

PAPUA NEW GUINEA NATIONAL ELECTION, JUNE-AUGUST 2007

REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH-PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM ELECTION ASSESSMENT TEAM

Contents

Page

Acknowledgements

Letter of Transmittal

Chapter One - Introduction	1
- Brief Political Background	1
- Invitation to Observe Elections	2
- Composition of Team	2
- Terms of Reference and Methodology	3
Chapter Two – Election Framework and Preparations for the Elections	4
- The Legal Framework	4
- The Electoral Timetable	4
- The Voting System	5
- The Ballot Paper Design/Poster System	6
- Electoral Boundaries	6
- Voter Registration and the Roll	7
- Election Management	8
- Voter Education	9
- Candidates and Political Parties	10
- The Campaign	10
- Non-State Actors, Gender Balance	11
- The Media	12
- Domestic Election Observers	13
Chapter Three - The Poll, Count and Results Process	14
- The Poll	14
Location of Polling places and resourcing of polling teams	14
Opening	15
Voting Procedure	15
Assisted Voting	16
The Poll in the Highlands	16
The Close	18
- The Count	19
- Role of the Police and Security Forces	20
- Results Process	22
Chapter Four - Conclusions and Recommendations	23

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Brief Political Background

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an archipelagic nation comprising the eastern half of the island of New Guinea (the western half being the Indonesian province of Papua) and about 600 smaller islands. PNG has a population of around six million, and is divided into 19 Provinces and one quasi-provincial district (National Capital District). PNG is an extraordinarily diverse country with topography ranging from rugged high mountain ranges far inland, to coastal cities, towns and villages, smaller islands and some isolated atolls. The majority of the population lives in rural communities, many still relatively isolated from each other and the capital. As a result of this, the people of PNG also celebrate enormous cultural and linguistic diversity, with some 800 languages spoken. Traditional cultures and social norms remain very important in many areas of the country, and can still have a strong impact on political as well as social and economic developments.

PNG gained its independence (from Australia exercising a UN trusteeship) in 1975. In its 32 years of independence, PNG politics has been characterised by a relatively weak political party system, and governments formed by coalitions of several parties and independent Members of Parliament (MPs). Political fortunes are most often based on local and personal allegiances rather than ideology or party identification. Prior to the 2002 elections, politics had also been quite unstable, with frequent changes of allegiance by MPs giving rise to no-confidence motions on the floor of Parliament and many mid-term changes of Government – continuing, albeit to a lesser extent, despite Constitutional amendments in 1991 which had the effect of restricting no-confidence motions in the first 18 months and the last 12 months of the Parliamentary term.

In 2000, an *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates* was enacted, formalising the process for registration of candidates' party affiliations and imposing a number of new rules on the behaviour of candidates and parties. This law was replaced in 2003 by a new Organic Law of the same name. Importantly, the new law strictly restricted the grounds upon which MPs may resign from their party or switch parties once elected, with "party-hopping" in breach of the law attracting penalties for misconduct in office, including the possibility of forfeiture of the seat. Moreover, the law required MPs to vote with their parties on Parliamentary votes pertaining to constitutional laws, election of the Prime Minister, no-confidence in the Government and the national budget. These new provisions have enforced a party discipline which has led to greater stability in Parliament, and as a result 2002-2007 marked the first time in PNG's Parliamentary history in which a single Government maintained power for the entire term.

The 2007 election is PNG's seventh national Parliamentary election, coming at the conclusion of the 5-year term of the previous Parliament. This national election is of particular significance because it sees the inauguration of a new electoral system, the Limited Preferential Vote (LPV), which is discussed further below.

This election was also closely anticipated and watched both within PNG and internationally, following the serious problems encountered in the 2002 national elections. The 2002 elections were marked by serious violence and unrest leading to some 30 deaths, and failed elections in five (Highlands) Provinces. The 2002 poll was described to us by one senior official as PNG's "worst election ever". As a consequence, the practical aspects of polling – particularly the security arrangements - were reviewed and new measures undertaken in preparation for 2007, in an attempt to avert similar problems this time around.

Invitation to Observe the Elections

In April 2007, the Secretary of PNG's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Gabriel Pepson, wrote to the Secretaries-General of both the Commonwealth and Forum, inviting both organisations to observe the election pursuant to a decision of PNG's National Executive Council (Cabinet) on 29 March 2007.¹ Both Secretaries-General accepted the invitation, but noting that the short timeframe and significant logistical challenges of PNG prevented deployment of full observer groups from each organisation, advised Secretary Pepson that the two Secretariats had agreed to deploy a small joint expert team to assess the election.

Composition of the Team

The joint assessment mission ("the Team") consisted of the following experts:

Mr Paul Tovua Former Minister, Speaker of Parliament, Electoral Commissioner and National Peace Council Chair Solomon Islands	Team Leader
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Mr Kwame Damoah-Agyemang Chief Director (Retired) Electoral Commission Ghana	Mr Matin Tete Principal Electoral Officer Vanuatu
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The Team was supported and accompanied by the following Secretariat staff:

Ms Juliet Solomon Special Adviser/Head of Caribbean/Pacific Political Affairs Division Commonwealth Secretariat	Dr Henry Ivarature Regional Governance Adviser Forum Secretariat
Mr Albert Mariner Adviser, Caribbean/Pacific Section	Ms Shennia Spillane Legal Adviser

¹ Similar invitations were extended to the European Union, the US-based Carter Center and the Australian and New Zealand Electoral Commissions, but these were declined. Australia and New Zealand instead deployed Port-Moresby based diplomats (plus a couple of Wellington-based Government officials for NZ) to observe the election.

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Terms of Reference and Methodology

The agreed Terms of Reference for the Team were:

“The Commonwealth-Pacific Islands Forum Election Assessment Team for the Papua New Guinea National Election shall observe the preparations for the election, the polling, counting and results process, and the overall electoral environment.”

While the long polling and counting periods precluded all Team members from being present throughout the process, members of the Team were in Papua New Guinea from 18-22 June, from 25 June to 22 July, and from 9 to 18 August. This allowed the Team to assess part of the preparation and campaigning period for the election as well as the polling, part of the counting process and the formation of the new Government.

The Team met with a range of stakeholders both prior to and throughout the polling and counting, including candidates and scrutineers, political party officials, officials from the Electoral Commission and other relevant Government departments, police and security forces, representatives of civil society and the media. The Team also met both formally and informally with international observers accredited from various countries’ diplomatic missions in Port Moresby, as well as domestic observers coordinated through the National Research Institute and Transparency International (PNG).

The Team worked mostly in two or three-person sub-teams and deployed to various locations during the polling and counting. Members of the Team were able to observe polling in Enga, Western Highlands, Morobe, West New Britain and East New Britain Provinces, the National Capital District (NCD) and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Team members observed counting in Western Highlands, Eastern Highlands, Morobe and Central Provinces, and NCD. Three Team members were also present for the first sitting of the eighth Parliament, at which the elected MPs were sworn in and the Speaker and Prime Minister elected.

The Team recognises that it was of limited size and conducted its observation in only selected parts of the country, for a relatively short time. For this reason, the scope of our report is limited in time and scale to those issues which we were able to directly observe or upon which we had sufficient information to form useful assessments or recommendations.

Chapter Two

ELECTORAL FRAMEWORK AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS

The Legal Framework

National elections in PNG are governed by three major legislative instruments:

- The *Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea*;
- The *Organic Law² on National and Local-Level Government Elections* [1997 as amended to 2006], and associated regulations;
- The *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates* 2003, and associated regulations.

The Constitution entrenches the right to vote, and establishes that a general Parliamentary election shall ordinarily be held every five years using “a system of universal, adult, citizen suffrage” for all citizens 18 years and older. The Constitution also sets out the qualifications for membership in Parliament, including a minimum age of 25 years.

More detailed electoral laws and procedures are set out in the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections (“the electoral law”). As noted above, matters pertaining to candidacy and political parties are also governed by the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates.

Prior to the 2007 elections, significant amendments were made to the electoral law, chiefly to replace the first-past-the-post electoral system with a new Limited Preferential Vote (LPV) system. The amendments also changed the format of the ballot paper and related rules about the polling process. These are discussed further below.

The legal framework provided for elections to be held in 109 single-member electorates – 89 “open electorates” as well as 20 “provincial electorates” in which voters in all open electorates in each Province vote on a second ballot paper for an MP who also becomes Provincial Governor³. This system was originally due to cease prior to the 2007 elections with the adoption of amendments to the provincial government system, but Parliament in late 2006 delayed the provincial government reforms, ensuring that the provincial seats would continue to exist in the eighth Parliament.

The Electoral Timetable

The Electoral Timetable issued by the Electoral Commission was as follows:

Issue of Writs	Friday 4 May 2007
Close of Nominations	Thursday 10 May 2007
Polling Commences	Saturday 30 June 2007
End of Polling	Tuesday 10 July 2007
Return of Writs	Monday 30 July 2007

² Organic Laws are a particular type of PNG law which have higher authority and are more entrenched than ordinary laws, while remaining subject to the Constitution.

³ The Provincial member ceases to be Provincial Governor if he or she takes a Ministry in the Government, in which case another national MP or President of the Local Level Government from that Province is elected by the Provincial Assembly to take the position of Governor.

In the event, logistical delays necessitated the continuation of polling for a further ten days beyond 10 July. Delays and slowness of counting also meant that as at the date for the return of the writs, counting was not completed. The Electoral Commissioner therefore exercised his power under the electoral law to extend the return of the writs to 6 August 2007, and due to further delays caused by legal action in a few electorates, extend them again to 13 August 2007. In the event, writs were returned for 108 of the 109 electorates on 6 August 2007, with the final electoral writ (for Western Highlands Provincial electorate) returned on 8 August 2007.

The polling period itself also varied from electorate to electorate. In the five Highlands Provinces, in order to ensure maximum possible security presence, polling was limited to one day, with the amassed security forces moving from Province to Province to cover each one's allocated polling day. The non-Highlands electorates polled for one to eight days, depending on logistical planning needs, with polling teams usually moving from village to village within each rural electorate across the polling period. In the National Capital District (NCD), polling was held over two days.

Given the terrain of the country and the resources available, there were inevitably significant logistical challenges in ensuring all the election related materials, polling teams and security forces were deployed to the designated places in time. Scheduling single-day polling in each of the Highlands Provinces, while a sound security decision, proved to be optimistic as weather and logistical delays extended the polling to two or three days in four out of the five Provinces. These eventualities should be taken into account in planning for future elections, as it appears unlikely that one-day polling in the Highlands is a realistic possibility. Other options may be worthy of exploration, such as utilising mobile polling teams with specifically allocated security escorts, to travel around each electorate during the polling period. As well as efficiency gains, such a process would have the added advantage of reinforcing voter secrecy and security, as votes from different villages would be mixed in a single box.

The Voting System

Legislative elections prior to PNG's independence had used an optional preferential system, but following independence the electoral system was changed to a simple majority or "first-past-the-post" poll, seen as a simpler and more manageable system for PNG.

The decision to move away from the first-past-the-post voting to the LPV system prior to the 2007 election was a response to growing calls to better reflect the will of a majority of voters and increase the mandate of MPs, which over previous elections dropped significantly due to increasing numbers of candidates contesting for seats. In 1997 a majority of elected members scored less than 20 per cent of votes, declining to less than 15 per cent of votes in 2002. As in most Melanesian elections, first-past-the-post voting also had the effect that candidates campaigned only in their limited local areas, relying on the "wantok" vote to secure the (often small) percentage of votes needed to win, while possibly resorting to unscrupulous methods to deny votes to other candidates. Preferential voting would require candidates to seek support (in the form of

preferences) outside their own clans and communities, while ensuring that elected MPs held a majority mandate from the people of their electorates.

The LPV system was introduced in 2002 and successfully trialed in three by-elections held prior to the 2007 election. The system required voters to express (precisely) three preferences in order from among the nominated candidates.

There was some concern that the more complicated LPV system, combined with the use of new ballot papers (see below), would be too difficult for voters in PNG, especially those in rural areas with low literacy and education levels. In the event, preliminary figures suggested that the informal (invalid) vote for the elections was fairly low at less than 3%. At the same time, the Team's observations indicated that this was the result of very high levels of assisted voting in rural areas, rather than most voters being able to correctly complete the ballot paper by themselves.

Nevertheless public responses, as well as those of candidates and others directly involved in the process, seemed to be strongly in favour of the LPV system. Many who spoke to the team believed that LPV provided a more representative system and a stronger mandate to the winning candidate, as well as contributing to more peaceful campaigning. With some exceptions, the people appeared to welcome the introduction of LPV and wish it to continue. If it remains in place, understanding of LPV and how to vote will only increase in future elections.

The Ballot Paper Design / Poster System

There was also a new ballot paper in use for the 2007 election, which had not been used in the previous national elections nor in any of the previous LPV by-elections. It required voters to write the names and/or the allocated numbers of their preferred candidates on an essentially blank ballot – with photographic posters provided in the polling booths for voters' reference. This unique system was designed to provide a workable preferential vote, while avoiding the production of extremely large ballot papers to cater for the large number of candidates standing in many electorates.

Some interlocutors expressed concerns about the ballot paper, however, both in terms of voters' ability to complete it correctly, and about its possible openness to fraud. There was particular concern that the electoral law provided that should a number and name filled in for any preference on the paper be inconsistent, the written name would be counted as the preference. Some voters and scrutineers worried that this would open the possibility of papers with only numbers being later altered by the filling in of a (different) name in the blank name space. There was also concern about voters mixing up the provincial and open electorate ballot papers, since both were similar in look and did not contain the candidates' names. This concern was realised to some extent during the count, and is discussed further below.

Electoral Boundaries

PNG's Constitution provides for the determination of electoral boundaries by a Boundaries Commission, which is to examine the boundaries at least every 10 years. Under the Constitutional provisions, Parliament holds the power to accept

or reject the recommendations of the Boundaries Commission. Although several boundaries reviews have taken place since independence, including prior to the 2007 election, Parliament has consistently rejected their recommendations, with the result that the electorate boundaries have not changed in almost 30 years. Significant changes in population and demography during that period have led to large differences between the populations of respective electorates (according to final turnout figures, the smallest open electorate in 2007 had less than 3,000 voters and the largest over 20,000).

While the Team recognises that recognition of traditional communities and their boundaries may be an important element of representative government in PNG, discrepancies of this magnitude between the sizes of respective electorates undermine the fundamental democratic principle of one-person-one-vote one-value, leading some individuals and communities to have far more actual voting power than others. An appropriate balance needs to be struck between community representation and egalitarian democracy, and in considering future recommendations from the Boundaries Commission, it may be time for Parliament to give serious consideration to whether the status quo provides fair representation to all citizens.

Voter Registration and the Roll

Two years prior to the 2007 election, the Electoral Commissioner made the decision to discard the 2002 electoral roll. The credibility of the 2002 elections was severely affected by the use of an old roll which was widely alleged to be inflated with the inclusion of a large number of "ghost" names and double entries. The new roll was compiled between 2005 and 2007 and contained 3.9 million registered voters (precisely 3,938,839), a drop of 1.4 million names from the 2002 roll. The Electoral Commissioner was confident that the integrity of the new roll was a major improvement for the 2007 elections. A further change in 2007 was the printing of separate electoral rolls for each ward, rather than one roll for the whole electorate. This was to make the roll more manageable for polling officials, although it did mean that there was no broader or "master" roll available for reference in polling places, should a voter's name be missing or a discrepancy arise.

Despite the preparation of a new roll, there were concerns expressed by many prior to the election that many voters would find their names missing from the new roll. Some claimed that the new registration exercise was rushed through and was not thoroughly conducted throughout the country, while some claimed mismanagement and even corruption in the production of the new roll.

For example, in East New Britain Province, public servants were engaged to visit all the wards to register voters. Team members were told that visitations were made during the day which meant that those absent were not enrolled. Subsequently, the Provincial Election Manager decided to utilise ward councilors and village recorders. All these names were sent to the Electoral Commission in Port Moresby where the preliminary roll was compiled, but the preliminary roll was alleged to have omitted names and include names wrongly spelt. Although further corrections were submitted to Port Moresby, the final electoral roll returned with the same errors and had to be used as presented, i.e., with the errors.

During the polling period, it was reported that many wards in various areas of the country encountered numbers of dissatisfied potential voters who claimed to have validly enrolled but who could not find their names on the 2007 roll. Some such instances were observed by the Team in various parts of the country. For example, village leaders in two areas of Angalimp-South Waghi electorate (Western Highlands Province) reported that of 10,000 and 15,000 voters respectively registered for the roll, only 4000 and 2800 respectively had actually appeared on the roll. Many citizens in East New Britain and on Buka, Bougainville, complained that their names were missing from electoral rolls.

At the same time, there were allegations in various places of inflated figures remaining on the roll in certain wards, including in the Highlands. Village leaders and scrutineers in Western Highlands accused sitting members of manipulating the registration process for electoral gain. They alleged that enrolment figures had been inflated in the sitting members' strongholds and reduced in those of other candidates. While this was difficult to objectively verify, we did observe that in one sitting member's home village, the number of enrolled voters had skyrocketed from a reported 2800 in 2002 to some 10,000 voters in 2007, where it seemed to us (and locals confirmed) that there were not 10,000 adults living in that village. We noted that in this particular village, which had four polling places running concurrently, the roll did not appear to be being properly used.

The Electoral Commission on 5 July 2007 strongly defended itself against "missing" names claiming that citizens were given every opportunity with ample time to enrol and check the preliminary rolls. The Electoral Commissioner attributed the problems to voters who had not registered properly. Following the election, however, the Electoral Commissioner also recognised the need for further attention to be paid to improving the roll for future elections.

Without any evidence of enrolment, it is the word of the citizen against the Electoral Commission and vice versa. The Team therefore suggests that upon enrolment, citizens should be issued a receipt, certificate or enrolment card as evidence of enrolment. Citizens can produce this when checking the preliminary roll and voting, and polling officials can request it as evidence of enrolment where citizens claim to have enrolled but their names are missing. Moreover, where proof is substantiated the Electoral Commission would be able not only to allow the citizen to vote, but also could correct the electoral roll.

The effort of the Electoral Commission to improve the integrity of the electoral roll prior to the 2007 elections was commendable. There is no doubt that producing an accurate electoral roll is a significant challenge in PNG. Nevertheless, it is apparent that continued effort needs to be put into further improving voter registration and the integrity of the roll.

Election Management

In accordance with the Constitution and the electoral law, management of the elections is vested in an Electoral Commissioner appointed by the Head of State on the advice of an Appointments Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee having oversight of electoral matters, and Chairman of the Public Services Commission.

The law also requires appointment of Returning Officers for each of the 109 electorates. Assistant Returning Officers, Presiding Officers and other polling and counting staff were responsible to the relevant Returning Officer.

One feature of the 2007 election was the decision taken to decentralise the electoral process. The Electoral Commissioner exercised his discretion under the electoral law to appoint 20 Election Managers at the Provincial level (and for NCD), and delegate to them a large amount of responsibility. This meant that the particular measures adopted for the polling and counting, and the overall quality and success of the process, were dependent to a significant extent upon the capability and integrity of the Election Manager for the Province, as well as the respective Returning Officers. The success of this approach also depended on effective and timely distribution of funding and logistical support to the Election Managers from the Commission.

In terms of election administration some 9,100 polling stations were established throughout the country with more than 4,550 polling teams utilising a total of approximately 27,500 polling officials. Together with officials from other Government departments and security personnel, the total number working on delivering the election was some 50,000 people.

Voter Education

Prior to the 2007 elections a major voter awareness program was conducted, with the assistance of civil society groups and with funding and technical support from AusAID through the Electoral Support Program (ESP). Voter awareness focused on ensuring understanding of the new LPV system, and was undertaken throughout the country largely through the use of face-to-face meetings, which featured group meetings and discussions, separate group discussions for men and women, mock voting and counting, as well as music and performances by theatre groups. While it was impossible to cover every community in PNG in this way, radio messages were also used to reach isolated areas inaccessible by awareness teams. Moreover, a comprehensive advertising campaign involved utilising television, radio and press to explain the voting process and encourage people to have their say – “Our Vote, Our Future”.

Election messages for 2007 also integrated and promoted awareness on HIV/AIDS.

The Electoral Commission told the Team it was satisfied with the voter education effort. The Electoral Commissioner noted that some had been critical of the programme as it had not reached all villages in PNG, but that this was virtually impossible and the coverage had been very good. In the event, the informal vote appeared to be at an acceptable level – final figures were not available at the time of writing but the estimated informal vote was around 2.4%. At the same time the Team observed that in rural areas many voters, especially those with little or no literacy, did not understand the system or how to vote properly, and the level of assisted voting was very high.

Candidates and Political Parties

Some 2,700 candidates nominated to contest the 109 electorates. More than half were independents and 101 were women. Four candidates died between the close of nominations and the start of the poll.

This number of candidates was very high, with an average of over 24 candidates per electorate. The highest number of candidates contesting a single electorate was 69 (in Northern Provincial electorate) compared to a low of 7 in three electorates.

A total of 34 registered political parties fielded candidates. During the campaign some candidates did attempt to shift party allegiances. The Registrar of Political Parties publicly denounced such activities and noted that appropriate legal action would be pursued after the election against those who breached the *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates*.

Under the electoral law, candidates were entitled to appoint agents, called "scrutineers", to observe the polling and counting processes. From our observations most candidates exercised their right to do so, and scrutineers often played an active role in the process, particularly the counting. While scrutineers often did a thorough job and provided a valuable check on the integrity of the process, it is important that both parties and polling officials well understand the rights of scrutineers as well as the limits on their roles.

In some polling stations, it was observed that scrutineers were allowed to see the process from a reasonable distance although we observed that scrutineers in some polling stations were enclosed in an area from which they had no real visibility of the process, while in others scrutineers were allowed to almost literally "hang-over" citizens in the voting booth.

The Campaign

The campaign period was described by all we spoke to as the quietest in recent PNG history, and our own pre-election observations confirmed this view. While candidate posters were ubiquitous and media advertising frequent for some candidates and parties, rallies and campaign events were orderly and not so numerous. The Electoral Commission noted some campaigning in breach of the law – such as painting rocks and buildings with candidates' names – but on the whole, candidates campaigned in an orderly manner.

The Team was advised that the new LPV system had the positive effect of forcing candidates to negotiate and strategise with other candidates in order to secure their supporters' preference votes. Many believed this was an important factor in making campaigning and pre-election activities more peaceful than in previous elections, where a "winner-take-all" mentality had led to aggressive and sometimes unscrupulous campaigning.

In certain places – particularly the Highlands, and most notably in Enga Province – our Team members were told of both bribery and intimidation playing a strong role in candidates' campaign strategies. Such reports are extremely difficult to verify but the atmosphere and activities in some polling places, and the results

of certain counts, lent credence to the proposition that not all campaigning was necessarily clean. Scrutineers for some candidates in the Highlands told us they felt powerless in the face of the large-scale bribery and intimidation practiced by dominant candidates.

At the national level, Transparency International (PNG) and the media raised concerns about improper use of state funds by candidates and parties. Notably, the Ombudsman Commission launched an investigation in June into more than K90 million of Parliamentary funding which had been expended in “questionable procedures” in the lead-up to the election. It is extremely important that the legal provisions for financial reporting and accountability are vigorously and impartially pursued by the proper authorities both during and following the election process, to ensure that campaigns are conducted in a clean and lawful way.

There seemed to be a little confusion about restrictions on campaigning during the polling period itself, with some Provinces banning campaign activities and advertising 24 hours before the poll, while in others it continued during the polling period. Television advertising for some parties was ongoing during and even after the polling. There may be a need to ensure that all Election Managers, candidates and parties are well briefed on consistent rules for campaigning.

Non-State Actors, Gender Balance

Civil society played a strong role in the 2007 elections. Civil society groups contributed a large proportion of the domestic election observers, and were also principal implementers of voter awareness activities conducted throughout the country, particularly in rural areas. In addition, groups such as Transparency International (PNG) and the churches promoted integrity in the electoral process, drawing attention to concerns about possible corruption or unfairness in campaigning and political activities.

Like other Pacific countries, PNG has had few women candidates since independence, and very few women MPs. In the last two terms there has been only one woman in the national Parliament. Significant efforts were made by civil society groups to encourage and train more women candidates prior to the 2007 election, with the result that 101 women contested this time – still a very low figure at around 3.7% of candidates, but an improvement on the 60 women candidates in 2002.

On average five (5) women candidates contested seats in each of the 20 Provinces, including the NCD. The exception was West New Britain Province which failed to field any women candidates. Out of the total 101 women candidates, 45 stood for seats in the southern region, including the NCD (Central 9, Gulf 5, Milne Bay Province 9, NCD 6, Northern Province 10 and Western Province 6). The Highlands region recorded 26 women candidates compared to 22 women in Mamose and eight in the New Guinea Islands.

Despite the financial incentives in the *Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates* for political parties to field women candidates, the number of women candidates endorsed by political parties in 2007 was relatively

low. Of the 34 officially registered political parties, only 21 endorsed women candidates numbering 36 women altogether. The People's Action Party fielded five women candidates while four political parties endorsed three women candidates each and most parties supported one women candidate each. The majority of women candidates (65) stood as independent candidates.

In the event, only one woman candidate was actually elected (incumbent MP Dame Carol Kidu). With the high number of candidates contesting and single-member electorates, the possibilities for women candidates to be elected using the LPV system appear to be no better than those under the recently replaced first-past-the post voting system. Unless further enabling mechanisms are examined to fast-track and increase the number of women entering Parliament, it appears to the Team that the numbers of women representatives in Parliament will continue to remain low for a long time.

As voters, women appeared to be well represented and the Team did not see evidence of any intimidation or discrimination in comparison to their male counterparts, even though the separate voting arrangements put in place for women were not always used. In many polling stations in East New Britain and Buka, Team members also noted the presence of women scrutineers keeping check on the proceedings on behalf of their candidates. This was not the case in the Highlands electorates, where women were relatively under-represented as both polling officials and scrutineers.

The Media

PNG boasts a free and robust media which played an active role throughout the election period including raising awareness about election preparations, processes and procedures, as well as providing coverage of candidates' and parties' campaign activities and positions, and of issues arising during the campaigning, polling and counting. From the Team members' perspective the electronic and print media appeared to play a constructive, comprehensive and impartial role in the reporting of election-related matters.

The Electoral Commission used the two main daily newspapers, the Post-Courier and the National, to educate voters about the elections, taking full-page advertisements, inserts and posters explaining the new voting system, updates on electoral preparations and polling schedules. The one local television station, EMTV, was also used by the Electoral Commission to televise information on the new LPV system and other election awareness information, including promoting awareness on HIV/AIDS. Nightly news coverage also carried news on the election preparations, polling and other news relating to elections in the Provinces. Political parties and candidates who could afford the costs used EMTV to campaign before and during the polling periods.

Provincial radio stations and FM stations were also used extensively by the Electoral Commission to educate the public on the new electoral system, electoral preparations and other news on developments relating to elections in general. Candidates and political parties also used radio to campaign.

The President of the PNG Media Council, Oseah Philemon, expressed disappointment with the lack of use of private media outlets by the Electoral

Commission for voter education and other election related programs, compared with government media such as NBC. Mr Philemon was of the view that other private radio stations and newspapers with more coverage and listeners could have been more effective in delivering these election related programs if they had been used by the Commission.

The Electoral Commission also used its website (www.pngec.gov.pg) to deliver a range of information on the 2007 elections. In June 2007, the Electoral Commission also set up a Media Centre (with support from the EU and other donors) as an information and resource centre, primarily for use by journalists. When polling commenced, the Media Centre was used daily by the Electoral Commissioner to brief journalists. As counting occurred, the Media Centre became the primary hub for receiving and disseminating results until all the results were declared.

Domestic Election Observers

For the first time in PNG, a fairly significant domestic observer presence was mobilised for the 2007 elections. Most of the domestic observers were organised in a network under the leadership of the National Research Institute (NRI), with teams of civil society representatives in each Province coordinated by academic team leaders. This programme deployed some 108 observers throughout the country, strongly supported in both financial and human terms by AusAID's Electoral Support Programme. Other domestic observers also deployed independently, including a group from Transparency International (PNG).

The Team built a good relationship with the domestic observers wherever possible, speaking with them both formally in Port Moresby and in the electorates around the country as we visited.

The Team notes with great concern reports from the NRI-civil society domestic observer team that several domestic observers based in at least two Highlands Provinces were threatened in relation to their work on the election. Some were forced to abandon their observation due to threats to their lives and safety. Threats to any independent election observers, whether international or domestic, are utterly unacceptable and the Team urges police and authorities to take all necessary action to bring those responsible for such actions to justice, and to take measures to protect the safety of observers in future elections.

Chapter Three

THE POLL, COUNT AND RESULTS PROCESS

The Poll

Having observed the vote in a number of locations throughout the polling period, the Team's observations were quite varied. This made it difficult to reach broad general conclusions about the integrity of the polling process and the positive and negative aspects of the conduct of the poll. The text below sets out some key elements of polling and the collected observations and analyses of the Team from different parts of PNG.

Location of polling places and Resourcing of polling teams

In addition to relevant materials and stationery, and polling schedules, the Electoral Commission prepared handbooks for Presiding Officers, polling officials and scrutineers, including one on offences relating to elections. These were used for training election officials in readiness for the election and also for their reference during the polling period. The handbooks and guides provided the different individuals involved in different aspects of the election a quick understanding of the processes and rules. In the Team's observations, polling teams appeared to have sufficient resources and training for the successful conduct of the poll.

The locations used for polling stations varied. Many were either government facilities, schools, churches or community halls. In villages they were often set up outdoors within the village area. However, in many places outdoor locations were used to set up the polling station even where there was a building available, such as setting up in school grounds rather than using classrooms. This led to some problems with crowd control and voter secrecy, as well as vulnerability to weather conditions. It may be worth consideration of these aspects when polling stations are set up in future.

Within the polling stations, the layout of most was adequate and conducive to the flow of citizens casting their votes, while at the same time allowing scrutineers, observers and other members of the community to see the proceedings. In some cases resourceful methods were adopted to create a satisfactory polling environment in difficult circumstances such as the absence of furniture.

In some polling stations, the Presiding Officers set up an additional polling booth to reduce the congestion created by too many voters queuing to cast their votes.

The Electoral Commission advised the Team that for the first time, separate polling booths for men and women would be provided in many polling places, particularly in the Highlands Provinces, to allow women to vote without any intimidation. However, the Team's observation was that this system was not generally observed in the Highlands.

Opening

The opening of polling stations was scheduled for 8.00 am on each day of polling. This appeared to be mostly observed although in some cases delay in arrival of materials and personnel delayed the opening of polling.

Larger delays were also experienced. For example, in Enga Province the first polling only began around lunchtime on the appointed day (3 July), and many polling stations were not able to begin until 4 July. In the Waghi Valley of Highlands Province, materials were not deployed from the District Headquarters in Minj to the polling stations until between 10 and 11am on polling day, which meant a late start to polling in many wards of that electorate. These kinds of delays were partly but not completely attributable to the knock-on effect of delays in other Provinces: even in areas easily reachable by road, it seemed that polling materials and teams were not always dispatched in time for polling to begin as scheduled. The reasons for this were not entirely clear and suggest that election management at the Provincial and electorate level could have been improved.

It was usual practice that before opening the polling station, the Presiding Officer explained the process to the scrutineers and gathered voters, and displayed the empty ballot boxes before locking and sealing them. While delays and alterations in the polling schedule prevented the Team from witnessing a large number of openings, in those we saw the opening procedures were correctly followed.

Voting Procedure

According to our observations in most parts of the country, the correct procedures for voting were followed in the polling places: the checking for and use of indelible ink on fingers, checking of the electoral roll for the name of the voter, marking of the roll and handing over of ballot papers after being initialed by the Presiding Officer. Most voters were also able to (and did) follow the correct procedure of marking their ballot papers in the polling booth and placing them in the ballot boxes marked for open and provincial seats.

In some polling stations only one box had been provided for both provincial and open ballots. In others, one box was provided for each. In some polling stations, having observed the difficulty voters were having distinguishing between provincial and open ballot papers and posters, election officials took the decision to have separate voting booths for provincial and open seats. This initiative seemed to work well.

However, the nature of the ballot papers still proved problematic in many instances. The ballot papers for provincial and open electorates were both white with only a pale blue and red strip across the top on one side to distinguish them from each other. Thus, once the ballot paper was folded it became impossible to tell one from another and this was underscored during our observation of the counting, which showed that many Provincial ballots ended up in Open electorate boxes and vice versa. It would certainly be helpful in the future to have the ballot papers two different solid colours.

Assisted Voting

Under the electoral law, voters who are disabled or illiterate may be assisted either by one or more persons of their own choosing, or by the Presiding Officer in the presence of another polling official.

Our observations suggested very large numbers of voters being assisted, especially in rural areas, rather than being able to fill in the papers independently. The extent to which such assistance followed the rules in the electoral law varied. Members of our Team often saw police, scrutineers and others assisting voters or at least watching the provision of assistance with a clear view of the voter marking the ballot paper.

In many Highlands polling places assisted voting was so widespread and so broadly construed that it was apparent that voter secrecy was being seriously compromised on a routine basis. Assistance was provided by large numbers of people (often whoever happened to be around, including other voters) and sometimes in circumstances – such as on a large table – where all, including observers and bystanders, could clearly see the vote being cast. While in many of these communal societies there seemed to be little concern about the secrecy of the ballot, there were some instances in which voters and scrutineers noted that the ability of any voter to go “against the flow” of their community’s common preference to exercise an individual choice, was non-existent.

Given such circumstances in at least some polling stations, it seemed to the Team that to genuinely observe the principle of a secret ballot, polling officials and security personnel may need to be more firmly inculcated in the importance of secret balloting and their roles in ensuring a more stringent observance of the legal provisions for casting the vote, including assisted voting.

The Poll in the Highlands

While the members of the Team observing voting in the coastal Provinces and NCD recorded many similar observations about the polling process, much of which is captured above, the members observing polling in the Highlands reported a distinct picture of polling there. Thus the Team felt it was worth noting some more particular observations about the polling as observed in Enga and Western Highlands Provinces, which were of concern although not reflective of the broader pattern throughout PNG.

Before doing so, it should be noted that security in the Highlands Provinces was extremely well maintained in comparison with the previous election. In the two Highlands Provinces visited by the Team for polling, the police and the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) did an excellent job of maintaining law and order throughout the polling. The vast majority of local people are also to be commended for the way in which they went about the polling process in a spirit of peace and good order. Many voters and others remarked to Team members on the significant improvement in the atmosphere and conduct of polling in Enga and Western Highlands, and spoke of both their support for LPV and their optimism that respect for peace and democracy was improving and would continue to do so.

That said, it must also be said that in many of the polling places visited by the Team in Enga and Western Highlands Provinces, there were serious flaws in the conduct of the polling. The Team's observations were confirmed by the diplomatic and domestic observers who were also present in the Highlands.

Problems witnessed in Enga Province included:

- The electoral roll either not being used at all, or used numerically only – that is, one name being marked off for each voter who entered, but with no reference to that particular voter's identity;
- Clearly underage boys observed voting;
- In some polling places no ink was used, and there was strong evidence of cases of multiple voting – including polling places where some voters were witnessed being handed more than two ballot papers;
- Serious compromise of voter secrecy in almost all polling places – this appeared to be fairly benign in some places (where family and community members all “helped” each other in a friendly spirit) and much less so in others, for example where polling officials, candidate supporters or others were filling in papers as a matter of routine, in the complete absence of consultation with the individual voters. In many polling places voting took place on a table in the open, not using the secret booths even though these had been provided and even set up. In fact in Enga Province the Team only saw one polling station where voter secrecy could be said to be properly observed;
- A high incidence of random people in the polling station who did not have clear identification or appear to be authorised to be there. In some these people were actively engaging in the polling process including filling out or “assisting” with ballot papers. We note these were not scrutineers, who were generally confined to a specific area or even outside the polling place;
- Vote buying visibly taking place in the vicinity of one polling place;
- At least one polling place in which the ballot box was not locked or sealed;
- Widespread reports of vote-buying and intimidation from scrutineers and voters, including firsthand reports from voters whose votes had been “bought”. There seemed to be some level of acceptance of these practices as part of the electoral process in Enga, although a minority expressed their grave concern.

In terms of incidents that we did not personally witness, we were told by other international observers in Enga that they had seen and recorded at least two cases of ballot box stuffing by polling officials, in the complete absence of voters – one near Wabag town and one in the Tsak Valley (Wapenamanda electorate). We were also told by other international observers that in one polling station (in the Laigam-Porgera electorate) polling was disrupted and unable to be completed on time, so two candidates simply sat down and worked out “a deal”

to divide the remaining votes among themselves. Our observers did not personally see these cases.

In Western Highlands Province the quality of the polling process varied. Overall, the Team felt the process was observed more carefully than in Enga Province. Some polling stations we observed, such as in the Waghi Valley, were indeed very well managed, following all the correct procedures despite a lack of good facilities.

In other places, particularly around Mt Hagen town, we did observe flawed processes. In particular, there was again a clear absence of voter secrecy in several polling stations. In addition, the electoral roll was either inappropriately used (i.e. for mere numerical marking off, rather than identifying specific voters), or not used at all. This problem occurred particularly where concerns were raised with us about the integrity of the roll, as discussed above. In wards which were the home of particular candidates, locals and officials told us this was no problem, since all locals were well known, and voter secrecy was not necessary because “everyone” supported the local candidate. This may well have been accurate but did not conform to the democratic principle of an individual’s right to a free and secret choice.

The upshot of these observations was that, while the process was peaceful and relatively orderly, there was often little genuine ability for individuals to exercise their right to vote freely and in secret. Moreover, some activities were apparently compromising the fairness of the election exercise. To some extent (and with some exceptions) this style of election process seemed to be accepted by the people of Enga and Western Highlands. It is difficult in these circumstances to make recommendations from outside as to how this can be significantly improved in the short term – more voter awareness, an even stronger security presence and an improvement in governance generally would all contribute. At the same time, in the context of PNG’s broader challenges, it seems that genuine democratic process in some places may be something that can only develop over a longer period.

The Close

Despite the late start of polling in some areas, polling was completed in most places by the designated closing times and dates. In fact, the use of outdoor polling stations and lack of lighting meant that 6pm closing was required even in areas where an extension of polling times was sought (such as in Lae Open).

The fact that polling was completed quickly in some delayed areas, however, may in itself be cause for concern. Completing a correct LPV vote on two (blank) ballot papers is time consuming, and observers noted that when done properly, voting progress was fairly slow. This raised questions about polling places that reported completion of polling, with thousands of voters on the roll, in a few short hours. It would seem that either proper process was not followed, or many voters missed out.

In a number of polling places we were informed that polling stopped when the last voter cast his or her vote.

At the close of polling, scrutineers witnessed the inner and outer seals closed and locked on the ballot boxes for transportation to a secure location, usually the police station, where ballot boxes were stored for counting. This process was carried out smoothly and correctly in the polling places witnessed by the Team.

The Count

The practice in the 2007 election was to start counting as soon as practicable after polling for an electorate was completed. Ballot boxes were not counted in polling stations. Instead, ballot boxes were delivered to secure locations and stored under police escort until the commencement of the count, at which point they were transferred to designated counting centres, mostly at the Provincial level with some exceptions (such as NCD) where counting was centralised at the electorate level. In the presence of scrutineers and police personnel ballot boxes were opened, and votes were checked for formality and sorted into candidate piles according to their marked first preferences. If one candidate obtained 50% plus 1 of all formal votes after all formal ballots were counted, that candidate was declared winner of the seat. If not, the candidate with the lowest first preference vote tally was eliminated and his or her votes were redistributed according to the voter's second preference. This process continued until a candidate obtained 50% plus 1 votes whereupon that candidate was declared the winner.

The Team would like to make special mention of the preparations made for counting in Goroka which were extremely impressive. Counting took place on the grounds of the National Sports Institute (NSI) where booths were constructed for each open and provincial seat. Over 2000 counting officials were trained and organised into two daily shifts so that counting could take place from 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. While security was tight and the general public not allowed inside the grounds during counting, the Election Manager and his team held an opening ceremony which made provision for public access to the process. Crowds had been gathering outside the NSI for three days prior to the start of the count. The election team had worked hard to make the facilities spacious and festive. National flags flew above each booth and a loudspeaker system kept the crowds outside informed as to what was taking place. After the counting officials were briefed the public was allowed to tour the facility and ask questions and they were told by the Election Manager: "these are your elections, this is your facility, look closely and ask anything you like". The Election Manager and his team effectively turned an event usually fraught with anxiety and tension into an occasion for festivity and patriotism and they should be highly commended for this.

Lae Open electorate in the Morobe Province was the first to commence counting after polling was completed. Some Provinces such as Morobe commenced count for each electorate as soon as that electorate finished voting, while other Provincial Election Managers preferred to complete polling for all the electorates in the Province before commencing the count. Consideration of the timing for the count in each Province required a judgment by the Election Manager balancing the security challenge of protecting ballot boxes holding votes until all polling is completed (particularly relevant in the Highlands) against any perception of bias created if results started to emerge of early counting while

polling continued. In the event, security of ballot boxes was well established and maintained pending the count in the areas witnessed by the Team, often through the use of locked shipping containers within police station compounds.

Overall the Team was impressed with the integrity and transparency of the counting throughout PNG. Polling officials conducted themselves well and took all necessary measures to ensure the count proceeded smoothly and correctly, while clearing up any problems or queries which arose. Scrutineers were able to play a strong oversight role – in fact in some electorates protests by scrutineers caused significant delays in the count as boxes were disputed and legal opinions sought. Security was tight but conducted very professionally and its success was notable in the lack of interference with ballot boxes or counting centres during the 2007 process.

While the Team would not wish to encourage any measures which would compromise the transparency of the count, it is true that counting was very slow and was a factor in the delay of return of the writs for the election. There may be some measures worthy of consideration for countering problems with the counting, including payment of counting officials by performance (eg ballot boxes counted) rather than by time.

In observing the count, Team members noted some incidence of mixing up regional and open electorate ballot papers, leading both to papers in the wrong boxes but also, more seriously, votes being informal because the voter wrote regional preferences on the open ballot paper, and vice versa. There was also some confusion between the papers in the polling places, which in some cases led to unnecessary numbers of officials and/or security forces looking at the completed papers before they were put into the ballot box. As discussed above, these problems could be easily avoided by printing one of the ballot papers on coloured paper (and perhaps printing the posters and marking the ballot boxes accordingly) so that the distinction is clear for all involved, and informal votes and time wasted during the count is reduced.

Role of the Police and Security Forces

The police played a significant role in ensuring security for the 2007 elections, with major deployment undertaken throughout the country, and particular focus on the Highlands. The PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) also played a major security role in the Highlands Provinces. Of the 11,000 security officers involved in the elections, nearly 5000 were assigned to the Highlands.

In security terms, polling proceeded quite smoothly and was a major improvement on the 2002 elections. In the Highlands the new approach of concentrating a large body of security forces in each Province for its allocated day of polling, then moving the force *en masse* to the next, ensured a significant and effective security presence and the maintenance of order in all the Highlands elections. Coordination between the police and PNGDF appeared to be cordial and effective.

There were some incidents of violence and unrest through the election period, for example:

- In Enga Province there were at least two attempts to remove ballot boxes from the polling place by supporters of a candidate, two armed confrontations between candidates and their supporters at the polling place leading to injury, and in one case a destroyed ballot box.
- Two ballot boxes were hijacked by a candidate's supporters in the Hagen Open electorate of Western Highlands Province, and two further ballot boxes were damaged by supporters of a candidate.
- A number of arrests were made (we believe around 20), and two vehicles and a number of firearms were confiscated, in security operations around Mt Hagen town. These were understood to be groups of supporters of particular candidates – one group was described as "terrorising" voters at a polling station, while others were heavily armed and believed to be headed for another station.
- There were a few incidents in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville including theft of two ballot boxes, and threats by the separatist Mekamui forces and other criminal elements in relation to the electoral process.
- Since the declaration of results, there have been reports of election-related violence between supporters of different candidates in Western Highlands, Southern Highlands and Chimbu Provinces.

In large part, such incidents were dealt with swiftly by the strong security presence in the Province, which contributed to a good law and order situation on the whole for the polling. From all accounts this was a significant positive change from the 2002 election, in which violence and disruption of the process was serious and widespread, and the security presence was insufficient to contain it.

Local people welcomed the improved security situation and attributed it mostly to the significant presence of special security forces, particularly the PNGDF in the Highlands. That said, where there were difficulties it was notable that the unarmed police, in small numbers, were not in a position to play much of a role. Where serious security incidents occurred the PNGDF presence was the main factor in restoring order. For example, in one polling place visited by the Team (Birip polling place, Wabag Open electorate, Enga Province), dispute over the electoral roll and between candidate supporters threatened to degenerate into chaos shortly after polling began. However, the PNGDF were called in and forcefully restored order to the polling.

It should be emphasised that throughout the country, including in the Highlands, the vast majority of polling and counting was in fact peaceful and orderly. The security forces worked long hours with little rest and food throughout the polling and counting periods to ensure a success story in security terms. Their efforts are to be highly commended.

Results Process

Three members of the Team returned to Port Moresby to observe the final stages of the election process and were present for the formal announcement of results and the inaugural session of the eighth Parliament. Despite pending legal challenges and rumoured protests, the Parliamentary session proceeded calmly under tight security.

In accordance with the Constitution and Organic Laws, the National Alliance party as the party winning the most seats, was invited to form the Government and did so in coalition with several other parties and independents, giving it a majority of 87 members, with a 21-member coalition opposition. One elected MP was not present for the inauguration as he was in jail under criminal sentence – his membership of the new Parliament was an issue awaiting legal resolution through court appeals processes.

Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare was elected Prime Minister, making him the first MP to hold the position on four separate occasions. He was elected with the largest majority ever (86 – 21).

Chapter Four

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the Team finds much to commend in the 2007 elections. Most notably, the elections were successfully conducted in all Provinces in an overwhelming atmosphere of peace and security. Unlike 2002 no elections failed, and no large-scale violence or disorder occurred. While there were some security incidents in the Highlands and in other parts of the country, these were handled with professionalism and a high degree of effectiveness by the security forces, and should result in appropriate follow up through the justice system.

PNG presents a uniquely challenging environment for elections in a number of ways, and the achievement of successful polls should not be minimised. The Team emphasises that all involved with the organisation and implementation of the 2007 elections are to be congratulated on this outcome.

The implementation of the new Limited Preferential Vote (LPV) electoral system was also a success. Although a high level of assistance was observed, strong attention to voter education also had an impact with the overall result that over 97% of voters were able to cast formal votes. Understanding of the system will only increase with future elections. The Team witnessed a consistently high level of support around the country for LPV, and the people of Papua New Guinea seem to welcome its adoption and encourage its continued use. LPV was said to contribute to a more peaceful campaign, a greater empowerment of voters and a stronger mandate for elected MPs. However, it may not necessarily improve the chances for women candidates.

The 2002 Report of the Commonwealth Expert Observer Group on Papua New Guinea's Electoral Arrangements made eight (8) recommendations, some of which were taken on board by the Electoral Commission. These include setting up a Task Force to conduct and organise the elections, the creation of a new electoral roll and one-day polling for some Provinces, voter education on the LPV, and strengthened security arrangements. For this election, a 'whole of Government' approach was taken with a national body comprised of key Government departments, and provincial steering committees chaired by the provincial administrator. These developments are welcomed and we believe they did improve the 2007 elections.

In acknowledging the good news story of the 2007 elections, the Team also recognises that significant challenges remain for the entrenchment of democratic principles and the efficient management of elections in PNG.

Logistical and technical problems continue to make PNG elections expensive and prone to difficulties and delays. Decentralisation of management to the provincial level, while a necessary and generally successful strategy, led to inconsistencies in the process in different parts of the country. Continued attention must be paid to ensuring timely and efficient provision of resources and support to Election Managers so that decentralisation can work, while at the same time providing the maximum possible training and oversight of election officials and management at all levels to improve efficiency and minimise mistakes.

The quality of the electoral roll continues to plague the Electoral Commission and the introduction of a voter ID card or voter registration whereby eligible voters are receipted for registering, which was considered but not implemented for 2007, may require further consideration. Avoidable confusion between Provincial and Open ballot papers also needs to be reduced.

Perhaps most importantly, this report has reflected that particular challenges of a substantive nature remain in the Highlands Provinces of Papua New Guinea. While the integrity of the process was variable, and many worked hard to ensure the success and integrity of elections in the Highlands, our observations indicated that more work is needed to ensure that electoral processes are conducted with uniform integrity and propriety, including clean and fair campaigning, proper management and use of the electoral roll, and respect for the secret ballot. We recognise that communal cultures and traditional rivalries remain strong in the Highlands and can interact imperfectly with a Westminster-style election process – but these factors need not, in fact must not, be mutually exclusive. Significant effort should be made in the short, medium and long term, to work with Highlands communities toward building and maintaining a stronger culture of democracy and respect for the law.

Bearing all of the above in mind, the Team makes the following **core recommendations**:

1. In view of the allegations of “missing names” in this year’s national election, **further effort should be put into continued improvement of voter registration including use of receipts, voter identification cards or certificates of enrolment for voters.**
2. Re-emphasising the 2002 recommendation of the Commonwealth Experts, **management and maintenance of the electoral roll should be decentralised under the control of the Electoral Commission at the provincial level, with careful safeguards to ensure that the roll can not be manipulated by local interests.**
3. **While recognising the logistical challenges of PNG, further review of polling schedules is recommended to minimise polling time and expense where feasible.** Consideration might be given to alternative approaches such as the use of mobile voting teams with a single ballot box per electorate. This would enhance secrecy of the ballot (e.g. it would not be possible to identify which votes came from which village), and could also be more effective in terms of financial, security and human resources.
4. **Voter education programmes on the new system of voting should be a continuous process to increase the knowledge of voters about the electoral process.** Such efforts should seek to reach out to as many citizens as possible and could include integration into school curricula. Attention should also be paid to a continuous review of the effectiveness of voter education initiatives. **Particular priority should be given to initiatives in the Highlands Provinces, to work towards building a stronger culture of democracy over time.**

5. Should provincial electorates continue to exist in future national elections, **to avoid confusion between Provincial and Open ballot papers the Electoral Commission should consider printing at least one of the ballot papers on coloured paper (and perhaps printing the posters and marking the ballot boxes accordingly)** so that the distinction is clear for all involved, thus reducing informal votes and time wasted during the count.
6. **There should be more effective delegation and decentralisation of financial powers and funds to provincial Election Managers to manage their elections, to minimise and reduce delays over payments relating to electoral administration.** Alternatively, financial requests for electoral administration should be efficiently processed to enhance electoral administration in the Provinces. In other words, election administration processes should be made easier and more efficient. This must be accompanied by the provision of appropriate support, training and oversight from the national level, to ensure effective, consistent and accountable election management.
7. **Further enabling mechanisms should be examined to fast-track and increase the number of women entering Parliament.** A number of models to increase women's representation in Parliament have been used in other countries and these could be examined to develop mechanisms suitable for the PNG context.
8. **Mobilisation of domestic election observers should be encouraged in future elections, and the capacity and professionalism of the domestic observer programme should continue to be built.** Continued international assistance is likely to be required to achieve a robust and high quality domestic observer presence in future elections.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum are keen to offer technical assistance towards implementation of the above recommendations if appropriate and when requested by the Government of Papua New Guinea.