PNG Electoral Support Program Phase 3

INJ466

INDEPENDENT PROGRESS REPORT

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Aid Activity Summary

Aid Activity Name	PNG Electoral Support Program		
AidWorks initiative number	INJ466		
Commencement date	21 February 2011	Completion date	21 February 2013
Total Australian $	14.65 million		
Total other $	NA		
Delivery organisation(s)	AusAID		
Implementing Partner(s)	Cardno, PNG Electoral Commission		
Country/Region	Papua New Guinea		
Primary Sector	Democratic Governance		

Acknowledgments

Author's Details

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. Conducting an election is widely recognised as the biggest single activity conducted by any nation in peacetime and is always a challenging logistical exercise. The review team acknowledges that conditions in PNG add further, significant complexity to this task, particularly in relation to logistics and security: severe problems of physical access and extreme linguistic and ethnic diversity, combined with a high degree of provincial autonomy and, against the backdrop of a resources boom, intense pressures on politicians and officials to promote the interests of their own clan or language group ('wantok') make elections 'high stakes' events.

2. The Electoral Support Program began in 2000 with a remit for long-term institutional strengthening, primarily with the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC). The goal is to contribute to strengthened PNG electoral systems. Phase 3 (2011–2013) is a relatively small program with an annual budget of around $6 million, focused on supporting the planning, management and review of the 2012 General Election. To do this, it has targeted four main areas for strengthening: electoral governance; PNGEC capacity to manage elections; awareness of the PNG electoral system and civics context; and research, analysis and coordination.

Review findings

3. The review found the Program to be highly relevant to the broader priorities of both Governments and the Electoral Commission, as expressed in the Partnership for Development, the Government of PNG's Medium-Term Development Plan and the Electoral Commission's Corporate Plan.

4. We also highlight the success the Program has achieved in integrating policy issues (gender, HIV and AIDS, and disability) into its implementation.

5. Our main concern related to 'Relevance' is whether the model of support developed for Phase 3 was 'fit for purpose', given the stage of the electoral cycle and the context of elections in PNG. There are three related issues: the choice of goal for Phase 3, the choice of focus areas and the mode of support chosen.

6. In terms of 'Effectiveness', the Program appears to have contributed to some significant achievements: the continuation and enhancement of successful voter awareness activities initiated in the 2007 election; important contributions towards increasing the integrity of the election; and a number of significant steps to help strengthen the security environment.

7. The review team, however, identified two major areas of concern. The first relates to the scheduling and timeliness of critical activities around the electoral roll and logistics. This in part reflects challenges the Program has faced in making progress in a capacity-constrained environment. But it also reflects a lack of realism, where predictable delays in activity start up should have prompted use of more pessimistic planning assumptions. The second relates to the continuing weaknesses in PNGEC capacity, in spite of twelve years of capacity-building assistance.

8. In terms of 'Sustainability', two issues warrant attention. The first relates to the short-term consolidation of gains achieved and in particular the need to manage the risk of losing important human capacity during the transition from Phase 3 support. The second relates to longer-term integrity of elections: if AusAID is going to help embed the electoral cycle in Government of PNG and PNGEC practices and shift thinking from from an event-based approach towards elections, then it needs to develop a more coherent, long-term funding and influencing strategy..

9. We make a specific recommendation that AusAID give consideration to extending Phase 3 to include the LLG elections in 2013 as a means to consolidate a number of positive innovations introduced for the 2012 election.

10. Looking forward, we conclude that after 12 years of support and three elections, the post-election period is a good time for a major stocktake and that the review scheduled later in 2012 should consider the entirety of AusAID funded election support since 2000. A key issue for this review should be the ambitions and design of AusAID's approach in the future: in particular, whether the issue is important enough to AusAID to warrant long-term support, realistically resourced and embedded across the electoral cycle or short term mobilisations to support the election event.

11. We favour the former option, because we feel that erosion of electoral processes risks undermining the integrity of democratic governance efforts more widely. But it is for AusAID to decide.

Caveat

12. This review of Phase 3 of the Electoral Support Program was conducted as a desk-based exercise over a period of 10 days in April 2012. It is based largely on document review, supplemented by a small number of telephone interviews. The timing (some three weeks before the writ and three months before polling starts in the General Election) and recent developments in Papua New Guinea have meant many key informants were not available during the review. In addition, there are a number of other highly relevant activities related to electoral support in PNG that are not included in the review. The findings and recommendations presented here must, therefore, be read with these limitations in mind. That said, on the basis of the available information, the review team stands by its findings.

Introduction

Activity Background

13. Phase 3 of AusAID's Electoral Support Program (February 2011 – February 2013) works with the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to strengthened electoral systems in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

14. The design of Phase 3 is based around four components:

- **Component 1 - strengthen electoral governance:** covering matters of electoral governance, policy, legislation and electoral management, and some of the broader fundamental issues that lead to electoral problems.

- **Component 2 - strengthen PNGEC capacity to manage elections:** relating to specific assistance for planning and conducting any by-elections and recounts; assistance to the PNGEC in preparing for the 2012 national election or any other electoral events; and continuation of the PNGEC organisational capacity work to realise and sustain the competency of the PNGEC to organise, plan and conduct elections.

- **Component 3 - increase the PNG electoral system and civics awareness:** relating to the funding relationships between the PNGEC and CSOs to promote the sharing of electoral awareness content and in the monitoring of awareness activities.

- **Component 4 - improve research, analysis, program management and coordination:** covering monitoring and evaluation activities and research to support the mainstreaming of key development issues, funding for research, PNG electoral coordination mechanisms, and provision of technical advice to these bodies.

Review Objectives and Questions

15. The purpose of the review was to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Phase 3 of the Program, as informed by previous phases of PNG electoral assistance. In doing this, the review was asked to:

- suggest any short term changes that can be made to strengthen the effectiveness of the Program.

- consider whether the Electoral Support Program has an approach that will deliver on the medium and long term Program goals.

- include analysis of integration of policy issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS, and disability;

- examine the theory of change and assess whether the objectives, approaches and modalities are appropriate and sustainable.

- consider and make recommendations regarding the scope of support during any extension of the current Phase 3 of the Program.

- suggest concept paper topics, to inform the future direction of AusAID support for PNG

elections; they will include topics relating to comparative international experiences of elections and electoral support.

- develop terms of reference for a more in-depth evaluation of the Program, scheduled for September 2012.

16. In addition, the team leader was asked to submit a draft report AusAID PNG Post, First Secretary Democratic Governance, up to 15 pages (inclusive of annexes) detailing the findings of the review, by 20 May 2012.

Evaluation Scope and Methods

17. The review was a rapid, desk-based exercise, conducted over 10 days. The main method employed was secondary data/document review. In addition, telephone calls with key informants were used to supplement the available information. In practice, many key informants were unavailable during the window for the review; discussions were limited to those closely involved with the Program: Program staff, PNG Electoral Commissioner, Australian Electoral Commission and AusAID post. We are aware that much important information is often not written down.

18. In addition to data constraints, there are a number of scope limitations that we need to acknowledge. The review has focused on the Electoral Support Program, but in practice, this is part of a wider range of activities in AusAID's democratic governance portfolio. We are aware that this review does not adequately reflect this broader suite of engagement in PNG. Nor have we reviewed the twinning arrangement that exists between the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and is an important part of the capacity development effort. We have, however, consulted with AEC. Finally, we have not reviewed the recently mobilised assistance provided by the Australian Civilian Corps, Australian Federal Police ,and Defence Force for supporting the 2012 election.

19. The findings and recommendations presented here must, therefore, be read in the light of the limitations imposed by the short duration and remote nature of the work, the timing of the review (vis a vis the PNG election) and scope of the review. We are also mindful that our suggestions and recommendations must look beyond the 2012 election, given the proximity of our review to that event.

Evaluation Team

20. Simon Henderson, team leader, is a Director in IOD PARC, a UK-based consulting company specialising in evaluation and organisational development and performance assessment. From 2009-11, Simon was Head of Performance in the UK's National Audit Office and from 2006-09, Principal Adviser in AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness

21. Dr Helena Catt, elections expert, was the Chief Executive and one of the Commissioners for the New Zealand Election Commission from 2004-2009. During that time she was involved in the PIANZEA network and capacity building workshops for colleagues across the Pacific. Since 2009 she has been working on a range of election related projects in Australia, Bangladesh and Nepal, and on the women in elections UNDP project.

Review Findings

Relevance

22. A key strength noted by the review team under 'Relevance' is the fit of the Program with broader priorities of both Governments and the Electoral Commission, as expressed in the Partnership for Development, the Government of PNG's Medium-Term Development Plan and the Electoral Commission's Corporate Plan. We also highlight the success the Program has achieved in integrating policy issues (gender, HIV and AIDS, and disability) into its implementation.

23. The main question raised here is whether the model of support developed for Phase 3 was 'fit for purpose', given the stage of the electoral cycle and the context of elections in PNG. There are three related issues: the choice of goal for Phase 3, the choice of focus areas and the mode of support chosen. On the basis of a limited number of interviews with key informants and review of documents (most of which refer to 2011), we cannot provide definitive assessments on these issues. But the available information suggests these are points worth reflecting on by the Program and AusAID staff.

24. The Program remains highly relevant to PNG and Australian Government partnership goals. The Program's Strategic Plan sets out (p2-4) how it links to the PNGEC Corporate Plan (2008 – 2012), which in turn is linked to the PNG Government's Medium Term Development Plan 2011- 2015 and Vision 2050. The Partnership for Development between the Governments of Australia and PNG recognizes the importance of good governance, the rule of law, transparency and accountability in underpinning success in the priority areas of cooperation and for sustainable development in PNG more broadly. Democratic governance, including free and fair elections, is a key part of this mix.[1]

25. The Program's goal is: to contribute to strengthened PNG electoral systems.[2] We interpret this to refer to all areas of work covered by election management bodies (in this case, the PNGEC), including liaison with other bodies who delivery specific services such as security, political party registration and voter awareness. Conducting an election is widely recognised as the biggest single activity conducted by any nation in peacetime and is always a challenging logistical exercise. The situation in PNG adds another layer of complexity particularly in relation to logistics and security.

26. Within this scope, the current Phase (Phase 3) is focused on supporting the planning, management and review of the 2012 General Election. To do this, the Program identified four 'components' for strengthening: electoral governance; PNGEC capacity to manage elections; awareness of the PNG electoral system and civics context; and research, analysis, program management and coordination. The first question is whether the goal and associated breadth of coverage is appropriate for what is a relatively small program, implemented over two years, with an annual budget of around $6 million.

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[1] Partnership for Development between the Government of Australia and the Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008

[2] Outside of an AusAID context, 'electoral systems' refer to the methods used to translate votes into representatives (such as AV, LPV, FPTP).

27. In practice, significant Program support has been directed at increasing voter awareness (75% of programmable expenditure in 2011) and building the engagement of key Government of PNG stakeholders and the wider Australian Aid program in the election. And in these areas, it has achieved some real successes (see *'Effectiveness'*). But the goal and design of Phase 3 looked very much like that of Phase 2, even though the latter covered a full election cycle (from 2005 to 2011), while Phase 3 was smaller, shorter and focused specifically on the 2012 election event. For the review team, this blurring of long-term institutional strengthening objectives with the short term operational needs of the current stage of the electoral cycle is unhelpful, given that they are potentially conflicting.

28. At one level, framing Phase 3 in terms of broad objectives has risked creating an expectations gap, in terms of what a small Program such as this can be expected to do given the demands of elections in PNG. While we acknowledge that strengthening PNG electoral systems is not synonymous with a successful 2012 election, the two concepts are inextricably linked in the minds of most observers. However, it is not just an external perception issue; the design chosen has also shaped the range of areas selected for work.

29. Under the four components, the Program has identified 11 strategic focus areas, which guide the selection of Program activities. Program staff and documents emphasise that the choice of focus areas was demand-led and the result of an extensive process of consultation between the PNGEC management and the Program staff, based on research and experience. The process distilled the views of PNGEC management, lessons learnt from the 2007 election; the reviews conducted as part of phase 2; and AusAID norms. Decisions were also heavily influenced by the proximity of the 2012 election and the available money and Program staff time.

30. Each focus area clearly relates to the goal of strengthening the PNGEC but so could a large number of other focus areas. Given the stage of the electoral cycle, the review team questions whether the focus areas are sufficiently targeted. The focus areas are viewed with equal priority and there is no indication of a planned approach to shifting the balance in line with proximity of the election. There is a sense that the range of focus areas enabled activities to be pursued even if they are not the most important issues at the moment. Tools subsequently developed by the Program with PNGEC and now used to drive activity planning, such as the risk management matrix and election readiness assessments, could usefully have been employed as the starting point in order to prioritise the areas of greatest need, given the proximity of the General Election. The four components for strengthening, which have guided the selection of strategic focus areas, were largely carried over from Phase 2 of the Program, which covered a full election cycle. As a result, the emphasis appears on generic corporate capacity rather than on explicit election functionality. Better management skills and systems are not unimportant for PNGEC, but we are simply question the apparent emphasis on these issues given the stage of the electoral cycle.

31. The mode of support provided by the Program is a mix of limited advisory support, designed to facilitate and guide strategic decision-making, and facility-based funding for key activities, proposed and managed by PNGEC. The factors influencing this design appear to be:

- Desire to hand over more responsibility to PNGEC – through the facility element, PNGEC has assumed responsibility for the selection and oversight of key activities such as training and contracting CSOs for voter awareness activities; under Phase 2, the Program undertook these activities directly;

- The 2010 Review of the PNG-Australia Development Cooperation Treaty – in particular, response to the recommendation to reduce reliance on technical assistance.

32. On a practical level, transferring responsibility for the facility element of the Program has necessarily added to the PNGEC's workload. The Program maintains that the transfer was an important element of planned capacity building efforts, and the risks were managed. Within the scope of the review, we have not been able to assess whether the transfer has adversely affected the PNGEC's ability to focus on delivering time critical tasks relating to the election and added to the already overwhelming task of conducting an election.

33. More fundamentally, however, the wider desire to limit technical assistance input may have influenced decisions about the level of support to provide during Phase 3. We should be absolutely clear here: we are not questioning the sense of the 2010 Review's recommendation; we are recognising that *how* it is implemented matters in different circumstances. It may be appropriate to reorientate and reduce technical assistance *over the electoral cycle*, but the significant demands in the build up to a major election event are well-known.

34. In response, the Program would point to a design that included 'surge capacity' for recruitment of both temporary in-line and consultant support. In addition, through Australian whole-of-Government mechanisms, wider Government of Australia support and resources were potentially available (in the background) to assist Government of PNG with the election – support and resources which have since proved necessary. We also recognise the political sensitivities around visibility of foreign support to elections.

35. But the sense remains that the Phase 3 design appears premised on a scenario that assumes the key constraints are weaknesses in strategic planning and prioritisation skills rather than problems with leadership, organisational culture, and operational constraints. An alternative approach might have been to design an approach that acknowledged, from the outset, known capacity constraints and their implications for the 2012 election, but also one that located the design of Phase 3 more explicitly in a longer-term vision of the changing nature of support *across* the electoral cycle. We return to this issue of planning across the electoral cycle in the section on sustainability.

36. The Program's success to date in integrating policy issues represents a real strength in ensuring relevance to the broader development context in PNG. The approach of the Program has paid significant attention to the challenge of mainstreaming key policy issues, with notable achievements:

- Recruitment of 18 (out of 22) women Assistant Election Managers, addressing, in some part, the existing gender disparity in the PNGEC;

- comprehensive review of the CSO training-of-trainers manual, '*Everybody's Business'*, to mainstream cross-cutting issues across all sections, and update the content of sessions on gender equality and HIV and AIDS and include a session on rights of people with disability;

- facilitation of a session on cross-cutting issues at a workshop for Political Parties, to explain their relevance to the work of political parties and the benefits of addressing these issues

- support for the PNGEC's decision to have separate polling compartments for women in all polling booths for the 2012 General Election – to assist women to vote freely without intimidation or pressure from their husbands and male family members.

- mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues within PNGEC, which has included a review of the draft gender policy and the draft HIV and AIDS workplace policy and reformation and expansion of the gender working group to include HIV and AIDS;

- new partnerships have been established with the National AIDS Council and National Advisory Committee on Disability and networks established between donor programs and with CSOs, particularly relating to gender equality, HIV and AIDS and disability.

37. The review team does not underestimate the challenge in advancing these issues, as the Program's own recent 'Roadblocks' report (February 2012) indicates: this highlights the lack of progress on PNGEC's Gender Policy; difficulties pursuing greater coordination between PNGEC and other donors on HIV and AIDS and the absence of a system for postal voting to assist people with disabilities (or other eligible members of the electorate – such as election staff or overseas voters).

38. Nevertheless, the work on gender balance within the PNGEC reflects a recent international switch in attention regarding gender and elections with an increased emphasis on women as voters and election staff, and not just on women in parliament. Few election management bodies in developing democracies are actively considering implementation of a gender policy that includes staffing issues. Similarly, on the inclusion of HIV/AIDS, PNG is amongst a small number of countries where this issue is being taken seriously in relation to elections and being fully mainstreamed into election work. Likewise, the PNGEC is among the leaders in work to ensure disability is not a barrier to election participation.

39. One aspect of policy integration, however, that has received less, explicit attention is conflict prevention Through its approach to risk assessment and management, the Program is very aware of and sensitive to the potential risk of conflict. The issue features heavily in the regular risk assessment process and a number of areas of support (such as voter awareness campaigns with CSOs and Police training) have an active conflict management function. As such, our observation is not a criticism of actions under Phase 3. But we also note that:

- The Program has not developed a formal conflict prevention strategy, and conflict prevention and management is not an explicit part of the mainstreaming effort that informs the Program's approach;

- Attention to this issue has focused on risks around the election event; not surprising in Phase 3, given the stage of the electoral cycle, but the same appears true in Phase 2, with significantly less attention to conflict prevention during the 'off years';

- The Program has not formally reviewed experience elsewhere in preventing and managing election-related conflict, the approaches and innovations tried and the lessons-learned.

40. Given the context in PNG, there appears genuine merit in mainstreaming conflict prevention activities throughout the electoral cycle. In this respect, the review team endorses the following conclusion from UNDP research in this area:

"...success in conflict mitigation in elections often requires the development of complex strategies involving many actors and varied approaches. When the root causes of conflict exist, conflict prevention should be an integral part of electoral assistance programs by UNDP and others, not only in the immediate run-up to a high profile election event, but—just as important—throughout the full electoral cycle where the most fruitful opportunities for institutional and individual capacity development occur."[3]

41. The argument that an explicit confliction prevention strategy was not requested by AusAID during design of Phase 3 is not sufficient justification for its omission. The Program has made good progress in engaging with relevant Government of PNG stakeholders and other parts of

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[3] UNDP, (2009), Elections and conflict prevention: a guide to analysis, planning and programming. Democratic Governance Group

the Australian aid program, and would be well-placed to advance this issue more systematically in the future.

Effectiveness

42. Notwithstanding concerns expressed regarding aspects of the Program's relevance, this section considers how effective the Program has been in the areas where it has engaged. Key achievements identified are: the continuation and enhancement of successful voter awareness activities initiated for the 2007 election; important successes in supporting the integrity of the election; and a number of significant steps to strengthen the security environment.

43. The review team, identified two major areas of concern. The first relates to the scheduling and timeliness of critical activities around the electoral roll and logistics. This in part reflects challenges the Program has faced in making progress in a capacity-constrained environment. But in this environment, we would hve expected to see more realistic planning assumptions given the predictable delays in activity start up should have prompted use of more pessimistic planning assumptions. The second relates to the continuing weaknesses in PNGEC capacity, in spite of twelve years of capacity-building assistance.

44. In reviewing Program effectiveness, we have not considered each of the Programs's four components separately, in part because of the rapid nature of the review but also because our assessment is pitched at the 'sum of the parts' in recognition that no one activity guarantees effectiveness. Instead, we have examined two broader issues with respect to the effectiveness of Phase 3:

   i.   the shorter-term objective of a successful 2012 General Election, and

   ii. the longer-term objective of building PNGEC capacity

A successful 2012 General Election

45. Given the timing of this review, some 3 weeks before the writs and 3 months before the start of polling, our assessment of the effectiveness of Phase 3 in this respect is necessarily risk-based.

46. The basic elements of a successful election are: an accurate electoral roll or equivalent; security for all for the duration of the campaign and polling; adequate voter awareness, including appropriate media coverage; and functioning polling stations including effective logistics, equipment, staff. In addition, a successful election needs integrity and acceptance by all, which relates to the integrity of the Electoral Commission and the voting processes and dispute resolution, as well as coordination and consistent support by other stakeholders, governmental, donor and civil society. Conditions in PNG add further, significant complexity to the task: severe problems of physical access and extreme linguistic and ethnic diversity combine with a high degree of provincial autonomy and pressure on politicians and officials to promote the interests of their own clan or language group ('wantok'). Alongside these are the on-going proliferation of weapons in the country and the more recent intensification of political competition as a result of the resources boom.

47. **Accurate electoral roll:** While the Program can only play a facilitation role, support to increase the accuracy of the electoral roll is one of Phase 3's strategic focus areas and also benefits from some of the activities aimed at management and infrastructure. An inaccurate electoral roll is viewed as one of the major risks (Six monthly report Dec 2011, p20) and was highlighted by the review of Phase 2 in 2010 as a major risk to the running of the 2012 election.

48. Increasing accuracy is a relative term and we have not seen any indication of the level of improvement deemed 'good enough'. The Program monitoring and evaluation framework bases overall success post-election measures of voter perception of the accuracy of the roll. We have not seen any formal intermediate measures to assess the ongoing effectiveness of work on the electoral roll and the extent to which it is reducing the risk to the (perceived) legitimacy of the election of an inaccurate roll.

49. Funded activities aimed at improving the accuracy of the electoral roll and its use are:

- assistance in training Election Managers and Returning Officers on the Master Roll list
- contract for quality control of field data by external auditors (Deloittes),
- urgent project management in the Highlands to deal with the stalled electoral update process
- work on the IT infrastructure so that the master roll can be used properly across the country.

50. The budget for electoral roll improvement activities in 2011 was just over K1 million; this was subsequently revised downwards to K717,000. Actual expenditure to December 2011 was K94,867 (or 13% of the revised total).[4] Timing issues have had a negative impact. Most activities in phase 3 effectively started in August 2011,. Those activities that were prioritised also suffered from timeliness weaknesses For instance:

- even though the external audit of the enrolment update process was flagged as urgent and time critical at the March 2011 board meeting, the Deloittes audit of enrolment procedures is happening in 2012 which is too late to have any real impact on the process this time because the update phase will be finished and results will only be applied to the verification phase.
- the PNGEC Senior Management Team felt that if Provincial Assistant Election Managers had been in place earlier would have been able to assist usefully in the update program.
- realisation that the process had stalled in Highlands and assistance was needed also seems to have occurred very late in the enrolment process.

51. A recurring comment during the review was that the model of the electoral roll being used needs a fundamental re-assessment. We have included this as one of the subjects for recommended concept notes; any such review and subsequent decision to change the electoral roll model would be a major project that would need to be conducted as part of a full electoral cycle workplan.

52. **Security:** The Program clearly recognises the damage that significant levels of violence and intimidation during the election would do, not just to the legitimacy of the election itself but to broader efforts to promote democratic governance in PNG. According to the December Six Monthly Report, "security and safety issues [are] one of the greatest risks to a free and fair election and [the Program] has committed significant adviser and management time to support the development of the IDEC Security and Safety sub-committee to increase whole-of-government coordination and engagement in order to mitigate these risks."

53. Key achievements in this regard comprise:

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[4] We have been told that this excludes "a number of large invoices for services received in 2011 but which were processed after 31 December" but have not been told the value of these invoices .

- A collaborative planning exercise between security agencies to share intelligence and develop provincial risk profiles for the 2012 election;

- Support to PNGEC for the formation of an intelligence action group under the IDEC's Safety and Security Sub-Committee to coordinate security information and planning;

- Subsequent provision in February 2012 of a Police coordination adviser in PNGEC, to strengthen the linkages in security planning, training and awareness.

- A ground breaking Joint PNGEC-Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Conference in August 2011, supported by the Program, which resulted in a signed statement of cooperation between the organisations.

- A follow-up workshop with the police at regional level in the first quarter of 2012 to finalise co-sharing of resources and security arrangement regionally.

- A framework for the development of a 2012 election safety and security plan; at the time of writing, the plan was being finalised.

- In addition, the security of polling staff themselves has received significant attention for the first time; a plan has been developed and Program has mainstreamed the issue in the election manual and training packages for staff and police.

54. The review team found that these initiatives represent real advances on previous practice, where there was little co-ordination and a generally poor strategic approach to deployment of security resources.

55. The possible caveat on this finding, however, is the lack of visibility, to the external review team at least, of the whole of government (Australian and PNG) response prompted by the Program's assessment of risk in this area. While it is true that the Program has little or no direct control over election security, a developed analysis is needed for it to play an effective advisory and influencing role. From discussions, we are reasonably confident that the routine risk assessment processes provide sufficient information about the status of security planning. But our concern is based on continuing funding constraints for the key security bodies, and the apparently unchanging assessment in the Program's risk register that violence and insecurity will almost certainly have a major impact on the election.

56. **Voter awareness:** This represents a significant strength of the Program. The Program is funding the voter awareness program for the election and as such activities in this area account for nearly three quarters of the facility-based expenditure. This strand of work has built on a successful voter awareness program in 2007 when the Phase 2 team worked with a range of CSOs to deliver information on the election, including the new LPV method of voting.

57. This time, the PNGEC is handling the relationships and contracts with CSOs so part of the capacity development work has been with managing this new, important area of work. In addition relationships have been built with CSOs working in the disability sector, in line with one of the cross-cutting themes. A CSO has been contracted to perform on-going assessment of the contracts as part of a tranche based funding system that allows the PNGEC to terminate contracts with CSOs which are not performing adequately.

58. Work on awareness materials was one of the activities flagged for immediate attention in March 2011 and benefitted from being able to use most of the materials created for 2007. The Program has also assisted in some valuable initiatives such as the use of a voter opinion survey and recruitment of temporary staff with private sector experience in communications.

59. All signs indicate that this component is working well and will be effective in terms of the core delivery of voter awareness but also as a vehicle for growing good relationships with a wide range of CSOs and in capacity development within the PNGEC in managing contracts with the CSOs.

60. **Effective logistics:** *Improved PNGEC Operations in the targeted areas of IT, communications, procurement and logistics* is a specific focus area for the Program. In addition some aspects of the focus area to Strengthen PNGEC Corporate Services are also relevant here. However many of the planned activities in this area have suffered from delays, mostly due to difficulty in recruiting the appropriate people.

61. By April 2012 a lot of advisor activity and Australian Civilian Corps surge capacity is focussed on issues of logistics and election preparedness. We do not have the information to judge when the switch was made to a risk assessment focus on logistic issues but would suggest that it was appropriate from the start of phase 3. In this phase of the election cycle it may be that more specific election focus and expertise was needed rather than the generic management expertise appropriate to the inter election years.

62. It would be harsh to view the recent recourse to wider Government of Australia support for election logistics as an indication of the failure of the Program in this respect. The decision to mobilise additional support no doubt reflects concerns about deficiencies in operational capability. But it also reflects changes in the PNG political environment, which in turn have heighted the perceived risks (in PNG and internationally) associated with any major weaknesses in the election.

63. We also note that the Program's monitoring and evaluation framework uses the 'Percentage of polling venues open and are operational as per polling schedules' as the measure of success for logistical support. The accuracy of this measure appears questionable to the review team. For instance, it would seem unlikely that a polling station would be closed due to out of date electoral forms, or the absence of a new communication system between provinces and headquarters.

64. **Integrity:** Integrity of the process and acceptance of the results is as important to the success of an election as the core service delivery components of an accurate electoral roll, security, voter awareness and functioning polling stations. Integrity is much more ethereal and is usually noticed only when it is lacking. At the most extreme a perceived lack of integrity in the election leads to parts of the population or contestants refusing to accept the election result.

65. The credibility of the election management body and a widespread belief that it is acting legally, fairly and ethically is one core component of election integrity. The PNGEC's Annual Plan incorporates understanding of this issue with the statement of core values. Other key players in an election such as the contestants, the police, the media and civil society organisations can bolster or harm the integrity of the election in their actions and pronouncements. Therefore recognition by all of whole of government and whole of society responsibility for successful elections is another important component of election integrity.

66. The Independent Review of Phase 2 suggested that one area 'requiring attention is supporting the PNGEC (and other GoPNG agencies) to generate a sense of integrity in the process through societal sharing in it, including in its administration.' (p16). The PNGEC can foster such shared responsibility through open relationships with other players, and coordination on respective roles and AusAID can ensure a consistent message across programs on the shared responsibility for a successful election.

67. Building on successes at the 2007 election, phase 3 has a number of activities which seem to be successfully increasing coordination and building a sense of shared responsibility for the election:

- Whole of Government involvement in the election through regular and effective meetings of IDEC (Inter-departmental Electoral Committee) and its sub-committees
- Sub-nationally with new terms of reference and reporting structures for the Provincial Elections Steering Committees and their links to IDEC

- Workshops with political parties and the proposal of a Code of Conduct for Political Parties and their activists which has been signed by 16 of the party Secretary Generals
- Partner coordination has increased with eight new eight new partners including other AusAID programs and disadvantaged groups. These partners are participating in training on electoral governance for civil society and contributing to the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues sessions of this training on issues such as HIV and AIDs and on disability awareness.
- Complementary support has also been provided through the Law and Justice Program for Community Policing Election Awareness in high risk provinces.
- Involvement of civil society partners in the domestic observation with an aim to 'demonstrate to ordinary people that they have an important role to play in ensuring the integrity of the electoral process' and helping to create 'an enabling environment in which ordinary citizens feel empowered to demand both free and fair elections and better electoral governance.'

68. Reported media and public acceptance of the Commissioners statements during the recent parliamentary vote to defer the election suggest are very positive for the integrity of the PNGEC and the election.

69. **Post election reviews:** The Program goal includes review of the election, in line with international good practice on post-election activity and will cover a third of the total life of phase 3. Results from such reviews, in particular observer reports, are also a common source of data for the evaluation of the Program's focus areas.

70. A domestic observer program and a series of post-election review workshops are included in the Annual Plan. The domestic observer program is being contracted to a team of ANU-based scholars from the *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia* (SSGM) Program, as was the case in 2007. The planned methodology follows international best practice for such an exercise.

71. We have not seen any documented planning for the review workshops so cannot comment on their likely effectiveness.

Building PNGEC capacity

72. Weaknesses in organisational capacity are not unique to PNGEC; in spite of serious efforts by donors, success in building capacity in many sectors in PNG has been patchy. In that regard, the Program is no different. The Program has clearly delivered some high quality, valued support to build PNGEC's capacity. In addition to achievements relating to security, voter awareness and integrity, the Program has supported:

- the Secretariat for the IDEC including timely creation and distribution of meeting documents
- Managing relationships and contracts with CSOs within the Information and Community Awareness Branch
- Logistics and program structure of the joint workshop with the police
- Mentoring/coaching activities at senior levels, along with action learning groups for key staff, showing positive signs in terms of building leadership within PNGEC

73. But important shortcomings are also apparent. There remain serious concerns about weaknesses in critical IT system upgrades affecting PNGEC's day-to-day corporate functions and its ability to manage the electoral roll for the 2012 General Election. This is in spite of significant support to PNGEC's IT Branch since 2005 – in the form of full time IT Advisers

embedded in the IT Branch and a period of high-level, full-time external support. As a result, Phase 3 recruited (in February) an international Adviser to assist this area of the PNGEC's operations. The recent provision of staff from the Australian Civil Corps has also bolstered support in this area.

74. Significant efforts during Phase 2 to secure appropriate budget allocations for PNGEC achieved some success in 2011 with the allocation for the first time of a development budget for the 2012 election. However, release of funds was halted because PNGEC could not account properly to the Department of National Planning and Monitoring (temporarily) for the funds. The problem was subsequently resolved with the assistance of the Program.

75. Similarly, during 2011 the Program helped PNGEC to address the Auditor General's finding that there was no institutional version of a PNGEC 2011 annual plan. According to the Program, "branches had regressed from previous models and had developed their respective plans in a collection of different formats and different presentation styles and content." In one sense, the response of the Program in addressing this weakness can be viewed as a clear example of the Phase 3's effectiveness. But the failure of previous models that necessitated the intervention in Phase 3 raises questions about the effectiveness of the longer term capacity building effort.

76. The example of the Auditor General's finding encapsulates the paradox neatly. In its individual interactions, Phase 3 has been responsive and effective and, in some cases, highly effective. But in considering capacity development efforts in the round, we could not find a coherent diagnosis of the reasons for continuing capacity constraints. And these are not minor: problems of staff competence and commitment (with associated problems of absenteeism) were highlighted to us, affecting key positions in the running of the election. The December risk register update reported a worsening in the impact of PNGEC staff capacity constraints from 'major' to 'severe', with the chances of the risk occurring rated as 'likely'.

77. A less substantial point, but we also note the disparity in performance reporting between capacity-building activities undertaken by long-term personnel and activities funded under the facility arrangement. The former present narrative accounts which are effective in summarising the successes, but provide very little critical self-reflection on less successful endeavours. Given that long-term personnel costs were around two-thirds of the expenditure on facility-funded activities (or considerably more if CSO voter awareness funding is removed), we would have expected a more rigorous reporting framework.

Sustainability

78. In terms of 'Sustainability', two issues warrant attention. The first relates to the short-term consolidation of gains achieved and in particular the need to manage the risk of losing important human capacity during the transition from Phase 3 support. The second relates to longer-term integrity of elections: if the ambition is to move on from an event-based, crisis management approach towards elections in PNG, then AusAID needs to develop a more coherent, long-term funding and influencing strategy aimed at embedding the electoral cycle in Government of PNG and PNGEC practices.

Local Level Government elections

79. As in 2007/08, the local government elections will be held in the year following parliamentary elections instead of at the same time as was the norm. The PNGEC is responsible for all of these elections, working with the provincial governments for support. The dates for these elections are not yet known but are likely to be sometime between March and July.

80. We were surprised to see that the current phase of support stopped before the LLG elections rather than considering the two electoral events as a linked part of the electoral work of the PNGEC. We understand this deadline was originally requested by PNGEC. In our view, Successful initiatives at the 2012 election are at risk of stopping or losing momentum if future funding is uncertain or if there is a gap between this phase of support and a new phase.

81. With the two nationwide election events in successive years there is potential to consolidate new procedures, benefit from strengthened capacity, and to respond to lessons learnt in the general election.

82. New procedures and skills benefit from repetition. Having a major election event in two successive years provides a useful opportunity for consolidation. Where new procedures have been incorporated into PNGEC practice then there seems to be no reason why the benefits do not flow on to the LLG elections. Reports indicate that three activities which may have been sufficiently incorporated are: the national vehicle hire standing order contracts; the police election training manual and field hand book; and the election financial management system.

83. However, in some instances the new capacity is dependent on Program funding and so will not be available for the LLG elections as part of the current phase of election support. Two examples are the 20 provincial Assistant Election Mangers and the surge capacity in HR to handle the recruitment of temporary polling staff. There is no indication that the needs for this support are not present in LLG elections and indeed with the emphasis on provisional government support, there may well be a greater need for the co-ordination skills being established at the provincial level. It may be the case that further support will be available; however, the uncertainty for those staff employed only until after the election increases the risks that they find alternative jobs in the meantime. For the review, we suggest that greater continuity and coherence between phases of support is desirable, to protect the benefits achieved and avoid instability, given the central role that AusAID plays as the main donor to the PNGEC.

Sustainability for the 2017 election and beyond

84. Longer term sustainability depends on the wider integrity of electoral systems and processes in PNG. If this is important to AusAID, then it will require the development of a realistic strategy that explains how to shift from the current crisis management mode of

operation to a more stable and managed situation, where the electoral cycle has been embedded.[5] Such a strategy requires elaboration of a theory of change on how such a transition can occur and over what timeframe, as well as a theory of action, that sets out how AusAID and its whole-of-government partners can intervene effectively to support that change process. We are not aware of such a strategy at present.

85. Insufficient action in the years between elections was a strong criticism of the review of the Phase 2. Addressing this requires coordinated efforts beyond support to just PNGEC. There are significant challenges in persuading government bodies and CSOs to work on election related activities in non-election years, and even if effective, progress may always be subject to setbacks as a result of changes in the wider political environment. But this need for an attitude change should be seen as a potential area of activity rather than a brake on any activity in non-election years.

86. Inadequate funding for the PNGEC across the electoral cycle was also identified by the Phase 2 review and lack of funding for inter-election year activities continues to be a major risk. Uncertainty of available funding across the electoral cycle, from both the PNG Government and AusAID, hampers a long-term, strategic approach that takes advantage of the inter-election years to introduce change. Where Government of PNG funding cannot be secured, AusAID should consider providing assistance to maintain necessary levels of operational activity as part of the process of embedding the electoral cycle. However, this support need not be in the form of an 'open cheque book', if it is an element of the strategy to build greater Government of PNG commitment over time and therefore part of on-going dialogue with Government of PNG.

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[5] It is noted that the current mode is *de facto*, because the expressed ambitions of the Electoral Support Program is long-term institutional strengthening.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

87. The review acknowledges the range and scale of challenges in seeking to strengthen electoral systems in PNG. This is difficult work and, although stating the obvious, there are no easy solutions.

88. We also emphasise that a comprehensive assessment of all the Program's successes was beyond a ten day, desk review. We have necessarily focused our attention on the areas of greatest challenge, with the risk of producing a report that is somewhat unbalanced.

89. We feel that the Program has made a significant contribution towards its goal in a number of areas. But its overall effectiveness has been constrained by a design that was not sufficiently tailored to the stage of the electoral cycle in PNG. It is true that nobody predicted the recent events, but it is also true that, even before 2010, the heightened risks around the 2012 election were recognised.

90. Phase 3 was still structured as a long-term institutional support program but focused on the 2012 election – as a consequence, it has been problematic squaring that circle. In part, delays on the logistics front and electoral roll reflected over optimistic planning assumptions, but more fundamentally the design emphasised management and systems development at a time when more focussed operational support was needed. To be fair to the Program, it has responded with greater focus on operational support since December and bolstered recently by the Australian Civilian Corps. But in part, the roots of problems lay in the limited progress achieved during the latter stages of Phase 2 in terms of maintaining momentum and using the inter election years for planning, procedure change and substantial capacity development.

91. Looking forward we feel that the design issue is part of a bigger question around AusAID's approach to support: whether to develop an explicit, long-term strategy for support embedded across the electoral cycle which is located within the broader engagement with the Government of PNG on governance reforms; or to continue with relatively small-scale support alongside periodic surges in short term mobilisations to support particular election events.

92. We favour the former option, because we feel that erosion of electoral processes risks undermining the integrity of democratic governance efforts more widely. But it is for AusAID to decide.

93. On the issue of long-term institutional strengthening, we have found examples of progress achieved with Program assistance. But the overall sense is that after 12 years PNGEC still exhibits significant capacity weaknesses.

94. We have no evidence to suggest that the Program's capacity building support has been of poor quality – far from it, it seems highly valued by the Commissioner. But given evident weaknesses, we feel that the Program has not invested sufficiently in the diagnosis of capacity constraints. In particular, without an overarching model, that distinguishes clearly between the different sources of constraints – leadership, skills, technology, operating funds, etc. – the risk is that inputs are mismatched to the specific problem and ineffectual. Without a model It is also difficult to review progress in a consistent, systematic way and modify strategy accordingly.

Recommendations

95. In the short-term, it is too close to the election, and we are too removed, to make specific recommendations regarding any changes to the approach. But we do recommend that

AusAID extends Phase 3 to cover the LLG elections to ensure greater consolidation and continuity of staffing innovations.

96. Longer-term recommendations relate to the overarching model of election support: We recommend that after 12 years of support and three elections, the post-election period is a good time for a major stocktake and that therefore the review later in 2012 should consider the entirety of AusAID funded election support. At the same time there are a number of areas where research papers on election management and support would be useful, such as: conducting elections in conflict situations; election planning across the election cycle and new methods of creating an electoral roll.

97. Based on this review we suggest that AusAID will then be in a position to make a decision on whether to commit to a longterm support plan that works across the election cycle following a model of capacity change or to concentrate on mobilisation of assistance at the time of each election.

98. **Recommendation 1:** extend phase 3 funding until after the LLG elections in 2013

99. **Recommendation 2**: 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 Civil Corp, and input from other parts of the AusAID program.

100. **Recommendation 3**: Agree the direction and scale of any future election support – in short, whether to pursue a long-term strategy, resourced across the election cycle (which includes 'surge' support for election events) and which is located within efforts to support broader governance reforms, or provide support focussed on each election event, with relatively limited engagement in the inter-election years.