

TI IPP STRONGG IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Good Governance and Access to Justice in PNG

Started in 1997, Transparency International Papua New Guinea (TI PNG) is part of the Transparency International global coalition against corruption that brings together chapters operating in more than 100 countries worldwide with an international Secretariat based in Berlin, working towards a shared vision: a world free of corruption.

BACKGROUND

Due to widespread corruption, governance issues, and lack of political integrity, Papua New Guinea's score in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) has remained stagnant in the past years (31 in 2021, 30 in 2022, 29 in 2023). 'Petty' corruption prevents citizens from accessing public services in a fair and transparent manner, and corruption at the top has so far prevailed. The election of a new Prime Minister in 2019 brought some hope for change as James Marape's government presented anti-corruption efforts as one of their top priorities. TI PNG continued to advocate for the passing of RTI laws and the introduction of an independent Information Commission for which promising measures have been taken.

PROJECT APPROACH

With support from the *TI Indo-Pacific Partnership for Strong, Transparent, Responsive & Open Networks for Good Governance (TI IPP STRONGG) 2020 - 2023*, TI PNG worked towards building a strong coalition against corruption by bringing together voices of anti-corruption actors from across the country. Through the *Coalition Engagement for Good Governance and Access to Justice* project, the chapter shed light on corruption issues and improved citizens access to justice, and their understanding of key legislation and policies. The programme also supported the chapter's overall [2019-2023 strategy](#) by providing access to core funding. The project was implemented over a period of 3 years and 11 months, from February 2020 to December 2023.



Lunch & Learn: TIPNG engages with its members to share information about its work and accountability campaigns. © TI PNG



Launching of the PNG Interim ICAC Anti-Corruption Strategy. (Right – Left) TIPNG CEO Ms Arianne Kassman flanked by PNG Interim ICAC Chairman and other partners agencies that worked with TIPNG to devise their internal integrity strategies - Commissioner National of the PNG Public Services Commission and Executive Director of the National Economic and Fiscal and Commission. © TI PNG

TI PNG ACHIEVEMENTS

Passing of the PNG Independent Commission Against Corruption Law

On Thursday 12 November 2020, Papua New Guinea witnessed a historic moment with the passing of the Organic Law on the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) during a parliament sitting. The establishment of an ICAC had been one of TIPNG’s priority campaigns for 23 years. Four months after the establishment of TI PNG, TI PNG hosted a National Integrity Workshop in June 1997. A year after in June 1998, TI PNG made its first submission to Parliament for an anti-corruption law for PNG. Over the years, TI PNG has utilized every engagement opportunity, and with every successive government to push its campaign for the establishment of a fully functional ICAC. In January 2020 when PNG’s current Prime Minister took office, the chapter invited him to the 2020 CPI Launch to provide a government response to the results of the CPI. It was at that event that he made

the public commitment to get the Organic Law on ICAC passed. The passing of PNG ICAC is a policy adoption and helps to improve citizens access to justice, understanding of key legislation and policies and ensuring the participation and engagement of citizens in the decisions that govern them. The PNG ICAC is highly important for Papua New Guinea as it serves as a dedicated body specifically tasked with investigating, prosecuting, and preventing corruption.

The ICAC complements existing anti-corruption agencies like the Ombudsman Commission and Police, providing a focused approach with additional powers and resources. After the certification of the ICAC law, TI PNG pushed for the operationalisation of the ICAC and worked in collaboration with the Interim ICAC office to develop its internal anti-corruption strategy and enhance their knowledge of the Corruption Perception Index as an advocacy tool.

Following the appointment of Commissioners for PNG's ICAC in July 2023, TI PNG issued a media statement encouraging all sectors of society to rally their support in a national effort to combat corruption. In this same statement, TI PNG also called for the Government to ensure adequate funding is provided to the PNG ICAC in the forthcoming national budget and encouraged citizens to understand that the ICAC under its constitutional mandate must remain free from influence and interference from political or special interest groups. Additionally, its mandate must be strengthened through active partnership with existing law enforcement agencies and for the public to clearly understand their role in reporting corruption to ICAC. In the passing of the National Budget in November 2023, the Government allocated K46million to PNG ICAC.



Chief Executive Officer Arianne Kassman welcoming the establishment of the ICAC © Transparency International PNG

Advocating for the adoption of a Right to Information Law

Since its establishment, TI PNG has pushed for a Freedom of Information law for PNG. This advocacy continues through the Open Government Partnership platform.

Papua New Guinea does not have a Right to Information (RTI) act or policy even though Section 51 of the National Constitution gives Papua New Guinean citizens the right. The Constitution of the country enshrines the right of access to information

and stipulates that a law should be adopted on this matter, but still no Right to Information law has been passed.

Even though Papua New Guinea has already committed to drafting an RTI Law through the Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan 2018-2020, the challenge remains to ensure that the government puts an effective law in place which empowers Papua New Guineans to demand accountability from all public offices and office-holders.

On 26 September 2023, TI PNG in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), co-hosted a roundtable discussing with key stakeholders to commit to a way forward for the development of a Right to Information Policy and Legislation for Papua New Guinea. The following commitments were made:

1. The Department of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will commence public regional consultation on the draft National RTI Policy in October 2023 with the support of UNDP.
2. Once consultation is completed and feedback is incorporated, the Department of ICT aims to finalize the policy for cabinet endorsement in Quarter 4 of 2023.
3. Following the development of the policy, the government is committed to commence drafting the RTI Legislation for Papua New Guinea in Quarter 1 of 2024.

Following the roundtable, TI PNG published an outcome document on 28 September 2023 outlining the access to information context in Papua New Guinea and commitments by key stakeholders. During the International Day for Universal Access to Information, TI PNG seized the momentum to push for concrete action and we succeeded in prompting the government to recommit to and hold the Freedom of Information (FOI) consultation the following month.

This landmark achievement was not just a victory for transparency, but also a testament to the synergy built through the chapter's co-hosting partnership with UNDP. TI PNG believes this collaborative effort will undoubtedly fuel future advocacy endeavours.

Re-establishing the Community Coalition Against Corruption

Through the IPP STRONGG funding, TI PNG was able to re-launch the Community Coalition Against Corruption (CCAC) in December 2021. Following its relaunch, the work on setting up the framework for CCAC came into full play. In April 2023, the 1st National CCAC Meeting was held in Lae (PNG's second largest city). The meeting was focused on galvanising national support for the Coalition and put forward issues for the CCAC to work to address. This inaugural meeting ignited interest from participants to play a more leading role in demanding accountability and holding power to account on various national issues.

Initially co-founded by TI PNG and the Media Council of PNG in 2002 with the support of churches, chambers of commerce, the Ombudsman Commission and the Office of the Public Solicitor, the CCAC is a network of organizations and community networks that come together to discuss and make recommendations on national governance issues. This renewed, strong partnership shows the collaborative effort towards promoting transparency and accountability in Papua New Guinea.



TIPNG Chairman, Mr Peter Aitsi speaking to private sector leaders on the chapter's accountability campaigns
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The Community Coalition Against Corruption

At its core, the Community Coalition Against Corruption (CCAC) is a model for national unity against corruption. The CCAC presents itself as a platform through which organizations can come together and present a unified voice against corruption.

Following the successful national inaugural meeting of the CCAC, various organizations expressed their interest to be part of the CCAC Steering Committee to develop, lead and guide an action plan for the CCAC. The CCAC Steering Committee members are:

- Co-Chairs (TIPNG and the Media Council PNG)
- Lae Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- PNG Trade Union Congress
- Catholic Bishop Conference PNG & SI, Centre for Environmental Law & Community Rights
- PNG Council of Churches
- Advancing PNG: Women Leader's Network.

The CCAC is an example of different stakeholders across PNG uniting to hold power to account and demanding more transparency in the country.