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## **Elections in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville**

*2015 General Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Asia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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# Frequently Asked Questions

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*Disclosure:*  
*These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Bougainville elections authorities as of May 14, 2015, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## **Why is the election important? What is at stake?**

The May 2015 elections mark the third elections for the House of Representatives for the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), and the fourth elections for the President (including the by-election of 2008) since the Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in August 2001. The agreement provided for elections to establish the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which was formed after elections in 2005.

In these elections, voters will cast four separate ballots: one for the presidency and three for various types of Representatives. These consist of general Representatives, who represent a single-member constituency; women's Representatives, who represent the interests of women from their region (North, Central and South); and former combatant members, who represent the interests of former combatants in their region.

Bougainville is poised to host a referendum within the next five years with an option for full independence from Papua New Guinea. The officials elected during the May elections will play a significant role in guiding the ABG through this process.

## **When will the general election be held? What is the timeline for voting, counting and announcing results?**

The electoral period for the general election lasts from March to June 2015, with voting occurring from May 11-25. The voting rotates through polling places, with voting at any given polling place occurring for a period of one day and in some cases for two days.

Votes will be counted between the close of polls on May 25 and June 8, when results will be announced.

The full election schedule is as follows:

- **Issue of Writs:** Friday, March 27, 4 p.m.
- **Nominations Open:** Monday, March 30, 8 a.m.
- **Close of Nominations:** Wednesday, April 1, 4 p.m.
- **Polling Commences:** Monday, May 11, 8 a.m.
- **Polling Ends:** Monday, May 25, 4 p.m.
- **Counting Begins:** Tuesday, May 26, 1 p.m.
- **Return of Writs:** Monday, June 8

## **What laws regulate the general election in Bougainville?**

The legal framework for Bougainville's general elections is primarily based on the Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (2004) and is expanded upon in the Bougainville Elections Act (2007). The election will be conducted under the system of limited preferential voting, requiring voters to rank three candidates in order of preference.

## Who are the candidates?

The following candidates will stand for the 2015 presidential election (listed in the order released by the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner):

- Nick F. Peniai, Bougainville Labour Party
- Justin Pokata Kira, Independent
- Sam Kauona, Independent
- Peter Nerau, Independent
- Sam Akoitai, Bougainville Islands Unity Party
- Simon Dumarinu, Independent
- John Lawrence Momis, New Bougainville Party
- Ismael Toroama, Independent
- Reuben Siara, Independent

The following number of candidates will be standing for Representative positions for the House of Representatives:<sup>1</sup>

North Region		Central Region		South Region	
<u>Representative For</u>	<u>Number of Candidates</u>	<u>Representative For</u>	<u>Number of Candidates</u>	<u>Representative For</u>	<u>Number of Candidates</u>
Women	10	Women	6	Women	7
Former Combatant	14	Former Combatant	7	Former Combatant	5
Atolls	8	Eivo/Torau	11	Baba	11
Hagogohe	5	Ioro	6	Baubake	8
Haku	24	Kokoda	6	Bolave	8
Halia	5	Kongara	2	Konnou	8
Mahari	8	North Nasioi	10	Kopii	10
Nissan	6	Rau	9	Lato	7
Peit	12	South Nasioi	9	Lule	8
Selau	14	Terra	6	Makis	7
Suir	9			Motuna/Huyono	8
Taonita Teop	11			Ramu	6
Taonita Tinputz	6			Torokina	10
Teua	6				
Tonsu	13				
Tsitalato	7				

<sup>1</sup> According to the [Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner, "Candidates: 2015 ABG General Elections."](#) For more, please see the resources section.

## **Who is eligible to run?**

Candidates for the position of President must be Bougainvillean, not less than 40 years of age and qualified to vote in the elections for the Bougainville House of Representatives. Additionally, candidates for President cannot be a member of or candidate for the National Parliament or the House of Representatives or have already been elected as President twice.

Candidates for the House of Representatives must be Bougainvillean, not less than 25 years of age and qualified to vote in the elections for the Bougainville House of Representatives. Candidates for the House of Representatives cannot be nominated in an election for another office. Finally, candidates must meet other qualifications depending on the seat they run for:

- To contest a constituency Representative seat, a candidate must be a member of a clan lineage that holds land in the constituency for which she or he wishes to be nominated; or have resided continuously in that constituency for at least five years immediately prior to nomination; or have been born in that constituency.
- To contest a women's Representative seat, a candidate must be a woman and a member of a clan lineage that holds land in the region (North, Central or South) of Bougainville for which she intends to be nominated; or have resided continuously in that region for at least five years immediately prior to nomination.
- To contest a former combatant Representative seat, a candidate must be a former combatant, have his nomination supported, and be a member of a clan lineage that holds land in the region (North, Central or South) of Bougainville for which he intends to be nominated; or have resided continuously in that region for at least five years immediately prior to nomination.

Candidacies are restricted for all positions for those that are of unsound mind by law, under sentence of death or imprisonment for a period exceeding three months, or have been declared bankrupt by a court and remain bankrupt.

## **Who is eligible to vote?**

Voters must be at least 18 years of age, Bougainvillean, citizens, and not of unsound mind according to law.

## **How many registered voters are there?**

The 2015 common roll (list of eligible voters) includes approximately 173,000 registered voters.

## **What is the structure of the government?**

The government in Bougainville consists of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), local formal government and a traditional system of government. The ABG consists of three branches: the Bougainville legislature consisting of the House of Representatives, the Bougainville Executive Council and the Bougainville judiciary.

## **Are there any female candidates? What is the gender balance?**

Thirty-five women are contesting seats, with 23 standing for the seats for women's Representatives and 12 for seats as constituency Representatives.<sup>2</sup> This is an increase over past elections, which local newspapers attribute to training sessions for potential female candidates.<sup>3</sup> In the past, women have secured the three constituencies reserved for them, but have not yet been elected to the general constituencies.

## **Who has the mandate to conduct the elections and how is it structured?**

The Bougainville Electoral Commissioner is responsible for the effective and efficient conduct of the Bougainville general elections as stated in the Bougainville Constitution and the Bougainville Election Act (2007).

Regional Returning Officers and Returning Officers are existing Bougainville public servants working in consultation with the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner to ensure that all preparations for the election are carried out, that publicity of election-related matters occurs and that all election laws and provisions are properly implemented. Returning Officers are responsible for all electoral matters within their constituencies, including the appointment of polling officials, usually drawn from the public service.

The Presiding Officer manages each polling place and the polling officials appointed for that polling place.

## **How many polling locations are set up during the polling period?**

During the 2015 general elections, 710 polling locations will be set up. Polling will take place more than once in some locations, so there will be more than 710 polling events during the polling period.

## **What are the basic polling procedures on Election Day?**

Election Day at any given polling location starts with the arrival of polling officials by 7 a.m. or 7:30 a.m. (depending on position), who set up the polling location. The Presiding Officer opens the polling place at 8:00 a.m. unless specified otherwise on the polling schedule

Upon opening the polling location and on every hour until the close of polling (or more often if required due to the number of voters), the Presiding Officer must make a speech to voters introducing themselves and their team and explaining the voting procedures, including:

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<sup>2</sup> "Bougainville women candidates target both open and reserved seats." (2015, May 7). Radio Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/bougainville-women-candidates-target-both-open-and-reserved-seats/1444650>.

<sup>3</sup> Rise in women contesting elections in Bougainville. (2015, April 8). Radio New Zealand International. Retrieved from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/270628/rise-in-women-contesting-elections-in-bougainville>.

- The four types of ballot papers (separate for the positions of President, constituency Representatives, women's Representatives and former combatant Representatives);
- The questions that will be asked to confirm their identify;
- Requirements to have their names checked on the electoral roll and to have voters' fingers inked;
- The requirement for voters needing to make a declaration, in cases such as voters requiring assistance or voting outside their constituency;
- The method of marking ballot papers;
- Assistance that will be given to certain voters;
- When not to allow people to vote (for instance if they are not on the electoral roll);
- The secrecy of the vote (only one person per voting compartment at any given time);
- The process for spoiled and discarded ballot papers; and
- The reasons when voting can be deferred: due to disruptions, riot or violence

The Presiding Officer must close the polling place at 4:00 p.m. If at 4:00 p.m. on a polling day there are people still lined up outside the polling booth waiting to vote, the Presiding Officer must immediately call them inside the polling booth and allow them to vote. The Presiding Officer must ensure that no further people are allowed into the booth past that time. If polling is taking place outside, no new voters should be allowed to line up after 4:00 p.m. If the polling is taking place indoors, the doors will be locked or entrance sealed at 4:00 p.m.

## **Who is allowed access to the polling booth on Election Day?**

Besides eligible voters, polling officials, scrutineers, media and election observers are all allowed access to polling booths. Polling officials, scrutineers, media and election observers must wear their identification badges at all times. Control of entry into polling locations is regulated by polling officials, who verify voters and turn away those that are ineligible.

Scrutineers are appointed by candidates to observe voting and the counting of votes. A candidate or political party or group is entitled to appoint scrutineers for each polling place and for the Regional Counting Center for their constituency. However, only one scrutineer per candidate can be present at any time.

The Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner invited all interested media outlets and personnel to seek accreditation to allow easier access to election officials, polling locations, and election information.

Any person, including a scrutineer, journalist, or observer who commits any breach or misconduct or fails to obey the lawful request of a Presiding Officer may be removed from the polling place by the police, at the instruction of the Presiding Officer.

Police will also be present at each polling place to keep order and provide security.

## **How does someone become an observer?**

Observers must seek accreditation from the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner (OBEC) to observe the polling and counting process. The accreditation process is supported by United Nations Development Programme.

For the 2015 general election, the OBEC will only accredit organizations as electoral observers, not individuals. Accredited organizations must fall within one of three categories:

- **Local electoral observer group:** a group based in Bougainville that is not affiliated with any political party or candidate;
- **National electoral observer group:** a group based elsewhere in Papua New Guinea that is not affiliated with any Bougainville political party or candidate; or,
- **International electoral observer group:** a group based outside of Papua New Guinea that has no affiliation with any Bougainville political party or candidate. This is understood to include diplomatic missions or offices of intergovernmental organizations with offices in Papua New Guinea.

## Resources

- [2015 Bougainville General Election Polling Schedule Summary](#)
- [2015 Bougainville General Election Presiding Officers Manual](#)
- [Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville](#)
- [Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner, “Accreditation of Electoral Observer Groups”](#)
- [Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner, “Candidates: 2015 ABG General Elections”](#)