

COMPLETION REPORT

VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT

1 May 2016 – 31 December 2017

Bougainville Women's Federation &
International Women's Development
Agency



IWDA INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

This program is part of the Papua New Guinea-Australian Partnership

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SHAPING PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT



Completion Report

PROJECT DETAILS

Partners:	Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF) and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)
Project Name:	Voter Education Project
Project Location:	Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
Source of Funds:	Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Program (Pacific Women)
Project Period:	1 May 2016 – 31 December 2017 (20 months)
Total Project Budget:	\$451, 888.25 (AUD)
Project Reporting Period:	1 May 2016 – 31 December 2017 (20 months)
Report Date:	30 April 2018

About The Report

This report details the implementation of the Voter Education Project, 1 May 2016 to 31 December 2017.

The report includes:

- Project Summary
- Final Project Report
 1. Key Project Activities and Outcomes of the activities completed
 2. Changes to Project Implementation
 3. Project Challenges and Risks
 4. Successes, Lessons Learned and Recommendations
 5. Case Studies
 6. Conclusions



Project Summary

The Voter Education Project is a twenty-month project implemented by the Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF) in partnership with International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

The goal of the Voter Education Project is to provide education about voting rights and responsibilities to people across Bougainville, focusing on the historically disenfranchised cohort of people (aged between 35-45 years with limited education) who grew up during the Crisis, known as the 'lost generation.'

The project targets women and men and pays particular attention to engaging women in communities. This is because the experiences of post-conflict trauma and disadvantage suffered by the 'lost generation' intersects with more generalised patterns of women's disenfranchisement from democratic processes in Bougainville and across the Pacific. The Voter Education Project aims to contribute to broader efforts under *Pacific Women* to increase women's political voice and agency.

The project objectives are:

- **Objective One:** Provide education about voting, elections, and making informed decisions as a voter to 6,400 women and men in 320 communities across all 43 Councils of Elders in Bougainville, focusing on the 'lost generation'
- **Objective Two:** Using information collected as part of project monitoring and evaluation, contribute to knowledge about how to ensure inclusivity and engagement in learning about democracy and elections in Bougainville communities.

This 20-month project concluded in December 2017. The Papua New Guinea national elections were held 24 June – 8 July 2017.

In 2016, BWF conducted community consultations to introduce the project. BWF trained 43 Voter Education Community Trainers and conducted pilot workshops in six communities. The majority of voter education workshops were rolled out between January and June 2017, implementing lessons learned from the pilot phase. From July to December 2017, BWF staff supported Voter Education Community Trainers to finalise their narrative reports and financial acquittals and prepare for the end of project review which contributed to the final evaluation.

Despite changes in BWF's Board and Executive and a challenging environment for activity implementation, the project was delivered to schedule and far exceeded targets. Seven hundred and one community voter education workshops were delivered by 41 Voter Education Community Trainers, across every District and Council of Elders in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. BWF staff, eight Voter Education Community Trainers and six young women from BWF's Young Women's Leadership Project were selected as election observers. The strong partnership established between BWF, the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission and other key partners with complementary areas of expertise (e.g. electoral process, Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) training, and gender sensitive programming) ensured an effective model of voter education.



The 2017 National Elections

In the absence of detailed data from the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission, it is difficult to verify the impact of the project on voting patterns in the specific communities that received the voter education workshops or to determine whether there was an increase in voter registrations. However, the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission officials confirmed to BWF that the number of informal votes in the 2017 election was less than that of both the 2012 Papua New Guinea National Election and the 2015 Autonomous Bougainville Government General Election. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence gathered by BWF during monitoring indicated that informal votes in the 2017 Papua New Guinea National Election were much lower in the constituencies where BWF held mock election.

The Limited Preferential Voting system used for national and Autonomous Bougainville Government elections is relatively new to Bougainville, and Bougainville continues to use First Past the Post for Community Government elections. Limited Preferential Voting is a more complex system and can be intimidating for low literacy voters. The project's monitoring data, observations from election observers and the election results all indicate that the voter education workshops increased voters' confidence in understanding the Limited Preferential Voting system, casting their votes correctly, and understanding their right to freely choose their preferred candidate.

BWF and community trainers selected as election observers stated that women were well represented at the ballot boxes. Importantly, women stated they were confident and felt empowered by the education they had received to make their own decisions rather than coerced or influenced by their husbands and male family members. While anecdotal, observations such as these indicate that the project has enabled more people to exercise their right to vote and participate in democratic processes.

We are confident that voters' increased understanding of the electoral process will also contribute to improved voting practices in the 2018 Bougainville Local Level Government elections. We also recognise that given that two different voting systems are used within Bougainville (Limited Preferential Voting and First Past the Post), more voter education and awareness is needed going forward to increase reach and reinforce the impact of this project. Collaboration between the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission and experienced implementing agencies like BWF needs to be further strengthened for increased impact and government ownership of the process.

BWF Advocacy & Promoting Gender Equality

This project provided the opportunity for BWF to increase their profile throughout Bougainville, informing communities of their role and projects. BWF has a key role in the Policy for Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality, Peace and Security and The Bougainville Action Plan 1325 Women, Peace and Security. It is essential, therefore, that the community understands the role BWF plays within the community and government, and actively seeks out and works with BWF to achieve key outcomes for women and girls. Prior to the project, many people believed that BWF worked only with women. Through the project, BWF had the opportunity to emphasise that they work with both men and women to achieve equitable outcomes for women and girls in Bougainville. This is particularly pertinent given BWF's new draft bill to the Autonomous Bougainville Government to enact the organisation as a government entity, essentially positioning themselves as Bougainville's equivalent to the Papua New Guinea National Council for Women.



The project promoted gender equality by ensuring that at least 50 per cent of Voter Education Community Trainers were women. The women Voter Education Community Trainers were role models of women's leadership in the communities where voter education workshops were delivered. This set the backdrop for discussions on the value of women as leaders, decision makers and parliamentarians. The visible role of women Voter Education Community Trainers and discussions served both to support an enabling environment for women candidates, and to empower women to feel confident to vote freely. The right for women to vote independently of *wontok* and family connections, and not by proxy for their husbands or male family members continues to be an issue. The case study below of Linda, a young woman and first time voter from Hagogohe Constituency, illustrates the importance of challenging this norm.

Reach

BWF's marriage of technical expertise (BRIDGE training and partnership with the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission) with a village based rollout model using Voter Education Community Trainers from each Council of Elders resulted in an extremely effective model of voter education.

The project reached 686 per cent of the targeted number of people in voter education workshops (6,400), reaching all 43 Council of Elders, remote locations, and effectively including young people (42 per cent), women (51 per cent) and people living with disabilities (1.3 per cent).

The following factors contributed to the greater than expected reach of the project:

- The workshops were readily accessible, as evidenced by the large number of people living with disabilities who participated.
- The workshops were appropriate for people with low literacy. This was supported through the BRIDGE training approach and visual aids. Voter Education Community Trainers were selected from each Council of Elders, and delivered workshops in local languages.
- BWF presented seven radio broadcasts on the Limited Preferential Voting system and good governance in the lead up to the election. A voter education jingle was also produced, which was played regularly.
- The village-based rollout model implemented by BWF enabled remote populations to access workshops. This was the first of its kind for voter education in Bougainville, in contrast to the district-based model used in the past. Voter Education Community Trainers were able to reach some of the most remote communities of Bougainville – in particular, the Atolls District.



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

Total reach of Voter Education workshops, May 2016 – December 2017

	Total	Women	Women with disability	Men	Men with disability	Female youth	Female youth with disability	Male youth	Male youth with disability
Pilot workshops	2,346	645	1	813	30	329	-	528	-
Nov-Dec 2016 workshops	5,112	1,619	30*	1,409		1,072	23*	959	
Jan-Jun 2017 workshops	36,426	10,601	100	9,716	280	7,991	105	7,560	73
Total	43,884	12,865	101	11,938	310	9,392	105	9,047	73

*Includes all women and men with disability - no sex disaggregated data available for this phase (not included in column totals).

**N.B. these figures include pilot and phase 2-3 workshops. Not included: participants of BRIDGE trainings, community consultations, MTR workshop, radio reach.



1. Key Project Achievements and Outcomes of the activities completed

Objective 1: Provide education about voting, elections, and making informed decisions as a voter to 6,400 men and women in 320 communities across all 43 Council of Elders in Bougainville, focusing on the 'lost generation'

Activity 1.1: Community consultations introducing the project to Council of Elders across Bougainville

Five community consultation sessions were held in Buin, Arawa, Torokina, Wakunai and Buka in May and June 2016, to introduce the Voter Education Project to the 43 Council of Elders, local leaders, government officials, members of the District Women's Federations and church groups. The consultations also shared information about the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission, the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission and the Limited Preferential Voting system. A total of 73 people (46 women, 22 men, 5 girls) participated. The consultations received very positive feedback and community leaders reiterated the need for awareness on Limited Preferential Voting and good governance.

Activity 1.2: Preparation of advocacy materials

BWF used three DVD resources in training sessions to address issues of good governance and election corruption, the economy, and the referendum. Each featured real-life examples of the impact of poor voter education on community development and good governance.

The **Good Governance and Election Corruption DVD** provides an overview of the importance of good governance, the strengths and positive actions one might expect from a good leader, it outlines different forms of corruption and explains how corruption may occur within an election cycle.

The **Economy DVD** covers the basic history of economics in Bougainville and outlines how economic spending by the government impacts all. A focus of the DVD is to breakdown an understanding of government promises in the lead up to an election and assist in analysing what these mean in the day-to-day lives of citizens.

The **Referendum DVD** introduces Referendum concepts and importance to a broad audience in the context of the upcoming Bougainville Independence Referendum in 2019. The DVD explains the differences and similarities between the current system of government and what may be produced as a result of the referendum.



A total of 344 advocacy posters, 43 pamphlets, 43 flip charts from the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission and 43 Training Manuals from the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission were reproduced and distributed at community consultations, training sessions and pilot workshops. Materials were distributed via social media outlets with accompanying hashtags including:

- #votereducation
- #referendum
- #betterbougainville
- #WomenforWomen

**A Bougainville Women's Federation
Voter Education Project Community
Awareness Initiative**

Dispela em hau bai yu pulumapim balot pepa
Wantaim LPV yu bai nid long givim 1st, 2nd Na 3rd mak bilong yu.

Hau long Vote

Writim code nem or nem bilong leda yu laik makim 1 long em
Writim code nem or nem bilong leda yu laik makim 2 long em
Writim code nem or nem bilong leda yu laik makim 3 long em
Talm yu hamamas long ol tripla chois blo yu poldim balot pepa na putim insait long balot box

NA TINGIM
Noken putim ol narapela kain mak long balot pepa.

A voter education jingle was produced for the program. BWF project staff and Voter Education Community Trainers recorded the jingle, which was played regularly on the radio.

Activity 1.3 Radio broadcasts in partnership with Autonomous Bougainville Government Media and Communication Division

BWF was invited to speak about the project live on the Autonomous Bougainville Government Media and Communications radio station in February 2016 (under the BWF-IWDA Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment project, funded by the Government of the Netherlands) and June 2016, which were broadcast across all regions of Bougainville.

In 2017, five radio broadcasts were presented by BWF on "Good Governance, Corruption or Bribery" during campaign time and on "Safety Tips for Women and Girls" during counting. Very positive feedback was received from listeners, urging BWF to continue with similar educational radio programs. Radio Ples Lain has an estimated reach of 108,150 in Bougainville (31 per cent of the population).

Activity 1.4: BRIDGE Training for Community Trainers

BWF invited two qualified BRIDGE facilitators to run three training sessions with local community members who had expressed interest in running Voter Education and Leadership training. The program is based on the United Nations endorsed BRIDGE training program, which focusses on electoral processes and is designed to sit within a broader capacity development framework. A total of 57 people (26 women, 24 men, 5 female youth, 2 male youth) participated in three BRIDGE training sessions and together represented all 43 of the community districts in Bougainville.

The training sessions used eight BRIDGE modules. Participants developed a greater understanding of the importance of voting and how the Limited Preferential Voting system works, electoral cycles and processes, ways to improve women's participation in the electoral process, how to engage with the media, guidelines for observing elections, and what dispute resolution options are available for managing election conflicts and disputes.



Third day of BRIDGE training in the Atolls; Taonita Teop & Nissan Voter Education Community Trainers in animated discussion on media & elections with BRIDGE trainers.

Activity 1.5: Community Voter Education Workshops

1.5.1 Two-day pre-pilot training

A total of 22 women and 21 men were identified from the BRIDGE training sessions as strong Voter Education Community Trainers who would excel in running community voter education workshops. BWF selected six Districts across North, Central and South Bougainville in which to pilot community workshops. Six participants (1 woman, 5 men) from the BRIDGE training sessions were selected to run the pilot workshops.

Prior to the pilot, a BRIDGE facilitator and the BWF Project Officer conducted a two-day workshop for the six pilot Voter Education Community Trainers. The workshop ensured that Limited Preferential Voting were confident in their planning, preparation and materials that would be presented during the community awareness sessions. A specific focus of the training was to equip the trainers with skills to engage people with low literacy, and encourage people who had been historically disenfranchised from participation in elections and from understanding their right to participate in democratic processes.

1.5.2 Pilot community voter education workshops

In October - November 2016, six Limited Preferential Voting conducted 40 voter education workshops across six rural districts of Bougainville (Buka and Atolls Districts in North, Kieta and Wakunai Districts in Central, Buin and Siwai Districts in South). The locations selected for the pilot included particularly challenging areas: geographically remote with difficult terrain, areas of high social disadvantage and disengaged voters, lack of services and network coverage. A total of 2,346 participants attended the pilot voter education workshops, across 40 locations (10 workshops in Buka, three in Atolls, seven in Wakunai, five in Kieta, seven in Buin, eight in Siwai).

1.5.3 Community voter education workshops

Following the pilot phase, BWF mentored and supported 41 Voter Education Community Trainers to plan, prepare for and conduct 701 community awareness workshops in 320 communities, reaching 36,426 people including 642 people living with a disability.



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

Working collaboratively with key stakeholders enabled increased reach, provision of quality and accurate information, and created an enabling environment for engaged and informed voters, particularly for women and people living with disabilities. Throughout the project, representatives from the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission accompanied and co-facilitated trainings with BWF to provide additional information on electoral processes and basic electoral laws and to equip Voter Education Community Trainers with relevant information for their fieldwork. The involvement of Village Assembly leaders and Elders was essential in creating an enabling environment for voters to make informed decisions.

Key highlights of the voter education workshops include:

- Alongside every voter education workshop, a mock election was held to cement theoretical learnings. Many participants stated that this was the highlight of the workshops.
- Many of the community trainers reported increased confidence of community members in better understanding and expressing their political rights and responsibilities and the importance of good governance.
- Opportunities were provided for awareness workshops to be held in educational trade centres and high schools, increasing access to information for young people, many of whom had not yet registered to vote.
- The use of local languages, good governance DVDs and mock elections were critical in distilling complex processes into accessible information.
- It was the first time many of the most remote villages and communities had access to any form of voter education.
- One of the women Voter Education Community Trainers travelled throughout the Lenoke Council of Elders constituency on foot (due to a lack of transport and communications infrastructure), visiting 14 locations and reaching over 533 participants. More than 1,000 people voted during the election and despite challenging and inconvenient voting locations, Lenoke Council of Elders recorded only four informal votes, the lowest number in South Bougainville.



An article in the *Post Courier*, April 2017, discussing voter education workshops in Torokina. Pictured: BWF Voter Education Community Trainers facilitating a workshop with many women in attendance.

During this time, BWF staff conducted monitoring visits to 12 constituencies in eight Districts. The monitoring visits included interviews with randomly selected participants of the workshops. Feedback indicated that: 90 per cent of respondents were happy with the workshops; workshops were easily understood by participants because Voter Education Community Trainers used local vernacular; the village based rollout model was the first of its kind; and that participants had increased understanding of how to vote, and their right to vote freely. The monitoring visits also confirmed that Voter Education Community Trainers found it difficult to communicate with communities to organise workshops because of poor network coverage.

Following the Community Government Elections, the Executive Officer of Lenoke Council of Elders reported that as the Assistant Retaining Officer for the Community Government Elections, he was amazed to see that the number of informal votes in some wards had



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

decreased. He attributed this to the voter education awareness conducted through the BWF project, but noted that further work needs to be done to further increase awareness especially on the more complex components such as the Limited Preferential Voting system.

BWF project staff, the Executive Director and eight community trainers conducted election observation and monitoring for the Papua New Guinea National Election. Teams were dispatched to locations in all three regions. The role of the observers was to keep track of the number of voters attending polling booths and casting their votes, interviewing key people about their views and experiences of voting and their participation in the BWF voter education awareness workshops. Some observers were involved in conducting quality checks of the ballots.



Observer watching recorder and Scrutineers and local observers



Counting officials separating the ballot papers & putting into candidate boxes and supporters & scrutineers double checking with the tally board

In July, following the elections, BWF supported Voter Education Community Trainers to submit narrative and financial reports. For many community trainers this was their first experience as trainers and facilitators in such a program. The capacity building and mentoring received from BWF particularly in report writing and budgeting has been of huge



benefit, particularly given the limited opportunities for employment and skills development opportunities for people in Bougainville. Community trainers gained confidence from community support, technical understanding of the BRIDGE model and the skills to facilitate voter education workshops.

Objective Two: Contribute to knowledge about how to ensure inclusivity and engagement in learning about democracy and elections in Bougainville communities

Activity 2.1 Review of pilot workshops

Participant feedback from the pilot phase demonstrated that the workshops increased participants' understanding of the Limited Preferential Voting system, as well as confidence and commitment in voting processes. The mock elections were identified as an effective way of increasing knowledge and confidence, particularly for participants with low levels of literacy. Conducting the pilot workshops in such challenging locations ensured that the Voter Education Community Trainers and BWF could be confident that the rollout was appropriate and effective for all areas of Bougainville. The pilot also provided learnings on appropriate budgets for workshops, logistics, and the importance of including awareness on good governance. Feedback from the pilot demonstrated that Voter Education Community Trainers have developed a range of skills that will enable BWF to effectively deliver voter education workshops across Bougainville. The pilot facilitated stronger partnerships with government and community leaders, and created opportunities for remote communities to engage with duty bearers who officially opened some of the workshops.

Activity 2.2: Mid-term monitoring workshop with community trainers

Commitment to continuous learning and best practice principles saw 26 of 41 active Voter Education Community Trainers attend the mid-term review in March 2017 to contribute to the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats analysis, which allowed for improved program implementation. An additional three workshops were held in Buka, Kieta and Buin for Voter Education Community Trainers who were not able to attend the first workshop. The mid-term review workshops enabled Voter Education Community Trainers to review the training materials to ensure information delivered was accurate and effective. The workshop also included basic report writing and finance training to support community facilitators to better manage their financial records and acquittals.

Activity 2.3: End of project monitoring and workshop with community trainers

In October 2017, 28 out of 43 Voter Education Community Trainers (14 women and 16 men) attended the final evaluation workshop. Three Voter Education Community Trainers were unable to attend due to personal reasons whilst the other 12 experienced transport difficulties or were unable to be reached due to communication issues. A Papua New Guinea-based external evaluator was engaged by IWDA to facilitate the workshop and write the report. Voter Education Community Trainers were divided into their regions; North, Central and South for group discussions based on the key evaluation assessment areas; Relevance, Impact or Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Gender and Social Equality. The participating community trainers used the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats approach, identifying positives, challenges and additional issues.



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

Following the review, project staff accompanied the external evaluator to meet with community stakeholders from the village level and partners International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission Commissioner and the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission Awareness Manager. Feedback from these parties was very positive and special acknowledgment was made that the community trainers were able to reach populations in rural and remote areas. This was the first time community trainers and BWF were involved in participating in an external evaluation of a project. It gave both parties the opportunity to think about how the program was implemented and how it could be improved for future projects.

Final project evaluation

IWDA and BWF have commissioned an independent evaluation of the project, to be completed by 31 May 2018.



2. Changes to Project Implementation

In mid-2016, it became apparent that financial systems and processes at BWF required strengthening. A new finance manager commenced in November 2016, and an Australian volunteer was engaged to improve financial systems. IWDA continued to provide comprehensive financial management support, including monitoring visits cost shared with other projects.

In September 2017, the BWF Board terminated the Executive Officer, alleging financial incompetence and mismanagement. IWDA's subsequent investigation concluded that the allegations made by the Board were unfounded. Nevertheless, IWDA supported the Board and the Secretariat to manage the transition to new management arrangements. During this period, IWDA finance and program staff travelled to Buka to support the BWF team to continue project implementation and to provide essential governance support. In late September, the Australian volunteer finance advisor returned home earlier than anticipated. This had a significant effect on the finance team. The new Finance Officer had been in the position for a few months and while she received intensive training from the Australian Government's Australian Volunteers program, she required additional support in order to accomplish her tasks. From August to October the IWDA Finance Coordinator provided phone, team viewer and on-site support. During this time, the Voter Education Finance Assistant also received capacity development training on financial management systems to support the BWF Finance Officer. With additional support and training, both young women are showing great promise. Financial systems and processes in BWF have improved greatly since the beginning of the year. Project staff are better able to follow financial procedures particularly in terms of cash advances and acquittals. IWDA considers this a wonderful outcome and great success given the challenges with BWF's financial management systems at the beginning of the project.

In November 2017, the Papua New Guinea Program Manager and Senior Program Manager met the BWF Board multiple times during their visit to reinforce key governance practices including ensuring that Board actions are in line with the BWF constitution, policies and procedures. In 2018, with the support of funding from the Government of Netherlands, IWDA will support the BWF Board and Secretariat through governance training and a strategic planning exercise to refocus and take stock of BWF's goals and their future. While it is noted that IWDA monitoring expenses are higher than expected, the progress BWF has made over the last two years cannot be underestimated. These costs were shared under the DFAT funded Young Women's Leadership Program and the Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment funded by the Government of Netherlands. We recommend that future projects ensure adequate budget for IWDA monitoring, finance and governance support be included to continue this success.

Despite the challenges experienced by the BWF project team and Secretariat, the project was implemented to schedule and with great success. In spite of organisational instability, project staff were able to continue with the project and support the community trainers to finalise narrative and financial reporting.

Activity 2.8.1 was underspent because the three regional end-of-project evaluation workshops were reduced to one central workshop. These unspent funds were used to support additional IWDA monitoring and capacity development support on governance and financial management.



Activity 2.5.2 (final evaluation) was overspent because the consultant did not deliver to the standard expected by IWDA. We have since engaged another consultant to complete the work. This budget was reallocated from activity 2.17 (program management support, cost-shared with other IWDA projects).

3. Project Challenges and Risks

The project faced the following challenges:

- In 2016, changes to the community government legislation and poor communication about the dates of community government elections created uncertainty about what needed to be included in the workshops, and dates for rollout.
- Limited communication channels (particularly the lack of network coverage in South and Central Bougainville, Nissan and the Atolls) restricted contact with Voter Education Community Trainers despite using innovative (wave radio) and traditional (word of mouth) methods. In three districts, this limited communication resulted in fewer participants attending the workshops.
- Difficult terrain and lack of transport options meant that many Voter Education Community Trainers walked long distances to reach communities. Weather delayed some activities in areas that became inaccessible because of flooding. Delayed travel sometimes increased the cost of implementation, which was unplanned. Women Voter Education Community Trainers were escorted by assistants to ensure their safety.
- Limited capacity of some Voter Education Community Trainers to write and deliver cohesive reports, meant that reports and acquittals from Voter Education Community Trainers were not received on time, delaying data collection. The BWF project team worked closely with Voter Education Community Trainers to build their skills in data collection, report writing and financial acquittals.
- Due to personal commitments, the project had to replace three Voter Education Community Trainers in three Council of Elders. Additional training and mentoring was provided to the newer Voter Education Community Trainers. Two Voter Education Community Trainers left the project without being replaced; Voter Education Community Trainers from neighbouring Council of Elders rolled out workshops in these areas to ensure that all 43 Council of Elders were covered.
- Governance issues within BWF had a negative impact on staff morale and community perceptions of BWF.
- The disruption to the BWF finance team caused minor delays. However, following additional IWDA support, the team has consolidated and become more effective.
- Future projects could benefit from a strengthened governance structure within BWF's District Women's Federations. This is being addressed in part by IWDA/BWF's Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment program. Project delivery in communities should be in partnership with the women's representative bodies to ensure that BWF's projects work in synergy with, rather than parallel to, the organisation's core representative mandate.
- Gender equality is an important aspect of this program, however deeply entrenched negative views on women as leaders continue to persist. Voter education projects can only address a small part of this issue. It is essential that in order for women to attain leadership within the political sphere, long-term gender sensitisation and education are provided for women and men, and structural and transformative projects are funded alongside targeted voter education.



- The availability of Callan Services to provide technical guidance on inclusion of people with disabilities, as per the project proposal, was limited. While the turnout for people with disabilities was enhanced by the village-based rollout model, there remains a need to improve understanding of how to best meet the needs of people with disabilities in community training.

4. Successes, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The following successes, lessons learned and recommendations are informed by reflections on the project and initial findings of the evaluation. Further detail will be provided in the final evaluation report.

Successes:

- Monitoring reports and election observations indicate that the voter education workshops and mock elections effectively reduced the number of informal votes.
- Voter Education Community Trainers were supported to reach many more people than initially planned. They were motivated to overcome logistical challenges to reach over 700 villages across Bougainville. The project also built their capacity in training, reporting and financial processes, and many reported increased confidence in public speaking, community organising and knowledge of voting systems and democratic process.
- BWF's partnership with District Women's Federations, Council of Elders, the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission, the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems highlighted BWF's role as an effective partner for Autonomous Bougainville Government with the capacity to reach remote and marginalised populations, linking communities to national processes. BWF's expertise in gender sensitive programming and women's representation ensured that the voter education workshops included awareness on gender equality, women's leadership and women's right to vote freely. This resulted in more women being empowered to vote confidently and freely in the 2017 election.
- BWF used an action-learning approach, with a pilot phase and early mid-term review used to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and adjusted their approach to delivering the workshops accordingly.
- BWF developed and mentored a network of Voter Education Community Trainers across all Districts of Bougainville, including women who role modelled leadership. One woman Voter Education Community Trainer from South Bougainville stated that 'BWF has taught me lots of new things about voter education, I gained new skills and tools on how to address communities including public speaking... I am more confident now, am empowered to speak up and out in public... I can now make informed decisions and feel proud to have been part of this catalyst for change.'
- Mock elections as well as posters and other materials provided by the Office for the Bougainville Electoral Commission and Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission were effective tools in increasing people's understanding of the Limited Preferential Voting system and confidence to vote. This was particularly effective for people with low literacy and reduced people's fear of voting. A young participant from Bana stated that 'now I am relieved of the fear of voting after attending the awareness. I am confident that knowing my right I am now able to identify a good leader to vote for.'
- Council of Elders leaders were supportive of the project, supported implementation and requested continued voter education in the lead up to the referendum in 2019.

Lessons Learned:



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

- There is a great need to continue to increase the civic participation of the 'lost generation' and other marginalised groups into democratic processes. Much of Bougainville's population reside in rural and remote areas. BWF's village-based rollout model was an innovative and extremely effective way to reach underserved communities. However, a lack of infrastructure, challenging topography and safety and security risks pose a huge barrier to access for all rights awareness programs.
- The ability for Voter Education Community Trainers to stay engaged in a 20-month program was a challenge, although the project sustained a good retention rate through an action-learning approach and by providing ongoing support and mentoring to Voter Education Community Trainers. Women Voter Education Community Trainers had the added burden of security, family responsibilities and the gendered reception to their roles as trainers. Additional budget should be secured to ensure that safe transport is available and that time delays caused by lack of transport to most villages are accounted for. Responding to concerns about the security of Voter Education Community Trainers, the project supported local assistants to accompany Voter Education Community Trainers where needed.
- Radio programs aired were well-received with strong audience engagement. Voter Education Community Trainers also noted a large appetite for voter education and awareness for general elections as well as the 2019 referendum.
- Voter Education Community Trainers needed to train communities on both the Limited Preferential Voting (used in Autonomous Bougainville Government and National Government elections) and First Past the Post systems (used in Community Government elections), to avoid confusion for the Papua New Guinea National Elections. Voter Education Community Trainers now have the knowledge and skills to provide voter education for the next Community Government elections.
- While monitoring reports and election observations indicate a strong correlation between the voter education workshops and increased voter engagement and fewer informal votes, future projects should increase engagement with the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission to ensure that adequate data on voter behaviour can be utilised to assess the impact of the workshops.

Recommendations:

- The collaboration between government, non-government and multi-lateral organisations allows for a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to voter education. For example, BWF successfully complemented the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission's technical knowledge of voting processes by introducing a focus on women as voters and candidates.
- Strengthen monitoring frameworks for future voter education projects to better track qualitative changes in perceptions of women's leadership and women's freedom to vote independently. In addition, work with the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission and Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission to capture and make publically available quantitative data to track changes in voter registration numbers and the rate of informal votes.
- BWF staff and Voter Education Community Trainers found that many people in communities do not have a good understanding of the upcoming referendum or its potential impact for Bougainville. We recommend that referendum awareness and voter education includes comprehensive gender equality and peace building components.



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

- The *Community Government Act 2016*, requiring gender parity in local government, is an opportunity to support women take on influential roles in politics. In the lead up to the next Community Government elections in 2022, we draw attention to the need for awareness raising on gender equality, women's leadership and voting rights
- BWF needs to strengthen governance mechanisms to ensure they remain a stable and effective advocate representing the women and girls of Bougainville. Continued governance and organisational development support is essential for BWF to continue this role.



5. Case Studies

Illiteracy in remote communities

Mathew¹, aged 51 years from Tamusei, Sapani in the Peit Constituency, shared his life experience in his peaceful, but very remote village. Mathew has been a widower for several years and has sole care of his eight children (seven boys and one girl), all of whom are grown up. Only one of his children is married. He was fortunate to marry to a woman from Kohenou, and as a result, his children have received a formal education.

Mathew however laments that in his small community of about 40 people, most have never received government services. Water tanks are needed to catch rain water as the creeks and rivers that used to supply water are no longer safe. Limited transport and roads means that there are no markets for cash crops such as coconut. People in the community would like to build houses but cannot transport roofing iron. Mathew says that the lifestyle in his community is very good but education remains poor. The whole community are suffering from lack of literacy. Health care is also a problem. Mothers have to walk long distances to seek medical attention. Pregnant women need to walk more than three hours to the nearest bus station located in Nokia, Bibinam in the Tsitalato constituency, to then travel to the Buka General Hospital to give birth.

The long-term effects of the Bougainville conflict on all facets of life, including electoral processes. While people who were educated prior to the crisis tend to vote, many of the 'lost generation' said that as they could not read or write they were discouraged from voting. They felt shy and were concerned about how they would appear to others. They did not want to expose their lack of education. Through the Voter Education workshop, more people now understand the basics of the elections and may be more confident to vote.

New Voter

Linda², aged 23 years from the Hagogohe Constituency was a first time voter in the 2017 National Election. Linda states that after attending the Voter Education community awareness workshop in her Constituency, she was prepared and looking forward to casting her first vote on a ballot paper. Linda said, during the campaign weeks, she was attentively listening to the candidates campaigning. Before the polling week, Linda had her three preferences set. She made her own decision to choose which leader she wanted to vote for. During the polling week, she went confidently to check her name, dip her fingers into the ink and take her ballot papers. Standing all by herself and feeling nervous she walked to the polling booth. Her hands were shaking but she was able to cast her vote easily because she had already made her three choices. Her choice of leaders was based on their campaigns and she felt and trusted that, if successful, the candidates would make a change in Bougainville. She was also very happy as she was now using her right to vote freely.

Linda commented that the Limited Preferential Vote system that was used in this year's Papua New Guinea National Election is complicated for the three quarters of voters who are illiterate. However, the Voter Education community awareness workshops were helpful and educated all voters. Linda was very happy because she was one of them. Linda still wants such voter education awareness workshops to continue in the years to come to educate those that will be turning 18 in the coming years and those that missed out in preparation for

¹ Name changed for privacy

² Name changed for privacy



the 2019 Referendum for Bougainville and the 2020 Autonomous Bougainville Government General Election. Linda now confidently waits to vote again in the coming elections.

Referendum

The synergies between BWF's Young Women's Leadership Program and Voter Education have enabled BWF to not only extend their education of voter rights and awareness to young women and their families but to also support the active participation of young women in this democratic process. This year, six young women had the confidence and skills to apply for election observation positions and three young women (unsuccessfully) contested seats in the community government election.

The November 2017 Young Women's Leadership Forum, hosted by BWF with DFAT funding, was an opportunity for community leaders to present alternative visions for Bougainville. For example, the Member for North Bougainville and Economic Development Minister spoke about his role as a Member of Parliament, women's leadership and the upcoming referendum.

During his speech, the North Member talked about the importance of the women's vote and their role as peace builders and mothers. A staunch supporter of an independent Bougainville, he emphasised that in order for Bougainville to be economically viable, Panguna and other profitable mines must reopen. He emphasised the role that young women could take in advocating within their communities and families for an Independent Bougainville in order to fulfil this vision.

Earlier that morning, Wendy Sawa from the Autonomous Bougainville Government Department of Primary Industries & Marine Resources presented an alternative. She spoke to the young women around the need to protect the country's natural and marine resources from pollution and extractive industries. She spoke about the harmful impacts that mining and extractive industries have had on the social fabric of Bougainvillean clans and culture and the negative health and social impacts on women and children.

Forums such as these assist Bougainvilleans to make informed decisions on how a vote for independence could affect their land tenure, health and livelihoods.

6. Conclusions

The Voter Education Project reached 686 per cent of its target beneficiaries, including 51 per cent women and 1.3 per cent people living with disability. The project's community level awareness on voter education reached some of the most remote and underserved areas of Bougainville. Observations from community trainers, BWF staff and election officials indicate that the voter education was effective, as evidenced by reports of fewer informal votes, and voters, particularly women, having the confidence to vote freely. These outcomes are significant in an emerging democracy and post-conflict context, particularly for Bougainville in the lead up to the referendum for independence.

Despite BWF's internal instability, the project team and community trainers were able to implement all activities effectively and efficiently, going far beyond the expected reach of the project and utilising creative approaches to workshop delivery. They demonstrated resilience,



Voter Education Project Report: May 2016 - December 2017

agility and skill to deliver effective voter education and to model a new approach to fostering an inclusive democratic process in Bougainville.

The Voter Education Project was critical in supporting the people of Bougainville to freely and confidently exercise their democratic rights in the 2017 Papua New Guinea National Election. Similar work is needed going forward to ensure that women are supported to participate in elections for all levels of government, and that voters are well informed of their rights and the process for the 2019 referendum. BWF has developed an effective model of voter education that can be applied for future elections as well as the 2019 Referendum on Independence, in partnership with the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commission and the Office for Referendum.