

The local government system in

# Papua New Guinea



## Key facts

**POPULATION (Census 2000):** 5,171,548  
**AREA:** 462 840 sq km  
**CAPITAL:** Port Moresby  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP:** -  
**CURRENCY:** kina (PGK)  
**HEAD OF STATE:** HM Queen Elizabeth II  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL:** Michael Ogio  
**HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:**  
 Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare  
**FORM OF GOVERNMENT:** constitutional monarchy  
**PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:** unitary  
**STATE STRUCTURE:** federal  
**LANGUAGES:** English, Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu (official)  
**NATIONAL ELECTIONS: last:** 2011; **turnout:** -  
**next:** 2016  
**LOCAL ELECTIONS: last:** 2008; **turnout:** -  
**next:** 2013

## SUMMARY

Papua New Guinea is a federal constitutional monarchy with three spheres of government: central, provincial and local. Local government is enshrined in the national constitution and whilst the 89 districts are administrative only, the 20 provinces and the 325 local-level governments (LLGs) are both political and administrative. The main governing legislation is the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments 1995 and the Local-level Governments Administration Act 1997. The Minister of Provincial and Local Government Affairs has statutory responsibility over all matters of local government. There are 40 urban LLGs and 275 rural LLGs; however there is very little difference between the two types. Local authorities may levy a variety of local taxes and charges which account for the vast majority of revenue. There are government transfers to cover staff salaries as well as for specific development projects. Local authorities are responsible for water supply and have joint responsibility with provinces for roads, waste disposal, health and environmental protection, economic promotion and tourism.

## 1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Papua New Guinea is a federal constitutional monarchy with a unicameral parliament, the House of Assembly. The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II who is represented by a governor-general. The governor-general can serve a maximum of two terms and is indirectly elected by the members of the House of Assembly with a simple majority for the first term, and a two-thirds majority in the case of a second term. The 109 members of the House of Assembly (MPs) are directly elected through universal adult suffrage from 20 provincial and 89 district single-seat constituencies. The governor-general appoints a prime minister from among the MPs, who is usually the leader of the majority party or largest party within a coalition following a general election. A cabinet of 28 is appointed from amongst the MPs by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister.

There are 20 provincial assemblies: 18 for the provinces, and one each for the autonomous region of Bougainville and the National Capital District of Port Moresby. Each assembly comprises the MPs from that province, one woman representative, three chieftaincy representatives (where appropriate) and up to three other nominated members.

## 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 2.1 Constitutional provisions:

Local government is enshrined in the national constitution.

### 2.2 Main legislative texts:

- The Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments 1995
- The Provincial Governments Administration Act 1997
- The Local-level Governments Administration Act 1997.

## 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 3.1 Local government within the state:

There are three spheres of government: national, provincial and local. The 89 districts are administrative while provinces and local governments are political and administrative. Local authorities are called local-level governments (LLGs) and there are 40 urban LLGs and 275 rural LLGs.

### 3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Minister of Provincial and Local Government Affairs has statutory responsibility over all matters of local government. The minister has

**Table 1.** Distribution of councils and population (Census 2000)

Province	District	Rural LLGs	Urban LLGs	WDCs*	Population (Census 2000)	% rural
Bougainville	3	1	0	n/a	175,160	n/a
Central	4	13	0	n/a	183,983	n/a
Chimbu (Simbu)	6	2	18	n/a	259,703	n/a
Eastern Highlands	8	2	22	n/a	432,972	n/a
East New Britain	4	2	16	n/a	220,133	n/a
East Sepik	6	1	25	n/a	343,181	n/a
Enga	4	1	15	n/a	295,031	n/a
Gulf	2	1	9	n/a	106,898	n/a
Madang	6	1	18	n/a	365,106	n/a
Manus	1	1	11	n/a	43,387	n/a
Milne Bay	4	1	15	n/a	210,412	n/a
Morobe	9	3	30	n/a	539,404	n/a
NCD Port Moresby	1	0	0	n/a	254,158	n/a
New Ireland	2	1	8	n/a	118,350	n/a
Oro (Northern)	2	1	8	n/a	133,065	n/a
Sandaun (West Sepik)	4	1	16	n/a	185,741	n/a
Southern Highlands	8	3	29	n/a	546,265	n/a
Western (Fly)	3	3	11	n/a	153,304	n/a
Western Highlands	7	1	14	n/a	440,025	n/a
West New Britain	2	1	10	n/a	184,508	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>6,129</b>	<b>5,190,786</b>	<b>86.7</b>

\*Ward development committees Source: National Statistical Office<sup>1</sup>

the power to dismiss members for misconduct in office or for neglect of duty.

### 3.3 Council types:

Papua New Guinea has both urban and rural LLGs; however, there is very little difference in either the composition or the functions and responsibilities of the two. LLGs have an average of 19 members each, including the chairperson. LLGs have full discretion to establish the committees they deem necessary to carry out their functions effectively and efficiently. Each LLG may also have up to three additional members appointed to represent various interest groups: one each nominated by the Papua New Guinea Trades' Union Congress, the Employers' Federation and to represent women's organisations.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections:

The last local government election was conducted in August 2008. Since then there have been supplementary and by-elections conducted for failed elections in various provinces.

### 4.2 Voting system:

Local government elections are held every five years, with each of the 6,129 wards in the country electing a single member. The head of an LLG may be elected by the LLG members or, if there is a proclamation by the head of state, directly by the electorate. The term of office is five years.

### 4.3 Elected representatives:

Eleven provinces have directly elected their presidents while nine have opted to maintain the existing system allowing the heads of LLGs to be elected by ward members.

### 4.4 Women's representation:

In each LLG sector at least two women must be nominated for election. This has ensured the inclusion of at least one female member in each of the 325 local governments. Ten per cent of all LLG members are women. In the last election, three women were elected LLG presidents, others were elected ward members in their respective wards.

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement and 5.2 Implementation:

The Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments 1995 provides for participative structures, including a committee system that involves reporting from community meetings to the LLG via ward development committees. Each ward committee comprises the elected member for the ward (who is the chairperson) and a maximum of five community representatives (of whom two must be women) as associate members. The function of the ward committee is to serve as a consultative and advisory committee to the LLG.

### 5.3 E-government:

There is no e-government strategy for LLGs in Papua New Guinea.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 6.1 National local government association:

Papua New Guinea Urban Local-Level Government Association (PNGULLGA) is recognised both in the constitution and by law constitution and membership is mandatory for all urban municipalities. PNGULLGA aims to encourage and protect effective and efficient democratic local government in the urban areas. The association is funded by membership contributions. The association is viewed as an NGO and does not receive any direct grant from central government to support operations; however, funding support may be provided if requested on a case-by-case basis.

There is no association for rural LLGs.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

PNGULLGA works in partnership with central government and its agencies. The Ministry of Inter-Government Relations has specific responsibility for the promotion of intergovernmental relations but other ministries and departments have similar roles. The Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-Level Governments 1995 provides for a provincial and local-level government mediation and arbitration tribunal. This body was created to settle disputes between or within the three different spheres of government.

In each province, the LLGs compile their plans and budgets into a joint district planning and budget priorities committee, which in turn reports to a joint provincial planning and budget priorities committee.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Independent scrutiny of LLGs is provided by the Public Services Commission and the Auditor General.

## 9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

### 9.1 Locally raised revenue:

Local authorities may levy:

- Community services taxes, fees and charges
- Public entertainment taxes
- General trading licence fees
- Domestic animal licence fees
- Corporation and personal head tax
- Other charges and fees.

The ministry supervises locally raised taxes through budget approval and reporting.



**Table 2.** Budgeted revenue and expenditure for Lae City Council (2003)

Revenue		Expenditure	
<b>Government transfers</b>			
Salaries and wages	3,412	Recurrent	5,531,681
Provincial grants	637,680	Capital	2,151,209
<b>Local revenue</b>			
Taxes	3,360,283	-	-
Fees and charges	1,610,136	-	-
Rates	1,190,100	-	-
Other	921,947	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,682,890</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,682,890</b>

Source: Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs<sup>4</sup>

**9.2 Transfers:**

The grants made to local government include:

- Administration grant (unconditional)
- Staffing grants
- Development grants
- Town and urban services grants.

**9.3 Local authority staff:**

All elected council leaders are full-time and are paid K50-200 per month. This remuneration is determined by the Salaries Remuneration Commission.

Local government staff are members of the national public service and are recruited centrally through the Department of Personnel Management and Provincial Administrations. They come under the provincial administration HR structure. The district administrator is also the chief executive officer of the LLG in a district, and is responsible for administrative services and the coordination of policy formulation, planning and implementation. National-level officers of the public service may from time to time be deployed to work within the districts. Local salaries are paid by central government in the form of a specific grant.

**References and useful websites**

1. National Statistical Office of Papua New Guinea [www.spc.int/prism/country/pg/stats/index.htm](http://www.spc.int/prism/country/pg/stats/index.htm)  
2000 Census [www.spc.int/prism/country/pg/stats/Pop\\_Soc\\_%20Stats/popsoc.htm](http://www.spc.int/prism/country/pg/stats/Pop_Soc_%20Stats/popsoc.htm)
2. UN statistics <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>
3. IMF statistics [www.imf.org/external/data.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm)
4. Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs [www.dplga.gov.pg](http://www.dplga.gov.pg)
5. UNDP Human Development Report 2010 [www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org)
6. The Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments 1995 and the Local-level Governments Administration Act 1997 [www.clg.uts.edu.au/research/paclocgov.html](http://www.clg.uts.edu.au/research/paclocgov.html)
7. Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission [www.pngec.gov.pg](http://www.pngec.gov.pg)

**10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY**

Most public services are provided by the national government with support from the provinces and LLGs. Local authorities are involved in the development of roads and parks, refuse collection and disposal, health and environmental protection, economic promotion and tourism. They are also responsible for water supply.



## Annex A. Summary of service provision in different spheres of government

Service	Delivering authority			Remarks
	Central	Provinces	Local Government	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Police	■			Most services are provided by the national government with support given by both provincial and local government as indicated. (unitary system of government)
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil justice	■			
Civil status register	■			
Statistical office	■			
Electoral register	■			
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Pre-school	■	■		As above
Primary	■	■		
Secondary	■			
Vocational and technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
Other	■			
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>				
Kindergarten and nursery	■			As above
Family welfare services	■			
Welfare homes	■			
Social security	■			
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>				
Primary care	■			As above
Hospitals	■			
Health Protection	■			
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>				
Housing	■			As above
Town planning	■			
Agriculture Land planning	■			
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
Roads	■	■	■	As above
Transport	■			
Urban roads			■	
Urban Rail	nil			
Ports	■			
Airports	■			
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>				
Water and sanitation	■		■	As above
Refuse collection and disposal			■	
Cemeteries and crematoria			■	
Slaughterhouses	■		■	
Environmental protection	■		■	
Consumer protection	■		■	
			■	
<b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>				
Theatre and concerts	■	■	■	As above
Museums and libraries	■	■	■	
Parks and open spaces	■		■	
Sports and leisure	■	■	■	
Other cultural facilities	■	■	■	
			■	
<b>UTILITIES</b>				
Gas services				As above
District heating				
Water supply	■		■	
Electricity	■			
<b>ECONOMIC</b>				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■			As above
Economic promotion	■			
Trade and industry	■			
Tourism	■			
Other economic services	■	■		