

Kokoda Initiative

In Papua New Guinea, 97% of land is owned and managed by customary landowners whose land rights are enshrined in the Constitution and organic laws.

Successful protected area management can only be achieved through strong partnerships between customary landowners and governments.

The Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea is the site of fierce World War II battles between Japanese and Australian Forces. It has become a symbol of shared friendship between Australia and Papua New Guinea, and is a popular trekking destination.

The Kokoda Track passes through the Brown River Catchment, an area that the Papua New Guinea Government plans to gazette as a protected area to:

- conserve its natural and cultural values and resources (including water)
- allow for sustainable uses by local communities and landowners

The PNG and Australian governments have entered into a partnership – called the Kokoda Initiative – to support this work, protecting the special values of the area and improving the lives of people living in the region.



Australian Government

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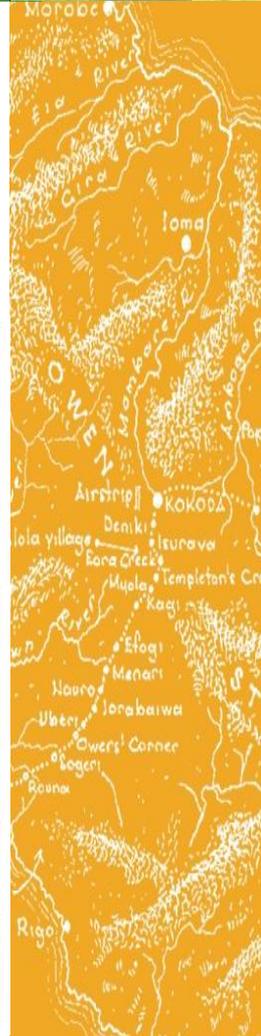
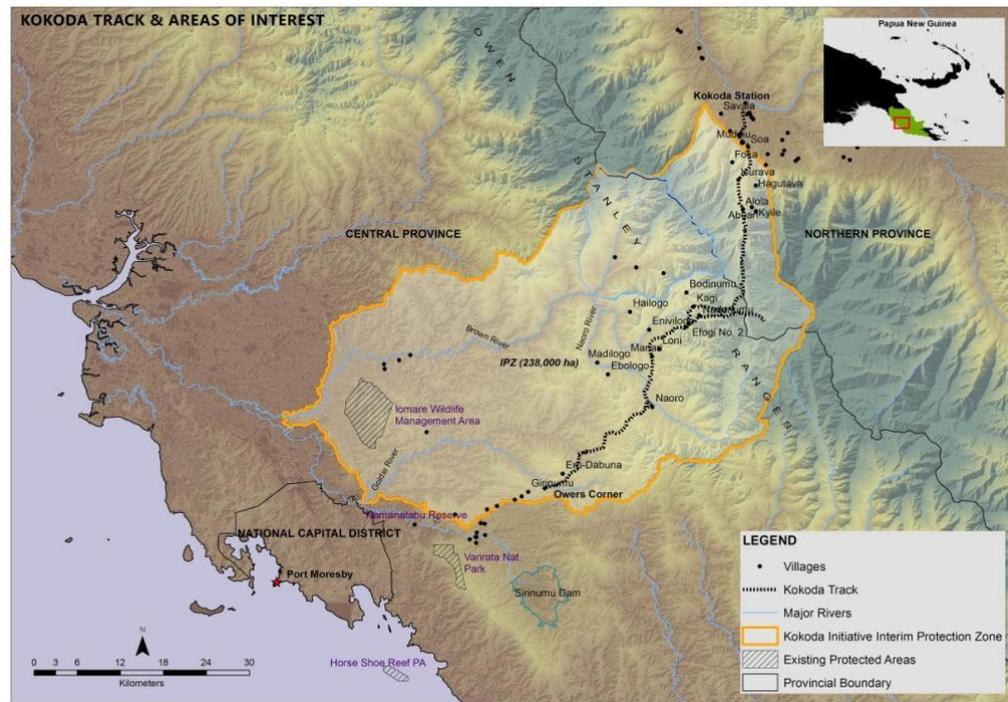


Putting a strong framework in place

The PNG Government is developing a new national protected area system which includes national sites, parks, marine sanctuaries, community conservation areas and locally managed marine areas. Under this system:

- customary landowners will be fully involved in all decisions relating to their lands and seas,
- protected areas will be managed to protect the areas' special values and enhance sustainable livelihoods of customary landowners and other community members.

The Brown River Catchment protected area (yellow outline) will be a pilot for this new community-based approach to protected area management.



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Understanding people and place

Foundational activities are underway to support gazettal of protected area management in the Kokoda region:

- **Social mapping:** mapping and recording information about relationships between people's settlement patterns, land use, land tenure and social organisation within an area by anthropologists to make sure that land use negotiations are carried out with the right people.
- **Surveys:** to identify and document the different values that will need to be managed in the new protected area, including:
 - Natural: biodiversity, water resources, geological
 - Cultural: prehistoric and historic ways of life, oral histories and historic sites associated with WWII, and documenting traditional knowledge

In the next 18 months we will:

- Identify payment-for-ecosystem models
- Prepare a Sustainable Development Master Plan for the Brown River Catchment area, using a participatory approach, that will set out how to manage conservation values and allow for development activities for customary landowners and local communities



Supporting local communities

While protected area planning is underway, the Kokoda Initiative is also supporting customary landowners and local communities, and helping to manage the Kokoda Track:

- Delivering basic services in areas of health, education, water and sanitation
- Assisting people to learn new skills, set up small businesses, and earn money
- Employing rangers to carry out Track management and manage the trekking industry
- Contracting customary landowners to carry out track maintenance work, and
- Providing funding to maintain roads, airstrips, bridges and the radio system.

Income from trekking fees is also distributed to local communities as ward payments, track maintenance fees and used for community development projects



The benefits

Through our work, we are already seeing benefits for conservation and customary landowners:

- Customary landowners and local community members participate in biodiversity, archaeological and cultural surveys, sharing their knowledge, learning new skills and gaining income
- Their work along the Kokoda Track provides a source of income and keeps the Track safe and well-managed, for both local people and trekkers
- Information is being collected on conservation values across the area which helps to inform landuse and protected area planning
- Basic services (health, education, water, sanitation) are being delivered to local communities as part of the Kokoda Initiative

Our vision is for a community-based conservation area with high national and international values, sustainably managed by customary landowners



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Strengthening land and resource rights of Indigenous people

- **Engage early:** Work closely with customary landowners, local people and local and provincial governments from the beginning.
- **Question assumptions:** What does conservation and protection mean to local people? What traditional systems for this are already in place? What motivates them to protect their land?
- **Listen closely:** What are customary landowners saying about their vision for the future?
- **Communicate often:** Keep everyone well informed and use different methods to get messages out.
- **Build partnerships:** Involve all stakeholders and build partnerships with others for funding, technical skills, training etc.
- **Support capacity development:** Build the skills and capacity of customary landowners to engage, lead, govern and manage their land, institutions and enterprises.
- **Use policy:** Recognise customary-based rights and community-based management of protected areas in legislation and policy frameworks.
- **Have a strong management plan:** Clearly describe the values to be protected, the stakeholders involved, the objectives and strategies for management, the resources required and the methods for monitoring and evaluation.



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