

## ECOSHARE PNG Implementation; management, ethics, social geography

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With some of the highest degrees of biodiversity and species endemism in the world, Papua New Guinea (PNG) holds a unique and invaluable place in the global environment. However, economic pressures for development and extraction of its vast mineral wealth have put PNG's incredible biological richness under threat. To allow such richness to disappear in the name of limited short-term economic gains would be a grave loss to both the nation of PNG the international community as a whole. Something must be done to secure PNG's ecological well-being, but at the same time, form a path to growth and a prosperous future for the peoples of PNG. PNG's unique land tenure system, which confers a great degree of control of large swaths of land to the local indigenous populations, presents an exciting opportunity to forge innovative, collaborative conservation programs that would not be possible in other parts of the world.

In recent years, the fields of environmental resource management and applied ecology have seen theoretical changes, moving away from ideas of strict preservation and separation between ecosystems and human activity, and towards concepts of "coupled" human-environment systems, participatory methods, adaptive co-management, and community-based conservation approaches. Ecoshare will build upon these paradigm shifts to develop a sustained, long-term investment plan that will protect PNG's biological resources, while also prioritizing the wants and needs of the communities that have acted as communal owners and stewards of these lands. The purpose of Ecoshare is not to generate maximum profits for its investors. Through the selling of "ecological shares", this project seeks to create a monetary pool that is not only sufficient for building community resources, creating economic security for the involved parties, and implementing effective tools for environmental protection, but to establish a financial base that is self-sustaining and capable of adaptation. It is only in this way that a conservation program may endure in perpetuity and in continual collaboration with local communities.

PNG is not only biologically and ecologically diverse, it is also very culturally diverse, with some of the highest concentration of linguistic variation in the world despite its small size. There exist great variances in customs, practices, and social structure across tribes. Ecoshare fully acknowledges this diversity, and understands that any conservation solution that hopes to be viable over the long term cannot simply be "rubber stamped" whole sale from one region and community to another. The success of any community-based conservation project hinges on its compatibility with the society and culture within which it is to be embedded. The founders of Ecoshare have a long-standing relationship with several communities leaders in the region dating back to [x]. Building on years of mutual respect and dialog, this conservation project will be based on careful consideration and communication between parties regarding ecological priorities, community needs, development limits, feasibility, and management of finances.

Moving forward, Ecoshare will conduct interviews in order to gain deeper understanding on several key social characteristics: kinship ties, gender relations, and social stratification. In order to implement this

project with care and respect, it is vital to understand social relations as they currently exist, as the project will inevitably bring changes to the community. As previously stated, the founders of Ecoshare have long been in communication with clan leaders and have built a foundation of trust over many years. Initial interviews have recently been conducted with several women regarding their thoughts and views on a potential conservation project without issue. With permission, Ecoshare will seek to speak candidly with additional community leaders, elders, and regular community members regarding their roles in society, the division of labor, social mores, and aspirations for the future. Interviews will be conducted under standard ethical interviewing practices to protect the welfare and rights to confidentiality of the interviewees. These interviews will be used to build a comprehensive picture of social structure. Community-based conservation projects across the globe have often encountered serious problems when it came to equitable investment throughout the levels of the community, so it is necessary to perform this initial groundwork in understanding the nuances of how the community is stratified and along what lines. With proper planning and collaboration, mechanisms for distribution of project resources and the creation of employment opportunities that are compatible with community members at all levels can be made.

Following these interviews, Ecoshare will request a select group of clan members to lead a community mapping project. Community mapping, when done with proper organization and in conjunction with conventional land surveys, is an effective means of collecting accurate, insightful data on land use. By asking the community itself to document their land use practices, it is a relatively easy and efficient means of delineating territory, categorizing land use types, and understanding how natural resources in these areas are utilized. The gathering and analysis of these data will allow Ecoshare to determine what types of activities and development will be appropriate for certain regions.

### **Code of Ethics**

Ecoshare is dedicated to the implementation of conservation practices that will allow involved parties to grow and thrive in a rapidly changing world, while maintaining the essential character and integrity of the local culture and community. The policies and protocols of this project shall adhere to the highest standards of mutual respect, accountability, and transparency in operation. Ecoshare expects all involved parties to act in accordance with common principles of good faith, fairness, and respect for local laws and regulations under all circumstances and without exception. All research will be conducted with intellectual honesty and following standard ethical practices in dealing with any subject (human or animal), protecting their welfare, rights to privacy, and right to withdraw consent to participation at any time. Project planning and finances shall be reported to involved parties clearly, accurately, and completely, and in a timely manner. Violation of ethical standards will result in termination from the Ecoshare project.