



MEDIA RELEASE

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Government must do more to promote free, fair and safe National Elections

Free, fair and safe elections are key components of the principles of a democratic system. This promotes a person's constitutional right to be freely expressed in voting in a national election without external influences. However, irregularities have become common practices in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Elections.

The National Research Institute (NRI) Spotlight Volume 15, Issue 6 entitled: **“Initiatives for addressing irregularities in Papua New Guinea’s National Elections”** by PNG NRI Research Officer Mr. William Kipongi, highlights some factors that contribute to irregularities in PNG National Elections and how the irregularities can be addressed.

Mr. Kipongi found that the irregularities in the last PNG National Elections include the following:

- Influence of money, such as paying some people to vote for a particular candidate;
- Influence of social events, such as supporting people to pay compensation, bride price and funeral feast so that they can vote for a candidate;
- The practice of communal or block voting, which involves selected people voting for a particular candidate on behalf of voters in a community;
- Cultural norms where leadership is earned through kinship, clan and tribal groups and people are not allowed to vote or discuss who may be the next leader because of intimidation; and
- Use of violence to compel people to vote for a particular candidate, with some supporters of a candidate going to the extent of using guns to threaten supporters of rival candidates.

Mr. Kipongi reported that irregularities in the National Elections can be addressed using the following initiatives:

- Impose tougher penalties on voters and candidates that are involved in vote buying;
- Create more awareness on the importance of the National Elections, voting and the impact of vote buying on service delivery;
- Consider nullifying all votes cast through communal/block voting because it is against the principle of democracy; and
- Impose tougher penalties on candidates and their supporters that use violence and force to intimidate voters during elections.

Findings from the Spotlight article contributes to the discussion on how to promote free, fair and safe elections in PNG.

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