



More than roads: How PACD is driving growth and economic development in cocoa and coffee regions of Papua New Guinea

Mihaela Balan and Clement Kunandi Victor (PACD, PCU)
Blein Asea Mailil and Grace Lima (PACD, PMU)



FROM FARM TO STRATEGIC CORRIDORS: Series #1 - PACD Investment in Agriculture Feeder Roads

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PACD Project Coordination Unit

Forward

Feeder roads are more than just physical infrastructure; they are vital economic lifelines that influence productivity, quality, trade efficiency, and household incomes.

What we have learnt from the implementation of the PPAP and PACD projects, was that reliable road access reduced transportation costs, minimizes post-harvest losses, improved access to extension services and farm inputs, and enabled farmers to participate more effectively in local and international value chains. In remote areas of Papua New Guinea, improved feeder roads strengthen social inclusion by connecting communities to education, healthcare, and access broader economic opportunities for those left behind.

The paper presents the story of PACD and PPAP investment in feeder roads in the cocoa and coffee regions of the Papua New Guinea and the approach the two GoPNG projects have taken. By embedding feeder roads within productive and commercial partnerships they successfully transformed roads from passive transport routes into active systems of exchange that led to growth in the “last-mile regions” of the country.

This approach becomes now significant in the context of the Government of Papua New Guinea’s Connect PNG Program, which seeks to establish major economic corridors and improve national connectivity across the country. While the development of national highways and transport corridors is critical for long-term economic integration, the full benefits of these investments will only be realized when cocoa and coffee production areas are connected to these main transport networks and supported to develop as well.

Roads and connectivity improvements matter, but their impact depends on how well they integrate local economies into provincial and national markets and PPAP and PACD projects offer a tested model that can be used in PACD 2 or other similar initiatives.



Jethro Apinas

PACD Project Coordinator

Strategic corridors have been predominantly framed in infrastructural terms, with policy emphasis placed on the expansion of trunk road networks. Within this framing, corridors are often treated as linear transport assets, with success measured by kilometres of roads constructed or rehabilitated. However, such an approach risks conflating physical connectivity with economic integration. In agricultural systems dominated by dispersed smallholders, roads alone do not ensure participation in markets, nor do they guarantee the movement of produce along value chains. A more wholistic view is needed. In this context, the GoPNG and World Bank [PACD](#) and [PPAP](#) projects, through over 20 years of agriculture feeder roads investment, offer a tested and effective model of operationalisation of corridor development that can support Government of PNG [“Connect PNG Program”](#).

This paper presents PACD and PPAP approach to investing in 30

agriculture feeder roads in cocoa and coffee regions of Papua New Guinea by addressing not only the physical “last mile” but also the institutional and commercial barriers that prevent smallholders from tapping into local and export markets. By embedding feeder roads within productive and commercial partnerships, and co-investing in export driven MSMEs, cooperatives and other membership organisations, PPAP and PACD successfully transformed roads from passive transport routes into active systems of exchange that led to growth in the last-mile regions of the country. The paper underscores the importance of roads being approached as market systems, whose effectiveness depends on the extent to which producers, intermediaries, buyers, public agencies, banks and other private service providers are functionally connected.

We hope you will find these insights useful to inform similar initiatives in PNG and beyond.

We are PACD

Government of PNG with loan funding from World Bank funded the PNG Agriculture Commercialisation and Diversification project (PACD), a US\$40million investment in commercialization and diversification of cocoa and coffee value chains. Building on the PPAP and its achievements, PACD aims at increased productivity and volumes sold to markets by smallholder producers, their organizations and MSMEs, while also promoting diversification from cocoa and coffee. Through its US\$40m investment, the programme facilitates the emergence of other value chains (spices, coconut, and small livestock) while also addressing infrastructure challenges to fast-track products to markets by investing US\$7.8 million (PGK32+million) in rehabilitation of feeder roads.





The study draws results from the PPAP Impact Evaluation (2022) and the [ICR \(2022\)](#) and a follow up study in 2025-2026, under PACD.

Methodology

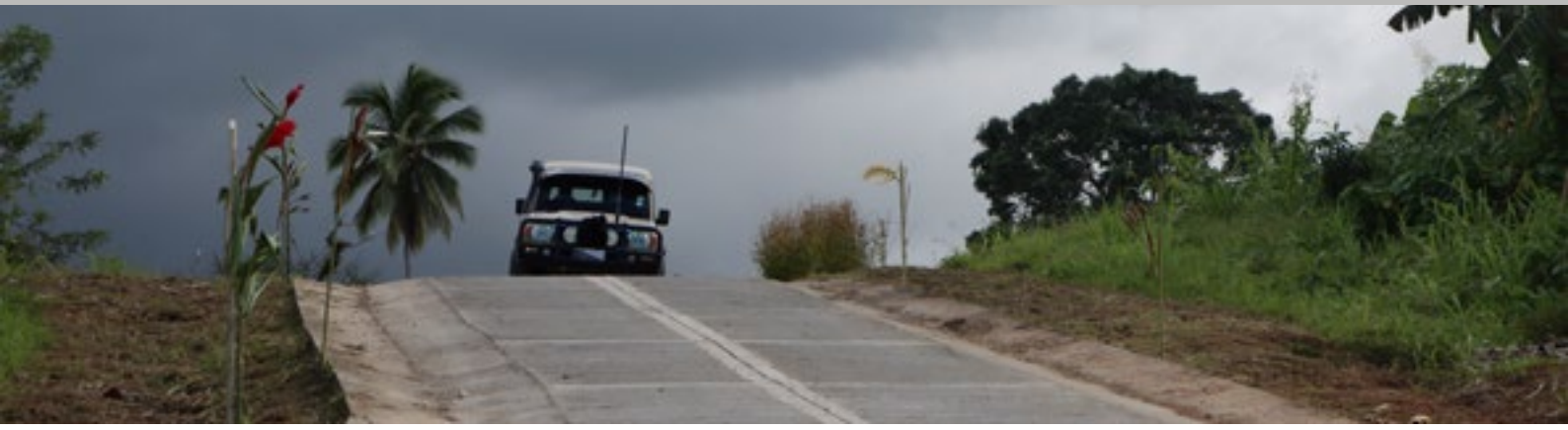
The Impact evaluation employed an ex-post quasi-experimental method to match across treatment and comparison individuals. A total of 2888 cocoa and coffee farmers, treatment and control, were part of the evaluation.

The follow up study under PACD, looked at two PPAP funded roads in the Highlands region and three roads in the ENB and AROB funded under PACD. The follow up study was conducted in August 2025 and March- April 2026 a PCU and

PMU team that included M&E staff, partnership officers, snr roads engineers amongst others.

Table 1: Roads visited for this study

Roads visited in 2025 - 2026	Nondugul station to Bonong Wo	2 Mile Yasubi to Waka Roots	Vulapalading	Kulungere	Tehbouin
Funded under	PPAP	PPAP	PACD	PACD	PACD
Location	North Waghi District Nondugul Station to Bonong	Okapa South Fore District 2 Mile Yasubi to Purosa	Burit Vunapalading No.1 in Inland Baining LLG, Gazelle District	Ivon-Gore ward, Sinivit LLG, Pomio District	Tehobuin–Sipotavai Road Rehabilitation Project in the Taonita Tinputz Constituency of North Bougainville
Province	Jiwaka Province	EHP	ENB	ENB	AROB
Lenght	5.0	12.9	3.5	4.0	6.8
Opened in	2019	2020	December 17, 2025	January 26, 2026	April 28, 2026
Outreach (#population)	5 wards 45,000	3 wards 8500	2 wards 3,000	2 wards 4,000	4 wards 7,500
Connection to main economic center/market	1.7km to Kundiawa town & National Highlands highway via a district road Jiwaka Provincial Government extended. The Highway connects Kundiawa town to Hagen.	Multiple roads to main town. The road is inside the Awande Junction to Waka Roots road and is 7.5km from the Oliguti -Okapa Station district road	11.4 km through one LLG road via New Britain National highway to Kerevat township and a further 35km to Kokopo	8 km via one district road to Warangoi buying point and further 19 km via one provincial and one national road tom Kokopo	56 km via one district road to provincial the trunk to Kokokpau township
PPAP Partnership	Kosem Partnership Completed in 2018	Coffee Connections & Monpi (Roots#1) Completed in 2019	East New Britain Women and Youth in Agriculture (ENBWYIA) in 2015	Growers Association, in 2015	Monpi/ Tinputz, in 2015
FGDs conducted in	August 2025	August 2025	March 2026	March 2026	April 2026
Beneficiaries (FGDs)	120+	85+	30+	50+	100+



PACD, the corridor enabler

Have you ever wondered what roads truly mean...

We very often take them for granted, assuming they will always be there to take us from A to B. But for millions, a road isn't just asphalt or bitumen or gravel—it is a lifeline. It is the difference between farmers reaching a market to sell produce or watching their harvest rot and having no money to feed their families, a child reaching a school or staying home and missing on life changing opportunities, a patient reaching a hospital or continuing to be sick. Welcome to the world of roads—the unsung heroes that connect the forgotten corners of the world to the heart of economic opportunity.

Strategic corridors, integrated infrastructure networks² are designed **to connect**. They boost economic development by linking key trade hubs and transforming transport routes into active economic zones. Developed with policy and regulatory considerations in mind, and in line with an effective marketing strategy, they enhance competitiveness, attract investment, lower logistics costs, and drive regional integration, creating employment and accelerating economic development in a country, or between countries or regions.

The GoPNG and the World Bank in PNG walked into this space of

corridor development to boost supply chains of key PNG export commodities (cocoa and coffee). Through PPAP³ and, since 2022, the follow-on PACD, GoPNG manage agriculture feeder road rehabilitation in the context of access to market. [1, 2, 3] The approach GoPNG took on road rehabilitation was straightforward. Rather than treating roads as standalone infrastructure, PACD and PPAP integrated feeder road investments within broader partnership concept⁴, explicitly framing roads as instruments of market access and supply chain expansion. Under these projects, roads function as “economic arteries” that connect coffee and cocoa producing regions to buyers and domestic or international markets.

The selection of roads followed a competitive process based on the scoping, cost-benefit analysis, and ranking of roads proposed during PPAP, by all project partnerships. The prioritization and selection process ensured that the selected roads provide the maximum positive impact on market access for partnerships, opening areas previously isolated and marginalized.

These roads (and bridges) enabled smallholders, which were supported with training and inputs and linked to buyers under each partnership, to market their produce, and SMEs (Lead Partners) to expand their supply chains by opening access to cocoa and coffee production areas and easing access to and from the main road network. In so doing,

more income for smallholders or revenue for SMEs would occur, while also generating a boost in growth and economic development in the last mile locations along the rehabilitated roads.

PPAP and PACD ensured an MOU for sustained road maintenance between the communities and the local-level government (LLG), district, and provincial administrations was signed before starting the work and as a condition of funding the rehabilitation works. Under this MOU, communities would undertake simple, labour-based routine maintenance free of charge, while the public administrations would carry out periodic and emergency maintenance using their own budget resources. Basic training was provided to communities, and post-construction inspections were made to assess the success of the maintenance initiative. In the follow-on project, PACD, tools, such as grass cutters were also provided to support communities with their part of the maintenance work.

25 roads under PPAP and five under PACD were funded, with nearly 150km⁵ of roads in ten provinces being rehabilitated through this process.



Roads, the invisible heroes

Over 600,000 farmers and their families were directly impacted by the roads funded under PPAP and PACD. The roads helped smallholders expand agricultural production of coffee and cocoa, increased access to services and markets, raised school attendance. In addition, more than 30 MSMEs funded under Partnership component strengthened or expanded their supply chains, increased intake of cocoa and coffee as a result of improved roads. The benefit trickled down to other businesses and communities throughout. Better infrastructure saw an increase in PMVs business in the areas. Better roads meant reduced vehicle wear and travel times, that increased incomes for Public Motor Vehicle (PMV) operators.

Interviews with farmers underscored significant and widespread positive socioeconomic effects that the rehabilitation of agriculture feeder roads had on people living in the roads catchment areas. These roads enabled increased sales and revenues not only from cocoa and coffee but also from vegetables and other farm crops, by allowing easier buyers' access to production areas and facilitating transportation of bigger volumes of crops (which previously was carried by hand). They also improved access to public services, including safe access to school and easier access to health facilities or banks. Other reported

benefits include better housing from improved access to supplies such as metal roofing and the construction of storage buildings along the roads in support of produce consolidation and marketing. Moreover, the road works were helping to create temporary jobs, as many contractors employed local people in the project areas to work on the roads.

Benefits accruing to women were also reported, including the possibility of expanding garden food production that they could sell to the market or on the roadside, ease of travel for pregnant women, increased travel safety while traveling, and faster access to health centres for baby delivery. Improved roads cut the time spent on domestic and caregiving chores, freeing up valuable time for income-generating activities.

Roads also motivated farmers to plant more cocoa or coffee or diversify because of good road access. Farmers expanded their blocks, they used money from cocoa and coffee to plant new blocks, they build new permanent houses, buy water tanks, buy smart phones, pay children schools fee and health care services. PMV business has flourished in the project road areas.

Agriculture Feeder road improvements changed transport patterns of farmers. Farmers reported that they could now take PMV quickly to hospital or town

"These roads are not just infrastructure — they are opportunities," Prime Minister Marape said. "They allow cocoa farmers to move their produce, mothers to access health services, and children to reach schools. This is the kind of impact we envisioned when we launched the PACD Project."

"These are the quiet but powerful stories of nation-building that often go unseen," he added. "But they matter deeply to the people whose lives are improved — cocoa farmers who can sell their beans more easily, and families who are no longer cut off from basic services."

[8 June 2025, ENB]

or to the market. Farmers saved travel time. Before they walked 5 to 10 km and it took up to two hours, depending on the weather or the condition of the roads before the rehabilitation, but now 10 to 20 minutes' drive from the main road. Children no longer walk, they use PMV to go to schools "because roads are here".



What have we learnt by listening: beneficiaries voices

Targeted feeder roads within corridors can unlock rural economies

We travelled to Nondugul in Jiwaka and Purosa in EHP in August 2025 to visit two roads funded under PPAP and completed in 2019 and 2020. Communities were waiting for us. More than 50 and sometimes 100+ farmers, women and men, children, students, police representatives, school and LLG representatives, lead farmers, bus operators were there to meet us. They all wanted to speak to us about what PPAP meant to their lives. How support they received

Road upgrades have transformed access from “mud tracks” to reliable routes. Connect coffee and cocoa growing areas to main economic centres (often via district and other LLG roads), improve access to services farmers would have not reached otherwise. Farmers report increased income and market participation.

through partnership model, e.g., inputs training, new skills acquired, connection to markets and linkages they now have”, or the road built in their area changed their lives.

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“Nondugul is an octopus station, meaning we have many roads, but most of them do not actually serve our communities. When the Yal bridge broke down, we struggled to take our coffee and fresh produce to Banz, and even accessing basic services became extremely difficult. The situation only improved when the PPAP road was constructed. It eased our worries and ended the long, tiring walks of carrying coffee bags to the highway. **This**

road has given us reliable access to Banz for basic services and for selling our coffee and produce. I want to thank PPAP for building this road for the people of Nondugul. More than 45,000 people benefit from it every day.”
(**Poto Akis**, farmer, on Nondugul PPAP funded road, Jiwaka, interview in August 2025)

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“Coffee is our life in Nondugul, and we depend on it for our livelihoods. Before the PPAP road was built, the Yal bridge was our only access to Banz town to sell our coffee and reach basic services. When the bridge collapsed, it became a major challenge for us to travel to

Banz. We now carry half bags of coffee from Nondugul to the highway and then take a PMV to Banz to sell our coffee”.

(**John Target** – Community Leader, on Nondugul PPAP funded road, Jiwaka, interview in August 2025)

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“Because of this road, we now have a functioning police station, barracks development and law and order in Nondugul is stable. Because of this road, we have a hospital, one secondary school, ten elementary schools, seventy five churches, seven primary schools, three eco tourism sites, and two cattle farms. Before this road was built, none of these services existed in Nondugul.

That is why I want to sincerely thank CIC PPAP and the government for giving us this road, which has transformed the lives of our people and opened the door to real development”.

(Patrick Tie - Community Police, on Nondugul PPAP funded road, EHP, interview in August 2025)

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“Before this road was built, our only access to school and health services was in Banz, and it was very far for our people. Every year, around 15 people died because there was no health centre, no ambulance, and no quick way to reach medical help. But because of the road that PPAP built for us, we now have a hospital and an ambulance to assist the sick and to help mothers who

need to give birth safely. This has greatly reduced the death rate in the Nondugul area. I want to thank PPAP for building this road for us”.

(Jessie Simbil - Youth Rep, on Nondugul PPAP funded road, Jiwaka, interview in August 2025)

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“The road you travelled on today was once only a pig track. Our fathers processed their coffee, and we—the young people—carried the bags on our backs and walked for hours just to find a buyer. Many times, we slept along the way before reaching a place where someone would purchase our coffee.

When PPAP built our road, everything changed. It opened access for us to take our coffee straight to Goroka and sell

it at a good price. We were excited because, for the first time, we could earn what our hard work truly deserved. Even though PMV owners charged us K20 to K50 per bag to load onto their vehicles, we were still happy because at least we could reach the market, sell our coffee properly, and return home the same day”.

(Ape Inapo - Youth Rep, on Purosa to Yasubi PPAP funded road, Jiwaka, interview in August 2025)

In March 2026, we were in Sandaun Block, a remote agricultural community in inland Baining, ENB, to talk to farmers beneficiaries of PPAP support and of the newly rehabilitated Vulapalading road. The road was opened in Dec 2025. Lead farmer, **Steven Liai**, told us people have been living there for three generations and for decades,

as settlers from all over Papua New Guinea that have bought land and built new lives, they have lived with isolation, hardship, and determination. They used to walk 5km from the main roadside with their cargos all the way to their homes. The road up was just a bush tracks where their grandparents dig with spades.

“But now with the good road under the PACD project we no longer walk we prepare our markets or cocoa dry beans and bring to the roadside and PMVs will come and pick us up, and we are so happy with this change and development,” said Steven (on Vulapalading PACD funded road, ENB, interview in March 2026).



Roselyne Nguangua, a mother from the same isolated village, told us that when she was still a little girl, she remembered her grandfather used to dig this road; he used to take them, his children, and they used to dig this road up with their father. When rain came, they needed a four-wheel drive to follow the road. To carry these bags easier, they split them into smaller bags for their

children to help and carry to the main roadside, or even to markets. ***"We the mothers especially struggled a lot to access services like health and schools our children we have no choice but to wake up early and walk this road,"*** Rose shared. There were people helping them to carry their cocoa bags of cargoes; they paid them K10 or K20, depended on the volume they carried.

Their main source of income is cocoa, a bit of garden food/fresh produce that they sell to Kerevat or Kokopo market. They joined PPAP during the second call, with 500 farmers from Vunapalading-Burit. That was a life changing experience. The trainings under PPAP, such as financial literacy, changed their mindset. It was an eye opener for them.

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"We joined PPAP, now we know about money spending and saving, cocoa practice, cocoa management. A lot of us are now benefiting from the PPAP cocoa; we are paying school fee, go to the hospital, buy

roofing iron and build our permanent houses and increase our living standards".

(Roselyne Nguangua on Vulapalading PACD funded road, ENB, interview in March 2026)

In 2026, under PACD, the 3.5-kilometre feeder road linking the communities of Vunapalading and Burit was opened. Everyone is planting more cocoa because of the better market access now. They use PMVs and trucks to go to market, go to school, access health or visit friends. They can afford to pay the bus fare, because of the money coming from cocoa.

Gethrude Henry walked the muddy road to go to school since she was in primary. She also helped her mom bring their markets and cocoa to the roadside. After 12 years, they have now a good road to travel on.

"We used to struggle to go to school and back after completing my grade 12 now there is road in my community, and I am so happy seeing my little ones getting on PMV to go to school. I am working now on our family cocoa block but in the future, I want to plant my own cocoa block to help me raised money to go back to school," said Gethrude (Vulapalading PACD funded road, ENB, interview in March 2026).

Walter Hawkins, representing the youths, told us that PPAP and PACD made a significant difference in their lives. PPAP supplied each farmer with 200-300 cocoa seedlings. Now, under PACD, 35 farmers are supported again under ENBWYIA poultry project. PPAP Project was an eye opener on how to farm to be passed onto the next generation. They learnt new farming practices which enabled the farmers to get involve into different farming activities, from cocoa to poultry, or even road works.



"I am one of the youths that worked under the Covec contractor who was employed to rehabilitate the road. For someone being at home for 5 to 6 years I was privileged to have learned a lot of skills from road construction, plus I have now a reference. The money got from my little work I used to look after my family. I also assist in paying school fees for the little once at home. This practice enables me to live self-reliance in my youth life". said Walter.

Road was also a life changer for Walter and family. Before, in the past, they used to walk, now they just wait on the roadside next to their house and wait for PMVs to come. (Vulapalading PACD funded road, ENB, interview in March 2026).

In March 2026, we were in Kulungure to talk to farmers about the impact of the newly opened feeder road. Farmers, which were under Growas Association during PPAP, told us the support they received was outstanding. And the partnership they built with Growas back then,

continues to these days, even if the PPAP support ended in 2015.

Each farmer was registered and paid K400 as their contribution and received 200 seedlings, tools and a lot of training. The seedlings turned into quality cocoa trees which they have started harvesting and can see the investments made ten years back continue to pay back.

Growers Association made a big Impact on farmers cocoa production in Kulungure.

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"During PPAP, the Growers officers came and stayed here for about two weeks to do the awareness. After the two weeks awareness, we formed ourselves into four (4) groups of 20 farmers (Clusters). We were profiled and recorded the GPS location. At the same time, each farmer was encouraged to do the block preparation. The distribution of seedlings came after the GPS location and distribution of tools for all

the 80 members. On the same note, we were also part of trainings, such as Financial Literacy and Cocoa Block Management. Each registered farmer was able to get an Identification Card (ID) for selling cocoa and opened new BSP accounts, which are still active and used, today, after 11 years".

George Moabi, farmer, on Kulungure PACD funded road.

The ID card is very valuable. Growas has an arrangement with Agmark where farmers, when they sell their cocoa to Agmark, and show their IDs, they receive a certain percentage based on the volume sold, e.g., an extra K50 on top of the base market price.

Kulungure road, built under PACD and opened in Dec 2025, has transformed communities along the roadside.

"Before, there were no roads, only bush tracks, and it was hard for farmers to transport their cocoa bags and other produce to markets. They often used their children to assist, sometimes youths from the village helped them carry for K10 or K20 service fees. As an alternative to roads, farmers were using the river nearby. They built a raft to put their cocoa bags on to cross the river, most times their cocoa bags get wet and damaged. Kulungure produced

tons of cocoa in the past, and it was one of the highest cocoa productions areas in the district and province; this has dropped due to poor road. Now, with the newly built road, they will try to increase it up.

Many mothers used to give birth to their babies in the middle of the road; now mothers can get in the truck and go to the hospital".

Russel Anet, farmer, on Kulungure PACD funded road.

For Paula Eris, a mother from Kulungure Road, **"the road brought in big change into their community and eased some of their burden like carrying their produce and walking long distances to get on PMV. However, one of the challenges they have is that the main road leading to them is not good. When they go outside PACD funded road, the connecting road gets bumpy again".**

Jenny Simon shared with us her experience before and after the road was built. *"Before, the road in their community was in very poor condition; mothers especially, struggle daily for decades to reach vital services, such as health. Few instances some pregnant mothers used to have their babies on the way it was very hard for them".* Jenny also mentioned that one other way to access services is to cross a big running river and go to the other side. On the other side they have

the hospital, secondary, and primary school. *"Students used to cross the river to the other side to go to schools before today others go to Matupit Primary School while others still cross the river to the other side".* Crossing the river to the other side is closer but dangerous. An opportunity would be for a jetty or a bridge.

For **Marry Madao**, a mother from Kulungere, *“having a good road makes it easy for them to travel to and from access services. However, one of the challenges still is for a school and an aid post as their children still walk long distances to school”.*

Hubert Baspi, a youth from the area, grew up in Kulungere. *“We usually help our mothers with their markets and cross the river to the other side,”* Mothers are going to town anytime they no longer crossing the river.

Many of the youths from the village worked under the Kulungere road contractor. They learnt a lot of skills. From their salaries they bought phones and planted more cocoa in new blocks because of the good road.

Our visit to Tehobuin–Sipotavai Road in AROB brought in new voices about how PPAP and PACD projects were changing farmers lives. Officially opened in April 2026, under PACD funding, the road is now impacting lives of more than 7,500 people in the area.

David Braun Vatavi is ABG Member in Taonita Tinputz Constituency. He told us that when Marlon Sira, the Community Relations Officer (CRO) to the contractor, and representing the communities, first came to their community in 2023 to raise awareness about the possibility of Tehobuin–Sipotavai Road to be rehabilitated, many were sceptical. It wasn't until the PACD Senior Engineer visited and assured them that the road would, indeed, be built, that they began to believe.

“This road project is made possible through our involvement in cocoa farming, and it shows the power of development partnerships. This project is not free it is funded through a loan that we, as citizens, are collectively responsible for repaying. It's a shared investment in our future, and we must treat it with care and responsibility.”

Since the road was built, It has brought a sense of unity and hope. *“However, I am concerned about the durability of this road. This is a K8 million investment, and we cannot afford to let it deteriorate. We must take ownership and ensure that it is properly maintained. Sealing the road would help protect it from damage and extend its lifespan. It's not just about infrastructure—it's about safeguarding the value of the money and effort that went into building it.”* (Tehobuin–Sipotavai PACD funded road, AROB).

Melsie Mathew, from Sipotavai ward, while happy for this new road, she would like one in her community as well. The maintenance and upgrade of an agriculture feeder road in Tinputz is a great achievement. **Marlon Sira**, a cocoa lead farmer and the road Project Liaison Officer from Tehobuin, Buka Island witnessed already how the new road has impacted the lives of more than five communities in the Tinputz Constituency. Communities are happy; the road really benefits the communities that struggled for more than five decades to bring cocoa dry

beans to the market. Families used to carry their cocoa bags and other produce, walking four hours just to reach the market, it was a reality. And giving birth was always a struggle, a journey through the bush sometimes pregnant mothers loses their lives. *“We also saw that this is a way for forward for the AROB Government in readiness for independence this road is a great achievement it also increases revenue and improve people's standard of living going forward plus the road will open up more opportunities for us”.* Now farmers are getting more than 15 tonnes of cocoa every week going to the market, unlike before and when there was no road”.

DAL Deputy Secretary Francis Daink shared similar sentiments recently, when the Tehobuin–Sipotavai PACD funded road was opened in April 2026, encouraging farmers to increase cocoa production and urging young people to turn away from social issues and engage in cocoa farming to meet the production targets set by the ABG. *“The road is now here. Look after it and carry out regular maintenance so it will serve you well for many years and future generations,”* Mr Daink said.

“This road is more than gravel and concrete; it is a vital connection to opportunity, improved livelihoods, and a better future for the people of Tehobuin and Sipotavai”.
(DAL Deputy Secretary Francis Daink, Tehobuin–Sipotavai PACD funded road)



Positive impacts of rural roads on women

The lack of mobility options significantly impacts women's participation in the economy, influencing their access to markets, employment opportunities, ability to meet job requirements, health and personal safety.

Women are often at risk by the lack of or poor quality of transport services. Reliable transport seems particularly important in encouraging parents to allow girls to continue their education, and in enabling women to participate in social and economic activities, outside the village.

“I represent the mothers in the four wards, and I want to speak for all of us. We carry our coffee bags on our backs, carry our children on the side, and walk long distances just to sell our coffee. All we want is a place where a buyer can set up a scale in Purosa so we can sell our coffee in our own community. But when there is no buyer in Purosa, we walk all the way to Ivingoi just to sell our coffee. The struggle is real for us women. Some mothers even give birth on the road while trying to reach the health centre. Some mothers die on the way, and some babies die before reaching help. Access to basic services has always been difficult. When PPAP built our road, we were all happy. It was a huge relief for us women. We finally had easy access to the Ivingoi health centre, and our mothers and babies were safe when giving birth. Coffee buyers came straight to our village, and we could choose whether to sell our coffee in Purosa or take it to Goroka. Life became easier, and we felt hope.”
Judy Tellah – Women's Rep on Purosa to Yasubi, EHP, PPAP funded road.

Many interviewees mentioned positive impacts of rural roads on women, with increased access to markets or female visits of health centres.

“I want to speak on behalf of all the women and mothers of Nondugul and express our sincere thanks to PPAP for building this road for us. Before this road was constructed, mothers constantly worried about how they would take their coffee and fresh produce to the market in Banz, and how they would buy basic household needs like salt, soap, and oil. When we carried our kaukau, bananas, and greens and walked down to the highway, it took us half a day. By the time we reached the highway, it was already afternoon, so we slept there and went to the Banz market the next day. After selling, we returned to the highway and walked back up again. This routine exhausted us, and we often wondered when this struggle would ever end. When PPAP came and built our road, all of us were truly happy. However, the project only completed 5 km of road from Nondugul Station to Bonong and stopped there. The Jiwaka Government continued the road from Bonong to the highway, but the section they built is too steep, and our vehicles cannot use it. Because of this, the community living near the highway used spades and knives to cut a temporary road up to where the PPAP road ends. This is the road we use during the dry season. If there is any opportunity for future road maintenance or improvement, we kindly ask that the steep section built by the Jiwaka Government be properly cut down and upgraded so that vehicles can travel safely and the whole community can benefit fully from this important road.”
Elis Kolip -Women Rep on Nondugul PPAP funded road, Jiwaka.



Improved road is positively impacting PMV operators

PMV operators in PNG provide vital transport, particularly in rural areas in the country. They are often sole traders or small business owners whose operations are highly vulnerable to fluctuating fuel prices and high maintenance costs. They serve as the backbone of urban and regional transportation in PNG, providing essential, affordable mobility for farming households.

FGDs with beneficiaries of the PPAP and PACD funded roads showed that the supply of transport had increased substantially, especially PMV/minibuses offering frequent



service, whereas in the past the only service was a PMV offering one or two runs a day. Improved roads have also influenced the number of trips farmers make to markets and district centres. On average, farmers can make more trips per year if roads are open throughout the year and the transport service is more competitive.

Better roads meant reduced vehicle wear and travel times, that increased incomes for PMV operators.

The roads showing large increases in traffic were those that were integrated as last mile long distance links in the province and national

Upgraded agriculture feeder road brings new opportunities for growth for PMV operators, transforming formerly inaccessible routes into viable, income-generating pathways. These infrastructure improvements directly benefit transport providers by lowering operating costs and enabling consistent access to markets and essential services for local communities.

networks, where the latter were properly maintained.

Improved road access is transforming livelihoods in parts of Inland Baining, according to young PMV operator, Daniel Dising and a direct beneficiary of the recently opened Burit–Vunapalading feeder road.

Daniel Dising is driving his father's PMV, providing a vital transport service to communities in the Sandaun–Burit Block of Vunapalading Ward, Inland Baining Local Level Government (LLG). For years, poor road conditions limited how far and how often he could travel into the community.

"Before, the road condition was very bad," Daniel said. "I could only drive to the beginning of the road and drop passengers off there. I was making less money, and farmers had trouble getting their produce out." (on Vunapalading, PACD funded road, interview in March 2026)

Daniel is also serving communities on the other side of the area, another road, but that is very poorly maintained, and he can make maximum three trips a day if the weather is good. The rehabilitation and upgrading of the 3.5-kilometre Burit–Vunapalading feeder road by PACD has significantly changed his operations. With the road now passable, Daniel extended his service deeper into the community. "Last year the road was okay, so I started driving right to the end of the road," he said. *"Now I can go in quickly and come out easily. I am very happy to bring this service here."*

Passengers pay K5.00 per person, and Daniel says he can now earn

between K500.00 and K600.00 in a single day. The improved road has also boosted economic activity for cocoa farmers, who rely on PMV services to transport their produce to market. *"In one day, I can carry four to five bags of cocoa out of the community,"* Daniel said. He charges K50.00 per dry bag, selling the cocoa at Kerevat, and can make five to six loads per day during peak periods.

"With a good road, I see good money from the people selling cocoa," he added. *"Before, I would drop farmers at the start of the road and earn less. Now it is better for everyone."*

The PMV operation is a family business. The Dising family owns another small vehicle. The income from transport, together with that from cocoa farming and their trade store, has been a major support for his household.

Eagle and Two Dragons Transport, two PMVs serving Kulungure PACD funded road, used to take only two loads a day and turned at Inlet to Kulungure junction; a passenger would give him K5.00 for that. Road condition was the main factor of minimizing the loads in a day. But as now, as Kulungure road is rehabilitated, they turn at the far side of Kulungure along the river side, and passengers pay K8.00 for a fare. Passengers are charged additional fees for any belongings: food like banana @K1.00 a bundle, a bag of betel nut @ K2.00, a basket of kumu @ K1.00; cocoa bag is charged 10 percent. To hire the PMV would cost @ K400.00. They spend K200.00 to K400.00 for fuel a day but still make a good profit. (on Kulungure, PACD funded road.

Sustainability beyond, with PACD maintenance model

If roads are not adequately maintained, the impacts of road investments can disappear in a few short years. Insufficient public budgets for road maintenance, low priorities for rural roads and poor management by road authorities are the reasons behind poor maintenance.

In PPAP, an MOU for sustained maintenance between the communities and the local-level government (LLG), district, and provincial administrations was signed before starting and as a condition of funding rehabilitation works on each road under the project, whereby the partnership would undertake simple, labour-based routine maintenance free of charge, while the public administrations would

Maintenance was found to vary across the 25 roads completed during PPAP. PACD learnt from PPAP and organised it better. However, the sustainable model for rehabilitated feeder roads is still to be proven.

carry out periodic and emergency maintenance using their own budget resources. Basic training was provided to partnerships, and post-construction inspections were made to assess the success or otherwise of the maintenance initiative.

Despite this, the level of effectiveness of routine maintenance for PPAP funded roads was found to vary across all the 25 roads completed. Some routine maintenance was carried out from time to time by the beneficiary community groups and there were cases of periodic

maintenance undertaken by public parties, contingent on availability of resources and other priorities. The follow up surveys conducted in 2025 found both PPAP feeder roads visited to be in bad condition. The two roads were completed in 2018. PNG has decentralized most infrastructure planning, financing, and maintenance to the provincial authorities. However, because of lack of funds, Districts and LLGs have not done any maintenance, and communities often been forced to carry out their own road maintenance which was minimal.

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“The Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4 communities of Purosa are coffee growing areas, and coffee is our livelihood. Our biggest challenge has always been the lack of proper road access. Before PPAP built our road, we carried our coffee and walked eight to nine hours just to reach Ivingoi to find a vehicle to Goroka. Along the way, we slept on the roadside for almost a week before finally reaching town. By the time we arrived in Goroka, our coffee was already spoilt, so we were forced to accept Y1 or Y2 prices even though we had produced quality coffee. It was painful to put so much effort into our coffee gardens and receive so little in return.

To get youths to help carry our coffee bags, we paid K40.00 per bag per person. We also paid for houses to sleep in along the way. The costs were high, the journey was long, and the struggle was heavy.

When PPAP built our road, all our burdens were lifted. PMVs could pick up our coffee bags right from our homes, take them straight to Goroka, and we could sell at a good price and return home the same day. However, the road did not last long. After only two to three years, it deteriorated and returned to a bad condition again.”

Illai Yombu -Village Magistrate rep Wards 1 and 2, Marawaka District [Purosa to Yasubi, EHP, visit Aug 2025]



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“When PPAP built our road, we were all happy.

It was a huge relief for us women... Life became easier, and we felt hope... But the road did not last long. After some years, it deteriorated and returned to a bad condition. Now we are feeling the same hardship again struggling to reach basic services and struggling to sell our coffee. If there is any chance in the future for road maintenance, we kindly ask that the 2 Mile Yasubi to Purosa Road be repaired so our mothers, children, and communities can live safely and continue to earn a decent living”. (Judy Tellah – Women’s Rep (Purosa to Purosa to Yasubi, EHP, visit Aug 2025)

Follow up visits to PPAP feeder roads in August 2025 identified other issues. Many feeder roads are linked to main economic centres via other roads (district and LLG); if these other roads are not properly maintained, they leave the communities isolated, even though a part of the route was rehabilitated under PACD/PPAP. District and LLG roads are the responsibility of the Government and DoW to maintain, and with limited funding, this is often omitted. No maintenance of access roads leaves the communities isolated, even though the PPAP road is properly maintained.

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"I can access the road constructed by PPAP, but I cannot use the road built by the Jiwaka Provincial Government because it is too steep. I can only use the community built road, but when it rains, it becomes inaccessible because it has no gravel. If there is any chance in the future, please maintain our road and properly cut down the steep section built by the Jiwaka Provincial Government so that vehicles can use it safely."

Carol Matthew -Teacher @ Nondugul Secondary (August 2025, follow up FGD on Nondugul feeder road).

Community maintenance models

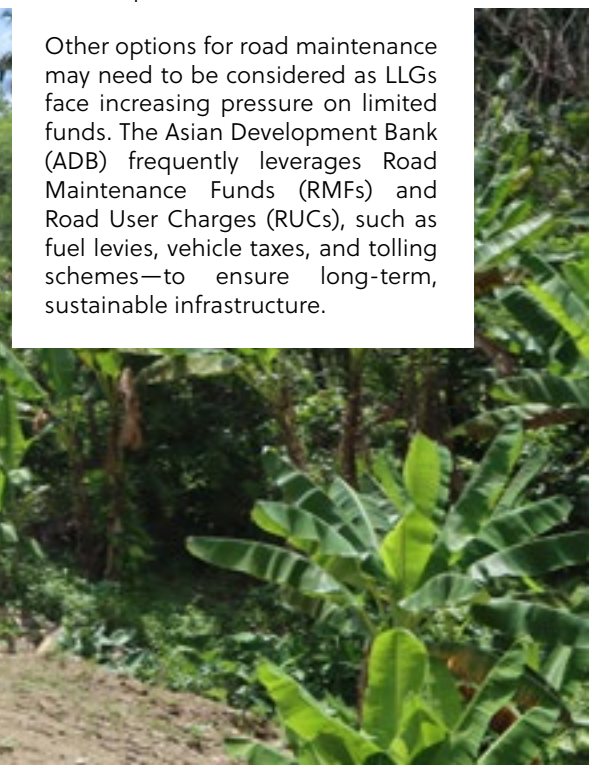
For the Vunapalading community they have a schedule for cleaning the road. They set it up after the maintenance training that PMU provided to the community. There are 5 groups in the community and the 5 groups divided into 5 sections and each section cleans their allocated sections. The contractor Covec has presented 6 grass cutters. The lead farmer Steven Liai makes their schedule every Monday on the first day of the month they clean the road. They do grass cutting, clean the drain, sweep the road, remove rubbish etc.

Kulungere community maintenance model is similar. There is a schedule for grass cutting and maintenance of the road every month. Kulungere have 7 zones where time for community work everyone will come and do the work. They have 5 grass cutters given to them by the contractor Kokopo Plant Hire after the completion of the road. Russel, the lead farmer, said the community was very responsive and participates well when community work, they ring the bell and all the communities come together.

PACD learnt from PPAP and the project improved on the maintenance model. PACD went on to provide more extensive training and also tools for communities to use in road maintenance work. Committees were set up by farmers, and the road is now cleaned periodically. LLGs started to do their part of maintenance.

However, the PACD funded roads have only recently been completed. Time will tell if the model is working. Measuring future sustainability of benefits will depend in large part on LLGs to fulfil their part of the maintenance to maintain the roads in good condition and on the roads' ability to attract traffic. If the roads are kept in reasonably good condition, sustainability will depend on transport demand.

Other options for road maintenance may need to be considered as LLGs face increasing pressure on limited funds. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) frequently leverages Road Maintenance Funds (RMFs) and Road User Charges (RUCs), such as fuel levies, vehicle taxes, and tolling schemes—to ensure long-term, sustainable infrastructure.





Key Takeaways

PACD and PPAP's experience highlights a critical lesson: better roads alone do not automatically unlock economic growth.

Connectivity improvements matter, but their impact depends on how well they integrate local economies into provincial and national markets. The PPAP and PACD projects paired road investments with Partnership development and SME support. This dual approach helps businesses expand and integrate into value chains, particularly in last mile locations. The most effective investments were in feeder roads which directly connect businesses, farms to markets.

Agriculture Feeder Roads, anchored in strategic corridors infrastructure, are central to Papua New Guinea's development strategy.

By connecting remote agricultural regions to markets, they reduce costs, increase incomes, and enable the commercialisation of key sectors such as coffee and cocoa.

The success of roads investments depends not only on building these roads but also on maintaining them.

PPAP was less successful in some cases with its maintenance model. Limited provincial government funding impacted on implementation of the MOUs signed, with periodic works by LLGs rarely happening. Other models, such as those promoted by The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Road Maintenance Funds (RMFs) and Road User Charges (RUCs), could be explored, to ensure long-term, sustainable infrastructure

There is trickle-down effect of investment in feeder roads. Improved feeder roads funded under PPAP and PACD have not only made transportation faster and safer but have also opened new economic opportunities for entrepreneurs, such as PMVs, roadside markets and farmers alike, demonstrating how infrastructure development can directly impact rural livelihoods.

Key Takeaways

Prioritise investment in **feeder roads** that link to main corridors that GoPNG is funding, under [Connect PNG Program](#).

Invest in **maintenance systems**, not just new construction

Integrate roads with **bridges, ports, storage, and processing facilities**

Partner, attract and **de-risk investment** from private sector in key strategic commodities along the corridors

Support **smallholder farmers** through partnerships, inputs, markets, access to finance and training

Build or strengthen **(sub-) economic hubs** to ensure services are where demand is, e.g., around cooperatives, plantations etc.



The Future

A more integrated investment approach with corridor development

For the future, development of clusters or “mini networks” of roads that are linked to main PNG Corridors

Clusters or “mini networks” of roads linked directly to main corridors have better chances of attracting and retaining traffic than isolated road investments. An opportunity will be by connecting infrastructure development to the Connect PNG Program.

Unlock plantation potential by investing in infrastructure, feeder, district roads, in cocoa grown regions of PNG

In ENB, three Corridors are proposed by PMU to be developed under PACD2. They include the East New Britain Lassul and South Coast Corridors plus the Karimui Road Access and potential feeder roads in West New Britain, Eastern Highlands Province. These corridors will cut across the big plantations in the area to bring up their full potential of both plantation and infrastructure rehabilitation. There is also potential

to start Plantation rehabilitations in New Ireland Province.

Coffee Corridor development alongside farmers cooperatives

In the Highlands, with support from PMU 3C initiative and PACD Component 3.1 and 3.2, coffee cooperatives are on the wave with more income now pouring into communities. PACD model showed that Cooperatives play key roles in the areas, well beyond aggregation. These coops facilitate skills development in their communities, the collection, distribution and shipment of coffee, enter into successful and rewarding arrangements with buyers, or bring in key services in areas often underserved by traditional commercial entities.

Three corridors in EHP that CIC PMU is proposing for PACD2 are designed to build on 120+ cooperatives as transition nodes. They can become transition nodes to the main economic hubs under [Connect PNG Program](#).

Since 2020, the GoPNG, through [Connect PNG Program](#), has been using economic corridors to promote economic growth and development that goes beyond the impact of a road or highway project. The Program focuses on establishing and enhancing [14 strategic corridors](#) that form the backbone of Papua New Guinea’s national road network. It will construct and upgrade over 16,000 km of roads, **linking** rural communities with urban markets and export hubs. These corridors are critical for **connecting** urban centres, rural communities, and key economic hubs, driving trade, regional integration, and equitable development across the country. Each corridor is strategically designed to maximize economic potential, improve accessibility, and strengthen the country’s infrastructure resilience. However, they do not go beyond national roads to connect last-mile locations.

Cooperatives - Key players for GoPNG “Connect PNG Program”

- Skills development and technology transfer are critical to corridors development. The corridor creates space for training, workforce development, and long-term institutional learning, allowing growth to be sustained rather than extracted. Cooperatives, under the PACD model are already doing that.
- Anchors of production and link to markets (demand): Cooperatives act as major points of production linking remote areas to larger markets. Through their model they create the supply necessary to respond to demand and make infrastructure projects viable.
- Last mile and regional Integration node: Cooperatives connect smaller, localized economies to regional and global value chains, fostering a balanced regional growth and reducing economic disparities.

Footnotes

1. This is the first of a 3-part FROM FARMS TO STRATEGIC CORRIDORS series that looks into feeder roads as corridor enabler. The second part: Investment in Cooperatives is available in here. The third part, on partnerships Blended finance to untap PS investment and Pathway to Brewing Success were published in 2025 and you can find [here](#).
2. Infrastructure, e.g., roads, waterways, railways, ports, energy grids, border posts
3. PPAP roads were funded by IFAD
4. PACD facilitates partnerships between farmers and SMEs (Lead partner) to increase competitiveness in the value chains (under Component 3.1) while also co-funding (and de-risk) with SMEs initiatives that support value addition and expansion (export) under Component 3.2
5. 115km during PPAP and 28.5km during PACD
6. for Cocoa: ESP, Madang, Morobe, ENB and AROB; for Coffee, EHP, Jiwaka, Simbu, SHP and WHP
7. <https://works.gov.pg/pages/134>
8. <https://works.gov.pg/pages/89>

www.pacd.org.pg

