

## Almami Conservation Law, and Adelbert Mountains Conservation Cooperative, Papua New Guinea

Author: Susi Menazza ([smenazza@tnc.org](mailto:smenazza@tnc.org))

**Short title:** Conservation law benefits communities and biodiversity, Papua New Guinea

**Key Message:** Land use management plans that include conservation laws are implemented to achieve conservation goals and benefit communities.

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### What was the problem?

In 1998, the Josephstaal logging concession covered over 150,000 hectares of customary lands belonging to over 400 clans in the Adelbert Mountain range, including the Almami Local Level Government Ward (LLG) in PNG's Madang province<sup>1</sup>. However, in 1999 the legal arrangements and benefit-sharing conditions of the concession were challenged by the communities, who felt aggrieved at the poor consultation and argued that the company had used coercion and fraud to secure the contract. Some community members had also witnessed the negative impacts of clear-fell logging which stripped the forests, damaged young growth and polluted water sources. As a result, the community leaders considered rescinding the agreement with the logging company and asked The Nature Conservancy for advice. TNC, which had been working with communities in the Adelbert Mountain range since 1996, engaged a local NGO that focused the rights of local communities and in 2001 local leaders challenged the legality of the arrangements in a national court. The Court ruled against the concessions. Buoyed by the decision, the community leaders wished to take better control of the way in which their forest and land was being used. Alternatives to commercial logging, such as ecoforestry, cocoa and vanilla production, and ecotourism trails were initiated.

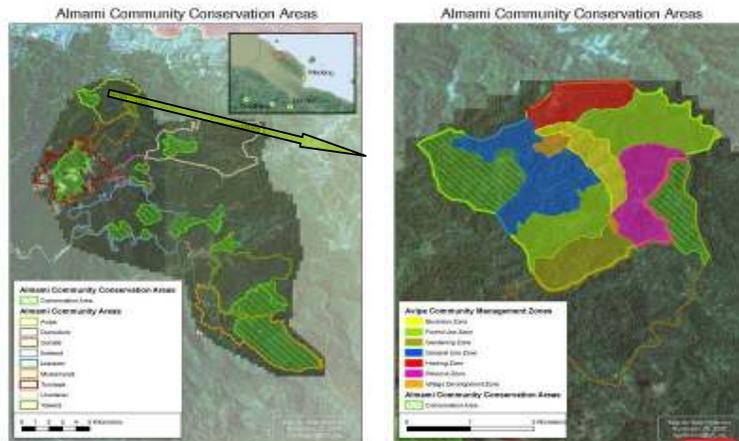
However, in some communities, the conversion of land due to poorly planned forest clearance, coupled with conversion of forest areas to cocoa and vanilla production had resulted in a loss of much-relied upon forest resources, had altered the economy of people's daily lives and importantly, had reduced the available areas for gardening and subsistence agriculture. In several villages, altered land-uses affected streams and resulted in a loss of water quality. This caused hardship, disrupted routines and exacerbated conflicts over water sources and access to potable water and freshwater fish.

### What was done to solve it? How were ecosystem services considered?

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<sup>1</sup> Papua New Guinea has 20 province-level divisions: 18 provinces, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the National Capital District. Each province is divided into one or more districts, which in turn are divided into one or more Local Level Government (LLG) areas. The Madang Province – where the Adelbert Mountain range is located – has six districts, including the Bogia District, which in turn is divided in three LLGs: Almami, Yabu and Yawar.

With support from TNC, the Almami LLG began a process to develop land use management plans to guarantee food security and environmental sustainability, through restricting spatial and temporal access and use on key areas. This was to reduce impacts on key ecosystem services including watershed, catchment and source for freshwater streams, as well as forest zones for hunting and collection of forest products, but also for conservation and *tambu* spiritual areas. Additionally, zones were firmly designated for agriculture to balance the land available for food cultivation against land converted for cash-cropping and production, such as cocoa. TNC assisted the Almami LLG in preparing a new legislation based on the 1995 Organic Law<sup>2</sup>, to formally recognize and manage local conservation areas in which the clans set aside land for conservation purposes. The lands were divided into various zones that protected or managed ecosystem services, such as conservation areas, hunting zones, gardens, cultural sites, forest use zones, general use zones; and then set aside clear areas for commercial enterprise, reserve and village development zones. This places ecosystem services as a key element of local development planning, reflected in spatial land use plans as well as management provisions and commercial enterprise.



### What was needed to solve the problem in terms of data, resources and capacity?

The main inputs required were principally:

- Strong local leadership
- Funding to complete plans and initiate action
- Strong support and leadership from the Almami Local level Government
- A network of local NGO's and actors able to engage with external partners and agencies (such as TNC) on behalf of the communities
- Technical assistance and strategic guidance, for example on how to assess ecosystem services, and how to develop land use management plans and conduct revisions and evaluations
- Local knowledge of targets/threats and areas of unique biodiversity and cultural value

The community engagement also involved a lengthy and inclusive process of delineating boundaries and zones, initially between communities and clans. This required local-level

<sup>2</sup> The Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments, enacted shortly after independence in 1975 decentralized many functions to provincial Government. The New Organic Law of 1995 further shifted authority to District and Local level Governments in a more equitable sharing arrangement.

government support to help resolve any local conflicts and to formally recognise territories. At the same time, zones within clan boundaries were negotiated with different user groups, families and individuals, to ensure an even distribution of access to resources and land for production and cultivation, but also for protection.

**What resulted from taking an ecosystem service perspective? Did the approach influence public management or result in policy uptake?**

With the New Organic Law (1995), local and district level governments in PNG were given the power to create Community Conservation Areas if the land owners desired. In order to provide guidance, the LLG created the *Almami Environment and Conservation Law (2003)*. Through this framework, the LLG, TNC and other partners have supported local level management planning for Community Conservation Areas in 21 traditional clan territories (with five more under development) and is now also starting to mainstream this process into other areas. This in turn has been incorporated into a Provincial Forest Bill (to be enacted in 2010) that provides a blueprint and policy guidance for communities elsewhere in the Madang Province. The signing of formal agreements allow communities to get support for managing their areas and enables the LLG to be actively involved in natural resource management, interacting with communities and understanding their needs.

**What else was necessary for it be influential?**

While land use management plans and conservation agreements provide protection and management of ecosystem services on customary lands through a legal framework, they do not always provide tangible, perceived benefits (including monetary incentives) to expand on and consolidate the effective protection and sustainable management of these areas. For this reason, in 2007 the Adelberts Conservation Cooperative was established to build a network of local members for organic and Fair Trade cacao production. Membership is tied to communities where local land use management plans are recognized under the *Almami Environment and Conservation Law*. Cacao grown in designated zones defined by the land use plans ensure that ecosystem services and food security are not impacted, and are therefore eligible for trade through the Cooperative. It has now received Fair Trade<sup>3</sup> certification and is one of the first cooperatives to export Fair-trade cocoa from Papua New Guinea.

Measures of the perceived social and economic benefit to communities through the land use management plan process and Almami Environment and Conservation Law is best demonstrated by the initial interest from 15 clan communities in 2007 to 26 in 2010.

**References:**

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<http://www.postcourier.com.pg/20030528/news13> (Last access, July 21 2010)

New Organic Law on Provincial Government and Local Level Government

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<sup>3</sup> Fair Trade is a non-profit organization that certifies products and assists their marketing and sale in developed countries. Fair Trade guarantees a best-price and a development premium for producers based on rigorous adherence to the certification criteria and principles.

<http://www.nefc.gov.pg/Organic%20Law%20on%20PGs%20and%20LLGs.pdf> (Last access July 21 2010)

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Further sources include:

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