
Assessment of Governance and Service Delivery in the Southern Highlands Province

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Abstract

This article provides results of fieldwork investigations into governance and service delivery in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. Although the investigations were conducted in 2004, many of the issues continue to exist. The article takes us on a trip from Mount Hagen to Ialibu, Imbongu, Mendi, Nipa, Margarima, Dauli and Tari. Written as a first hand account by the then advisor to the Ministry of Inter Government Relations, the article provides grass-roots insights to conditions of police, hospitals, schools, housing, water and power supplies, correctional services, law and order, magisterial services, women's resource centre and district offices.

Introduction

Papua New Guinea is at a critical stage of its development where there is a national need to focus upon rural development issues that include good governance and adequate provision of basic services. The issues highlighted in the article are timely in terms of current debates about Papua New Guinea's status as a developing, aid-dependent country and the up-coming national elections in 2007. The experience of the author offers special insight into development issues and it is anticipated that this article can stimulate research-based discussion.

In May 2004, a team of officers made a visit to the Southern Highlands to assess governance and service delivery in that province. The team consisted of officers from AusAID, Kutubu Oil Search and Porgera Joint Venture in addition to myself, who was then an advisor to the Ministry of Inter Government Relations.

Our mission was to visit various districts of the province and identify which services were working and what was available; and assess what was not available and what intervention could be undertaken by AusAID, the resource developers in the province, the Southern Highlands Provincial Government and the National Government. The people desire services and had been suffering because of inadequate action by relevant authorities to ensure that essential services were provided. In addition, I was to assess the level of control and governance, accountability of the government, the management of the districts in general and whether the responsible authorities were in charge and effective decision making and controls being exercised.

Ialibu

We travelled by road from Mount Hagen and our first stop in the Southern Highlands was in Ialibu. We arrived in Ialibu in wet weather and were in the rain during our rounds of the district headquarters.

Ialibu Police Station: The Police Station was open and police officers were on duty. The Police Station Commander was attending to and trying to resolve a dispute over who was the legitimate District Administrator at the time of our arrival. The Police Station was in reasonably good shape and there was a very well-secured guardroom for remandees. Radio communication was effective and functioning. What was required was a bit of maintenance to the office and police housing.

Ialibu District Office: As stated previously, at the time of our visit there was a dispute as to who was the legitimate District Administrator. One person had been appointed under the Public Service appointment process and another person had been recently appointed by the Minister for Public Services and Member for Ialibu/Pangia. This problem needs to be resolved by the Department of Personnel Management. We witnessed the local people getting involved and discussing the issue outside the District Administrator's house, but did not have a chance to talk to them. But we did witness the remains of the District Office that had been completely gutted after the 2002 elections, with only the cement foundation left. A new office building is immediately required. The District Administrator was said to be operating out the very new and impressive Ialibu Urban Authority building, which was in the District Office grounds. However we did not witness anyone working in the new building. Most of the public servants who were around all wore caps and they could not be distinguished by their dress from ordinary villagers.

Regional Women's Resource Centre: We visited the Women's Resource Centre. This place was well maintained and the area well cared for by a former Women's Representative in the Southern Highlands Assembly. The centre provides an avenue for mobilization and training for women from all areas within the eastern region of the province. It also ran a counselling service for broken marriages and victims of beatings by husbands. What the centre needs is to be properly resourced and assisted to enhance and sustain what it is doing. The Community Development Scheme funded by AusAID was also housed in the Women's Resource building. The program had funded a resource centre at St Claire's Catholic Church that was nearing completion at the time of our visit. What the centre needs is to be fully completed with electrical fittings and furniture to get it into useable condition.

Ialibu Vocational School: Ialibu Vocational School is a new school started in the late 1990s and, at the time of our visit, the students were in class and teachers were on duty. The Manager was out but the Deputy Manager showed us around and we observed mechanics and computing classes in session. The teachers commented that they did not see much of the free education supplies that were promised and were working hard to keep the school functioning.

They had sufficient buildings but were in short supply of everything needed for students' practical work. What is needed are adequate supplies of basic tools and materials. This was the only vocational school that was functioning in the Eastern Zone and is a day school. Students from Kagua and Pangia come to this school as their vocational schools had been closed down for various reasons.

Ialibu Hospital: We visited the referral hospital for the Eastern Zone at Ialibu which was working at the time of our visit. Staff were on duty and patients were visible. The hospital was in good condition and reasonably clean. They had a resident doctor based at Ialibu. At the time of our visit he had taken a patient to the hospital in Mount Hagen. It was brought to our attention that the Ialibu Hospital had received no operational grants from the Provincial Government since the start of 2004 and was operating from the fees paid by the patients. The vehicle was in a rundown condition and the morgue was not working. The standby generator was not working as well. A report on maintenance to be done for this hospital was done by the health department and funds were said to be available under AusAID but no action had yet been taken. We promised to follow-up and facilitate for this funding to become available so that maintenance work could start. This needs prompt coordination with the Department of Health

Ialibu Secondary School: We arrived at the Ialibu Secondary School in heavy rain. We talked to the Deputy Principal Academic and he explained how the school was converted from a high school to a secondary school by the will of a political decision. He identified some problems they were experiencing trying to function under the free education policy of the Provincial Government. The school had over 1000 students. Although the school had secondary status, the facilities were that of a high school. No new infrastructure was put in place for the school to operate as a secondary school. We witnessed classrooms with no desks and students sitting on the floor. The library books were outdated and the science equipment was not sufficient. In fact there were no facilities suitable for Grade 11 and 12 studies. The Secondary Inspector had visited the school prior to our visit and would submit his report to the Education Secretary. With the increase in students, there were no new dormitories or kitchen and messing facilities. According to teachers, support from the Provincial Education Office was very minimal and teachers were doing their best in difficult circumstances.

Imbongu

Imbongu District Headquarters: On our way from Ialibu to Mendi, we stopped by the new and impressive Imbongu District Headquarters. The District Administrator lived there and there were two other staff houses. It would seem that the rest of the staff were scattered and may be based in Mendi.

Mendi

Mendi Provincial Police Headquarters: Our first stop in Mendi was at the Provincial Police Commander's office. He spoke about what the police were

trying to do to restore peace and harmony in the Southern Highlands. In attendance also was the Provincial Station Commander, who was also involved with the Community Development Scheme within the province. The Provincial Police Commander said that police alone were not able to bring the province back to normalcy and that it was important for the elected leaders to be in the province to assist as well. Most times they were not in the province. The law and order situation in the province had been brought under control but he did not know how long this situation would be sustained. There were 200 police officers in the Southern Highlands Province of which 110 were based in Mendi. They had three vehicles. They were working hard but still need a lot of support. The Peace Foundation was doing a good job by training village leaders to broker peace and this initiative came under the Community Policing program. There were no problems so far with the shooting to death of some villagers and the people seemed to have accepted this fate.

The Provincial Police Commander and the Provincial Station Commander mentioned that the judiciary was functioning well but village courts needed to be strengthened. The arms build up was a real worry and this was related to drugs. The strong suspicion was that the arms were being traded for drugs and the route seemed to be from Kikori in the Gulf Province to the Southern Highlands. High-powered guns were being brought in by people with money, as no villager could afford to purchase such guns.

The Zone Administrator for the Western Region made the following observations on the arms build up.

People want arms for protection as they no longer trust the government to provide adequate security for them. Arms give status and power to people in a community. Arms are needed for petty criminal activities, road blocks and taking revenge. Arms are brought in by people with money such as politicians, business people and public servants. A gun can cost up to K10,000.00. Guns were been moved to places and hired out, for example, to Kundiawa in the Simbu Province. Guns have become part of inter-marriage arrangements.

The Provincial Police Commander suggested that the enhancement program might assist and improve on practices to limit illegal arms in the community. He suggested that there should be a complete ban on the importing of guns and ammunition. There was no monitoring of the Irian Jaya border area and there was a decline in government services which was contributing to the build-up of gun supply in the Southern Highlands community. The question raised was, who was doing what to stop the importation of guns into the province? There was no effective system in place to monitor movements of people by land, air or sea. There was lax security and this needed to be improved, and soon. Otherwise, the situation would become completely out of hand in a few years time. It was suggested that the police officers under the enhancement program could be deployed in the province in the near future.

Mendi Provincial Government Headquarters - Agiru Centre: We visited the Mendi Provincial Government Headquarters. The walkways had buai stains

and cigarette butts everywhere. It seemed that the office had not been cleaned. Even the inside of the Deputy Administrator's office was un-swept when we went in. A few skeleton staff were at the office. Most were out of the office or were in Port Moresby, or so we were informed. It was quite amazing to see the many officers who were in their offices in caps and their casual dressing left a lot to be desired.

Meeting in Deputy Administrator Office

We met with the Deputy Administrator, the Director of the Social Sector, the Provincial Advisor and Adviser for Local Level Government Affairs and the Hela Region Zone Coordinator. It became obvious at this briefing that there was a lack of governance, lack of accountability and lack of effective management of the government systems in the province. The officers had different views and perceptions of what was going on around them.

They were not sure whether the budget went through the Provincial Assembly before it was sent to Department of Finance for approval; but approval was granted. One person said that four meetings were conducted, but another was not aware of such meetings, and no minutes had been circulated. The Budget had inflated revenue estimates of K134m, as such the expenditure based on the inflated estimates could cause problems. Internal Funds were coming through but that they were not sure of the expenditure details.

The political tensions had eased but there were gaps between the administration and the politicians. The administration was not really stable at this time, especially with four Administrators. No plans were in place and therefore no standard procedures were being followed in making decisions. There was a certain degree of political instability in the province, with the Members of Parliament also divided.

The Director pointed out that there were two groups setting budgets and there was no close collaboration between them. It was unclear what procedures had been followed. Under the circumstances, it was suggested that the functions of the Provincial Treasury and the Southern Highlands Provincial Government Finance be amalgamated and function as one finance office for proper accountability. The Director said that they formed a committee to screen all outstanding claims. Another officer said that he was unaware of such a committee being in place.

There seemed to be divisions amongst leaders of the province. Some leaders were afraid to come home and some had been giving out guns. A suggestion was made to arrange a meeting of all leaders to discuss the Southern Highlands situation, to be organized possibly by the Ministry of Inter-Government Relations and to request AusAID for assistance.

The Department of Personnel Management(DPM) was still sitting on the Southern Highlands structure. Staffing responsibilities were still with DPM and they requested quick action to create the Deputy Administrator positions in the

three zones for effective co ordination and management. The position of the Zone Co ordinator at Tari had to be properly legalized.

It was stated that the Governor and Acting Administrator would come into the province one day and go out the next after they did whatever they wanted to do. There was no consistency and there was no co ordination amongst the staff and everyone seemed to be doing their own thing. Getting paid for doing nothing seemed to be an acceptable practice in the province or, at least, tolerated by Department of Personnel Management.

Meeting with Advisor – Local Government & District Services

I met with the Advisor to hear of the status of the district administrative centres and whether they were functioning as required. Some of the issues highlighted were as follows. All districts and sub districts were not working. They have become defunct as a result of negligence and careless attitudes by officers. Communication with districts was non existent.

The Local Level Governments (LLG) are not functioning because they have less funding now. Their funding is now K870,000.00 for 32 Local Level Government authorities and their previous funding was K2m. The 2001 selections had recruited people from the streets to LLG Officer and District Administration positions. They had no training to do the job and that was part of the reasons which had contributed to the decline in district administration. Senior and experienced officers were ousted and had become unattached. Most new District Administrators were from the districts they were appointed to. Obviously political connections had a lot to do with such appointments. There were fifteen illegal Presidents of LLGs who were sworn in as members into the Southern Highlands Provincial Assembly.

There was one scenario where the selection process appointed one officer to be District Administrator and Department of Personnel Management appointed another one. There is now a crisis in the districts which contributes to a lack of governance and lack of effective administration.

Meeting with Deputy Administrator

I met with one of the two deputy administrators who are trying their best to maintain the effective functioning of the provincial headquarters. I gathered that there was a certain degree of interference into all aspects of the administration by the political leadership in the province. The Department of Personnel Management was complicating the issue by facilitating the appointment of new District Administrators without due regard for the people on the ground already.

Although the staff functions are still the responsibility of Department of Personnel Management, politicians continue to collaborate and appoint cronies and untrained and inexperienced supporters to district administration positions. This contributes significantly to the decline in effective district administration and local government throughout the province.

Another concern was that because there were four Administrators, staff had taken advantage of the situation by not being at their place of work. Most were in Port Moresby. No-one was doing anything about this issue and it seemed that the staff are getting paid for doing virtually nothing. Each of the Administrators appointed new staff of their choice, and when they leave office the new recruits remain on the payroll. The payroll is likely to be blown out of proportion very soon.

The 2004 provincial budget seemed to have been passed under suspicious circumstances. It did not go through the normal budget cycle and systems to get it approved. It is a mystery how the budget ever got approved by the Department of Finance.

Law and order continues to be a big issue and the issue of illegal guns is a major concern. Most of the guns that go into the province are purchased and distributed by people with money, that is politicians, business people and some public servants. Ordinary people do not have the money to buy expensive and luxury items like guns.

The issue of lack of governance and financial accountability continues to be a big problem. If the Special Support Grant can be collected by anyone, then what sort of accountability is there now? This is a real and serious problem and coupled with the many millions of outstanding cheques and the many false claims still around, the province has a real problem.

District administration is a concern and must be addressed. If donors and other agencies can assist, this will benefit the many people in the districts who are the real victims of the ineffectiveness of service delivery. Maintenance and communication have been identified as urgent tasks to restore some services. Appointing the right people to the right jobs is the way to go forward. Appointing assistant teachers to district administrator positions makes a mockery of the merit based public service system of appointments.

Discussions with Senior Provincial Magistrate

The Senior Provincial Magistrate met with the AusAID team and myself and expressed concern and frustration at the pressure under which he undertakes his duties. It would seem that there is already political pressure to have the magistrate transferred because of his stand on many cases involving theft and corruption. This matter is serious as politicians seem to have a free hand in determining who is to be appointed to public service positions in the province.

Concerns he had about constraints in undertaking his judicial functions in the province included the following: there was no houses for the Senior Provincial Magistrate and other magistrates in the province; there was no computer and fax machine at the office; there had been no funding received in the province and even the provincial government did not prioritise magisterial services. Apart from Tari, there were no other magistrates based in any of the districts of the province because of funding and housing problems, together with the

increasing law and order issues. It was noted that magistrates who are from provinces other than the Southern Highlands did not stay very long.

Discussions with Mendi Hospital Management

We had discussions with officers in management positions at the Mendi Hospital. They have four doctors and the hospital was functioning, as it should. This hospital is the referral centre for the huge population of the Southern Highlands province. The rural health services should be transferred back to come under the overall supervision of the National Department of Health. There is a urgent need to undertake maintenance of all facilities at the Mendi General Hospital. They need eight doctors immediately to restore services to former times. The hospital is in urgent need of a photocopier to improve on its efficiency and the services it provides. The Mendi School of Nursing which is closing, must be re opened. This million kina facility should not be wasted and demolished. It could come under the hospital if it is closing down. The older health workers should be retrenched so that new and energetic staff can be recruited to keep the efficiency of health services intact.

Meeting with President of Poroma LLG

The President of Poroma LLG is one of the presidents who was not sworn into the Southern Highlands Assembly and he made the following observations. The Southern Highlands Administration is really overstaffed. There are four Administrators and all positions have two or three people on the same position number. Appointment of Grade 10 leavers to District positions must be stopped and all appointments must be done on merit. There is political interference in appointment of all positions of the public services. All Special Support Grants under the Mining agreement must be carefully monitored. The cashing of cheques at Port Moresby banks must be investigated and for the cheques to go through the formal process to the Southern Highlands accounts. There is evidence of abuse of processes at all levels of decision making by the present political leadership in the province. The National Government seems to have turned a blind eye to all that is happening and destructing the smooth operations of the Southern Highlands province. The payment of large amounts of money to individual people and voters must stop as it is a bad precedent for the future development of the province.

Nipa

We made arrangements to travel with Mendi Police to Tari, but changed our mind to travel alone on the road to visit Nipa and Margarima along the way. We left Mendi in the Mendi hospital vehicle and were joined at Poroma junction by the Oil Search Team. The road was in reasonably good condition and there was little traffic. Of significance about this trip was that there were three ladies in the team and we had no Police escort. Along the way to Nipa, we did not encounter any road blocks but only waving and smiling people on the roadsides and there were markets as well. Possibly it was one of those lucky days or that only targeted cars are stopped. Whatever the reason, we had a trouble-free trip along the Nipa section which is constantly referred to as a troublesome route.

We arrived at the Nipa District Office and the Deputy District Administrator was in the office and met us. There were many people there and they were pleased to see us and to note that we stopped over to have a look around and assess the state of the facilities. The station is generally in good order and most of the infrastructure is in place.

Nipa District Office area: There were only a few staff at the District Office which had been renovated and was in good condition.

Nipa Station Houses: Most of the houses were in reasonably good order but a few were very run down and in need of urgent maintenance to stop them becoming more damaged. I was told that some of the staff houses were occupied by village people, and this needs to be investigated.

Nipa Local Government Chamber: The local government chamber had been completely damaged. It needs to be renovated to be the seat of government for the local area.

Nipa Police Station: The Police station was in reasonably good order. The Highway Patrol Office had been wrecked when the former Governor died. It was regarded as 'his' building. There were policemen who were on duty when we arrived at the station. It was confirmed that there were a lot of large guns within the Nipa Basin area. We did not see any but we heard that there was a gang around the area and they had guns which were more powerful than those of the Police.

Nipa Power house and generator: The old generator was not working and most of the power lines were old and need replacing. The Deputy District Administrator said that a new generator was on order but that the reticulation had to be thoroughly checked, or else the old buildings would go up in flames.

Nipa Vocational School: The buildings at the vocational school were generally in good condition, with some maintenance needed.

Nipa Health Centre: The staff were on duty when we visited the health centre. We were pleased to note that the centre was operating. When we arrived a mother was delivering a child at that moment. This was evidence that the health facility was still delivering services to the people under the hard political culture of the place. Maintenance and equipment were the two urgent needs of the health facility.

Nipa High School: At the time of our arrival, the students were just coming out for work parade. The teachers and a Secondary Inspector were there as well. The school was in operation with a full student population and teaching staff. The teachers' opinion was that the free education policy had encouraged more students to re-enrol but that the promised funds were not coming through as expected. They did not know how long the school could remain open without the promised financial support. There were doubts about the success of

the free education policy as it was coordinated by Treid Pacific out of Port Moresby and not through Mendi.

All facilities at the school were in good condition but graffiti was a problem in the classrooms that we visited. Some maintenance may be required as the school was promoted by the politicians to be a secondary school in 2004, but the teachers refused to enrol students until appropriate infrastructure was in place. There were students from all over the province including students from the Hela region. Science equipment was not available and library books were old. They need updated materials to facilitate effective learning by the students.

Margarima

From Nipa we travelled to Margarima. We arrived at the Margarima District Office in very cold weather. The two offices were closed and no one was available to escort us around. I had been in Margarima previously for four years (1981–1984) and the people greeted us warmly and showed us around the station to see the state of affairs. There were a lot of auxiliary policemen who were kind enough to provide information on what has been happening. In fact, they said they appreciated people like us being there to appreciate the problems of providing basic services in Margarima.

Margarima District Administration: The appointed District Administrator had never been to Margarima. The Acting appointee, who is a trained Kiap, was recently appointed and was preparing to take up office from Mendi. Needs of the district administration were for: office and staff house maintenance, health centre renovation and maintenance, Margarima hydro electricity scheme, Komo sub-district headquarter rebuilding (destroyed completely in a tribal fight some years back), district communication system, Margarima station power restoration, office furniture and equipment, and maintenance of three Kiap houses at Margarima.

Margarima Health Centre: The health centre had been destroyed at the time of the conflict between Tari and Nipa. Margarima is in the middle and much damage had been done to the health centre facility. There was a skeleton staff who were working from one room where they keep medicine. The centre was now downgraded to an aid post status. The structures are still there. All it requires is maintenance and the health centre can be back on track to operate as a health centre. Although they are still on the government payroll, many staff were not on duty. A nurse aide was on hand to show us around.

Margarima Police Office: There was a new police office at Margarima which was operating at the time of our visit. The Court House next door had been damaged and needs to be renovated and maintained.

Department of Primary Industries: This department was using the old District office and was in good shape and condition.

Power House: The generator had been stripped but the power house was still there. They need a new generator and power lines to re-establish a power supply.

Margarima High School: The Margarima High School was functioning but for how long was the question people were asking. The buildings were in good shape and the teachers were there. However supplies and rations had run low.

Ambua Lodge After Margarima we checked in to Ambua Lodge. We had lunch on the road near the river at Tingo, courtesy of Oil Search. We then made a quick visit down to the Dauli and Wabia areas of the Hulia constituency of Komo/Margarima but physically in the Tari valley.

Dauli

Hydro Power: The hydro power was recently maintained by the Porgera Joint Venture and was functioning well at the time of our visit. They had engaged a caretaker, something which had not happened before.

Dauli Teachers College: This teachers college is managed by the Evangelical Church of PNG and was functioning. We met the Principal and he had no problems with overall operations except for funding. The surrounding communities of Dauli and Wabia are said to be good people, have a spirit of community ownership and look after the property. The teachers college has students from all over Papua New Guinea and has been functioning all the time despite the political and law and order problems.

Tari

From Dauli we travelled to Tari. The Tari township was alive and well, the market was open and the stores and other businesses open. One major store was still closed pending an improvement in the law and order situation.

Tari Secondary School. We visited the Tari Secondary School run by the Catholic Church. There was quietness at the school and we were informed by the Deputy Principal that the students had been sent home. They had been told to return with K350.00 per student because the free education cheque of K28,000.00 per month from Treid Pacific was not enough to cover the costs of feeding and keeping the students at the school. This is a boarding school and with over 1200 students. The free education policy does not seem to be achieving the desired results. Each school gets K30.00 per student each month from Treid Pacific. The school administration said that the contractor did not ask the schools about their needs. They are given 60 bags of rice for a month whereas they need 66 bags of rice a week to feed the students. The students were travelling to Mendi to see the Governor when we were coming up from Margarima.

The school infrastructure was impressive. The upgrading had been done with K11m funding from the PNG Incentive Fund. The contractor, NGI Steel, had

done a great job. It seemed that local participation with such a project had been minimal, which could be part of the problems that the school is facing. Earlier on, a criminal had demanded a cow and money from the school but he is dead now. The surrounding communities do not cause too much problems for the school.

Interaction with Resource Developers (Oil Search & Porgera Joint Venture)

We had the chance to interact and discuss issues of service delivery and maintenance with the resource developers operating in the Hela area and involved with the tax credit scheme programs in the region. The issues raised were that there seemed to be a complete lack of governance and accountability in the province. Government services were collapsing and the resource developers could only do so much to maintain and keep some services functioning to serve the local people. A concern raised was what would happen after the resource developers leave the area, if people becoming dependent on them to attend to services that should be provided by the government.

The law and order problem is an issue that needs to be addressed. The tax credit scheme projects were solving some issues the economic issues remain problematic. Some policies like free education are having a negative effect on the people who are not mindful of their responsibility as parents. What happens when there is no free education any more? Will they ask the resource developers to step in?

We discussed how we could co ordinate and work together to ensure that we were doing different things and not doing the same things as each other for the common cause of service delivery. One of the concerns was that central agencies take too long to approve and action matters and that a coordination role was missing from the central agency to make sure things happen when and where they were needed. We felt that the Inter Government Relation Ministry was well placed to perform this coordinating role.

Correctional Services Hawa: We went to visit the recently reopened 80 person capacity jail at Hawa that serves the Western Region of the Southern Highlands Province. We met the Commanding Officer and his staff on the road, who followed us up to the site. The prisoners' kitchen was under construction funded by the Provincial Government. More materials were been sourced from Mount Hagen and it should be completed soon. A men's forty-man dormitory and kitchen in a fenced area were inspected. No security confinement was available. There were seven staff houses, a rundown church building and a generator that was in working order. Electrical wiring and service lines are required.

A new office had been completed and was ready for use, complete with office furniture. We did not see any staff based there despite it having been officially opened. We thought some staff could actually be based there to look after low risk prisoners, and to show that the jail was operational. However, the management wanted everything to be in order first before the jail took in

prisoners. Some of the things still required to be done were: housing for a maximum of forty officers, electrical lines and wiring, a bore and water supply (water was the problem that saw the jail closed the previous time), a tower, guard house, a dormitory that could house twenty women, double arch mesh for a second fence at the prisoners compound, perimeter fencing for the whole jail and boilers and eating utensils. It was thought that there could be some funding under the Correctional Services division of the Law and Justice Sector might be accessed for these purposes. The needs of the re-opened jail must be addressed as it is to serve the three districts of the Hela region.

Tari Hospital: We visited the Tari hospital and were shown around by the Acting Medical Superintendent and the Hela Zone Coordinator. The hospital was in reasonably good shape but there were urgent issues to be addressed. Only twelve staff were working at the hospital. Many had gone to Port Moresby in search of their allowance claims and were not back on the job. There are four brand new houses for doctors all fenced in with very strong spiked fencing, but there were no doctors based there.

The Acting CEO informed us that there were three doctors being paid for the Tari doctor positions but that they were not based there. This needs to be sorted out with Health Department and the Southern Highlands Administration. There is a problem with the water supply to the hospital, and this has to be sorted out soon or to have a bore well to be installed. A lot of maintenance work needs to be done to keep the buildings in good order. A reliable hospital vehicle/ambulance would assist the staff with their difficult task. The present vehicle was bought by politicians, taken away, and then returned in bad shape.

It was stated that no funds had been received from the Southern Highlands Administration to run the hospital in the previous five months. They were running the hospital with fees collected from the patients. This is not sustainable and the continuity of services can not be guaranteed. It would seem that the hospital is only surviving because they have a dedicated CEO. The AusAID officers mentioned that they could possibly assist with some things and for two doctors to be arranged to be sent there.

Tari District Office: The new office had not been used but we caught up with the Acting District Administrator in the old office. He told us that he had received too many visits from people from Port Moresby and nothing was happening to fix problems or services. He later apologized for his outburst, which we felt was understandable. At the time of our visit, there was another person who had the keys to the District Administrator's office and was claiming that the position was his by virtue of his political alliances. Most of the staff were either not in Tari or were away in Port Moresby and other places.

After our meeting, I met with some of the District staff and a number of issues were raised. There was no computer and stationery available. The staff were making do with whatever was available as they have had no grants from the provincial administration to function properly. The Dauli Hydro plant needs to be taken over by PNG Power as at the moment, its upkeep and maintenance is

uncertain. Porgera Joint Venture is doing periodic maintenance but it should not be their responsibility. A power supply must be guaranteed for the township. The issue of the District Administrator position needs to be sorted out. The issue of village courts and peace mediators are not necessary parts of the justice system in the Hela region. They do not get allowances and their work is hijacked by young people, thus leading to the law and order problems. The Justice Department must take on this responsibility again, as the decentralized function to the province had been a nightmare. The Civil Aviation Agency and Air Niugini need to resolve issues relating to the Tari airport as that is the only air-link to the outside world.

Tari Police Station: The Police station was busy with police on duty to attend to the various complaints and problems. I met the Provincial Police Commander who felt that the commitments by the government had not been fulfilled. At the time of our visit, the Mobile Squad which was based there had been withdrawn to assist with the elections in Western Highlands and Chimbu provinces. The issue of law and order in the Hela region needs to be addressed seriously before it blows out of hand. The people are dissatisfied with deteriorating services and questioned what benefits they were getting from resource development at Hides and Porgera. They have the capacity to cause problems for the government to attract attention. The issue of creating a Hela province is a sticky issue and although commitments have been made, nothing had progressed so far to facilitate whatever has to be done. This matter is an issue that needs to be addressed.

The problems relating to law and order can be addressed with the following recommendations.

- 1) The behavior of people must be addressed. It is an individualistic society and therefore public awareness on the importance of living together must be undertaken as part of restoration of services. The work of the Peace Foundation must be strengthened and expanded as it addresses the issue of reconciliation and forgiveness. The system of reconciliation and restoration must be further promoted and enhanced into the society.
- 2) A mobile squad must be permanently based in Tari. The Enopi barracks have been maintained and are now ready for use. The squad must be posted to Tari as a matter of urgency equipped with guns, the necessary vehicles and with working police radios. In fact, all police personnel should carry guns within the Hela region.
- 3) The village court system must be strengthened with control from the Department of the Attorney General's Village Courts Secretariat. The officials must be appointed and gazetted to undertake the necessary work.
- 4) Peace mediation must be properly funded and resourced as it performs a vital service to contain problems and issues.

- 5) There must be proper surveillance of people moving between Tari and Tabubil or Kiunga. There is a bush track that people use to travel up and down trading marijuana and guns. You can walk to and from in three days either way. There is an arms build up and something has to be done to try and reduce the statistics of unlicensed guns in the area.

Conclusion

Some conclusions and recommendations from the trip have been made in this report. Hopefully, these could help to stimulate discussion and to restore services to the people of the Southern Highlands Province. We achieved our goal of visiting various districts of the province and identifying services that were or were not available, the level of control and governance, accountability of the government, the management of the districts in general and whether the responsible authorities were in charge and effective decision making and controls being exercised. We travelled out of Tari by plane to Mount Hagen, in time for the AusAID officials to catch the evening flight to Port Moresby. It had been an interesting, informative and enlightening trip.

Author

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