

2022 PNG NATIONAL ELECTION

1st July – 29th July 2022

REPORT OF THE MELANESIA SPEARHEAD
GROUP (MSG) OBSERVER GROUP

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Figure 1: Team Leader Kalkot Mataskelekele

The MSG Observer Group (MSGOG) team expresses its appreciation and thanks to everyone who had assisted them in undertaking the mission to observe the 2022 Papua New Guinea National General Election (PNGNGE 2022).

Firstly, the MSGOG expresses their sincere gratitude to the Government of Papua New Guinea for the invitation to the MSG members to participate in observing the PNGNGE 2022. The MSGOG also thanks the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC) for the accreditation which enabled the MSGOG to undertake the observation mission.

Thirdly, the MSGOG was indeed very grateful to all the stakeholders for the courtesies accorded to them, in particular from the Electoral Commission, Polling Officials, the Scrutineers, the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, local and international observers, and voters and members of the public whom the Group met and talked to during the observation period.

We acknowledge the help extended to the Group by the Heads of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and other international partners in Port Moresby and the region. We were also grateful for the support provided by UNDP in coordinating the work of the international observer groups. The assistance and advice from our drivers and security officers during our deployment across the three regions of the country was exemplary.

Finally, the MSGOG was grateful to the MSG Secretariat for their assistance with logistics and administrative matters and for the warm hospitality and courtesies that were extended to them during the observation period. This mission would not have been possible without the support and assistance of all the people and institutions mentioned and for that the MSGOG was indeed honoured and very grateful.

Thank you to all of you for your invaluable assistance and support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Kalkot Mataskelekele'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

H.E. Kalkot Mataskelekele
Leader of the MSG Observer Group.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The MSG Observer Group (MSGOG) to the Papua New Guinea National General Election (PNGNGE 2022) visited PNG from 1st – 29th July 2022. The Observer Mission was undertaken on the request of the PNG Government. The Chairman of MSG who was also the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Hon. James Marape sent the invitation through the MSG Secretariat Office and directed the Secretariat to establish and mobilise the MSGOG.

The Mission was undertaken in accordance with the MSG Terms of Reference to observe elections within the jurisdiction of member states, and in accordance with the PNGEC Code of Conduct for Domestic and International Observers. The Mission was also mindful of the UN Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. The MSGOG's findings will be submitted to the PNG Government through the office of the Electoral Commissioner. Copies of the final report will also be made available to the other MSG member countries for their scrutiny and endorsement.

The MSG Observer mission was led by His Excellency Kalkot Mataskelekele, former President of the Republic of Vanuatu. Other members of the Mission were Messrs. Kim Than Trong of FLNKS (Kanak Nationalist Socialist Liberation Front) in New Caledonia, Francis Iro Otainao, Solomon Islands Electoral Office (SIECO), and Aisea Wainiqolo, Fiji Elections Office.

The MSGOG was also supported by Staff of the Secretariat. The Members of the MSGOG and other Observer groups were granted accreditation on 1st July by the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission (PNGEC).

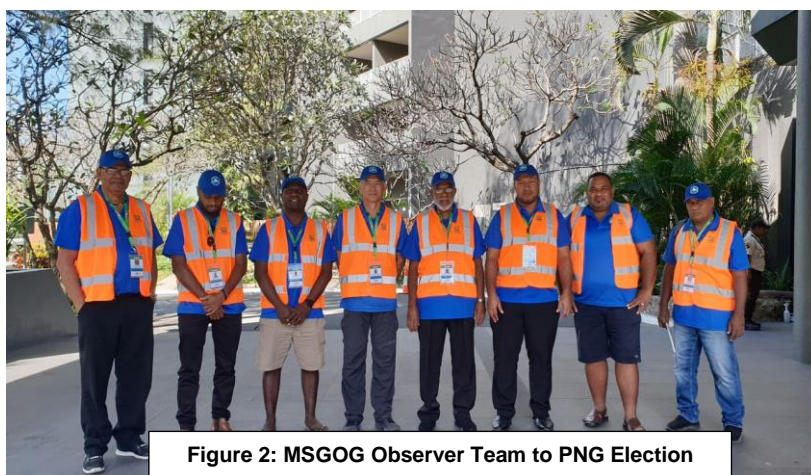


Figure 2: MSGOG Observer Team to PNG Election

The PNGNGE 2022 was delivered in the face of significant funding and logistical challenges, including inclement weather, which hampered the PNGEC's ability to administer the election within the prescribed legal timeframe. Significant issues with the voter registration process were

an unfortunate and reoccurring feature in polling areas visited by the mission with a large number of names missing from the electoral roll. However, voters who were able to participate were generally free to exercise their democratic right, and in the three provinces and the NCD observed by the teams saw men, women, the elderly and young appearing largely unhindered in their participation in the voting process.

The general observation of the MSGOG was that the process of the PNGNGE 2022 was fully embraced by the citizens of Papua New Guinea despite the challenges observed by the mission teams, and reported by media. For instance;

- Polling station dissatisfaction with many voters complaining about their names missing from the Common Electoral Roll;
- Significant delays in the opening of polling stations on polling days causing inconvenience to voters;
- Allegations of double voting and incidents of intending voters finding out at the polling station that someone else had voted in their name; and
- Election related violence, deaths, intimidations and destruction of election materials and infrastructure as reported by the media.

The above challenges show need for urgent review by the PNGEC immediately after the election to improve electoral roll accuracy, review polling day logistics, implement a voter ID system, and start and sustain a nationwide community awareness programme about PNG as a nation born out of traditional cultural values which must embrace new democratic norms of governance and Christian principles. These processes should be carried out with a strong support from the MSG member countries and Secretariat in collaboration with other development partners.

Despite the challenges the MSGOG teams noted the high voter turn-out and enthusiasm of people to participate freely in the most basic activity of the democratic process – voting to choose a member of Parliament. The Mission noted also the overall effective administration of polling stations and counting centres by confident and committed presiding, polling and returning officials.

Overall, the MSGOG found, and was encouraged that the PNGGE 2022 was conducted by the PNGEC under difficult situations and challenges. The MSGOG also noted the importance of having observer missions as part of MSG's efforts to strengthen the systems of good governance in the region under the auspices of the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Acknowledgements and Executive Summary sections of the report are set out above. The rest of this report is divided into the following six (6) parts:

- i) Introduction
- ii) Methodology
- iii) Electorates and Polling Stations observed
- iv) Papua New Guinea Background in Brief
- v) MSGOG Election Observation & Findings
- vi) MSGOG Strategic Focus on Women and PNGNGE 2022
- vii) Conclusion & Recommendations

1.1 Report Outline

This report records the observations of the MSG Observer Group (MSGOG) during the 2022 Papua New Guinea National General Elections (PNGNGE 2022). The task of the mission included observing the following matters:

- ❖ Completeness of the Electoral Roll for the 2022 national general elections.
- ❖ Preparation process by the presiding officer and polling team before the opening of polling stations.
- ❖ Opening of polling station and carrying on of the polling process, which sometimes involved teams receiving comments from voters and members of the public.
- ❖ Closing of the polling process and sealing of ballot boxes, including transfer of the sealed ballot boxes to safe holding centres.
- ❖ Unsealing and emptying of ballot boxes, sorting, counting and tallying of ballots, doing summary and quality checks of the final tally, and observing declaration of a successful candidate by a returning officer.
- ❖ Declaration of the final results of the PNG 2022 national general elections.

1.1.1 Submissions To PNG Government

A number of recommendations are made at the end of the report as submissions to the Government of Papua New Guinea through the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) for their consideration and appropriate decision.

1.2 Invitation by PNG Government

The Government of Papua New Guinea extended an invitation to the MSG Secretariat, amongst others, to participate in observing the PNGNGE 2022. The invitation was conveyed to the MSG Director General, Mr. Leonard Louma, who appropriately directed and mobilized the establishment of the MSGOG observer mission. A copy of the invitation letter is attached to this report as Annex I.

1.3 Members of the MSGOG.

The MSGOG was led by H.E. Kalkot Mataskelekele, former President of the Republic of Vanuatu, assisted by Mr. Graeme Hinge of Department of Foreign Affairs (Vanuatu). Other members of the team were Messrs. Aisea Wainiqolo, Fiji Election Office, Kim Than Trong, FLNKS New Caledonia, and Francis Iro Otainao, Solomon Islands Electoral office. The MSGOG was supported by the Secretariat Staff.

1.3.1 Seventh MSGOG

The MSGOG has engaged in observing six elections in the past, this is the seventh one and also the second for Papua New Guinea. The other six observation missions were conducted in Fiji (2014 and 2018), with Vanuatu (2016 Snap Election and 2020), Solomon Islands (2019) and PNG in 2017.

1.3.2 Arrival of the Observer Mission in PNG

Members of the MSGOG arrived in Port Moresby on 1st and 5th July 2022. Originally set for 9th July, polling began on 2nd July 2022 under the revised electoral calendar. The PNGEC assisted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted briefing sessions for all observer groups from 31st June to 2nd July 2022.



Apart from the MSGOG, there were observers from the Commonwealth Secretariat, European Union, Australia, New Zealand, USA and the Australian National University (ANU). According to UNDP Port Moresby office about 160 international and local observers were accredited to observe the PNGGE 2022. The MSG

Secretariat was also able to conduct a number of short briefings for the MSGOG prior to the polling.

1.4 Media

The media played a crucial role during the elections and ensured that voters were always able to freely make informed choices. The Mission observed that the media (including TV stations such as EMTV and NBC, the Post Courier newspaper, radio stations and regional and international news agencies) was very active in the days leading up to the elections as well as during the elections creating awareness on the different aspects of the election processes. The Mission also noted that there was active participation by PNG citizens via the social media.

1.5 Statements by MSGOG

The Chairman of the MSGOG issued a statement prior to the elections applauding the PNG Government for the extensive preparations for the elections and the anticipated outcome of the elections. The MSGOG also released an Interim Statement in Port Moresby at the end of the mission commending the Government, the PNGEC and the people of Papua New Guinea for the conduct of the Election. Copies of the statements are attached as Annexes V and VI respectively.

2. METHODOLOGY

Due to the limited financial resources available and small size of our observer group, our observation mission not only recorded matters observed in constituencies visited in real time but, it also endeavoured to record information on events that occurred during the election and reported through other secondary sources, primarily from relevant reports and main stream media, such as national newspapers and radio.

2.1 Coverage of Elections

This approach above was adopted to ensure holistic coverage of the elections and to present qualitative and quantitative analysis of matters, which in our view, is important for the Government to consider in its ongoing efforts to improve electoral systems in the country. This approach also aims to encourage discussion on matters that are important to improve the governance systems in general. It should be noted however, that information gathered through media were reported as such without asserting direct involvement or observation by our observers.

2.2 Scope of the Mission

Limited resources to a large extent dictated the scope of the MSGOG elections observation activities reflected in this report. The MSGOG teams limited their observation to selected electorates only while at the same time endeavoured to cover areas of distinct geographical locations to allow for a broad comparison. The MSGOG also had a specific Terms of Reference (TOR) that guided their observation on the Election. The MSGOG observation was also guided by the Code of Conduct for Elections provided by the PNGEC. A copy of the Code of Conduct is attached as Annex II. The MSOG was also mindful of the UN Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.

2.3 Distribution of MSGOG Teams

The MSGOG was divided into three (3) teams to observe the polling and counting in the National Capital District (NCD), Central, Milne Bay (Alotau) and Morobe (Lae) Provinces.

2.3.1 Areas visited and observed

The election observation was limited to the particular constituencies and provinces mentioned above (NCD), Central, Milne Bay and Lae) due to limited time and resource available and due to the late arrival of MSGOG in PNG due to delayed notification of the revised election timeline.

3. ELECTORATES AND POLLING STATIONS OBSERVED

The MSGOG divided itself into two (2) teams to observe the polling process of elections in the Central Province and the National Capital District (NCD) from 2nd to 13th July 2022. The observer group later divided itself into three (teams) to observed the vote counting process from 14th to 21st July.

3.1 Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below show the distribution of members of the MSGOG to the areas visited during the election period. The 3 observer teams were supported by Staff of the MSG Secretariat who provided clerical, administrative and logistical support as required.

Table 1: MSGOG Teams 1 and 2 Observing Polling (Up to 13.07.22)

Team	Members	Deployment Areas
MSGOG Team 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. H.E. Kalkot Mataskelekele 2. Ilan Kilo 3. Graeme Hinge 4. William Soaki (SIHC to PNG) 5. Kim Than Trong 	National Capital District (NCD) Central Province
MSGOG Team 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aisea Wainiqolo 2. John Palmer 3. Francis Iro Otainao 	National Capital District (NCD) Central Province

Table 2: Polling Stations & Counting Centres visited by Team 1.

Province	Polling Stations Observed	Counting Observed
Central Province	Kairuku	
Central Province	Hiri-Koiari	
Central Province	Sambuya	

Central Province	Gidobada	
Central Province	Gomore	
Central Province	Tubusereia Ward 5	
Central Province	Tubusereia Ward 6	
Central Province	Gaire	
NCD	In-Service College	
NCD	SDA Head Quarter- Ela Beach	
NCD	University of PNG Drill Hall	
NCD	Air Niugini Headquarter	
NCD	6 Miles Police Station	
NCD	6 Miles Clinic	
Morobe Province		Lae Open
Morobe Province		Huon Gulf Open

Table 3: Polling Stations & Counting Centres visited by Team 2

Province	Polling Stations Observed	Counting Centres Observed
Central Province	Sabuia	
Central Province	Matairuka	
Central Province	Saroakeina	
Central Province	Tubusereia	
Central Province	Gaire	
NCD	Murray Army Barracks	
NCD	Kila Police Barracks	
NCD	Gordons International School	
NCD	Hohola Police Station	
Milne Bay Province		Kiriwina/Goodenough Open

Milne Bay Province		Esa'ala Open
Milne Bay Province		Alotau Open
Milne Bay Province		Samarai Murua Open
Milne Bay Province		Regional

Table 4: MSGOG Teams Observing Counting (14.07.22 – 21.07.22)

MSGOG Team 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. H.E. Kalkot Mataskelekele 2. Ilan Kiloe 3. Graeme Hinge 	LAE- Morobe Province
MSGOG Team 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Palmer 2. Aisea Wainiqolo 3. Francis Iro Otainao 	Alotau- Milne Bay Province
MSGOG Team 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leonard Louma (DG) 2. Chris Waiwori 3. Kim Than Trong 	NCD- Port Moresby.

3.2 Observation Forms

MSGOG observation forms with set questions were distributed to each Team member to fill out during the actual observation. The two forms were as follows:

3.2.1 Polling observation form

The **Polling Questionnaire form** directed its questions to the following issues:

- polling station environment;
- authorized persons in polling station;
- opening of polling stations;
- polling process;
- number of voters; and
- closing of polling stations.

3.2.2 Counting observation form

The **Counting Questionnaire form** directed its questions to the following issues:

- Starting time for counting;
- Checking for ballot box seals;
- Counting environment;
- Scrutineers presence;
- Conduct of counting by officers;
- Counting free and fair; and

- Declaration result.

3.2.3 Record of Observations written in forms

The observer teams recorded their observations in the forms and under each section, then collated the information and the results were tabulated and compiled in this report. Copies of the observation forms are attached as Annexes III and IV respectively.

4. PAPUA NEW GUINEA BACKGROUND IN BRIEF

This part is a brief overview of Papua New Guinea's political profile, legal framework and Electoral Commission (PNGEC) electoral calendar guide for the 2022 National General Elections (PNGNGE 2022).

4.1 Brief Political Profile

The Independent State of Papua New Guinea obtained Independence on September 16, 1975. It has a parliamentary democracy structure of government with a single chamber legislature comprising one hundred and eighteen (118) Members of Parliament elected to a five (5) year term. The country adopted the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) System in 2007 to elect Members of Parliament. Previously a first-past-the-post system was used. The Constitution of Papua New Guinea is the Supreme law of the country. There are about eight hundred (800) languages spoken in PNG. There are three distinct arms of Government - the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary in a Westminster style of government.

4.1.1 Head of State

The Monarch of England and the United Kingdom is the Head of State of PNG and is represented by a Governor-General (GG) in the country. The GG is nominated and elected by Parliament and serves for a term of six (6) years. The current Governor-General is His Excellency Bob Dadae who was elected in May 2017.

4.1.2 Head of Government

The Prime Minister, the head of Government as Chairman of the National Executive Council (NEC), is elected by Parliament from among its members by secret ballot. The leader of the majority party or majority coalition is usually elected Prime Minister by Parliament from among its members. Parliament can only hold votes of no confidence in the Prime Minister after he has serving more than eighteen (18) months in Parliament and at least 12 months before the date of the next election.

4.1.3 Political Coalitions

Politics in PNG is diverse and often characterised by fluid coalitions. Allegiances are fragile and Members of Parliament often change parties more than once during the life of a parliament. The country has successfully conducted elections in the past and this is the 11th parliamentary election in PNG.

4.1.4 The Judiciary

The Judicial Arm consists of the District Courts, the Magistrates' Court, the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal. The Chief Justice is appointed by the GG after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Court of Appeal is the highest appellate court in PNG.

4.1.5 22 Provinces

Papua New Guinea has 22 Provinces namely, Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB), Central, Enga, East New Britain, Eastern Highlands, East Sepik, Gulf, Hela, Jiwaka, Madang, Manus, Milne Bay, Morobe, National Capital District (NCD), New Ireland, Oro, Simbu, Southern Highlands, Western, Western Highlands, West New Britain, and West Sepik. Each Province has a government headed by a Governor who is also Member of Parliament for the Province. The top provincial bureaucrat is the Provincial Administrator supported by local level governments (LLGs) headed by Presidents. By custom, Chiefs exercise customary authority either through a matrilineal or patrilineal structure at village, community and provincial levels.

4.2 The Legal Framework

The laws that govern national elections in Papua New Guinea are the National Constitution and the Organic Laws on National and Local-Level Government Elections (2006) and on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (2003).

4.2.1 Right to Vote

The Constitution stipulates under section 50 the right to vote as the fundamental right of all PNG citizens who are 18 years old and above based on the system of universal, adult, citizen suffrage for all citizens. A citizen of PNG who is 25 years or over shall be eligible to stand for election to Parliament. The notion of “free and fair” election is clearly embedded in the electoral laws of PNG giving right to citizens to freely choose their representatives into Parliament in a democratic manner without fear or influence by competing parties or their supporters.

4.2.2 Open and Provincial Seats

Section 101 of the Constitution establishes the Parliament with a single Chamber legislature consisting of Members of Parliament (MP's) voted in Open electorates as well as Provincial electorates. This means that in one visit to the polling station voters

vote in each Province for an MP for the Open electorate in the first ballot paper and are also required to vote in a second ballot paper for an MP for Provincial Governor in the Regional Electorate. There are 118 seats altogether in Parliament, 22 provincial seats and 96 open seats. PNG has a multi-party system where no one Party has ever formed a government on its own. As a result, Political Parties are required to negotiate to form a coalition government.

4.2.3 Organic Law on Elections

The Organic Laws on National and Local-Level Government Elections (2006) and on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (2003) set out detailed matters and processes for the conduct of elections as well as matters relating to candidacy and political parties. Significant amendments were made to these laws prior to the election in 2007, particularly the introduction of the LPV System replacing the first-past-the-post electoral system.

4.2.4 Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) System

The LPV system requires voters to choose three preferences in order from among the nominated candidates and write down their names or corresponding number in the ballot papers.

4.2.5 Key elements of Election Laws

Basic key elements under the electoral laws that were of interest to the MSGOG and taken into consideration during the observation of the conduct of the elections are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Key elements under PNG election laws

Issues	The Law
1) Right to Vote for persons 18 years and older	<p>Section 50 of Constitution states: "the right to vote and stand for office"</p> <p>Section 51 (1) of Organic Law on National and Local – Government Elections states: All persons who have a right to vote under Section 50 of the Constitution who comply with the requirements of Part VII for enrolment for an electorate are entitled to enrolment.</p>
2) Updating of Common	<p>Section 46 of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states:</p> <p>A new Roll for an electorate shall be prepared whenever the Electoral Commission, by notice published in the National Gazette, directs.....The entries in an existing Roll may, at the</p>

Electoral Roll	discretion of the Electoral Commission, be transferred to a new Roll without the need for the persons whose names are in the transferred entries to make any further claim for enrolment.
(3) Bribery & Undue Influence	<p>Section 21 of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states: “VOIDING ELECTION FOR ILLEGAL PRACTICES.</p> <p>If the National Court finds that a candidate has committed or has attempted to commit bribery or undue influence, his election, if he is a successful candidate, shall be declared void”</p>

(4) Polling Station	<p>Section 43 of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states:</p> <p>“The Electoral Commission may, by notice published in the National Gazette or in a newspaper circulating in the electorate, (a) appoint such number of polling places for each electorate as it thinks necessary and practicable; and (b) abolish a polling place.</p> <p>(2) No polling place shall be abolished after the issue of the writ and before the time appointed for its return.”</p>
(5) Polling Schedules & adherence to Polling Schedules and times	<p>Section 115 of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states: “As far as possible, polling booths shall be open in accordance with the polling schedule, and the Returning Officer and presiding officers shall take all such action as is necessary or desirable for that purpose, whether expressly authorized by this Law or not.”</p>
(6) Voter identification	<p>Section 71 of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states:</p> <p>“1. The Electoral Commission may establish and manage a system to identify voters entitled to vote. (2) A system of identification established under Subsection (1) may take any one or more of the following forms: – (a) manual finger print system; (b) computer recorded and recognized finger print system; (c) computer recorded and recognized palm recognition system; or (d) computer, electronic or other photogenic system.”</p>
(7) Double Voting & Falsely	<p>Section 51 (2) of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states “All persons whose names are on the Roll for an electorate shall...vote at elections of a member for</p>

personating a person	<p>the electorate, but no person is entitled to vote more than once at an election, or at more than one election held at the same time”</p> <p>Section 191 (6) of Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states; “Falsely personating a person to secure a ballot paper to vote to which the personator is not entitled, or personating any other person for the purposes of voting are liable for imprisonment for two years.”</p>
(8) Scrutineers	<p>Section 127 of the Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections states: “Scrutineers may be appointed by candidates to represent them at polling places during the polling, but so that not more than one scrutineer, other than relieving scrutineers, shall be allowed to each candidate at each polling booth or subdivision of a polling booth on any one day.”</p>

<p>Day of Voting</p> <p>(a) Commencement of Polling</p> <p>(b) Sunday & Public Holiday</p>	<p>Section 79 of the Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections:</p> <p>“The date fixed for the <u>commencement of the polling period shall be a Saturday</u> and shall be not less than eight weeks not more than 11 weeks after the date of the writ.”</p> <p>Section 130 of the Organic Law on National and Local-Government Elections:</p> <p>“(b) <u>the poll shall open at each polling place at 8 a.m. on each day (other than a Sunday or a public holiday)</u> during the period for taking the poll at that polling place, and shall not close until all electors present in the polling booth at 6 p.m. and desiring to vote, have voted.”</p>
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4.3 Establishment of Electoral Commission

The PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) was established pursuant to Section 5 of the Organic law as the institution responsible for the conduct of the elections. The PNGEC is headed by the Electoral Commissioner (EC) appointed by the Head of State to a term of six (6) years acting on the advice of the Appointment Committee. The Appointment

Committee consists of the Prime Minister or Minister so appointed, the Leader of opposition or Deputy Leader, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee and Chairman of Public Service Commission.

4.3.1 Responsibility of PNGEC

The PNGEC is responsible for the overall conduct of elections and to administer the supervision of the registration of voters. The Electoral Commissioner shall by Notice in the National Gazette appoint the Returning Officer (RO) for each electorate. Pursuant to section 16 of the Organic Law on National and Local Government Elections, the Electoral Commissioner can also request public servants in government offices to assist with the running of elections.

4.4 Time Line of Electoral Events

The original time line of electoral events provided to the MSGOG by the Department of Foreign Affairs of PNG and PNGEC is as shown in Table 6 below commencing with the issuance of the Election Writ on 12th May to the return of the Writ on 29th July.

Table 6: Original Timeline of events for the 2022 National General Election

Dates	Activities
12 th May 2022	Issue of Election Writs/Nomination Open
19 th May 2022	Close of Nomination – eight (8) days of nomination
9 th July 2022	Polling Period Starts
22 nd July 2022	Polling Period Ends – 14 days polling - Counting period starts
29 th July 2022 Extended to: 12th August 2022	Return of Writs on or before. The extension of the return of the Writs was accepted after a successful submission from PNGEC, to His Excellency the Governor General. The new date for the Return of Writs was on the 12th August, 2022.

4.5 Revised Time Line of Electoral Events

The revised timeline of electoral events (“indicative electoral calendar”) was endorsed by the Governor General on the advice of the PNGEC for the 2022 elections due to the “special circumstance” of the sudden death of the late “Hon. Sam Basil, MP”. The new indicative electoral dates appear in Table 7 below. The revised dates were published by the PNGEC in the PNG National Gazette dated 18th May 2022, the date of the PNGEC amendment instrument.

Table 7: Revised Timeline of events for the 2022 National General Election

Dates	Activities
12 th May 2022 (Not revised)	Issue of Election Writs Nominations Open
26 th May 2022 (Revised)	Close of Nomination
2 nd July 2022 (Revised)	Polling Period Starts
22 nd July 2022 (Not revised)	Polling Period Ends
12 th August 2022 (Revised)	Return of Writs. The extension and new date of the return of the Writs endorsed by the Governor General on the advice of the PNGEC was made shifting the return date beyond the original dateline of 29 th July, due perhaps to the delayed polling and counting in some electorates.

5. MSGOG ELECTION OBSERVATION AND FINDINGS

This part sets out the election observation events of the MSGOG mission. The key findings identified within this report are detailed under the six (6) broad themes outlined in paragraph 1.1 (Report Outline) in part 1 above. These findings are based on the data collected during the teams’ observation and are elaborated on further by comment in the body of this report.

5.1 Matter under Observation:

Completeness of the Electoral Roll for the 2022 national general elections.

Key Finding 1:

Electoral Rolls in many polling stations excluded names of many eligible voters therefore denying them their basic right to vote in the election.

5.1.1 Comment on Key Finding 1 and Observations made:

The PNGEC should make, and may have already made a post-election public explanation why electoral rolls in many polling stations were not fully complete during the 2022 elections. Such a response would be a useful guide to the way forward in achieving more comprehensive and inclusive voter electoral rolls.

5.1.1.1 Huge voter numbers turned away from voting

Our Observer teams had witnessed huge numbers of voters being turned away because their names were not on the roll, which raised a lot of serious questions about the legitimacy of the roll used during this election.

5.1.1.2 Eligible voters turned away in many locations

During the 2022 election, widespread concerns about the electoral roll were reported, with numerous voters turned away in many locations. In some polling stations lack of confidence in the roll was so great that it was abandoned altogether. The 2017 observer reports noted allegations that errors in the roll had arisen from missing, misplaced or incorrect data entries which occurred in the rush to complete the roll update in the weeks leading up to this election. Voters who were denied to exercise their rights only hope that the PNGEC will address this issue before the next general elections in 2027.

5.1.1.3 Several young eligible voters unable to vote

In some polling stations observed several young women complained through an elder male that they were unable to vote because their names were not on the roll. They spoke to our observers because they thought the observers (who were wearing orange jackets) were PNG election officials. The team of observers informed them that they were part of the MSGOG and could not interfere in the electoral process, however the team will note down the complaints and put it as part of its observation report. Our observers also witnessed at least one female who was turned away at a polling station in that community. Similar incidents happened in other polling stations visited by our teams.

5.1.1.4 Teacher and Students unable to vote

Our observers were approached by one PNG lecturer and two students at the UPNG Drill Hall on polling day on 08th July 2022 late afternoon to say that they had voted at the polling station in a previous election, however on this occasion they could not vote as their names were not on the roll, much to their surprise.

5.1.1.5 Eight hundred Names allegedly not on the Roll

The Observer teams had witnessed huge numbers of voters being turned away because their names were not on the roll, raising a lot of serious questions about the legitimacy of the roll used during this election. The most serious allegation came from a male commentator at a polling station in Central Province on Thursday 07th July 2022 at around 2.00pm that the updated electoral list of 2019 had about 1000 less names than the 2017 electoral list. He claimed that about “800 people did not vote at that polling station and many people did not vote at the other polling stations as well.

5.1.1.6 Accurate Electoral Roll is an integral part of a well-run election

An up-to-date accurate record of all eligible registered voters (the electoral roll) is a basic and integral part of a well-run election in a democratic country. It assures citizens, especially eligible voters, of the integrity of the electoral process, and forms the basis of all other election-related administration and reduces opportunities for election frauds.

5.1.1.7 Allegation of Preliminary Roll not being well established

It was made known to our observers that one of the problems of the Electoral Roll was that preparation of the preliminary rolls was exacerbated by the limited time for the return of preliminary rolls for checking in several provinces including Central Province. It was also suggested that voters who were unable to locate their names on the electoral roll at their polling stations may in fact have been on the electoral roll but designated to another polling station within the same electorate or district.

5.1.1.8 Expectation of eligible voters denied

The electoral process in place ensured that all eligible voters can take part in the elections, but this was not the case as witnessed where hundreds of voters were not on the roll and were denied their right to vote and participate in the democratic process.

5.1.1.9 Election progressed on despite inadequate Electoral Rolls

Inadequacy of the Rolls resulted in many eligible voters being denied their right to participate in this democratic electoral process to elect a candidate of their choice. Nevertheless, the observer teams noted that despite the issue with the Common Roll, voting progressed on throughout country.

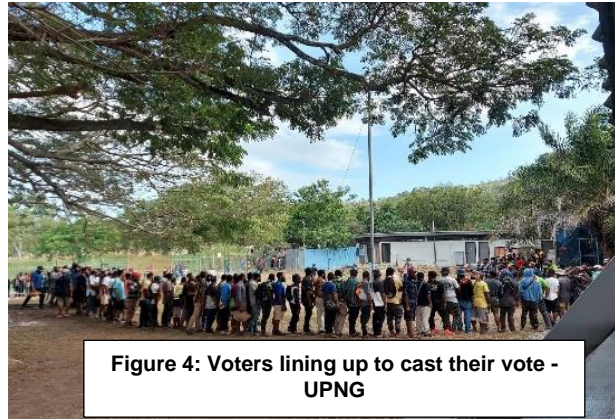


Figure 4: Voters lining up to cast their vote - UPNG

5.2 Matter under Observation:

Preparation process by the presiding officer and polling team before the opening of polling stations.

Key Finding 2:

Preparation process before the opening of polling stations not managed well in polling stations observed.

5.2.1 Comment on Key Finding 2 and Observations made:

The PNGEC 2022 Polling Manual standard procedures paragraph 1.4 says amongst other things that the presiding officer “is responsible for the preparation, management and operation of the polling booth in an ethical, professional and impartial manner, ensuring all procedures are followed in accordance with the law.” Paragraph 2.2 of the Manual also says that the presiding officer “must also ensure that all furniture and equipment necessary for polling is available to the team before polling commences.” Presiding Officers are therefore directly implicated when a polling station is not well prepared before the opening of the polling process in the elections.

5.2.1.1 Polling Location not fully equipped

Observers observed that many polling stations visited in the Central province were not fully equipped with proper election materials such as tables and chairs to setup the polling station. Polling booths were placed on chairs which were too low for voters to bend

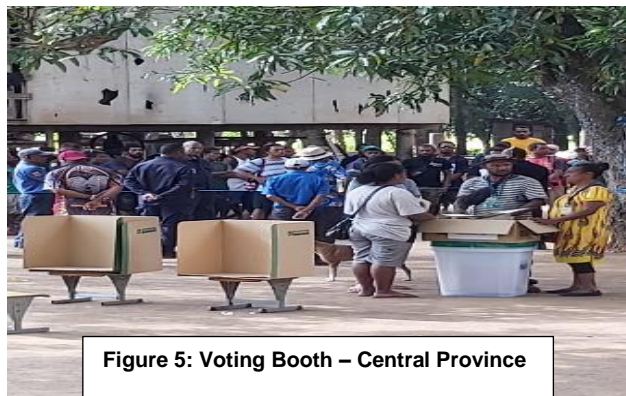


Figure 5: Voting Booth – Central Province

down and do their voting. It was an issue for the elderly and generally posed a risk to voters.

5.2.1.2 Inadequacy of some Polling Stations

In some polling stations observed, appropriate infrastructure for polling stations were not made available to polling teams. A good number of polling stations visited were uncovered and open to the elements, which caused delays and disruption due to heat, and forced voters and polling staff to be exposed to the sun all day. There was a lack of basic facilities available to polling staff, scrutineers, and voters. In some polling stations voters were required to travel long distances, though it was recognised that multi-polling had allowed polling officials to bring many polling stations closer to communities.

5.2.1.3 Overcrowding of Polling stations

The delays in timely opening of polling stations resulted in overcrowding of polling stations creating an environment not conducive to allowing voters to exercise the right to vote freely.



Figure 6: University Students lining up to cast their vote

Overcrowding of polling

stations also led to intimidation of voters, especially in relation to female voters, by some party supporters which caused many voters to leave without voting.

5.2.1.4 Success in the face of challenges

Despite those hiccups and challenges most of the polling stations had sufficient election materials for the entire polling process and there were adequate polling booths set up to cater for the respective number of voters in each polling station. There were polling venues which were well organized. Strings were used to indicate the boundaries of the polling venue with a voter entry to cast votes and the exit after casting votes. Officials table were also well-organized beginning from the voters' roll register where voters initially had to check their names, the inking table where the voter had to dip the little finger of the left hand, the ballot paper issuing table, the casting booth and to the ballot boxes where ballot papers were to be placed.

5.2.1.5 Campaign Posters were displayed near to Polling Stations



Figure 7: Officials preparing voting station – National Capital District (NCD)

Posters of candidates were still displayed within the 10 – 20 meters from the polling stations. This was very real in the Central Province where campaign posters and candidate camps were located right next to the polling stations. As

administrator of a polling station the presiding officer has the legal standing to ask for the removal of such campaign posters. On the other hand, however, due to the Limited Preferential Voting system of PNG, the Polling Manual requires the Electoral Commission to display photos of all candidates which in fact are identical to the campaign photos, with their names in all polling booths to assist voters to cast their ballots. In such an electoral environment it is understandable, but wrong, that presiding officers will be hesitant to take action to remove campaign photo posters that were too near the polling station.

5.3 Matter under Observation:

Opening of polling station and carrying on of the polling process, which sometimes involved teams receiving comments from voters and members of the public.

Key Finding 3:

- a. **Opening of the polling stations observed in the NCD were usually late for unknown reasons, indicating systemic issues.**
- b. **Late openings of polling stations resulted in consequential errors and breaches.**
- c. **On the positive side the polling in the Central province and NCD proceeded generally in an orderly and peaceful manner.**
- d. **Members of the public at polling locations voluntarily offered information and complaints to the observer teams.**

5.3.1 Comment on Key Finding 3 and Observations made:



Lateness in the opening of polling stations in the NCD seemed to be a normal happening which indicated that there were management issues within the NCD electoral authority. In brief, the standard procedures set out for opening and voting were: Polling hours are from 0800 hrs to 1800 hrs. If polling is for one day

only or on the first day of polling, the empty ballot box should be shown to scrutineers and any voters, and seals affixed immediately prior to the presiding officer declaring the polling station open and delivering the pre-election speech concerning the voting process.

5.3.1.1 Voter Expectations compromised

Expectations of a free and fair election was compromised through technical and management errors which impacted the election schedules in the provinces and electorates to be deferred for few days within Papua New Guinea. Broadly, the election was conducted with a mixture of irregular and inconsistent application of electoral processes during the opening and towards the closing of polling stations.

5.3.1.2 Consequence of Polling Station opening late

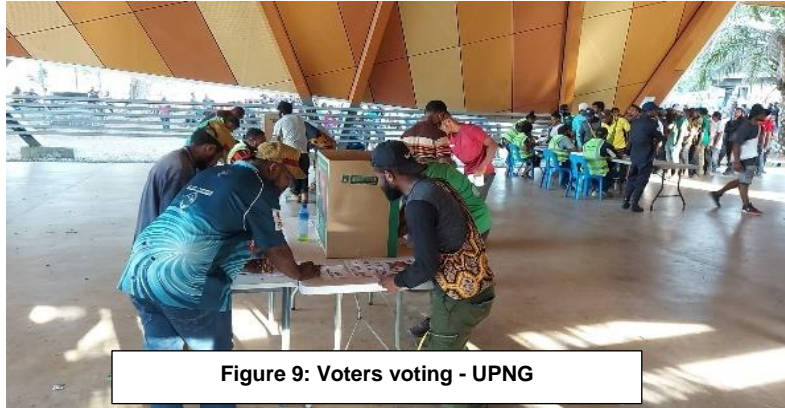
The mission teams also observed serious delays in the opening of polling stations on polling days culminating in a rush to finish polling at the end of the day resulting in more than one voter using the voting booth table at the same time. This raises question about the secrecy of the voting process.

5.3.1.3 Late Opening of polling stations often caused by Polling teams

Observer Teams witnessed that most polling stations both in NCD and Central Province (east) did not open at 8am as stipulated by the election manual, but depended entirely on the Polling team's arrival or availability. This caused wide spread delay and deferral of polling dates in the provinces including the NCD. Opening of polling stations were also inconsistency in almost all of the polling stations visited.

5.3.1.4 Serious Consequences of late Opening of polling station

Poor setup of some polling stations did not allow for the flow of voting creating chaos at entrances to polling stations that became overcrowded and congested which caused confusion, unnecessary delay and breach of process. Delay of opening the polling station led to voting congestion at the roll check table, which is a breach of manual requirements,



resulting in polling officials allowing three to four or more voters using one polling booth at the same time contrary to proper procedure. In some polling stations there were only 2 polling booths even though there were many voters standing in line to cast their votes. In some polling stations voting had to be extended for another day, as authorised by the Electoral Commissioner, as many voters were not able to cast their votes.

5.3.1.5 Polling generally calm and peaceful

The atmosphere in the polling venues were generally calm, peaceful, and the voters were cordial and patient throughout the polling periods even though there were long lines of voters waiting to cast their votes. Security in all polling stations were generally sufficient.

5.3.1.6 Voters intimidated by Scrutineers and supporters

Observer findings suggested that some voters were denied the opportunity to cast their ballots in secret, and there were also occasions of intimidation from party scrutineers and supporters.

5.3.1.7 Application of seals

In most polling stations observers witnessed the correct application of seals and they were read out to scrutineers in the morning before the sealing. The polling venues in NCD and Central provinces were strategically located and were accessible by voters.

5.3.1.8 People with disabilities

Most of the polling stations that were observed had easy access for disabled people and there were community volunteers who were ready to assist those who went to vote. But there are still areas to be improved to further accommodate better access.

5.3.1.9 Scrutineers

Observers witnessed the impact of what scrutineers can do if they are not controlled by officers responsible. Scrutineers have an important role to play in the process of fair and free elections, however they need to be made aware of their responsibilities and work area in the context of the polling process. They should not interfere with the voting process. A scrutineer in one of the polling stations was seen actually sitting next to and sharing the table with the roll checker to check on names of voters, which is a breach of proper process.

5.3.1.10 Ballot box seals

In most places, observers witnessed the correct application of seals and the seal codes were read out to scrutineers in the morning before the ballot boxes were opened. However, in several places, particularly in remote polling station, ballot boxes were not sealed properly, compromising the security of the ballot boxes. It seems that some polling teams in some remote areas were unaware of all the correct procedures when questioned.

5.3.1.11 Security of Ballot Boxes

Our observers noted incidences of hijacking of ballot boxes and burning of ballot papers which were reported in some electorates.

5.4 Matter under Observation:

Closing of the polling process and sealing of ballot boxes, including transfer of the sealed ballot boxes to safe holding centres.

Key Finding 4:

Closing of the polling process was carried out in orderly fashion in some polling stations but the process was disorderly and irregular in other polling stations in the Central Province and the NCD observed by the teams. The transfer of the sealed ballot boxes, however, by vehicles under guard of the security forces to safe holding centres were carried out peacefully without negative incidents.

5.4.1 Comment on Key Finding 4 and Observations made:

Generally, observers observed an orderly closing of the polling process in the Central Province with the exception of other polling station where our observers witnessed irregularities during the closing of polling process.

5.4.1.1 Closing of Polling and making up for lost time in late starting

The Observer teams witnessed a lot of irregularities during the close of polling at several polling stations both in Central Province and the NCD. It was observed that the application of the process to close polling seems to vary depending on the presiding officers and their team. Some of our observers were concerned about the time that was missed due to the late



Figure 10: Sealing of ballot box – Central Province

opening in the morning that was not accounted for at the closing. Whether this would affect the results of the elections or not, or whether it would raise issues on the lack of time allowed for voters to vote or not, due consideration for such lost time would assist in determining the fairness of the election to the voters.

5.4.1.2 Orderly Closing of Polling Process.

Observers observed an orderly closing of the polling process in polling stations in the Central Province on 07th July 2022. The processes for the closing were adhered to and scrutineers and observers were allowed to observe the whole process of closing the polling. Appropriate checks were undertaken and sealing of ballot boxes with the relevant security seals. As required, the officer announced the seal code numbers of the inner flaps and the code numbers of all the other seals on the sides of the two ballot boxes. Sealed ballot boxes were then loaded on to a waiting vehicle which was guarded by a number of national security force vehicles. The ballot boxes were then transported to Port Moresby. Our observers were able to also observe the transport of the ballot boxes along the main highway in vehicles travelling at such high speed with flashing security vehicle lights for the simple purpose of keeping the two ballot boxes safe until their destination.

5.5 Matter under Observation:

Unsealing and emptying of ballot boxes, sorting, counting and tallying of ballots, doing summary and quality checks of the final tally, and observing declaration of a successful candidate by a returning officer.

Key Finding 5:

The counting process was generally well administered under orderly and peaceful conditions in the counting centres visited by the observer teams, however in some centres the counting process was delayed for unexplained reasons, and in others the counting process was unnecessarily interrupted by scrutineers.

5.5.1 Comment on Key Finding 5 and Observations made:

The MSGOG was divided into three groups and observed counting in Lae (Morobe Province), Alotau (Milne Bay Province) and NCD counting centres. Counting in all venues were scheduled to open on 22nd July 2022. However, counting had started earlier. MSGOG observers were present on 17th July when a candidate was declared elected. Another candidate was declared in the first week of July.

5.5.2 Counting Process

Our observers observed that the Counting Process was very slow partly due to the scrutineers interfering with the counting process. There was no control in the counting centre as scrutineers kept raising their queries throughout the counting process and could not be controlled by the Counting Manager and the Police personnel present in the Counting Centre.

5.5.2.1 Counting Schedule

The PNGEC did not provide a counting schedule to the election observer groups to confirm the planned counting schedules in the different counting venues. The team noted that there was no proper plan for the commencement of the count straight after polling or as soon as possible.

5.5.2.2 Security Checks

The team noted that every time the team visited the counting venues, security personnel conducted their checks even though the vehicles were clearly labelled with stickers stating International Observers. The team did encounter unprofessional and a bad experience when harassed by the Police Officers to get out of the vehicles as they needed to check the vehicles before allowing them to go into the counting venues. The Police Officers unprofessional behavior were uncalled for and there was no respect given to International Observers to freely conduct their responsibilities in a peaceful environment. Our observers also noted that in a few polling stations security officials appeared to have misunderstood their role and responsibilities and interfered with the voting process.



Figure 11: Security Officer at Polling Station

5.5.2.3 Overall counting process

Overall, the counting process progressed well and in an orderly manner though there were matters identified above relating to long delays, simplifying of processes, sticking to approved processes, security issues and overall conduct that need to be improved. Conversely, in some polling stations the counting was expedited by polling officials, presiding officers without allowing the right of scrutineers to object to anomalies that they identified in the counting process.



Figure 12: Counting Officials

5.6 Matter under Observation:

Declaration of the final results of the PNG 2022 national general elections.

Key Finding 6:

When the MSGOG concluded our observation mission, counting in many constituencies were still underway. However, it was noted that there was a requirement to declare the results of elections on the return of all the writs as per the schedule time, in this case 29th July 2022. The MSGOG noted that the deadline for the return of writs had been extended to 12th August 2022.

5.6.1 Comment on Key Finding 6 and Observations made:

Our observers noted that declaration of seats for the winning candidates for some of the electorates proceeded on despite voting and counting were still underway in many other electorates. The early declaration of results may have influenced voter choices in their voting in other electorates.

5.6.2 Declaration of results under special circumstances

Our observers also noted that in one of the electorates in the highlands the winning candidate was declared under special circumstances. Another electorate in the Morobe Province also had a candidate declared although a substantial number of ballot boxes were burnt and destroyed by disgruntled electors.

6. MSGOG STRATEGIC FOCUS ON WOMEN AND PNGNGE 2022

6.1 Women In Politics:

6.1.1 Women Candidates Contested the Elections

The total number of women who contested the 2022 Papua New Guinea National General Elections was 159. This figure shows a decrease of 5% compared to the 2017 election where a total of 167 women candidates contested the elections.

6.1.2 Political party endorsement of women candidates

Of the total of 159 women candidates who contested the 2022 national elections, 64 women were endorsed by various political parties. The PANGU party endorsed seven (7) women candidates, the National Alliance (NA) endorsed five (5) women and the new People's Resources Awareness Party endorsed a total of nine (9). Other parties endorsed at least two (2) women according to data recorded by the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission. This shows a positive trend of 40.3% compared to 2017 election where only 38 women were endorsed by the various political parties.

6.1.3 Women elected to Parliament in the 2022 Election.

Out of the 159 women candidates who contested the 2022 election only two (2) secured seats in Parliament namely, Hon. Rufina Peter (MP) of Central Province who also won the Governor's seat for the Province, and Hon. Kessy Sawang (MP) who won the Rai Coast open seat. Hon. Peter contested under the People's National Congress while Hon. Sawang contested under People First Party. Despite the election of only two (2) women into Parliament, a positive trend had emerged where ten (10) women candidates finished between 2nd and 5th in constituencies they contested the election. This trend needs to be nurtured and further improved to ensure women are empowered to contest elections.

6.1.4 Political Party quota for women candidates

Our observers view that the proposal to have quota for women under each political party as specified in the amended Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC) section 56 (4) would provide the much-needed affirmative impetus space for women representation in Parliament. The provision states: "A registered political party shall, from the total number of candidates nominated by the party in a general election, ensure that twenty percent of these candidates are women candidates."

6.2 Challenges for Women In Politics:

6.2.1 Intimidation

Women who contested the election faced violence and intimidation by male candidates. According to reports observed, young male supporters of contesting candidates used violence as a means to intimidate voters, during the campaign period and at polling stations, not to vote for female candidates. As a result, many women and vulnerable voters did not vote.

6.2.2 Security

The general security environment during the election was not conducive for women candidates. There were threats and violence against women reported in parts of the country. There was no free and fair environment to conduct campaigns for instance. It was reported that male candidates also used violence and controlled voting to manipulate voters. The security in itself creates an environment where all aspiration by women is lost.

6.2.3 Cultural prejudices

The role of women in politics has often been overshadowed by massive cultural and structural factors associated with a predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal society in the country. There is a prevalent prejudice in communities where women duties are generally considered to be within the confines of the home – cooking, washing, feeding and bearing children. According to some analyses, even family members of political dynasties long dominant in PNG politics, for instance the Somares and the Skates, found that legacy could not overcome the barriers to women's representation in Parliament. There needs to be more effort to raise awareness and voters' education to ensure the population are educated on the equal role played by women in society.

6.2.4 Sponsorship and funding support

Women candidates contesting the election faced significant challenges relating to sponsorship. Funding support is often provided by Political Parties endorsing women to contest. However, with very low percentage of women endorsement by the parties, the majority of women still face challenges with funding.

6.2.5 Male decide who to vote

In some instances, men mostly husbands, and sons decide which candidate female family members should vote for during the elections. Women are therefore not only vulnerable voters but were effectively dictated in how to cast their vote.

6.2.6 Privacy of voting

The two-lane regulation where dedicated women's lane was supposed to be observed in all polling stations, was not enforced strictly. Many polling stations only had one

lane for all voters and women had no option but to cast their votes, in many circumstances, under duress.

7. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION:

On the basis of observations and findings made, and cognisant of the challenges faced by the PNGEC in conducting the 2022 PNG national general elections, the MSGOG notes that the election was concluded in a manner that enabled eligible PNG citizens to exercise their right to vote, although many were unable to do so due to their names not appearing in the appropriate electoral rolls. Overall, the MSGOG finds and is encouraged that the PNGGE 2022 was conducted by the PNGEC often under very difficult situations and circumstances. The MSGOG congratulates the voters, citizens and people of PNG for electing a new Parliament which itself has elected a new government to lead the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The MSGOG offers the following recommendations, based on its observations and findings, for appropriate consideration and decision by the PNGEC and by the Government of Papua New Guinea:

7.1 Election Administration

The PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) should conduct an urgent review and lessons learned process immediately following this election. The review should include a specific component on the transparency of the PNGEC's operations, which needs to be improved in order to enhance the credibility of the PNGEC and the electoral process.

7.2 Funding for the Electoral Commission

It is critical that the PNGEC be provided with timely and adequate funding. The Government should consider introducing arrangements for direct appropriation of funds to the PNGEC to ensure its independence.

7.3 Timely Release of Funds to EC

The PNGEC should ensure adequate and timely release of funds to provincial election authorities and service providers, to minimise avoidable disruption to the election timetable.

- 7.4 Engagement with political parties, candidates, media and the public**
The PNGEC should strengthen its working relationship with the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPPC) to deliver regular briefings for political parties and candidates on all aspects of the election, to foster greater trust in the election process.
- 7.5 Financial Empowerment of EC to Fully process Electoral Roll updating**
The Government should ensure timely release of funding to the PNGEC to enable a thorough process of updating the electoral roll. This process should be completed earlier in advance of the election and finalised prior to the cut-off upon the issue of the writs. Security measures should be put in place to prevent further changes to the roll after the cut-off point, and political parties and candidates should receive copies of the final electoral roll in advance of the polling period.
- 7.6 Voter registration**
The PNGEC should consider providing for continuous voter registration, including online registration. In efforts to improve the electoral roll, use of tablets should be considered for biometric voter registration.
- 7.7 EC Need for Greater Accuracy in Voter Registration**
The PNGEC should ensure greater accuracy and transparency in the voter registration process. The biometric voter registration with the use of tablets would significantly improve the accuracy in voter registration. To this end, existing local structures should be supported to collect enrolments and provincial election authorities should be responsible for maintaining the electoral rolls. The PNGEC should ensure oversight and accountability of this process, including providing adequate training.
- 7.8 EC to Conduct Voter Verification before an Election**
PNGEC to conduct voter verification processes prior to the General Election to give voters an opportunity to verify if their details not only appear in the voter roll but are also correct. The voter verification process should be done using tablets and keep biometric data of the voters.
- 7.9 Inclusion and access**
We urge political parties, independent candidates and stakeholders to enhance youth and women's political participation at all levels, to foster meaningful involvement and inclusion. A study looking into the participation of women as voters and as candidates should be commissioned to better understand the barriers faced by women.

7.10 Election preparations

Effort should be made to ensure polling stations are able to open on time. Election officials should ensure that the time for transportation of ballot boxes, materials and staff is incorporated into planning so as to minimise delays.

7.11 Placement of Polling Stations

The PNGEC should review the placement of polling locations to ensure adequate shelter, lighting where possible, and to enable voters to easily access the polling stations. Consideration should be given to a more equal distribution of voters among polling stations.

7.12 Voting practices

The PNGEC should ensure sufficient distribution of ballot papers based on the numbers on the electoral roll. The colour on the back of the ballot papers should match the front.

7.13 Training of Polling officials

Training for polling officials, including on assisted voting, should be strengthened with an emphasis on ensuring ballot secrecy.

7.14 Use of Indelible Ink

The PNGEC should consider using more effective indelible ink with a higher concentration of silver nitrate.

7.15 Election ID Card

PNGEC to introduce election identification cards through the biometric registration system to ensure all voters produce a standard identification card when they go for polls as a means of verifying their details in the Common Roll.

7.16 Proper polling venues and adequate materials

Proper polling venue assessments to be conducted by the PNG Electoral Commission before polling so that all election materials required are provided for during polls;

7.17 Counting practices

Counting should commence in all locations following the conclusion of the polling period. Counting processes should be reviewed, with a view to making it more efficient without compromising the transparency of the process. Formulate a uniform approach to batch counting system, this should be considered as an alternative system to this current system.

7.18 Declaration of results

The declaration of results should be made when all counting is completed and results are officially published and known.

7.19 The traditional and new nation

Government start and or sustain a nationwide community awareness programme for PNG, an old but new country which must embrace democratic norms of governance and Christian principles, the programme to be carried out with support from MSG member countries and other development partners.

7.20 Review body

The PNG Government establish a review body to carry out a review of the issues raised in these recommendations in good time before the next national general elections.