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MEDIA RELEASE

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Customary land could unlock opportunities for PNG's growing youth population

Customary land in Papua New Guinea (PNG) could play a significant role in creating economic opportunities for the country's large and growing youth population, according to an Issues Paper released today by the PNG National Research Institute (PNGNRI).

The Issues Paper titled **"Enhancing economic opportunities on customary land for youths in Papua New Guinea"** by Research Fellow, Logea Nao, highlights youth perception and their views on land from the 2024 National Youth Baseline Survey.

These views were elicited from a survey of 9,029 youths across 13 of 22 PNG provinces where 94 percent of the youths reported that they own land in their villages while 5 percent said they don't own land in their villages because of several reasons including being away from their villages for too long, being born in the city/towns or being migrants living in town or on customary land.

The fact that an overwhelming majority of the youth have land in their respective villages suggest significant potential for young people to engage in agriculture and other land-based economic activities. A good number of them are willing to use their land for agriculture, with almost equal interest in growing food crops and cash crops. Some of the youths expressed interest in joint ventures and other activities.

The survey also noted some potential barriers to youth participation in agriculture. More than half of respondents were not aware of the process of registering customary land through Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs), while only 21 percent reported that their family land was registered through an ILG.

Young people's participation in land-related decision-making is another concern. Fifty-four percent reported that young people in their communities do not have the authority to make decisions about land-related matters.

The Issues Paper recommends greater awareness of customary land rights and registration processes. Stronger youth participation in land-related decision-making, and support for youth enterprises in both agriculture and non-agricultural sectors should be given priority consideration.

The plight of young people without access to land is also worth looking into. Youth-focused interventions to provide complementary support, including access to finance, financial literacy training, business development training, agricultural skills training and market opportunities are necessary to help the youth get something to do for themselves.

The Publication and Media Release can be accessed on the PNGNRI website https://www.pngnri.org.

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