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Profiling local-level governments and districts in Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

Are the districts and local-level governments (LLGs) better placed to deliver services at the local level? In 2008, the National Research Institute (NRI) initiated a project to address this question. The profiling of districts and LLGs was an attempt to gather information on the status of the districts and LLGs in relation to their infrastructure, human resources, administration, and service delivery responsibilities.

The profiling was to determine the capacity of the districts and LLGs, and also to provide an analysis of the findings.

Several sample districts and LLGs in the Southern Region were profiled, including:

- **LLGs:** Rigo Central Rural, Mekeo/Kuni Rural, Huhu Rural, Alotau Urban, Kerema Central, Kiunga Rural, and Tufi Rural.
- **Districts:** Rigo, Kairuku, Alotau, Tufi Subdistrict, Kerema, and North Fly.

The profiling took place between June and October 2008. The profiling team was led by Dr. Alphonse Gelu, with Emmanuel Pok, Jennifer Adema, and Jeffrey Murley, as field assistants.

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good governance, and more informed decision making**

Purpose of the profiling

The profiling exercise was conducted after the national government made a shift to funding districts in the country. For the first time, the Government is directly funding the districts through the District Support Improvement Program (DSIP). This program is administered through the Office of Rural Development and focuses on improving capacity at the district level.

Capacity in the districts and LLGs has been the government's main agenda. However, the term 'capacity' has become vague and needs proper definition. This paper defines capacity as 'the resources that are available and which would assist the districts, the LLGs, and their personnel to effectively deliver services to the people', and uses it to refer to a wide range of resources. For example:

- human resources, such as staff training, skills, qualification, and so on;
- transportation;
- money/funds;
- buildings;
- utilities – electricity and telephone;
- roads and bridges;
- furniture and office equipment;
- service delivery plans;
- maintenance of law and order;
- presence of relevant government agencies;
- political commitment and leadership/management; and
- good governance – accountability/transparency/rule of law.

For the Government to address capacity at the district and LLG levels, improvements have to be made to these resources. It is apparent that the majority of the 89 districts and 305 LLGs lack most of these resources. Despite the DSIP, there are outstanding issues that need to be addressed at the district and LLG levels in terms of their capacity to use funding in a transparent manner, and most importantly, to spend the money on impact driven projects, and how to account for the use of the funds.

As well as the direct funding of districts, there is an initiative by the European Union to strengthen districts and LLGs in Papua New Guinea. A K65 million agreement has been signed by the Government of Papua New Guinea and the European Union.

The profiling exercise was timely and the analysis of the data hopefully will inform the government on the status of lower-level governments in the country. The resulting information will be stored at NRI as part of its database on decentralisation.

Methodology

A questionnaire was prepared and used in the profiling exercise. The key individuals involved in providing information included the district administrators, health advisers, education advisers, local-level government managers, and the presidents of local-level governments.

The sourcing of information was done through a survey which saw the researchers visiting the districts and LLGs. One of the important components of the profiling was to examine the status of the infrastructure in the districts and LLGs, which required the researchers to obtain first-hand information about the districts and LLGs. The profiling exercise also assessed the status of educational and health infrastructure in the districts and LLGs, as well as the delivery of these services. These are two important services, and the information obtained will be useful in determining their status.

Critical areas for profiling

The profiling was done for both the districts and the LLGs. The health and education survey was carried out only for the districts and not the LLGs. For example:

- **LLGs:** councillors (number and gender), administrative staff, infrastructure, funding and meetings, economic activities, and others.
- **Districts:** district administrator, open Member of Parliament, administrative structure and staffing, security and police, utilities, infrastructure, funding and district plans, and economic activities.
- **Health Sector:** district administration/funds, staff, health centres, aidposts, utilities, and others.
- **Education Sector:** status of school infrastructure, number of teachers, number of education officers, boards of management, parents and citizens, and curriculum materials.

Purpose of the profiling

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Table 1: Local-level Governments

<p>Huhu Rural (LLG Manager)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Administration Support Grant, K2 000➢ Infrastructure Support Grant, K160 200➢ District Support Grant, K30 000➢ Provincial Support Grant, K60 200➢ Internal Revenue, K204 500• Administration<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ 14 staff — 8 full-time and 6 casuals➢ Education, Health, Agriculture, and Finance advisers➢ LLG manager has had district administration experience in Milne Bay, and is active in the LLG➢ LLG has a development plan• Infrastructure<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Office in Alotau➢ Alotau town market➢ 5 computers, 2 photocopiers, 2 printers, and one 4x4 vehicle➢ Constructed aidposts, elementary classrooms, and teachers' houses➢ Maintenance of bridges, roads, jetties, and wharves➢ LLG does not have a council chamber. Meetings held in hired venue➢ 7 banana boats purchased for health• Extension Program<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ DAL – rice seedlings, cocoa, coffee, and oil palm seedlings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infrastructure<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Office in Alotau shared with Huhu LLG➢ Computers, printers, fax, and telephone• Extension Programs<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Nil
<p>Alotau Urban (Town Manager)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Internal Revenue, K350 000➢ External Revenue, K217 000• Administration<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ 6 staff, but more needed➢ Town manager has experience in the national Public Service➢ Staff training conducted➢ LLG has a development plan	<p>Kiunga Rural (LLG Manager)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ K192 000 (2008)➢ K1 000 000 from Ok Tedi (2009)• Administration<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ 3 staff — 1 manager, 1 finance officer, and 1 assembly clerk• Infrastructure<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Share office with district administration➢ Old council chamber leased to Treasury➢ New chamber to be constructed➢ Computers, telephone, fax, printer, and photocopier➢ Proposal to fund projects in 2009➢ Four 4x4 vehicles• Extension Programs<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Provide assistance and seedlings to smallholder rubber growers
	<p>Kerema Central Rural (LLG Manager)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ K112 700 (2008)• Administration<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ 3 staff – 1 manager, 1 assembly clerk, and 1 finance officer• Infrastructure<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ LLG office in Kerema Town, but has no transport➢ Computers, printers, telephone, electricity (only after 6.00 p.m.)

- Incomplete (construction started in 2006)
- Meetings conducted in LLG office

- **Extension Programs**

- Nil

Rigo Central Rural (LLG Manager)

- **Funding**

- K82 000 (major component goes to salaries)

- **Administration**

- 8 staff — 5 full-time and 3 casuals
- Caretaker manager
- LLG has no development plan

- **Infrastructure**

- LLG has a council chamber that needs major renovation
- LLG has an office, but no phone, no computers, no proper furniture, and has no transport

- **Extension Program**

- Formerly yes, but not currently because of lack of funds
- Giving advice to farmers in cash cropping and acquiring loans for small businesses
- Potential for cash crops such as coffee, vanilla, cocoa, and rubber, but no markets

Tufi Rural (LLG Manager)

- **Funding**

- K87 400 (formerly receiving K500 000)

- **Administration**

- 3 administration staff, and 1 LLG manager
- LLG has no development plan

- **Infrastructure**

- LLG has a council chamber which is also used as the district court
- Basic furniture, but no computers or other office equipment
- VSat 80
- LLG has no electricity
- 1 dinghy with motor which broke down years ago

- **Extension Program**

- Nil

Mekeo/Kuni Rural (District Administrator)

- **Funding**

- K145 800

- **Administration**

- 10 staff (from district administration), but staff not available in the office
- LLG has a council chamber
- Office is shared with Kairuku/Hiri LLG
- LLG has no asset register
- LLG has no electricity and no telephone
- LLG has no development plan

- **Extension Programs**

- Nil, despite potential for cash cropping, such as cocoa, coffee, rubber, and vanilla, but no markets

From the profiling exercise the following issues were evident:

- LLGs are not seen as important institutions. Despite being the third level of government, LLGs have not operated as political institutions and have not been given proper recognition. The poor performance of LLGs is attributed to this perception. Unless LLGs are given proper recognition, they will continue to be ineffective, despite their strategic location at the local level.
- Not all LLGs have council chambers, which are important assets to enable them

to have their meetings.

- Those LLGs that were effective in certain aspects of service delivery were well-funded and also have an effective administrative structure. Huhu Rural LLG and Kiunga Rural LLG were the most effective in service delivery.
- Huhu Rural LLG was able to raise its own internal revenue from market fees, while Kiunga Rural LLG was able to get sufficient funds from Ok Tedi royalties. Both LLGs also funded projects within their respective areas, such as aidposts, teachers' houses and classrooms, as well as extension activities, such as agriculture.

- The other LLGs remained ineffective because of improper levels of funding, and the absence of an effective administrative structure and leadership.
- Tufi Rural LLG and Mekeo/Kuni Rural LLG were the worst off. The funding they receive is insufficient, which is evident as projects are not funded in their respective areas. Also, both LLGs do not have an administrative structure or skilled personnel. Generally, the LLGs that were profiled lacked administrative capacity.
- These two LLGs are not involved in any extension activities because of problems such as no transport, no officers and training.
- LLGs that were profiled have no development plans, including ward plans.

Table 2: Districts

<p>Alotau (District Administrator)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not available ➤ Open MP provides documents to show what funds are available and where they were spent ➤ Use of the DSIP was not mentioned • Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Total number of staff not available ➤ 5 divisions — education, health, DPI, commerce, and community development ➤ JDPBPC meets ➤ District has a development plan ➤ Open MP has his own plans, which conflict with the district plan • Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administration office has assets, such as computers, furniture, and telephone ➤ District has a boat, but no vehicles ➤ PPII assisted in the purchase of office equipment • Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All files for Alotau District were destroyed in the recent fire • Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Alotau has one of the best health services in the country ➤ Ward clinics operate in the district to service all the villages ➤ Funding of aidposts comes from the district administration • Extension Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DAL provides advice to farmers on cash crops <p>Rigo (District Planner)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ K82 000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No information given on the use of the DSIP and the involvement of the Open MP in the affairs of the district <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 13 divisions with district staff ceiling of 81 (6 vacancies) ➤ Restructure done to organisational structure ➤ JDPBPC meets once a year in Port Moresby ➤ District plan is available • Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administration office is in good condition ➤ District has computers and printers ➤ Electricity and telephone are available ➤ District vehicles are provided ➤ Heavy equipment is no longer in running condition because of closure of the Works Division • Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ School infrastructure in bad condition, for example, Kwikila Secondary School ➤ Require more teaching materials at all levels ➤ District education office does not have adequate furniture, office equipment, or proper office and support staff • Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4 health centres (3 operational, 1 closed) ➤ 33 aidposts (23 operational, 10 closed) ➤ Health centre at Kwikila Station, but the ward clinics are run down ➤ 12 staff only, but divisional staff ceiling is 41 ➤ Vacant positions currently occupied by unattached officers ➤ No regular supply of drugs ➤ Still effective in providing services ➤ No transport available for the Health Division
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- **Extension Programs**
 - District no longer carries out extension services in agriculture, fisheries, and other areas

North Fly

- **Funding**
 - K15.5 million as annual funding, including LLGs
 - K28.4 million for education
 - K1 million for rubber project
 - Open MP visits on the request of the district administrator
 - District Treasury is effective
- **Administration**
 - 16 program divisions, 136 district staff (29 vacancies, but recent appointments made)
 - Effective in carrying out their duties
 - Restructure done in the past
 - JDPBPC meets four times a year, but sometimes urgent meetings are called
 - District has a plan for 2009-2012, which is under review and will be launched in 2009
- **Infrastructure**
 - District administration office is in good condition
 - Plans to build a new office complex has been budgeted for under OTML tax credit scheme
 - District has a fleet of vehicles
 - Office equipment, such as computers, printers, fax, and other items are available
 - Telephone and electricity are available
 - District has a water supply system
- **Education**
 - 15 schools closed because of inadequate number of teachers
 - Need more curriculum materials
 - Some schools are undergoing renovations, but more schools need renovating
- **Health**
 - 98 staff in the Health Division and all positions are filled
 - No divisional organisational chart
 - 2 health centres
 - 33 aidposts (17 closed because of lack of funds to pay wages)
 - Supply of drugs is adequate
 - Aidposts run by two mission agencies – ECPNG and Catholic Church
- **Extension Programs**
 - Nil

Kairuku (District Administrator)

- **Funding**
 - K50 500 annual budget
- **Administration**
 - 8 program divisions, with a staff ceiling of 66 (55 attached and 11 unattached)
 - District administrator assumed office two weeks prior to our visit
 - JDPBPC meets once a year in Port Moresby
 - District has no development plans
- **Infrastructure**
 - Hiri office located at Konedobu
 - Open MP has no office in the district
 - District has an office that is shared with the district treasury, but needs renovating
 - No basic office equipment such as computers, printers, fax, and so on, and no proper furniture
 - District has no electricity and no water supply
 - Telephone available (VSAT)
 - Tall grass covered the Works Depot
 - DAL station has been abandoned
 - List of assets is available
 - District has no vehicles
- **Education**
 - Bush materials used for elementary classrooms, while primary classrooms are semi-permanent
 - Classrooms and teachers' houses need major renovations
 - Church-run schools are well-maintained in terms of infrastructure
 - Elementary teachers need training
 - Sufficient curriculum materials are available for teachers, but students lack resource materials
 - High rate of teacher absenteeism in the district
 - No patrols made to schools, as no transport is available
- **Health**
 - 37 staff in the district, but some positions are vacant
 - 3 health centres are operational (2 government owned, and 1 church-run)
 - Bereina Health Centre is run down, and has no electricity, no water supply, and patients prepare food out in the open
 - Government health centres have no ambulance, and rely on the Catholic-run health centre
 - Catholic-run health centre is very effective

- 11 aidposts are all government owned (only 4 are operational)
- Aidposts use Digicel phones
- **Extension Programs**
 - Formerly did this, but there is now no transport to get officers out to the villages
 - Huge potential for cash crop cultivation

Kerema (Assistant Administration Officer)

- **Funding**
 - Not available in Kerema Town
- **Administration**
 - 8 program divisions, with 146 staff
 - No restructure has been done
 - JDPBPC meetings are held quarterly in Port Moresby
 - The district has no development plan and operates with uncertainty
- **Infrastructure**
 - District offices in Malalaua
 - Open MP does not have an office in the district, but visits twice every 3 months
 - District office needs renovating
 - District has computers, typewriters, and furniture
 - Electricity is available only at night
 - Reliable telephone service is available

- District has no vehicles and no boats

- **Education**
 - School infrastructure is in poor condition, particularly the classrooms and teachers' houses
 - Schools lack basic teaching materials
 - Shortage of teachers in the District
 - Salaries for teachers arrive late
 - Training is needed on new education reforms

- **Health**
 - Health Division is based in Malalaua

- **Extension Programs**
 - Nil

Tufi (Assistant District Administrator)

- **Funding**
 - Not available, as information is in District Headquarters, Ijivitari
- **Administration**
 - Staff ceiling is 35 and there are 35 staff employed
 - District has 77 program divisions
 - 2 JDPBPC meetings are held in Popondetta each year
 - District has no development plan

From the profiling exercise, the following observation was made:

- There was widespread deterioration of infrastructure, such as offices, furniture, public servants' houses, transport, and so on, particularly in Kairuku and Tufi.
- There were no efficient and regular water supplies, and many former regular water supplies have broken down.
- Staff shortages were faced in all districts, and no training or recruitment had been done to fill vacant positions.
- Staff cannot perform their roles because of a lack of transportation and means of communication, particularly in Tufi, Kairuku, and Kerema.
- There was no clear delineation of authority from provincial administrations, particularly in Tufi and Kerema.
- Inadequate funding is a problem faced in all the districts.
- Some districts do not have electricity or a proper means of communication, particularly in Kairuku and Tufi.
- The JDPBPC is ineffective because of the ad hoc meetings that were held, and the deliberations of the committees were unknown particularly in Kairuku, Tufi, and Kerema.
- No districts had any knowledge of the DSIP or how the funds were used.
- Some districts do not have district plans, particularly Tufi and Kerema.
- Health centres were closed because of lack of manpower and shortages of drug supplies.
- Health centre infrastructure is poor, particularly in Tufi, Kerema, Mekeo-Kuni, Rigo, and Kiunga. Health centres operated by churches were better managed and have proper infrastructure as well as transport, buildings, and so on.
- In all districts, schools are facing problems with teaching materials, school supplies, lack of teachers, and deterioration of school infrastructure.
- Church-run health centres and schools have better facilities and regular supplies of drugs and school materials, compared to government-owned services.

Conclusion

The profiling was an important exercise as it revealed the strengths and weaknesses that are inherent within the districts and LLGs. The profiling also revealed the poor capacity levels to enable districts and LLGs to effectively perform their roles.

With the recent attention given to the districts by the national government, it is only appropriate to determine the capacity levels of the lower-level governments.

The work is descriptive, but the data provide greater opportunities for analysis, especially by identifying the current weaknesses and strengths of the districts and LLGs.

The districts and LLGs are important agencies of the government – the LLGs as the third level of government, and the districts as the administrative machinery for implementing the agendas of the provincial government and the LLGs. The poor

performance of LLGs that was uncovered in the profiling resulted from the LLGs being ignored and not being given recognition, as the third level of government. Instead, the districts, which are supposed to be servicing the LLGs, have been given prominence in terms of funding and administrative support.

From the profiling, it is clear that districts and LLGs face greater challenges in terms of their capacities. It was evident that many do not get sufficient funding from the national government and provincial governments. Once funding is improved, it would reignite the roles and responsibilities of the districts and LLGs in service delivery. If the current trend continues, the districts and LLGs will continue to be institutions that exist, but do not have the capacity to deliver services to the people.

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New Publications from the National Research Institute

1. Monograph No. 40, **The Quest for Good Governance: A Survey of Literature on the Reform of Intergovernmental Relations in Papua New Guinea**, by Dr. Alphonse Gelu (K45).
2. Special Publication No. 50, **Options for the Restructure of Decentralised Government in Papua New Guinea**, by Dr. Alphonse Gelu and Prof. Andrew Axline (eds.), (K15).

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