



WASDOK NIUS



EYE WITHIN



August 2012 edition

OC lifts ban on DSIP funds

Members of Parliament can now access grants, particularly the District Services Improvement Programme and other Constitutional funds, for service delivery to their electorates. This is possible after the Ombudsman Commission (OC) lifted the Direction under Section 27 (4) of the Constitution to safeguard public funds from abuse during the election period.



Ombudsman John Nero and Ombudsman Phoebe Sangetari lifting the direction under section 27(4) of the constitution to safeguard public funds from abuse during the election period

The direction was enforced for over two months by a Working Committee comprising of OC, Department of Finance, Department of Implementation and Rural Development and Department of National Planning.

The committee announced the withdrawal on 17 August.

Without the direction government grants can be accessed through the departments of finance, implementation and rural development and national planning.

OC was satisfied that the direction had served the in-

tervention of preserving the integrity of the leaders and protect public funds from being misused during the election period.

Ombudsman John Nero said the exercise has served its purpose and clearly stated that it was not intended to impede progress in any way. He added that the direction was intended to first preserve the integrity of the leaders and second the public funds particularly the DSIP and other constitutional grants. "We received widespread com-

plaints from the public regarding potential instances of abuse and note prima facie evidence of abuse both before and during election, which are subjects of ongoing investigations".

He said OC's assistance was in the interest of upholding the importance of compliance by leaders and public servants in serving the people.

Ombudsman Phoebe Sangetari said the direction was necessary as it protected the money that was now available for use.

VISION

Fair, just and effective leadership and good governance in Papua New Guinea.

MISSION

To promote and foster quality leadership and good governance and strengthen respect for Rule of Law in accordance with Section 218 of the Constitution.

The Ombudsman Commission is committed to (6) fundamental values in all dealings with government bodies, the private sector, members of the public and the leaders.

The values uphold are;

- ◇ Impartiality
- ◇ Integrity
- ◇ Independence
- ◇ Accountability
- ◇ Responsiveness
- ◇ Respect

[Ombudsman Commission Strategic Plan 2011-2015]

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MPs told to be accountable Page 3

Read about OC's visit to North Bougainville Page 4

OC thanks Department Secretaries for part-taking in the DSIP committee Page 5

OHS training vital: Alu

By Bernard Alu

“Safety Officers must be well versed with the government safety legislation and all the safety requirements to ensure work place health and safety of its workers are paramount”. These were the words of course facilitator from Seifti PNG during the Level Three Workplace Health and Safety Officer training from 13-17 August 2012 in Lae, Morobe province.

Mr Bernard Alu from the Ombudsman Commission was among 15 other participants who attended the week-long training.



Right: Floor warden Deloitte Tower Level 5 Willie Gawi seems to be cautioning occupants that it is still not safe to enter the building during a fire drill exercise

Mr Alu said the training covered many important aspects of workplace health and safety measures. Participants were placed into four groups with each of them having a topic to present. “My group was assigned the topic on Personal Protection and Equipments’ (PPE) and I was given the opportunity to do the presentation on Power point for my team”.

Equally important, the facilitator reminded the participants that Safety Officers must be well versed with the government safety legislation and all the safety requirements to ensure the work place health and safety of its workers is paramount.

“Our workplace environment is subject to health risks and other hazards, hence a lot of improvement needs to be done on the floors we occupy,” Mr Alu said.

He noted that the fire extinguishers on the floors have already expired and are unworthy for usage and the floor carpets are dirty and can also be considered as health hazard risks. The removal of broken equipments like chairs, unused computers or damaged electronic equipments and boxes seem to lie around the corners of the office hence, considered as risks too.

Also, the monthly fire drills exercised here at the Deloitte Tower building is very important hence the emergency procedure must be strictly adhered to and followed by everyone.

He said officers become too ignorant to such exercises. Officers are encouraged to take some time to read and know the fire escape route as the emergency fire escape plan is on the wall of the lift lobby area. In case of fire alarm, everyone should know what to do.

editorial

*Welcome to August's edition of
Wasdok Newsletter*

We bring you yet again events that occurred through out the month.

Following the issue of Direction under section 27 (4) of the Constitution to safeguard public funds during the election period, the Commission has lifted the ban and it is satisfied the Direction served its purpose.

The Commission also took part in the 9th National Parliament Members’ induction program held at the Parliament State Function Room. Ombudsman Nero and Ombudsman Sangetari talked on the Leadership Code and its consequences. We will bring you this story in next month’s edition.

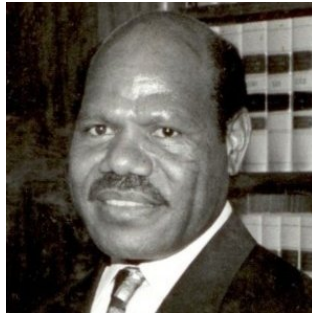
You will also read about the Commission’s first visit to North Bougainville.

Happy reading...

Editor

MPs to practice Accountability

“There has been establishment of new initiatives as part of good governance, transparency and anti-corruption related strategies, however, the problem remains that many organisations have not been providing their accountability reports on time and there has not been any sanctioning for non-compliance in this regard”. These were the words of Mr Albert Monave, Deputy Auditor General at the 9th National Parliament Members’ Induction Program held at the Parliament State Function Room in Port Moresby on 24 August 2012.



Mr Albert Monave

He encouraged the members of parliament to have their accountability reports on time so that his office can provide specific information about the status of accountability of organisations in their respective provinces, electorates, or ministry so they can use to ensure accountability in the organisational level.

Mr Monave told those MPs present that Accountability is one of the responsibilities they should consider as important as much as he does in his capacity as an oversight agent of the Government.

He referred to *accountability* as the obligation of an individual or organisation to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. It is the ‘state of being answerable’ to those who have assigned such responsibilities to individual representatives, in this case, respective MPs and agency heads. “Accountability refers to the obligation to explain and justify conduct”, Mr Monave said.

He explained to the members of parliament that to hold someone to account means obtaining from authorities the public explanations needed by the Auditor General’s office at the time when needed, auditing and other oversight processes such as the Ombudsman Commission on the Leadership Code matters and so forth. He added that this is very important for bureaucrats and public office holders to be accountable.

“As elected representatives your utmost responsibility is to

ensure effective service delivery to your voters, especially the majority back who live back in the rural communities of our country”, Mr Monave said.

B’ville Administration wants audit done: Disin

“There is a great need to audit books in the Bougainville Administration and District offices.” This was the cry of the Bougainville Chief Administrator, Lawrence Disin.

Mr Disin said there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed within the administration. He said his office engaged auditors from the Auditor General last year and they are still awaiting the audit report .

Mr Disin stated that the report is very vital to them as it may contain evidence that will help them take necessary action against authorities or persons exposed in the report. He had advised the auditors to mention names in their report.

There are issues of infrastructure because of improper costing and also contractors misusing funds before the actual work begins.

Dominic Wiput from Selau/Suir district supported the need for audit in the district offices. Mr Wiput claimed that when funding goes to the district some portion of it goes missing. He said there needs to be an audit exercise to show how public funds are disbursed.

Meanwhile, there were complaints of non-performance of public servants from the public. “This is an issue that needs to be addressed” said Mr Disin. He said punctuality is a big problem. Some officers come to work very late and leave work early. Mr Disin stated that the same issue was raised by Bougainville leaders in a meeting. He added that there are functions that some public servants do which they are not supposed to do. He gave an example of public servants’ involvement in the arms disposal exercise.

OC visits North Bougainville

The people of North Bougainville mainly in the Tinputz and Selau/Suir Districts were very humbled and thankful of the Ombudsman Commission's maiden



Assistant Investigator, Dorothy Tamo registering a complaint from a woman in Namatoa, Tinputz.

visit to their areas.

The Commission conducted its Public Education Program (PEP) from 20 – 25 August 2012 in Waropa, Namatoa, Tearoki, Tinputz, Hantoa, Siara and Tsunpets in North Bougainville. Among these areas, there were four (4) schools together with the community involved in the awareness program.

PEP is an awareness program to promote the roles and functions of the Commission and improve accessibility to the public.

Most of the issues raised during the visit were crisis related issues and claims. The people complained that claims of properties lost during the crisis have not been addressed.

Continued next page...

Service delivery not reaching districts

Service delivery is not reaching the district level as gathered in the Commission's visit to North Bougainville. This is one of the many sentiments shared by the people.

The Commission on its visit discovered that there are more than six (6) schools suspended in North Bougainville due to deteriorating buildings including teachers' houses and classrooms. One of the schools on suspension is Siara Primary School. Parents are really concerned that the closure of the school would affect the grade eight (8) students.

Daniel Tsunno, a parent of Siara Primary School said the school has never received funding from the government and for it to be suspended is not right. Mr Tsunno said the school is currently under-going renovation with volunteers helping out but the work is very slow. The parents asked that a portion of the Rehabilitation Educational Sector Institute (RESI) funds be released to the school to do maintenance.

Tsunpets Primary School Headmistress, Patricia Aisa also echoed similar sentiments. Ms Aisa said it is very difficult to go through the education office to access subsidy funds for the school. She stated that the school has provided the requirements however, their request is still pending. Furthermore they can not do maintenance work at the school because there is no funding available for them to use.

A lot of incomplete projects were pointed out including the proposed Tinputz High School. Work on the project has come to a halt because there is shortage of funding.



Students of Tsunpets Primary School listening attentively to Ephraim Manhi as he explains the Leadership Code.

Lawrence Disin, Bougainville Chief Administrator explained that some projects remain incomplete because the initial estimates of projects are not done properly and there is no project management component. Mr Disin said there is lack of supervision and no proper administration of projects. He said the National Government has a problem of honouring its commitment to Bougainville. Mr Disin stated that because funding is slow, they have to cut budgets for certain activities and it can affect projects as well.

Mr Disin also stated that some contractors misuse funding that is awarded to them to work on projects. He said they use funding to purchase new trucks with the funds before work commenced and the projects end up incomplete because of no money.

OC thanks Dept Secretaries

The Ombudsman Commission is grateful to the Secretary for Finance Steven Gibson, Implementation and Rural Development Secretary Paul Sai'i and Secretary for National Planning Dr Peter Kora for being part of the team to issue the Direction under Section 27(4) of the Constitution to safeguard public funds from abuse during the election period. Basically OC preserved a lot of funds after it issued the directions.



Left: Implementation and Rural Development Secretary Mr Paul Sai'i and Finance Secretary Mr Steven Gibson.

The direction was enforced for over two months by this Working Committee including the Ombudsman Commission.

Ombudsman Phoebe Sangetari said the whole intention of the direction was all at protecting public funds. She said it is a power that OC rarely use. While agreeing, Ombudsman John Nero said the Commission however, was not new to issuing directions. He stated that it was all on the basis that the wider public have complained about funds being abused or misused, hence, the Commission issued directions during election periods in 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Lately, a lot of the new MPs have been visiting the office of Rural Development to see if they have funds available.

Secretary for National Planning Dr Peter Kora said the Ombudsman Commission has done the right thing by issuing this direction. He said there should be checks and balance done. A member of parliament is supposed to acquit before another cheque is released to him/her. "Acquittal is a problem", Dr Kora said. "We have effective guidelines to follow to safe guard public money and the public service is ready to assist politicians to deliver to their districts", he added.

...from page 4

They said it is very difficult to provide proof for their assets because everything was lost in the fight.

During the Commission's briefing with the Chief Administrator Lawrence Disin, he said that crisis-related-claim is one of the difficult issues at hand. He said the Bougainville Administrative Government does not have a policy to act as a guideline to the claims. Mr Disin added that crisis related claims have increased and it is very difficult to verify them. He further stated that work on a policy has commenced to address the issue.

**Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea,
Ground Floor, Deloitte Tower, Douglas Street, PO Box
1831, Port Moresby 121, NCD, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
Phone: 675-308-2600 Fax: 675-320-3260,
Email:
ombudspng@ombudsman.gov.pg**

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