



Curtin University



Faculty of Humanities

2020 Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships

Strategic Project Profile

PROJECT TITLE: Coffee, pests, and people: examining livelihood vulnerability and resilience, PNG

FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE: 1604

PROJECT SYNOPSIS: Coffee is a major agricultural export in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and an important income source for c.500,000 households. This is threatened by the recent arrival of a pest, Coffee Berry Borer (CBB). PNG smallholders are vulnerable because they typically adopt a low-input production approach. In this context, a similar pest devastated the livelihoods of cocoa farmers and the cocoa industry in PNG. CBB represents a similar threat to coffee farmers and the coffee industry. This project will examine the vulnerability and resilience of coffee smallholders, and from a socio-economic perspective explore adaptation and pest management approaches in the PNG smallholder context.

The PhD student will join the Pacific Livelihoods Group (Sustainable Livelihoods, DBE). The Pacific Livelihoods Group is a strong and expanding research program which examines, and seeks to improve, the livelihoods of export cash crop smallholders in Papua New Guinea (see www.pacificlivelihoods.com). The student will work alongside a multidisciplinary team of researchers working on an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded project titled 'Improving Livelihoods of Smallholder Coffee Communities in Papua New Guinea' (ASEM-2016-100) (see <https://pacificlivelihoods.com/projects/>) involving researchers from Curtin University, CSIRO and PNG's Coffee Industry Corporation. When this project commenced, Coffee Berry Borer (CBB) had only very recently arrived in the country, and so an examination of the potential impact of CBB was only a minor component of the funded project. It has however become clear over the first year of the project that

CBB is a major threat to coffee-supported livelihoods, and there is a real need for research to help us understand the potential impact this pest may have on livelihoods and the coffee industry, and to examine how it may be best managed. The PhD student would contribute to the present project, and expand on the scope of the research with an eye to future grant applications. Findings from previous projects have directly contributed to the development of policy and practices in the private sector, and similar outcomes are anticipated from the present project. This project will run through to end of 2022, and will remain a focus of the research group beyond this date.

FEASIBILITY AND RESOURCING – DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT THIS PROJECT WILL RECEIVE:

The supervisory team has extensive experience in PNG. They have studied agricultural systems and the livelihood impacts of a similar pest affecting cocoa. The Pacific Livelihoods group have a strong record of research impact, competitive grant success, private sector engagement and capacity building. The project is supported by PNG's Coffee Industry Corporation.

The group has graduated numerous HDR students in association with previous projects. Curtin previously funded a PhD scholarship for Reuben Sengere. Reuben completed on time, received a VC commendation, and is now the PNG leader for the ACIAR-funded project.

Pacific Livelihoods will provide supplementary fieldwork funds of \$5000.

WHAT MINIMAL ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS EXPECTED BY THE CANDIDATE BE COMPETITIVE:

We are seeking an outstanding and highly motivated student to conduct long-term socio-economic fieldwork at the community level in the Papua New Guinea highlands. The successful candidate will have:

- A Research Master's degree, or a Bachelor's degree with first class honours, or equivalent, in geography, anthropology, development studies, agricultural studies or another relevant discipline. (Essential)
- Willingness to undertake long-term fieldwork and to work at the community level in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, and to learn Melanesian Pidgin. (Essential)
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and within a team. (Essential)
- Demonstrated research experience in a relevant field. (Essential)
- Demonstrated fieldwork or work experience (or equivalent) in a developing country or cross-cultural context (Desirable)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT/ PROGRAM FOR THE ENROLLING SCHOOL OR

INSTITUTION: The Pacific Livelihood's research program sits within DBE's Sustainable Livelihoods Discipline.

This research, and the proposed PhD project, align closely with the Faculty of Humanities' Sustainable Development research priority area, particularly in relation to rural livelihoods and food systems. The research also fits closely with Curtin's focus on strong partnerships with the private sector.

Part of the Pacific Livelihoods group's strategic plan is to recruit domestic HDR students to further strengthen the program, and to contribute to the growth and sustainability of the program.

The recruited PhD student would strengthen and expand the scope of the ACIAR-funded 'Improving Livelihoods of Smallholder Coffee Communities in Papua New Guinea' project. The expanded research could provide the basis for further grant applications.

Students are advised to contact the Project Lead listed below prior to submission of their scholarship application to discuss their suitability to be involved in this strategic project.

PROJECT LEAD CONTACT

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