Background
The Eastern Highlands Province (EHP) was the first province in the Highlands to be discovered in 1930’s and opened up to external travel including government patrols. It was recorded that Lutheran missionaries had accessed it from Ramu valley via Rihona and to Gadsup villages. However, the first government station was established at Kainantu and named the Upper Ramu Post and then to Bena and Goroka until the War ensued the construction of the Airport and expansion of the Administrative Headquarters.

Observations on Campaign Strategies
EHP attracted many big-name party leaders to attend and speak at the rallies organised by their candidates or generally as an avenue for public dissemination of their policies. Some of the presentations included:

1. PNG Country Party and its leader Hon. Wera Mori hosted an Eastern Block Rally attended by the ULP leader, late Hon. Sam Basil.
2. PNG Party leader Hon. Belden Namah attended campaign rallies for his candidates in Goroka, Lufa and Kainantu.
3. PNC Party leader Hon. Peter O’Neill also attended campaign rallies in Goroka, Unggai-Bena, Obura Wonenara and Lufa.
4. Pangu Pati Leader and Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape attended public rallies at Mando village in Daulo and in Henganofi.
5. In Goroka, there was a public rally at Iufi-Iufa for the 3 Mimanalo LLG candidates and various candidates hosting alliance gatherings in selected villages.

There was widespread use of social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) by candidates and political parties.

Observation on Polling
- Polling teams were not at their polling stations at 8:00 am;
- Most polling teams had no police personnel;
- Allocated or serialised ballot papers for specified polling locations was not delivered to those locations;
- Common Roll issued to polling teams did not contain names of eligible voters;
- The community argued on manner of voting and distribution of ballot papers, that is selected persons marked all 3 preferences;
- Polling officials did not mark names off the common roll, nor used the inedible ink;
- In one instance, the Presiding Officer made a speech to convince people to vote for the incumbent Governor and also Member for Goroka (where the presiding officers are supposed to be neutral persons);
- There was no polling at one station but ballot papers were marked and deposited into the ballot box;
- Only 146 people voted at one of the polling stations because it was disturbed by drunkards and supporters of a candidate; and
- Urban residents including police personnel and their families did not vote as candidates and supporters from surrounding villages took control of the ballot papers.

Observation on Counting
- Due to time limitations, Returning Officers and the PNGEC were forced not to entertain scrutineers’ objections and disputes on the ballots boxes.
- Late dispatchment of polling teams, resulted in block voting or illegal voting.
- Block voting (i.e. community endorsed including splitting of ballot papers amongst different candidates) was evident in most electorates.
- In certain places, ballot papers and boxes were hijacked by candidates, which denied eligible supporters their right to vote.
- Double infringements issues such as ballots marked elsewhere outside of polling station and by few persons and not eligible voters, were admitted.

Recommendations
- Political Party endorsement should be at all levels of Government.
- State Assets (e.g. DSIP/PSIP) should not be used during election time to dispel any perception of vote buying.
- Political Party Policies should be promoted at public forums.
- Inducements and threats from other provinces should be stopped.
- Adhering to dates and schedules are important for the Integrity of Elections.
- Use of permanent public servants for Election Purposes is highly recommended for purposes of accountability of actions should they engage in illegal actions. Non-public servants cannot be easily reprimanded for their actions.
- Use proper names for villages, streets, clans and tribes.
- Improve Common Roll and Verification system.
- Voting for all eligible Voters should be safe and secured.
- Counting/Scrutiny of Ballots be localised in all Districts.

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