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A Historical Perspective on Decentralisation and Service Delivery for Socioeconomic Development in Papua New Guinea

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ABSTRACT
Papua New Guinea (PNG) has over 800 different language groups. Decentralisation in PNG continues to devolve from central government. This paper considers government service delivery through decentralisation mechanisms noting provincial and local level governments have often inadequately facilitated service delivery. The 2014 District Development Authorities enabled provincial governments to be bypassed, thus reducing bureaucratic and administrative wastage, eliminate cultural and tribal politics, and delivering basic socioeconomic services directly at the district level.

Keywords: Papua New Guinea, local level government, service delivery, district development authority, socioeconomic development

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INTRODUCTION
Since political independence in 1975, Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) development remains focused on its people and in improving: (1) education, (2) health, (3) legal and governance systems, (4) infrastructure, (5) transport, and (6) communications (PNG 2050).

The World Bank, and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2016 reports rank PNG in the ‘least developed nations’ category. PNG ranks below its pacific island nation neighbours. PNG is a sizeable nation and its diverse natural resources lifts its economic ranking towards the middle, and above its surrounding pacific island nation neighbours.

The Observatory of Economic Complexity’s independent economic observers listed PNG as the world’s 89th largest export economy (OEC, 2015) - placing it above Bolivia, Jordan, Kenya, Iceland, Macedonia and all pacific island nations. Eighty per cent of the population reside in isolated, rugged topographies, or in inaccessible islands, and are not representatively surveyed. Hence, socio-economic observations remain exaggerated. Further, such economic figures, to date, have not transposed into achieving: (1) increased socio-economic outputs and (2) outcomes for PNG citizens and (3) an improved national position.

PNG is politically decentralised in four geographical regions encompassing twenty provinces, one autonomous region (Bougainville) and the National Capital District. Provincial Governments (PG) empower each culturally-diverse and geographically-diverse population sector to manage their own: (1) social agendas, (2) economic agendas and (3) institutions (Edmiston, 2002).

In 1994, Kalinoe highlighted that the PG model inadequately facilitated services value delivery. Hence, Local-Level Governments (LLG) became established, and the role of PG’s moved towards being a facilitator of value services delivery for respective LLGs.

Between 2005 and 2010, PNG’s Human Development Index (HDI) ranking fell from 126th to 137th (Human Development Report, 2010). Figure 1 shows this position has not improved significantly through to 2016.

Underlying PNG’s low HDI, population growth is 3.1% annually (2.8 million in 1975 to 7.6 million (projected) in 2015) (National Statistics Office, 2011). There remains a critical lack of qualified human resources including: (1) teachers, (2) health workers, (3) engineers, and (4) skilled artisans. Inaccessibility to markets and basic services is compounded by lack of adequate infrastructure lead to low microeconomic activities among the largely rural population. Rural LLGs, with minimalistic amenities are particularly disadvantaged to provide basic services.

In a bid to resurrect the continuous decline in HDI, the District Development Authority (DDA) was established in 2014 (DDA Act, 2014). The DDA aims to deliver services directly through empowering each district in the country.

This paper presents an historical perspective on PNG’s attempts to deliver basic services through the process of decentralisation...
since independence. It is intended to draw attention on the country’s attempts at improving services value delivery through the DDA mechanism.

Figure 1: PNG’s HDI world ranking index (source: 錯誤! 找不到参照來源。)

SERVICE VALUE DELIVERY

Service delivery ensures goods and services reach people within an equitable geopolitical framework through;
(a) establishing social and economic institutions and supporting infrastructure,
(b) building institutional capacity and empowering them,
(c) resourcing these institutions, and
(d) ensuring legislative policies facilitate transparent flows of goods and services to end-users.

Where service delivery operates as a transparent flow process through to the end-user it becomes a service value network (Lusch, Vargo & Tanniru, 2010). This service value delivery system targets delivering values that the individual end-user requires.

In PNG, service delivery is a political process construct, which may be viewed as a system (or service value network) encompassing the delivery mechanisms and their associated serviced institutions.

DECENTRALISATION

In developing countries decentralisation occurs when colonial centralised governance structures and systems are dispersed to lower-level authorities. Here decentralisation redistributes some central government functions and powers to lower-level local governing authorities. This dispersal of functions and powers across a service value network can enhance the processes by which specific services move, and ultimately reach their chosen end-users.

The World Bank (Mundial, 2004) notes, since the 1970’s, over 75 developing nations have attempted to decentralise some powers and responsibilities to lower-levels of government. In Latin America, decentralisation reinforced a transition towards democracy (Litvack, Ahmad & Bird, 1998). In South Africa, Sri Lanka and Indonesia decentralisation was a response to racial, ethnic and/or regional conflicts. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, decentralisation moved nations towards political and economic transformation and autonomy. In Chile, Uganda and Cote d’Ivoire, decentralisation resulted in some improvement in service delivery (Shah & Thompson, 2004). In most cases decentralisation aimed at ensuring decision making and ownership of service delivery rested with end-users at the local-level. However, although decentralisation typically occurred through elected politicians and political processes, administrative and fiscal process problems remain (Mundial, 2004).

When PNG gained self-governing status in 1973, the East New Britain Mataungan Association (which included parts of New Ireland) and Bougainville sought independence or more autonomy (Ghai, 2000; Wolfers, 2007). Independence in 1975 triggered the 1997 Organic Law on Provincial Government (OLPG), under the ministry of decentralisation, which established twenty one PGs. The PGs were tasked with providing: (1) ethnic and tribal self-determination, (2) the delivery of basic socio-economic services, and for Bougainville, (3) greater economic participation and social equity in the Bougainville Copper mine (Wolfers, 2007).

Decentralisation Defined

Cheema and Rondinelli define decentralisation as ‘the transfer or delegation of the legal and political authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from the central government and its agencies to field organisations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations or regional development authorities, autonomous local governments, or even non-governmental organisations’.

Governments decentralise for geographical, social, political, economic and administrative advantages through local or sub-national level governments and administrations. In developing countries, Mogalakwe notes certain geographical features such as size and under-developed national communication and infrastructure facilities also build a demand for decentralisation.
Decentralisation also facilitates the administration of societies with cultural and social heterogeneity, and it may promote national unity by accommodating demands from diverse groups for political participation, and in providing limited self-government. Phiriinyane observes that through decentralisation, national development plans can move administratively closer to end-user needs, problems, and priorities.

Administrative decentralisation alters the concentration of authority within the central government, promoting decongestion of activities from the central bureaucracy to the sub-national local authorities. It also checks and balances excessive central directives, reduces delays, and introduces faster decision making. However, Cheema and Rondinelli note that while the central government delegates some of its authority and encourages the autonomy of local authorities, it retains responsibilities relating to control, direction, supervision and guidance – particularly during the early stages of development around local authorities. This system of democratic decentralisation ensures the relations between central and sub-national local government reflect a balance between centralisation and decentralisation of authority and of delegated functions. According to Rhodes decentralisation at State and organisational levels is the distribution of administrative functions or powers of a central authority down to appointed local authorities or departments.

In development economics Hart (1972), Shepard and Grabowski define decentralisation as a process of redistributing and reallocating industry and urban populations to rural areas. In modern neo-classical economics, decentralisation means the transfer of government decision making to the free play of markets through delegating regulatory and revenue collection powers to sub-national authorities.

In sociology, decentralisation denotes social processes where population and industry spreads out from urban centres to outlying districts. Decentralisation is also used in a more general sense to denote the dispersal of a centre of concentration such as decentralising either a military decision making process or an economic base.

In public management decentralisation transfers power away from the central government to local or regional government centres. Thus, decentralisation is conceptualised as “a shift of authority towards local governments and away from central government, with total government authority over society and economy imagined as fixed” (Rodden, 2004).

Scope of Decentralisation
Decentralisation is expressed in different forms and is shaped by historical factors, politics, cultural and socioeconomic factors and experiences of each country. This provides a scope for understanding PNG process of decentralisation.

Deconcentration
Traditionally, all the power was vested in the central government system. This ‘centralisation’ and concentration of power in national capitals offered little to the development of local leadership and local initiatives. Since the Second World War, decentralisation in the form of deconcentration has been applied across many developing countries.

Decentralisation offers degrees of deconcentrated authority and responsibility, but does not totally devolve power from central and ministerial authorities down to the local-level (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983). However, deconcentration does shift workloads from centrally-located officials, to staff or offices outside of the central government, and it gives some discretion to field agents to plan, adjust and implement central directives in line with local conditions and within guidelines set by central government ministries or agencies.

Delegation
Decentralisation is also a delegation that transfers managerial responsibilities for specifically-defined functions down to local organisations outside the regular bureaucratic structure. These local organisations remain indirectly-controlled by the central government (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983). Although the delegated agent is given broad discretion to carry out certain specific functions, the ultimate responsibility lies with the sovereign central government authority.

In developing countries, responsibilities are delegated down to different authorities such as public corporations, regional development agencies, special function authorities, semi-autonomous project implementation units and a variety of parastatal organisations. Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983) observed that the delegation of responsibilities to these organisations is usually viewed as a way for: (1) removing important functions from inefficient government bureaucracies, (2) for the central government to provide indirectly, goods and services not effectively provided by the central civil service, and (3) maintaining public control over highly profitable or valuable resources.

Privatisation
Decentralisation through privatisation allows the transfer of select central government functions to voluntary organisations or private enterprises. This privatisation approach targets effective service value delivery. Decentralised privatisation in developing countries moves: (1) responsibility to organisations such as national industrial and trade associations, professional groups, religious organisations, political parties, or cooperatives, and (2) responsibility for producing goods and supplying services (previously offered by parastatal or public corporations) to voluntary or privately-controlled enterprises.
Privatisation in developing countries allows governments to transfer responsibilities to organisations that do represent various interests in society (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983). Ralston, Anderson and Colson observed a number of organisations in developing countries (farmers' cooperatives, credit associations, mutual aid societies, village development organisations, trade unions or women's and youth groups) do respond to privatisation programmes by government.

**Devolution of Power and Authority**

The devolution of power and authority is the creation or strengthening of financial and/or legal powers to sub-national units of governments, the activities of which are substantially outside the direct control of the central government (Rondinelli, Nellis & Cheema, 1983). Sherwood p. 75) adds "... the strong association between devolution and economic and technological factors tends to validate the generally held position that diverse structures within a system can be tolerated only when the integrity of the system itself is not in question. That is, national unity seems to be a necessary precondition for devolution."

Rondinelli and Cheema and Smith suggest that devolution of authority to local-level authorities requires: (1) clear and legally recognised geographical areas of exclusive authority to perform explicitly-granted or served functions, (2) corporate/statutory authority to raise revenues and expenditures, (3) Sub-national government servicing to local citizens perceived as satisfying local needs/aspirations, and (4) reciprocal and mutually-benefiting relationships with central government.

However; the degree of devolution depends on: (1) the range of services to be decentralised, (2) the kind of activities to be undertaken by local authority staff, and (3) the political organisation (and life) to be developed in the local authority area.

**Decentralisation Summation**

In summary, decentralisation improves service value delivery but worldwide remains a work-in-progress. Decentralisation encompasses deconcentration, delegation, privatisation and power devolution. In developing countries with central governments retaining fiscal resource control decentralisation implementation has remained a slow process. Many developing countries are still failing to provide basic service such as health, education, water and sanitation at the various levels or tiers of a decentralised political system of governance (Mundial, 2004).

With funding of basic services controlled nationally and weak monitoring of public spending outcomes, local-level projects receive little of the financial support allocated (Filmer, Hammer & Pritchett, 2000; Filmer & Pritchett, 1999a, 1999b). For instance, Clarke (2015) and Feeny (2013) show that in PNG, central government increases in public spending on health bears little significance in reducing child/infant mortality; and that public spending on education has a very weak relationship to primary school completion rates.

**Scope of Decentralisation in PNG**

PNG’s decentralisation is characterised through the devolution of power and authority. PNG devolves degrees of independent authority for sub-national development to Provincial and Local-level governments. These sub-national levels of government and authorities, such as the DDA, experience increased power and responsibility for developing local sub-national institutions such as local school education and local primary health. Other forms of decentralisation, especially privatisation, also interplay at the sub-national levels.

Tordoff (1987) suggests central government pressure to decentralise stems from the need to: (1) disperse management of state functions throughout a network of local and regional offices, and (2) accommodate different demands of different areas within a territory of a State. This devolution of administration frames local administrative units as autonomous authorities and with some legal status separating them from central government. However; developing nation studies suggest central governments frequently continue to exercise indirect/supervisory control over local or regional sub-national government administrative units.

Devolution remains pertinent for PNG as it empowers local-level administrations to interact reciprocally across other levels of government within the PNG political system. Rhodes observes this 'partnership model' of central-local relations of government entails that local authorities and central government are co-equals under parliament. Such inter-governmental relationships appear to be prominent in the process of devolution of power to sub-national governments and local-level administrations.

**PNG Brief historical perspective**

Prior to Independence PNG followed a Westminster system of government – with a unicameral House of Parliament. During its first PNG House of Assembly (1964-1968), the Australian colonial administration retained executive control. In 1968, the Papua and New Guinea Act, set governing institutions of the Territory and allowed indigenous members of the House to become government ministers. Consequently, seven ministers and ten assistant ministers were appointed. By 1970, most Australian officials sought the Westminster system of government for PNG A Federal system was rejected, and a unitary system adopted – because strong central government had proven useful in solving intractable problems during Colonial rule. The formation of self-government in 1973 saw Australia abdicate its day-to-day administrative responsibilities. However; the Chief Minister was still responsible to Australia’s Minister for External Territories on more significant matters. In anticipation of full Political Independence, a constitution had to be designed that define the identity of a diverse population with only a limited sense of
nationalism, and whose claim to a unified national history was derived from developments across two separate colonial territories.

**Devolution to Provincial Governments**
Between 1976 and 1978, PNG devolved to a PG’s model with full legislative and management responsibilities. In each Province an elected assembly and executive council, headed by a Premier, were given control over a wide range of matters, including the power to levy and collect taxes.

PGs received from the national government refunded revenues from licenses, fees, royalties collected in the provinces, and a 'derivative grant' equivalent to 1.25 per cent of the value of export goods produced in the province. PGs also received an annual unconditional grant from the national government to offset the administration costs of devolved central government functions. Unconditional grants are mainly used to construct and maintain public works. Conditional Provincial governments’ grants previously under the jurisdiction of the national government (including general hospitals and sectoral programmes in health and education) were also provided.

Such devolution in PNG drew PGs into increased participation in government. It provided local government decision making opportunities for diverse groups of local people. In PNG, Falleti (2005) PGs were created. This improved local planning, management, and coordination capacities within Provinces. It also attracted skilled professionals who chose to return and work within their Provinces.

**Provincial Government Issues**
The process of devolution has not eliminated Provincial inequalities and disparities across levels of development (Hinchliffe, 1980). Decentralisation has weakened the central government's ability to stimulate the country's economic growth. The provinces lack local sources of revenue, and per capita administrative costs remained substantive in-part because of the need to create additional public service sectors. Tordoff (1987) noted financial mismanagement within the provinces – and on occasions some PGs were suspended. As Tordoff (1987), May and Ghai and Regan noted as unsatisfactory both the existing arrangements monitoring Provincial performance, and the arrangements helping provinces to improve financial management, project planning/preparation, and general administration. National agencies have sometimes offered inadequate consultation to Provincial governments regarding new projects being undertaken in the provinces.

Brown, Reilly and Flower explore systemic and institutional aspects of governance on service delivery by reviewing PNG's Westminster Parliamentary System. They note bureaucratic staff shortages/training, poor financial management, and accountability exist. They review the history of sub-national governance in PNG including: (1) the Organic law on Provincial Government (OLPG), (2) the ongoing evolution of the Organic Law on Provincial and Local-Level Government (OLPLLLG) and (3) the Autonomous Region of Bougainville arrangements. They explore potential alternative PNG governance arrangements including: (1) presidentialism, (2) federalism and (3) bicameralism. Decentralisation, devolution and sub-national governance literature supports these as hybrid PNG governance alternatives.

Feeny (2013) examines Provincial government spending against health and education’s measureable outcomes – noting that proper resourcing and astute use of resources offers efficiency benefits that are measurable using a Stochastic Production Frontier (SPF) approach. Feeny (2013) argues, for example that, Milne Bay Province and the New Guinea Islands region PGs are most efficient in maximising outputs against health and education inputs.

Ketan observes the negative influences of tribal elites and argues that decentralisation through the provincial and local level government systems has tribalised service delivery decision making. He notes for instance where ‘big man’ in Western Highlands Province often times diverted resources meant for districts peripheral to the provincial capital to other ‘priorities’.

Service delivery levels across PNG relate to a lack of fiscal and human resources politicisation of service delivery mechanisms (Standish, 2015; Wolfers, 2007), corruption (Walton, 2013), poor governance and organisational structure (Seip, 2011) and politics (Standish, 2015). These impediments are common across Provincial and Local-level government systems.

Wolfers (2007) and Duncan, Cairns and Banga note that service delivery devolution still remains top-down, and subject to control/manipulation by vested interests, powerful individuals and political elites. DDA, designed to bypass PGs and deliver services directly at the local level, remain dependent on (1) the local decentralised governance system in operation, and (2) the proper/adequate financial and human resourcing provided.

**Decentralisation and Service Delivery in PNG**
To date Provincial and Local-level government systems have not effectively delivered services. A plethora of legislative, administrative and financial misalignments have created a ‘muddling-through’ (PNG Vision 2050) service delivery system. Figure 2 highlights the muddling-through pathways that cause such wastage, mismanagement and duplication of roles/functions, which siphon critical resources, sap bureaucratic energy, and create inefficiencies. This leads to, for example, lack of basic medicines and curriculum materials at local rural health posts and schools.
Decentralisation model to improve service delivery – The DDA

The Organic Law on Provincial Government (OLPG) moved service delivery closer to people. Many provinces experienced better service delivery under the PG system.

However; from 1995, the delivery of services began shifting from Provincial Governments towards the Districts or electoral constituencies. The Joint District Budget Priority Committees (JDBPC) chaired by the respective Member of Parliament (MP) brought service delivery directly under the control of districts. Electoral development funding arrangements channelled funds through the respective MP.

On 6th April 2006, the current Prime Minister Peter O’Neill (then Opposition Leader of Parliament), conceded services were not reaching the people. He indicated Provincial and Local-level governments were highly bureaucratic siphoning off much needed resources and were impediments to service delivery. Thus he proposed the establishment of DDA to directly integrate with local communities and to bypass the middle tiers of PNG government.

The District Development Act 2014 increased access for goods and services to the greater majority of citizens. It set frameworks for national service delivery against population distribution and geography – meeting the basic frontline core services required at the district level. It aligned planning processes and devolved responsibility for service delivery.

Service Delivery under DDAs

Since 2002 significant service delivery resources have been released, yet DDA service delivery is still failing to reach its local citizens. Brown et al. (pp. 1-2) note governance and service delivery are influenced by political governance. Further, they suggest cross-country comparisons of common political constraints on service delivery (and incentives problems) may provide lessons for PNG.

In PNG no institutional feature of the system of government is directly responsible for service delivery failures. Thus, the redesign of its political institutions is unlikely to foster better service delivery without concomitant deeper changes to the public service culture, popular attitudes and political leadership.
Empirical literature on PNG service delivery is scant. Hence the links between good administrative (management and leadership) practices and service delivery outcomes within the frameworks of the democratic service delivery models remains opinionated. However, building trust across the service delivery system likely assists when considering services delivered through whatever system is established.

Trust builds effectiveness in service delivery. With increased transparency and good governance, public officials remain accessible to citizens and service delivery agencies remain well-managed - this builds trust in citizens and leads to effective service delivery. By contrast, as noted by Brown et al., “ineffective or inaccessible service delivery undermines trust not in just government but in the legitimacy of the entire political system”. Thus lack-of-trust contributes to ineffectiveness in service delivery.

Effective leadership systems and management processes can address a lack of good governance within the PNG service delivery mechanism. Such processes can equip the DDA with; (1) improved transparency and leadership, (2) good governance and (3) reporting systems having greater accountability.

Seip (2011) examines the DDA organisational structure, focusing on Middle Ramu District in Madang Province, and concludes its structure is highly centralised across nine levels of hierarchy each with high degrees of formalisation. Coupled with poor resourcing and inadequately trained staff; this DDA structure has a weak influence on its performance outputs and outcomes. Standish (2015) asserts politics and governance (with service delivery as its core mandate), politicises service delivery in PNG. Ketan, Feeny (2013), and others see politicians as chairpersons of DDAs then usurping local bureaucratic roles, becoming project managers, and often offering projects and services to their supporters within their electorate.

Unage’s experience with Domil Community Government in Jiwaka province demonstrates that, when communities are empowered, they take ownership of their own development priorities and needs. This is ‘community-driven-development.’ When adequately resourced and managed, DDAs are intended to facilitate such community-driven-development.

The DDA framework is embedded in the Medium Term Development Plans (MTDP). District Services Improvement Programme (DSIP) development grants directly fund districts projects – annually at ten million kina (K10m) per district. This district funding bypasses the PG system. The PGS also receives five million kina (K5m) per district within the province under the Provincial Services Improvement Program (PSIP). Annually provinces and districts receive between 12 to 15 per cent of the annual development budget.

**Mixed Results**
From 2014 the Department of Prime Minister’s annual conference has district managers’ present district development reports. Some districts used their K10m DSIP funds on district impact projects. For instance in the district of Ialibu Pangia, 150 kilometres major road networks were upgraded (Ialibu Pangia, DDA report, 2015). In Alotau district two major roads were constructed to connect coastal communities to the capital plus number of jetties for coastal villages (Alotau DDA Report, 2015). However, many districts did not use their funds appropriately. These mixed results contribute to PNG’s low HDI.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS - ENQUIRY FOR FURTHER STUDY**
The DDA establishes the structure and systems within the existing political system to ensure service value flow. Further enquiry can explore the country’s diverse culture; topography; capacity issues; and the general socio-economic, and political, realities and landscape underpinning services value delivery in PNG to improve its development indicators. Experiences elsewhere and literature provides useful insights and guidance to improving the services value delivery in PNG through the DDA.

A resources flow approach captures and provides a use framework (Figure 3) for PNG’s service delivery through to the DDA. It captures the national funds allocated, and elucidates the percentage of funds actually deployed into the DDA’s targeted local-level projects. This further clarifies the DDA’s ability to perform and successfully deliver suitably-funded local-level projects.

![Figure 3: Funds distributed to local-level projects](image)
Figure 3 is extended to Figure 4, and specifically observed, first against PNG local-level education programs, and second against PNG local-level health programs. A Figure 4 approach can also be used to assess the local-level citizens’ perceived quality of service delivery around these local-level programs. These citizen perceptions of service quality can be gauge against the citizens’ trust in their DDA and its ability to deliver local-level programs.

CONCLUSION
Decentralisation experiences elsewhere provide historical insights that have influenced political and legislative developments on the decentralisation process in PNG. The ultimate challenge for PNG is to ensure its citizens have access to basic services that enhances their livelihoods. As the HDI demonstrates, this continuous to remain a challenge.

Today the central government is enabling the decentralising of administration, and it is distributing funds closer to local-level operational programs and projects.

The funds flow and resources flow frameworks (Figures 3 and 4) provide the approaches for further improvement into service delivery and service quality. These approaches offer insight into constructs that frame PNG national-to-local decentralization, and into constructs related to the PNG’s service delivery. These frameworks provide the basis to pursue understanding of PNG’s socio-economic balance with a view to improving PNG’s service delivery administration levels, and to decentralising the delivery of services - so greater resources can be operationally deployed across local-level programs and projects. Though the results are mixed to date, the DDA appears to be facilitating this process; if some districts are demonstrating positive results, there is hope. Further enquiry can learn from the success stories within PNG to continue improving DDAs capacity to improve the HDI positioning of the country.

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