

# Governance and corruption in PNG's public service: Insights from four subnational administrations

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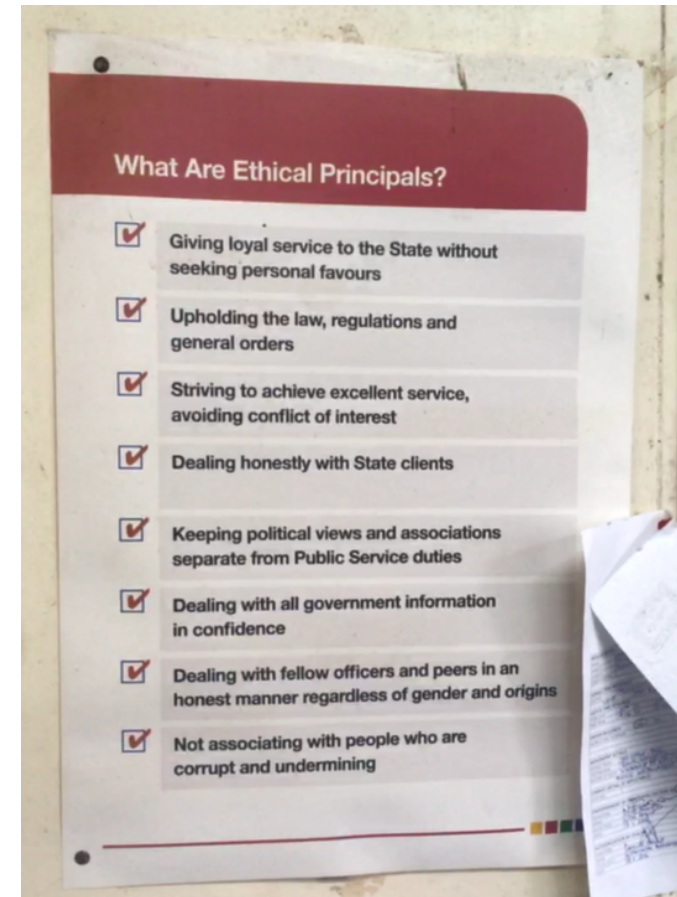
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# Introduction

- High levels of investment into good governance and anti-corruption
- Corruption considered widespread in PNG's bureaucracy
- We know more about citizens perceptions of corruption (e.g. see Walton, 2013, 2015, 2018)
- But know little about perceptions of corruption and good governance in public service (some exceptions, eg Pieper, 2004)
- **Argument: while normative reforms are important, social and political factors critical for policy interventions.**



# Trends and challenges for PNG's Public service

Politicians increasingly interfering in bureaucracy through:

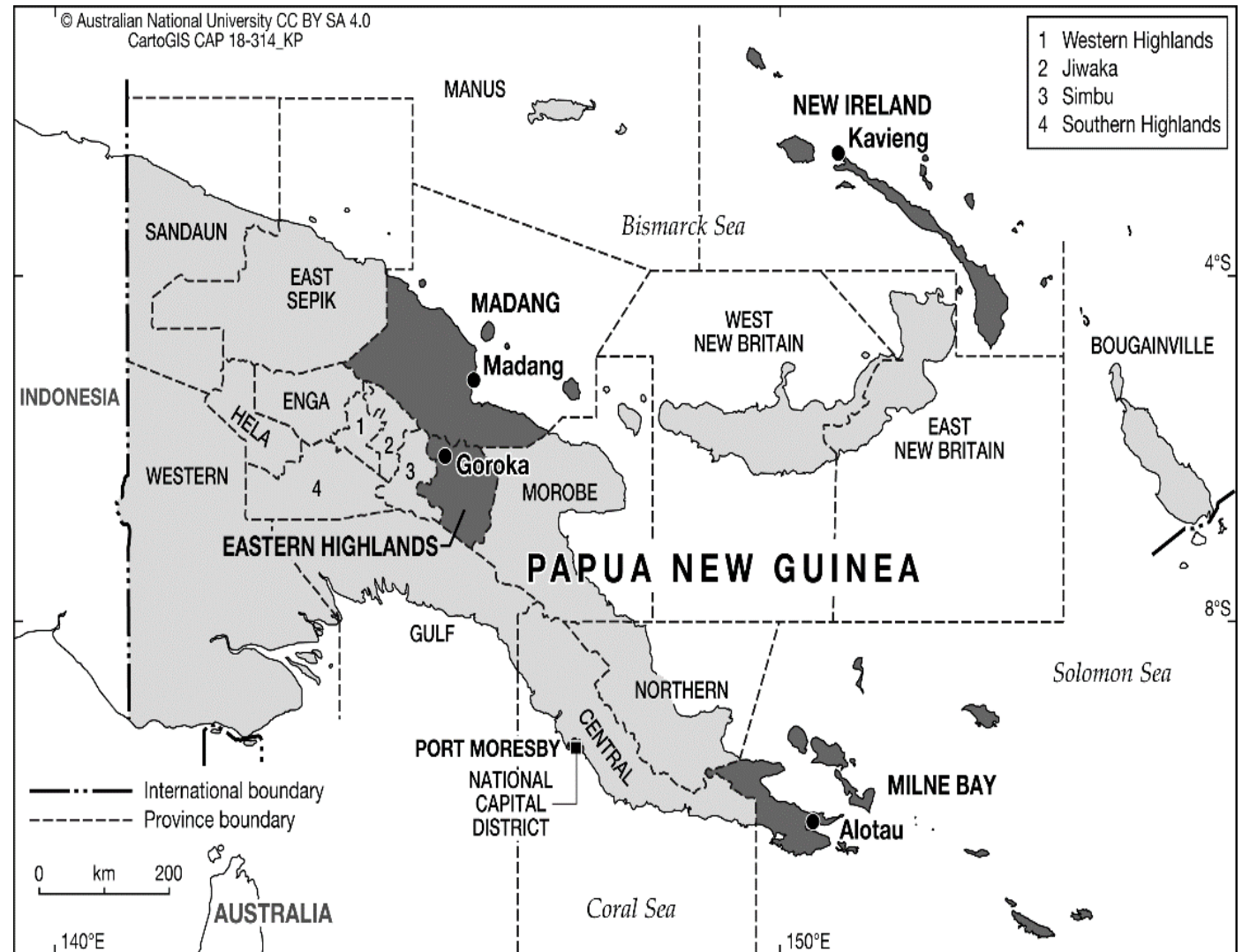
- District Development Authority Act (2014)
- Funding of Service Improvement Programs (SIP)
- Public Services (Management) Act (2014)

Reforms have also led to private sector playing increased service delivery role

Public servants pressured for unofficial favours through the wantok system (Payani, 2000)

# Methodology

- 136 administrators
- 43 percent female
- representative spread of junior, middle and senior staff
- Four provinces →
- Snowball sampling
- Qualitative and quantitative questions.



# Threats to good governance



# Corruption

*“The biggest and the most feared threat is corruption. It has crippled everyone in the system...It comes in different forms and happens at all levels...It is a brick wall that stops water from flowing down the stream”.*

*Female public servant, New Ireland*

- Two-thirds had found out about corruption over the past two years
- Less than half of those who had uncovered corruption reported it
- Assemblage of business, politicians, public servants, public involved

# Politics and political interference

*“[the] biggest threat in PNG is the politics. Politics in the sense that decisions regarding the administration do not follow the laws that were established by the government, they only follow political interest”.*

Mid-level male public servant, New Ireland

*“In the past it was really [only] the top management [whose positions] were determined by the decisions by the political leaders of the province, now the senior management even ... officer’s positions are influenced by politicians”.*

Mid-level male public servant, Milne Bay

# Wantok system

*“PNG’s culture [is the] is wantok system, which is the biggest threat... A few people are in a positions/authority where they make decisions to ... help their wantoks. This is not fair because the majority miss out in terms on employment and many other things. This wantok system thing should stop, and we should go through the right process or procedures”.*

Mid-level male employee from Eastern Highlands

- Over 90 percent provided favours for their wantoks;
- More than 70 percent said their *wantoks* asked for a favour related to their work
- Junior staff found it most difficult to say no



# Conclusions

## Respondents' recommendations

- Training
- Improved reporting mechanisms (particularly for women)
- Increasing law enforcement

But...

## Policy makers need to:

- Untangle web of political and economic interests
- Respond to reforms enabling political/private sector interference
- Engage with ambivalence around *wantok* system

