
Stronger partnerships needed to address social challenges

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Government and the private sector must develop new partnerships to bring entire communities along PNG's development journey – especially young people.

Peter Botten, Oil Search Managing Director told delegates attending the 15th PNG Mining & Petroleum Investment Conference in Sydney that work is needed to develop sustainable non-project related activities and skills training that engage the thousands of young people in the communities.

“During the life of a 20-year LNG contract, the population will almost double. With over 50 per cent of the population in PNG under the age of 25 years, there is a real need to focus on skills development and we, as developers, must work with government to ensure we play our part in addressing these social challenges.

“It is clear what has worked in the past won't work in the future, and if we don't change how we work with our communities and Governments, we run the risk of not reaching anywhere near the full potential that this wonderful country has to deliver better lives and a prosperous economy.

“We must continue to build on partnerships with government and communities that deliver critical infrastructure including roads, schools, health centres and churches.

“We need to play a facilitation role enabling local communities to become key owners in power generation, power distribution, internet and telephone services as well as downstream developments where provision of local gas makes sense.

“We also need to focus on the trades, such as carpentry and construction skills, and build on agricultural skills in the communities, provide infrastructure connecting growers to markets, and business skills to manage their companies. We must engage the whole population, women and men, in these initiatives, bringing as many people as possible along on the development journey.”

Mr Botten who has been the driving force behind Oil Search's growth, and 25 years in the industry as Oil Search Managing Director has seen the changes that have occurred to date. He told industry delegates, which include industry players and government that new ways are needed to address these social challenges along with new partnerships with government and communities to leverage respective skills and together, address these social sensitivities.

“If we don't play our role, apart from being the right thing to do, can we really say to our shareholders and investors we can ensure our operations will continue and potential value can be delivered?”

PNG has one of the highest population growth rates in the world. The country adds a Hela Province, in terms of people, each year.

Ends.

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