Background

Wapenamanda District is one of the six districts in Enga province. It is located in the southeast of the province and shares provincial borders with WHP and SHP. Wapenamanda is divided into two LLGs, Tsak LLG and Wapenamanda Rural. The township of Wapenamanda is located just along the Highlands Highway.

In the 2022 National General Elections, 19 candidates contested the Wapenamanda Seat. Candidates included self-employed businessmen and others with education ranging from high school to university.

Observations on Campaign Strategies

1. **Campaign Visitations**: Family to family visit programs were initiated by individual candidates’ campaign managers for the candidate to visit each family with a small delegation to secure votes.

2. **Use of money and goods**: Candidates supplied money and goods to supporters to put up campaign rallies for the candidate, and the candidate then invited his supporters from other areas and put a big show.

3. **Political Rallies**: Candidates also invited other candidates whom they plan to exchange their preference votes to come and give speech so the others will see that this candidate has support everywhere.

4. **Campaign Houses**: Candidates were competing to put up campaign houses along the roads and public areas to show that this was their territory and that they have votes here.

5. **Invitation**: One candidate openly invited anyone who needed money to his house, and he gave them money.

6. **Money, Money, Money and Mr. Money**: Another candidate threw money at the public places for anyone to grab when they call him “Mr. Money”, especially when he drove past.

7. **Clan Coordinators**: Most candidates appointed individuals from each clan to make list of those eligible voters and pay them K100 each.

Observations on Polling

- **Block and Control Voting (BCV)**: Few people marked the ballot papers on behalf of clan or tribe.

- **Distributive voting (DV)**: Ballot papers were distributed to the candidates.

- **Defective or out of date Common roll**: Many names were not on the common roll.

- **Absence of Security Personnel**: In all the 7 polling areas that the observers visited, there was hardly any police or army presence.

- **Threats and Intimidation**: In one polling area, a group of youths came with bush knives, threatened the people and marked the ballot papers.

Observations on Counting

- The counting venue for Wapenamanda was changed from Jiwaka to Wabag.

- There was no roadblock set by the security personnel and people carried guns and bush knives into Wabag town.

- There was heavy police and army presence at the counting room and even outside.

- The scrutineers’ rights and freedom to express their opinion were denied.

Recommendations

1. **Common roll update**: We should use a bottom-up approach to do this to be exact – use councilors and church pastors to do this to avoid inflating numbers by supporters of candidates.

2. **Update and upgrade the election process**.

3. **NID (biodata)**: which can be used in the coming national election. This will resolve many election related problems and issues.

4. **Invite foreign police and defense personnel (Australia & New Zealand) to supervise polling and counting**.

5. **Do away with campaign rallies and arrange certain days for candidate’s policy presentation**.

6. **Tidy up the security arrangements to prevent overloading cars, crowd moving from one place to another and punish those breaking rules severely**.

Authorised for Release by
Dr. Osborne Sanida
Director, PNG NRI.