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# Current forestry laws do not allow Papua New Guineans to develop their own forest resources

Resource  
August 2012

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**PolicyBrief** AUGUST 2012

**Current forestry laws do not allow Papua New Guineans to develop their own forest resources**



In Papua New Guinea (PNG) 90% of land is being farmed in under customary communities. Customary Papua New Guineans (PNGC) are often excluded from meaningful forestry development due to the forestry laws and regulations that have been in place since gaining independence in 1975. The laws have been developed from the view point of large scale forestry and business, therefore have effectively removed the customary rights of the PNGC. This has resulted in numerous state owned and private forestry by large businesses over an increasing majority of PNGC forest land.

An example of this is that, for PNGC wishing to practice community forestry, the process of acquiring a license from the Timber Authority (TA) is cumbersome, expensive, and time consuming (sometimes taking up to 18 months). Therefore local PNGC are often unable to comply with the regulatory requirements for harvesting timber. There is a discrepancy between the current Forestry Act (1993) and the reality in PNG because, in PNG many local Customary and peasant farmers have generations of forestry regulations and currently understand that other situations (around where a forest area is granted) for a company (by the national) had unrecognised different rules. The laws that are sometimes made then, are then requested to work together in the forest area. This can all take place without any consultation with or consent from the Customary owners. The PNG forestry laws require changes so that they are in accordance with the cultural and historical context of the country.

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## PDF



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## Summary

In Papua New Guinea (PNG) 97% of land (including forests) is under customary ownership. However Papua New Guineans (PNGs) are often excluded from meaningful forestry development due to the forestry laws and regulations that have been in place since gaining independence in 1975. The laws have been developed from the view point of large scale forest industry and business, therefore have effectively removed the customary rights of the PNGs. This has resulted in increased state control and private ownership by large businesses over an increasing majority of PNGs forested land.

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