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**Bougainville Referendum Support Project
Final Report to the Government of Japan, May 2020**

I am pleased to submit herewith the Final Report for the Bougainville Referendum Support Project (the 'Project'), for the period 01 August 2018 to 31 March 2020.

The report provides an overview of the achievements of the Project, its performance and implementation strategy, and management effectiveness together with lessons learned and associated recommendations.

UNDP takes this opportunity to thank the Government of Japan for its contributions and looks forward to strengthening our partnership in support of development in Papua New Guinea.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Wagener', is positioned above the printed name.

Dirk Wagener
Resident Representative
UNDP Papua New Guinea

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Reporting Period	01 August 2018 – 31 March 2020
Donor	Government of Japan
Country	Papua New Guinea
Project Title	Bougainville Referendum Support Project
Project ID (Atlas Award ID)	00100579
Outputs (Atlas Project ID and Description)	00103472 (Bougainville Referendum Support Project)
UNDAF Output	Output 4.1: By 2022, Government agencies and non-government organizations working on good governance, peace and security have capacity and leadership to undertake measures to combat corruption, prevent violence and provide access to justice.
CPD Output	Output 1.3: The Bougainville Referendum is supported to conduct free and fair elections, and post referendum strategies with the two Governments are formulated.
Implementing Partner(s)	UNDP, Bougainville Referendum Commission and Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission.
Project Start Date	01 August 2018
Project End Date	31 March 2020
Implementation Modality	Direct Implementation Modality (DIM)
Project objective	By December 2019, the Bougainville Referendum is held successfully; eligible voters are given a credible opportunity to exercise an informed right to self-determination in a safe and secure environment, and accept the outcome of the process, further strengthening peace in Bougainville.
Revenue received	Government of Japan: USD 891,359.99
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Acronyms

ABG	Autonomous Bougainville Government
BPA	Bougainville Peace Agreement
BRC	Bougainville Referendum Commission
BRSP	Bougainville Referendum Support Project
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EMB	Electoral Management Body
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
JSB	Joint Supervisory Body
JRBC	Joint Bougainville Referendum Committee
OBEC	Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner
PNGEC	Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Executive Summary

UNDP with other UN Agencies supported political dialogue with groups, such as ex-combatants, where the unification of political factions is central to peace and stability in Bougainville and other parts of the country. UNDP focused on young people as peacebuilders, ensured wide participation and the inclusion of women in a range of processes. UNDP successfully provided a neutral space within which political issues were addressed and resolved by supporting mediation and peace negotiations. Over the years, UNDP has provided material and advisory support to the special purpose Bougainville Referendum Commission.

Through the Bougainville Referendum Support Project, UNDP offered specific support to the National Government and the Government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, via the Bougainville Referendum Commission, in preparing for the 2019 referendum. The Government of Japan was a key donor to the Project. It provided USD 891,359.99 to support the Project to purchase a pair of digital printing presses, camera and video production kits and community projector kits; voting screens; polling kits; Indelible ink and relevant clearing and handling services. In 2018, it supported six month's salary of UNDP's Senior Referendum Adviser to manage the Bougainville Referendum Support Project. The Project supported the BRC to prepare and hold the Bougainville Referendum successfully in November 2019.

On 11 December 2019, the international Chair of the Bougainville Referendum Commission announced the results of the referendum on Bougainville's future political status. This was the culmination of a long process set in train by the Bougainville Peace Agreement. UNDP has supported the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, through facilitating timely decision-making (before and after the referendum), the unification of factions, and promotion of social cohesion and widespread awareness of referendum-related issues. UNDP provided planning and training assistance to the Bougainville Referendum Commission and other key institutions. It also assisted with preparations for the transition to a post-Bougainville Peace Agreement environment, while also coordinating all international assistance to the referendum process.

The Project was instrumental in ensuring that the referendum happened as planned in 2019. The final report produced by the Bougainville Referendum Commission, annexed to this report, acknowledges the vital contribution this Project made to the successful conduct of the referendum. Through judicious use of the resources available, it also ensured that the referendum's cost was commensurate with the size of the task. The printing press and its associated materials (e.g. ink, paper, and maintenance) financed by Japan were instrumental in the printing of voter education materials and all other referendum-related materials. The community projector kits enabled field awareness staff to share the latest messages and information from the BRC with communities across Bougainville. This ensured a wide-spread understanding of the referendum process.

The Project was able to provide high-value, integral support under significant time pressure and challenging conditions. The Project has fully met its overall objective. The referendum was completed in December 2019 and was not subject to challenge by petition and so is now finalised. The Project supported BRC activities that ensured the referendum was credible, inclusive and peaceful. The result of the Referendum has been widely accepted by the people of Bougainville and by the two Governments as reflecting the will of the people.

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The Project was specifically credited by the BRC, including its Chair, as being highly relevant and supportive in progressing implementation of the Bougainville Referendum. In a statement¹ issued on 11 December, the Commonwealth Observer Group concluded that “the Referendum held from 23 November to 7 December 2019 was credible, transparent and inclusive. Those Bougainville residents qualified to vote, and who took part in the process, had the opportunity to express their will and exercise their franchise. The Referendum outcome reflects the view of the majority who voted.”

Context

Following nearly a decade of conflict (1988-1998) and the deaths of up to 20,000 people (through direct and indirect effects of the conflict) and displacement of many more, the PNG National Government and various Bougainville actors signed the Bougainville Peace Agreement in August 2001. Key provisions of the BPA were subsequently reflected in the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, the Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, and the Organic Law on Peacebuilding in Bougainville, Autonomous Bougainville Government, and Bougainville Referendum 2002.

The BPA has three main pillars: a deferred referendum on the future status of Bougainville (including an independence option); a special, high level of autonomy for Bougainville; and an agreed weapons disposal plan. The referendum was to take place between June 2015 and June 2020 and was subject to ratification by the National Parliament of PNG.

Under the Joint Supervisory Body established through the BPA, which includes representatives of both the PNG Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, a Joint Bougainville Referendum Committee (JBRC) was established. In 2014, the JBRC developed a number of work streams to guide discussions on the referendum.

The United Nations has played a critical role in the BPA process since its earliest days, and the two Governments sought United Nations’ assistance in preparing for the Referendum on a number of occasions, including an 11 November 2014 request from the national Chief Secretary and a 20 May 2016 Joint Request for the United Nations to provide support for the Referendum’s preparations. Also, in May 2016, the Joint Supervisory Body endorsed the option of establishing an independent administrative authority (the Bougainville Referendum Commission) to organise and carry out the Referendum on behalf of the respective electoral authorities (the PNG Electoral Commission and the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner). The two Governments formalized that decision at a January 2017 signing ceremony, and the Governor-General issued the charter of the Bougainville Referendum Commission on 30 August 2017.

Accordingly, the BRSP was designed to provide support to the BRC. An initial target date for the Referendum was set for the 15 June 2019 by the JSB. In 2019, by exchange of letters, the two Governments agreed for the writs to be issued on 27 September and for the referendum to commence polling on the 23 November with the result to be announced no later than 20 December 2019. Considering the slow state of referendum preparations at the time of drafting, the proposed approach featured a high degree of flexibility to deploy resources where they would have maximum impact in moving the process forward.

¹ Available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/papua-new-guinea-referendum-political-future-bougainville-was-credible-transparent-and>

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Performance Review

Overall results achieved against the objective

The Project has fully met its overall objective: the referendum was completed in December 2019 and was not subject to challenge by petition and so is now finalised. The Project supported BRC activities that ensured the Referendum was credible, inclusive and peaceful. The result of the Referendum has been widely accepted by the people of Bougainville and by the two Governments as reflecting the will of the people.

Results achieved against activities

Activity 1: Support to the establishment of the BRC, including preparations for enrolment

The establishment of an independent Referendum Commission that benefited from the technical inputs of the National and Autonomous electoral commission. In addition, the leadership of eminent Papua New Guineans and Bougainvilleans, chaired by a distinguished International Statesman and supported by international best practices through its advisors was critical to achieving a credible, inclusive and peaceful referendum.

The BRSP was designed to be purposefully nimble. This was a key component in supporting its success. In late 2018, the Project was able to start procurement of core material goods for the BRC made possible by initial contributions by the Government of Japan to purchase a pair of digital printing presses, camera and video production kits and community projector kits.

Under this activity, the Project with support from the funds provided by Japan paid for six months of the salary of the Senior Referendum Advisor based in Buka who was the lead technical adviser. This adviser provided management and oversight of Project key activities outlined in this report.

The Project worked closely with the BRC to provide all essential operational support to ensure that the Commission was well equipped and prepared for the referendum exercise. The printing press and its associated materials (ink, paper, and maintenance) financed by Japan were instrumental in the printing of voter education materials, and all other referendum-related materials. The community projector kits enabled field awareness staff to share the latest messages and information from the BRC with communities across Bougainville to ensure wide-spread understanding of the Referendum.

In the final Project Board meeting on 18th February 2020, it was agreed that the assets including the printing press purchased through Japan's contribution and other equipment, be transferred to the ABG and National Coordination Office for Bougainville Affairs (NCOBA). This was seen as an important way to meet the various needs of the two Governments, with a specific focus on supporting the post-Referendum process, the 2020 ABG elections and possible crisis response in the future. The UNDP Resident Representative presided over a Handover Ceremony on the 3 March 2020. During this event, he officially handed over the assets to the Acting Chief Secretary Thomas Raivet, and Acting Director of NCOBA, John Anuma, in the presence of Embassy of Japan officials and other key donor partners New Zealand and Australia. To ensure sustainability, the printing press was transferred to the Office of the Media Bureau to assist with awareness materials for the post referendum period. OBEC will have access to the printers to assist with printing of the ballots and awareness materials for the 2020 ABG General Election. A two-year repair and maintenance package was procured to support continuity of service of the printing press during this period.

Activity 2: Augmenting BRC capacity

This activity covered three inter-related areas of support: the deployment of a Senior Referendum Advisor; the deployment of technical advisors across the BRC's operations; and support to the BRC Chair, Mr Ahern. In 2019, the Senior Referendum Advisor oversaw the Project's day to day operations,

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managed the Project's advisors, managed the Flexible Funding Window in conjunction with BRC officials, coordinated with other United Nations Projects as well as performing the functions of a senior United Nations electoral advisor.

The Project was able to also provide longer-term advisory support, following the provision of resources, to increase the desired ten long-term advisors (in addition to the Senior Advisor). BRSP was the only assistance project to deploy advisors to the three BRC field offices (Buka, Arawa and Buin) to support awareness and operations. These advisors were recruited as International UN Volunteers, in conjunction with the United Nations Volunteer's office in Bangkok. In addition, these advisors provided a backup communications channel for BRC HQ managers to the field.

The Advisors worked closely with their counterparts to support capacity and skills development. The contribution by Japan to fund the six months of salary Senior Referendum Advisor enabled the Project team to be supervised effectively to deliver on the Project's workplan and the objectives of the BRC.

A key element of the Project was to provide the mechanism for the deployment of the BRC's international chair, former Irish Prime Minister, Mr. Bertie Ahern, having the Senior Referendum Advisor support the BRC Chair to work effectively to deliver on his role. The Senior Referendum Advisor provided briefings and reports to the Chair to enable him to meet political heads of both Governments as well as the BRC Commissioner to progress preparations for holding the referendum in November 2019.

Activity 3: Flexible Funding Window

Due to the funding issues facing the BRC, the BRC relied on the flexible funding window provided by this activity to meet financial shortfalls, in relation to both the timing and quantum of Government funding for BRC. With support of the Senior Referendum Advisor, this activity helped to 'plug' the BRC's budget gap in several key areas, which are detailed below. The Project provided continuous financial and logistical support to the BRC, with UNDP processing payments on behalf of BRC, or procuring goods and services for the use of BRC throughout 2019.

BRSP was always envisaged to allow for external funding of key electoral supplies. With support of the Senior Referendum Advisor and UNDP Country Office, the BRSP used UNDP's global Electoral Procurement Team to assist in the purchase of voting screens, small ballot boxes, polling kits and indelible ink. These goods were procured to specification, arrived on time and at a lower cost than previous procurements for such goods at previous PNG and Bougainville elections. Any spare materials left after the referendum have been passed to the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner for future use.

In pursuit of bridging the BRC's budget gap, the Senior Referendum Advisor worked with UNDP's Country Office to organise various on-going costs from the BRC budget. These included rent for the BRC headquarters and the central warehouse in Buka, rent for the regional offices in Buin, Arawa and Buka, and the salary of the Chief Referendum Officer. The Senior Referendum Advisor also worked with the BRC to bridge funding gaps in the months up until June 2019, when national contributions were constrained. This allowed the BRC to continue to prepare for the referendum and weather any significant disruptions until the national contributions were received.

In the areas of awareness and external relations, the Project provided financial and technical support across the year. This ranged from organising venues for observer and scrutineer training to meeting travel costs of team members for BRC events. The commercial printing press purchased with support from Japan enabled printing materials for enrolment awareness, the procurement of ID cards and vests for observers and scrutineers, and venues for media briefings and press conferences. The Project hired two portable satellite internet sets for the referendum period, allowing for media centre

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internet provision that directly allowed for full international coverage of the Referendum's polling, counting and results, as well as the first ever 'live cross' to Bougainville by an international broadcaster and live relay of the results announced by ABC Australia to the world.

The Project under the supervision of the Senior Referendum Advisor, supported the BRC to conduct an extensive awareness for voter enrolment. The awareness materials, produced commercially, were distributed across Bougainville and to the polling sites.

Activity 4: Project Management

The Project was managed by the Senior Referendum Advisor based in Buka. The Project had a very lean support cell, with just two full time support staff (project assistant and driver) and one shared project operations lead (shared with the Sustaining Peace in Bougainville Project). The Project was remotely managed by the Deputy Resident Representative in Port Moresby. Additional human resources were provided by the Sustaining Peace in Bougainville Project team at busy times, including finance and operations' associates, as well as from UNDP's Country Office in Port Moresby.

Activity Five: Coordination of International Observers

Under the guidance and support of the Senior Referendum Advisor, UNOPS coordinated and supported international observers with a range of services that included the timely dissemination of information printed using the printers procured under the contribution from Japan. This include briefing packs for stakeholder meetings and communication materials which enabled international observers to undertake their duties effectively. A total of nine countries and four intergovernmental organisations expressed an interest in participating. Only five countries and three intergovernmental organisations however, confirmed their interest before the BRC deadline. These included the Australian, Britain, Japan, New Zealand, the United States, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European, and the Pacific Islands Forum. From these, 107 international observers were accredited, the majority of which observed polling in Bougainville, across 800 polling venues (note: there were a further 29 polling stations outside of Bougainville).

The Project's aim was to contribute to greater efficiency and effectiveness of observation effort and therefore increase the credibility of the referendum process. This assisted with accreditation, the provision of information, briefings, a conduit to help access information, development of a deployment plan and communications support. Overall, the Project achieved its outcomes and contributed to a successful international observer effort. International Observer groups have released statements after the announcement of the referendum result acknowledging its credibility.

Performance Considerations

Capacity Development

The importance of delivering a credible Referendum required efforts to balance technical assistance with capacity building. The Project did manage to build considerable capacity among officials. This did however have to be balanced against the short-frames, political expectations and various requirements that had to be met. Nonetheless, the Senior Referendum Advisor, supported by the contribution from Japan, worked closely with national counterparts to deliver training and workplace experience.

Gender Mainstreaming

The Project itself supported Gender Mainstreaming via the decision to select and strategically place UNVs with experience in promoting women's participation in elections in each of the field offices. This explicitly supported female participation in the Referendum. Such interventions by all actors culminated in the Referendum roll having equal numbers of women and men voting.

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During 2019, specific efforts were made by the Senior Referendum Advisor and BRSP advisors to scrutinise proposed BRC strategies and plans from a gender perspective. A joint gender audit was conducted by BRSP and UNWOMEN, to document lessons learned that could be actioned in other situations with single purpose Electoral Management Bodies. This resulted in further face-to-face awareness (outreach) delivered by women and men in the field.

Human Rights Mainstreaming

All United Nations electoral assistance is grounded in the international human rights framework. In 2019, the Senior Referendum Advisor conducted training for all BRSP advisors on the United Nations electoral framework, with specific attention to the participation of women and people with disabilities. Awareness advisors mainstreamed such access issues into their advice in the field and at headquarters. The Project supported BRC to participate in activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, relating to human rights issues in the referendum. The Senior Referendum Advisor worked with the Buka-based Human Rights Advisor to develop a checklist on human rights monitoring of referendum processes by Civil Society Organisations and other partners.

Implementation Strategy Review

Sustainability

The sustainability of the Project's interventions is channelled through three areas supported by the Senior Referendum Advisor: capacity development and knowledge transfer from advisors to BRC staff that will stay engaged with national and Bougainville elections; asset transfer to support ABG and National Government service delivery going forward in the areas of Post Referendum, ABG 2020 elections and possible crisis management; contributions to achieving a credible, inclusive and peaceful referendum result supporting the ongoing implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

Partnerships and ownership

In addition to BRSP, two other electoral assistance projects were established to work with BRC by IFES and the New Zealand Electoral Commission. Later, additional advisors were provided from standing Australia-New Zealand assistance facilities in PNG and Bougainville, as well as under Australia's aid programme to PNG. The Senior Referendum Advisor was responsible for continuous liaison with these agencies' team leaders and advisors on the ground to ensure that BRC received high quality, value for money assistance.

Innovative Initiatives

The Senior Referendum Advisor worked with the Project to use innovative awareness materials such as SMS blasting to support information dissemination during the lead-up to the referendum.

Management Effectiveness Review

Monitoring and Evaluation

With the contribution from the Government of Japan, UNDP hired the Senior Referendum Advisor, a dedicated technical staff member who administered, managed and monitored overall the Project on day-to-day basis. The Senior Referendum Advisor provided oversight on the Project's implementation, ensured all outputs were produced with the required standard of quality and provided regular updates to the BRC Board of Commissioners as well as to international development partners.

UNDP management were kept fully informed of actions, resources and plans. Nine UNVs who are specialised in electoral process were hired, they provided continuous guidance and support to the Bougainville Electoral Commission on various elements related to voter registration, civil society

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engagement, voter information, media management, training, and logistics. Both the Programme Management Unit and the Operations Unit extended support to the Project and ensured successful implementation of the Project's activities. Operations provide close monitoring on the recording of financial transactions, procurement ensured valid and proper requests were provided consistent with annual work plans and that value to money metrics were applied consistently through implementation. The Programme Management Unit conducted programme quality assurance against quality standards during the implementation process, prepared the financial briefs that were presented to donors during the board meetings, coordinated the implementation of micro assessments on the capacity of Bougainville Referendum Commission and audit requirements limited to the component implemented by BRC and PNGEC. Risk assessments were also prepared and continuously updated.

Cost-effective use of inputs

Goods and services are expensive to procure in Bougainville, or to bring to Bougainville. Within those constraints, the project focused on achieving value for money in procurement. The Senior Referendum Advisor worked with the UNDP's central electoral procurement team ensured that the best possible prices were obtained, and that the BRC was fully supported through the procurement cycle. As an example, BRC's own budget has estimated that ballot papers would cost USD 588,000. In the end, the cost of the ballot papers, including freight from Dubai to Bougainville, was USD38,142 – a significant saving that allowed the Project to provide even more support to BRC.

The long-term international advisors were recruited using the UN Volunteer modality and supervised by the Senior Referendum Advisor. International UNVs are skilled individuals with relevant work experience and in this case, strong electoral backgrounds. The international UNV modality can prove very cost effective when a Project can recruit UNVs of the calibre BRSP was able to recruit.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The Project faced a variety of implementation issues and challenges. Delays in the release of funding to the BRC from the National Government led to some uncertainty. This made planning at time difficult. The delay was a key factor in the decision for the BRC to request a postponement in the referendum date from June until September 2019. However, the support of international development partners including Japan enabled allowed the Project to support the successful conduct of the referendum in November 2019. This support shows the deep commitment of the Project's donors to ensuring the BRC had the capacity to support an inclusive, credible and peaceful referendum.

The Project was specifically credited by the BRC, including its Chair, as being highly relevant and supportive in progressing the implementation of the Bougainville Referendum. A variety of lessons can be drawn from the Project during its implementation which also serve as recommendations. These include:

1. The purchase of the commercial printing press ensured high quality and critical voter awareness materials such as polling information throughout Bougainville and the polling sites outside of Bougainville, were disseminated in a timely manner.
2. UNDP providing technical support through the hiring of an experience Senior Referendum Advisor who:
 - a) Provided advice on financial and operational capacity gaps to support achievement of a credible, inclusive and peaceful referendum.
 - b) Supported coordination to streamline interventions by multiple advisory bodies and donors.

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- c) Provided ongoing support needed to ensure meaningful and continued/increased engagement by marginalized groups such as women, in elections in Bougainville.
- d) Project goals, in particular the flexible funding window, were considered very relevant and beneficial.
- e) Supervised UNVs who are highly skilled and valuable human resource who can provide cost-effective support.

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Annex 1 – UNDP Final Financial Report, 31st March 2020

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Annex 2 – Pictures of the equipment purchased

