



Stakeholder Briefing Kit

Monday 6 July 2009

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NRI reports reveal major priorities for electoral reform in PNG

Guaranteeing 'one person, one vote' should be the highest priority for the PNG Electoral Commission and all other stakeholders in ensuring that elections in PNG are free and fair and to eliminate corruption of the electoral process.

This is the primary message of two research reports into the 2007 National General Elections undertaken by the National Research Institute (NRI). These reports, coordinated and co-authored by Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Ray Anere, outline important priorities for electoral reform based on the NRI's own analysis of the 2007 General Elections, as well as the experience coordinating the National Domestic Observation study with Dr. Nicole Haley.

The two reports are entitled, 'Priorities for a Free and Fair Election: An NRI Issues Analysis', and '2007 Domestic Observation Report', and were launched on Monday 6 July 2009 at the NRI's Conference Centre.

Dr. Anere said that the foremost priority identified in the report entitled 'Priorities for a Free and Fair Election: An NRI Issues Analysis', is the urgent need to develop a common roll that protects the fundamental principle of one person, one vote.

He said:

"A new common roll was developed for the 2007 Elections, and although it contained 1.4 million fewer names, it remained vulnerable to manipulation and administrative inaccuracy at every stage of the enrolment and verification process".

"This report suggests that it wasn't necessarily a new common roll that was required, but a new system of voter registration and identification to end multiple voting, prevent the attempted manipulation of the roll, and minimise administrative errors".

"The need for a watertight voter registration and identification system emerges as the most significant priority for PNG".

Both reports found that the 2007 National

General Elections were an improvement from the 2002 Elections. This was due to the mobilisation of security throughout the four regions and the whole-of-government coordination across agencies and stakeholders under the new Interdepartmental Elections Committee (IDEC).

The Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system awareness drive also covered an unprecedented number of citizens, especially in the rural areas. Even the polling day seemed calmer, and unlike the 2002 Elections, all seats were declared.

However, it was evident that the electoral roll continued to be seriously abused and undermined in the 2007 Elections.

Dr. Anere said there was a widespread absence of a secret ballot, and in a number of electorates, it was apparent that the results were influenced and interfered with during the polling and counting processes.

He said that these issues had beset elections in the past and will continue to do so if the leaders and policy makers are not committed enough to major reform.

As a consequence of these findings a second recommendation of the National Research Institute's *Priorities for a Free and Fair Election* is to make a 'single, safe, and secret ballot' the central objective that guides the planning of agencies involved. A **single** ballot emphasises the importance of 'one person one vote', a **safe** ballot focuses on achieving an election free from violence and corruption, and a **secret** ballot focuses on guaranteeing the rights of all Papua New Guineans to vote freely and without influence or intimidation.

Dr. Thomas Webster, Director of the NRI, said the Institute, as the leading think tank on policy research, aims to bring out these issues to stimulate thinking and to generate debate and discussions.

He said the two reports portray the recurring theme of 'One person, one vote', that all should aspire to for electoral reform.

This Stakeholder Briefing Kit is intended to provide background information about the two Elections Reports.

A Brief on the Reports

Discussion Paper No. 107, 'Priorities for a Free and Fair Election: An NRI Issues Analysis', by Dr. Ray Anere and Katherine Wheen

This report identifies and evaluates the key issues that underpin free and fair elections in Papua New Guinea. This report is intended to be a 'health check' on these issues in order to mark a path towards future reform. The report draws from a wide range of sources – bringing together findings and recommendations from the Domestic Observation, and other analyses of the 2007 Elections. It also includes some analysis of the 2007 official electoral results.

Special Publication No. 52, '2007 Domestic Observation Report', by Dr. Ray Anere and Dr. Nicole Haley

For the first time in PNG's history, domestic observers were mobilised to monitor and review the elections. The exercise was coordinated by the National Research Institute (NRI), and funded by AusAID, through the Electoral Support Program, Phase 2 (ESP 2). The purpose of the exercise was to generate and analyse quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide an impartial, accurate assessment of the 2007 Elections. This report documents the findings of this exercise.

Executive Summary

Priorities for a Free and Fair Election: An NRI Issues Analysis

The 2007 National Elections were a considerable improvement from the 2002 Elections, where extensive malpractice and violence were widespread. In 2007, the mobilisation of security was superior, as was the whole-of-government coordination across agencies and stakeholders under the new Interdepartmental Elections Committee (IDEC).

Voter awareness on the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system covered an unprecedented number of citizens, particularly in rural areas. Polling day was mostly calmer, and unlike the 2002 Elections, all seats were declared.

However, it was evident that the electoral roll continued to be seriously abused and undermined in the 2007 Elections. In addition, there was a widespread absence of a secret ballot, and in a number of electorates, it is apparent that the results were influenced and interfered with during the polling and counting processes. These issues have beset elections in the past and will continue to do so without the commitment of leaders and policy makers to major reform.

The need for a watertight voter registration and identification system emerges as the most significant priority for PNG. A new common roll was developed for the 2007 Elections, and although it contained 1.4 million fewer names, it remained vulnerable to manipulation and administrative inac-

curacy at every stage of the enrolment and verification process.

This report suggests that it wasn't necessarily a new common roll that was required, but a new system of voter registration and identification to end multiple voting, prevent the attempted manipulation of the roll, and minimise administrative errors. The arguments for a biometric voter registration and identification system that collects photos, fingerprints, and other data are compelling. A pilot study on the feasibility of biometrics and the use of such systems elsewhere is an urgent priority. This would be the first step towards getting a voter registration implementation plan in place, by 2010, ready for the 2012 Elections.

The second priority that is identified is the need to make a 'safe, single, and secret ballot' the central theme of the 2012 Elections. This would create an objective for all agencies, stakeholders, and citizens to collectively work towards. Giving 'a safe, single and secret ballot' the same level of emphasis that was given to LPV in 2007, would create a greater level of demand for more orderly and safe polling. It would also provide a clear objective for the operational plans for the key coordinating agencies. To be successful, this strategy would need the full support of Papua New Guinea's current political leaders.

The third and fourth priorities are

essentially about greater safeguards for the electoral process as a whole. They focus on improving security and the conduct of the count, to reinforce every stage of the electoral process. Security at the 2007 Elections, particularly in the Highlands Region, was excellent.

As the role of security personnel grows, it will become necessary to develop a National Security Framework, in order to maximise the involvement of different agencies and ensure that their roles are clear. The development of an Elections Security Tool Kit and Training Program would create a standard resource that can continue to be refined with every election.

Ensuring that the size of the security mobilisation is adequate for the level of threat in key electorates is essential, as is ensuring the real and/or perceived independence of security personnel.

Formalising the use of electronic counting, so that its usage is directed by law in certain predetermined circumstances, such as recounts, close results, and by-elections resulting from disputed results, is also required. At present, electronic counting is permitted by law but can be applied with some discretion. The choice to use — or not use — electronic counting should not be a political one. Many countries have also used electronic data entry systems during manual counting.

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This should be piloted in PNG.

In addition to these priority areas, a set of key electoral issues where further reform is needed to bring greater fairness and integrity to the PNG electoral system has been identified. These issues require further detailed analysis, and include:

- the need for a review of the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC), citing ongoing problems with the integrity of political parties and candidates;
- improving the impact of the new LPV voting system by reducing the number of candidates, and further analysis and awareness;
- the need for further research on the policy options for increasing women's representation in parliament; and
- the need to expand future civic engagement strategies for voter awareness and domestic observation.

Other countries are achieving significant improvements in electoral management as part of major packages of reform, which are supported by a growing body of international expertise. An analysis of these programs would be valuable for PNG.

In many cases, the National Research Institute intends to take up these vital policy issues as part of our ongoing Election Studies Program, collaborating, wherever possible, with key stakeholders.

In other nations, it is often a crisis of governance that delivers the impetus to undertake a substantial reform of electoral systems, which was the case in Bangladesh and Sierra Leone. Papua New Guinea has not descended into such a crisis and has achieved a level of political stability that is a credit to the country, its people, and its leaders. However, a political crisis should not necessarily be the catalyst for moving the electoral reform process forward.

The recommendations in this report are designed to be ambitious. Some are expensive and would probably require external funding and support. All are achievable with the basic preconditions of political will on the part of leaders, and the commitment to reform by all stakeholders.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are limited to a small number of high-priority proposals that are considered to be essential for free and fair elections in 2012.

1. Implement a new system of voter registration and voter identification for the 2012 Elections.

This system should be supported by:

- an immediate pilot study on the feasibility of a biometric system, informed by the experience of such systems elsewhere in the world; and

- an implementation plan for voter registration, to be in place by the beginning of 2010.

2. Make a 'Single, Safe and Secret Ballot' the central theme for the 2012 Elections.

This central theme should be:

- uniform across all official election messages and all forms of public awareness; and
- coordinated under the leadership of the Interdepartmental Elections Committee to ensure this theme guides the 2012 operational plans of all relevant agencies and stakeholders.

3. Develop a National Security Framework for the 2012 Elections.

This framework should encompass:

- an Elections Security Tool Kit, which would include a national set of standards for the conduct of security forces in relation to election offences, examples of best practice, and examples of successful contingency plans, a nationally consistent training program; and
- operational strategies that scope the potential security needs of each electorate and determine the levels of deployment. Flexible solutions could then combine the use of mobile polling teams, mixing of local authorities and external security personnel in areas that are particularly vulnerable to threat.

4. Formalise electronic counting and electronic data entry as an additional check on electoral integrity.

This priority should be supported by:

- legislative changes to the Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections (OLNLLGE) to direct the use of electronic counting in certain predefined instances; and
- the pilot usage of a digital data entry system for the manual count. This is to provide greater safeguards for the manual count, and would require relevant training of counting and data entry officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

In addition to the four priority recommendations, there are also other significant issues that are identified in this report that will involve more long-term structural reform, and require more detailed policy analysis. In many cases these issues will be taken up by the National Research Institute. They include:

1. A major review of the OLIPPAC (see Section 5 of this report).

This should address the following issues, amongst other things:

- which aspects of the law are not being adequately enforced and whether the Registrar of Political Parties has the necessary resources to be effective;

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- the impacts positive, negative or neutral impacts of the current law on regulating the actions of independent candidates and political parties during the formation of government; and
- how to improve the incentive structures within the law, to further strengthen political parties.

2. Careful investigation on how to reduce the number of candidates in order to improve LPV (see Section 3 of this report).

This sensitive and complicated issue requires further policy analysis to consider:

- international research on electoral system reform relevant to a PNG context;
- an analysis of the policy options that are available, including introducing the statutory declaration of criminal records to the nomination procedure, further analysis on the grounds for disqualification of nomination, a process of review before candidate nominations are finalised, and the need to collect citizen signatures or public endorsements by nominating candidates; and
- international human rights norms and conventions.

3. Improving women's representation (see Section 4 of this report).

Research into the policy options and practical considerations would need to consider:

- the creation of a set of popularly-elected, reserved seats for women candidates and/or the creation of

multi-member districts with quota systems, among other options; and

- ways to generate greater public acceptance and awareness of the roles of women in political life.

4. Developing a research framework on elections management (see Section 2 of this report)

This could be a partnership between the National Research Institute and the PNG Electoral Commission. The framework could consider:

- international options used to strengthen the internal controls of Election Management Bodies, pertaining to finance, data, human resources and so on, and examples of multi-stakeholder coordination; and
- domestic issues such as ensuring that the funding and resources match the task at hand, are in place throughout the electoral cycle, and are efficiently disbursed and evaluated.

5. Strengthening citizen participation in elections (see section 6 of this report).

Further analysis should focus on assessing:

- different approaches to voter awareness, nationally and internationally, and their suitability for different contexts;
- the coordination responsibilities of the various stakeholders in relation to the different aspects of voter awareness;
- the balance between research and observation in the arrangements and intended outcomes for domestic observation; and
- how Papua New Guinea can successfully scale up domestic observer presence in the future.

About the Authors

Dr. Ray Anere

Dr. Anere is a Senior Research Fellow and Acting Head of Political and Legal Studies Division, NRI.

His research interests include Governance Issues including, political parties, decentralisation, local governments, women in politics, and elections in PNG

He has written numerous newspaper articles, and contributed to NRI's Searchlight and Spotlight articles, book chapters, reports, and edited books on governance issues including elections in PNG.

In relation to his research into Electoral Reform, he would like to see biometrics and electronic counting introduced in PNG to ensure one person, one vote, and faster, efficient and reliable counting in PNG elections.

Dr. Nicole Haley

Dr. Nicole Haley is the interim Convenor of State Society and Governance in Melanesia at the ANU. She has extensive research and consultancy experience, having undertaken long-term and short-term ethnographic research, both academic and applied, in Melanesia over the past 15 years.

This has involved over 44 months field-based research in the troubled Southern Highlands and Enga Provinces, Port Moresby, and most recently in the Solomon Islands.

Dr. Haley's research focuses on aspects of political and social conflict including social identity and contemporary land politics, social identity, and electoral politics, conflict and armed violence, gender and HIV/AIDS, and the links between these and service delivery failure.

In addition, Dr Haley has conducted extensive baseline and community survey work, and social mapping and program monitoring in various advisory and consultative capacities.

Dr. Haley was the Co-coordinator of the 2007 National Elections Domestic Observation with Dr. Anere from the National Research Institute.

Katherine Wheen

Katherine Wheen is a Senior Research Communications Officer with the Political and Legal Studies division of the National Research Institute.

Prior to that she was the Co-director of Aidwatch, a Sydney-based non-government organisation. Katherine completed her studies in Communications and International Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney.