

# 2022 NATIONAL ELECTION REVIEW - WEST SEPIK



**ELECTORAL  
COMMISSION**  
Papua New Guinea



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# Introduction

Electoral Commission West Sepik has successfully delivered 2022 National election through partnership and team work with stakeholders. The completion of election in West Sepik was not as easy as the previous elections given its lack of resources. This submission report states the Terms of reference as provided by the committee that will be discussed following the electoral cycle.

Elections are composed of a number of integrated building blocks, with different stakeholders interacting and influencing each other. Electoral components and stakeholders do not stand alone. They are interdependent, and therefore the breakdown of one aspect (for example the collapse of a particular system of voter registration) can negatively impact on every other, including human and financial resources, the availability of supplies, costs, transport, training and security, and thus on the credibility of the election itself. In turn, if an electoral process suffers from low credibility, this is likely to damage the democratisation process of the country and block its overall development objectives.

The electoral cycle appreciates elections as continuous processes rather than isolated or onetime event. Notably, the electoral cycle has no fixed starting or ending points, and some post-electoral period activities may still be ongoing when activities related to the subsequent electoral cycle commence. Similarly, some segments, such as continuous voter registration or on-going civic education, cut across the whole cycle and are therefore to be considered ongoing activities throughout all three periods. The fusion and cross-cutting of electoral related activities and the inter-dependence of the stakeholders highlights the cyclic nature of electoral processes and stress the need for long-term assistance and capacity-building as opposed to short-term event-based electoral assistance. In this submission the topics are discussed within the election cycle as the heading whilst the activities are discussed under three different stages of the cycle starting with pre-election, then to election period and winding up with post-election period; finally to conclusion and recommendation. Within the pre election period the items of discussions are planning, training, information awareness & registration. During the election period the activities of discussions are nomination, campaign, voting and results. The post-election the items of discussion are concentrated around strategy, reform & review.



# ELECTION CYCLE

## Pre-Election Period

This period is a thoroughly preparatory one for West Sepik. We used this time to conduct audience analysis, resource mobilization, and finally to devise a comprehensive strategy. In addition, this period the electoral official especially the provincial, and field officers like ROS & AROs used for consultation, communicating and educating both general public and stakeholders about their rights and responsibilities during the elections, the relevant laws and regulations, voters' education, and so on. The activities during this period within the West Sepik context are as follows:

### 1. Planning

#### a. Budget & Funding

The budget for the West Sepik national Election is K8, 306,558. An allocation of K2, 680, 000.00 was given to the province. The payment for TEW & AROs & ROs vehicle hire was paid at the head office totalling to K2, 500 000. The provincial administration gave a support of K150, 000 of which the funding was used for logistics and security.

#### b. Electoral Calendar

The electoral calendar was shorter than usual. The deferral and change in nomination dates had created a lot of confusion and disharmony with the candidates and the general public. The decrease in the counting period was one change that put most officials under immense pressure to complete counting within the return of the writ dates.

#### c. Operational Work plan

The operational work plan was one tool that we maintained all throughout the cycle that kept the team ahead of things despite the changes. The main let down was the cut in the budget that didn't allow us to fully implement the activities.

### 2. Training

#### a. Develop Procedure

The training manuals for officials were reviewed and made available on time however for the scrutineers it arrived late causing delay in distribution.

#### b. Training For Electoral Officials

All training was conducted as cascade training. Election officials train the Provincial Awareness & training officer to facilitate training for other temporary election workers including scrutineers if requested

### 3. Information Awareness

Awareness in West Sepik was not conducted thoroughly due to funding and lack of materials. Despite the lack the ROs and AROs took the lead in conducting awareness in their respective LLGs and district. This is one important area that needs attention during the pre-election stage where the people get to be informed about the electoral program and process.

### 4. Registration

### **Voter Registration**

The voter registration in West Sepik was not produced to the expectation of the people however concerns around enrolment was addressed and rectified when it arises. The main concern of not having most people on the roll was due to the shortage of forms and would appreciate more forms to be made available by PNGEC. The setback was the non-completion of the enrolment cycle causing unnecessary query.

For West Sepik we felt this phase was most neglected, despite the number of “lessons learned” from previous elections that emphasize its importance. One of the common reasons it is neglected is a lack of funding, or resources in general. Overlooking the preparatory stage and delivering straight into an electoral cycle, the implementers risks being continuously one step behind the game and scrambling to make up for the lack of a clear and targeted plan.

## **Election Period**

Election for West Sepik commenced as per national timeline however there were few places that didn't commence polling and counting on time due to late arrival of materials and more number of candidates.

### **1. Nomination**

Candidate nomination was a bit of a challenge but we actually took control by ROs doing awareness and contacting all intending candidates with the change in dates. Despite the nomination was conducted successfully with main concern cantered around the qualification of candidates and nomination acceptance by the EC.

### **2. Campaign Period**

The campaign period was shorter causing inconvenience in materials distribution but we managed to get it through.

### **3. Voting**

The voting population for West Sepik is 164,659, out of that only 133 000+, a total of 31 000 didn't vote. Voting is not compulsory therefore its ones choice not to vote. Polling turned out well however there are two LLGs in Nuku electorate that reported serious polling incidents that required the attention of security personnel to intervene and rectified immediately.

### **4. Results**

The scrutiny process was also another share of challenge with the reduction of counting days from 21 to 7days. Given the number of candidates in respective electorates not all electorates declared as expected. For the provincial seat we had to request for extension since there we 53 candidates and a total of 146 boxes to be counted.



## Post-Election Period

The post-election period is a time for evaluation, capacity-building, planning and consultation for an election event. West Sepik after the election conducted three difference reviews for three different groups. The three target groups are Field officers (ROs & AROs) stakeholders (PESC) review and the provincial (EC Staff) review. With these three reviews it has given the team a fair idea of what worked well and what didn't in different settings.

### 1. Strategy

The main strategy that West Sepik would like to embrace going forward is to maintain collaboration with the provincial election steering committee and all provincial stakeholders. There are certain areas of responsibilities under the MOU between PNGEC and Sandaun Provincial Administration needs to be reviewed for a quality output.

### 2. Reform

The use of limited preferential voting and the process of election is somethings that a good number of citizens are yet to understand and use. With this reform it requires more advocacy and wariness considering the literacy level of the province. The LPV system encourages team work between candidates and it's something most are yet to understand utilise.

### 3. Review

With the completion of election in west Sepik we will appreciate a review of this sort as well as the use of external observers' assessments and recommendation to the team. From the three provincial reviews we have identified areas of lack both internally and externally. For west Sepik after the completion of election, out of the five electorate a total of three is being disputed in court. Two of the cases are to do with bribery whilst one is to do with errors and omissions. The causes of the dispute has been reported and explanation are being prepared by respective ROs and it's on file.

## Conclusion

In Conclusion, without electoral integrity, leaders and officials lack accountability to the public, confidence in the election results is weak, and the government lacks necessary legitimacy. Integrity depends on public confidence in electoral and political processes. It is not enough to reform institutions; citizens need to be convinced that changes are real and deserve their confidence. To ensure that elections have integrity, other factors outside of the electoral institutions themselves need to be taken into account and strengthened. On behalf of the west Sepik Team I commend the committee for creating an avenue for the voice of the key players of election to be heard. I wish the committee a successful review and look forward to favourable changes in the electoral processes and procedures. I have stated a few recommendation below for the committee noting and submission if need be.

### Recommendations

#### 1. Post-Election Period

- i. Development of Strategies must be through collaboration
- ii. Reforms like boundaries review and should be done a year before election year

- iii. Review of each election activity must be done after every activity and it must be on going
2. Pre- Election Period
- i. Planning
    - ✓ Budget & Funding must be done accordingly and funds to be directly sent to the provinces
    - ✓ The Election Calendar must be gazetted and should not be subject to any changes to avoid inconvenience i.e the change in nomination dates.
    - ✓ Operational Work Plan must be monitored by an external partner to ensure the budgeted items are expended accordingly
  - ii. Training
    - ✓ Candidates should make it their responsibility to training their scrutineers on the election process and procedures.
  - iii. Information
    - ✓ Voter Information to be made a prerequisite activity with timely funding
    - ✓ Stakeholders Liaison to an important task to the whole of government approach
    - ✓ Observer Accreditation must be done through the PESC
  - iv. Voter Registration
    - ✓ The form 11 should be reviewed since the current is like a test of literacy
    - ✓ Election Managers to be appointed permanent Returning Officers for Electoral Roll update exercise to coordinate electoral roll update exercise annually
    - ✓ A centralised data base system to be developed locally and should be linked to NID for verification. Village record books to be used as the main document of verification
    - ✓ The enrolment cycle must be completed in spite of any factors
3. Election Period
- i. Nomination
    - ✓ Set a nomination quota
    - ✓ Review on the nomination forms
    - ✓ Nomination requirements should be supported with documents of reference
  - ii. Polling
    - ✓ Polling Officials Rates to be reviewed and increased
    - ✓ All polling locations should be given GPS locations
  - iii. Counting
    - ✓ Counting period to be maintained on 21days
    - ✓ A system to be developed to capture the election cycle where electronic records of all stages of elections are captured from start to finish with used credentials are restricted to authorities.
4. Others
- i. Security
    - The funding of security should be given to respective PPCs
    - The engagement of auxiliary police should be made formal and budgeted for
  - ii. 2027 Election Planning and roll out of ongoing activities like awareness and voter registration procedure review must commence immediately.