

# Milne Bay Environment

## Milne Bay Province

### Last update: April 2015



#### Overview

Milne Bay is a maritime province with a population of approximately 200,000 people. The province consists of a large mainland area at the eastern tip of Papua New Guinea's main island, along with hundreds of islands stretching to the east. The province is relatively isolated from the rest of the country having no road links to other provinces. It is bordered to the north by Oro (Northern Province) and to the west by Central Province.

Due to its isolation, the population is relatively homogenous, with the majority of residents coming from Milne Bay Province. Exceptions are (mostly) men who have travelled to work in the mines, oil palm estates or other industries.

New Britain Palm Oil Limited (NBPOL) - commonly known as Milne Bay Estates - is the province's largest employer with 4000 employees. Smallholders (who register with the Oil Palm Industry Corporation – OPIC) are few in comparison with other provinces with only 500 (7,000 in Oro and 12,000 in WNB). Oil palm is the largest cash crop in the province. The Estates are located on the mainland to the west of Alotau and include Hagita, Waigani, Sagarai, Padipadi, and Mariawatte. A new Estate at the Central Province border in the Bibara area is planned to open in the next four years.

Mining is playing an increasingly important role in Milne Bay's economy. In addition to exploration and drilling, the existing Misima gold mine is being reopened. There are also operating gold mines in Normanby and Woodlark islands. Oil and copper are being prospected around Rabaraba, while Sudest has small-scale alluvial gold mining. This attracts people from outside the province seeking business and employment opportunities.

There is regular travel between the islands and the mainland, in particular to the provincial capital Alotau, located on the northern coast of Milne Bay. Alotau is the provincial shipping port and receives steady flow of industrial shipping, cruise ships and tourist yachts. Marine transport is dominated by smaller local passenger and cargo boats from the islands.

The United Church is the largest church in the province; followed by Anglican, Catholic and smaller Protestant church followings. English is the commonly spoken throughout the islands.

The Province is home to several large cultural festivals that bring together people from all over the islands as well as other provinces and tourists. These include the Milamala (Yam) and Canoe festivals. People from the Trobriand Islands have a reputation of sexual license due to the annual Milamala festival and the nature of celebrations and behaviours associated with this festival. A rise in STIs and pregnancies has been reported around the festival periods as well as the rainy season when people spend a lot of time indoors.

In 2012, the former Governor established an LLG transit house in Alotau to support islanders travelling to Alotau on personal or official business. Residents of LLGs can stay in the large

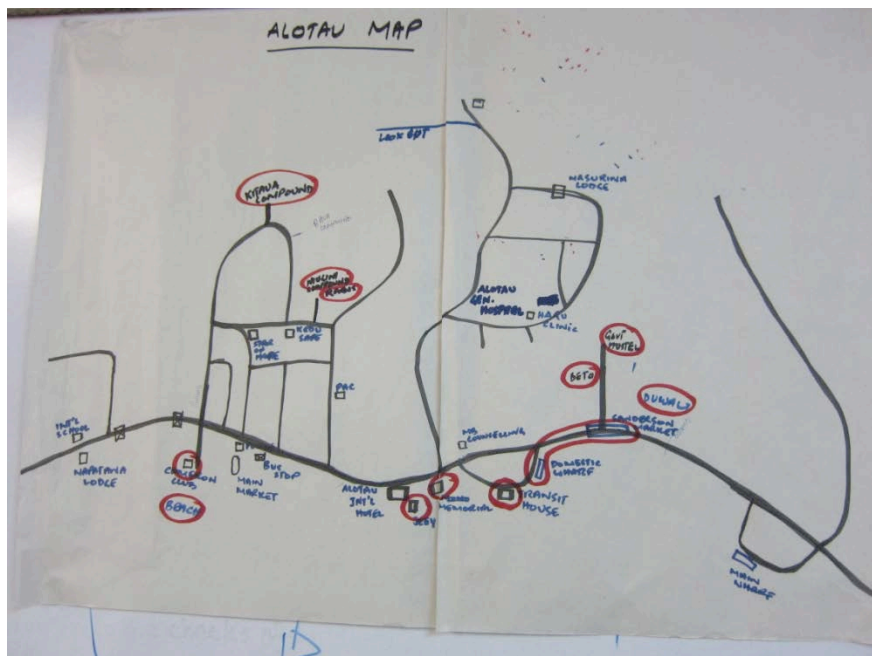
accommodation complex for a reasonable fee. Occupancy is limited to 5 days, and while it does not seem to attract sexual promiscuity, many of the occupants are reported to seek transactional sex outside of the compound.

## Environment of Risk

Through its micro-mapping, TL has learned that transactional sex is often arranged and then takes place through a series of complicated steps that may occur: at different locations; at different times of day; involve several different people. Understanding this process presents opportunities for multiple intervention points for Tingim Laip volunteers and field staff that may target: clients of sex workers (MMM); women engaged in sex work; associated gatekeepers; and relevant stakeholders. Further, the timing of these interventions can be done at key stages of the process: contact establishment; negotiation; socialising before transactional sex; transactional sex; after transactional sex. This section describes the network of connected settings in which there is increased risk of HIV transmission, and in which HIV makes a greater impact.

The Tingim Laip Milne Bay Environment centres on the highly mobile population moving into and out of Alotau, as well as a smaller group of mobile men associated with the oil palm industry.

The population of Milne Bay Province experiences a very high level of mobility. People regularly travel through Awaiaama on the north east coast (close to the Oro border) from the Trobriand, Goodenough and West Ferguson Islands, as well as from inland Rabaraba and even Tufi in Oro. From East Ferguson, Normanby, Misima and again the Trobriand islands they pass through East Cape, and from Central Province they transit Mariawatte on the south west coast. From within the Milne Bay area – the Bay itself, not the Province – they access Alotau. In Alotau people often stay with family or wantoks for a few days to do their business.



**Map of Alotau coastline and environment of risk**

Alotau stretches along the north coast of Milne Bay. The main market is located at the western end of town, and the main wharf is located at the eastern end of town. The town stretches back from the

coast and up several hills. Five Alotau compounds (settlements) are known for their risky behaviour, in particular in association with transactional sex:

- Kitava, Niugini and Rabis compounds in bottom town away from the coast and on the western end of town
- Baua and Duau compounds, closer to the coast and on the eastern end of town

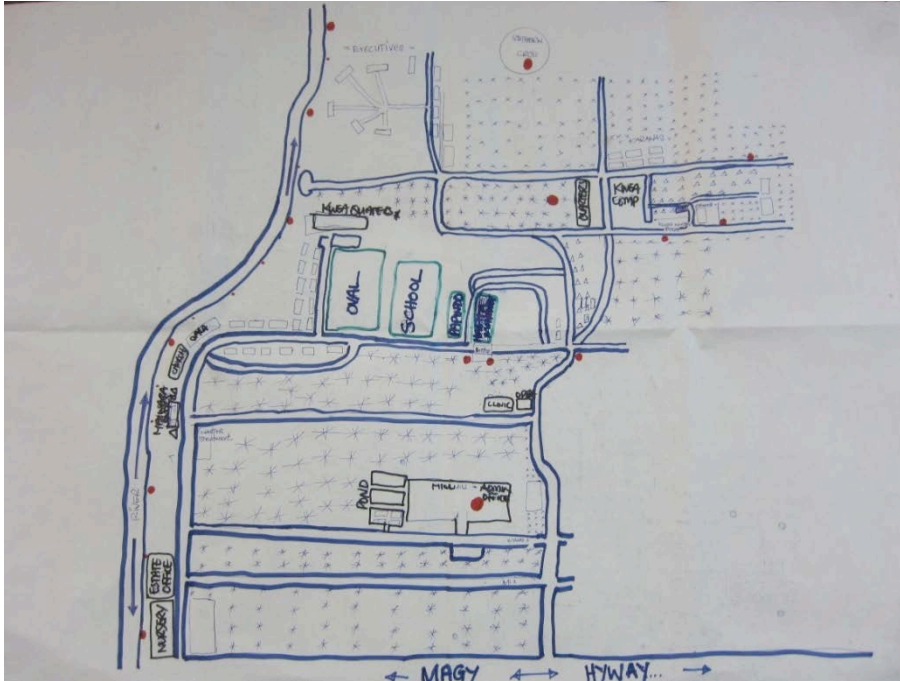
Many women who regularly exchange sex are known to reside in these compounds. Residents of these compounds are generally mixed with lots of intermarriage occurring in recent years. There is an unofficial division of territory where by the two larger groupings of women who exchange sex. Taxi drivers are familiar with these compounds and drive in to pick up women for clients.

Other locations that are commonly known for transactional sex are:

- Beach at Cameron Club (close to the main market): Dinghies regularly travel across Milne Bay from outer islands, Suau and Samarai coast and use the wharf here. These are generally marketers who stay for up to a week in their dinghy/houseboats. They negotiate sex in the Cameron Club and have sex on the beach. Alotau residents (workers, government workers) will also bring WES from compounds to the Cameron Club or weekend dances at the Alotau International Hotel.
- The Jetty (located between Alotau International Hotel and the Memorial) – similar to Cameron Club beach
- Sanderson Bay: Identified during the micro-mapping as the 24 hour market located close to the domestic wharf selling buai, smokes, store goods, drinks and food. While sexual activities have shifted to a new location, there is still a regular presence of women who exchange sex (13- 25 years) – mostly from Duau compound. Boat crew and captains, taxi drivers, local travelers come here to negotiate for sex.
- Informal Sector Market: This is a new market house, built by the local level government to house men and women who are engaged in informal businesses, mainly with artefacts and handicrafts. It is a meeting place where women who exchange sex (13- 25 years) from within Alotau hang out.
- Soccer Oval: As the informal sector - especially people who sell store goods at Sanderson Bay and the Main Market - are being displaced by the LLG, these people have moved to the Soccer Oval to do their business. The Oval now has market stalls that sell store goods such as biscuits, noodles, rice, cigarettes and flex cards, as well as cooked foods such as sausage, lamb flaps, banana, and buai. It has now become a 24-hour market and WES from Kitava, Niugini and KB hang out at the market. Travellers, contractors, NBPOL drivers, taxi drivers go there to negotiate sex and pick up WES.
- Kona House (next to Bosmei and Kapiak): This is a private family house in which the daughters and extended female family members are pimped out for sex to clients
- Beto Guesthouse – clients can negotiate for sex at the Umbrella Market and book rooms at the guesthouse. Women from Duau, Niugini and Kitava compounds often come to this guest house
- Government Hostel: K40 night and relaxed security – men can bring women into the rooms. Women from Duau, Niugini and Kitava compounds often come to this guest house.
- LLG Transit House: this is a gated compound and is closed at 10pm. Between 6am and 10pm this is commonly used as a place to meet and connect with people and take them into boats.
- Memorial (located between the Jetty and the transit house): popular spot where young girls hang out to pick up clients.

Previously, TL has focussed its interventions in Milne Bay around the oil palm industry. TL's Social Mapping as well as the micro-mapping were not able to report decidedly elevated risk for all populations in this particular environment.

Hagita Estate – main administrative centre for NBPOL in Alotau is located 26km (30 – 40min drive from Alotau).



**Map of Hagita Estate**

The majority of Estate workers live in residential compounds provided by NBPOL. These are commonly overcrowded and rundown, affording very little privacy for couples. There are many reports of 'sex under the palms' or by the river, but it is not certain if these are transactional encounters, or sexual encounters with one or two regular partners.

Regular transport does happen among the Estates and this is an opportunity for men to engage in transactional sex. This is reported to happen, but it is not certain how often men travel and to what level of risk they are exposed. It is thought that the workers who regularly travel between the Estates collecting fruit and transporting it to the mill at Hagita Estate would have the most opportunities and be exposed to the most risk.

This environment is different to that seen in other locations, most likely due to the significantly lower number of small holders in the area. There is not as much opportunity to manipulate the system. Without ready access to cash bribes – as reported in the Oro estates – little evidence of sex work as such was found.

Milne Bay is in the process of establishing its Provincial Health Authority. ART is available in Alotau, Misima and Losuia and VCT is available in many locations through both provincial and church (United or Catholic) services. Current PAC leadership is weak and there are few connections with networks and other stakeholders in the province. The PAC has slowly lost its presence in the province and currently does very little.

Condoms are available for sale in shops and are offered free through clinics but otherwise are not very visible.

## Key Populations

TL has identified the following key populations to work with in the Milne Bay Environment.

- WES: Especially young women and girls and single mothers (13 – 24 years) who exchange sex on a regular basis. The primary focus would be on those women residing in identified compounds.
- Taxi Drivers: town based taxi drivers act as pimps but also have cash and engage in transactional sex with women from the identified compounds. There are approximately 15 to 20 taxis in Alotau – most of these are independently owned, with only a small number of fleets (Wagga Taxi, CSL, Bolbol)
- Truck Drivers: Estate-based as well as contractors, have money and look for clients. They might have 2 or 3 women in the vehicle to join the on the rounds and drive between Estates to collect fruit and bring to the Mill at Hagita
- Security – NBPOL/ Town (guesthouse/ main business houses): shift work and have money – can be gatekeepers as well as clients
- Dinghy Operators, Boat Operators and crews: at least 50 boats / day travel to Alotau. Boat crews will stay in town for 2 or 3 days at the domestic wharf in Sanderson Bay. They negotiate with women from the Transit House or Umbrella markets. (Here, a dinghy means a small craft with an outboard motor, while a boat is a larger craft with an inboard motor and cabin.)
- PLHIV: Igat Hope Milne Bay group is not functioning and has more or less shut down. Many town-based PLHIV have joined Buyeta – an independent FSW group (that separated from FF) which has broadened its network to include MSM and PLHIV, to a degree filling the void left by Igat Hope Milne Bay.

## Gatekeepers

TL uses “gatekeepers” to mean *people who control or affect access to sexual networks*. In Milne Bay, as elsewhere, some gatekeepers are also members of key populations - police, security guards and street-based buai sellers as well as staff at clubs, bars, guest houses and hotels.

TL has identified the following as gatekeepers in the Milne Bay Environment:

- Taxi Drivers: act as pimps and have lists of mobile phone numbers of young girls. They will drive clients to the areas of town where they can find the girls. In some situations clients will pay taxi drivers to make the connection.
- Security Guards: shift workers – work long hours. They know people moving in and out of guest houses and have lists of mobile phone numbers of young girls and can approach clients to see if they would like something arranged.
- Peers of WES/ FSW (Mummy bos): peer networks to establish contact with clients, work through networks
- Hotel and guesthouse staff: As per security guards

## Stakeholders/ Service Providers

TL uses “stakeholders” to mean *any individual, agency or organisation with interest in a specific HIV intervention.*

	Name	Works with	Provides	Opportunities
<b>Stakeholders</b>				
1	<i>Milne Bay PAC.</i>	Overall HIV Response Coordination in the Province (not active enough at current)  Condoms supply, meeting room,  Igat Hope Milne Bay office	General Population	Maintain good relations Keep informed on TL’s plans
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Works with</b>	<b>Provides</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
2	<i>Buyeta</i>	Provides support & advocacy	Province-wide network of PLHIV, sex workers and men who have sex with other men	TL support Buyeta in working with its members
3	<i>Igat Hope Milne Bay</i>	Dysfunctional body formerly made up of PHLIV and non-HIV+ supporters; housed in PAC office	PLHIVs	TL supports Igat Hope Milne Bay to work with its members, develop capacity and stronger links to Igat Hope
4	NBPOL	Oil Palm Company	Gen Pop	Partnership, sustainability strategy for employees
<b>Service Providers</b>				
5	<i>Hagu (“Help”) Clinic, Alotau General Hospital</i>	Confirmatory testing, ART, STI & VCT; Clinic HEO is also the Province’s Disease Control Officer	Alotau residents and getting referrals from outer Health Centres and Clinics General Population	Continue working with the clinic Strengthen referral network TL to sensitise clinic staff on working with KAPs
6	<i>Star of Hope VCCT Services.</i>	STI testing & treatment overnight accommodation for PLHIV  VCCT  Mobile VCCT	General Population Mobile VCT targeting schools	Strengthening referral network Collaboration with TL in the mobile VCCT program
7	<i>Milne Bay Counselling Services.</i>	General counselling, trauma counselling, paralegal services; one senior counsellor in Alotau, network of volunteer counsellors in islands; no outreach, responds to people seeking the service; <i>Brot für die Welt</i> funding	Counsellors based in wards to respond to victims of violence  General Population	TL refer FSVAC victims and others TL to receive some support from them for their expertise in dealing with violence cases

	Name	Works with	Provides	Opportunities
8	Hagita Clinic, NBPOL	VCT, STI testing & treatment General health screening	company employees & dependents, and residents of surrounding villages	Maintain good relations with the clinic Referral to STI & VCT services
9	Kedu Safe House	Refuge for victims of violence; has some history of discriminating against PLHIV and MSM	Victims of violence	TL to sensitise on working with KAPs

## TL Workforce and Structure

Based on the target populations and the types of interventions, The TL workforce in Milne Bay is as follows:

- Independent Volunteers**
  - 6 NBPOL Field workers, drivers and security – employees of the company and company allows them to do this as part of their work – volunteers to do awareness and referrals during muster points, breaks, lunches targetting truck drivers and security guards
- Volunteer committee.**
  - WES: Kitava, Niugini, Rabis, Baua Compounds
- Field Officers.** TL will support the placement of up to five Field Officers in Milne Bay
  - FO Counselling: working with PLHIV – ART Adherence support and living with HIV support at Estate and Buyeta – strengthening referral pathway
  - FO Counselling (KAP): Act as counterpart to FO Counselling
  - FO WES: Help to establish WES volunteer committee
  - FO MMM: Targeting taxi drivers, dinghy operators and other clients
  - FO Buyeta: WES, MSM, PLHIV – members who are gathering – strengthen to eventually link with FF, KC and IH
- Condom distributors.** Increase visibility and availability of condoms:
  - Alotau – 8 locations: Main market, 2 x Sanderson Bay, Eliata Market, Kitava Compound, Works Department at Red Hill/police barracks, steps opposite Anglican church, Garuboi Street
  - Hagita – 3 locations: Hagita Market, Kwea Market, Gumini Market