagement.

The government therefore needs to significantly bolster oversight mechanisms by enhancing the functional capacities of critical accountability institutions such as the Auditor General's Office, the Public Accounts Committee, the Ombudsman Commission, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), and the Police. Strengthening these institutions through adequate resourcing, enhanced legal mandates, and technical support will facilitate comprehensive auditing, monitoring, and enforcement actions, promoting prudent management and transparent use of public resources.

The equitable distribution of funds must be institutionalized to prevent political interference and enhance fairness in resource allocation. Converting DSIP and PSIP funds into constitutional grants will ensure stable, predictable, and equitable financing to all provinces and districts, irrespective of political affiliations, fostering consistent and uninterrupted development across PNG.

Strengthening Partnerships with Private Sector and Civil Society

The government acknowledges the critical role that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the private sector play in national development and SDG achievement. Strengthening these partnerships remains fundamental for leveraging their resources, expertise, innovation, and grassroots networks. The private sector, in particular, has contributed substantially to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and foundation-supported programs, especially within resource and agriculture enclaves.

These contributions must be strategically recognized and systematically integrated into national development plans and frameworks. The government should engage the private sector and civil society through dialogue, joint planning, and co-investments in critical development areas such as infrastructure, health, education, and environmental sustainability, to enable deeper collaboration and impactful interventions at scale.

Exploring innovative partnership opportunities, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), social enterprises, blended finance mechanisms, and locally-led development initiatives, will further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of such collaborative efforts. Robust engagement platforms and transparent coordination mechanisms are necessary to maximize collective efforts and ensure alignment with national priorities and the SDGs.

Improving Development Statistics for SDG Monitoring and Reporting

The lack of reliable and timely development statistics remains a major constraint for Papua New Guinea in effectively monitoring and evaluating progress towards the SDGs and other national development objectives. Although the PNG Strategy for Development Statistics (2018–2027) provides a comprehensive policy framework for strengthening national statistical capacities, its implementation has faced significant hurdles, including inadequate resources, limited institutional capacities, and fragmented data collection systems. Future surveys should include comprehensive health modules aligned with SDG indicators and the National Health Plan monitoring framework to enhance evidence-based planning and real-time monitoring of SDG 3 progress.

The government acknowledges the critical support from international partners, notably ESCAP, in providing technical assistance for the 2025 VNR process, and UNFPA in providing technical assistance to NSO, especially in areas such as data analysis, methodology, and reporting standards. Data Literacy Workshops were conducted at the national and sub-national level in 16 provinces by NSO, supported by UNFPA and DFAT. Continued collaboration with ESCAP, UNFPA and other international technical agencies will be essential to systematically strengthen PNG's statistical infrastructure, improve data quality and consistency, and establish robust platforms for evidence-based policy-making and SDG reporting.

The government should significantly increase investments in statistical capacity-building, both at the national and sub-national levels. Prioritizing data literacy training, digital data collection platforms, and comprehensive data governance frameworks will enhance the national statistical system's responsiveness and

accuracy. This investment will allow PNG to generate credible data sets essential for informed decision-making, accurate progress tracking, and timely reporting to both national and international stakeholders.

Enhancing Domestic Resource Mobilization

Achieving sustainable development in Papua New Guinea requires effective mobilization and management of domestic resources. Currently, significant potential exists for increasing domestic revenues through improved taxation systems, better fiscal management, and diversified economic activities beyond the extractive sector. A stronger domestic revenue base will enable PNG to reduce dependence on external financing, ensuring sustainability and increased autonomy in pursuing national development priorities.

To enhance revenue generation, the government must prioritize comprehensive tax reforms focusing on increasing compliance, expanding the tax base, and introducing equitable taxation mechanisms, especially targeting sectors with substantial revenue leakages. Enhancing institutional capacity within the Internal Revenue Commission (IRC) and Customs Service will be critical to ensuring effective and transparent revenue collection, thereby significantly improving fiscal sustainability.

Moreover, economic diversification remains critical for enhancing domestic resource mobilization. Strategic investments in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and SMEs, supported by targeted infrastructure investments, improved regulatory frameworks, and enabling policies, can help drive inclusive growth, increase employment opportunities, and broaden PNG's economic base. By effectively harnessing domestic resources, the government will not only enhance fiscal stability but also foster inclusive and sustained development aligned with the SDGs.



8. PNG SDG Implementation & Way Forward

Papua New Guinea proudly commemorates its 50th Independence Anniversary in 2025, providing the perfect moment not only to celebrate past achievements but also to reflect on the vision laid down by our Founding Fathers. As we step into the next half-century, we are deeply mindful of our responsibility to fulfill the aspirations articulated by our founding fathers such as the late Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, whose legacy inspires our renewed dedication to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable national development in alignment with the SDGs.

Challenges Affecting SDG Implementation

The journey towards achieving the SDGs in PNG has been significantly impeded by multiple crises, including the global COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns, natural disasters, tribal conflicts, prolonged political instability, closure of major mining operations such as the Porgera Gold Mine, corruption and widespread lawlessness. These disruptions have weakened governance systems, heightened inequalities, and undermined economic stability, affecting virtually all aspects of development.

To overcome these challenges, it is recommended that the government adopt comprehensive resilience-building strategies that integrate

disaster risk reduction, conflict resolution, and crisis preparedness into national development planning. Strengthening law enforcement, enhancing governance structures, and fostering political stability are essential. A targeted national dialogue involving diverse stakeholders should be initiated to rebuild confidence, reduce tribal conflict, and restore social cohesion.

Re-establishing the SDG Governance Framework

Recognizing the need for improved SDG governance and coordination, the PNG government is taking decisive steps to re-establish the SDG governance framework. A dedicated SDG Secretariat within the Department of National Planning and Monitoring will provide technical guidance, support policy coherence, and facilitate enhanced collaboration across sectors. This move signifies a renewed commitment to accelerating SDG implementation aligned with the MTDP IV and Vision 2050.

For effective operationalization, it is recommended that the SDG Secretariat be adequately staffed, resourced, and empowered with clear mandates. It should actively engage subnational governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, academia, and development partners in integrated planning, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation,

thereby ensuring sustained focus, collective ownership, and robust accountability towards SDG targets.

Strengthening Coordination and Governance of Development Data

Development data quality, availability, and coordination remain major barriers to accurate tracking, monitoring, and reporting on SDG progress in PNG. Although policy frameworks such as the PNG Strategy for Development Statistics (2018–2027) exist, implementation has remained inadequate. Consequently, the capacity to provide evidence-based insights for decision-making and policy formulation remains constrained.

Recommendations include substantial investment in statistical capacity-building, digitalization of data collection processes, and institutional strengthening at national and provincial levels. Additionally, stronger technical partnerships with international development and technical partners should be pursued to build sustainable national statistical systems and to improve the quality, reliability, and timeliness of development data.

Aligning Government Financing and Capital Investment to SDGs

The alignment of PNG's Capital Investment Budget with SDG targets under the Medium-Term Development Plan remains critical. Historically, substantial funds allocated through the Public Investment Program have not been systematically tracked or measured for SDG impact, limiting the effectiveness of public expenditures.

To address this, it is recommended that the government institutionalize robust budget-tracking mechanisms specifically focused on SDG outcomes. Enhanced training, capacity-building, and tools should be provided to budget and planning officials to ensure budget alignment and impact assessment, enabling more effective allocation and utilization of public investments in line with national and international commitments.

Enhancing Transparency and Accountability in Service Improvement Funds

Approximately PGK 2 billion annually is channelled to provinces and districts via the Service Improvement Programs (DSIP/PSIP) and other grants. However, accountability and transparency regarding these funds remain insufficient, compromising development outcomes and public trust.

Recommendations involve empowering accountability institutions – including the Auditor General, Ombudsman Commission, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), and the Public Accounts Committee – with adequate resources, legislative backing, and technical capabilities. Converting DSIP and PSIP into constitutional grants would also safeguard equitable distribution, minimize political interference, and improve transparency and accountability at subnational levels.

Improving Alignment and Effectiveness of Development Partner Contributions

While PNG appreciates the support of international development partners, there remains significant room to improve the alignment of external assistance with national priorities outlined in the Development Cooperation Policy and MTDP IV. Development partners should emphasize their normative roles, such as strengthening governance, building institutional capacities, and facilitating knowledge transfer rather than direct service provision, which remains primarily the responsibility of the government.

International partners should adopt innovative approaches and global best practices, ensuring interventions are systematically scaled, sustainable, and locally driven. Increased accountability in development partnerships, grounded in mutual respect and effective communication, will enhance alignment, ownership, and long-term sustainability of development programs.

Leveraging PNG's Youth Population for Accelerating SDG Achievement

PNG's large and growing youth population presents significant potential as a demographic dividend for accelerating national development and SDG achievement. With young people making up 60 per cent of our population, engaging them meaningfully and strategically in economic, social, and governance processes can harness their energy, creativity, and innovation for transformative change.

It is recommended that the government establish comprehensive youth-focused strategies encompassing skills development, entrepreneurship training, digital literacy, civic education, and youth-inclusive governance mechanisms. Such targeted investments and policy support can engage youth as proactive agents of change, effectively advancing PNG's sustainable development ambitions into the next 50 years.

Celebrating 50 Years and Looking Forward

As Papua New Guinea celebrates its independence golden jubilee, we reflect on the foundational vision of unity, equity, prosperity, and sustainability articulated by our Founding Fathers. The passing of Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare and other visionary leaders in recent years compels us to honor their legacy by recommitting to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable national development aligned with the SDGs.

PNG must embrace a comprehensive reset, reflecting deeply on the lessons of the past, and mobilize collective efforts toward building resilient systems, inclusive governance, transparent accountability, and meaningful partnerships. Such actions will ensure that, over the next 50 years, we realize the transformative promise of leaving no one behind, fulfilling the aspirations of our Founding Fathers, and securing lasting prosperity for all Papua New Guineans.



9. Appendices

I Table 7: List of SDG indicators, national proxies, and data used for progress assessment

Indicator Display	Indicator Name	Sub Indicator Name	DataSeries Type	DataSeries Unit
1.3.1	Social protection floors/systems	Population covered by at least one social protection benefit	Total	% of population
		Proportion of population above statutory pensionable age receiving a pension	Total	% of population
		Unemployment benefit coverage	Total	% of unemployed population
1.4.1	Access to basic water and sanitation services	Population using basic drinking water services	Disaggregation	% of rural population
			Total	% of population
		Population using basic sanitation services	Disaggregation	% of rural population
			Total	% of population
1.5.1	Deaths/missing/affected from disasters	Deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters	Total	Per 100,000 population
		Directly affected persons attributed to disasters	Total	Per 100,000 population
1.5.2	Economic loss from disasters	Direct economic loss attributed to disaster	Total	Million US dollars
1.5.3	Score of adoption and implementation of national DRR strategies	Score of adoption and implementation of national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework	Total	Index
1.5.4	Local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategy	Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national DRR strategies	Total	Percentage
1.a.1	ODA to poverty reduction	Official development assistance grants for poverty reduction, by recipient countries	Total	% of GNI
1.a.2	Government spending on education/health/social protection	Proportion of total government spending on essential services, education	Total	Percentage
		Proportion of total government spending on essential services, health	Total	%
		Proportion of total government spending on essential services, social protection	Total	%
2.1.1	Prevalence of undernourishment	Prevalence of undernourishment	Total	% of population
2.1.2	Food insecurity in the population	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population (%)	Total	% of population
2.2.1	Prevalence of stunting	Children moderately or severely stunted	Total	% of children under 5
2.2.2	Prevalence of malnutrition	Children moderately or severely overweight	Total	% of children under 5
2.2.3	Anaemia in women by pregnancy status	Prevalence of anaemia in women, non-pregnant women	Total	% of non-pregnant women aged 15-49
		Prevalence of anaemia in women, pregnant women	Total	% of pregnant women aged 15-49
2.4.1	Area under productive and sustainable agriculture	Progress toward productive and sustainable agriculture, current status	Total	Score
2.5.1	Conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture	Plant genetic resources accessions stored ex situ	Total	Number
2.a.1	Agriculture orientation index	Agriculture orientation index	Total	Index
2.a.2	Official flows to the agriculture sector	Official flows (disbursements) for agriculture	Total	Million 2022 US dollars
2.c.1	Food price anomalies	Indicator of food price anomalies (IFPA)	Total	Index

3.1.1	Maternal mortality	Maternal mortality	Total	Deaths per 100 000 live births
3.1.2	Births attended by skilled health personnel	Births attended by skilled health personnel	Total	% of live births
3.1.P1	Births in health facilities	Proportion of births that occur in health facilities	Total	%
3.2.1	Infant and under-five mortality rate	Infant mortality rate	Disaggregation	Deaths per 1 000 live births, boys
			Total	Deaths per 1,000 live births
		Under-five mortality, rate	Disaggregation	1st wealth quintile (poorest)
			Total	Deaths per 1,000 live births
3.2.2	Neonatal mortality	Neonatal mortality rate	Disaggregation	Total
			Total	Deaths per 1,000 live births
3.3.1	HIV infections	New HIV infections, all ages	Disaggregation	Per 100,000 population
			Total	Per 100,000 population
3.3.2	Tuberculosis	Tuberculosis incidence rate	Total	Per 100,000 population
3.3.3	Malaria	Malaria incidence rate	Total	Per 1 000 population at risk
3.3.5	Neglected tropical diseases	People requiring interventions against NTD: Total	Total	Thousand people
3.4.1	Cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases	Disaggregation	Probability, women (%)
			Total	Probability (%)
3.4.2	Suicides	Suicide, both sexes	Disaggregation	Per 100,000 population
			Total	Per 100,000 population
3.5.2	Harmful use of alcohol	Alcohol per capita consumption	Total	Litres per annum, population aged 15+
3.6.1	Road traffic deaths	Road traffic deaths	Total	Per 100,000 population
3.7.1	Family planning satisfied with modern methods	Demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods	Total	% of women of reproductive age
3.7.2	Adolescent births	Adolescent fertility rate, aged 15-19	Total	Live births per 1 000 women (aged 15-19)
		Adolescent fertility rate. aged 10-14	Total	Live births per 1 000 women (aged 10-14)
3.8.1	Essential health services coverage	Universal health coverage, service coverage index	Total	Index
3.9.3	Unintentional poisoning	Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	Disaggregation	Per 100,000 population, men
			Total	Per 100,000 population
3.a.1	Tobacco use	Prevalence of current tobacco use	Disaggregation	% of male aged 15 and above
			Total	% of population aged 15 and above
3.b.1	Population covered by all vaccines in national programme	Target population with access 3 doses vaccinaton against diphtheria-tetanus-pertusis (DTP3)	Total	% of population
		Target population with access to pneumoccal conjugate 3rd dose vaccinaton (PCV3)	Total	% of population
		Target population with access to vaccinaton against measles (MCV2)	Total	% of population
3.b.2	ODA to medical research and basic health sectors	Official development assistance to medical research and basic heath sectors, total gross disbursement, by recipient	Total	Million 2021 US dollars

3.c.1	Health worker density	Dentistry personel density	Total	Per 10,000 population
		Nursing and midwifery personnel density	Total	Per 10,000 population
		Pharmaceutical personnel density	Total	Per 10,000 population
		Physicians density	Total	Per 10,000 population
4.1.2	Completion rate by educational level	Completion rate, primary education	Disaggregation	% relevant age group, male population
			Total	% relevant age group, total population
4.2.2	Organised learning before primary entry age	Adjusted net enrolment rate (one year before the official primary entry age), total	Disaggregation	Percentage
			Total	Percentage
4.3.1	Formal and non-formal education and training	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, total	Disaggregation	% of population aged 25-54
			Total	% of population aged 15-24
4.5.1	Inequality indices for education indicators	Completion rate, adjusted gender parity index, primary education	Total	Ratio, total population
4.b.1	ODA for scholarships	Official flows for scholarships, total, by recipient	Total	Million 2022 US dollars
5.1.1	Legal frameworks on gender equality	Legal framework for gender equality (percentage, scale 1 - 100)_Area 1 (legal framework and public life)	Total	Percentage
		Legal framework for gender equality (percentage, scale 1 - 100)_Area 2 (violence against women)	Total	Percentage
		Legal framework for gender equality (percentage, scale 1 - 100)_Area 3 (employment and economic benefits)	Total	Percentage
		Legal framework for gender equality (percentage, scale 1 - 100)_Area 4 (marriage and family)	Total	Percentage
5.5.1	Seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments	Seats held by women in national parliament	Total	% of seats
5.5.2	Proportion of women in managerial positions	Proportion of women in managerial positions - 13th ICLS	Total	Percentage
		Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions - 13th ICLS	Total	Percentage
6.2.1	Safely managed sanitation services	Population practicing open defecation (%)	Disaggregation	% of rural population
			Total	% of population
		Population using safely managed sanitation services	Total	% of urban population
		Population with basic handwashing facilities on premises	Disaggregation	% of rural population
			Total	% of population
6.3.1	Wastewater safely treated	Safely treated domestic wastewater	Total	Percentage
6.4.2	Water stress	Water stress: (total freshwater withdrawal as proportion of available freshwater)	Total	% of total renewable water per annum
6.5.1	Integrated water resources management	Degree of integrated water resources management implementation (%)	Total	Percentage
6.6.1	Change in water-related ecosystems	Lakes and rivers permanent water area change	Total	Percentage
		Mangrove total area change	Total	Percentage
6.a.1	ODA to water and sanitation	Official development assistance (total gross disbursement) for water supply and sanitation, by recipient	Total	Million 2022 US dollars
6.b.1	Participation in water and sanitation management	Countries with procedures in law or policy for participation by service users/communities in planinng program: rural drinking-water supply	Total	10 = Clearly defined; 5 = Not clearly defined; 0 = N/A

		Countries with procedures in law or policy for participation by service users/communities in planning program: water resources planning and management	Total	10 = Clearly defined; 5 = Not clearly defined; 0 = N/A
		Countries with users/communities participating in planning programs in rural drinking-water supply	Total	3 = High; 2 = Moderate; 1 = Low; 0 = N/A
		Countries with users/communities participating in planning programs in water resources planning and management	Total	3 = High; 2 = Moderate; 1 = Low; 0 = N/A
7.1.1	Access to electricity	Access to electricity	Disaggregation	% of rural population
			Total	% of population
7.1.2	Reliance on clean energy	Population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technologies (SDG)	Disaggregation	% of rural population
			Total	% of population
7.2.1	Renewable energy share	Renewable energy share of total final energy consumption	Total	% of total final energy consumption
7.3.1	Energy intensity	Energy intensity level of primary energy	Total	Megajoules per unit of GDP in 2017 PPP
7.a.1	Financial flows to clean energy	International support for clean energy and renewable energy	Total	Million 2021 US dollars
7.b.1	Renewable energy generating capacity	Renewable electricity capacity, total	Total	Watts per capita
8.1.1	Real GDP per capita growth rate	GDP per capita growth rate (2015 US dollars, average annual)	Total	% change per capita per annum
8.2.1	Real GDP per employed person growth rate	Output per worker growth rate (2015 US Dollar)	Total	% change per annum
8.4.1	Material footprint	Material footprint	Total	Tons per capita
8.4.2	Domestic material consumption	Domestic material consumption	Total	Tons per capita
		Domestic material consumption intensity	Total	Kg per 1 USD (2015) GDP
8.5.2	Unemployment rate	Unemployment rate - 13th ICLS (15+ years)	Disaggregation	% of male labour force aged 15-24
			Total	% of labour force
8.6.1	Youth not in education, employment or training	Not in Employment, Education, Training (NEET)	Disaggregation	% of female aged 15-24
			Total	% of population aged 15-24
8.8.2	Compliance of labour rights	Level of national compliance with labour rights	Total	Score from 0 (better) to 10 (worse) compliance with labour rights
8.10.1	Commercial bank branches and automated teller machines	Number of automated teller machines (ATMs)	Total	Per 100 000 adults
		Number of commercial bank branches	Total	Per 100 000 adults
8.a.1	Aid for Trade	Aid for trade, total official flows (commitments)	Total	Million 2022 US dollars
9.1.2	Passenger and freight volumes	Air transport freight	Total	Million ton-km
		Air transport passengers carried	Total	Million passenger-km
		Container port traffic, maritime transport	Total	Million TEU
9.2.1	Manufacturing value added	GDP by activity: Manufacturing, % of GDP	Total	% of GDP (2015 USD)
		GDP by activity: Manufacturing, per capita	Total	2015 US dollars per capita
9.2.2	Manufacturing employment	Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment - 13th ICLS	Total	% of total employment
9.a.1	Official international support to infrastructure	Total official flows for infrastructure	Total	Million 2022 US dollars
9.c.1	Population covered by a mobile network	Population covered by at least a 3G mobile network	Total	% of population
		Population covered by at least a 4G mobile network	Total	% of population

10.4.1	Labour share of GDP	Labour income share of GDP	Total	% of GDP
10.7.4	Refugees, by country of asylum	Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	Total	Per 100,000 population
10.a.1	Tariff line on imports	Tariff lines applied to imports with zero-tariff, all products	Total	Percentage
10.b.1	Total resource flows for development	Total assistance for development (ODA+OOF+private), by recipient	Total	Million US dollars
11.1.1	Urban population living in slums	Urban population living in slums	Total	% of urban population
11.5.1	Deaths/missing persons from disasters	Deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters	Total	Per 100,000 population
		Directly affected persons attributed to disasters	Total	Per 100,000 population
11.5.2	Economic loss from disasters	Direct economic loss attributed to disaster	Total	Million US dollars
11.6.2	Urban particulate matter	Annual mean concentration of PM2.5, urban	Total	Micrograms per m3
11.b.1	National disaster risk reduction strategy	Score of adoption and implementation of national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework	Total	Index
11.b.2	Local disaster risk reduction strategy in line with national strategy	Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national DRR strategies	Total	Percentage
12.2.1	Material footprint	Material footprint	Total	Tons per capita
12.2.2	Domestic material consumption	Domestic material consumption	Total	Tons per capita
		Domestic material consumption intensity	Total	Kg per 1 USD (2015) GDP
12.3.1	Global food loss index	Food waste, total	Total	Kg per capita
12.4.1	International agreements on hazardous waste	Hazardous waste and other chemicals, average Basel/Montreal/Stockholm/Rotterdam convention compliance	Total	%
12.a.1	Renewable energy generating capacity	Renewable electricity capacity, total	Total	kWh per capita
12.c.1	Fossil-fuel subsidies	Fossil-fuel subsidies (consumption and production)	Total	% of GDP
13.1.1	Deaths/missing persons from disasters	Deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters	Total	Per 100,000 population
		Directly affected persons attributed to disasters	Total	Per 100,000 population
13.1.2	National disaster risk reduction strategies	Score of adoption and implementation of national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework	Total	Index
13.1.3	Local disaster risk reduction strategies	Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national DRR strategies	Total	Percentage
13.2.2	Greenhouse gas emissions	Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions without LULUCF	Total	Million tons of CO2 equivalent
14.1.1	Costal eutrophication and floating plastic	Beach litter originating from national land-based sources that ends in the beach	Total	Tonnes
		Beach litter originating from national land-based sources that ends in the ocean	Total	Tonnes
		Chlorophyll-a deviations, remote sensing	Total	Percentage
14.5.1	Protected marine areas	Proportion of marine key biodiversity areas covered by protected area status	Total	Percentage
15.1.1	Forest area	Forest area	Total	% of land area
15.1.2	Sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity	Average proportion of Terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas	Total	Percentage
15.2.1		Above ground biomass in forest	Total	Tons per hectare

	Sustainable forest management	Forest area net change rate	Total	Percentage
		Forest area with a long-term management plan	Total	Percentage
		Forest area within legally established protected area	Total	Percentage
15.4.1	Sites for mountain biodiversity	Important sites for mountain biodiversity	Total	Percentage
15.4.2	Mountain Green Cover Index	Mountain green cover index, total	Total	Index
15.4.2b	Proportion of degraded mountain land	Proportion of degraded mountain land, Total	Total	Percentage
15.5.1	Red List Index	Red list index total	Total	Index
15.6.1	Fair and equitable sharing of benefits of genetic resources	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA), contracting party	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
		Leg., admin./policy framework reported through Online Reporting Sys. on Compliance of the Int. Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food&Agriculture	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
		Legislative, administrative and policy framework reported to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
		Nagoya Protocol, country party	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
		Reported number of Standard Material Transfer Agreements (SMTAs) transferring plant genetic resources for food and agriculture to the country	Total	Number
15.8.1	Prevention or control of invasive alien species	Legislation, Regulation, Act related to the prevention of introduction and management of Invasive Alien Species (1 = YES, 0 = NO)	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
		National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) targets alignment to Aichi Biodiversity target 9 set out in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
15.a.1	ODA and public expenditure to biodiversity and ecosystems	Official development assistance for biodiversity, total, by recipient	Total	Million 2021 US dollars
15.b.1	ODA and public expenditure to biodiversity and ecosystems	Official development assistance for biodiversity, total, by recipient	Total	Million 2021 US dollars
16.1.1	Intentional homicides	Victims of intentional homicide	Total	Number
16.3.2	Unsentenced detainees	Unsentenced detainees (Pre-trial)	Total	% of prison population
16.6.1	Government expenditure/original budget	Primary government expenditures as share of original approved budget	Total	Percentage
16.7.1	Population representativity in public institutions	Women's representation in parliament (from the age of eligibility), Lower Chamber or Unicameral	Total	Ratio (women's share in parliament over share in total population)
		Young members representation in parliament (from the age of eligibility to 45), Lower Chamber or Unicameral	Total	Ratio (age groupA's share in parliament over share in total population)
16.a.1	Independence of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI)	Countries with National Human Rights Institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles	Total	0 = No status; 1 = Status B, partially compliant; 2 = Status A, fully compliant
17.1.1	Government revenue by source	Government revenue (budgetary central government)	Total	% of GDP
17.1.2	Domestic budget funded by domestic taxes	Domestic budget funded by domestic taxes	Total	Percentage
17.3.1	FDI, ODA, South-South cooperation as share of domestic budget	FDI inflows	Total	Million USD
17.3.2	Personal remittances	Personal remittances received	Total	% of GDP

17.4.1	Debt service	Debt service	Total	% of exports of goods, services and primary income
17.6.1	Fixed Internet broadband subscription by speed	Fixed-broadband subscriptions	Total	Per 100 population
17.8.1	Internet users	Internet users	Total	% of population
17.9.1	Financial and technical assistance	Official development assistance (gross disbursement) for technical cooperation	Total	Million 2022 US dollars
17.10.1	Worldwide weighted tariff-average	Most-favoured nation, worldwide weighted tariff-average, all products	Total	Percentage
		Preferential rate, weighted mean, all products	Total	Percentage
17.11.1	Developing/least developed countries share of global exports	Developing countries and least developed countries share of global merchandise exports	Total	% of world merchandise exports
		Developing countries and least developed countries share of global services exports	Total	% of world services exports
17.12.1	Average tariffs faced by developing countries, LDCs and SIDS	Most-favoured nation, average tariff applied by developed countries, all products	Total	Percentage
		Preferential rate, average tariff applied by developed countries, all products	Total	Percentage
17.15.1	Use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools in development cooperation	Extent of the use of country-led result framework, by recipient of development cooperation	Total	Percentage
17.16.1	Progress in development effectiveness in support of the SDGs	Progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring framework in support of SDGs, recipients	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
17.18.1	Statistical capacity for SDG monitoring	Data Infrastructure performance index (Statistical Performance Indicators Pillar 5)	Total	Index
		Data Sources performance index (Statistical Performance Indicators Pillar 4)	Total	Index
17.18.3	National statistical plan funded/under implementation	National statistical plan under implementation	Total	Yes (1)/No (0)
17.19.1	Financial resources to strengthen statistical capacity in developing countries	Resources made available to strengthen statistical capacities in developing countries	Total	Million US dollars

II Table 8: Dashboard of progress by SDG target



LNOB Methodology

The Classification and Regression Tree (CART)

Understanding that inequality of opportunity is broadly associated with specific circumstances opens the door to deeper exploration of the data, in order to see exactly which groups of children, households or individuals are the most marginalized and which groups have benefited most from development. Identifying these groups can help policymakers better focus policy and programmes to tackle inequality of opportunity.

The primary goal of using classification and regression tree (CART) analysis is to identify the groups with the lowest and highest access to opportunities, in the case of birth registration, those children with the lowest and highest birth registration rates. "Birth registration" is the response variable, while the factors that characterize these groups are the explanatory variables, also referred to as "circumstances".¹¹⁰ A tree is an analytical structure that represents groups of children of the sample population that have significantly different response values, or in this example, different birth registration rates.

¹¹⁰ Within the field of machine learning, response and explanatory variables are more commonly referred to as target and input attributes, respectively.

To identify the groups of children with the greatest difference in their birth registration, a regression tree is constructed for each country using R, an open-source statistical software. The root node of the tree refers to the entire population sample. The tree method algorithm starts by searching for the first split (or “partition”) of the tree. It does so by looking at each circumstance and separating the sample in two groups so that it best satisfies a certain “splitting criterion.” This splitting criterion can be defined in a few ways, while the one used here is the Analysis of Variance, or ANOVA. The formula that represents the core of the algorithm is:

$$SS_T - (SS_L + SS_R)$$

Where $SS_T = \sum(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2$ is the sum of squares for the parent node, and SSL and SSR are the sums of squares for the left and right child nodes, respectively.¹¹¹ The sum of squares is calculated by first finding the distance between \bar{Y} , the sample mean, and the *i*th data point Y_i . This is also referred to as the deviation.

If deviations for all data points Y_1, Y_2, \dots, Y_i are squared and then summed, as in $\sum(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2$, this yields the sum of squares for these data. This is equivalent to choosing the split to maximize the between-groups sum of squares in a simple analysis of variance.

The CART algorithm applies this ANOVA test to each possible split, or partition, of the sample population given by the circumstances. After comparing all of the available partitions, the algorithm is able to identify the single partition that would decrease variance the most for the combined sum of squares of the child nodes compared to the parent node. This is how CART uses ANOVA to identify the best possible split for each node down the tree.

The actual algorithm that generates the nodes for each partition works step-by-step, starting from the entire sample (where “T” given by SST is the root node). Each time the sample is partitioned, new nodes are generated, and the ANOVA is calculated and compared to the ANOVA before the new partition. This stepwise process of building nodes and branches of a tree is also known as “recursive partitioning.” Each partition (and hence the new pair of nodes) is kept when the decrease of variance exceeds a preset threshold also known as a “complexity parameter.” When the best available partition fails to satisfy the complexity parameter, or a set of other preset conditions can't be satisfied, the algorithm ceases to make additional partitions. The nodes that could not be further partitioned are henceforth referred to as “terminal nodes.” In addition to finding groups that are left furthest behind, the/ CART algorithm requires that each group should have enough group members. To avoid a too small sub-sample size, the analysis ceases to make additional partitions if the resultant nodes fail to contain either 9 per cent of the total sample population or an absolute value of 49 survey respondents. The analysis is also limited

to six levels of nodes (encompassing five partitions), as additional partitions past that point have diminishing returns for the purpose of identifying population groups experiencing inequality of opportunity.

Out of the many variables available in the survey, several circumstances are considered in order to help identify the most excluded groups. These circumstances (determinant factors) define the composition of the groups. However, circumstances should not be interpreted as causes of inequality. The association found does not imply causality. Furthermore, there are many other factors that these models cannot consider, given the limitations of the datasets.

The available datasets limit the scope of this analysis somewhat. First, several relevant circumstances cannot be captured. Consistent with similar studies on inequalities among groups, this analysis does not consider inequality within groups. Even within homogenous groups, additional unobserved circumstances may affect outcomes. This analysis only calculates observable averages for each group, and therefore draws conclusions on gaps and inequality based on these observations.

a) Dissimilarity Index

The dissimilarity index, or D-Index, measures how different groups of households or individuals fare in terms of having access to an opportunity such as accessing the internet. For example, to obtain the D-Index on internet usage for example, the following equation is estimated:

$$D = \frac{1}{2p} \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_i |p_i - \bar{p}|,$$

where β_i is the weighted sampling proportion of group *i*, (sum of β_i equals 1), \bar{p} is the average rate of access to the internet by households in the country and p_i is the average rate of access to internet by population group *i*, and takes values from zero to 1. There are “n” number of groups defined by using the interactions of circumstances selected for the analysis.

Four circumstances are used to determine the number and composition of the groups of individuals in some indicators: wealth of the household (two groups); place of residence (two groups); sex (two groups); educational attainment (three groups); age groups (three groups). This produces n=72 groups (2x2x2x3x3), covering the entire sample population. In practice, the D-Index summarizes how much the birth registration rate in these 72 groups are different from the national average.

b) Data

This section will clarify the way each SDG indicator is set up using the national surveys. The results will be shared with the NSO for their validation. Not all results are validated against the final SDES 2022 reports.

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Table 9: List of Indicators and Circumstances from SDES 2022

Indicator	Circumstances in Standard Model	Extended model	Level of Analysis	SDG Reference
Basic drinking water – improved sources + water on premise/collec- tion time <=30 min	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 6.1.1
Basic sanitation – improved facility + not shared	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 6.2.1
Hand-washing facility with soap and water	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 6.2.1
Electricity – lighting source (grid, solar, hydro)	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 7.1.1
Clean fuel – for cooking (non-solid fuels)	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 7.1.2
Durable housing – roof/wall/floor using finished materials	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 11
Basic waste collection – collected by provider/ disposed in designated area	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 11.6.1/1.4.1
Mobile phone ownership	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 5.b.1
Internet access	Wealth + Residence + Highest education attainment among members + Sex of head		Household	SDG 17.8.1
Early childhood education – Currently attending school (age 5-6)	Wealth + Residence + Mother's education + Sex of child + Number of children under 7 in household	Disability	Individual	SDG 4.2.2
Primary education completion – completed grade 8 or above (age 15-25)	Wealth + Residence + Sex	Disability	Individual	SDG 4.1.2
Secondary education completion – Completed grade 12 or above (age 20-35) *vocational/technical is also counted	Wealth + Residence + Sex	Disability	Individual	SDG 4.1.2
Post-secondary education atten- dance – Completed or attending college/university/post-graduate (age 25-35)	Wealth + Residence + Sex	Disability	Individual	SDG 4.3.1
Literacy - can read and write in any languages listed (age 10-95)	Wealth + Residence + Sex + Age	Disability	Individual	SDG 4.6.1
Labour force participation (age 15+)	Wealth + Residence + Sex + Education + Age + Marital status + Number of children under 5 in household	Disability	Individual	SDG 8
Unemployment (age 10-95)	Wealth + Residence + Sex + Education + Number of children under 5 in household	Disability	Individual	SDG 8.5.2

¹¹¹ Therneau, Terry, and Elizabeth Atkinson. 2019. “An Introduction to Recursive Partitioning Using the RPART Routines”. Mayo Foundation. Available at: <https://cran.rproject.org/web/packages/rpart/vignettes/longintro.pdf>

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