

# **Independent Evaluation of AUSAID PAPUA NEW GUINEA ELECTORAL SUPPORT PROGRAM PHASE 3 MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

## **Independent Evaluation Summary**

**Evaluation Objective:** To provide an independent rapid review of Phase Three of AusAID's Papua New Guinea (PNG) Electoral Support Program, in order to assess the relevance and effectiveness of that phase of support.

**Evaluation Completion Date:** 15 June 2012

**Evaluation Team:** Mr Simon Henderson (team leader) and Dr Helena Catt (electoral specialist)

## **Management Response**

AusAID welcomes the report of the independent rapid review of the PNG Electoral Support Program Phase 3 (ESP3). The report is of high quality and provides valuable insights into the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of ESP3. We broadly agree with most of the findings and support in-principle all the recommendations.

The evaluation identified a number of ESP3-supported achievements.. These include improving voter awareness, integrating gender, disability and HIV/AIDS policy issues into PNGEC activities, and improving coordination between PNG Government agencies, particularly between the PNGEC and security forces. These suggest ESP3 was successful in addressing some of the main recommendations of reviews conducted following Phase 2 of the PNG Electoral Support Program.

The main concerns identified in the evaluation were:

- too many strategic focus areas meant the Program was not sufficiently targeted;
- support was not proportioned across the electoral cycle in a way which best addressed the changing needs of the PNGEC;
- support for logistics and the electoral roll was provided too late to have maximum impact;
- despite the long-term support for capacity building, the PNGEC continues to have significant capacity constraints;
- lack of a formal conflict prevention strategy;
- need for consolidation of gains achieved; and
- need for a coherent longer term strategy.

AusAID agrees that these concerns raise important considerations. Some further context for decision-making regarding Australian support to these issues is outlined below.

We agree that Australian electoral support should be appropriately targeted so that it can make a sustainable impact. The ESP3 focus areas were determined in close consultation with the PNGEC, reflecting the priorities identified by the PNGEC in the lead up to the 2012 elections.. Electoral management in PNG is complex, and creates much demand on Australian support as the only large and long-term development partner to the PNGEC. However, Australia will work with the PNG Government to ensure any future support is well-targeted at the highest priority areas.

The period covering 2011 and early 2012 was marked by a significant amount of political instability and unrest in PNG. The political impasse heightened the pressure to deliver a timely and credible election, and increased the scrutiny of electoral preparedness. .. In that context, the Australian Government agreed to the PNG Government's request for additional support to the elections, targeting areas which the PNGEC and the Electoral Support Program had long identified as areas of concern. As a result, in the months prior to the election, Australia committed significant surge support to the delivery of the 2012 election, additional to original commitments under the Program.

Regarding questions on the scope of ESP3's support for improving the quality of the electoral roll we note that Australian Government can only provide facilitation support. Voter registration data is highly sensitive, and all decisions on electoral roll reform and amendments must be made by the PNGEC. The evaluation

recommended the Program develop a conflict prevention strategy. The management of conflict, corruption and fraud was considered in all activities. However, the Electoral Support Program has very limited control over the broader conflict context in PNG, and particularly the pervasive environment of election-related conflict. To manage the Program in the PNG context AusAID takes a risk assessment and management approach to all election-related activities. AusAID will explore further options for supporting the prevention of election-related conflict and human insecurity. This analysis will be completed prior to the overall review of electoral support to PNG, in order to inform further recommendations about Australian support.

The evaluation recommends an extension of the current support under ESP3 to include the Local Level Government elections scheduled for mid-2013, to ensure consolidation of gains achieved. The evaluation also recommends a review of electoral support which covers the entirety of AusAID funded election support since 2000. This broader review should inform decisions about whether support should be long-term and across the electoral cycle (as favoured by the evaluation team), or short term mobilisations to support each electoral event. We agree in-principle with all the recommendations. The Electoral Support Program team recognises the constraints of conducting the rapid, desktop review in a very short timeframe just prior to the national election. A fuller review planned for later in 2012 will not have the same constraints. Evaluation team members will have the opportunity to conduct extensive research, including during time spent in PNG, and will have opportunities to interview most key stakeholders.

This later evaluation will review the implementation and achievements of Australian support to strengthening electoral systems in PNG since 2000. On the basis of this analysis, it will identify lessons and provide recommendations to inform any future strategy for Australian support to strengthening electoral systems in PNG.

## **Recommendation One**

**Recommendation:** Extend phase 3 funding until after the LLG elections in 2013

**Response:** Agree in-principle

**Actions:** The electoral support team agrees that it would be beneficial to extend phase 3 funding and support until after the LLG elections (anticipated to take place in the first half of 2013). This will help consolidate improvements to capacity and processes gained by PNGEC staff throughout the period prior to, and during, the 2012 general election. Any extension of support will be informed by the outcomes of the full review of the Australia Government's electoral support. An extension would be based on an assessment of capacity and needs, building on the successes and lessons of the 2012 election. The Electoral Support Program will be restructured during any extension period to target these highest priority areas. Any further support provided will be subject to the request and approval of the PNG Government. The current ESP3 contract can be extended until 21 February 2015.

## **Recommendation Two**

**Recommendation:** Set the Terms of Reference for the September 2012 review to cover all assistance since 2000, including the three phases of the program, twinning relationships with Australian Electoral Commission, Australian Civilian Corps, and input from other parts of the AusAID program.

**Response:** Agree

**Actions:** The review scheduled to commence later in 2012 will assess all official development assistance (ODA) eligible Australian assistance provided through AusAID to strengthening electoral systems since 2000. This includes the three phases of the Electoral Support Program (ESP), the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Twinning Program, Australian Civilian Corps (ACC), and input from other parts of the AusAID program, including the Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen (SPSN), HIV/AIDS program, and the Papua New Guinea-Australia Law and Justice Partnership (PALJP).

## **Recommendation Three**

**Recommendation:** Agree and set the direction of any future election support as being a fully functioning capacity development plan across the election cycle or support focussed on each election event.

**Response:** Agree in-principle

**Actions:** The future direction of any Australian support to PNG electoral management will be informed by the findings of the evaluation to be conducted later in 2012. The review may recommend support for a fully functioning capacity development plan across the election cycle, or support focussed on each election event, or a combination of the above. The Australian Government Decisions will be based on where the aid program can get the best returns on investment, building on success and identifying where and how we can support PNG-led reform. We will consider how we can support the PNG Government to consider different

models of electoral management, appropriate to the PNG context. We will also consider the balance of our support between electoral administration and broader democratic governance efforts creating demand for accountability and transparency.