

Introduction

Papua New Guinea is the biggest Island Nation in the South Pacific. To the West we share Boarder with Indonesian, and to the South Australia is the next closes neighbour.

Papua New Guinea got Independence from Australia in 1975, (last month September 16 country celebrated its 40 years of Independence).

Papua New Guinea is the member of the Common World nations.

The total population is approximately 7.8 million people

I came from traditionally male dominated society but my Christian up bringing plays major role in my life and other learned fellow Papua New Guineans.

I give Credits to many pioneer Missionaries for evangelising the gospel of Jesus Christ to Papua New Guinea and other smaller Pacific Island Nations. Missionaries crossed the vast Pacific Ocean to spread the word of God.

1. The constitution allows Freedom of Religion therefore Papua New Guinea is always express is the Christian Nation.

The Country is known for culturally diver's with 8 hundred languages, over 1000 tribes and cultures. Unity in diversity is only made possible by word of God and not by the barrel of gun or any other unethical means such as oppression, suppression, discrimination etc.

According Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

“Religion in Papua New Guinea is predominantly Christian with traditional animism and ancestor worship still found in some places. The courts and government in both and practice upholding a constitution right to freedom of speech, thought and belief. A large majority of Papua New Guineans identify themselves as a member of a Christian Church (96%) However many combine their Christian faith with traditional indigenous belief and practices. Other religious represented in the country include the Bahai faith and Islam”.

“The 2010 Report on International Religious Freedom by the United States Department of State states that religious participations in the country are relatively peaceful and no reports of conflict are reported. Public schools host a religious subject once per week and representative of Christian churches teach the lessons and students attend the classes operated by the church of their parent's choice”. Many still believe that church brought civilization.

The main-Line Churches according to 2000 census:

- Roman Catholic Church (27.0%)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church Papua New Guinea (19.5%)
- United Church (11.5%)
- Seventh Day Adventist Church (10.0%)
- Pentecostal (8.6%)

- Evangelical Alliance (5.2)
- Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea (3.2%)
- Baptist (0.5%)
- Salvation Army (0.2%)
- Other Christian (10%)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (0.4%)
- Later day Church of Jesus Christ (0.4%)

Some Policy Statement under My Ministry

The guiding principles and the values between the church and state partnership have to be based on: productivity, sustainability and accountability and that existing partners need to be strengthened. There has to be mutual respect, honesty, transparent and equal participation must recognise the Christian principles. And that one tenth of the internal revenue to given to Churches.

There is also the contention with the word Religion as it may be too broad but we must be mindful of the rights of others and constitutional requirement of the freedom of religion. We have to be mindful that there are other religions and faith based organisations.

The general consensus for the Role of the office is to develop and improve policies legislations to enhance and strengthen work of all churches and improve coordination and monitoring of programs and provide for annual church grants.

The Church State partnership programs may include; HIV/AIDS Prevention program, National Government grants to churches, Outsourcing programs to churches – Marriage celebrants, counselling. Safe houses to Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence.

The key challenges for the government and the church in entering into these partnership may include; the fear of unequal distribution of resources depending on the size of churches, accountability, Biasness/ Intimidation, Influence, Lack of knowledge to formulate policies, lack of adequate resourcing.

The department upholds several International Conventions which the country is signatory to. And these are as follows;

1. CEDAW – Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
2. CRC – Convention on the Rights of a Child
3. CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

These legislations, policies and conventions basically shape the structure or the department. The departments is far wide and broad in nature unlike other Departments where they have specific mandate of their role and functions. The department is organic in nature, meaning whenever issues arise within the community the department is often directed to formulate policies to address and cater for it. Examples

1. **Social Protection.** -----

2. **Electronic ID Card.** -----
3. **Establishment of the Office of Religion** – Government recognises and acknowledges the role churches continue to play in service delivery. Churches have reached the areas where government services haven't reached its people and as such this office will see and enhance the role of churches to continue to deliver services where government is unable to do so. Both churches and government have one common denominator which is the people but the government cannot expand its reach without effective strategy therefore government must partner with the churches.

The Later day Saint Church of Jesus Christ Provided several vital humanitarian assistant to the Department of Youth, Religion and Community Development examples:

1. Digitize Bio data information for all Papua New Guineans. **(To be inserted into Electronic ID Card)**
2. Assistance to people living with Disabilities
3. Special Outreach program to Communities, Youth in town, villages and settlements.

I acknowledge the work of Momon Church in Papua New Guinea.

Thank you for the hospitality and God bless.

Hon. Delilah Gore

Minister for Youth, Religion and Community Development.
Government of Papua New Guinea

When Country is predominantly a Christian. New Legal issues arises and my Country is not immune to such challenges.

Example:

PNG speaker's "reformation" agenda proves divisive

Updated at 11:11 am on 8 September 2015

Opposition is mounting to so-called reformation plans by the speaker of Papua New Guinea's parliament which have seen the removal and destruction of prized cultural artefacts amid a rise in fundamentalist beliefs among some in high office.

TRANSCRIPT

The speaker of Papua New Guinea's parliament is facing mounting criticism over what he has dubbed his "reformation" campaign. Under the campaign, Theo Zurenuoc, plans to replace Parliament House's traditional cultural objects with Christian symbols such as a copy of the King James bible recently brought to PNG from America by a state-funded delegation.

However, as Johnny Blades reports, it's seen by many as an attack on PNG culture.

The Speaker's reformation campaign has seen the removal of various traditional artefacts from inside and outside the House Tamburan in the past two years. These objects Theo Zurenuoc considered to be "obscene, offensive and inappropriate" for the parliament. The director of PNG's National Museum and Art Gallery, Andrew Moutu, called Theo Zurenuoc's actions "heinous sacrilege." However the Speaker is understood to have more special plans for upcoming celebrations to mark PNG's 40th anniversary of independence. The Trade Union Congress general secretary John Paska is part of a group filing a Supreme Court reference on the constitutionality of the Speaker's actions. John Paska says public debate is needed about the issue in light of the recent surge of fundamentalist influences in parliament. He says the government needs to regulate on the separation of church and government amid what he calls increasing signs of a Zionist movement in state affairs.

JOHN PASKA: So it's quite dangerous. And his (Zurenuoc's) actions in authorising destruction of the totem poles... it's a state property, number one; and number two, he did not secure parliamentary approval for it. And so he unilaterally used his decision, it's an abuse of power, a decision to pursue his religious conviction.

Various MPs in both government and opposition have raised concern about the speaker's plans. The Bulolo MP Sam Basil says Mr Zurenuoc is an example of a disturbing trend in PNG leadership.

SAM BASIL: The weakness of Papua New Guinean people is religion. When you talk about religion, they forget about who and why you are there for them. And I think a lot of parliamentarians are now preaching instead of delivering services back home. So this is happening in my province too, and I think the speaker is one of them.

The former prime minister Sir Michael Somare warned that Mr Zurenuoc's actions may breach the constitution by imposing personal religious views when Parliamentary approval has not been sought. However, the acting parliamentary secretary Danny Puli has defended the speaker's reformation efforts.

DANNY PULI: He's been misunderstood as trying to go against culture, which is not correct. Culture, you cannot put one piece of tomato on a plate and say this is the only food in the whole world. Culture is all kinds of things put together. And we have good parts of our lives, we have bad parts of our culture as well, and so we need to sit down now as we are turning 40 years old and.. what is good for us, what is not good for us, and we need to engineer a nation forward, a diverse nation forward on a common culture.

Yet Sam Basil says members of parliament are meant to be legislators, not pastors.

SAM BASIL: I think the Speaker of parliament should go back to the seminary and become a pastor. I think he's in the wrong place. The people of Fincshafen voted him in to serve the country and make good laws and deliver services back to his district. They're not voting him in here to chop up our cultural heritage at the parliament. I think he's done the wrong thing. He should be charged for it.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Professionals' Society says it will mount a court challenge against Theo Zurenuoc's ongoing agenda. This comes after the National Council of Churches spoke out against the destruction of carvings by "a few pastors and their followers". The Speaker describes his reformation agenda as being aimed at forging national unity. So far it's proven mainly divisive.

PNG Union complains about Bible collection

A Papua New Guinea union says it will make a complaint to the Ombudsman Commission over the actions of the Parliament Speaker, which they say infringes upon people's constitutional rights.



Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister Peter O'Neill speaks at a reception for a first edition of the King James Bible given to PNG by a private US donor.

Theodore Zurenuoc led a delegation to the US to collect a 404-year-old Bible but the PNG Trade Union Congress says the more than \$US26,000 of tax payers money used to fund the trip is inappropriate.

PNGTUC General Secretary John Paska says Mr Zurenuoc, a devout christian, is using public funds to promote his own beliefs.

Mr Paska says the actions is also counter to the constitution.

"The essence of our issue remains this; he has misused public funds to pursue religious beliefs which violate constitutional rights in terms of freedom of religion and he must be taken to task on this."

Mr Paska says there are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and atheists contributing to PNG's development.

Mr Paska says Mr Zurenuoc and MPs William Powi, Anton Yagama, De Kewanu and Tobias Kulang, who were part of the nine-person official delegation, will be referred to the Ombudsman Commission.

A union leader in Papua New Guinea has written to the Governor-General and the Prime Minister seeking regulation on the principle of separation of church and Government.

The Trade Union Congress general secretary John Paska says public debate is needed about the issue in light of the recent surge of fundamentalist influences in parliament.

He has highlighted moves by parliament speaker Theo Zurenuoc to remove prized cultural artefacts from parliament house as part of his ongoing campaign to reform the legislature.

Mr Paska says there are increasing signs of a Zionist movement in PNG state affairs.

"So it's quite dangerous. And his (Zurenuoc's) actions in authorising destruction of the totem poles... it's a state property, number one; and number two, he did not secure parliamentary approval for it. And so he unilaterally used his decision, it's an abuse of power, a decision to pursue his religious conviction."



The facade of PNG's parliament, featuring a lintel of carved heads, before Speaker Theo Zurenuoc ordered their removal in late 2013.

Photo: RNZ / Johnny Blades

This information was down loaded on Radio New Zealand Webb sides.