



# Rural Peoples' Perceptions of Corruption in Papua New Guinea



March 2009

**Grant Walton**  
*Head Researcher*

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Executive Summary .....	v
Introduction .....	1
Background .....	2
Objectives of the research .....	2
Scope.....	2
Questions guiding the research .....	2
Methodology.....	3
Field Sites .....	3
Method.....	4
Limitations.....	5
Results from focus group discussions.....	7
Story One: Misappropriation of school property .....	7
Story Two: Bribing of voter by political candidate.....	9
Story Three: The tale of a logging company and two landowners .....	11
Story Four: Businessmen influencing the government .....	13
Story Five: Nepotism or a helping hand? .....	14
Key Findings.....	16
What types of acts are understood by participants as corrupt? .....	16
Which behaviours are seen to excuse corrupt acts? .....	17
What are the perceived causes of corruption?.....	17
What are the perceived consequences of corruption?.....	18
Conclusions.....	20
Appendix One.....	22

## Acknowledgements

Conducting research of this variety is not for the faint-hearted. Thankfully there have been many brave and generous souls who have given advice, organised, trained, asked questions, answered questions, driven, written, cajoled and provided funding and resources to keep this project running. Firstly, we thank the many community members who took time to answer questions, organise focus groups and make the researchers feel welcomed. It is our sincere hope that this report, may, in some small way, help to improve conditions in rural communities all over the country. We thank the partner organisations and researchers involved. Their names are provided below:

### Partner organisations

Province	Partner Organisation	Facilitator
Southern Highlands Province	Community Development Initiatives Foundation	Duriyame Tumbi, Tom Kukhang and Chris Ap
Milne Bay	Milne Bay Provincial AIDS Committee	Ruth Bearpark
Madang	Partners In Community Development	Steven Kadam
East New Britain	Barefoot Community Services	Linda and Simon Passingan

### Researchers

Province	Researcher
Southern Highlands Province	Christopher Ap, Kofe Ibu, Lasso Tanguala, Malex Mesengi, Miriam Haibu, Anne Taboe and Nancy Zafe
Milne Bay	Ben Napoleon, Charlie Hesaboda, Joe Mahia, John Napoleon, Cheryl Perocco, Florence Frank, Serina Ketaloia and Verna Guise
Madang	Andrew Mapio, Hais Wasel, Laina Pangasa, Steven Kadam, Jenny Soo, Joan Dambui, Lucy Buck, and Wendy Dogga-Kemas
East New Britain	Clive Passingan, Peter Tutuai, Sammy Giri, William Vomne, Doreen Kaili, Loraine Rore, Rachel Atam and Wevisi Bolasa

Appreciation to the Corruption Perception Survey's advisory team, which comprised of: Dr Sarah Dix (National Research Institute), Dr Jon Barnett (University of Melbourne), Paul Barker (The Institute of National Affairs), Alois Francis (Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council), Emily Taule

(Transparency International Papua New Guinea), Dr Orovu Sepoe (University of Papua New Guinea), Fiona Hukula (National Research Institute), and Dr Alphonse Gelu (National Research Institute). This team provided guidance on the methodology and methods of the study.

Field management, finance, training and researcher supervision were coordinated by Ivan Jemen, Research Coordinator. Credit must also go to the rest of the TI PNG team, particularly Danny George for organising logistical arrangements and Simon Jenkins for helping to shape the initial proposal and for his ongoing ideas. Emily Taule also provided ongoing support and advice. Survey design, training manuals, and initial partner agreements were written and conceived by Grant Walton, Head Researcher.

This research was funded by the Australian aid program – AusAID. Transparency International Papua New Guinea implemented and managed the research.

This report has been written by Grant Walton.

## Executive Summary

In July 2008 Transparency International Papua New Guinea (TIPNG) undertook a six month pilot research project to better understand public perceptions of corruption. Eighty focus group discussions were held in eight rural villages, spread across four provinces of the country. Within these focus groups respondents were asked set questions about five different scenarios, each of which could be perceived as an act of corruption. In addition, respondents were asked about what they thought the word corruption meant, and to give examples of corrupt acts.

The respondents:

- Felt that corrupt acts were wrong when people misused their official office, engaged in illegal activities, acted immorally, and/or engaged in behaviour which rewarded the individual rather than the community. When directly asked about their thoughts on corruption, those who understood the term believed it also referred to social behaviour, misusing entrusted position and structural inequalities (which included unequal distribution of resources, low wages, and a lack of government services).
- Were willing to forgive those engaged in corruption if they thought they were acting from a position of social disadvantage, were interacting with those who had greater power, or were victims of weak governments or faltering democratic processes.
- Believed that corruption was caused by competition and the race for profit, loose government systems, aspects of the wantok system, decaying personal morals, and by the causes of social disadvantage – such as poverty and illiteracy.
- Mostly considered corruption to result in negative outcomes such as lack of services available at the village level, environmental destruction, increased prices of goods and services, a break down of law and order, worsening poverty and social inequality and social problems (including prostitution, womanising and increased use of homebrew alcohol). Some believed that corruption could lead to positive outcomes for the poor and marginalised through providing employment, money and other resources.
- Suggested that they often engaged in acts of resistance against those who they saw as corrupt. This ranged from direct conflict to hidden acts of resistance.

The report concludes by suggesting that anti-corruption efforts in PNG may be able to harness community discontent arising against acts of corruption. However, it also suggests that anti-corruption agencies also need to link their activities to concrete forms of development. Development which enfranchises communities and is sympathetic to the needs of the poor and marginalised.

## Introduction

Many Papua New Guineans have a tale or three to tell about corruption - either through direct experience or the experiences of friends or family. There is a debate surrounding the acceptability of certain practices which may be called corruption, which is not surprising given PNG is so culturally diverse, and a relatively newly established nation-state. Some argue that Melanesian systems of governance have placed less emphasis upon accountability and rather focus upon chiefs or big-men improving their status through gift-giving and reciprocity. They focus upon the incompatibility between state systems and traditional systems. Others argue that the majority of Papua New Guineans' understand the difference between a gift and a bribe, and that the malfeasant nature of corruption can be related back to lessons passed on through traditional culture. In between these views are a range of different explanations about local peoples' acceptance of, and resistance to, corruption.

These debates, however, are not unique to PNG. Philosophers, linguists, and anthropologists have long debated the meaning of corruption, particularly in cross-cultural settings. Within the literature different definitions of the term abound. Each of these definitions has distinctly different connotations as to which types of acts may be considered corrupt, and what needs to be done to mitigate corruption.

Given this, it is important to determine, not only the frequency at which Papua New Guineans' experience corruption (e.g. how many times they have accepted or given money or favours in return for an unofficial benefit), but to also ask them which acts they think are acceptable or unacceptable (and under what circumstances) and the magnitude of the problem (the degree to which each act is 'wrong'). Yet, surprisingly, very little research has been conducted on understanding local perceptions of corruption in PNG. Much has been written about events (such as the *Sandline* crisis<sup>1</sup>) or systems (such as the bureaucracy<sup>2</sup>), which can be considered as contributing to corruption. However, there has yet to be a concentrated effort on understanding local perceptions of corruption. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, where PNG is ranked as one of the more corrupt countries in the world (151 out of 180 countries), scoring a lowly 2.0 out of 10, is based upon the opinions of elite businessmen, journalists and academics. Whilst it is a worthwhile measure, this influential report does not directly survey the people in the countries involved.

This report outlines findings of a series of focus group discussions with local people from four provinces of the country – East New Britain, Madang, Southern Highlands and Milne Bay. It provides a snapshot of rural Papua New Guinean perceptions of corruption. It does this by outlining the background to the study, which includes a brief outline of the objectives, scope and questions guiding the study. Next the report's methodology section outlines where the research was undertaken, why it was undertaken in these locations, whose views are represented, the limits of the study and the method undertaken (focus group discussions). This section is followed by a detailed synopsis of the responses focus group participants gave to five stories. The report then outlines key findings in relation to the research questions, before making some concluding remarks.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: Dorney, S. (2001). *Papua New Guinea: People Politics and History since 1975*. Sydney, ABC Books.

<sup>2</sup> See: Payani, H. H. (2000). "Selected Problems in the Papua New Guinean Public Service." *Asian Journal of Public Administration* 22(2): 135-160.

## **Background**

This report forms the second part of a three phased project. The first phase consisted of identifying provinces and partner organisations to conduct this research. This phase was mostly about planning for field work and ensuring that partner organisations had the capacity and willingness to support the research in each of the four provinces. It resulted in an internal report for TI PNG. The second phase comprised of conducting qualitative research with rural communities in four provinces. This report is the product of the second phase.

The third phase of the research is still to come. Subject to funding, it is hoped that this qualitative research will be followed up by a quantitative survey of perceptions of corruption in rural, urban and semi-urban communities.

### **Objectives of the research**

The primary objective of this survey is to identify and more accurately portray the range of rural peoples' understandings of corruption. TI PNG will use the results of this research to identify effective strategies to combat corruption.

### **Scope**

The report presents research conducted in eight rural communities in four provinces (two communities per province). It therefore provides insights into what some Papua New Guineans' think about corruption. It does not give a statistically valid indication as to what all or most Papua New Guineans think about corruption (that would require a larger scale research program, which samples Papua New Guineans around the entire country). In addition, this phase of the research provides important insights into the types of questions which could frame future quantitative studies into the issue.

### **Questions guiding the research**

The survey is guided by the four research questions, listed below:

1. What types of acts are understood by participants as corrupt?
2. Which behaviours are seen to excuse corrupt acts?
3. What are the perceived causes of corruption?
4. What are the perceived consequences of corruption?

## Methodology

The provinces, villages and individuals chosen for this study, and the rationale for choosing them, are described below. In addition, a description of the method used to gather data as well as some of the limits of the study are also provided.

### Field Sites

#### Rationale for choosing the Provinces

After consultation with the Corruption Perceptions Advisory Group, potential partner organisations, local researchers and other stakeholders, it was decided that the research should be carried out in the following provinces:

1. Milne Bay;
2. Southern Highlands Province;
3. Madang;
4. East New Britain.

The decision to conduct research in these provinces was based upon three factors. First, each province required available and capable partner organisations. As TI PNG did not have offices in these provinces it was important that partner organisations were capable and willing to assist with the research. Thus this practical consideration was an important factor in choosing the provinces. Second, these locations provide examples of provinces with varying access to resources and funding. According to the National Economic and Fiscal Commission's (2005)<sup>3</sup> 'Review of all expenditure in 2005 by Provincial Governments' these four provinces have different abilities to meet the recurrent costs of basic service delivery. The Southern Highlands was shown to be one of two provinces in the country where revenue exceeded recurrent costs by over 50%, mainly due to revenue from mining and (in the case of Southern Highlands Province) petroleum projects. Both East New Britain and Madang were shown to have relatively moderate fiscal capacity (i.e. the ability to provide basic services). Milne Bay was near the bottom of the table, with less than 50% of fiscal capacity. Some believe that the degree to which provincial governments are able to meet recurrent service delivery costs may impact upon perceptions of corruption<sup>4</sup>.

Third, each of these provinces represents different regions – the broadest scale administrative divisions of PNG. Southern Highlands represents the Highlands region; Madang, Momase region; East New Britain, the Islands region and Milne Bay represents Southern region. While ensuring geographical diversity was a primary reason for choosing the provinces in these four regions at the start of the research, it is now considered a secondary consideration. Because of the diverse social, economic and environmental conditions within regions of PNG, geographical differences are not considered as a primary reason for varying perceptions of corruption. However, having research sites spread around the country does help to ensure a diversity of cultural and social conditions are being sampled, which, in turn, ensures a range of views are represented.

---

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the design of this study the 2005 edition of this report was the latest version available.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion on this point see: Torvik, Ragnar 2002. Natural Resources, Rent Seeking and Welfare, *Journal of Development Economics*, 61, 455–470.

## Rationale for choosing the Villages

In each of the provinces research was conducted within two rural villages – one with high access to resources, development and, in particular, money and the other with little access to resources, little investment and minimal access to markets and money. These villages were chosen by partner organisations based upon their knowledge of local conditions. Villages assumed to have access to higher amounts of resources included areas which incorporate major development projects such as oil palm, mining, fisheries, forestry and other projects that provide royalty payments to land owners and bring employment and services. As a counterpart, villages without a high degree of access to resources were often in more remote rural areas. An exception to this rule is found in East New Britain. Due to a last minute change by the partner organisation, research was conducted in two villages which have relatively high access to resources. Both Gelegele and Reit villages have relatively high level of access to development, with Reit being close to a mine site and Gelegele around 40 minutes car drive from the large coastal town of Kokopo, a growing urban economic hub.

Whilst access to resources was the major determining factor for choosing areas to conduct research, other factors, such as accessibility to provincial capitals (villages were within 5 hours drive from the capital), and the degree to which the partner organisation was familiar with the area, were also important considerations guiding the selection of field sites.

## **Method**

A total of eighty focus group discussions, consisting of between 6-10 men or women were conducted. This meant that in each community 10 separate focus groups were conducted:

### *Male Groups*

- 18-25 years of age who are illiterate
- Over 25 years of age who are illiterate
- 18-25 years of age who can read and write
- Over 25 who can read and write
- Community leaders (traditional leaders, politicians, etc.)

### *Female Groups*

- 18-25 years of age who are illiterate
- Over 25 years of age who are illiterate
- 18-25 years of age who can read and write
- Over 25 who can read and write
- Community leaders (traditional leaders, politicians, etc.)

Groups were divided up in this way because it is assumed that perceptions of corruption vary due to gender, age and the educational attainment of each individual. In addition, dividing groups in this way helps to lessen the power asymmetries which can form between individuals of different ages and levels of education, which can constrain responses of participants in focus groups. Each focus group discussion was conducted by data collectors of the same gender as the participants. Whilst one data collector facilitated the discussion, another took notes of what was discussed. All researchers were from the same province as the participants they were interviewing.

## Limitations

It is difficult to gauge what people think corruption is. This is because the term 'corruption', even when used in culturally homogenous settings, is a contested concept. The difficulty of identifying one definition of corruption has been touched upon throughout the academic literature on the subject. Indeed, some academics even argue that the word corruption has become so contested that it may no longer be a meaningful term. In a culturally diverse place like PNG, understanding what people mean by corruption is even more difficult. This is because the word corruption often does not have a directly translatable equivalent within the 800 language groups within the country. In addition, it is not known how widely used the equivalent term in *Tok Pisin* (the bridging pidgin language - or lingua franca - of the country) – *Korapsen* – is used throughout the country. Thus asking people what they think corruption is, without using examples, is difficult. This problem is not unique to PNG. Those conducting research on corruption in cross cultural settings have often had to revert to describing acts which they think are corruption<sup>5</sup>, thus potentially biasing respondents answers – particularly if some respondents are given one example of corruption and others are given a different one.

To overcome this difficulty, in this study, respondents were presented with five stories where characters within the stories may be perceived as acting in a corrupt fashion (or not). Respondents were asked to talk about what they thought about the actions of different characters in each of the stories. As outlined in table 1 each story represents different ways of understanding corruption – moral, political, legal, economic and public sector<sup>6</sup> – and different scales in which corruption may take place. In this way respondents had a chance to give their thoughts on what might constitute corrupt acts. Thus, in essence, the stories act as a proxy for the word corruption. They help to break down the different aspects of corruption into digestible chunks to help the researcher make more nuanced conclusions from responses. It is acknowledged that these stories do not represent every example of corruption. But they do represent a range of different types of corrupt acts which may be discussed and analysed within cross-cultural settings.

The study was conducted within a short timeframe (six months) and to a constrained budget. These restrictions meant that the research could not cover more than four provinces and that researchers could only afford to be stationed within a community for between four and seven days in total. This length of time was felt to be adequate to achieve the aims of this phase of the research.

---

<sup>5</sup> For example see: Savage, Delesgues, Martin and Ulfat (2007) Corruption perceptions and risks in humanitarian assistance: an Afghanistan case study, *Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper*, July: 5.

<sup>6</sup> Williams (1999) argues that corruption can be defined in four ways: legally, morally, economically, and through a focus upon the boundaries between public and private in the public sector. While there may be some overlap between different definitions, Williams argues that each of these definitions provide a different way of conceptualising corruption. For example, legal notions of corruption may not represent moral considerations.

Table 1

Story	Aspect of corruption represented
<p>1. A teacher occasionally takes a box of note pads and pens from the school stores cupboard, without permission, to donate to the local community centre (for example a health facility).</p>	<p>Alludes to public sector (abuse of official office) and morally motivated corruption<sup>7</sup> through embezzlement.</p> <p>Small scale.</p>
<p>2. A candidate stands for election and tells a voter that he will give the voter fifty kina if the voter votes for him. The voter takes the money and tells the candidate he/she will vote for him.</p>	<p>Alludes to illegal and economically (which puts economic imperatives as a key consideration) motivated corruption through bribery.</p> <p>Small scale.</p>
<p>3. A logging company comes to a Papua New Guinean village and flies two local land owners to Australia. The company does this to help convince the two land owners to give them access to their land. The two land owners' accommodation, flights and meals are paid for by the logging company. The two land owners agree that the company can have access to their land, without getting consent from the rest of the community.</p>	<p>Alludes to economically motivated possibly illegal corruption through undue influence.</p> <p>Medium scale.</p>
<p>4. Tax is a payment that all businesses operating in Papua New Guinea need to pay to the government. A group of businessmen influence the government to decrease the amount of tax their business pays. They influence the government without breaking any laws. This helps their businesses keep more money.</p>	<p>Alludes to economically motivated corruption conducted within the boundaries of the law through undue influence.</p> <p>Large scale.</p>
<p>5. Mary works in the government of Papua New Guinea and gets a job for her Wantok as a driver. But she does not follow the correct government procedure to employ her Wantok. Her Wantok is a safe and reliable driver.</p>	<p>Alludes to misuse of official position within the public sector through nepotism.</p> <p>Small scale.</p>

<sup>7</sup> This story is primarily a public sector representation of corruption as the teacher appears to be blurring the boundaries between the private and public spheres within his public sector position. It also contains, as a secondary element, a moral element, as the teacher's actions may be interpreted as helping the community centre.

## Results from focus group discussions

This section outlines the responses participants gave to five different stories. In each story respondents were asked about what they thought about the actors mentioned in the story, if this type of scenario occurs in PNG and why, and what they believed the outcome of such activities would be. A summary of these findings is included in appendix one.

### **Story One: Misappropriation of school property**

*Respondents were asked to respond to the following story: A teacher occasionally takes a box of note pads and pens from the school stores cupboard, without permission, to donate to the local community centre (for example a health facility).*

#### Role of the teacher

Most respondents believed that the teacher's actions were wrong. The most popular reason given for this belief related to the teacher misusing his/her office. Concerns around the misuse of office centred on the teacher failing to follow correct procedures set down by the school or the state. Those who focused upon the teacher breaking school regulations believed that the teacher's actions would have been acceptable if s/he asked for permission from his/her boss. Some were concerned about the way in which the teacher's actions contravened state law. These respondents felt that these actions broke the law of PNG, which the teacher, as a representative of the state, should be bound to uphold.

Others suggested that the teacher acted in this way because of his/her lack of morals. Respondents invoking this discourse argued that the teacher was dishonest, selfish and irresponsible. They feared that, because of the influence of teachers in the village (it was suggested that teachers played a leadership role in the community and provided an example for young people), such activities would provide a bad example to the rest of the community – especially children. For example, in Gelegele, a village in East New Britain, older women were concerned that as a role model the teacher was setting a bad example and that others in the community may follow suit.

Respondents also believed the teacher's actions were wrong as his/her actions established, or maintained, a reciprocal relationship with the community centre worker in order to receive a future benefit. Here the teacher was seen to be helping out a friend, or clan member, in order to build up social capital that could be exchanged for future favours, which would benefit the teacher as an individual. A number of the focus group participants assumed that the teacher would be running for political office and would receive votes for helping out the community centre. This response was particularly strong in both communities (Waro and Yamasi) in the Southern Highlands.

However, not everyone saw the actions of the teacher as wrong. A minority surmised that the teacher was helping the community centre because it suffered from a lack of materials, money or support from the government. For example, in Waema village in Milne Bay one group of older literate males argued that the teacher was only trying to help the centre because it lacked materials. A few suggested that despite the misguided nature of the teacher's actions, s/he should be absolved from his wrong-doing. For example, one young female in Waro, Southern Highlands Province, thought that the teacher was building up a reciprocal relationship, which s/he could later benefit from, because the teacher had yet to be paid by the government. She believed that building relationships in this manner was wrong, but believed the teacher had little choice as s/he needed money to live. Overall, females were more likely to be sympathetic to the teacher's motives.

Why does this occur in PNG?

Those who believed that the teacher and community worker were working together to receive personal benefits from the transaction suggested that it was part and parcel of Papua New Guineans' penchant for getting what they wanted through informal reciprocal relationships (referred to as the *wantok* system). It was suggested that those who are involved in similar acts are able to do so due to the connections they have established, through ties of friendship or family. Those with this somewhat cynical view of the *wantok* system (other respondents commented upon the positives of the system) felt that it helped to smooth the way for unsavoury transactions, which benefited individuals at the expense of the community as a whole.

Those who suggested that the teacher's actions were wrong also felt this behaviour was caused by bad morals. This included selfishness, greed, disrespect and irresponsibility. This was given as a reason by a number of groups who intimated that, on the whole, Papua New Guinean teachers in rural areas struggled to say no to monetary temptations. Some argued that the pressures associated with becoming a political candidate, or surviving in the modern world, could fuel such immoral behaviour.

Those who were more forgiving of the teacher's actions believed that his/her malfeasance was helped along by an ineffective state system. For example, some respondents were concerned about the government's ability to provide timely payments to its workers. One male leader in Waro village argued that the government's inability to pay their workers meant that teachers would struggle to survive themselves, let alone feed their families. Others suggested that the teacher must be helping the community centre as the government was unable to provide adequate social services for its constituents – particularly in rural areas. They felt that this stemmed from the government's lack of understanding the difficulties of rural life, with politicians (primarily) and bureaucrats (secondarily) often being described as being out of touch with the needs of their constituents.

The state's inability to prevent these perceived immoral actions came under fire from those both sympathetic and unsympathetic to the teacher's plight. Respondents believed that the lack of checks and balances within the Papua New Guinean school system results in school assets not being properly accounted for, making it easier to steal materials without others knowing. Even if a teacher was caught misappropriating materials, many felt that justice would not be achieved, as laws were either not properly developed or enforced. This was put down to a lack of political will from local and national leaders.

Possible outcomes

Most respondents felt that such actions would result in a lack of educational facilities at the village level, denying children an education. This was a particular concern for groups in Sogeram, Madang, and Gelegele, East New Britain. Participants in these focus groups argued that the teacher was either depriving the right of current children to education, or was making it difficult for future generations to better themselves.

As a result of a lack of educational facilities, respondents noted a number of possible follow-on effects, including conflict and negative social outcomes. Conflict was seen as an almost inevitable outcome with arguments, threats, physical violence and death envisaged to occur between parents and the teacher, the teacher and his superiors/colleagues and the teacher and students. Respondents also feared that negative social outcomes would eventuate. Many feared that a lack of proper educational facilities would

lead to illiteracy and, ultimately, further poverty and marginalisation. Some predicted the closure of the community centre, which they believed would lead to social problems in the village<sup>8</sup>.

Parents were concerned that this would result in higher school fees. This was met with angry responses and a number argued that they would resist higher fees through direct confrontation with the teacher – which included physical conflict or legal action. Some advocated for subtler forms of resisting dishonest teachers or malfunctioning school systems. In Waema village of Milne Bay, a male leader said: “I would refuse to support my child’s needs if the teacher is going to be careless and shows negligence with the use of school materials”. Thus, suspicion of a misuse of office by a teacher at their school was reason enough to refuse to pay school fees, a more subtle type of protest against possible dishonesty.

### **Story Two: Bribing of voter by political candidate**

*Respondents were asked to respond to the following story: A candidate stands for election and tells a voter that he will give the voter fifty kina if the voter votes for him. The voter takes the money and tells the candidate he/she will vote for him.*

#### Role of the candidate

Almost all respondents said that the candidate acted in his own self interest and, as a result, he was regarded as being more culpable than the voter. Some argued that the candidate acted in this way because of his weak character. Thus he was described as immoral, dishonest, and selfish. Others believed that he acted this way because of his education – the inference being that most educated leaders were dishonest and used their education to dupe others who were less educated.

Another group of respondents felt that this was a part of the political process in PNG and a normal way for the candidate to gain support. These respondents felt that candidates needed to spend money in this way to get into government office. This was particularly the case if the candidate was not well known within the village. One male youth of Waro village in Southern Highlands Province surmised that “old people [must not] know much about the candidate’s character and therefore the candidate is buying the vote from the voter”. This quote suggests that vote buying may help to secure relationships which are otherwise uncertain. Once the support of key members of the community is secured it was reported that candidates then had greater freedom to influence the vote of individuals in the community.

In turn a number of respondents suggested that the candidate’s actions would not be considered wrong if he paid the entire community. A young male from Waro in Southern Highlands Province commented that: “the candidate is to be blamed as he is doing it secretly, which is not good. If he comes openly and lets the community leaders know, then that is good.” So it was felt that if the candidates gained approval from the right community leaders, and the entire community benefited, then dishonest behaviour may be excused. Some suggested that the candidate was doing the right thing, even if he wasn’t being entirely transparent, because he was giving out cargo and money to the community – something which the government rarely did. If participants thought that the candidate was distributing his largesse equally then he was regarded as a modern day Robin Hood – redistributing resources to those who needed it, because the government did not have the means to do so.

---

<sup>8</sup> Many respondents related the community centre as an aid post. Thus many believed that if the aid post closed, deleterious health outcomes would arise.

## Role of the voter

Responses to the voter's actions tended to be fairly evenly spread between two different categories. First, respondents believed that in accepting the 50 kina, the voter was wrong. They felt that the voter was only interested in gaining individually from this transaction, rather than voting in a leader who would redirect resources back to the community, once he was in office. They believed the voter should know that taking the money from the candidate was illegal and would ultimately hurt the community in the long-run. Thus, this group of respondents had little sympathy for the voter's actions.

A second category of respondents felt that power asymmetries and social disadvantage may excuse the voter from his/her wrong-doing. One female of Garuahi village of Milne Bay believed that the candidate was much more powerful than the voter, suggesting that: "the candidate is buying voters and forcing people to vote for him." Another female in the same group chimed in: "by using money, people may have no choice but to vote for him [the candidate]". Those sympathising with the voter often argued that s/he must be poor, illiterate and/or without alternative means of income generation. This is not to say that they considered the voter's actions as correct. Rather they believed s/he lacked the agency to say no to the offer, due to the greater power (derived from money, influence, social status, education) of the candidate, and the voter's lack of economic prospects.

As a corollary, a number suggested that the only way for the voter to resist was to take the money and vote for another candidate. Men in particular advocated this strategy; some admitting that they had done this in the past. One young male in Yamasi village of Southern Highlands Province stated: "If I observe that the person is an honest person, I will vote for him. But if I see that he is not an honest person I won't cast my vote for him [but] I'll get his money." Some women suggested that if they were given the money in a considerate way they would not 'play such games'. Thus one female respondent from Garuahi village in Milne Bay said: "I know that the voter did not do the right thing by taking the cash. I'm not sure he (the voter) didn't vote for him. I would do the same and take the cash. But I would vote for the candidate because he offered me the cash kindly." So while men admitted to employing subtle strategies of resistance (in this case by not voting for the candidate) some women said they were less likely to resist if the candidate was respectful.

Some believed the voter was wrong, but argued that a 'bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'. If a candidate was successful, and got into office, many felt that those in the villages would be quickly forgotten, justifying taking money from candidates as a short term strategy of getting something from the election process. As a young male from Milne Bay suggested: "The reason someone may take bribes is because as soon as these candidates win, they do not stick to their word and disappear into...oblivion, leaving the voters to their own devices for the next five years...so while the voters can they just take the cash and goods and gifts. So really, everyone does their own thing until it's time to repeat that cycle again." Thus communities had come to expect hand outs during elections and believed it was one of the few times that they could benefit from the electoral process.

Many of those who sympathised with the voter's actions admitted that they had done something similar in the past. Some admitted to accepting money from candidates (either as an individual or as a part of a community block vote), and some admitted feeling that it was wrong. But the opportunity to make quick and easy money proved too much of a temptation. Referring to the voter taking the money from the candidate a female in Garuahi village in Milne Bay said: "some of us have done this". Another female in the group added, "as a villager, a voter might as well just take the cash. I don't see any harm in that." In admitting their own complicity in taking money from candidates, participants were also more willing to empathise with the voter.

Why does this occur in PNG?

Many believed that the reason that candidates bribed voters in PNG was due the enormous rewards waiting for those who make it into government office. Respondents argued that politics was like a game for many in the country, with the spoils – gaining a big name, living in Port Moresby, or becoming a businessman – far out weighing the financial costs of bribing voters. This race to political power was also seen to be fuelled by traditional tribal rivalries, with different clans keen to see their candidate win, in the hope that government resources would be delivered to them.

A number suggested that a combination of the demands of the modern world (where money is increasingly needed to survive) and poverty, led voters into accepting money offered by candidates. A lack of education was also seen to lead people into taking bribes, as ill educated voters were less likely know the rules and laws around voting. Respondents who took this view therefore felt that Papua New Guineans often take bribes out of both necessity and naivety.

These factors were believed to be compounded by a state unable to create just laws, or enforce law and order. A number of respondents lamented the states inability to arrest those who offered bribes during election time. Respondents said that this left them to sort out their own law and justice problems.

Possible outcomes

Most respondents were concerned about a lack of services that would result from such a scenario. A male leader in Waro village Southern Highlands Province argued that “The candidate who bribes people will refuse to provide service by saying ‘I paid for your votes’. So he will use the funds for other purposes such as private benefits.” This coupled with a tendency for violence and conflict to arise during and after elections, which was a particular concern of participants in both villages in the Southern Highlands Province, meant that many had lost hope in the electoral process. A male respondent in Waro village, Southern Highlands Province, commented: “If the candidate does not win there will be violence in the community. If he wins he will not deliver services to the people in the village. The more money he spends [during the election time] the more he would want to get back from the...public funds...so people suffer [from lack of] basic services.” This cycle of violence and lack of services left many feeling fed up with the electoral system. As a result only a few respondents believed that this cycle could be stopped by not voting for the same sort of voters in following elections.

### **Story Three: The tale of a logging company and two landowners**

*Respondents were asked to respond to the following story: A logging company comes to a Papua New Guinean village and flies two local land owners to Australia. The company does this to help convince the two land owners to give them access to their land. The two land owners' accommodation, flights and meals are paid for by the logging company. The two land owners agree that the company can have access to their land, without getting consent from the rest of the community.*

The role of the logging company

Across the board respondents disagreed with the actions of the logging company. Some argued that companies came to divide and conquer. One male leader in Gelegele village of East New Britain said, “the company wants to break up the bonds within the clan relationship [for their own benefit].” Respondents were particularly concerned that flying landowners to another destination would unduly influence them. They were also angry at the thought that the company would not properly consult with

the community. This was particularly driven by the fear that this process would privilege some within the community over others, which would weaken communal bonds and cause internal disputes and conflict.

#### The role of the two landowners

Most thought that the two landowners were wrong in accepting the company's offer. Their actions were condemned, particularly because they personally benefited at the expense of the community. Thus many believed that the land owners should be condemned, not necessarily for enjoying the benefits provided by the company, but for not sharing the benefits with the community. As a result, they were described as greedy, selfish, dishonest and having little regard for friends, relatives and wantoks.

#### Why does this occur in PNG?

Respondents believed that the drive for profit led to companies cutting corners and failing to properly consult communities. This drive for profit often meant that companies only distributed resources to a select few – rather than equally throughout affected communities. Large scale industry was also seen to bring temptations from the modern world such as money, women and beer. These temptations were seen as immoral influences for ordinary Papua New Guineans and their leaders. In turn, it was believed these temptations helped individuals to lose their sense of obligation to their clan and were more likely to enter into deals that did not benefit the community.

Some blamed their leaders for such scenarios occurring in the country. A male in Waro village, Southern Highland's Province said:

The story of candidate and logging company, they are happening in our country. There won't be any change, it will be the same. The leaders are educated and they know what is happening but we villagers don't know what is happening because we are illiterate. When we try to ask, the leaders tell us "you go and see the company" and when we go to the company, they tell us to go and see our leaders, such is happening and we the people in the villages continue to suffer the effects of such practices. This is happening in our place.

A sizable minority acknowledged their own and fellow villagers' complicity in problems associated with these types of negotiations. One local female leader in Garuahi village in Milne Bay reflected upon why landowners would take money at the expense of other villagers: "When offers like these are given we just accept it without thinking much about the outcome or the end result. Money and luxuries like that often blind, or make people go crazy." So while some put the blame for shady practices at the feet of foreign companies and their own leaders, many willingly acknowledged the allure that money and cargo had for ordinary Papua New Guineans.

#### Possible outcomes

In all villages respondents were concerned that activities of this nature would result in conflict, particularly because the community had not been consulted. Reflecting upon the story a male leader in Waro, Southern Highlands Province, suggested that they had seen this type of scenario result in violence: "People will argue, there will be disputes and fights, because the other landowners have not been involved in the agreements."

Environmental destruction was also believed to be likely to result from such dealings. Respondents feared that environmental degradation would lead to a lack of building materials, increased water pollution and reduced food security. In turn, it was felt that this would directly impact upon the poorest and most marginalised as this group relied upon the environment for food, shelter and water.

Environmental destruction was of particular concern in communities that were located far from development projects and townships, as they had fewer economic opportunities.

In addition, deals of this nature were said to exacerbate and create divisions at all levels of the society. People were concerned about the inequalities which would form within the villages or those between villages and (particularly) foreign companies. Many also believed this scenario would lead to poverty for the many (villagers) and wealth for the few (foreign companies and mischievous landowners).

#### **Story Four: Businessmen influencing the government**

*Respondents were asked to respond to the following story: Tax is a payment that all businesses operating in Papua New Guinea need to pay to the government. A group of businessmen influence the government to decrease the amount of tax their business pays. They influence the government without breaking any laws. This helps their businesses keep more money.*

##### Role of the government

Respondents felt that the government's decision to reduce the tax of the businessmen was unfair to ordinary Papua New Guineans. If tax was to be reduced respondents argued that it should be cut across the board: "If the government is decreasing taxes then they must also decrease our taxes and lower prices of goods." (male in Reit village, East New Britain). Some made the connection between lower taxes for business, less revenue for government and reduced services in rural areas, as another man in Reit Village, East New Britain explained: "the government shouldn't lower company taxes because it is the only way they collect money to help us people." So, ultimately, this story was seen as unfair as it benefited the few at the expense of the many.

Despite the story suggesting that everyone acted within the law, many believed that the government had made some sort of deal with the company. Imaginations worked overtime with people trying to ascertain who was bribing whom. A few suggested that someone in the government must have had, or been offered, a share in the business. One young male from Milne Bay described how the villagers have come to view the government with suspicion in such cases: "we hear and read in the papers about government having investments overseas...and it makes us wonder, where they get money from to invest? Are there any deals?" This question raised the issue of the legality of such deals, with many suggesting that this story was an example of the government breaking, or not enforcing, their own laws. In turn, some argued that those in the government involved should be taken to court, or terminated from their positions.

##### Role of the businessmen

The majority of respondents deplored the actions of the business men. While respondents understood that this was a legal act, many still thought of it as an act of bribery (*gris*), or stealing, because they did not believe that a tax cut benefiting business would be passed on: "The business people do not want to help pay workers higher wages, there is always low income wage earners, so what's the use of reduction of business tax?" (male from Waema village, Milne Bay). In the same focus group another man was doubtful that tax cuts would lead to lower priced goods: "low income earners also pay for goods that are taxed in every shop, why do business want to pay less tax?" Thus, respondents generally believed that the businessmen had an obligation to pay tax at the same rate as ordinary citizens. A few believed that the businesses involved were smarter or more powerful than the government, giving them leverage over the government in their negotiations.

Why does this occur in PNG?

Respondents were primarily concerned about the power that large business could wield over the government. This was troubling for participants as they felt businesses were not representing their interests. For one female respondent in Garuahi village in Milne Bay, the sway of business over the government has been a key reason for such 'deals': "[These deals are happening] because the government is listening to the businesses and not the very people who elected it in the first instance." A number also argued that while the government listens to foreigners, they forget those at the village level. As such, most respondents believed that powerful businesses were more interested in gaining profit than acting in a socially responsible manner.

Possible outcomes

The majority of respondents believed the actions of the government and business would result in prices of everyday goods and services increasing. More educated respondents spoke about the effect of inflation on the national economy, but for most, higher prices meant that it would be harder to buy everyday items such as tinned fish, rice and bully beef. As a result many respondents said that they would find it harder to make ends meet if such deals were to occur in the country.

Participants felt that deals of this nature would result in a lack of services to the village. A number of highly educated respondents made the connection between decreased tax paid to the government and a diminished ability of government to provide services. One male respondent in East New Britain suggested that with less revenue from internal sources PNG would need to borrow from other countries – putting it at the mercy of outside creditors, reducing the government's ability to provide services. Less educated groups also feared that this would also result in a weakening of the government's ability to bring development to the rural areas, although their concerns related more to their everyday experiences.

As a result of a lack of services and rising prices, a host of social problems were predicted to arise. This included further misuse of office at the government and village levels, prostitution, disease, conflict with foreigners, inequality, stealing, and further mistrust of business and government by those in rural areas. Those predicting impending social problems felt that PNG was in for a grim future.

### **Story Five: Nepotism or a helping hand?**

*Respondents were asked to respond to the following story: Mary works in the government of Papua New Guinea and gets a job for her Wantok as a driver. But she does not follow the correct government procedure to employ her Wantok. Her Wantok is a safe and reliable driver.*

The role of Mary

Most respondents suggested that Mary was wrong to employ her Wantok without following correct employment procedures. As a result, respondents felt that giving her wantok preference over better qualified drivers would influence others in government to employ their friends and families over better qualified candidates. She was described as selfish and greedy because they believed her actions would only benefit her and her immediate family – at the expense of the wider community. Some were able to draw upon personal experience to condemn Mary's actions, citing examples from both the public and private sectors.

However, a minority argued that Mary's actions were understandable in the Papua New Guinean context. This group believed that her actions should not be condemned as they were intended to help a struggling wantok. In light of a lack of jobs, a paucity of resources and rural poverty, a number saw

Mary's actions as philanthropic and a normal part of the relational obligations between relatives and friends in PNG. A male from Waema suggested Mary was right to support her Wantok as she was acting out of "traditional obligations." Other reasons given as to why Mary's actions may be understandable revolved around the perceived need for women to be protected from strangers in the workforce, with a few respondents suggesting that Mary may need her Wantok around her at work to help ensure her safety.

#### The role of Mary's wantok

While most were ready to condemn Mary, respondents were fairly evenly split in regards to how they viewed the actions of her wantok. Around a half of respondents acknowledged that if placed in a similar position they would be happy with this offer and would take it. Drawing from their own life experiences they suggested that given the harsh realities of rural village life, such as the paucity of job opportunities, the need for money to live in the modern world and the increased cost of living, taking the job was the right thing to do. A male from Madang said: "Life is hard so [we] should take whatever job comes by." To do so could mean lifting oneself out of poverty. One male from East New Britain argued that Mary's wantok "could now eat rice". While some in this category acknowledged that doing so may be considered wrong by some, they suggested that the ends can justify the means.

The other half of respondents believed Mary's wantok was wrong. These respondents argued that her wantok must have known that Mary was not following the right procedure to secure the job. They suggested that no matter the degree to which people are socially disadvantaged, they should not contribute to practices which discriminate against those who are the best qualified to do the job. As a result, some suggested that Mary's wantok should refuse the post, clearing the way for more qualified candidates.

#### Why does this occur in PNG?

Most put the reason for this type of activity occurring in PNG down to the wantok system. Most felt that the wantok system was abused throughout PNG, particularly in regards to government appointments. However, some did suggest that utilising friends and familial connections was particularly important when looking for jobs in a tight job market. One male from Milne Bay said that because it is hard to get jobs "who you know is the best solution." The need for people to rely on their wantoks (and the wantok system) was acknowledged as a coping strategy for those with few economic opportunities.

#### Possible outcomes

Respondents felt that the actions of Mary and her wantok would result in social problems including increased incidence of prostitution, crime, drinking of homebrew, womanising, divorce and social disunity. Conflict could arise between those with jobs and those without, as well as between workers and family members. This conflict was seen to be a result of jealousies - from those not employed towards those who are. Reduced employment opportunities was a particular concern for educated youth, who did not like the thought of a future where familial affiliations meant more than an education when applying for a job.

## Key Findings

Responses to the stories outlined above help to answer four primary questions, namely: what types of acts are understood by participants as corrupt?; which behaviours are seen to excuse corrupt acts?; what are the causes of corruption?; and what are the perceived consequences of corruption? The following section summarises respondents' answers to answer each of these questions. It should be again noted that the above five stories act as a proxy for the word corruption. The way in which participants responded to these stories therefore helps to answer the afore mentioned questions.

### **What types of acts are understood by participants as corrupt?**

Sometimes the quickest way to work out what people mean by corruption is to directly ask them. We did this by asking respondents if they knew what the word corruption (*Korapsen*) meant and to give examples of corrupt acts. Those who spoke *Tok Pisin*, and understood what corruption meant, saw corruption as bad social behaviour which included acts ranging from lies, gossip, prostitution and womanising. Corruption was also referred to as misusing entrusted position (within government, non-government organisations and business) and as a form of structural inequality (which included unequal distribution of resources, low wages, and a lack of government services). These responses give insights into the broad types of acts respondents understand as corruption. To get a more nuanced view about the way in which people view corrupt acts we asked respondents to give feedback on a number of different stories which depict possible corrupt acts (as outlined in the previous section). Responses to these stories are outlined below.

Respondents were particularly concerned about government workers, bureaucrats, politicians and local leaders (those who represent the community to the outside world) misusing their position by abusing institutional rules and norms. This concern extended to teachers taking school materials without getting permission or a government worker employing a wantok without following the correct procedures. While some also acknowledged that those in the business community and within non-government organisations abuse their office, most focused upon employees in government organisations misusing their office.

In each of the stories some respondents were concerned about the legality of certain acts. This was particularly the case in the story about businessmen legally convincing the government to reduce tax payments. Here some respondents questioned the actions of the government and the businessmen and believed that their actions must be somehow contrary to Papua New Guinean law. Others accepted that their actions were not illegal, but thought that laws should be developed to stop this sort of behaviour. The legality of certain acts was a highly discussed subject, particularly in focus groups with highly educated members.

Respondents also were quick to make moral judgements of the protagonists in the stories. There was a tendency to view those who abused their office as lacking in moral fortitude, having an 'attitude problem' or having a weak character. Essentially those with a weak character were described as acting in ways which would only benefit them as an individual at the expense of the community. Therefore immoral characters were often labelled as selfish or greedy. It was also believed that either not enough (particularly religious) education or too much (particularly higher) education was the cause of the protagonists' immorality. In terms of the former it was felt that religious education would provide a kind of moral compass for people in positions of power. As for the latter, educated elites were believed to be taking advantage of their knowledge by abusing it for their personal gain. Most respondents claimed that

educated leaders knew the ins and outs of the government system and used this information for their own gains.

A large number of responses focused upon the problems inherent in rewarding one, or a few, over the many. The wantok system, the Papua New Guinean system of maintaining relationships through favours and gifts, was seen as problematic only when reciprocal relationships benefited a few people at the expense of the community. For example, when the teacher and the community worker were perceived to be in cahoots, respondents felt that this was wrong because only those two individuals would benefit from the transaction, while current and future generations would suffer. The same actions were not seen as problematic if they benefited the entire community. Thus when respondents thought the candidate only bribed a few to gain votes he was seen to be acting wrongly. If, on the other hand, he gave fifty kina to everyone in the community, all would be OK. In turn, while a community may act inappropriately, even dishonestly, this was not seen as problematic as individuals acting within their own self interest.

### **Which behaviours are seen to excuse corrupt acts?**

Respondents believed that social disadvantage, power asymmetries, weak government and dysfunctional democratic processes may excuse behaviour which may otherwise be understood as wrong. Many were ready to excuse behaviour that others saw as wrong due to social disadvantage facing 'grassroots' Papua New Guineans. Respondents were also more likely to defend those who had few opportunities to earn an income. Social disadvantage was seen to be caused by a lack of services, low levels of education, low pay, salaries not paid on time or at all, and poverty. So if a health centre didn't get adequate support from the government, a teacher was not paid on time or a friend was poor and hungry, bending or breaking the rules, and possibly the law, was seen as permissible.

Those who were in a dubious (possibly corrupt) transaction with a more powerful actor were likely to get a sympathetic response from participants. This was particularly the case for the voter who received fifty kina to vote for a candidate. Many absolved the voter's action in light of his/her lesser power vis-a-vis the candidate. While power asymmetries excused some, respondents were unable to forgive the two landowners who accepted accommodation, flights and benefits from an overseas logging company. These landowners were seen to have 'sold out' the community, by benefiting individually from the transaction.

Some participants were willing to forgive actions perceived by others to be immoral because of a lack of faith in government and the democratic process. In the example of the teacher giving school materials to a community centre, some suggested that it was right for the teacher to do this, and the community worker to accept it, if the community centre was not receiving adequate funding from the government. Similarly, many felt that it was acceptable for a voter to take fifty kina from a candidate in return for a vote, because by doing so s/he would at least get something out of the democratic process. The chance of a politician providing benefits back, through official channels, to the community which elected him into government office was seen as unlikely.

### **What are the perceived causes of corruption?**

Corruption was believed to be caused by competition and the race for profit, loose government systems, aspects of the wantok system, decaying personal morals, and social disadvantage. Respondents were often keen to lay the blame for corruption at the feet of locals, businesses and government workers competing for profits. The profit motive for business was often discussed in a pejorative sense and was seen to inhibit social responsibility. This was particularly the case in the example of the business men lobbying the government. Although respondents knew the company was acting within the law, they suspected that it must have bribed the government in some way. Local leaders and politicians were also

seen to be adversely affected by competition and engaging in, if not the race for profit, then the race for largesse. Local leaders were seen to be competing against other leaders and tribes for the spoils of government or development. Thus, it was suggested that competition - induced by the spoils of the modern world (including modern consumer goods and the benefits derived from gaining political office) - meant that many were tempted to forgo the ties of their community in favour of amassing individual wealth.

The lack of checks and balances within the state system was another causal factor cited by respondents. Ineffective judiciary, badly trained bureaucrats, incompetent or absent policing, and badly written and enforced laws were seen to create an environment ripe for government workers and others to abuse their entrusted position. Respondents had little faith in government institutions often surmising that government workers were acting irresponsibly and were unlikely to be caught for their wrong doing. However, many argued that those acting inappropriately should be punished through appropriate legal or institutional channels. So many respondents showed faith that the legal system could bring those acting against the law to justice, but doubted that it has the capacity to do so given the constraints of the current system.

Respondents blamed certain aspects of the wantok system for causing corruption. Many saw that the wantok system was utilised in the village and within the government and the private sector to secure work and other benefits. Most comments about this system were negative, with many arguing that the wantok system was a primary reason for wrongdoing in PNG. But when respondents were probed further it was generally found that they believed that the Wantok system was to be blamed for corruption when the community *as a whole* did not benefit from these relationships. Relationships of exchange and reciprocity which were relatively transparent and helped bring development to the community were viewed as beneficial.

Respondents were often quick to blame corruption upon decaying personal morals. There were a range of reasons as to why morals were seen to be deteriorating in PNG, including the temptations of the modern world and lack of adherence to Christian principles. Those lacking morals were described as greedy, selfish, lacking respect and irresponsible. Some suggested that loose morals were undermining traditional and state systems of governance. Thus, traditional and political leaders were often attacked for no longer fairly representing the norms and rules set down by the state, tradition or Christian codes of ethics. It was believed that leaders lacking good moral character provided further opportunities for corruption and, in turn, inhibited community level development.

Some respondents also believed that corruption was caused by social disadvantage. Poverty, lack of education, few employment opportunities and lack of services were often cited as reasons for the socially disenfranchised taking advantage of corrupt transactions. For example, if a villager had few employment opportunities, many did not believe it wrong that s/he took advantage of having a Wantok ready to provide a paying job – even if this action was against the law.

### **What are the perceived consequences of corruption?**

Most respondents suggested that the stories described would result in a range of negative outcomes. These included lack of services available at the village level, environmental destruction (particularly in the example of the logging company), increased prices of good and services, a break down of law and order, worsening poverty and social inequality and social problems (including prostitution, womanising and increased use of homebrew alcohol). There were some, albeit in the minority, who believed that the examples provided could lead to positive outcomes, particularly for the poor. These included employment in a time of job scarcity and immediate cash handouts at the time of electoral campaigning.

Expected positive outcomes were generally connected to the inability of systems of government to provide adequate and timely services to those at the village level.

Participants listed a number of strategies to counter those who they saw as corrupt. The most frequently cited strategy was conflict through direct physical or verbal abuse. Legal action was also cited as a possible strategy, although a number doubted its effectiveness to bring about justice. Others suggested that they used, or could use, less confrontational approaches. For example, parents of school children suggested that they wouldn't pay school fees if a teacher at their school was believed to be corrupt. In a similar vein, many respondents suggested that they may not vote for a candidate who gave them money on polling day. Although less confrontational, participants made it clear that these strategies were designed to show displeasure over acts perceived to disenfranchise the majority and benefit a minority.

## Conclusions

This report has outlined responses to five different scenarios, which may be considered as examples of corruption. The majority of respondents were ready to condemn the characters within the scenarios. This was the case when characters were said to be acting within the law (in the case of the businessmen lobbying government) or even when the story hinted that they could be doing something morally right (in the case of the teacher giving materials to the community centre). These respondents were deeply cynical about the motives of those who may gain some sort of personal benefit out of a transaction. They were quick to judge those in positions of power and, particularly, those who had the potential to abuse their office. While many had personal experience of this happening in their own backyard, others were quick to relay stories of corruption that they had heard of from friends, relatives or through the local news. This group of respondents felt that a range of personal, social, political and economic factors caused corruption in the country and were concerned that if this behaviour continued, PNG was in for a bleak future. It is this group which may support more traditional forms of anti-corruption campaigns, particularly those that seek to tighten rules and laws, or change the way citizens understand their roles and responsibilities within the nation state.

Indeed, many were practicing their own form of anti-corruption activity by resisting those who were perceived as being dishonest. Overt resistance strategies included direct conflict ranging from violence to legal action. In addition, more surreptitious (hidden) forms of resistance were reportedly being used. Some suggested that not paying school fees could be a way of registering a protest against a crooked teacher. Others said they would take the money of a political candidate, but not actually vote for him/her. This indicates that many people may be registering their unease with corrupt practices through noticeable as well as less noticeable acts of resistance.

Respondents knew that power was regularly abused in Papua New Guinea, both within the private and public sectors. They understood that companies and small business holders can be as likely to misuse power as the government. For example, many related the story of Mary and her wantok (a story suggesting nepotism) to local businesses and large companies who favour certain segments of their communities for jobs and benefits. It was clear that, in a number of cases, people in large companies were abusing their position of power. As a result, anti-corruption campaigns which fail to highlight the rights of citizens vis-à-vis the private sector, as well as the state, may be underestimating the importance of the private sector, particularly in the parts of PNG where development is delivered by the private sector (for example in areas where mining, forestry or oil palm companies provide traditional state services – education, health and infrastructure), and the potential of the private sector to be engaged in corruption.

The findings also show that some (a sizable minority) respondents had a great deal of sympathy for those who were poor and marginalised. They were aware that a lack of development, traditional ties, power asymmetries, lack of education, pressures of the modern world and poverty, often propelled people into participating in corrupt transactions. For them, addressing corruption can not occur without fixing the causes of wider social problems: power asymmetries, weak government, poor accountability mechanisms and lack of services in rural areas. They suggested that corruption can not be disentangled from the social realities which enable it. In turn, some even felt that corrupt behaviour may be beneficial for those who have little social, political or economic capital.

The responses from this second group of respondents further challenge the approaches of some anti-corruption policies and programs in PNG. This group suggests that 'corruption' is a far broader and more nuanced issue than simply abusing one's entrusted power. Rather, they point to the constraints placed upon those in rural communities, which can lead to acceptable forms of corruption. This is because, for the socially disenfranchised, some acts that outsiders perceive as being corrupt may be ultimately beneficial. Fighting corruption then, becomes more about social justice – increasing levels of education, improving health facilities, policing the actions of powerful government officials or candidates – than just condemning 'corrupt' acts, which may benefit the poor and marginalised. This finding provides a challenge for those involved in the anti-corruption industry as it suggests that corruption is the symptom of a much larger problem. The core problem is linked to the inability of the state, and others, to provide basic services to those who need them. It is linked to the mode of development and politics which often promotes the individual at the expense of the community. It is also linked to the cultural milieu in which these acts occur, with communities' preferencing the well-being of their own members, at the expense of their neighbours or those in other areas of the country.

Responses from this group could suggest that anti-corruption activity is actually too narrow in its focus. Teaching people about their responsibilities as a voter, for example, is pointless without supporting a range of other activities which will help ensure a voter has the chance of gaining a job and is then paid a decent wage. In this example, the fight for a decent minimum wage (as a means to purchase basic goods and services) is as important as teaching people how to vote, or ensuring that money for development projects doesn't go missing as soon as a candidate is voted in. In addition, by teaching a person how to vote, anti-corruption campaigns can increase expectation that development will result - if only they vote in the right way. The posters that suggest that a vote for a 'good candidate' equates to development may be misleading if the 'good candidate' lands into a system which is inefficient, corrupt and hasn't got the ability, money, technology, or will power to deliver basic services. Or, if 'good candidates' (in anti-corruption terms) simply don't exist.

In other words, the findings of this report suggest that anti-corruption agencies may be more effective if they are more than just 'anti'. People surveyed want to see tangible development. Development which enfranchises the entire community, not just segments of it. If anti-corruption (or any other concept) is linked to tangible outcomes, it will be more likely to be supported by communities. By promoting the advantages of a life without corruption, without providing tangible evidence (i.e. development) is, at best, problematic.

Having said this, research into perceptions of corruption in PNG is still relatively new, and this report is a first step into examining Papua New Guineans' thoughts on what corruption means. This report has used five stories as a proxy for the word corruption due to the difficulty in representing this word in cross-cultural settings. More research could show the way in which other corrupt scenarios are viewed in PNG. This may include scenarios revolving around corruption in different sectors of government or the private sector. Other research may also be able to further tease out how certain social realities enable or restrict corrupt practice. Also, this research has focused only upon rural communities and has preferenced qualitative responses, which are more difficult to measure, over quantitative ones. Future research should be conducted to compare rural and urban ideas of corruption and to quantify results in statistically meaningful manner. This will help to better answer the 'who thinks what' about corruption in PNG question. Further research will bring anti-corruption policy makers, and others, closer to the realities of those at the 'grassroots' level of the country.

## Appendix One

Story	Role 1	Role 2	Why does this occur in PNG?	Possible outcomes
<i>One</i>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Teachers actions were wrong due to misuse of office (primary) and bad morals, and misuse of the wantok system (secondary).</p> <p><u>Secondary concern:</u> The teacher was right, or at least not wrong, as s/he was poor, had yet to be paid by the government or was distributing wealth.</p>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> N/A</p> <p><u>Secondary concern:</u> N/A</p>	<p><u>Primary reason:</u> Misuse of wantok system.</p> <p><u>Secondary reason:</u> Bad morals, teachers not being paid, lack of government capacity to provide social services.</p>	<p><u>Primary outcome:</u> Lack of education facilities.</p> <p><u>Secondary Outcome:</u> Conflict, higher school fees (which may lead to resistance).</p>
<i>Two</i>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Vast majority felt this was wrong. Candidate acted in his own self-interest. Respondents unhappy with political process.</p> <p><u>Secondary concern:</u> A minority suggested this was not wrong if the candidate gave K50 to everyone.</p>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Split between: voter wrong as was selfish and an illegal act, and voter is right because of poverty, illiteracy, power asymmetries.</p>	<p><u>Primary reason:</u> Awards waiting for candidates if they are elected.</p> <p><u>Secondary reason:</u> Demands of the modern world, poverty, weak state.</p>	<p><u>Primary outcome:</u> Lack of services in the future.</p> <p><u>Secondary outcome:</u> Conflict and violence.</p>
<i>Three</i>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> The actions of the company were wrong due to lack of consultation driven by a profit motive.</p>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Landowners were wrong because they benefited at the expense of the community.</p>	<p><u>Primary reason:</u> Profit motive of company.</p> <p><u>Secondary reason:</u> Inability for leaders and people at the village level to say no to such temptations.</p>	<p><u>Primary outcome:</u> Conflict within the community.</p> <p><u>Secondary outcome:</u> Environmental destruction, inequality.</p>
<i>Four</i>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Government's actions were unfair to preference business.</p> <p><u>Secondary concern:</u> The government was acting illegally.</p>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Businessmen were misusing their power.</p>	<p><u>Primary reason:</u> Power of big business over the government, driven by the profit motive.</p>	<p><u>Primary outcome:</u> Prices of goods and services increasing.</p> <p><u>Secondary outcome:</u> Lack of services and increased social problems.</p>
<i>Five</i>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Mary was wrong as they were against procedural rules.</p> <p><u>Secondary concern:</u> Mary's actions were right due to lack of jobs, limited resources and poverty.</p>	<p><u>Primary concern:</u> Split between: 1. Mary's wantok was right. 2. Mary's wantok was wrong.</p>	<p><u>Primary reason:</u> Misuse of the wantok system (most viewed this as problematic, while a minority found this a positive social protection system in a tight job market).</p>	<p><u>Primary outcome:</u> Social problems (prostitution, homebrew, social disunity) due to jealousies.</p> <p><u>Secondary outcome:</u> Conflict and less employment opportunities.</p>