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Politics and Governance Seminar

NRI Research on Decentralisation of Government in PNG

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Background

- **Since establishment in 1976, the NRI has conducted research and released reports on decentralisation of government:**
 - Local level governments (Pesah and others)
 - Provincial governments establishment 1977 to 1995 (Regan etc)
 - Since 1997 on Reforms to Provincial Governments (Gelu, Axline)
 - District Development Authorities – Implementation and Issues (2014) Duncan, Banga)
- **Since 2021, Autonomy and Decentralisation of Government Research Project – Concerns with Effective Service Delivery.**

What is the Issue?

- 1. Weaknesses in Basic Services delivery systems and capacity.?**
 - Concerns with 1995 reforms led to CLRC and DPLGA undertaking a review;
 - Final Report released 2015; “ Despite improved service Delivery being one of the objectives of the Organic Law, service delivery has deteriorated over more then 20 years. This is particulalry the case in rural areas where most people live”
- 2. Meanwhile, Basic Services Delivery mechanisms have worsened.**

The second National Goal and Directive Principle

- “for all citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country” (PNG National Constitution, s.2);
- “the creation of political structures that will enable effective, meaningful participation by our people in that life, and in view of the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of our people for those structures to provide for substantial decentralization of all forms of government activity” (ibid; s.2(2)).

What is Decentralisation?

- Decentralization covers any arrangements for sharing power between a central or national government and sub-national level(s) of government. Arrangements for decentralization cover a broad spectrum that includes:

Delegation → Devolution → Regionalism → Federalism

- There are no clear borderlines between them, and there are variations within each type.

Key Changes - Decentralisation in PNG

- **Colonial Government – Centralised Administration. Introduction of LLG's in 1960s**
- **Provincial Government – In 1977 after Independence**
- **Reforms in 1995 and implemented in 1997**
- **DDA in 2014.**

Emerging Institutional Weaknesses

- **No clear demarcation of responsibility for delivery of basic services between National, Provincial, DDA and LLG.**
 - **Who is responsible for what?**
 - **A de-link between Provincial Administration and District Administration.**
 - **Misconception between Representation and Service Delivery system.**

Emerging Institutional Weaknesses (cont.)

The DDA has weakened or/and distorted the following;

- **Public Service Administration Systems;**
- **Executive Government; and**
- **National Parliament and responsibilities.**

Policy Considerations – What Next

Need for an effective Decentralised System of Government.

- 1. Have Autonomous Provincial Governments to take care of basic service delivery functions with defined Legislative, Executive and Financial Powers.**
- 2. Leaving the National Parliament and National Government to take responsibility for National and International Affairs.**

Considered Best Practice – Global Examples

1. OECD Countries;

“ Sometimes called a “ silent” or a “quiet” revolution, decentralization is among the most important reforms of the past 50 years”, ... implemented in a majority of developing and developing countries”. ... the decentralisation process affects all spheres of society, from the nature and quality for governance to national wealth and economic growth and, more broadly to citizen well-being” (OECD;2019).

2. Europe – (Examples of effective autonomy governments)

1. Spain – Catalan Region (Barcelona)

2. Italy - South Tyrol – Autonomous Province

Framework for Considering Decentralised System of Government

- 1. Levels of Government – (National, Provincial, LLG)**
- 2. Political Institutions (Legislative, Executive)**
- 3. Division of Legislative and Executive Powers (National and Subnational Levels)**
- 4. Administrative Support (Public Service & Oversight Institutions**
- 5. Fiscal Arrangements. Also Control of Economic Resources.**
- 6. Intergovernmental Relations**
- 7. Legal Framework for decentralisation.**
- 8. Implementation**

Implementation Steps

- 1. Development of a National Policy on Decentralisation.
(Autonomy – Self Government within a Unitary State)**
- 1. Agreements on arrangements of Electoral Development Funds and possible abolishment of DDA's**
- 2. Amendments to Constitution on agreed steps.**

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