

# Oro Environment

## Oro Province

### Last update: December 14



#### Popondetta, Oro Province

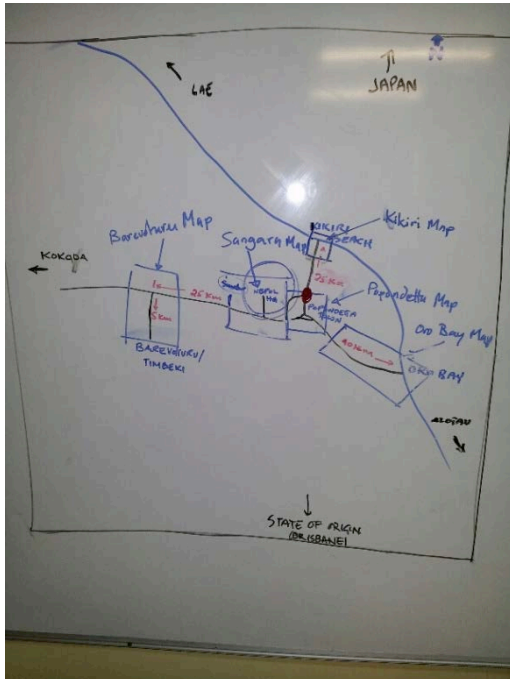
Oro Province is located on the southeastern coast of Papua New Guinea, between Morobe and Milne Bay provinces. It shares inland borders with Central and Highlands provinces. It is most commonly known as the end of the Kokoda trail and receives hundreds of trekkers each year. Popondetta is the capital of Oro and, according to the PNG Census (2011), has a population of approximately 176,000. A highway of over 300 kilometres connects Oro Bay, Popondetta and Kokoda. Oro is linked to other provinces by air and by sea. Oro Bay, located 45 kilometres from Popondetta, has a harbour for ships transporting cargo and supplies including palm oil. Kokoda District is a high altitude region in Oro where locals grow cold weather vegetables sold in Popondetta markets. The Province produces cocoa, coffee, rubber and palm oil, with buai (betel nut) also grown year round.

Cyclone Guba devastated Oro in 2007 and destroyed most of the Province's main bridges. Poor quality reconstruction has resulted in continued accessibility challenges. In November 2011, three bridges collapsed during flooding, leaving Popondetta isolated and unable to access food, medical supplies and other essential items for significant periods. One major bridge at Girua River has still not been replaced, continuing this isolation when the water level is high. Services are generally poor and are continuing to deteriorate. The Summer Institute for Languages (SIL) estimates that 71.2% of the population is illiterate. It is estimated that approximately 50% of the population access services by foot.

The majority of the population is dependent on subsistence farming for food and gains access to cash through betel nut trade and the oil palm industry. The formal oil palm industry dominates the province – employment, land use, service provision and the economy. Previously, people were given a 6-hectare block of land covered by oil palm. Each block has approximately 480 trees which are cut every 10 days during the April – June peak harvest months (less frequently during off-peak months) when 5-6 tons of oil palm fruit is produced from each block, earning approximately K162/ton on the current global market. Over the years, block owners' families have grown and blocks have been subdivided amongst children and their families. New Britain Palm Oil Limited (NBPOL) employs 5,000 people while an additional 7,000 block holders and their families sell their product to the company. The company and the palm oil industry support an estimated 2/3 of the province's population directly or indirectly.

The informal betel nut industry supplies betel nut to Morobe and the Highlands provinces. This is also a significant source of income for the province's population.

Socially, the increase in cash income is thought to have had an impact on local cultures, with more inter-marriages between people from different parts of the province as well as inter-province marriages. Polygamy is thought to be increasing and reports of family and sexual violence are increasing. The majority of the population is Christian with a strong following in the Anglican church. There is also strong adherence to customary beliefs; so-called “black magic”, animism and cargo cults. This has implications for local understanding of HIV, how HIV is transmitted and for people living with HIV if illness is interpreted as caused by sorcery.



**Map 1: Overview of Popondetta and surrounding areas**

Popondetta is located 30km from Kikiri Beach to the north and 44km from Oro Bay to the southeast. It is 10km from Higaturu Oil Palm Estate and 40km from the turn off to the Borevoturu and Timbeki villages. Kokoda base is 76km from Popondetta town.

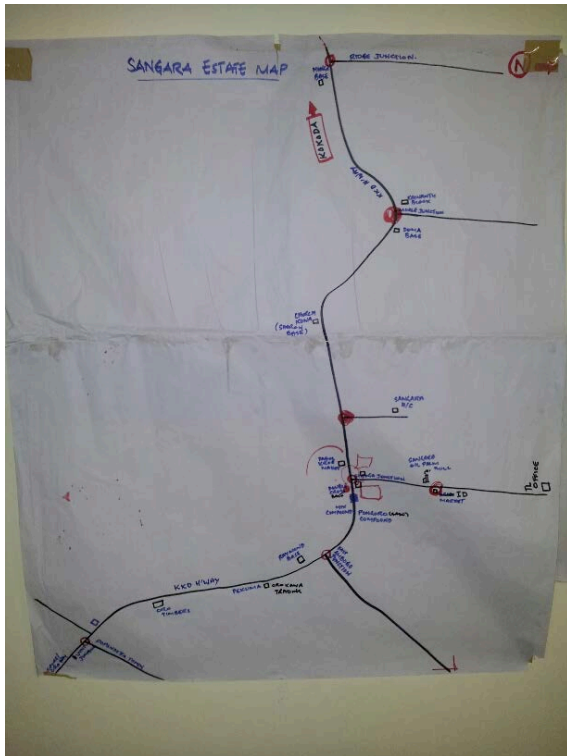
## Environment of Risk

Through its micromapping, TL found that a lot of transactional sex takes place in Oro. Sex work is not clearly defined but is clearly present and is common: when asked how many of her Popondetta peers are engaged in sex work, a 16-year-old schoolgirl estimated 4 out of 10. Most women appear to have no power to negotiate for money or for goods. The majority of transactional sex was found to be associated with the formal oil palm industry and the informal betel nut industry. These two environments are presented in greater detail below.

### Palm Oil Industry

The Palm Oil industry has a significant presence in Oro Province and dominates landscape, economics, service provision and social welfare of the population. New Britain Palm Oil

Limited maintains major roads, and provides local health facilities and is reported to – in some ways – act as the government.



**Map 2: Sangara Estate**

Sangara Estate is home to NBPOL administrative and operational headquarters in Oro Province. It is located 20 km from Popondetta town along the Popondetta-Kokoda highway. The highway is lined with oil palm plantations. NBPOL employs drivers (directly and through contracts with the USG trucking company) to travel the road and throughout the estates to collect and weigh oil palm and transport it to the Sangara Mill for processing.

There are several large weigh points located at highway junctions throughout the estate. Leading away from town, these are: East Ambogo, Sirogo, Sangara, Moale and Rioke Junctions (indicated by red circles on Map 2). At each junction, small markets have been established that sell beer, fuel, food and other goods. Oil palm collectors (called “tango drivers”), security guards and oil palm workers gather around these locations to socialise, rest and to negotiate for sex.

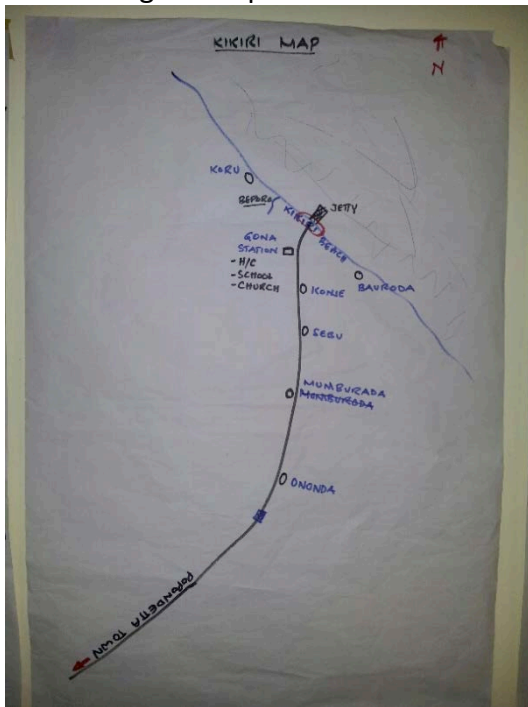
Tango drivers work 24 hours a day. Tango drivers often work in teams of two – the driver and one ‘crew’. It is common for both NBPOL and USG truck drivers and crew to pick up women at the start of their shift (6 – 7pm), to travel with them all night – the women are the ‘meri blo car’ [‘the car’s woman’]. The women keep the men company throughout the evening and have sex with them at stop points and junctions. Many of these are organised

by mobile phone contacts and are part of existing networks. While some women join the drivers in exchange for little more than beer and food, others can earn up to K200 a night.

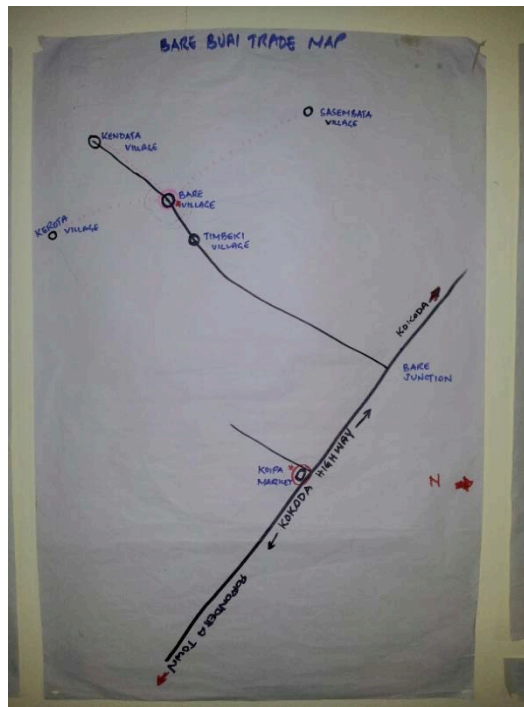
Fortnightly payments are made to local shareholders (small holders) on Thursdays and Fridays each week, so there is a high level of cash present at those times. Pay days are large movement days for people in and out of Popondetta. People travel to town to collect their money and do their shopping and then travel back to their homes. There are less than twenty PMV buses in the province, so large numbers of people regularly travel together. People returning home regularly stop at highway junction night-markets to buy beer, fuel, cooked food, to socialise and to have sex.

### Oro Buai Trade

The Oro buai trade has exploded in the last 5 – 10 years. Each day approximately 50 dinghies travel from Lae to Kikiri Beach in Oro Province, carrying buai traders from Morobe and the Highlands provinces.



Map 3: Kikiri Map



Map 4: Bare Buai Map

Kikiri beach at Gona Station, located 30km due north from Popondetta town is the major landing point for dinghies. Along the road to town are the Gona Health Centre, school and church as well as other small villages (Reporo, Koro, Bauroda) where (mostly Morobe-based) dinghy operators, crew and traders overnight. A typical dinghy will carry approximately three crew and two traders for the 6 hour journey. Dinghy operators and crew stay near the beach to watch over their boat, while buai traders travel to Popondetta or Barevoturu village (Bare) to negotiate for buai. A 20kg bag of buai that is purchased for K50 in Oro is sold for K350 in Lae and up to K600 in the Highlands. Each dinghy will return with approximately 40

x 20kg bags and after deducting costs of boat hire (approximately K3,500), each buyer can profit approximately K8,500-K18,500 per journey, depending upon where the buai is sold.

Following the highway approximately 25km outside of town is Bare Junction and the road to Timbeki, Bare and Kendata villages near the base of Mt. Lamington. Kerota and Sasembata villages can be reached from these villages on foot. Buai flows through these villages into the main village of Bare.

There are two distinct patterns of trade: Morobe traders tend to purchase their buai in the Popondetta main market, then travel back to Kikiri beach to return to Morobe the next day. A Morobe trader will do this up to three times a week. They overnight in villages along Kikiri beach near Gona Station or along the road between Popondetta and the beach. Many of these villages sell beer and sex can easily be negotiated with village women. Gona Station Health Centre reports high levels of STIs amongst its clientele, many of whom are associated with the Morobe buai trade.

Highlands traders develop longstanding connections with Bare villages and will travel directly to Bare to negotiate their buai purchase. Regular customers might stay in Bare for a few nights and take up local girlfriends. They will send Bare youth to collect buai from neighbouring villages and spend their evenings partying and having sex with young women in Bare and surrounding villages.

Highlanders who are newer to the trade stay at SBS compound in Popondetta (commonly known as a Highlanders' area) and move during the day through their networks to establish longer term connections.

There are a number of associated informal 'industries' that have grown to support the buai trade: young people walk from Bare to surrounding villages to carry buai back to the buai traders and PMV drivers regularly transport buai traders between Kikiri beach and Bare village.

The buai trade generates a lot of money, and Bare has benefited from this industry, with almost every household owning a vehicle. They offer a very well organised business, with buai bags packed and coded according to the destination.

The Buai Trade is a seasonal industry, with March to October being the peak months for trade. This is when there is a high influx of buai traders traveling in and out of the province. The seasonal nature of the trade influences associated industries (sex, beer sales, guesthouse businesses).



male clients. Women are local women – 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> generation on small block holders or work for the estate. Many school age women are reported to be engaged in sex work (a rough estimate was given as about 1 in 5), with most women engaged in sex work aged between 15 and 25 years. Other women engaged in sex work include single mothers – women who are married but their husband has left them or they are single women with children; and, married women – “loose fruit” mamas – women who collect loose oil palm that has fallen on the ground, then negotiate with tango drivers/ fruit weighers to inflate fruit weights in exchange for sex. The women receive inflated dividends from the company.

- Mobile men with money (clients of women engaged in sex)
  - Tango/USG drivers
  - Buai traders – captive audience in Bare, Kikiri
  - Securities (hotels, guest houses, company)
  - Other company workers mills, supervisors
  - Dinghy operators and crew
  - Businessmen in town and other men with money (blockholders, policemen, ship crews, sawmill workers, civil servants)

#### **PLHIV**

- Hondate is the local support network for people living with HIV. It is registered with Igat Hope and was previously supported by Anglicare

#### **Gatekeepers**

TL uses “gatekeepers” to mean *people who control or affect access to sexual networks*. In Oro, 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 Oro Environment:

- Security Guards – hotel, guest house, club house security guards act as middlemen, connecting guests to local women, mostly from the nearby settlements/villages. Quick response unit security guards associated with oil palm regularly negotiate for women to travel with them in their vehicle while on patrol.
- Young boys in the village/oil palm blocks – live in garden house – negotiate with women on behalf of traders/middlemen for tango truck drivers to get beer and/ or women

#### **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	Anglicare	General population in 5 LLGs; PLHIV	Leadership Adult Literacy	Literacy training to TL identified KAP Coordination and collaboration
2	NBPOL	Employs general population	10 health facilities throughout estate; STI and VCT services In-house training all NBPOL staff on basic HIV, health and safety	Referrals Collaboration and Coordination
3	Hondate	PLHIV support network	Leadership and support Outreach Monthly PLHIV meetings	Collaboration and Coordination Support development of outreach program
4	Oro PAC	General population in Oro Province	Coordinate Provincial Response	Partnership and coordination
	OPIC	Small holder and village oil palm management	Technical advice to growers	Coordination and collaboration Seek opportunities for interventions
	USG	Trucking company contracted by NBPOL		Coordination and collaboration Seek opportunities for interventions
<b>Service Providers</b>				
5	Siroga NBPOL Clinic (Sangara Estate)	General population in OP Estate and nearby communities	STI testing and treatment VCT/ PICT; ART prescriber OI treatment Referrals to other services	TL referrals for STI, VCT, HIV services TL provide sensitivity training Clinic provides trainings for TL / mobile VCT
6	Gona Health Centre (Gona Village)	General population	STI testing and treatment; antenatal clinic; referrals to other services	Referrals Collaboration and coordination TL provide sensitivity training
7	Popondetta General Hospital	General population	STI testing and treatment ART prescriber; working CD4 counter Referrals to other services	Referrals Sensitivity training Coordination and collaboration
8	Sangara Health Centre	General population in Sangara and Higaturu catchments	STI services Antenatal clinic Referrals	Referrals Sensitivity training Coordination and collaboration
9	St. Maragret's Church – Anglican Church	General population	STI and VCT services Antenatal clinics Mobile clinics	Referrals Coordination and collaboration



			Referrals to other services	Sensitivity training
10	Oro Division of Health	General population		Coordination and partnership
11	FSVAC (DCD)	General population	Training GBV Counselling Court orders and legal process Advice on legal processes	Partnership Coordination Referrals KAP Sensitization

## TL Workforce and Structure

Based on the target populations and environment of risk TL workforce in Oro will be as follows:

- **Volunteer committee.**
  - 2 women engaged in sex work groups: Sangara Estate (East Ambogo-Sangara-Sirogo) and Town
  - PLHIV Group – Hondate (based in Popondetta but with Province-wide members)
- **Field Officers.**
  - Field Officer: buai traders/ dinghy operators include condom umbrella monitoring in Kikiri area
  - Field Officer: Buai Traders – Bare, Timbeki, Kiorota villagers
  - Field Officer: tango drivers/ USG/ security – attached to companies; include condom umbrella monitoring
  - Field Officer: women engaged in sex work
- **Structural Interventions:**
  - NBPOL – Workplace Safety Officer for the company who also provides training in HIV and STIs (45-minute sessions done on a regular basis) for company employees – TL will strengthen and support this, with a focus on truck drivers, and strengthening content and messaging; supporting implementation of NBPOL company policy; condom supplies; clinical services
  - USG – TL will explore possible partnership with USG so that a similar intervention (to NBPOL) can be established with employees
- **Condom distribution points.** Increase visibility and availability of condoms:
  - Guba Market
  - Town Market
  - USG Head quarters
  - ID Market in Sangara Estate (so-called because supposedly only people with company ID are allowed in)
  - Double Cross Market
  - Moale Junction
  - Sangara Junction
  - Sumbiripa Estate (before Bare turn off)

- Jawuni Estate
- Irigi and Epa Estate
- Kikiri
- Gona Station
- Bepopo Guest house on Kikiri Beach

□ ***Individual Volunteers***

- Muster points – before workers moving out into the fields – part of company workforce – securities and drivers

