

Case Study: Papua New Guinea – Mobilizing for Support



Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development Papua New Guinea

“Never try to stand without family support. Melanesian society is based on relationships and if this is expanded on and utilized and treasured, it can beat bribe money,” says Minister Carol Kidu, three times election winner and Moresby South candidate.

For Minister Kidu, her decision to stand was borne not only out of anger over the sudden death of her husband, former Chief Justice Sir Buri, but also for her life long concern for issues of social injustice. Nor was her decision to enter politics a flippant one. On the contrary, Dame Carol (as she is affectionately known) got a job as a Research Officer for a then Minister to ‘survey the scene’ and learn more about the intricacies of being in government before deciding to run for the first time in 1997.

According to Dame Carol, there is no one style when it comes to campaigning.

“Campaigning and being a politician is about leading. As a leader, there is a need to develop various strategies, whether it is leading from the front, the back or in circles. As a woman it is important not to try to campaign like men. We need to develop our own style and stick to it in principle but adapt where necessary.” For Dame Carol, the message was clear – in outlining what her platforms were, she promised nothing but honesty, hard work and consistency.

No stranger now to campaigning and elections, Dame Carol says that campaigning in PNG is not cheap. Whilst money is good to have, your people support is very important. “During the 2007 campaign, I faced a very tough battle against two candidates with lots and lots of money. I had to get smart. I used five different styles of campaign strategies. Open rallies, general community campaigns, coffee and cordial campaigns with special target groups, power point presentation nights, house to house campaigning with “bag of knowledge”. We literally took around bags filled with leaflets and awareness materials to give to people. I even involved people in my electorate and support team to make the bags. When you have a good support team, you CAN win, even if other candidates have so much more money.”

During every election, Dame Carol moves into the village house with her extended family a month before voting to manage the campaign from there. She eats, sleeps and moves with her team as much as possible, always ensuring that at least one of the family elders slept on the mat beside her to give her moral support and strength.

Her message to other women, “Work hard, stay as focused as possible under the pressure. Remember elections are about numbers – check the rolls, keep consolidating your bases but also cast your net wider and wider for more numbers. Use every opportunity for public exposure and media but be careful and manage this well and above all, be genuine.”



Resource yourself!

Running a campaign requires resources. Not just money but also people.

Harness your “people power”. You can’t be everywhere all the time and you can’t try to do everything yourself. You need to think about who you know that you can rely on to help you. Even if you don’t have a lot of financial capital, use your “human capital”.

Rely on your personal networks - your family, your friends, your fellow church-goers, people you know who are in community groups and sporting mates. Mobilise women and communities at the grassroots level. Many women candidates have been heavily involved in the church, their children’s school and/or NGOs. Get in touch with people you know from these groups and see if they would be willing to help you out - by handing out fliers, helping to organise meetings or inviting you to speak to their own networks.

Get a support team together. This is not easy because your volunteers will need to commit to the time required to assist you throughout your campaign. They need to be people you know you can rely on. Ensure your team includes men and women. Diversity in ideas and feedback is helpful. Ensure your team is balanced in their strengths - perhaps one member is well known in the community, another in researching

policies, facts and figures, while another is good at writing speeches and press releases.

Start fundraising as early as possible. When you know you have support and have identified those who can help, your other big challenge will be campaign finance. Having funds to run a successful campaign is critical. Campaigns are quite expensive but if you prepare well and manage carefully, you can keep your costs to a minimum.

Fundraising should begin as soon as possible after you decide to run. Do not wait for the election to be announced. Funds are needed for:

- ✿ Registering your nomination
- ✿ Transport
- ✿ Communications
- ✿ Food and refreshments
- ✿ Traditional protocol
- ✿ Stationery
- ✿ Paying allowances to your campaign team and volunteers

Many women who have run for election have noted that their campaign budget is smaller than that of male candidates. Women often do not have access to loans and donations because they may not have a secure independent income or the same network as men. This means you will need to be even more active in trying to get donations from people. This is also one of the reasons why some women join a political party. You can take advantage of political party fundraising and the party outreach machinery.



Tick the box!

When you are campaigning, it is essential to always remember that the end result you want is for voters to actually get out on voting day and tick your box on the ballot.

Make sure your supporters get out and vote! In the Pacific, it is generally not compulsory to vote. This means that it is up to you to make sure that your supporters feel committed enough to you to make the effort on voting day to go to the polling booths, wait in line and then cast their vote for you.

Even if people like you and agree with what you stand for, in today's Pacific, experience has shown that many people instinctively think they should vote for a man. Culture, tradition and habit all contribute to this. You need to be aware of this and make sure that people are reassured that if they vote for you, they will get a representative who understands them and will represent their interests effectively.

Target male voters as well. It is very important that women candidates don't forget to work with men too. It doesn't mean that because you are a woman you won't also represent the men in the community if you get elected. Men make up half of the voting population. If you want to get elected, you need men as well as women to vote for you!

Youth have significant voting power. They can be prompted to take part in elections if you respond to their needs.

Get involved in major youth concerns such as the environment and youth unemployment. Ensure your messages support a more inclusive society which respects diversity. Target universities and youth groups in faith based organisations to get your message across.

Know the laws governing casting and counting of votes. Unfortunately, in the Pacific, one of the problems women have reported is that despite people voting for them, vote buying or vote rigging occurs and they still don't win.

You need to be aware of the electoral laws and regulations that govern voting day and vote counting. Although such regulations can be complicated, make the effort to read them, and make sure you comply with the law and also protect your interests on voting day.

Most election laws in the Pacific let a candidate appoint someone to observe the voting and counting on their behalf to make sure that it's all done properly. These people are usually called "scrutineers". If scrutineers can be appointed in your country, make sure you nominate someone to do this job because in small countries, elections can be won or lost by only a handful of votes.

If you feel that something has not been done right by election officials, make sure to let the Election Commissioner know. You can always lodge a complaint. Be sure to carefully read the elections manual or rule book that also contains important dates.



After The Elections

Getting through the campaigning and election process is only the first step in reaching the goal of making a difference – to your community, your province and your country.

Once you get elected, you must live up to all the promises you made and the policies you said you would pursue. Although daunting, it is an honor and a challenge to be elected as your people's representative and this is why the burden of such leadership can feel heavy.

One of the first things you will have to do when you are elected is to make an inaugural speech at the first sitting of parliament or congress.

This is a big opportunity for you to tell your other legislative colleagues as well as your constituents what you plan to do during your term in office. Plan your speech carefully. Think back to the policies you proposed and the issues you told voters you would pursue when you were campaigning.

Increasingly, Pacific legislatures are running training workshops for new members of the legislature, called Induction Workshops. Look out for such opportunities, as this training could be helpful in clarifying for you how the legislature works, how you can engage in debates, what rules apply in the legislature, how

Bills are passed, how parliamentary committees operate and how you can more effectively use legislative processes to make a difference.

Once you are elected as a member of parliament or congress, there are people around who can help you achieve your goals. The parliamentary staff, your party, community groups and your local supporters are good sources of assistance and advice. Use your networks for support and information. Ask them to help research issues and provide their opinions. Keep them informed of upcoming issues.

Working in parliament can be tricky. Trying to improve and enact legislation and making sure that money is spent efficiently and effectively can be a complicated process. But if you attack these challenges as systematically as your campaign, you will be successful in making a contribution to the welfare of your constituents and your country.

Your effort, engagement and accomplishments will be an inspiration to women throughout the Pacific. Best of luck!