

## LSPNG 2015:

### PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA THROUGH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Hosted by the University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, 15-17 June, 2015

#### CONCEPT NOTE

##### LSPNG: the Road Travelled

The Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea was founded at a meeting of UPNG staff and students on October 11, 1967, with the aim of promoting the languages of Papua New Guinea through research and advocacy of literacy/ language education. LSPNG achievements in these and many other areas of Papuan, Austronesian and general linguistics had raised the image and popularity of Papua New Guinea on the world stage long before the present economic boom. Going back almost half a century, the archives of our online journal, *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia* (LLM) @ [www.langlxmelanesia.com](http://www.langlxmelanesia.com) hold an invaluable and much sought-after resource for linguists, anthropologists and education specialists nationally and all over the world.

##### LSPNG: the Road Ahead

The uniquely complex diversity of PNG's languages and cultures has attracted a lot of interest and admiration from around the globe, and it is still the focus of LSPNG researchers' work up until today. This conference will create a forum for intellectuals and policy makers to exchange ideas about the best way to reconcile the traditional languages and cultures of Papua New Guinea with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To survive in our new Flat World, people must communicate and conduct business across language barriers. This poses a great challenge in PNG, the 'land of a thousand tongues,' where adult literacy rates are still relatively low (Fig. 1).

Year	Human Development Index (HDI) (out of 182 listed countries)	Life Expectancy (years)	Real per Capita GDP (Kina)	Adult Literacy Rate (percent of 15 years and older)	Basic Education Gross Enrolment (pre-Gr. 8, 6 – 14 year pop.)
2010	148	58.0	1 919.8	58	85.5
2020	123	63.0	2 744.4	70	90.0
2030	98	68.0	3 663.5	80	96.5
2040	73	72.0	6 178.6	90	98.0
2050	50	77.0	10 420.5	100	100.0

Table 2.2: Strategic Target Goals for Vision, 2050

Fig. 1. Vision 2050, p. 28

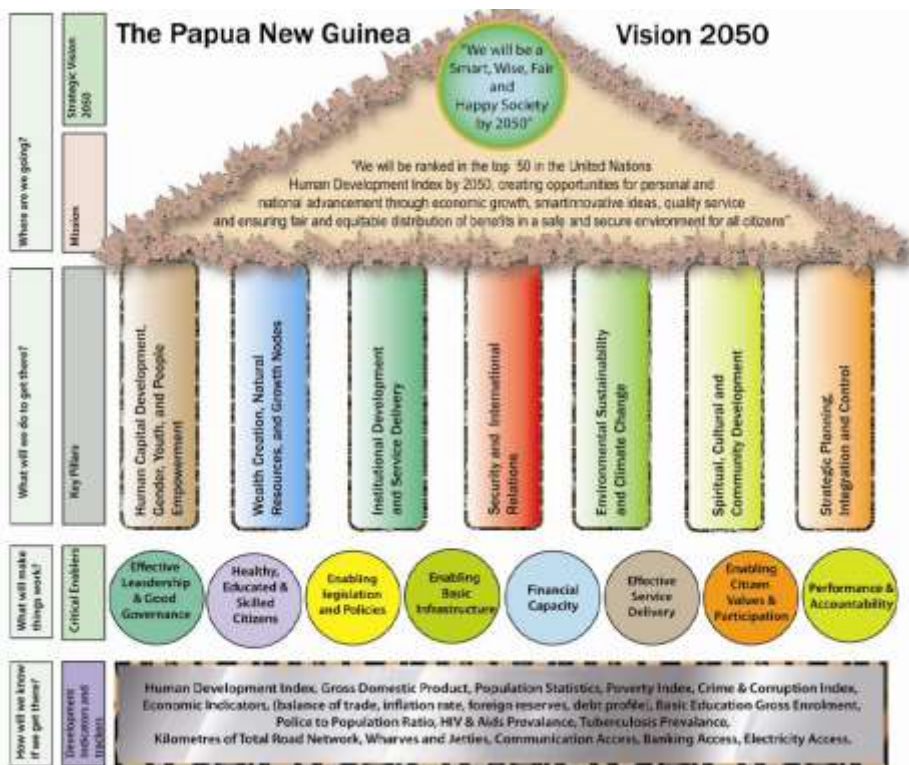
Traditional myths claim that linguistic diversity is an obstacle to social contact. Nothing is further from the truth, since humans have always been able to create new oral modes of communication (pidgins and creoles) out of existing tongues when the need arose. Yet our modern world requires the use of the established languages of a few powerful nations to ensure the political and economic development of other less favored areas of the world. Thus, the acquisition of officially prestigious languages such as English must go hand in hand with the preservation of native, ancestral languages that reflect important local identities but are often seriously endangered. This is the challenge that PNG must face. By providing a forum for a useful exchange of ideas between intellectuals and policy makers on language education and language-related issues, LSPNG 2015 aims to help find the optimal way forward in language education policy, to

ensure that **Vision 2050**<sup>1</sup> becomes reality, and that the people of Papua New Guinea can effectively manage their ‘neighborhood’ in the Global Village.

World-renowned linguists, founders of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea and former Editors of LLM, Prof. William Foley (University of Sydney, Australia) and Prof. John Clifton (SIL and the University of North Dakota), have been invited to address the Plenary Conference Session, sharing with us their view of the road covered; leading National intellectuals, educators and language policy makers, whose names will be announced in our second call for papers, will also address the Plenary Session, presenting their view of the best way forward towards achieving universal primary education (Fig. 2: MDG 2) and, in particular, the all-important Strategic Development Goal of Human Capital Development, Vision 2050 (Fig. 3: SDG 1).



Fig. 2. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be realized by September 2015.



PNG Vision 2050 National Strategic Plan Taskforce (3) focuses on seven broad strategic areas (or pillars):

1. Human capital development, gender, youth and people empowerment;
2. Wealth creation;
3. Institutional development and service delivery;
4. Security and international relations;
5. Environmental sustainability and climate change;
6. Spiritual, cultural and community development; and
7. Strategic planning, integration and control.

Fig. 3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Amongst the Strategic Policies designed to position PNG globally, the Population Policy comes as No. 1, even before the Strategic Food Security Policy and the Strategic Energy Security Policy; this is because PNG policy

<sup>1</sup> The United Nations is in the final stages of defining a post-2015 development agenda, scheduled to be launched in September 2015, the target date for realizing the MDGs (1). Actively participating in this process, Papua New Guinea launched a long-term national development strategy, Vision 2050, which is ‘the most ambitious planning document in the county’s history,’ according to the Oxford Business Group website (2).

makers recognize that all social development hinges on knowledge, which we acquire only through language.

Thus, LSPNG 2015 theme, **“Promoting Language Education for Sustainable Development,”** cuts to the core of the interrelated, cross-disciplinary issues that determine all socio-economic and cultural development. While papers on any subject dealing with topics in Melanesian languages and general linguistics will be welcome, the conference will focus mainly on issues pertaining to the role of language in society, highlighting the impact of national language education system on sustainable socio-economic development. Language change in the changing world, the impact of modern technologies on the way we communicate, and the use of the Internet and digital devices in language education will also form the fabric of fascinating discussions.

### **Conference Objectives:**

1. Support the PNG Government in its long-term national development strategy (Vision 2050) by highlighting the crucial role of human resource development in attaining all other SDGs
2. Stimulate research and exchange of ideas in the areas of language education, sociolinguistics, cultural studies and anthropology
3. Develop programs to document endangered languages
4. Define and help shape an effective language education policy for sustainable development
5. Advocate adult literacy programs and the implementation of an effective language education policy for sustainable development
6. Present research findings in the area of language education and literacy in PNG that will help shape PNG SD policies.
7. Create national educators’ networks, promoting awareness of the complex socio-economic issues involved and understanding of PNG language education policy
8. Contribute to the work of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development by promoting the concept of pragmatic language education policy
9. Showcase successful programs and projects in literacy / language education
10. Forge important partnerships for development between LSPNG and the DoE, government and private sector organizations, international agencies and research institutions.

### **Expected outcomes:**

- Fruitful exchange of ideas on the best way forward in language education
- Publication of conference proceedings in the free-access online journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea, *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia* Vol. 33/2, 2015
- Successful realization of Vision 2050 SDGs, primarily that of human resource development, through implementing an effective language education policy

### **REFERENCES**

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3. The Papua New Guinea Vision 2050 National Strategic Plan Taskforce. Accessed 02/03/2015 @ <http://www.pacificclimatechange.net/index.php/eresources/documents?task=view&id=333&catid=105>