Women, Violence and Modern Slavery in Papua

Map the System 2020
University of Oxford Submission

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INTRODUCTION

Our objective is to explore the systematic and causal relations between violence, colonialism and the exploitation of women in Papua by using a systems-thinking approach. Papuan women's experience of violence is inseparable from the history of power conflicts that has plagued the Land of Papua for so long (Woodman, 2020).

Positionality

The project team consists of five non-Papuan researchers each with little proximity or lived experience to the phenomena being examined. Given this, it has been important to recognize that the depth of our understanding is inevitably limited to outsiders. In responding to this understanding, our individual and shared positionalities has remained an important aspect to our team's approach.

We understand positionality as the intersection of our identities, our geographical and historical locations, and our power and privilege as researchers (Fisher, 2014). Articulating our positionality is the vital first step in Decolonising knowledge, to help identify ethical and culturally appropriate lenses that might help re-centre Indigenous women's agency. And importantly move discourses beyond the deficit narratives that problematise non-Western or developing nations and cultures.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

Background on the Region

Papua is currently divided into the independent nation-state of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and West Papua. The western-half of the island is embroiled in an Indigenous self-determination movement and anti-colonial nation-building struggle (Woodman, 2019). This movement exists in the settler colony of West Papua, a territory annexed by Indonesia 57 years ago and constituting one of the world's longest-running military occupations (Woodman, 2019).

It has been reported and estimated that over 100,000 Indigenous Papuans have been killed since the 1960s representing at least 10% of the population. The brutality of Western-backed Indonesian colonisation in West Papua is alarming and significant. However, a full exploration of the background/context is outside the scope of this paper (see Appendix 1).

The System of Modern Slavery

The systematic process of mapping modern slavery within this context has unveiled a significant nexus between the exploitation of women and the brutality of **colonisation. By using systems thinking methods, it has been identified that exploitation shares a direct relationship that feeds into a complex ecosystem of violence. This in turn reveals a significant inter-relationship** exposing some of the key drivers engendering modern slavery within the global Pacific region.

Post-Colonial Theory

Post-colonial thinkers such as Fanon (1967), Spivak (1988) and Said (1993) have long illustrated how the positional superiority of first world knowledge systems operate. They have created a world that privileges the first world position as "knower" and relegates the third world to the position of the "other" [who is passive and invisible] or learner (Chilisa, 2012).

The West has constructed the world along binary opposites of, colonizer/colonized, centre/periphery, developed/developing, first world versus third world (Chilisa, 2012, p.74). These

constructions privilege the first world and subjugate othered, marginalized and or Indigenous knowledge forms (Chilisa, 2012. p74).

Decolonising the System's Mapping Approach

Given our positioning as non-Indigenous to the region and subscribing to a western model of knowledge and theory, the project team *intentionally* applied a de-colonial theory of practice that would complement and culturally enrich the systems mapping approach.

The process of developing a de-colonial theory of practice was shaped by asking the following guiding questions:

- How do we ensure the development of a culturally appropriate framework in which to conceptualize the issues?

- How are we working to ensure we produce ethical theory and practices that do not create an unequal power dynamic between researcher and researched?

- What methodological strategies can we employ to address the inherit gap between western academic training, culture and community?

See Appendix 2 for an overview of the Indigenous Knowledges Framework and Principles that guided our approach.

SYSTEMS THINKING APPROACH

This section will now detail the methods used to develop the accompanying systems maps and models designed to visualise the systematic landscape of modern slavery in Papua. The systems thinking tools and concepts used include the following:
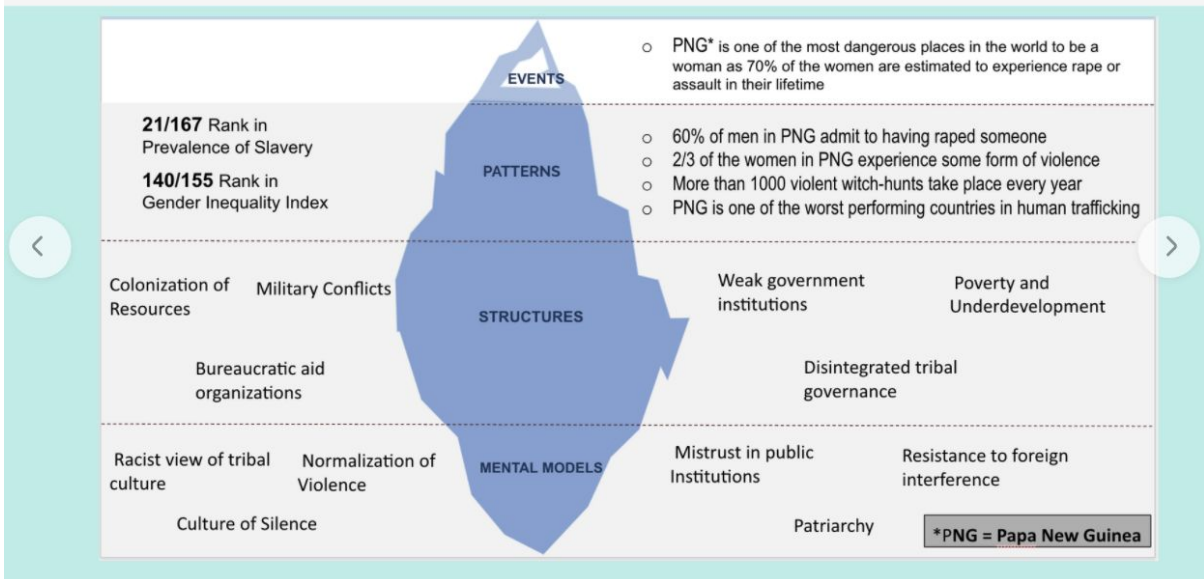
- Iceberg Model
- Stakeholder Map
- Systems Map
- Causal Loop Diagrams
- Gaps and Levers Model

Iceberg Model

To begin understanding the factors that perpetuate slavery and violence against women in Papua, we developed the Iceberg model. The model helps to distinguish between events, underlying structures and identifies the pervasive mental models specific to the Papuan communities that are contributing root causes of the issue. Through the exercise, we learnt that the human development statistics for PNG have been abysmal for decades with some deteriorating for years like the response to human trafficking.

See Appendix 3.

Iceberg Model: A Systemic Understanding of the Underlying Issues

EVENTS
- PNG* is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman as 70% of the women are estimated to experience rape or assault in their lifetime

PATTERNS
21/167 Rank in Prevalence of Slavery

140/155 Rank in Gender Inequality Index

- 60% of men in PNG admit to having raped someone
- 2/3 of the women in PNG experience some form of violence
- More than 1000 violent witch-hunts take place every year
- PNG is one of the worst performing countries in human trafficking

STRUCTURES
Colonization of Resources   Military Conflicts

Bureaucratic aid organizations

Weak government institutions   Poverty and Underdevelopment

Disintegrated tribal governance

MENTAL MODELS
Racist view of tribal culture   Normalization of Violence

Culture of Silence

Mistrust in public Institutions   Resistance to foreign interference

Patriarchy

*PNG = Papa New Guinea

Stakeholder Map

The stakeholder map displays the stakeholders within the ecosystem surrounding women in Papua. Each concentric ring (layer 1, 2 and 3) starting in the middle and moving outwards represents different levels of removed interaction within the system.

See Appendix 4.

Causal Loops

We used the Causal Loops method (Appendix 5) to identify and examine the institutions responsible for these developmental outcomes. This enabled us to go beyond the direct factors and identify underlying structural issues like weak institutions, unequal economic developmental models and clashes between traditional and modern cultural systems that play a significant role in causing this problem. Causal loops were then integrated into our systems map as described below.

Systems Map

Link to systems map: https://embed.kumu.io/fe1f71110c7ac139545b6d80349b5921

Women of Papua New Guinea are faced with a complex array of issues that include, cultural destruction, political repression, poverty, HIV, alcohol addiction, exclusion from economic structures, land dispossession, environmental poisoning and degradation that harm women in ways specific to the daily lives of Papuans (Woodman, 2020). Poverty, violence and economic vulnerability are endemic to women across the world. However, there are a specific set of circumstances within Papua New Guinea that **embed a deeper level of gender inequality rooted in the region's history of imperial, patriarchal, colonialism.** It is important to note that these circumstances all work in direct relation to **maintaining a structure of global inequality** that benefits the West. But is also influenced by Western international diplomacy and aid efforts directed at Papua.

The lack of strong institutions including, educational and legal, have caused the Papua New Guinean economy to rely on natural resource exploitation including agriculture, forestry, mining and petroleum. This creates a strong narrative of instrumental value of Papua New Guinea, perpetuating the colonialist perspective of exploitation. When the economy of a country has been

forced into exploitative and colonial ideologies by the international community, then the people of the country are not immune to this extreme inequality and devaluation trauma.

We argue that violence against women is more extreme in Papua New Guinea than anywhere else in the world because of the nuances of this socio-political coloniality. Which has created the social conditions for a country's economic and cultural institutions to rely on the exploitation and commoditization of women.

Deep Structure/Root Causes

The deep structure of our system map relies on five key and strongly correlated areas:

1. Modernisation/Colonisation
2. Weak Institutions and Governance Structures
3. Normalization of Violence
4. Patriarchy
5. International Diplomacy

1. Modernisation/Colonisation

The first is Modernization (or colonisation), which involves the shift of Papua New Guinea's society, culture and economy away from the traditional form. With the influence of the money economy traditional customs were monetized and valued according to their economic contribution. This meant that women were seen more in terms of their economic value and began to be commoditized. This happened through the trafficking of women, and the sale of women such as Bride Price and Sister Exchange.

Women became exchangeable commodities for use in the money economy, which the local economy then began to rely on as they did not have other valuable assets to trade. This resulted in the inherent value of women decreasing, which meant that the economy did not value educated women. This decline in education completion rates lead to a lack of employment opportunities for women.

The lack of formal employment opportunities led women to relying on their marketplace income for their entire income. As marketplace incomes are based on selling food from subsistence farming, it was more vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations, which perpetuates the cycle of low income and underdeveloped economy due to the lack of recognition of the value of women's economic participation.

The underdeveloped Papuan economy then relies on its natural resources, which involves the mining industry. The mining industry is male dominated, which perpetuates the lack of employment opportunities for women.

2. Weak Institutions and Governance Structures

This modernization challenged Papuan core social and cultural structures, which leads to the second area; weak institutions and governance structures. The absence of a strong rule of law means that there is little to no incentive for people to train and practice law as their profession is not upheld in society. This leads to a paucity of trained lawyers which are then unable to cover the high amount of crime against women. The lack of lawyers leads to low conviction rates of violence against women, as the legal system lacks the capacity to prosecute and convict perpetrators. As there is a clear lack of outcome for perpetrators of violence, there is no incentive for women to report violence to the police.

These weak legal institutions result in an inability to adhere to international agreements which mean that there is little to no accountability for the perpetrators. As these perpetrators are

unpunished and unrecognised, they continue to govern important institutions in society, meaning that women are significantly underrepresented in institutions that could prevent or stop this cycle of violence.

This carries over to the healthcare industry where there is an absence of women health care workers as women are not educated or employed nor do they have any decision-making power in these institutions. This leads to women developing health problems and becoming isolated due to these issues preventing them from participating and engaging in the community and economy. This further drives the devaluation of women in society. It also has a direct impact of normalising violence in the community, as people are not punished for it.

3. Normalisation of Violence

Due to this normalization of violence, society members justify it, as a normal and understandable part of everyday life. This leads to a widespread prevalence in violent behaviour as it is both justified and normalized, which further perpetuates violence against women. The normalization of violence against women is both shaped by and perpetuates Patriarchy in Papua. The patriarchal structures are built into the Western Christian gender norms of the religion, leading to patriarchal churches.

4. Patriarchy

Patriarchal churches directly perpetuate the normalization of violence cycle as the male church leaders never address violence or state that it is wrong. Due to the significance of the male church leaders, the traditional value of women's roles in the community is diminished resulting in an increase in viewing women as instrumentally valuable, instead of socially and inherently valuable. This encourages women to be used as sacrificial objects which exacerbates the violence against them.

This exacerbated violence then provokes foreign interference through aid budgets and military engagement, which further enforces a patriarchal approach to women. This exploitative nature of patriarchy influences a societal structure that creates clearly defined gender roles, which can result in women's financial dependence on men.

Due to the lack of employment opportunities and education, and their reduced involvement in society and culture, there is a distortion of traditional marital norms which results in the acceptance of practices such as polygamy. This is a cycle of the devaluation of women and one clear outcome is the threat of sorcery violence against women.

This threat is directly related to the devaluation of women because women are used as sacrificial objects to help the community understand particular accidents or occurrences. This threat, ever present and pernicious, alienates women. This itself is extremely dangerous because physically and socially isolated women are targeted by community and sorcery violence.

5. International Drivers

This extremity of violence attracts international aid and diplomacy efforts. This means that the violence against women is seen as a humanitarian crisis and the funding that is sent from neighbouring countries and international bodies is purposed and given to charity and rehabilitation. Instead of structural reforms, informed by the culturally appropriate expertise and authority of community lead grassroots actors and their initiatives. This means that the capacity to address issues on a broader scale are reduced to being only reactionary rather than preventative and there is a lack of outcomes from this funding. These lack of outcomes mean there is a lack of support for women, and the cycle of violence is perpetuated.

UNDERSTANDING EXISTING SOLUTIONS

Solutions Landscape

Government	Non-Government	Business	Local Community
Flow of power and influence →			
Family Protection Act (FPA) 2013 legislation	**Papua New Guinea (PNG) Law Reform Commission** research on violence	**PNG Women in Coffee Association**- coffee supply chain group fighting exploitation of women in coffee farming/business	**Kup Women for Peace** a women-led peace focused coalition
Royal PNG Constabulary's Women's Advisory Network which improves work conditions for female officers	International NGO's such as **Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Child Fund**	**PNG Business Coalition for Women (BCFW)** Skills training and policy development for female employment	**Wide Bay conservation association** supports women to have control over land and resources decisions
UN agreements like CEDAW - the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women ratified by PNG in 1995	**Liberty Shared** – data collection and mapping for trafficking victims	**Pacific RISE**- Aus. Govt Pacific focused impact investment fund with the largest gender lense investing mandate	**Eastern Highlands Family Voice Eastern Highlands Family Voice** provide direct counselling, referral services and paralegal advice to victims of violence
Australian Aid programs including the **Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program**	Medicin San Frontiers (MSF) and **Family Support Centres** focused on health care.	**Bel isi PNG**- Private business consultation for employee protection against domestic abuse.	**Voice for Change** addresses gender based violence and economic participation

1. PNG Governmental Efforts

In 2013, due to increasing international media attention, PNG **repealed the archaic Sorcery Act** and committed to international obligations to protect women from violence. PNG also passed the **Family Protection Act (FPA) 2013** that criminalized any form of violence against women.

While the laws are stricter now, removing any reference to specific kinds of violence like sorcery and witchcraft created a legal vacuum for an issue that is still a part of the lives of New Guineans. The under-resourced male-dominated state is also **failing to enforce these laws**, intensifying the sense of impunity among the perpetrators, as well as the preference of **village courts** for mediation rather than law enforcement.

2. Local Efforts

At the community level, **Femili PNG and City Mission** are the largest NGOs in PNG, providing shelter and legal services to the survivors of violence. In addition to these city-based NGOs, **Kafe Women's Association** and **Kup Women for Peace** are key activist networks led by women survivors that work with the communities, especially men as agents of change. They are using technology like Radio, TV and Facebook to reach out to men and women in the remotest parts of the country.

Churches play an integrating role in the community, bringing together the 800 different languages spoken in PNG. Some churches use a 5-point strategy to tackle abuse by creating social accountability among the perpetrators, diffusing local disputes through early interventions and instilling respect for law through prayer meetings.

While immediate relief measures are necessary to alleviate hardships and protect survivors, the approach of changing mind-sets appears to be more sustainable on a long run.

3. Global Efforts

Being a powerful neighbour, Australia aligned its aid program with a gender lens. The **PNG Incentive fund** provides grants to local organizations focused on empowering women. The aid is

also used to **train police forces** fighting domestic and sexual violence and creating safe spaces for women in cities as a part of the **UN Women Safe Cities.** Though well intended, these programs lack community participation in their design and do not target the root-causes of violence that underlie the societal structures. Australia's conflicting interests in PNG's resources also restricts aid from addressing core issues of self-reliance and westernization.

Regarding international best practice, the **Ugandan Raising Voices Campaign** raises awareness of domestic violence through support networks around arts, media and in person discussions. Their framework has been so successful that it is now adopted in Latin America and the Caribbean.

GAPS AND LEVERS OF CHANGE

GAPS & LEVERS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE
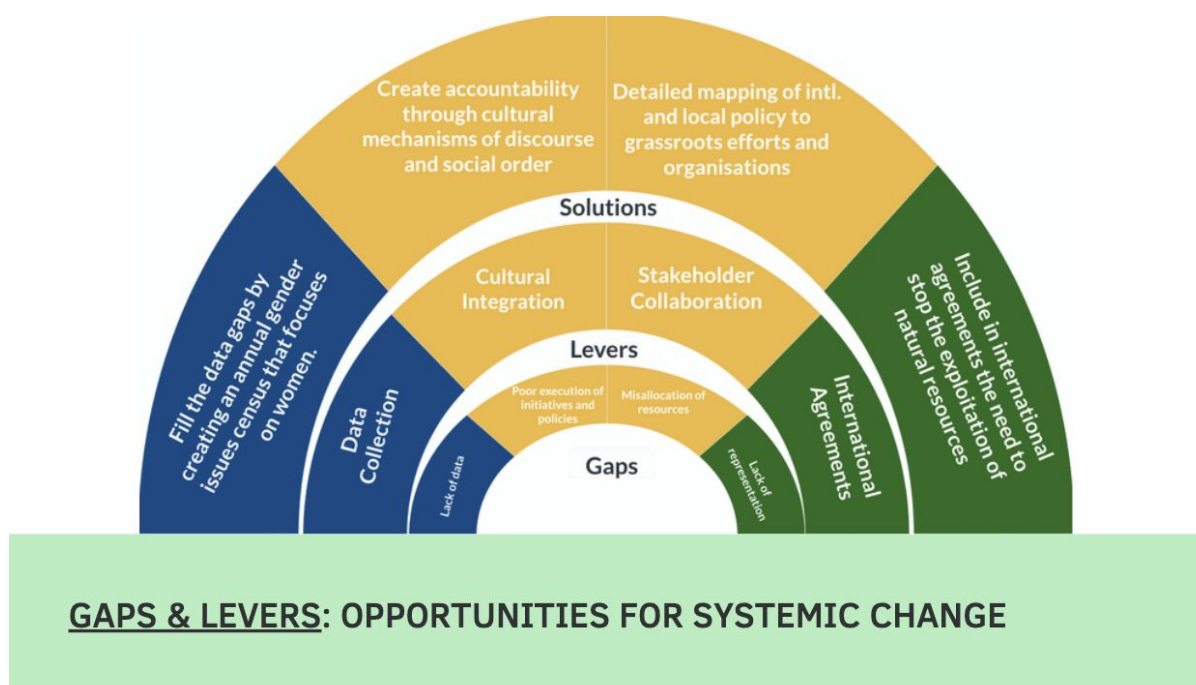
While these efforts are constructive, there are certain gaps that restrict system change. A major gap is the lac**k of women's representation in institutions** that leads to patriarchal structures reinforcing exploitation. Considering the power dynamics between big nations like Australia, International agreements like **CEDAW** can be an effective lever to nudge the nation to have more women in their institutions, especially the police and justice systems.

Another significant gap is the **disconnection between policies and local cultures.** New Guinea is by far the most culturally dense region in the world and solutions must avoid reproducing intellectual hegemony and be co-designed within communities. For example, ignoring the role of the male-governed wantok system's in the treatment of women. It encourages favours that help men avoid state sanctioned punishment for crimes committed against women, threatening good governance. However, the system could instead be utilised to shape discourse on gender-equality.

There is also a **lack of collaboration across institutions** to make lasting progress and it is imperative that solutions are collaborative. To illustrate this, we evoke the metaphor of the traditional Bilum weaving, a practice passed down over generations of women that is transformative and liberatory praxis for indigenous women globally. It represents the multiple and layered processes by which intercultural solutions can be developed (Pamphilon,2015). Therefore, we need to build platforms where **best practices can be shared and nurtured across power hierarchies** like the threads that tie together to tell the stories of equality and peace.

Lastly, another crucial **missing link is that of data.** There is little to no evidence of the conviction rate of violence against women in Papua New Guinea and there is no clear data on the number of women killed by witch-hunts annually. This paucity of data further removes any possibility of accountability, rendering the women more vulnerable and invisible to the international community and national government.

KEY INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Mapping the system of modern slavery and violence against women in New Guinea has revealed the **significant interconnectedness between cultural norms and economic institutions** that are often and **detrimentally analysed separately**. It has highlighted the **unintended negative consequences that high-level policy decisions** often have at the community level when they are made without community-level engagement. This methodology challenged our assumptions that high-level policy engagement is the most important first-step to creating long-lasting norm change, as it showed us that the **people with the best understanding of the problem are often excluded from this process**. It showed us how self-determined grassroots action are currently excluded from these policy and program design processes, limiting their effectiveness and retrenching further disempowerment of the women at the heart of the problem. Most shockingly to our team, as a team made up of majority Australians and neighbouring countries, the systems mapping process revealed **the economic benefits of the systems of commercial, societal, cultural and political slavery in the region, revealing the embedded vested interest in maintaining the status quo.**

Our hope is to gain much more than a learning experience and to deliver a systems analysis tool that can be used by the Papuan community to help **articulate self-determined and sovereign solutions** toward their continued fight for freedom and justice.

APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

As our project takes inspiration from de-colonial and Indigenous methods, we have chosen to focus on Papua as a whole rather than view the issue of violence as located in countries, states, and borders defined and defended through processes of colonisation. The Papua region has rich natural resources, including minerals and forests, and projects to exploit these resources have brought revenue to governments, as well as challenges - as the World Bank (2013: 3) noted, in PNG "substantial mineral wealth is not yet being transformed into sustainable and equitable improvements for women, men, girls and boys." Further, modernization and the growing prominence and dominance of the cash economy and global market economy has also profoundly affected gender roles and dynamics in Papua and variously complicated and monetized ancestral practices and relationships among people and 'property' (World Bank, 2013).

While our project focuses on how *contemporary* systems perpetuate slavery as a form violence in Papua, the histories of conflict, power, and interaction with Western countries, companies, and institutions must be considered alongside the systems at this current point in time because contemporary violence and the systems that perpetuate it are a product of these histories. Further, these histories of colonisation, development, modernisation, and corporate exploration invite a careful consideration of the role of Western nations and the various ways in which they are connected to historical and contemporary violence in Papua.

In addition, close attention to these histories provides opportunities to learn from women's agency, and to critically consider how apparent solutions are developed and the kinds of futures that are imagined for Papua. For instance, in the case of West Papua "Westerners working with the West Papuans must both recognise the immense pressures placed on them to conform to a particular bourgeois-capitalist model of national modernity, whilst avoiding aggravating these pressures."

The tendency to point to the (formation of) a functioning modern nation-state and associated institutions as a key factor in resolving conflicts for power and sovereignty *and* addressing issues such as violence against women in Papua overlooks alternative visions of Indigenous governance that may also provide modes of addressing systems of violence.

APPENDIX 2: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK & PRINCIPLES

Using an Indigenous Knowledges Framework

Many First Nation's and Indigenous Oceanic theorist draws upon the post-colonial notion that knowledge is not neutral but rather subjective and based on unequal structures of power (Foucault, 1980). This study recognizes that one of the core functions for using an Indigenous knowledge's lens is the opportunity to reposition and or re-distribute the flow of power between the colonizer and colonized.

Applying a theoretical lens that centres and privileges the knowledge and experiences of the key Indigenous women at the centre, enabled us to apply systems mapping thinking in a way that disrupts and challenges the validity and practices of Eurocentric models and constructions of knowledge.

Indigenous Knowledges Principles

The following principles establish the protocols for the next stage of the process, including:

1. ***Relationality:*** A person's relationship/ proximity to the issue as an insider or outsider. Determines who has the cultural authority to speak on the issue.

2. ***Respect and Reciprocity:*** Acknowledges the autonomy of Indigenous systems of social and cultural knowledge, customs and societal.

3. ***Responsibility:*** What are our obligations and accountability to the communities?

These core principles of Indigenous knowledges theory ensure our analysis and interpretation of the solutions landscape is culturally responsive, appropriate and not intellectually dispossessing. It is framed from within a position that acknowledges the nexus between power and knowledge, but more importantly enables the project to produce outcomes that ensure the central stakeholders remain key agents, co-curators and "experts" in the articulation and analysis of their own lives and lived experiences.

APPENDIX 3: ICEBERG MODEL INPUTS

See page 10-11 in our visual systems map for Appendix 3.

APPENDIX 4: STAKEHOLDER MAP

See pages 3-6 in our visual systems map for Appendix 4.

APPENDIX 5: CAUSAL LOOPS

See pages 12-22 in our visual systems map for Appendix 5.