5. Electoral Administration

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This chapter, which provides an overview of electoral administration in the 2007 election, draws heavily upon the findings from the *2007 Domestic Observation Report* (Haley and Anere 2009). It finds that Papua New Guinea's 2007 general election was better managed and more peaceful than the 2002 polls, which were marred by electoral irregularities and widespread violence across the Highlands, and were generally regarded as the worst elections in Papua New Guinea's history. In short, all the seats were declared, MPs in the new parliament were elected with larger mandates, government was formed, and for the first time in many years concerted electoral and civic education was undertaken in the lead-up to polling. There were also appreciable gains with respect to electoral administration—so much so that the elections ran smoothly in many provinces, particularly in the New Guinea Islands Region. Nevertheless there is room for further improvement. Specifically, electoral fraud and malpractice continue to be problematic in the Highlands, and problems with the accuracy of the electoral roll persist, as do complaints about the untimely release of funds, delayed delivery of election materials and inadequate training of election officials. These issues will require attention in the lead-up to the 2012 election.

Observation and monitoring

In 2007, for the first time in Papua New Guinea's history, domestic observers were mobilized to monitor and review the election. The exercise involved a partnership between academics and civil society and was jointly coordinated by myself and Dr Ray Anere from the National Research Institute. It was funded by the Australian Agency for International Development through the Electoral Support Program, Phase 2 (ESP 2). In total some 150 observers took part in the domestic observation, the purpose of which was to generate and analyse quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide an impartial and accurate assessment of the 2007 election, which might in turn be used by the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) and other government agencies critical to the conduct of elections, to further improve the operational planning and delivery of future elections.

Figure 5.1: Wilson Hauke conducting awareness at Pori, January 2007

The 2007 Domestic Observation comprised 18 observer teams, each covering a single open or provincial electorate. Typically, the teams consisted of an academic team leader (many of whom have contributed chapters to this volume) and six to 10 civil society observers, depending on the type of electorate. Individual observers were engaged for up to 28 days over a two-month period and were given the task of making observations during the campaign, pre-poll, polling and counting periods. To assist them in this task, observers undertook a day-long training program and were given an observer journal to complete. The journal was designed to record individual observations in a systematic way so that key aspects of electoral administration might be assessed. In most cases observers were able to observe the elections unhindered and in many cases received support and assistance from the security forces deployed to assist with the smooth running of the election. Given the length of time observers spent ‘in the field’ in the lead-up to and during the elections, detailed observations about electoral administration can be made.

The new electoral roll

Perhaps the most significant ongoing administrative challenge the PNGEC faces is the production of an accurate electoral roll. Indeed, political commentators have long been aware of problems with the electoral roll. It is well documented that enrolled voters have, for more than a decade now, far exceeded the number of eligible citizens in the Highlands electorates (Standish 2002, 2003; Haley 2004:20, 2002; Gibbs 2006). Recognizing this, a decision was made to do away with the old common rolls following the 2002 election. The PNGEC then embarked upon a nationwide re-registration exercise. This was a mammoth task, and one that began too late in the election cycle.

On the face of it, the new electoral roll, the result of a re-registration exercise which commenced in late 2005/early 2006, appears more accurate than those used in 1997 and 2002 in that the number enrolled is considerably smaller. The new roll, containing the names of 3,938,839 registered voters, had 1.4 million fewer names than the 2002 roll. This was certainly an achievement, although as Ladley, Holtved and Kantha (2010:vii) note, the current Papua New Guinea electoral roll 'does not provide a credible link between eligible electors and the votes counted during an election'.

In 2007, observers around the country received complaints from people who claimed that they were not on the roll, and many reported seeing voters turned away from polling stations on polling day. Collectively, domestic observers in the Highlands noted major faults with the voter re-registration and verification exercises, reporting duplications and ghost names as well as omissions. Specifically, they reported less than 25 percent of adults surveyed in pre-polling and post-polling surveys in the Highlands had completed a Claim for Enrolment form. Observations with respect to the rest of the country varied.

The enrolment process

The enrolment process, which was overseen by election managers in each province, was undertaken by district officials engaged and funded by the PNGEC. A common criticism repeated across the country concerned the partisanship of the local officials engaged to undertake this task (see Haley and Anere 2009; Ladley, Holtved and Kantha 2010:vii, and chapters 18 and 23 in this volume) and the hurried nature of the exercise. Observers in the Highlands were particularly critical of the process, noting that enrolment teams did not travel to the wards but instead completed the forms themselves (see chapters 19 and 21).

By contrast, the re-enrolment exercise seemingly took place satisfactorily in the Islands Region and in urban areas. For example, survey work undertaken by the Madang and National Capital District (NCD) observer teams revealed that enrolment teams in these urban areas did go door-to-door in an effort to ensure all eligible citizens were enrolled. Observers in Bougainville and Gazelle likewise reported that enrolment teams visited each ward.

Verification

Each of the nine Highlands observation teams reported deficiencies with the verification exercise. Verification rolls were not displayed in the districts and wards and, in most cases, were not seen prior to polling day. In the Southern Highlands and Western Highlands, they were displayed only in the provincial headquarters and then only for a matter of days. A similar process was reported for Oro Province (see chapter 16). Gibbs (chapter 19) further reports that the verification rolls arrived in Enga in June—just one month before the election. As such there was little time for final checking.

Where verification took place it seems to have been undertaken by individuals—many of the same people involved in the enrolment process. As a consequence there was little opportunity for public scrutiny of the roll. There were also claims of political interference at the verification stage. Certainly in the Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open electorate, enrolments in some of the previously over-enrolled wards increased further during the verification phase (see chapter 21 and Haley and Anere 2009:24). The Pacific Islands Forum Election Observer Team also noted suspicion that sitting members were inflating the roll in their districts, and observed in one sitting member's village that the roll went from 2800 names to 10,000 (Commonwealth Pacific Islands Forum Election Assessment Team 2007:8).

Despite the fact that less than a quarter of adults surveyed by observers in the Highlands had enrolled to vote, electoral rolls in the Highlands continue to be highly inflated. Detailed analysis undertaken by the Wabag and Koroba-Lake Kapiago observer teams, for instance, indicates that the Southern Highlands electoral roll is twice the size it should be (see chapter 21; Haley 2006, 2004; 2002) while the Enga roll looks to be inflated by 45 percent (see chapter 19).

Under-enrolment was also a significant problem in some parts of the Southern Highlands. In some cases this seems to have been due to administrative errors but in other cases because enterprising candidates successfully managed to ensure that their opponents' supporters were disenfranchised. In the Southern Highlands, observers identified whole families and clans which were disenfranchised by being placed in the wrong wards or by being left off the roll completely (see chapters 20 and 21). They also collected information from

a variety of sources—including assistant returning officers—which suggested that supporters of particular candidates had difficulty gaining access to Claim for Enrolment forms, giving rise to widespread speculation and claims of bribery, mismanagement and corruption in several Southern Highlands electorates—namely Koroba-Lake Kopiago, Tari-Pori, Imbonggu and Kagua-Erave.

Throughout the Highlands, observers repeatedly heard the complaint that ‘not enough forms were sent out’ during the roll re-registration exercise. Clearly sufficient forms were in fact sent out as evidenced by the highly inflated roll. However, it is the case that they were used inappropriately and in fraudulent ways (to enrol children and people who were already deceased), causing eligible citizens to be left off the new roll.

Where claim forms were completed and signed on behalf of children, dead people or those long absent from the electorate—people who did not meet the legislatively proscribed residency requirement—correct procedures were not followed. For example, an official witnessing a Claim for Enrolment is legislatively required, by section 56 of the *Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections*, to satisfy himself or herself that the statements made and information provided in the claim are true.¹ In most cases the local village enumerators and witnesses—councillors and village recorders in most cases—would most likely have known which of the would-be voters were underage, deceased or non-resident.

A key factor concerning the problems associated with the roll is the absence of community ownership of the roll. Community participation in voter verification and roll cleansing is therefore vital for ownership of the roll. The present methods of voter verification and roll cleansing do not encourage community ownership of the roll. As such the roll is vulnerable to blatant manipulation by self-interested individuals. So as to mitigate this, verification rolls should, in future, be publicly displayed at both the district and ward level. Public readings of the electoral roll, in the presence of community scrutineers, the ward councillor and village recorder might also be incorporated into the roll cleansing and verification exercise, as a means of producing more accurate rolls. This would also help generate community ownership of the roll.

Without a doubt, the ongoing problems associated with the roll have the potential to undermine public confidence in the PNGEC as well as in the principle of political equality between citizens as called for under section 50 of the national

¹ This requirement is clearly spelled out on page 8, paragraph 3.3.6, of the *Electoral Roll Training Manual*, which states, ‘You are signing to verify that you saw the elector sign the enrolment form and you are satisfied the information contained on the enrolment form is true (my emphasis)’.

constitution. Attention must be given to the electoral roll as a matter of urgency, in order to: ensure political equality between citizens; restore confidence in the PNGEC; and ensure that the elections have integrity.

Administration and planning

At the national level, electoral administration and planning was enhanced by the adoption of a whole-of-government approach and in particular the establishment of the Inter-departmental Electoral Committee (IDEC) (see chapter 2). IDEC was set up by an act of parliament in 2006. It comprised key government stakeholders including the PNGEC, ESP 2, Department of Finance, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs, Office of the Chief Secretary, and the registrar of political parties. The membership and participation of senior government officials, including the chief secretary, secretary of the Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs, the electoral commissioner, the chief executive officer of the National Broadcasting Corporation, and the registrar of political parties, not only lent weight to IDEC but also to the decisions it made. For example, the 2007 Domestic Observation would not have been possible had it not been for the support of these senior government officials through IDEC.

Improved communication at the national level did not, however, necessarily result in better administration at the provincial and district level (see chapter 8). There is still considerable room for improvement in terms of operationalizing national level plans. For example, despite high-level support for the domestic observation and the whole-of-government approach to the 2007 election, there was surprisingly little knowledge about the presence of domestic observers. Several observer teams found that key electoral officials and security personnel were unaware a domestic observation was being undertaken,² and as a result experienced obstruction in the first instance—for example, the Mt Hagen Open observers were initially denied access to the Western Highlands counting centre, and one of the Southern Highlands Provincial observers was beaten by security personnel when he tried to observe a training session for polling officials. Thankfully the problems experienced tended to be quickly resolved, and in fact many teams reported receiving valuable assistance, from the security personnel in particular.

2 The first version of the security booklet prepared by the RPNGC (2007a), and issued to police, defence and Correctional Services personnel, deployed under the National Elections Operation (NATEL) did not include anything about the domestic observation. A second version of the booklet, entitled *Election Handbook 2007* (RPNGC 2007b), which was printed in June 2007, did include a section on observers, but unfortunately was issued too late to be distributed to security personnel already in the field.

Election management

Only two of the 18 observer teams deployed as part of the 2007 Domestic Observation commended the performance of the key electoral personnel in their province and/or electorate (Haley and Anere 2009:19). The others reported poor performance on the part of provincial election managers, and/or returning officers and assistant returning officers, observing that they were difficult to locate and did not demonstrate a good understanding of their roles. It was also noted that many election managers and returning officers were conveniently absent when administrative issues, problems and complaints arose and, even when present, proved ineffectual.

Observers in several electorates also reported concerns that key electoral personnel were partisan, that they failed to properly train polling and counting officials, and that the appointment of assistant returning officers, presiding officers, and other polling officials was subject to political interference.

The three Southern Highlands observer teams and Wabag Open observer team reported that key electoral personnel were changed several times in the lead-up to the election. In the Southern Highlands the constant appointment, revocation and reappointment of personnel, on the advice of the Southern Highlands Provincial steering committee, hampered election preparations, and resulted in pre-polling and post-polling disputes. The appointment of the assistant returning officer for Lake Kapiago Local-Level Government is a case in point (see chapter 21).

The confusion about appointments in the Southern Highlands was exacerbated by a tussle between William Powi and Alphonse Hayabe over the provincial administrator's position. After being confirmed as acting administrator by the National Court on 13 April 2007, Hayabe sought to have key election officials recommended by his predecessor replaced. Specifically he wrote to the PNGEC deputy commissioner of operations on 16 April 2007 in his capacity as chairman of the provincial steering committee, recommending, among other appointments, the appointment of a new provincial returning officer. These recommendations were subsequently overturned by Powi once his position as provincial administrator was confirmed by the Supreme Court. Needless to say, returning officers and assistant returning officers should be appointed early in the election cycle.

The new ballot paper

Election 2007 saw candidate photographs removed from the new ballot paper and the introduction of separate candidate posters. This change was effected very late in the election cycle, being certified by the speaker of the National

Parliament in September 2006—nine months out from the election. Despite concerted civil-society-led awareness campaigning concerning the changes, many voters were not aware of the new arrangements.

The changes were not insignificant. The way people were required to vote in 2007 was markedly different from previous elections. Rather than marking their ballot papers with an X, as they had in recent general elections, or with 1, 2, 3, as they had done in the limited preferential voting (LPV) by-elections, voters were required to write three two-digit code numbers and/or the names of their preferred candidates on both the provincial and open electorate ballot papers. This proved very slow, especially when voters marked their own papers.

The voting process was further complicated by the fact that the open and provincial ballot papers were very similar in appearance, being differentiated only by a pale blue or pale pink band at the bottom of the ballot paper. Voters found it difficult to differentiate between them—and this was used by presiding officers to justify the high levels of assistance in many areas. Many of the informal votes identified in counting rooms across the country arose because voters mixed up the forms, writing their open seat preferences on the provincial ballot paper and vice versa. There may well have been many more papers marked in error than were identified as informal. For this reason voters and polling officials around the country were universally critical of the new ballot papers; many have since called for the reintegration of photographs on the ballot papers, others have insisted that bolder colours should be used in the future or that the papers should be markedly different in size or shape.

Despite the confusion wrought by the new ballot paper, the informal vote remained very low. This was due, in no small part, to the high level of assisted voting witnessed around the country. In the Highlands the vast majority of voters were assisted, either by polling officials, police, campaign managers, candidates' scrutineers or family members. Given low literacy levels, especially in remote rural areas, assistance proved necessary in many cases. Often, however, assistance was forced. It was observed too that completed papers were often checked as well. As a result very few voters were afforded a secret ballot.

Worryingly, where 'assistance' was given the voters' wishes were not always adhered to. In the Southern Highlands observers witnessed several instances where presiding officers marked ballot papers in a manner contrary to the voter's wishes. Observers in the Southern Highlands also noted that polling officials at several polling stations had pre-marked the first preference prior to issuing ballot papers.

Figure 5.2: Pre-marked ballot paper

It is difficult to ascertain just how widespread this practice was, but observers in counting rooms around the country observed that many ballot papers in various boxes were completed by more than one person. For example the first preference was marked in one pen while the second and third preferences were marked in a different coloured pen and/or different handwriting.

Awareness

Efforts to create community awareness about the new voting system commenced late in the election cycle, due to the fact that the legislative changes introducing the new ballot paper and separate candidate posters were certified by the speaker of the National Parliament only nine months prior to the election. Voters and candidates around the country were critical of the late change. This problem was beyond the control of the PNGEC.

Bearing in mind the narrow window for awareness, the PNGEC focussed its awareness campaign on television, radio and print media initiatives, supplemented by face-to-face awareness by election managers and returning officers. The media awareness proved most effective in urban areas. Observers across the country reported that the awareness conducted by the PNGEC teams was limited and in most cases delivered very late, due mainly to the fact that PNGEC funding for awareness was released only after the close of nominations.

Figure 5.3: Domestic observer Justin Wandi at Koroba, 28 June 2007

In the main, face-to-face awareness was undertaken by civil society groups, many of which were funded under ESP 2 (see chapter 4). The awareness provided by these groups was observed to be generally comprehensive. Pre-polling and post-polling surveys conducted by individual observer teams revealed it to be particularly effective, especially in the Highlands, where five times as many people reported having attended civil-society-run LPV/civic awareness as had attended awareness conducted by the PNGEC.

Despite the extensive civil society awareness campaign, irregularities of various kinds were noted by observers on polling day, and many voters reported they found the new voting system confusing and had needed assistance when voting. Ongoing awareness is therefore needed.

Pre-polling

The findings of individual observer teams varied considerably in respect of pre-polling administration. The NCD teams, for example, reported that electoral administration was much improved, being better than both the 2002 general election and the 2006 NCD by-election. Observations from other parts of the country, particularly the Highlands, were nowhere near as positive. Only six of the 18 observer teams (NCD Provincial, Port Moresby South Open, Goroka Open, Wabag Open, Mt Hagen Open and Gazelle Open) reported that essential election supplies, including candidate posters, ballot papers, and ballot box seals, were received on time in advance of polling. The remaining teams reported delays with regard to the release of funds and the delivery of essential materials.

In the Southern Highlands funds that should have been released prior to polling were not received until after the polling was complete. In the absence of these funds the PNGDF arranged for and funded the insertion and extraction of polling teams (see chapter 8). The funding shortfall also resulted in reduced payments to polling officials, which in turn gave rise to much discontent and saw the majority of returning officers from Koroba-Lake Kapiago and Kagua-Erave withhold their returns and refuse to attend the count.

Training

Training of polling officials was not consistent. Lists of polling officials were finalised early in some areas (for example NCD, Bougainville, Western Highlands and the Eastern Highlands) and reasonably comprehensive training was provided. In Southern Highlands and Enga, however, polling officials were appointed on the eve of polling or on polling day itself, and the training was observed to be inadequate.

Polling

For the most part polling in the 2007 election proceeded peacefully, though the conduct of polling varied greatly across the country. Observers in the Islands, Momase and Southern regions reported that polling was generally well organized

and managed and polling places set up in the recommended manner. For the most part polling stations opened on time and few disturbances or irregularities were noted. Nonetheless gender-segregated polling, which was official policy in 2007, was not observed except in NCD, Ijivitari Open and Madang Provincial seats.

By contrast, voting in the Highlands—particularly the Southern Highlands and Enga—remained generally chaotic. One-day polling proved unworkable, except in urban areas, and significant irregularities were identified in each of the highland's provinces, particularly in relation to the conduct of polling. Other problems noted in the Southern Highlands included the relocation of polling stations from their gazetted locations and movement of polling stations from their historical locations.

Inclement weather and a shortage of vehicles and air transport meant polling in the Southern Highlands, where the polling began, was delayed for several days in some areas. In Enga and Chimbu delays to polling were also experienced, and in both provinces it took a full week for polling to be completed. This had flow-on effects across the rest of the Highlands. The delays also meant that the security forces were spread very thinly in many areas, and in some cases redeployed before the completion of polling, which may have contributed to some of the irregularities and malpractice witnessed.

In terms of the conduct of polling, a wide array of voting practices was noted in each of the Highlands provinces. In Enga people tended to vote in family groups, with papers issued en masse to family heads (see chapter 18), although in some parts line-up voting was also employed, such that names were not called but marked off when people entered the polling place. Similar practices were noted at polling stations throughout the Eastern Highlands (including Goroka Open), Southern Highlands and Chimbu.

In some places, particularly Chimbu, *man-meri* voting and 'next' voting were employed. In these cases names were not called, but rather the gender of registered voters in the order that they appeared, or when one person had finished the polling officials simply called out 'Next' (Chuave Open, Goroka Open, EHP Provincial, Koroba-Lake Kapiago team reports). In other cases, the roll was completely disregarded, serving only as the basis to issue a certain number of ballot papers. This was so in the more remote parts of Eastern Highlands and much of Southern Highlands—with several observers noting that polling officials in many polling booths did not check the roll at all.

Voting irregularities

Cheating and voting irregularities were reported across the country, but were certainly widespread and most pronounced in the Highlands. Outside the Highlands, irregularities such as underage voting and multiple voting were observed to be isolated rather than the norm.

Underage voting, multiple voting, 'line-up' voting, serial voting, 'outside' voting and proxy voting were all commonplace in the Highlands. Voting took place publicly and there was no secret ballot. The indelible ink was not used or was used randomly and excess ballot papers were used in many cases.

Bloc voting was also observed throughout the Highlands, especially in open electorates. In some cases this appears to have been the result of genuine group consensus (a group choosing to vote for their clan/local candidate) but in other areas it resulted from coercion, intimidation or outright malpractice. In many wards in Southern Highlands, Enga, Chimbu and Eastern Highlands polling officials were observed to do away with the pretext of individual voters casting their votes. This was particularly so in Enga. In many cases people in Enga voted in family groups, and in others ballot papers were simply filled out by scrutineers or candidate representatives. In some parts of Enga the majority of people played no part in the voting process. Similar observations were made in parts of Southern Highlands, where ballot papers were pre-marked or filled out by teams of young men or supporters.

Observers in six of the nine Highlands electorates (Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open, Kagua-Erave Open, Southern Highlands Provincial, Eastern Highlands Provincial, Chuave Open and Wabag Open) also witnessed bribery and intimidation on the part of candidates and their key supporters. Their observations were confirmed by post-polling surveys in Southern Highlands (see chapter 20) and Enga, where 38 percent of male voters and 58 percent of female voters surveyed reported that they had experienced intimidation when casting their vote. The same post-polling surveys revealed that just over 40 percent of voters surveyed (41 percent in Southern Highlands and 43 percent in Enga) felt that the 2007 election was worse than 2002. Certainly many voters in the Southern Highlands felt that this election had failed, as it had in 2002 (see chapters 20 and 21).

Two key factors contributed to and facilitated the cheating and malpractice (underage voting, double and multiple voting, serial voting and outside voting) observed on polling day: first, the integrity of the new electoral roll in the Highlands, which can be shown to include children, deceased people, people from neighbouring electorates, and several thousand duplicate entries, and, secondly, the location and positioning of polling stations, many of which were moved from their gazetted locations to facilitate ease of movement between

polling stations. At Pureni, in the South Koroba local government area, four polling stations (Tumbite, Pubulumu 1, Pubulumu 2 and Tangimapu) were set up on Tumbite airstrip. Three of the four polling stations were moved from their gazetted locations on grounds of alleged security threats, although the assistant returning officer later conceded that the polling stations were moved to 'make it easier for voters to move between polling stations'.

Post-polling

Post-polling arrangements around the country proved for the most part to be quite good, with observers reporting that ballot boxes were transported under security escort and properly secured in preparation for counting. Problems were, however, evident in the Southern Highlands, where observers noted that returns were completed after the fact, as was polling-day paperwork. Few returning officers and assistant returning officers were observed to keep a register of unused ballot papers. There were also problems with the movement of ballot boxes from Tari to Mendi. The Hela people wanted their boxes counted in Tari and blockaded the Tari police station where the boxes had been temporarily secured. As a result, the transportation of the boxes to the counting centre in Mendi was delayed by 10 days, and was only effected after an eleventh-hour intervention on the part of the deputy electoral commissioner, who entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Hela candidates.

Counting

Counting is a fundamental part of election administration. Counting in 2007 was generally well organized, though slow. As a result, the deadline for the return of writs needed to be extended by a week. For the most part, irregularities in counting were identified by the checks and balances that were employed. Observers in most electorates reported that individual ballot box counts were checked against the returns and serious anomalies were investigated and often gave rise to recounts.

Significant anomalies were, however, identified in the NCD Provincial, Eastern Highlands Provincial and Southern Highlands Provincial counts. Specifically, the NCD Provincial results reveal that Powes Parkop was declared without having obtained an absolute majority and without the final distribution of preferences taking place, while the Eastern Highlands Provincial results make evident that, despite a thorough two-day recheck count, figures during the elimination phase did not balance with those made earlier. Additional informal papers were identified, as were 1438 additional papers that seemingly had not been counted

in either the primary count or recheck count. A total of 3848 previously counted and rechecked ballot papers could not be located or accounted for during the elimination phase.

In most provinces counting took place at a central location—often the provincial headquarters. In most cases, security was tight with a heavy police and PNGDF presence. Overall counting was conducted in an open and transparent manner and was well managed. For the most part, used and unused papers were reconciled, individual ballot box counts were reconciled against the ballots issued and the presiding officers' returns, and checks and balances picked up papers that had been wrongly allocated in the first instance.

Counting in all the Highlands provinces was centralized in the provincial headquarters. Procedurally it varied—within provinces and between them—but overall tended to be well organized, with varying degrees of transparency. In Chimbu, ballot papers were subject to the highest level of scrutiny, with individual counting rooms set up in such a way that scrutineers could properly view the counting process, and in particular the sorting process. Ballot papers were checked for formality, sorted, rechecked, counted and recounted before being tallied. Importantly, the open and provincial papers were consistently reconciled as well, meaning that the vast majority of errors were picked up during the primary count.

By contrast, few checks and balances were employed in the Southern Highlands Provincial seat counting room, and little or no effort was made to balance results against returns from individual polling stations. Similarly, little concern was shown when the number of open papers did not match the number of provincial papers. It is not known how often this occurred, because it has not been possible to obtain the full Southern Highlands Provincial results. A major problem with respect to electoral administration across the whole country has been the lack of completed returns.

Counting for the Southern Highlands Provincial seat also proved very slow, taking a month to complete. The primary or first preference count commenced on 7 July and continued through till 28 July. Counting was then suspended following a court challenge by four of the provincial candidates, namely Hani Yawari, Bob Marley Undi Nande, Dickson Pena Tasi and Michael Nali. These candidates claimed the ballot boxes from the Hela region had been tampered with and should be excluded from the count, and that the memorandum of understanding entered into by the deputy commissioner should be declared null and void. The National Court dismissed the proceedings and ordered a recheck count prior to the distribution of preferences. Counting resumed at around midday on 4 August, with the recheck count. Although it had taken some three weeks to sort and count the first preferences, the recheck count,

which involved the rechecking of close to 384,000 ballot papers, was completed in less than five hours. Observers felt the recheck was cursory and that few cross checks were employed.

The eliminations phase of the Southern Highlands Provincial count commenced at 5.15 pm on 4 August, and continued through the night and into the following day, with the declaration being made exactly 24 hours after the eliminations commenced. It was observed that the eliminations were rushed and that countless mistakes were made, especially in relation to the last five eliminations. Specifically, observers noted that the distribution of preferences took place 'in a split second' and there was no checking of the redistributed or exhausted ballot papers. Observers felt many papers were wrongly allocated. By way of comparison, the elimination phase of the Tari-Pori Open seat count took five days to complete, and involved only 37,000 ballot papers, one tenth the number of papers in the Southern Highlands Provincial count.

Training

As was the case with training for polling officials, there was much variability with respect to the training provided for counting officials. Counting officials in the Islands, Momase and NCD were all provided with one or two days training, and observers reported that counting officials appeared well versed in all aspects of the count. By contrast, observers across the Highlands described the training provided to counting officials as inadequate. The Eastern Highlands Provincial team reported that only 200 of the 700 counting officials received training and those that did received only one hour's training prior to the commencement of the count. Observers in Chimbu similarly felt the training provided to counting officials was inadequate and some observers were asked to provide additional training for counting officials during the early phases of the count.

In the Southern Highlands, counting officials and scrutineers were provided with anything from an hour to a day's training (depending on the counting room) immediately prior to the commencement of count. Observers described the training as confusing and noted that counting officials and scrutineers often appeared out of their depth and seemed confused about procedural matters. As counting progressed it also became evident that new counting officials were being appointed and admitted to some counting rooms, such as the Southern Highlands Provincial counting room. Those counting officials appointed after the commencement of the count did not receive any training and were observed to make many mistakes.

Security

The 2007 general election was considerably less violent than other recent elections. How much this improvement can be attributed to LPV will become clearer over ensuing elections. Certainly it had been felt that LPV would contribute to improved security, and observers around the country did report that campaigning in the 2007 General Elections was generally quieter, far more relaxed and more accommodative than in past elections (see chapter 13). They also noted there was little or no violence in the Islands, Momase and Southern region seats, and overall levels of violence in the Highlands seats were substantially reduced. That said, there was a huge investment in security, especially in the Highlands.

In Southern Highlands, where polling commenced, the special police operations security force, consisting of 200 regular police and 150 PNGDF personnel, was boosted by 2500 additional NATEL (National Election) security personnel (2000 police—mostly auxiliary and community police—and 500 PNGDF personnel). Despite the large security presence, one-day polling meant that the security personnel were still thinly spread, given that there were 862 polling stations, and the fact that many security personnel remained in Mendi and other key distribution points in the districts. Unarmed police provided the security at most polling stations, while armed PNGDF provided security at more high risk locations and acted as response units.

One factor which contributed to the good security situation witnessed was the pre-deployment of NATEL forces a full two weeks prior to polling. The early deployment of these troops meant they were in a position to undertake detailed reconnaissance and attend to security threats well in advance of polling (see chapter 8). Importantly, they were also observed to undertake election and security related awareness, and to contribute to logistics and the conduct of elections. In some places it was only through their interventions that polling took place (see chapters 7, 20, and 21).

Despite the overall good performance of the security personnel, they were observed to be unwilling or incapable of intervening to deter voting irregularities. This was possibly due to the fact that they were unarmed and in many cases poorly trained. Security personnel across the Highlands, but most particularly the PNGDF contingent, reported that they had received no pre-deployment training, and many seemed unclear about their role in general, and about electoral processes and electoral offences more specifically. The small handbook prepared for police (RPNGC 2007b) was an excellent innovation.

Communications

Communications proved problematic across much of the country, but especially in the more remote areas where communications infrastructure is weakest. Observers consistently noted that electoral personnel—returning officers, assistant returning officers and presiding officers in the field (that is, outside the urban areas and larger towns)—tended to be without communication, while the security personnel had either field radios which allowed them to communicate with headquarters (in the case of the PNGDF) or handheld radios which could communicate over short distances (in the case of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary).

In the main, security personnel in the field were observed to experience considerable difficulty communicating with those coordinating the security operations in the provincial headquarters, and with the security personnel inserted with polling teams, and they were reliant on third parties relaying requests for helicopter support or security backup. In the Highlands, electoral and security personnel were observed to rely heavily on mobile phones; however, there were major network outages during the polling and counting periods. This was particularly so in the Southern Highlands and Enga, where the network repeatedly went down for days at a time.

The lack of radios and an effective joint communications strategy also meant that there was no communication between election officials in the field and those in the provincial election office. The lack of communication was particularly evident at polling stations.

Communications at the counting centres around the country, by contrast, proved to be very good. With a few exceptions, the crowds gathered outside counting centres were kept well informed at all times, with progressive tallies being broadcast throughout the day, and recorded on a huge purpose-built tally boards. Progressive tallies were also faxed to PNGEC headquarters in Port Moresby on a regular basis.

Inter-agency coordination

Inter-agency coordination appeared greatly improved, although hampered to some extent by a lack of effective communications equipment (see previous section). The improved inter-agency coordination appeared to result from the adoption of a whole-of-government approach to the planning, staging and conduct of the 2007 election. At the national level the whole-of-government

approach was evidenced by the establishment of IDEC, chaired by the registrar of political parties, and at the provincial level by the establishment of provincial election steering committees—chaired by provincial administrators.

The extent to which the provincial election steering committees proved effective varied greatly, however. Many were established very late in the election cycle. Several committees were viewed as partisan, and in at least four provinces attempted to influence key appointments, for example by seeking to remove key returning officers and assistant returning officers and to make their own appointments. This caused much confusion on the ground and hampered election preparations.

Overall assessment

Papua New Guinea's 2007 general election was better managed and more peaceful than the 2002 poll. Specifically, there were appreciable gains with respect to electoral administration. Nevertheless there is room for further improvement. The electoral roll needs further verification and cleansing, training needs to be prioritized and financial management needs improvement, so as to ensure that funds are available when needed and that essential election supplies reach all provinces on time.

Electoral fraud and malpractice continue to pose problems in the Highlands, facilitated in part by the poor state of the new electoral roll. Accurate electoral rolls are the administrative basis for free and fair elections. Problems with the electoral roll need to be addressed as a matter of urgency if the 2012 elections are to have integrity. More accurate rolls will also give rise to less costly elections.

Once again, one-day polling in the Highlands proved impossible. Recognizing that it took a full week to complete polling in at least three of the Highlands provinces, it could well prove better to stage future elections in the Highlands over several days in each province. Alternately, other polling modes—such as the use of mobile polling teams—might be considered. This would reduce the total number of polling officials needed, make training easier, and see the security forces utilized more effectively.

Finally, civic awareness should continue and be expanded in order to generate and foster demand for good elections. Such awareness should, among other things, seek to educate voters about the electoral roll, the function it serves, and differences between the electoral roll and the census. It should also seek to educate voters about electoral laws and electoral offences, as well as voter rights and responsibilities. Such awareness will only work if it is coupled with the confidence that other parts of the electoral process will work. For this reason

every effort should be made to ensure that good, honest and reliable staff are engaged to conduct the 2012 elections and that they are properly trained and supported.

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