



**Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG & Solomon Islands
Desk for Migrants and Refugees**

WEST PAPUA



**Asylum Seekers & Refugees
Household & Livelihood Survey
2022**

Port Moresby



**A report by the CBC PNGSI Desk for Migrants
& Refugees**

**Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
2023**

West Papua Camp Locations in Port Moresby, PNG



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Acronyms

CBCPNGSI	Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and Solomon Islands
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SI	Solomon Islands
M&R	Migrants & Refugees Desk
PRP	Permissive Residency Permit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ASR	Asylum Seeker & Refugees
JSR	Jesuit Refugee Services
PNG ICA	PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority

I. Preface and Introduction

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea (PNG) & Solomon Islands (SI) Desk for Migrants and Refugees carried out the West Papua Asylum Seeker and Refugee (ASR) Household and Livelihood Survey 2022 (WP-ASR-HLS-2022), in Port Moresby as one of its major projects in 2022. The survey was conducted in 12 West Papuan camps in Port Moresby. This included Red Hills, Tete Settlement, Rainbo, Nine Mile (9Mile), Six Mile (6Mile), Waigani, Hohola 1, Seven Mile (7Mile), Gerehu State 2, Hohola 2, Manu and Badili. The survey commenced on March 08th 2022 and concluded 6 weeks later on April 20th, 2022. The survey was conducted electronically via Kobbo Toolbox and physically through paper questionnaires. The survey captured 99 heads of households, 75 of which were men and 24 women. This report is the outcome of this ASR Livelihood survey 2022.

The West Papuan refugee situation in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has been out of the radar for many years, denying it meaningful attention by responsible actors, particularly the government of PNG and UNHCR. Little is known around the world and regionally about the existence of this marginalized group of people in PNG. Little has been reported in the mainstream media and so too were advocacy efforts to bring their story to the world and those who are in the position to help them.

In the recent decade, the controversial Regional Resettlement Arrangement (RRA) between the governments of Australia and PNG not only brought PNG to regional and international discussions on refugees and refugee policies etc. but further diminished the awareness about other refugee groups in PNG, including West Papuans. CBCPNGSI Desk for Migrants & Refugees acknowledge that in order to help these refugees their stories must be told wider than it used to be, their concerns must be advocated on, and their plight must be reported to the government and other actors who care about the protection of refugees and migrants.

That is the reason why this household survey project was initiated. The survey was carried out only in Port Moresby where the second highest population of these refugees live. This report will help to inform stakeholders including the government of PNG, international NGOs, catholic-inspired organizations and other actors in the migrants and refugee sector to implement programs and strategies to improve the wellbeing and livelihoods of the West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby and PNG at large.

At this juncture, I would like to make special mention of people who have made valuable contributions towards the success of the survey and this report. Firstly, I acknowledge the intuitive and incredible work and commitment of CBCPNGSI Migrants Officer Gabriel Wake who was responsible for most of the data collection, verification and collation, which provides the basis for this report. Gabriel was assisted immensely in the field by West Papua camp leaders and volunteers Paul Kosnan, Olaf Wayangkauw, and the others. I also want to express a sincere gratitude to Caritas PNG and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New and Solomon Islands Secretariat for their general backing. I would also like to acknowledge the

Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) Australia, for providing the original questionnaire which inspired a tailored version for this survey in Port Moresby. Finally, I wish to thank all the families and individuals who have participated in this survey and supported its motive.

The findings, interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of CBCPNGSI. All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the data referred to in this report, including through data verification. We regret, however, any data errors that may remain. Unless otherwise stated, this report does not refer to data or events after April 20th, 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Siwat', enclosed within a faint, light-colored oval shape.

Jason Siwat, Mr.

Director, CBCPNGSI Desk for Migrants & Refugees

30TH January 2023, Port Moresby, PNG

II. Background

The West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby live in one of the most unhygienic and destitute conditions that you can find anywhere in Oceania and the Pacific that host refugees. Imagine 21 families consisting of both young and old all using a single toilet, using one tap for doing dishes, laundry and taking shower, and sheltering under two old houses joined to each other by makeshift materials. If this is the kind of condition that raises your eyebrows, you should be interested to understand better the living conditions of the West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby.

Apart from Australia and New Zealand who are known for their refugee policies and how their government is dealing with refugees and asylum seekers, Papua New Guinea hosts close to about 15000 refugees and asylum seekers, majority of whom are from the West Papua region, formerly called Irian Jaya. In 2015, the PNG Immigration estimated that there were 10000 West Papuan refugees living in PNG¹. However, this figure is believed to be lower than what the exact population was, because seven years earlier the World Refugee Survey 2008, reported that there were about 10 000 West Papuan refugees living in PNG. That was almost 15 years ago. Given the population growth rate in the last decade in PNG, the population of the West Papuan refugees could be even higher if a census was carried out. The West Papuans began arriving in the 1960s after Indonesia gained control of the region, with the largest number entering between 1984 and 1986.²

In Port Moresby, where this survey was conducted, there are about 200 West Papuan families living in nine informal camps scattered across the city. Majority of them are squatting in informal settlements and have no proper land or property titles. Basic amenities such as water, sanitation, electricity, and even a decent home remains out of reach for the bulk of these refugees and their families. Education and employment among these refugees are one of the lowest in the country.

The situation of the West Papuan refugees is also undermined by a number of serious challenges, including lack of meaningful livelihood opportunities, lack of identity documentation and lack of appropriate government interventions.

III. Land and Housing

None of the places currently occupied by the West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby is established by the government through formal integration process. The PNG government has no direct involvement in where and how these people are settled, let alone supported to live in Port Moresby. What this means is that West Papuan refugees have to use other channels to get access to a piece of land to build their homes. The closest if at all the government went so far was in 2008 when they identified a piece of waste land at Rainbow, to temporarily settle about 400 refugees who have been evicted from Eight-Mile³ . One of the camp leaders recounted the

¹ PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority, <https://ica.gov.pg/refugees/facts-and-figures-about-refugees-in-png>

² U.S Committee for Refugees & Migrants, 19 June 2008, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/485f50cbc.html>,

³ Ibid.

traumatic experience that him and his family had been subjected to as refugees in PNG.

The Rainbow camp is situated on a small pocket of waste land, cramped in between three private properties and right in the pathway of water runoffs from the city. The refugees who now call this once squalid piece of land their home was allowed to live there after they have been evicted 5 times consecutively from different locations between 2007 and 2008. Initially, when they were moved to the current location, they were given some basic building materials by UNHCR to build themselves basic dwelling structures. Most of what they now live in are built from makeshift and patchwork materials, including cardboards, canvas, car wrecks and basically whatever they could convert into some form of shelter. What was initially planned to be an interim arrangement has now become a home for these refugees for over 15 years. Rainbow is the biggest camp by comparison to the others in terms of population consisting of 59 families, according to our records.

Waigani and Hohola 1 camps were properties held in trust by certain individual West Papuans who came in the 1960s. Over time, as the population grew the properties were converted into informal refugee camps hosting more than 20 families respectively. Similar to Rainbow, there is no government involvement in improving the conditions of these camps to this date. Apart from these three main camps, the others are established among illegal settlements in Port Moresby by the refugees themselves. These camps are facing threats of evictions as the city expands. For these refugees, there is no security over the land upon which they are squatting.

Despite a National Executive Council decision of 2014 Decision No 326/2014 directing provincial governments to allocate land to West Papuans who were given PNG citizenship, nothing concrete has transpired so far in this regard.⁴ In 2016, several media outlets reported that West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby have been allocated about 10 hectares of land at Red Hills, Gerehu, through what appeared to be an initiative of the West Papuan leaders and supported by city Governor Hon. Powes Parkop.⁵ Six years on and there is not much progress done to fully acquire the land and commence resettlement for these refugees. At the time of this survey, the refugees were still waiting for land verification process and issuance of titles.

It is important to mention here that at the time of writing this report, Hohola 1 camp leaders has gone to the National Court of PNG to prevent an eviction order being carried out on their property. The Migrants & Refugee Desk is supporting these refugees with legal aid support and have engaged Albatross Law, to fight for the refugees to retain tittle of a small piece of land that provides vital sanctuary for 21 families. At the latest directions hearing in December 2022, the presiding judge ordered for a full trial to be heard in 2023.

⁴ PNG National Executive Council, Decision No: 326/2014 Registration and Naturalization of West Papuans

⁵ West Papuan Refugees Set for Resettlement, *The National*, July 2016.

In Waigani Camp there is also another ongoing court case in the National Court to prevent yet another eviction to take place. The matter was heard in September 2022, and a decision is pending. According to the camp leaders they believe the decision will not be favorable for them. Many of the families there have already started exploring places they could relocate to, should they lose their property. Most of them will end up at Red Hills, and other squatter settlements.

Meanwhile, at Rainbow camp, demolition notice has been served on the refugees in 2016, a forceful eviction was almost carried out. Fortunately, the city Governor had to intervene to stop it. Despite having been reported in the media, and attracting support from certain parliamentarians, there was no follow-up intervention by any government authority to have these refugees properly relocated and resettled. On 1st January 2023, eleven families at the Waigani camp had to be forcefully moved to Red Hills, after their houses were destroyed by local youths. The high level of uncertainty and lack of secure tenureship over where they live causes a lot of stress for the families. According to the survey, all participants in these three camps believe that there is a very high risk of them facing either demolition or eviction in the near future.

Furthermore, the adequacy of housing in these camps is also a serious problem. Most households are comprised of extended families. Given the difficulties in obtaining land and sourcing building materials it is common to find large extended families living together under a single household. For instance, in Rainbow camp, almost all of the household reported to be accommodating people other than their own dependents, such as their in-laws, other relatives, unrelated children and adults, and friends. At Hohola 1, there are 21 families living together in two houses, connected by makeshifts and partitions.

The research further attempted to understand how the state of their homes have an impact on their wellbeing. 32% of the respondents say they feel miserable, anxious, or depressed living in their homes. Additionally, among other impacts, 14% responded that their housing conditions brought on new health problems, while 13% replied that their housing condition has made an existing health problem become worse. There is also a serious lack of privacy among the households. In Hohola for instance, sleeping spaces for each family are divided by curtains. Some people use cardboards placed on the ground for sleeping at night.



Figure 1: Photo showing the bed and living area of some of the refugee families being inundated with rain and flood waters.

Furthermore, safety and security of the refugees are always at stake because illegal and irregular dwellings are a high-risk place to live in, in PNG. For refugee women and girls there is constant risk of harassment, intimidation, assault and violence, or even serious crimes like rape. Elderly people and young children fall victims to thugs and pickpockets on their way to the camps from stores or marketplaces. There is also no proper fencing around these camps to protect them from potential attacks from outsiders. With the makeshift homes, security and safety of the children and women is constantly at stake. On top of that, there is also limited lighting in the nights for all the houses. This is a huge risk for women and girls at night when going out of the house to use the pit toilets or to take a shower.

Natural disasters are also inevitable. Rainbow and Waigani camps are particularly prone to flooding during wet season as both camps are situated next to huge city drains. During heavy rains, the drains overflow into the camps. Many of the refugees are concerned about the risk of their children being washed away by the floods. These findings clearly portray the type and standard of living conditions the West Papuan refugees had to put up with for more than three decades. On 30th January 2023, the M&R Desk assisted with transport cost to evacuate two families from Waigani to Red Hills after floodwaters destroyed parts of their homes and posed serious danger for their children.



Figure 2: Photo showing a house belonging to a West Papuan refugee in Port Moresby

IV. Health, Hygiene & Nutrition

Water, health, hygiene, and sanitation remain poor among all the refugee camps. The likelihood of an outbreak of waterborne and airborne diseases is a constant concern, but over time this has become an accepted reality that the refugees live with, no matter how bad the situation is. Let us look at the case of the Hohola 1 camp as an example. During a physical tour of the camp, we found out that there are 21 families sharing one and the same water tap for doing laundry, washing dishes, and shower; and there is only one rest room for all the families to use. Despite the growing population they cannot expand their property or develop new ones. Most of the families use the same spot for cooking, eating their meals and sleeping at night. There is nothing like a separate kitchen, dining room, and bedrooms as we know to be the minimum standard for a decent home. Children often get sick from exposure to cold at night or from mosquito bites due to the open type of dwelling. Most of them do not have mosquito nets to protect them at night while sleeping. When it rains, water runoffs flow into their yard and through their bedspaces and fireplaces forcing them to use buckets and containers to keep the water out.



Figure 3: Photos showing the only water tap that is used by 21 families for cooking, laundry, shower, and doing dishes. Hohola 1, informal refugee camp.

Water is essential to life, health and dignity and access to it is a basic human right. All refugees should have assured access to adequate water of good quality, to sanitation facilities, and hygiene promotion practices⁶. To apply this in the context of these refugees is going to be a mismatch. Water shortage and lack of good quality water are a common problem in West Papua refugee camps. While camps like Rainbow, Hohola 1 and Waigani had to contribute to pay for the water bills every month, other smaller camps like Tete and Red Hills have to pay fifty toea (AU\$0.21) to fetch a bucket of water. Port Moresby is known for experiencing dry seasons, which have drastic consequences on people like the refugees who live at the peripheries of the city without proper water supply. It costs three hundred Kina (AU\$123) to refill a 5000 liters water tank during dry seasons, which can barely last for one week if used for cooking and drinking. Most times when they could not afford to pay for the water, some of them have to walk for 20 minutes to Rainbow camp, which is the nearest camp to fetch water. Some refugees at Red Hills would even take the risk to illegally fetch water at the University of Papua New Guinea campus which is about two kilometers of walk away from the camp. The lack of water supply presents great challenges for women and children, not only because they need water to wash and maintain their hygiene, but because they are mostly the ones who walk the distances

⁶ UNHCR Emergency Handbook, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/32947/emergency-water-standard#:~:text=Five%20indicators%20should%20be%20collected,per%20usable%20well%20%2F%20hand%20pu mp>.

to fetch water. It must be noted that these refugees' water consumption hardly fulfills the UNHCR recommended water intake of 20 liters per person per day.

Apart from water, these refugees do not have access at all times to safe and nutritious food, sufficient to maintain a healthy and active life. The food prices in Port Moresby are really high that even some basic food items can be unaffordable by refugees. Here, the estimated amount for food for each person in a day is thirty-three Kina (AU\$13.52), roughly the same amount that West Papuan women make on average each day⁷. For them this amount will get food for the whole family.

Most children whose parents do not have regular incomes have to rely on the takings from their mothers' sales along the roadsides to get them meals each day. These children often get minimal calory intake per day. Consequently, they become food insecure and malnourished, and many adopted unsafe coping mechanisms that endanger their security. For instance, on any regular day, it is easy to find West Papuan children eating scones or biscuits, as it is cheaper to get and readily available nearby. Mothers and fathers often go without food from morning till the evening and have only one meal for the day.

Most households go for the main food items only and those that are cheaper to get, with little thought given to its nutritional values. Garden foods like sweet potatoes and banana are sometimes part of the meals in the afternoon, along with rice. They normally would go for the cheapest greens in the market or sometimes collect them from the surroundings close by. For protein, the cheapest to get from the store is tinned fish, and thus is the common protein for the households. Other healthier protein option like fresh fish or chicken seldom get to their dinner tables because of the cost. It cost eighteen Kina (AU\$7.37) for one kilogram of chicken at the grocery store nowadays. Balanced meals are difficult to come by for these group of people, and hence malnutrition and unhealthy diet is a serious problem in the West Papuan camps.

Additionally, majority of these refugees do not have the benefit of doing medical checkups or seek medical attention when they fall ill. The most common reason for this is the financial cost. They usually are out-of-pocket spenders on health care, and hence, what they make on a daily basis is just enough to get some food and pay for water and power and could hardly be budgeted for medical costs. A survey conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reported in 2010 that about 0.8% of total household expenditure of Papua New Guineans goes to medical expenses. The report further highlighted that the poorer the family, the lesser the likelihood of them visiting hospitals for treatment.⁸ This report clearly describes the situation of the West Papua refugees.

By using a self-assessment method, participants were asked to indicate their medical conditions as best as they know about themselves. Not surprisingly, 52% of the

⁷ NUMBEO, Cost of Living in Port Moresby, <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Port-Moresby>

⁸ Asian Development Bank Publication Stock No. ARM135437-3 December 2012

participants indicated to have fair to poor medical condition, while at the top only 5% indicated to have excellent medical conditions. In the survey, all except for two small camps indicated that they are at very high risk of becoming ill because of the condition of their homes. Note that these responses were only from those adult participants of the survey and does not imply the overall health conditions of other age groups. Specialized health or secondary health care are the most unaffordable due largely to the high cost involved in accessing such medical services.



Figure 4: Photo showing a makeshift shower built outdoor in one of the refugee camps.

V. Livelihood activities

This chapter aims to bring to light how the West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby make their living. This includes employment in both formal and informal sectors as well as other forms of income generation activities that the refugees rely on.

Formal employment opportunities in Papua New Guinea are so limited that even university and college graduates have difficulties securing jobs after completing studies. In fact, the number of job seekers is much higher than the available job opportunities in the country. [Trading Economics](#) reported in 2021 that from the total population, youth unemployment was reported at 62 percent in 2020.⁹ According to a policy blog published by the National Research Institute (NRI) in 2022, the author Julian Melpa pointed out four key factors that contribute to youth unemployment in PNG: 1. Poverty, 2. Inadequate formal education, 3. Corruption, and 4. Recruiters

⁹ Trading Economics, available on <https://tradingeconomics.com/papua-new-guinea/unemployment-rate?embed/forecast>

consider work experience.¹⁰ Taking the context of the West Papuan refugees into consideration, it is easy to note that they are disadvantaged on the basis of all four reasons.

Almost all of them come from mainly poor backgrounds, many did not reach higher level education, so they lack the accepted level of formal education or skills needed. Besides, the *who you know* system does not really work for them due to their small network; and finally, many young able-bodied persons do not have the required experience that most recruiters need. In this practical context, West Papuan refugees have limited chances of securing formal employments and are further disadvantaged.

Of the 99 heads of the household surveyed, 32 are in paid work, i.e., either on full-time or part-time basis, 29 said they were unemployed and looking for work. Other 29 said they were engaged in other type of employment activities, with another 19 stated they neither work nor looking for work. This last category of people comprised mostly of old people who are unable to work. Only one participant indicated unable to work due to physical disability or illness. Analyzing these statistics, it can be concluded that, there are more heads of households who are unemployed compared to those who are employed.

To meet their daily needs, many engage in a number of other activities to generate some form of income. The refugees engage in mostly menial routines of informal vending. The three key items of sales that came up during the survey were fast food, with a score of 33%, betelnut and smoke with a score of 18%, and selling clothes and other store items with a score of 3%. The remainder 46% engages in other forms of income making activities. This includes recycling empty cans and PET bottles that are mainly found in the rubbish bins, along roadsides, in the rubbish pits or in front fast-food outlets. A day's sale of cans can fetch up to K5 (AU\$2) on average, depending on how much was collected and sold. This amount is enough to get a meal for one person for a day.

Apart from recycling, some refugees also sell firewood at the side of the roads. Chopping woods in the heat of the day is not an easy task. And most times they do it on empty stomach in order to get some money for the dinner meal. However, not all days are good. Sometimes there are no sales at all for the day. But these people are resilient, and they master ways to get by each day.

¹⁰ Julian Melpa., Youth Unemployment in Papua New Guinea: Causes, effects, and way forward. The National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea, *February 2022*



Figure 5: Photo showing firewood being chopped and prepared to be put on the roadside for sale.

While informal sector is the handy way to make a living, it also involves a number of challenges. Unfortunately, it is the refugee women who pay the most price, spending most of their time out in the streets trying to sell something. For a West Papuan woman, it is not only the competition for customers or the rush to sell their products before it is getting late but also the competition for market spots. During the survey, a West Papuan woman said there are always arguments among themselves and other women in securing tables or spaces to do their sales in the markets, which makes it difficult for them to make good sales. Besides that, rainy weather and police surveillances also pose serious challenges for the women in making a good sale. On many occasions West Papuan mothers have been chased by police, their products confiscated or destroyed by the police, a fate that they share with other local vendors in the informal sector. At other times, when it is not the police, opportunists and street thugs who are most of the times under influence of alcohol would harass the women and steal from them. There is zero chance of recovering the items or the cost when things are lost through such behaviors.

Similarly, those who collect empty cans and bottles are also competing with many other underprivileged people who are all doing the same thing for survival. Cans and bottle collecting is risky. You can get run over or bumped by moving vehicles. In October 2022, one of the refugees was out on his cans collecting routine when he was unfortunately hit by a vehicle. He survived but his left leg was completely damaged and had to be amputated at the knee area. The M&R Desk was requested to provide small assistance to cover some medical and hospital costs. The victim is now recovering slowly but taking care of him is now an added burden to his community.

Despite the glaring inequalities faced by the refugees there is little the refugees can rely on, for the government to provide them help to get employment. Pillar No. 4 of the National Refugee Policy, clearly emphasize this stance as:

"In order to become self-sufficient refugees must be able to work or otherwise secure their livelihood. The Government of Papua New Guinea has removed the requirement for refugees to hold a work permit and thus work without restriction. Refugees are not given preferential access to jobs and are expected to compete for jobs, just like Papua New Guineans (pg.9)"¹¹

The same policy states this regarding business; "refugees may start a business if they have, or attain, the means to do so."¹² The policy categorically demonstrates the government's approach towards helping refugees attain self-sufficiency and independence; which in effect, puts the West Papuans on the back foot to move towards self-sufficiency and integration in PNG.

Essentially, the majority of the West Papuan refugees lead a hand to mouth lifestyle, relying on the informal sector for their daily survival. This way of making a living was tested when Covid 19 struck, and the city went into lockdown. The West Papuans were hard hit by the restrictions on movement around the city. One woman recollected on this experience saying that they were barely surviving during this time.

VI. Main challenges

Living as refugees is often marked by several challenges, no matter what country they find themselves in. From laws and policies to systems and processes, culture, and economic challenges, they all have an impact on how well the refugees assimilate into the host community. This last section examines two key challenges that have significant impact on the progress of West Papuan refugees.

Firstly, paying school fees for their children remains the biggest challenge West Papuans face today. The research shows that many school-aged children do not attend school because of financial constraints on their families. The higher the level of education, the expensive the cost is for enrolling one's child, consequently resulting in lesser number of West Papuan children being sent to high school and colleges. According to the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST), in 2021, the average cost of Higher Education student per year is K30,000. At the University of Papua New Guinea, a student studying humanities will pay K11,677 (AU\$4796.34) to study in 2023. Those who fail to pay the compulsory component of the fees (K3,115) in full by 3rd February 2023 will automatically lose their offer from the institution, according to the school's website.¹³ Privately run institutions that offer spaces for short course trainings usually require a 25% first installment payment of fees before enrollment. These amounts are way

¹¹Government of Papua New Guinea, National Refugee Policy 2016

¹² Ibid.

¹³ University of Papua New Guinea, Fees & Costs, <https://www.upng.ac.pg/index.php/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/undergraduate-fess-costs>

beyond what the West Papuan households could afford to raise, let alone make in a year.

With the government's tuition fee subsidy scheme some West Papuan parents who have the means were able to send their children to primary or elementary schools. Nonetheless the cost of looking after the needs of the children for school, including buying uniforms, project fees, school supplies and the bus fare to and from school is still a struggle for many West Papua parents, as found in our survey. Of the 310 school-aged children recorded in the survey, only 120 of them were attending schools. And out of this 120, only 8 were attending colleges or universities. This statistic clearly indicates the hardships that parents face in raising enough money to send their children to higher levels of education. Many young West Papuan children who are eligible for tertiary institutions or technical vocational training after leaving high school are disadvantaged because of this.

In the last two years, the M&R Desk received a number of requests from the West Papuans to assist with their children's fees. We have been however, unable to support all of them due to our own financial inability, unless we secure a sustainable funding. We were able to support only five students with part payments of their fees. We have also noticed that there is a critical need for supporting students with resources such as laptops to allow them to do their schoolwork better. In 2022 the M&R Desk assisted five students at Don Bosco Technical Institute with two laptops.

Figure 6: Shows the break-up of 310 school aged children that were recorded in this survey, and their status as to whether or not they attend school, and the different levels of school.

Number of Students In/school-aged children in the camp	Elementary	Primary	High	Secondary	TVET/Colle	Out (school aged)	Does not attend school	Total No. of Students in School and School aged
Badili								3
Female	1	2						3
Gerehu Stage 2								1
Female						1		1
Hohola 1								25
Female						1		1
Male	3	9				12	6	24
Hohola 2								Nil Recorded
Female								1
Hohola-Burns Peak								14
Male	1	6	2	2		3		14
Manu								1
Male		1						1
Nine Mile Camp								17
Female	1	6			1	2		10
Male	1	3				3		7
Rainbow Camp								96
Female	6	12	1	1	1	11		32
Male	8	17	3	3	1	32	18	64
Red Hills Camp								26
Male	3	9	1		2	11		26
Seven Mile (7 Mile)								Nil Recorded
Male								

Six Mile (6 Mile)								1
Male			1				1	1
Tete Settlement								7
Female	1						1	1
Male		2			1		2	5
Waigani Camp								19
Female	4	1					3	5
Male	2		1				8	12
Grand Total	31	68	9	4	8		91	24
								310

Another challenge facing the refugees and their children that is worth highlighting is to do with identity documentation. There is an inherent difficulty for any West Papua refugees to obtain official documents, importantly the national identity card, birth certificate, and passport.

Some of these refugees were issued with Permissive Residency Permit (PRP) when the policy was introduced in 1997, a status that allows them to basically self-integrate. As cited by D. Glazebrook in her monographs for anthropology series, "according to the 1978 PNG Migration Act, permissive residency status could be given to refugees for renewable periods of three years, conditional on no political activity and residence outside the border regions."¹⁴ These permits however have not been renewed for many years since they expired. Over the years, many refugee children were born from West Papuan parents and also those of mixed parentages, thus adding to the growing population of undocumented refugee families. While a handful of them managed to secure some documentation, as far as their status is concerned the majority are refugees without formal document evidence. Information available on the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority (PNGICA) website affirms this as "*West Papuan refugees either currently have no formal documentation or hold quasi-official "permissive residence permits"*"¹⁵

In 2015, following a nationwide registration and regularization exercise by the PNG ICA, only 1374 West Papuans in all of PNG were issued with citizenship certificate. The majority who applied during that time or later are still waiting for the outcome of their applications, and there were also others who missed out. From the total of 99 participants of the survey, only 29 stated to have citizenship status, 7 with PRP (*expired*), and the rest are mostly undocumented. Because it is costly and often takes long, many refugees were discouraged to apply for one, or gave up following up on the progress of their applications. They feel that they would rather spend their time and resources in making their living rather than turning up at government offices and getting negative responses.

Similar challenge exists for these refugees and their children to obtain the national ID card (NID) and birth certificates from PNG authorities. Many West Papuans who submitted their application for these documents have complained that their

¹⁴ Diana Glazebrook, *Permissive Residents, West Papuan Refugees Living in PNG*, (ANU E Press, 2008) 122.

¹⁵ Helping West Papuans, PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority, available on <https://ica.gov.pg/refugees/helping-west-papuan-refugees>

applications have been set aside and were not processed. This is the same story even for those refugee children who were born and lived all their life in PNG, or who were born from a mix parentage of PNG and West Papua. Even those who have been granted citizenship are also having difficulties obtaining these documents. It has become so difficult that it prompted two of their leaders to register complaints with the PNG Ombudsman Commission regarding their application being shelved by the Birth and Civil Identity Office. Both of them have been subsequently issued their NID cards.

This lack of identity documentation has a negative impact on the refugees when they want to avail services like banking, registering a business, or importantly applying for travel documents where a proof of identity is a mandatory requirement. With the lack of documentation as well as the small proportion of the population reaching colleges and universities, the West Papuans are deprived of two important refugee rights, namely rights to education and rights to documentation, and consequently are disadvantaged from getting into activities that would enhance their living conditions and their progress towards integration. As presented in the *Figure 2* below, 72 out of the 92 persons surveyed indicated that identity documents are one of the things highly needed among the refugee communities.

VII. Important Needs

As a way of bringing the situation of the West Papuan refugees to the fore and highlighting it, the survey captured some of the needs that the refugees identified as be most needed. The table below shows the needs and the extent to which each need is required according to individual household. Generally, the needs are similar in all camps in Port Moresby. While all the needs remain as highly needed, housing and education assistance notably top the score. These findings in general support the relevant topics covered in the aforementioned sections of this report. The higher the score means the particular service or resource is not available or unaffordable. In other words, these are services and resources that are seriously lacking in the refugee camps.

Figure 7. Table showing needs identified by the refugees.

Needs	Highly Needed	Fairly Needed	Needed but not necessary	Not needed at all	Grand Total	Percentage (%)
Land for farming	88	1			89	9%
Electricity	89	1	1		91	10%
Water	89	1	1		91	10%
Land for housing	92	1			93	10%
Health Service	88	1	3		92	10%
Food	88	3	1		92	10%
Employment opportunities	88	3		1	92	10%
Housing	94	1	1		96	10%
Education assistance	91	1	2	1	95	10%

Documentation	72	7	6	7	92	12%
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VIII. Conclusion

The West Papuans refugees in Port Moresby and in PNG in general are one of the most forgotten refugee groups domestically as well as internationally. Domestically, the PNG government's lack of will and commitment to provide them better processes and opportunities to integrate have been recorded in a number of publications. To live as a West Papuan refugee in PNG is perhaps one of the helpless conditions for any refugee to live in, when considered within the scope and spirit of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. While a handful have managed to push through and become successful professionals and established themselves, the large majority continue to struggle.

The widely held belief that West Papuans can easily assimilate into PNG society and build their lives due to the similarities in our Melanesian culture, has proven to be wrong. There are more than just cultural similarities that underpins refugees' capacity to integrate in another country. In PNG where land is mostly owned by traditional landowners, where social safeguards are absent, and employment opportunities are minimal you cannot expect refugees to self-integrate without any government support.

In fact, most countries around the world, including some of those non-signatories of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention have developed programs that supported refugees and asylum seekers when they are within their national boundaries. Unfortunately, for the West Papuan refugees, the government of PNG has for the last decades, and perhaps UNHCR have bought the idea that they can self-integrate based on the common culture and ethnic identities. However, as highlighted throughout this report, the reality is the opposite. In fact, there is greater need for support firstly from the government, as well as UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to give these refugees a better shot at building their lives and the future for their children.

Though the lack of appropriate and required government actions can be attributed to a number of factors, including political, legal or policy, bureaucratic expertise, or financial ability etc., the fact of the matter is that West Papuan refugees in PNG, including those in Port Moresby are disadvantaged and neglected for more than three decades. It is in recognition of such protection gaps that Catholic inspired organizations and offices like the M&R Desk have found the meaningful need to reach out and help. But as in many cases, solidarity and partnership among civil and church organizations as well as with the government is the better approach towards rescuing the marginalized and accord dignity to those relegated to the peripheries of our societies, such as the West Papuan refugees in Port Moresby and around Papua New Guinea.

"Let us renew our commitment to building the future in accordance with God's plan: a future in which migrants and refugees may live in peace and with dignity." Pope. Francis

Annex 1. Random photos depicting the conditions of the West Papuan refugee camps in Port Moresby, PNG.

