



Global Expertise. Local Solutions.  
Sustainable Democracy.

# **Elections in Papua New Guinea**

## *2012 National General Elections*

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Asia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

1850 K Street, NW | Fifth Floor | Washington, DC 20006 | [www.IFES.org](http://www.IFES.org)

June 21, 2012

## Frequently Asked Questions

What is at stake in the June-July 2012 elections? .....	1
What type of electoral system will be used in the June-July 2012 election? .....	1
Who is eligible to vote?.....	1
How many registered voters are there in PNG? .....	2
When is the campaign period? .....	2
What are the rules on campaigning?.....	2
What is the campaign finance framework? .....	2
What are the rules for campaign finance? .....	2
What is the state of political parties in PNG? .....	3
How many male and female candidates will contest the 2012 national general election? .....	3
Will there be special electoral seats for women voters?.....	3
Why does voting not occur on one day across the country? .....	3
How many polling stations will be operational for the legislative elections? .....	4
What provisions have been made for female voters and persons with disabilities at the polling stations?4	
What are the rules and penalties for candidates unduly influencing voters?.....	4
What changes have been made to the ballot and the ballot box for the 2012 elections? .....	4
Who will count the votes? .....	5
Who will observe the elections?.....	5
Resources.....	6

*Disclosure:*

*These FAQs reflect decisions made by PNG's election authorities as of June 21, 2012, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.*

## **What is at stake in the June-July 2012 elections?**

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is one of the most culturally diverse – and poorest – countries on the planet. It has very low representation of women in parliament and an election process often marred by corruption.

With large revenue streams coming online in 2014, PNG is in great need of responsible leaders to use this revenue to improve the infrastructure and government service of the nation.

## **What type of electoral system will be used in the June-July 2012 election?**

A limited preferential vote (LPV) system will be used. This system requires the voter to choose their top three candidates.

First, the voter will review the assigned code numbers and names of candidates. They will then write either the names or the candidate code number of their selected three candidates on the ballot paper in order of preference.

For a candidate to be elected under the LPV system, they must receive 50% + 1 of total votes cast in the election. This is called an absolute majority. If no candidate gets an absolute majority, a second count is held.

In this count, the candidate with the fewest first preferences is eliminated. Each ballot paper counted to the eliminated candidate, will be re-assigned to their second preference. This process is repeated until an absolute majority is reached.<sup>1</sup>

Once a candidate has received an absolute majority, they will be declared elected.

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

To qualify to vote in an election, one must be a citizen of PNG, at least 18 years of age and of sound mind. To enroll in an electorate, citizens must have lived in that electorate for a minimum of the preceding six months from Election Day. For further details refer to the election law.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/organic\\_law.pdf](http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/organic_law.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/national\\_electoral\\_regulation\\_2007.pdf](http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/national_electoral_regulation_2007.pdf)

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

As of February 2012, there are a total of 2.4 million registered voters of an estimated 4.3 million eligible voters.<sup>3</sup>

## **When is the campaign period?**

The campaign period was originally scheduled to begin April 27 and last for eight weeks. After the readiness of the electoral rolls was questioned, the campaign period was compressed to five weeks and began on May 18.

## **What are the rules on campaigning?**

Campaigning before the issuing of writs on May 18, 2012, was forbidden. During this electoral cycle, early campaigning provoked written warnings for all candidates.<sup>4</sup>

## **What is the campaign finance framework?**

The 2003 Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates requires all donations be reported to the Integrity of Political Party and Candidates Commission (IPPCC) by both donor and recipient. Parties and candidates have to submit their financial returns to the IPPCC after the election and every year thereafter. Elected leaders are required to submit their financial returns to the Ombudsman Commission.

## **What are the rules for campaign finance?**

Citizens and corporations/organizations (non-citizens) are subject to limits when making contributions to political parties. Neither citizens nor non-citizens are allowed to contribute more than 500,000 (PGK), approximately US \$236,000, per calendar year. The only actors explicitly banned from making donations to political parties are international organizations.

Public funding is not available to candidates, but political parties receive support on a regular basis. Such funds are being distributed from the central fund, to which the state contributes. Citizens, non-citizens and international organizations can also contribute to the central fund.

The income side of money in politics is fairly well regulated in Papua New Guinea, but there is very little information on the expenditure side. There are no spending limits for either political parties or candidates, nor is there a definition of what constitutes a campaign expense.

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/Status\\_Report\\_on\\_Election\\_2012\\_Preparation.pdf](http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/Status_Report_on_Election_2012_Preparation.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/pub\\_notice.pdf](http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/pub_notice.pdf)

## **What is the state of political parties in PNG?**

There are 46 registered political parties, but only 16 have seats in the current parliament. Many parties are only loosely organized and lack the structure that would allow them to develop constituencies. Historically, political parties in PNG rarely have well-defined positions on issues. This limits political competition to contests between personalities.

## **How many male and female candidates will contest the 2012 national general election?**

A record number of male and female candidates were nominated to contest the 2012 national general election. Electoral Commissioner Andrew Trawen announced 3,435 candidates were nominated for the 2012 national general elections when nominations closed at 4:00 p.m. on May 24, 2012.

“This is the highest number of candidates who have [been] nominated to contest a national general election since the first elections in 1977. In 2007, a total of 2,759 candidates [were] nominated to contest the elections, while 2,910 [were] nominated in 2002,” he said.

A record number of 135 women were nominated, compared to 101 in 2007.<sup>5</sup>

## **Will there be special electoral seats for women voters?**

A major milestone was achieved in PNG on November 24, 2011, with the passage of the Equality and Participation Bill by a vote of 72 to two. It inserts a clause into the constitution allowing reserved seats for women in the national parliament.

This act, however, can only be implemented if an amendment to the Organic Law on Elections is passed. The enabling organic law was tabled in the February 2012 sitting of parliament. Twenty-one members walked out of parliament as the vote was about to take place. Of the 59 members who remained, 58 voted in favor of the law. However, a super majority of 73 votes was needed to pass the law.

Women candidates will contest the open seats in the June 2012 national elections.

## **Why does voting not occur on one day across the country?**

Voting takes place from June 23-July 6. It's not on a single day largely due to security needs. PNG security forces, accompanied by Australian and New Zealand defense forces, will travel to polling places to reduce the threat of electoral violence throughout the period.

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/nomination\\_close\\_2012.pdf](http://www.pngec.gov.pg:7780/i/pngec/nomination_close_2012.pdf)

## **How many polling stations will be operational for the legislative elections?**

There will be over 10,000 polling booths during the 2012 elections.<sup>6</sup> Of these, an estimated 1,700 have little or no road access.<sup>7</sup>

## **What provisions have been made for female voters and persons with disabilities at the polling stations?**

There will be separate polling booths for women and persons with disabilities at each polling station. This is a result of the success of a pilot that tested this approach.<sup>8</sup>

In the pilot program in Chimbu, separate polling booths were established for women to protect them from harassment and intimidation at the polls. These separate polling places are hoped to increase voter turnout for marginalized populations.

## **What are the rules and penalties for candidates unduly influencing voters?**

Bribery, treating and undue influence are illegal electoral offences under PNG's criminal code.

Bribery is defined as asking for or offering money, property or additional benefits to vote a certain way in an election. Bribery can apply both to voters and electoral officials. Treating is when a person pays for food, drink or lodging for a person to influence his/her behavior as an elector. Undue influence is when a voter is threatened with force or restraint; prevented; or obstructed from voting through fraud, or forced to vote/not vote.

The penalty for all three of these crimes is a fine not exceeding 400 (PGK), approximately US \$189.00, or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year.

## **What changes have been made to the ballot and the ballot box for the 2012 elections?**

Ballot papers will be printed with serial numbers on them to minimize double voting, misplacing and/or duplicating ballot papers, as experienced in the past. Should there be a dispute, the ballot papers could be used as evidence in court because they were numbered and recorded.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2012/s3523650.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pina.com.fj/?p=pacnews&m=read&o=12720667924fcfee09a07511cb559>

<sup>8</sup> <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2012/April/04-02-08.htm>

A new transparent, light-weight ballot box will replace the older, metal boxes. The new ballot boxes are transparent have a lock-lid, five seal areas and can hold over 5,000 ballot papers. In total, there will be 30,000 ballot boxes for the 2012.

## **Who will count the votes?**

Counting will be conducted from July 6-July 27, 2012, at counting centers located within each electorate as they conduct polling. If circumstances make it difficult for a center to be located within the electorate, another center may be appointed.

A returning officer or an assistant returning officer will oversee the counting centers. Candidates may also appoint one or more individuals to scrutinize the counting process.

The counting period is scheduled to take place July 6-27, 2012.<sup>9</sup>

## **Who will observe the elections?**

- Center for Democratic Institutions at Australia National University.
- Transparency International
- National Research Institute
- University of Papua New Guinea will also be observing elections.
- International observation is being conducted by a range of actors, including the Commonwealth Election Observer Team, East West Center and various embassies and high commissions.

---

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.pnhec.gov.pg:7780/i/pnhec/organic\\_law.pdf](http://www.pnhec.gov.pg:7780/i/pnhec/organic_law.pdf)

## Resources

- Regional news resources:
  - New Zealand Government: “Press Release: NZ to help election in Papua New Guinea” ([English](#))
  - ABC News: “Australia provides help for PNG elections” ([English](#))
  - Pacific Islands News Association: “PNG’s ballot boxes to be airlifted to polling station not accessible by roads” ([English](#))
- Regulations related to elections:
  - Electoral Law (National Elections) Regulation 2007 ([English](#))
  - Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments ([English](#))
  - Electoral Commission Papua New Guinea ([English](#))
  - Public Notice: Early Campaigning Before April 27 for 2012 Elections Illegal ([English](#))
  - Media Release: Status Report on PNGEC’s Election 2012 Preparations ([English](#))
  - Media Release: Record Number of Female and Male Candidates Nominate to Contest 2012 National General Elections ([English](#))