BOUGAINVILLE AUDIENCE STUDY

NIUPELA WOKABAUT BILONG BOGENVIL

PHASE 2 - JUNE 2019
The Bougainville Audience Study was supported by the Bougainville Partnership, a development partnership between the Autonomous Bougainville Government, and the governments of Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.
FOREWORD

Good decision-making requires good information and consultation. This report was commissioned to hear the voice of over 1,000 Bougainvilleans living both in and outside Bougainville. From Siwai to Nissan, from Rabaul to Brisbane, this is a report card from those who have received (or not) information on the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA), the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and referendum preparations. It is a guide for those in government, leadership, the media and our development partners who are designing the awareness activities of the future as we prepare people for referendum and beyond.

It has been three years since the conduct of the first Bougainville Audience Study. That report established a baseline understanding of people’s awareness of the Peace Agreement and gained critical insights into how people access their news and information. It highlighted very low levels of awareness, in part related to poor access to media and government.

In response to that report, the ABG and many others have undertaken numerous initiatives to better reach out and inform people. Such activities include ongoing work to restore radio through short wave, improved urban FM coverage and the distribution of thousands of SW/FM radios; continuous production of 14 editions of the Bougainville Bulletin, distributed throughout the region and online; over 200 community broadcasts from the Radio Ples Lain team and 50 community video and Q&A shows; Hundreds of Referendum Dialogues have been held across Bougainville; numerous roadshows and community events; and constant updates on the ABG website and Facebook page. The Bougainville House of Representatives’ continue to conduct Referendum Ready activities.

The Bougainville Audience Study provides a report card on the effectiveness of those activities, providing tips and feedback on how to improve. It focuses not on the number of activities conducted, but the level of awareness achieved.

Many of the results are pleasing. There has been a dramatic increase in people’s understanding of the three pillars of BPA – weapons disposal, autonomy and referendum – as well as their connection to each other. This has been most prominent among women, who in the past had far lower knowledge levels than men. People see information as a sign of a government serving them. They see better information delivery, new roads, schools, health centres and agricultural support activities as a sign of the growing maturity of the ABG. There is strong support for well publicised reforms such as the Community Government system and anti-corruption measures.

The results also show more is needed. Clearly, we must do better to engage young people who are feeling left out and uninformed. We must ensure information reaches the most remote parts of Bougainville and not just the urban centres. We must provide clear information in multiple ways and give people the chance to ask questions of our leaders. We must support leaders to provide a clear vision of a future Bougainville and how we will get there. We must continue to listen.

Information is power, but it also assurance. As we prepare for referendum and beyond, we must assure people by giving them balanced, credible information upon which they can make decisions, important decisions that will affect future generations to come. This study also charts for the first time the views of Bougainvilleans living outside Bougainville. They are clearly engaged and share a desire for a clearer picture of Bougainville, its government and its future.

While Bougainville continues to be a challenging place to provide information and awareness, I acknowledge the efforts of government colleagues and our many development partners who continue to support our efforts. For this study, I wish to acknowledge the ongoing assistance of the four governments of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.

In closing, I wish to thank those who gave their honest feedback during the survey. Without your comments, we cannot improve. But now that you have spoken, it is up to those of us planning and delivering awareness to continue to work together and respond.

Adriana Schmidt
Director
ABG Directorate of Media and Communications

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In closing, I wish to thank those who gave their honest feedback during the survey. Without your comments, we cannot improve. But now that you have spoken, it is up to those of us planning and delivering awareness to continue to work together and respond.
The Bougainville Audience Research Study was commissioned by the Directorate of Media and Communications of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and undertaken by Queensland University of Technology together with the group of field researchers who took part in the baseline study in 2015. The research was funded by the Bougainville Partnership Program, a joint initiative of the governments of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.

Ethical approval for the study was received from the ethics committee at Queensland University of Technology.

This research would not have been possible without the commitment of the field researchers who participated in the design of the study, undertook the data collection and provided invaluable information for the analysis.

We thank the Directorate of Media and Communications staff who assisted in the research. Thank you in particular to Adriana Schmidt, Director of the the Directorate of Media and Communications and Jeremy Miller, Communication Advisor to ABG for their support and ongoing feedback during the research process.

We wish to acknowledge the commitment and support of the ABG Chief Secretary, Joseph Nobetau. We also thank those who provided information about existing awareness programs, including staff from the ABG, the UN and PaCSIA.

We would like to thank the research respondents who agreed to participate in the study and shared their stories to provide information.

The information and opinions presented in this report represent those of the authors and research participants; and are not necessarily representative of the views of the ABG.
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABC  Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABG  Autonomous Bougainville Government
ARoB  Autonomous Region of Bougainville
BiBs Bougainvilleans living in Bougainville
BPA Bougainville Peace Agreement
BRA Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BRC Bougainville Referendum Commission
CoE Council of Elders
NBC National Broadcasting Corporation
NRB Non-resident Bougainvillean
PaCSIA Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia
PGK Papua New Guinea Kina (Currency)
PNG Papua New Guinea
PNGDF Papua New Guinea Defence Force
RPL Radio Ples Lain
SW Short Wave
UN United Nations
VHF Very High Frequency

TOK PISIN WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

Gutpela Sindaun  Community well-being
Kastom  Traditional practice
Tok Ples  Local language
Walkabaut  Journey
Wantok  Extended family

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The Bougainville Audience Study Phase 2 provides an update on the knowledge levels of Bougainvilleans prior to the upcoming referendum, as well as people’s attitudes and aspirations towards Bougainville’s political development and how this relates to their information needs.

The study used a mixed methods approach. The results presented are based on 583 surveys and over 250 semi-structured interviews conducted in Bougainville across all Community Government areas (except Atolls). It also captured the views of Bougainvilleans living outside of Bougainville through 10 focus groups (with over 60 participants) and an online survey undertaken by over 200 Bougainvilleans.

The following key findings offer community feedback on three years of media and public awareness activities of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and other organisations, and provide insight into what they feel the current information and communication gaps are for future awareness activities.

BOUGAINVILLEANS RESIDING IN BOUGAINVILLE
Mass Media and Mobile Access

While media access has not changed significantly over the past few years, there has been an increased focus in providing people with information and materials about the referendum. With regard to media access, the research found that:

- Mobile phone use remains high across all regions of Bougainville, although access to signal is hindered by the disabling of several mobile towers due to local conflict or lack of maintenance.
- Print media – newspapers, factsheets and posters – have been received and used more frequently than captured in the previous study, in particular the Bougainville Bulletin has been received by almost half of the respondents who access newspapers (46.7%). Print is favoured for its permanency – compared to word of mouth, for instance, that may become distorted.
- Radio access and use has not increased despite the restoration of shortwave signal (for NBC Bougainville). While some listen to SW radio regularly there is still more awareness needed about SW radio among audiences and providing people further access to appropriate devices.
- More than half of those accessing TV access it via Digicel Playbox.

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Preferred channels of information

When asked about how people have received information about the upcoming referendum, most mention community awareness and word of mouth as a way to receive information. Printed materials have also been widely circulated.

- The Bougainville Bulletin has provided information about the referendum to 39.4% of all respondents (n=540) and ABG fact sheets were seen by 21.1% (n=540). Both sources are deemed to provide good information reliable references to spread the information. Posters have been seen in public places and are referenced by over a quarter of the respondents (27.4%).

- ABG Radio Ples Lain and mobile video shows are well received, as they often provide opportunities for local engagement and answering of questions specific to the area.

- Respondents comment on appreciating awareness initiatives taken by ABG members. Almost half of all respondents comment that they have participated in awareness conducted by an ABG member (42.1%). In addition to ABG members, who might in some cases be distant to the community, ward members are considered as the key people to provide information.

- The Referendum Dialogues were perceived positively because of the participatory engagement which offered opportunities to ask questions. Respondents however commented on the challenge that meetings at one location are not always attended by everyone in the community.

- Respondents would like trusted members in the community and the Community Government Ward members to be equipped with up-to-date information, on a regular basis. Those in official capacities at the local level are most trusted by the community to provide information. This includes the pastor or priest, a health worker, teacher, police officer, the local chief or the community government member.

- Technology was appreciated, although drawbacks are recognised for services that require power and that involve costs (such as mobile phones and internet)

Respondents appreciated all information and they would like to see more of it. They wanted regular updates and the opportunity to ask questions. They asked for information to be made accessible in easy to understand terms, and asked questions about future scenarios.

There was a general request for information to be inclusive, to reach all groups and all levels of the population. Some groups, like youth and people in remote areas, were most vocal in their request for information. Most respondents saw the referendum as a group effort requiring everyone's input because the outcome would affect everyone. Many comments reflected a feeling of solidarity and a concern that Bougainvilleans be given the opportunity to operate in unity, as a coordinated group. However, unequal access to information was seen as hampering this goal and risking the potential for a successful referendum outcome.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Radio remains one of the preferred media channels and there is much need to continue upscaling radio coverage within Bougainville and to increase awareness around accessing SW radio. Audiences noted a preference for interactive talkback programming which offers the opportunities for questions. Radio together with face-to-face communication and community awareness remain the preferred ways of receiving information.

- A key recommendation, supported by many respondents is the need to engage local and existing networks more strongly. This includes in particular the ward members and the church groups. Not only are they trusted by the community, they are also in position to respond in local language, are closer to people and can create a safe space for asking questions, an important feature in ensuring that key information is understood by people.

- Overall, it is recommended to use trusted media, such as print, radio and audio-visual media, to communicate further in-depth information to people while considering presenting the information in accessible ways and formats (simplified language, visual and mixed media concepts, question and answer dialogues).

- As the 2015 study found, the engagement of key audiences who might be more vulnerable and less included in the process continues to be important. Progress has been made with regards to the engagement of women and youth, and this needs to continue. But strongly highlighted in this study was the need to also engage remote communities in the ongoing dialogue and for everyone to be aware of these activities so that everyone has confidence in everyone else’s ability to participate in the political process.
Rather than seeing these vulnerable or less included groups as key audiences or simply ‘passive recipients’, it is important to consider the structural barriers and opportunities that young people, women and those in remote locations might experience, and consider media and communication strategies that enhance their participation, visibility and inclusion.

There is a need for the population to understand not just the basic concepts of the political process or the Bougainville Peace Agreement but possible post-referendum scenarios and what independence might look like and how it would work.

Expectations towards ABG

When asked to talk about ABG’s performance since 2005, respondents display a critical attitude closely mixed with pride and loyalty towards “their” own government. Survey respondents, when asked about their level of satisfaction with the ABG’s performance since 2005, were split, with almost half of the respondents being satisfied or very satisfied (48.4%).

POSITIVE: Respondents commented positively on the step from the structure of Council of Elders to Community Governments, the recent steps towards eradicating corruption, and awareness efforts to spread information about the referendum. These were appreciated by respondents as the evidence of ABG’s commitment to a “free and fair” referendum. The ABG’s work in the past years was acknowledged by those respondents to whom it is visible, usually in their area: schools, roads, aid posts, coffee projects and the airports.

NEGATIVE: Criticism of ABG’s performance was widespread, but focused on two related issues: the lack of services, and the misuse of funds and corruption. Respondents said the ABG had not delivered services as expected or promised, and the infrastructure was lacking, mainly in roads, education and health. ABG was also criticised for the lack of progress in establishing a strong economy in Bougainville.

The referendum was generally perceived as an opportunity for change, welcomed by a large majority of respondents at various levels. While some expressed uncertainties about the future, many respondents associated various potential developments with the prospect of gaining independence. Associations with key development areas included infrastructure, economic development and education.

Respondents across Bougainville appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to the ABG. While some individuals were more vocal than others, the strong sense of solidarity and loyalty to Bougainville and the ABG was evident across all respondents.

Key questions raised to the ABG during the research should be addressed in future engagements, and channels to be kept open for people to continue to ask questions and receive responses. Key information about the government’s plan to work together is important to provide to guide people’s expectations.

Further, it was evident that the trauma of the past played a significant role among Bougainvilleans both in Bougainville and outside of Bougainville. This was not only the case for those who experienced the crisis but young people who have been impacted by the trauma their parents experienced and the stories they have been exposed to.

Media and communication strategies must consider the way that the experiences of the crisis continue to impact on people. This might include programs that include personal storytelling or the creative arts to generate a dialogue about the past and bring out people’s contributions.

NON-RESIDENT BOUGAINVILLEANS (NRBs)

This study, unlike the first, sought the views of Bougainvilleans living outside the region through an online survey and eight focus group discussions held in mainland Papua New Guinea and two in Brisbane, Australia. Participants were Bougainvilleans born in Bougainville, or born outside Bougainville with at least one Bougainvillean parent. Some respondents identified as Bougainvilleans through their marriage. The reasons for living away from Bougainville included leaving because of the crisis, marriage, work opportunity or study opportunity. Family ties included being in contact through visits, telephone, internet and social media.

Feelings in relation to Bougainville identity often included trauma, anxiety, fear and regret linked to personal and family experience. History still had an impact on the respondents’ situations and attitudes, and some expressed feelings of being uprooted.

• Over two thirds of online respondents (68.4%) stated that they supported people living in Bougainville. Most of these (60.1% of all online respondents) provide financial support.

• Two fifths (40%) of online respondents stated that they were formally part of a Bougainville group. These include Bougainville community groups or associations in all focus group locations, as well as student groups at all PNG universities. Many of these groups hold regular, semi-formal meetings where information is shared and discussed.
• All respondents were easily able to list multiple sources of information on Bougainville affairs. Printed newspapers were more readily mentioned by PNG participants than overseas ones, while internet was used by all overseas, but only some (or irregularly), within PNG.

• Unlike within Bougainville, social media occupies a more prominent position in people's information landscape. For the majority of online respondents, accessing Facebook and social media was an everyday activity, and was their preferred way of receiving information, as well as print media, online news media and the ABG website. Facebook is appreciated for the opportunity to respond and ask questions. Newspapers and ABG media are appreciated for providing reliable information.

• While the online and focus group samples may have an information bias, in general respondents demonstrated high levels of engagement and awareness regarding the referendum but they wanted to know clearly how to participate in the process.

Similar to Bougainvilleans residing in Bougainville, those outside of Bougainville ask for more in-depth information, such as understanding greater autonomy as well as the pros and cons of the choices during the referendum.

The suggestions made by NRBs with regards to how to provide information were consistent to those residing in Bougainville: to provide more in-depth information, to target specific key audiences such as youth and to make media more accessible for people where possible.

**Expectations towards the ABG**

About half of the online respondents (49.1%) stated that they were not or were not at all satisfied with the ABG. They identify similar issues as Bougainvilleans living in Bougainville (BiBs), but were more critical of ABG's performance than BiBs.

The online survey captured numerous specific questions about the voting process, including the registration and voting processes for NRBs. The large majority of online respondents (95.8%) said that they planned to vote in the referendum.

NRBs demonstrate a strong loyalty to Bougainville and they maintain their connections to their home region. Some of their responses resonated with the responses from people residing in Bougainville while others, such as questions around their status, were uniquely distinct for this group of respondents. NRBs appeared somewhat more sceptical than BiBs with regards to Bougainville’s economic readiness and with regards to the processes involved. At the same time, most expressed confidence and hope in Bougainville’s future.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Social media and traditional mass media (Radio, TV, Newspaper) might be used initially to reach out to Bougainvilleans residing outside of Bougainville, but **locally organised groups are crucial** in reaching those who do not access media and in providing spaces for discussion and dialogue. In this sense, Bougainvilleans living outside of Bougainville should not just be seen as individuals, but as part of wider communities outside of Bougainville.

- Many Bougainvilleans residing outside of Bougainville provide support to people in Bougainville and they demonstrate a strong loyalty to their region. Considerations must be taken how to integrate those residing outside of Bougainville in meaningful ways where possible.

With the date of the referendum confirmed for 12 October 2019, there will be an increased engagement around the implementation of media and communication strategies and growing motivation for people to obtain information. The results from the research provide a current picture of information levels and information needs of Bougainvilleans who will be voting in the referendum. The research provides key information for the pre-referendum and post-referendum periods.

The ultimate goal supported by many of the respondents is that everyone who votes in the referendum can make an informed decision. A key component of this process is that no one is left behind and key audiences are reached and engaged. Maintaining dialogue and continuing to provide updates as regular as possible is an important part of the ABG's mandate to build a peaceful Bougainville.

From the results of this study, we have developed a communication and community checklist as recommendations to consider when undertaking awareness-raising and information-sharing sessions with community groups in Bougainville in the lead up to the referendum.
COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

- Work through local networks including local leaders those who are trusted (pastors, chiefs, teachers, ward members).
- Ensure event timing is appropriate is adequately promoted for maximum audiences such as working through local leaders, church announcements, posters, flyers, radio tok saves.
- Be aware of groups that might be excluded and discuss ways to include people within the community (women, youth, people living with disabilities).
- Provide opportunities for questions and dialogue when undertaking face-to-face awareness activities, radio programming and using social media.
- Where possible provide translations and information in local language and always use terms and explanations that are easy to comprehend.
- Use mixed media and visual support information for community engagement.
- Bring approved print materials to be left within the community for further discussion.
- Consider innovative, visual engaging media formats such as video and drama, and engagement through mobile phones.
- Contribute balanced information on the pros and cons of the possible choices during referendum where it can be provided depending on the experience and knowledge of facilitators. Ensure that information is contextualised.
- Be aware of the information circle and information sharing between those living in and out of Bougainville. Online information is often consumed by NRBs, while those residing in Bougainville have access to print materials, radio and face to face dialogues. Consider harnessing these links where relevant for the dissemination of information.
- Ensure that materials and messages have been approved by the Directorate of Media and Communications (DMC) to ensure consistent messaging and engagement. Provide contact details and phone number of the DMC. (www.abg.gov.pg, www.facebook.com/AutonomousBougainvilleGovernment and 71505009)
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Media and communication play a crucial role in Bougainville’s peace process and preparations for the referendum about Bougainville’s political future. The baseline research of the Bougainville Audience Study (Phase 1), which was conducted in 2015 and published in 2017, demonstrated a number of limitations and opportunities with regards to media and communication for people living in Bougainville. The study provided information about Bougainvilleans’ access to and use of information sources and channels, as well as how much they knew about, and how they perceived, the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the upcoming referendum.¹

This Phase 2 of the study uses the data of the Bougainville Audience Study conducted in 2015 as comparative data, and aims to assess the effectiveness of relevant information activities undertaken and materials circulated since 2016. One significant difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2 is that this second study included responses from two groups of Bougainvilleans: those living in Bougainville (BiBs) and those living outside Bougainville (NRBs). During Phase 2, the research team asked Bougainvilleans how they thought their knowledge level about the peace agreement and referendum had changed, and what their aspirations were for the referendum process and beyond as it relates to information and communications.

This Phase 2 research presents an important component in understanding the knowledge levels of the Bougainville population prior to the referendum, as well as people’s attitudes and expectations about the various components of government and Bougainville’s political development. The results presented in this report offer insights to the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and other organisations involved in public awareness and designing media and communication strategies informed by what Bougainvilleans would like to know and what they feel the current gaps around information and communication are.

Key points from the 2015 baseline study

Phase 1 conducted in 2015 was a comprehensive study on the access and use of media in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB). During that phase, the research team collected 114 surveys, conducted 203 interviews and undertook field observations across all Councils of Elders (CoEs), which are now community government areas. Regarding access to media and information, the Phase 1 study identified that:

- Word of mouth and mobile phones were the main ways people in Bougainville communicate with each other.
- There were strong differences in information access across the different regions, with North having most access to media, and the South region having the least access to media.
- Radio was accessed by about half of the respondents across Bougainville and was identified as the preferred medium to receive information.
- People commented on the need for face-to-face communication as well as to have printed materials featuring key information on the Bougainville Peace Agreement made available.

Regarding levels of BPA awareness the baseline study found that:

- More than three out of every four respondents said they were not clear or did not know enough about the Bougainville Peace Agreement and about the referendum processes.
- There were differences in knowledge levels between men and women, and different age groups. Young people were less informed, and knowledge levels were generally better in the higher age groups. Women were generally less informed than men.

Some of the key recommendations of the Phase 1 baseline study in 2015 were to:

- Improve strategies to strengthen the link between the local community and the Bougainville government
- Involve key groups such as women and youth, and design specific programs for them
- Take a regional approach to disseminating information using the media channels available
- Use the strength of each medium
- Ensure that participatory messages are developed, messages are piloted and all messaging is consistent
- Work with community advocates and community leaders to disseminate regular information

ABG’s strategies for communication and information since 2015
The ABG Directorate of Media and Communication, in partnership with a variety of government departments, Parliament, organisations and committees, has led a process of active engagement to provide information about the Bougainville Peace Agreement to the population.

**Print media content developed and distributed**
- Production of the Bougainville Bulletin: A government 20-page newspaper, which at the time of reporting, had distributed 13 editions of at least 30,000 copies each around AROB and digitally.
- Regular media releases: These average at least two a week, and are published online and in Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) national media agencies and international media.
- Factsheets and posters: These have focused on key messages about the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the referendum.

**Established community-based media outlets and supported mainstream media**
- Radio Ples Lain: This mobile community radio station has conducted more than 250 community-based broadcasts around Bougainville since 2015 and has provided broadcast support and coverage of parliamentary sittings, often in partnership with NBC Bougainville.
- Ples Lain Piksa: The mobile video projector has been used to conduct more than 50 community-based screenings and Q&A sessions since 2018.
- Video screen and community information centres have been established in the three regional centres, with Buka operational for over 12 months.

**Related ABG community-engagement activities**
- Discussions and engagement with communities were facilitated.
- Community events were staged, facilitated and participated in.
- Training and information sessions were conducted with various partners, including media and civil society groups.
- Coordination meetings were convened with communications stakeholders, including government and development partners.
- Department of Peace Agreement Implementation Referendum Dialogues undertaken by PACSIA across nearly all constituencies
- Parliamentary ‘referendum-ready’ awareness activities undertaken by ABG Members in their constituencies

A key component of the Directorate of Media and Communication’s work has been to ensure that messaging is coordinated effectively and that it is consistent. To do this, the Directorate works closely with the various commissions set up to facilitate the processes under the Bougainville Peace Agreement, including the Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC), established as the independent agency to conduct the Bougainville referendum (http://bougainville-referendum.org). The date for the referendum has been set by the National and Bougainville governments for the 12 October 2019.
This study was designed to inform the information dissemination and engagement activities related to the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the preparation of the referendum process. However, it is important to highlight that many of the perceptions and questions that Bougainvillean in and outside of Bougainville expressed as part of this research also play an important role in the post-referendum processes.

The Bougainville Audience Research Study Phase 2 builds on Phase 1 research conducted in 2015. Phase 2 used a similar mixed-method research approach with data collection tools including surveys, interviews and field observations. While the scope of the quantitative data collection within Bougainville was smaller, Phase 2 also included the views of Bougainvillean living outside of Bougainville, which were not included in Phase 1.

Research in Bougainville

Overall, 583 survey respondents took part in the research within Bougainville. The quantitative data collection was complemented by qualitative data. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with about half of the survey respondents, resulting in over 250 semi-structured interviews of various lengths. The interviews captured how people had received information, and their feedback on the materials and information they had received. Both through the surveys and interviews, we captured details about how informed respondents were and their perceptions of the ABG.

The fieldwork was designed to include all Community Government areas, with the exception of the Atolls. The research team visited Nissan Island as the only island Community Government. An initial mapping of communication and awareness activities across Bougainville provided data about locations where awareness programs had taken place. The selection of research locations was informed by a preliminary audit of where key awareness activities had been conducted since January 2016. Selection included about half of the locations with confirmed awareness activities, and the other half with no confirmed awareness activities. Researchers visited at least two different locations within each of the Community Government areas and collected on average 15 surveys per Community Government.

The majority of the field research for the Phase 2 study took place during 8-22 December 2018, following on from a three-day workshop and training in Buka during 5-7 December 2018. Additional research was conducted between January and March 2019. Our team involved 11 Bougainvillean field researchers, one coordinator, a technical support person and three senior researchers. The field research team was mostly the same as in 2015, and experiences from Phase 1 fed into Phase 2 of the research.

Field researchers’ understanding of the local areas and their local approaches in recruiting participants were invaluable. Field researchers managed their own support budgets and recruited assistants when necessary, in particular when they needed to travel to remote areas. The lack of a functioning mobile network in many areas presented challenges for communicating with field researchers on a regular basis and for providing support in a timely manner. At times, language presented a barrier where people preferred to speak in local language. The approach often used was to make contact with the local ward member, discuss the study with him or her, and ask for assistance to identify potential participants.
Research outside of Bougainville

Unlike the Phase 1 study, Phase 2 included surveys and focus groups with NRBs. Due to time and budget constraints, the research outside of Bougainville included selected focus groups and an online survey. This survey was distributed via email and Facebook during 1-12 March 2019. More than 200 people participated in the online survey, with all questions answered by 166 people.

Overall, ten focus group discussions were facilitated in towns in Papua New Guinea (Port Moresby, Goroka, Lae and Rabaul), as well as two focus groups in Brisbane, Australia. More than 60 people participated in the focus groups. There was an almost equal number of men and women. The participants’ backgrounds were varied and the focus groups included students in many of the locations.

The participants of the focus groups were recruited through existing Bougainville associations or groups in each of the towns and were based on personal contact. Because the participants in each group knew each other, the level of knowledge for members within each group appears quite homogenous. Therefore, the analysis highlighted views and opinions representative of specific segments of the Bougainville population: for instance, students in Rabaul, Lae and Brisbane, or long-term expatriates in Brisbane. This report therefore does not present views common to all NRBs, rather the distinct views of various subgroups.

In the same way, the online survey represents the views of a sample with access to internet and sufficient literacy to complete the questionnaire. Together, they give a complementary impression of the varied and complex views of the Bougainville population as a whole, whether living in or outside the AROB.

Analysis

The analysis triangulated the Phase 2 quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive picture of the respondents’ perceptions and their access to information. In the key areas of media access and knowledge levels around the BPA, quantitative data was compared with results from Phase 1 data from 2015. Similar sampling strategies were used in both phases which has enabled the comparison of results from both samples. A comparison of key demographics also confirmed that the samples at both time points represent the same population. The overall number of respondents in 2018 was half of those than in 2015 taking into account available resources and timeframes.

Because this is an audience study, we have maintained the voices of the respondents by integrating a large number of direct quotes in the report. Most of the Phase 2 interviews were conducted in Tok Pisin. The analysis was done in Tok Pisin but, for the purpose of the report, the quotes were translated into English.
PART A  PEOPLE LIVING IN BOUGAINVILLE

Respondent profile

Survey respondents’ genders were balanced (men 51.3%, women 48.7%). More than half (54.7%) were under the age of 35 (see Fig 1). About two thirds (63.9%) were married and about a third (32.8%) had access to electricity at home. Education level varied: about a quarter (22.3%) had completed Grade 6 schooling; slightly more than half (52.8%) had completed Grade 7, 8, 9 or 10; and a quarter (24.4%) had gone beyond Grade 10. Less than 2% had a university degree.

The genders of those who participated in qualitative interviews in addition to the survey were also balanced with the average age being slightly higher. Older respondents were more likely to agree to an in-depth interview than younger respondents, as they were more confident in discussing referendum related issues in more depth.

Survey respondents predominantly lived in rural areas (80.3%). The remainder lived in either remote (14.6%) or urban (4.9%) areas. About three quarters (77.8%) said they spoke and understood English, but almost all said they spoke Tok Pisin and at least one Tok Ples (local language).

Throughout the report we refer to respondents for those who participated in the research. We mention survey respondents and interview respondents separately only when we present results that are only derived from one of these methods.

Fig 1. Age groups of survey respondents (n=583)
MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND ACCESS – A SNAPSHOT

The Phase 1 baseline study had a strong focus on understanding the media landscape and understanding access, ownership and use of various media. While this Phase 2 study was less focused on access to media, and more on people’s understandings and the information received, basic comparative data was captured to understand any significant changes in the media and communication landscape over the last three years.

Newspaper access increased in Phase 2 because the Bougainville Bulletin's distribution increased and more respondents reported having accessed the Post Courier and The National newspapers. This finding does not necessarily mean that respondents had more frequent access to newspapers because rural and remote areas often depend on people bringing newspapers back from town and access is irregular. Almost half (46.7%) of those accessing newspapers (n=497) said they had access to the Bougainville Bulletin, compared with 15.8% in 2015.

The mobile phone remains the dominant communication medium. Two thirds of respondents (66.4%, n=434) said there was mobile coverage in their area. The main challenge with mobile phones is coverage and reception. Of those who did not have coverage (n=200), about two fifths (41.5%) said this was due to landowner issues, 27% said the tower was not working, and 14% said there was no tower.

Mobile towers not being functional is a key concern in Bougainville. Research showed that people sometimes deliberately damage towers due to conflicts that emerge because of benefit payments or because mobile communication is perceived as playing a key role in an existing conflict. Once towers are not functioning, it appears that there is no established process to rectify the situation. Respondents seemed to accept that the mobile network was unlikely to be fixed. They said they often made alternative arrangements to connect with people, either through word of mouth or by using their mobile strategically in places where there was reception.

Just over half of those accessing a mobile phone (51.3%, n=431) accessed a 3G phone. In contrast, in 2015, most people (81%) accessed 2G phones. Two thirds of respondents with internet access (66.2% n=231) used it via mobile phone.
Radio access remains low with 39.1% of respondents stating that they had access to radio. Over half of the respondents (52.6%) said that their main challenges with regards to radio were getting reception and coverage in their area. About a third (32.9%) of those accessing radio accessed SW radio (n=295), and 19% of those respondents said they owned an SW radio. SW Radio owners said they received radios through awareness campaigns by the United Nations (UN) and the ABG media unit.

This research indicates a need for further awareness about SW radio and for increased access to appropriate devices. With regards to programming, respondents said the best time to listen to information via radio was in the evenings after 6pm.

The Phase 2 data shows a strong increase in people accessing television via the Digicel Playbox; more than half of those accessing television (56.1%, n=289) accessed Digicel TV. During data collection in 2015, the Digicel Play Box system had just been introduced and we reported on 9% of respondents having access to TV via Digicel Play Box in 2015.

As in the 2015 study, significant differences across regions are apparent (see Fig 3). Media access in the north is strongest across all media. Respondents living in the south region generally had less media access than those in the northern and central regions. Mobile phone access was quite high in the south (79.8%), which is similar to the 2015 data (73.1%).

No significant gender differences were found in media access. However, respondents under 35 had slightly more access than older respondents, particularly to the internet and Facebook.
Perceived trust in information

In this study, we expanded the various roles that people might play within the community as information sources. Respondents most trusted information from those in official capacities at the local level, including pastors, priests, health workers, teachers, police officers, the local chief or the community government member (see Fig 4).

![Perceived Trustworthiness in Information Sources](image-url)
UNDERSTANDINGS AND KNOWLEDGE LEVELS ABOUT THE BPA AND THE REFERENDUM

This study investigated people’s knowledge about the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) and the referendum. The discussion places this data in the context of respondents’ access and exposure to information via various communication channels.

KEY POINTS

- Knowledge levels about the BPA and the referendum have increased from the previous study. More than 55% of respondents considered themselves to have a good understanding of the referendum and weapons disposal.
- Younger respondents and female respondents were more likely to report feeling ill-informed about the relevant issues.
- Respondents wanted to know more about possible referendum scenarios, the pros and cons of the referendum options, and the meaning of ‘greater autonomy’.
- Respondents sometimes used the terms referendum and independence interchangeably.
- Some awareness activities about the referendum included strong independence sentiments, but respondents preferred balanced information about their choices.
- Less than a quarter of respondents (23.4%) felt that they understood the process that would take place after the referendum.
- Most respondents (92%) felt they could vote freely.
- 59.2% of respondents were confident that the referendum would have a peaceful outcome.
- Respondents perceived ‘referendum readiness’ in various ways, depending on whether they were focused on reconciliations, weapons disposal, or dealing with law and order problems in the communities. A central feature of respondents’ feeling of readiness was feeling confident that they knew enough to make an informed choice.

51% said that they understood the difference between independence and autonomy. Older respondents and men were more likely than younger respondents and women to say they had a good understanding of these concepts.

92% felt that they could vote freely. Over half of all respondents were confident that the referendum would have a peaceful outcome.
Respondents’ knowledge about the BPA and the referendum has increased from the previous study. In 2018, more than 55% of respondents said they had a good understanding of the referendum and weapons disposal (see Fig. 5); however, in 2015, this was less than 35% for weapons disposal and less than 30% for the referendum.

More than half of respondents (51.4%) said they understood the difference between independence and autonomy (see Fig. 6). Older respondents and men were more likely than younger respondents and women to say they had a good understanding of these concepts. The finding about younger respondents and women being less informed was similar in 2015, however, there has been an overall increase in knowledge levels since 2015 (see Fig 2). This increase in knowledge levels compared to 2015 was documented to be most significant for older women (55 and over).
The table below shows examples of the different responses to express the difference between autonomy and independence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Independence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narapela lukautim yumi.</td>
<td>Yumi yet lukautim yumi yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else looks after us.</td>
<td>We look after ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nau yumi gat autonomy.</td>
<td>Em sapos yumi bruk lus long PNG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now we have autonomy.</td>
<td>It happens if we separate from PNG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yumi traim long wokabaut yumi yet.</td>
<td>Yumi sanap yumi yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are trying to stand on our own.</td>
<td>We stand on our own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yumi nogat olgeta pawa.</td>
<td>Bai yumi gat gavman na olgeta pawa bilong ronim kantri bilong yumi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We don’t have full power.</td>
<td>We will have a government and full power to operate as a country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy is the present stage where we are now.</td>
<td>Independence is what we are heading for (or what we are voting for)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of responses to distinguish autonomy and independence

Autonomy was often simply associated with the present and independence with the future.

If we vote ‘yes’ for the referendum it’s good, because we Bougainvilleanse would like to become independent. I don’t really want us to remain part of PNG. What I am saying is that we Bougainvilleanse must break away from PNG. (Female 45-54, Central rural)

The term ‘greater autonomy’ was more challenging and many respondents asked for clarification about what it encompassed. They wanted to understand the difference between the current autonomy arrangements and greater autonomy.

Many respondents appeared to confuse ‘referendum’ with ‘independence’, using the words interchangeably. This suggests that these respondents thought the referendum would definitely lead to independence.

To my understanding referendum means that we want self-governance for Bougainville. (Female, young, North rural)

Often, respondents compared the referendum to an election, using words such as ‘win’ and ‘lose’ meaning to win or lose independence.

They say that the referendum is like an election. It’s an election vote for the future of Bougainville. (Female, 35-44, South rural)

Some respondents knew that initial advertised response method for the referendum (writing ‘yes’ or ‘no’ on the voting paper) had been changed: voters would have to write an ‘X’ next to a response printed on the paper. This change led to more uncertainty and respondents said they needed clarification about this to make an informed decision.

The notion of a fair referendum is also widely quoted, though questioned in areas where respondents reported having been told or shown – for instance, on a poster affixed on a public wall – how to vote.

When they do awareness in the community they tell people to come together and that they must vote in the referendum. That they have to mark ‘yes’ during the referendum to break away from PNG so we can be on our own. (Female, young, North rural)

He did not show us the sample but he was only saying that it would not be yes and no but it would be Greater Autonomy or Independence. (..) telling us to vote for independence, Yes, independence. It was alright but in order for the people to vote, maybe we could have more ideas on, what it would be like…if we vote for independence or what it would be like if we voted for Greater Autonomy. (Female 45-54, South, rural)

Overall, respondents’ comments reflected strong pro-independence sentiments and they reported that those involved with raising awareness about the referendum often actively encouraged them to make that choice. However, respondents said they would prefer to be fully informed about the choices and the consequences of their vote.
Despite a strong push towards independence, including in some of the voter-awareness information, most survey respondents (92%) said they felt they could vote freely.

Balanced awareness-raising activities should clearly outline the referendum options, what these would mean in practical terms and what the post-referendum process will be. For example, after the vote, the PNG and ABG governments will negotiate the final outcome and the PNG Parliament will need to ratify it. This research identified gaps in respondents’ understanding of this. Less than a quarter (23.4%) felt they understood the process after the referendum. When asked who, from their understanding, would make the final decision about Bougainville’s political future, less than a fifth (17.6%) said the PNG National Parliament.

There is a clear need for information campaigns and awareness to include information about the decision-making processes post referendum vote and the possible scenarios involved after the voting.
CONFIDENCE IN A PEACEFUL OUTCOME AND UNDERSTANDING OF ‘REFERENDUM-READINESS’

About half of the survey respondents (50.7%) recognised that some groups might pose a threat to a peaceful referendum outcome: the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and Mekamui were often mentioned, but the list also included those who might be ill-informed or those who might oppose independence. However, 58.9% of respondents were confident or very confident in a peaceful outcome (see Fig. 7).

Many public and political efforts have been made to prepare Bougainville for the referendum. The term ‘referendum-ready’ has often been used, including in a motion passed in the PNG Parliament in 2016 to declare each constituency as referendum-ready by 2018.

Answers to the question of what referendum-ready means were varied. The research reached respondents in areas that had been declared referendum-ready, and who were pleased with the result. Although some expressed doubts about how ready they were:

Our constituency member declared already that we are referendum-ready. However, from what I am thinking, we are not well prepared for the referendum, because the service delivery is not actually flowing down the way it should be, and even the law and order system as well as the rule of law, and the respect towards the people like the elders and the ward members is poor. (Male, 25-34, Central, urban) 5

To some respondents, the concept of referendum-ready was not clear. They vaguely envisaged referendum-ready as gutpela sindaun (community peace and well-being), but mostly wondered what the criteria were for judging readiness.

The qualitative analysis showed that respondents who felt less informed also felt less confident that their community or Bougainville as a whole was indeed referendum-ready. Women and youths were more inclined to question their referendum-readiness, while men and older interviewees often demonstrated more confidence in being referendum-ready.

For some respondents, referendum-readiness meant independence-readiness. To them, the referendum was a ‘natural’ next step, and indeed, the last step in a process that started taking them towards independence with the signing of the BPA in 2001. Other respondents, often the better-informed ones, viewed the referendum as one part in a larger peace process (involving weapons disposal and reconciliation) and as having distinct steps that must be completed correctly to be free and fair.

We must reconcile with the others and find ourselves without wrong within our own wards, and dispose of anything that would impact the lives of the people negatively, especially the lives of the people in the remote areas. That is ‘referendum-readiness’. (Female, 55 and over, Central, urban) 6

Fig 7. Confidence levels around a peaceful outcome
Almost two thirds of survey respondents (65.3%) stated that a reconciliation had taken place in their area. But some respondents expressed doubts about whether weapons disposal had been fully completed. Rumours about – and fears of – armed factions were kept alive while parts of the process were not considered complete.

Doubts were also expressed about the real worth of government-driven ‘mass reconciliation’, which some respondents deemed not always credible nor in line with traditional reconciliation customs.

This ‘mass reconciliation’ that they were talking about, is not the right way to do reconciliations. The process or the reconciliation programs […] did not really pay attention to people’s feelings. That’s why people kept asking if they were going to be compensated. (Female, 55 and over, North, rural)

With regards to good governance and a successful peace process, law and order disturbances and their link to widespread substance abuse were also mentioned. The expression “clean up” came up repeatedly, particularly among older respondents who saw community law and order problems as “un-Bougainvillean”. To them, becoming referendum-ready represented a way to repair the damage caused by the Bougainville crisis and return to the good situation they had before.

To prepare for the referendum, we must clean up our communities or villages, families and communities. Any disputes and frictions we have, we must reconcile, live peacefully and look towards the referendum period. (Female, 25-34, South, rural)

A central feature of ‘readiness’ for respondents was feeling confident that they had enough ‘good’ information to make an informed choice. Many respondents thought that referendum-readiness should be realised not only at the community, family and individual levels, but also in the relationship between the ABG and those it governs - for example, by the ABG manifesting its intention to get closer to the people and listen to them. Several respondents pointed out that referendum-readiness cannot be built “on a void”.

The concept of ‘inclusivity’ was crucial for respondents. Young people and those in remote communities, in particular, felt like they were not yet fully included in the process and needed help to become referendum-ready. Young respondents characterised themselves, and were characterised by other respondents, as having low literacy levels, being idle, lacking hope, and looking for solace in destructive homebrew and marijuana addictions. Remote communities suffer from isolation, and lack of access to health facilities, transport infrastructure, and educational and employment opportunities.

Referendum-ready to some respondents also meant having dealt with the trauma of the past, and to be free of any fear.

Overall there is general awareness of the upcoming referendum among respondents as it has been much discussed at the community level. Uncertainties about the referendum process and possible outcome scenarios remained for some respondents. However, the research shows that the respondents’ knowledge levels have increased as they have had increased access to information since 2015.
We investigated how people in Bougainville received information about the BPA and referendum, and what their preferred information channels and activities were. When asked about how they had received information about the referendum, most respondents mentioned community awareness programs and word of mouth. Printed materials had also been widely circulated (see Fig 4).

![Graph showing information sources](image)

How have people received information about the Referendum?

Fig 8. How people have received information about the referendum

Across the sample, respondents displayed a real “hunger for information” and asked “to be fed” information. Most respondents recognised the referendum’s importance, and said that all of the information they had received, regardless of the source and tone of the content, contributed to their feeling of empowerment. Interviewees relied on multiple sources, according to what was available to them.

Because of the Post Courier or the Bougainville Bulletin, I have information about how the Bougainville Peace Agreement was formed, how people are getting ready to vote in the referendum. I received some information about the referendum and independence and also about arms disposal. Sometimes I get text messages with information on the mobile phone. (Male, 35-44, South rural) 11

We might create disunity amongst our own people and this is not good. Because we need to unite, we must have unity to move to the next phase. (Male, 25-34, Central rural) 13

Those who go to Buka or Arawa or to the main town, they come back and tell us, and we hear it. (Female, 55 and over, South rural) 12

I know how to read and can understand the information. But those that do not know how to read, I really want a team to come and conduct more awareness with those people in the community through their community ward member. (Male, 55 and over, North rural) 14

There was a general request for information to be inclusive, to reach all groups and all levels of the population. Some groups, like youth and people in remote areas, were most vocal in their request for information. Most respondents saw the referendum as a group effort requiring everyone’s input because the outcome would affect everyone. Many comments reflected a feeling of solidarity and a concern that Bougainvilleans be given the opportunity to operate in unity, as a coordinated group. However, unequal access to information was seen as hampering this goal and risking the potential for a successful referendum outcome.

Information was considered key to a successful outcome and people saw a risk if people were not well informed. This was particularly mentioned with regards to the younger generation:
A lot of young men here, a lot are youths, who are the future generations, the majority of them did not go to school because of the crisis, and if they do not have information on the processes for us to go for referendum, this can cause problems. (Female, 45-54, Central remote) 15

Respondents were acutely aware of the difference being informed makes to an individual or a community:

I can say that those people that have a chance to know are those that have status, the working class and those that have access to attend some training, only these people have a fair idea. (Male, 18-24, South rural) 16

Local members appeared to be judged on the quality of their efforts to inform their electorate.

Some government members are doing their best to bring information to the community. Others are not doing as much but conducting a general awareness. (…) I have heard of a woman ward member, how she manages to hold awareness sessions through her electorate and makes sure her constituency understands the information, that’s how she does it in her constituency. (Female, 55 and over, North rural) 17

A central element in the concept of fairness, besides information, is comprehension, often linked to the level of literacy. Respondents requested careful choice of words, and of language. Again, these requests were made by those with low levels of literacy themselves, and others on their behalf.

If everybody is given the opportunity to be given that awareness, honestly be given the pros and cons – the good of greater autonomy, the benefits of independence and the disadvantages for both sides, then they will be able to give their vote. (Meri, 55 and over, North rural) 18

Awareness they carried out is a big thing, [but] it’s not right when leaders conducting awareness don’t simplify the English terms so people can understand what they mean. So, when leaders come to conduct awareness about the referendum, they have to use accessible terms so everyone can understand them. (Male 35-44, South, remote) 19

Respondents in remote areas felt the need for information intensely and some regretted not having had sufficient access to information.

ABG is doing good work, but it’s the communities and the people in the communities now that the ABG must refocus and go into each village, door to door to carry out awareness or to carry out this vote to get a positive result. (Female, 25-34, North rural) 20

I reflect back on my village, a lot of men, women and youths in the village do not understand what the Autonomous Bougainville Government means, (…) we haven’t had awareness in our community, or clarification on the type of government system we have or what we are working towards as [a region]. (Male, 18-24, South, rural) 21

There is still confusion, in some parts of Bougainville more than in others, about what the referendum really means, what its real consequences would be. But in parallel, there is also a lack of self-confidence about one’s own knowledge: respondents often sought reassurance and repeatedly asked basic questions. The research shows the need for repetition and for confirmation.

In some areas here when they call and talk to me, I am clear about the referendum, but at other times I do not fully understand what they are saying about the referendum. (Female, 25-34, Central, rural) 22

The underlying feeling of confusion has led to rumours that some interviewees found disquieting.

I think about the crisis, what if we say yes and then there is a crisis like the last time. These thoughts make me worried (Female 18-24, North, rural) 23

Generally, preference for first-hand information was repeatedly expressed, and the need to ensure that the information is understood by everyone in the community.
PRINT MEDIA

Printed information was viewed as informative and was favoured for its permanency compared with word of mouth, for instance, which may allow messages to become distorted. Multiple respondents asked for printed versions of the constitution, for instance, or of other official texts, when they realised they had not seen them and did not know their exact content.

With regards to this question, I have not read a Bougainville Peace Agreement book, in fact I have not seen it with my eyes, but the people who carry out awareness refer to the Bougainville Peace Agreement. (Male, 25-34, South, rural)

While respondents’ support for print media is similar to the 2015 study, there has been a demonstrated increase in access to printed information. Some respondents in areas with no radio or phone coverage were grateful to get printed material as a resource. While illiteracy is a challenge widely acknowledged, literate respondents gladly shared any information they had access to. In the spirit of solidarity mentioned earlier, some made it their mission to share their knowledge as widely as possible.

One thing is when go to town, that’s the news our friends send to us, or any information they have, they pass it on to us. (Female, 55 and over, South, rural)

Print in general and newspapers in particular were appreciated by respondents for using clear wording, allowing their readers to develop sound judgement, and giving regular updates. These updates were particularly appreciated because the BPA was perceived as a process involving steps and changes.

I understand what referendum and what independence mean, but at first, I was not really clear what they meant, but now I know more, which is good. I will go home, and educate the young ones, so they can understand, I will explain what referendum and what independence mean because they, the young people, do not know what they mean. (Female, 25-34, South, Urban)

The Bougainville Bulletin reached 39% of respondents (n=557) and the ABG fact sheets were accessed by 21% (n=557). When they have been sighted and read, both sources were deemed to provide good information, and to be reliable references to spread the information.
I like it, I get it and I really like the Bougainville Bulletin because I receive more information about the referendum and independence. (Male 35-44, South, rural) 28

In the factsheets, I see that we receive very important key messages (…) Regarding the posters, especially within our networks – the Women’s Federation – during our forums, we use the posters. Many times we get our posters from the office of the Referendum directory. (Female, 45-54, South, rural) 29

Publicly visible posters were referred to by over a quarter of the respondents (27.8%) as having provided information about the referendum. The posters were deemed appealing through the combination of text and photos.

The way I understand the referendum is through reading posters. When I see posters, I stand there and read it. That is how I understand the referendum, not necessarily through awareness. (Female, 25-34, North, rural) 30

The poster of the veterans’ message in particular reassured people (about the veterans’ intentions), and was viewed as trustworthy. Such messages reinforced the feeling of togetherness latent among the population.

I use the posters to give information to my kids and to my family members as well. I tell them, we are not living in ordinary times, we are going through this change because of what happened during the Bougainville crisis. (Female, 45-54, South, rural) 31

WORD OF MOUTH

Word of mouth is the informal communication in conversations between community members. Respondents used the word “awareness” for face-to-face, in-person information received from a source with a level of official authority. While word of mouth messages might be distorted, this communication method offers the advantage of allowing one to ask questions.

Word of mouth – when my friends tell me where they get news from – my friends get their information from newspapers, some get it from radio, some receive information from some ward members. When we sit and tell stories, my friends tell me about the referendum and how life will be like (…). Word of mouth, I like, because some things the government workers are not explaining clearly enough but through word of mouth, people can ask questions, and they can answer us. (Male, 35-44, South, rural) 32

Within “awareness”, we heard mention of teams of the Referendum Dialogues, ward members, community government members and chiefs having received a recognised “induction”, “workshops” and “skul” organised by the Electoral Commission and other groups. “Awareness”, or face-to-face communication, and radio, were the most preferred information channels. Respondents appreciated the direct contact, the informant’s effort to come to them, and foremost, the possibility to ask questions, which is essential to confirm the correctness of one’s interpretation.
Those that come to do awareness, they come and explain. They come and ask us what we understand about referendum and some of them explain it to us. I like that because, when they talk and if you don’t understand it fully, you can ask them questions and they will explain it. (Female, 55 and over, North, urban) 33

A condition for successful awareness-raising is that enough time is allocated for the session. Another condition is that, rather than an isolated occurrence, the visit is repeated, as a token of goodwill and intention to inform well. Repeated visits provide opportunities to listen again, ask more questions, clarify information and retain it. Respondents in remote areas unanimously asked for this.

Some things not going well are that some community members do not attend the awareness that the ABG conducted regarding autonomy and independence. Another thing that is not so good is that the ABG come and do one awareness and then they don’t come back again. (Male, 18-24, Central, rural) 34

Some respondents pointed to the fact that awareness sessions were not always well attended:

Presentations given about the referendum are alright. But a lot of time I see that people do not turn up the time the awareness is carried out. Attendance from the community is not good. (Female, 25-34, North, rural) 35

When attended, the Referendum Dialogues, organised by the Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia (PaCSIA), received good reviews:

They give us a lot of information. Some of this information, we have not received from other sources, but we get it from PaCSIA. And the style they conduct the dialogues is good because their process gives everyone a chance to talk and ask questions. This is a great way to give information because those that are there have the freedom to say what they truly want to share or say. The only thing that I do not agree with, as a leader from this community, is that we are selected from one central location. (Female, 45-54, South, rural) 36

Respondents noted that only certain people attended gatherings and that not everyone was reached when holding sessions in one location. Some respondents commented on challenges with timing because they were waiting for the integration of the awareness process towards referendum-readiness.

The referendum dialogues were carried out by the member, it was for an hour and it was held at the school grounds. At the time the package about referendum readiness was not released yet, so we were not really clear about it. (…) We are waiting for our constitutional member to come and conduct the awareness with us. (Male, 25-34, North, rural) 37

ABG members’ initiatives were appreciated by respondents. Almost half of all respondents (42.9% n=578) said they had participated in awareness sessions conducted by an ABG member. When detailing their appreciation of ABG members’ awareness efforts, respondents provided various layers in their answers. They appreciated:

- seeing their member in person in their area, as evidence of their commitment for their electorate’s well-being
- information efforts made in person, as an opportunity to access first-hand information from an official source, and to get answers to their questions
- objective information about the two main options to be proposed in the referendum: the best information detailed the pros and cons of each option.

Respondents said awareness sessions helped them to understand the process, and highlighted the steps involved. The sessions emphasised weapons disposal and reconciliation as preliminary steps, and provided much-needed reassurance to the audience, thereby gaining further credibility. In addition to ABG members, who might in some cases be distant to the community, ward members were considered the key people to provide this information.

When the ward member and the team we work with come and run the referendum workshops, it gives us a good understanding on how to vote, to vote well for independence, and we are provided with more information around this during the awareness. When our leaders come and deliver awareness we are happy to participate. (Male, 25-34, North rural) 38

For all these reasons, all respondents wanted more awareness sessions and more teams to be sent to them and other villages, ideally several times.

I observed that the awareness team came once only but they must continue to carry out more awareness and provide posters so that we can clearly understand the process of the referendum. This way we will get more information on what to do during the referendum. (Female, 55 and over; South, rural) 39
The consensus among respondents was that awareness sessions had not yet reached all people within Bougainville. Respondents wanted more efforts made to reach remote areas because villagers may not have the opportunity, the means or the inclination to travel to the town centres.

I see that most of the people don’t attend the forums. When we call for a meeting in a particular location, most people don’t attend. It’s usually the same people who come together to hear the information. Some people don’t care – they stay in their homes. (Female, 45-54, South, rural)

Respondents asked for printed materials to be left within communities, as reference for further discussions.

The Ward Members need to be inducted so that they must carry out the work to each of the hamlets. And the information leaflets should be printed English and in Tok Pisin. (Male, 35-44, North, rural)

Use the Ward Member to talk because I can ask questions if I am not clear about some things (…) One thing, the ward member is from our community and it is easy for them to conduct awareness – they also use our mother tongue. (Female, 45-54, North, rural)

Respondents wanted the existing networks to be used, including ward members, community governments and chiefs, churches, teachers and local groups: these people know the area, are trusted and are accountable because the locals know them. They are efficient because they use the “adequate” language (appropriate choice of words and of language) that suits the community’s needs. Information was seen as trickling down to the community from ward members, to chiefs, then to wantoks (extended family), and finally, to families and individuals.

The touring Radio Ples Lain was appreciated by respondents. One respondent, for example, was gushing with praise about how a women’s forum that was advertised on the station and how they were given information about the event.

Radio should, however, be complemented with opportunities to ask questions.

I prefer radio because I don’t have to walk distances to get information about referendum awareness. I can stay at home and tune my radio and listen to it. (Female, 45-54, North, rural)

Some awareness is carried out by Ples Lain Radio. It would be good to get this kind of information on a regular basis, day to day, from this radio. So can it improve its coverage so we can receive it from here as well, and not just Buka people have access to it, us too from isolated places – the government must set up coverage so we can have access to the radio station. That way we can tune in to the radio and receive information ourselves. (Male, 25-34, Central, rural)

Radio should, however, be complemented with opportunities to ask questions.

When I listen to the radio, I feel good but sometimes I don’t feel so good, I like face-to-face communication. Some must come with teams to confirm what is being said on the radio with their own mouths. On the radio, I sometimes I doubt it, and think about if what they are saying is true or not. (Male, 55 and over, North, rural)

The touring Radio Ples Lain was appreciated by respondents. One respondent, for example, was gushing with praise about how a women’s forum that was advertised on the station and how they were given information about the event.

Radio Ples Lain - my first time to listen to them and to see them was during a Women’s Unification Forum for us women from South Bougainville. That forum was organised by the women member for ABG. Radio Ples Lain came along as well. (…) and they gave us a radio each. We transited before going back to Aran Siwai District. We accessed all the information during that week. I really liked it, and I saw that that the service itself was very effective to the people inside Bougainville. (Female, 45-54, South, rural)

I think it's good because I receive first-hand information from the radio. It's not second-hand information that you receive. Radio provides the right information. (Female, 55 and over, South, rural)

I think it’s good because I receive first-hand information from the radio. It’s not second-hand information that you receive. Radio provides the right information. (Female, 55 and over, South, rural)
**VISUAL SCREEN MEDIA**

The use of visual technology was generally appreciated, and was perceived by respondents as helping information retention through entertainment. Some respondents appreciated the billboards in towns for the informative content and some particularly liked the referendum countdown. Others were at times puzzled by non-political content, such as cultural or tourism-related content.

The thing that made me understand was what I saw especially from the Buka TV screen. It describes the process and talks about integrity, and each group should be well prepared. (Female, 34-45, Central, remote) 48

I once went for a visit and on the billboard, I saw the president and the ABG members. They were talking about the processes of the referendum. I did not quite get it, so I did not understand it really. But I collected a bit of the information about the referendum. (Male, 25-34, North, rural) 49

Some respondents expressed regret that the billboards were only accessible to a small part of population:

It’s not so great to place the billboard in town only. They should put this billboard in the villages as well so that at least everyone is informed of the awareness, and then can be clear about it. (Male, 25-34, North, rural) 50

Videos involving James Tanis were judged informative and attractive, but one drawback of this form of media is the inability to ask questions.

I only watched awareness from the team which was James Tanis recorded on video. He did referendum awareness regarding arms disposal (...) He was explaining all the steps of the referendum and how it will come about (...) What is not so great about it is that we can’t ask them questions. Because we only see him talking. This is one-way information. (Male, 25-34, Central, urban) 51

Videos and the use of projection were generally well received.

They talk and give us good information on the referendum, and I understand. Sometimes they also show us pictures. (Male 25-34, South, rural) 52

**MOBILE PHONES AND INTERNET**

Mobile phones were noted for their ability to receive information quickly and precisely.

I was in school and they just told me that we would have a referendum. They rang me and said in 2019, we would have a referendum. (...) With regards to phone and using phones, it is good, because you can pass the message faster to people. (Female, 25-34, Central, urban) 53

Some (mostly urban) respondents said they relied on their mobile to get information:

I prefer mobile phones because it’s handy. Even if you are on a bus or wherever, you will still hear the news. This is how it helps us because, with a mobile phone, you can ask questions if you are not clear about something. (Male, 25-34, Central, urban) 54

Some respondents reported receiving texts communicating the referendum date only, while others received complementary information. About a third of all respondents (29.8%) commented on receiving a text message from the ABG media unit.

They send text message about the referendum, the text says we are about to go for referendum (...) As for the mobile, when they ring, I like when they ring me… I can understand what they are saying about the referendum. (Female, 25-34, Central, rural) 55

Some urban, often younger respondents appreciated using the internet to get information. They mentioned, however, the need to check the value of the information because they had heard about false news circulating on the internet.

What I don’t like is that there is false information coming from the internet and from Facebook as well. (Male 25-34, Central, urban). 56

Downsides of the internet noted by respondents were the unreliable network, and the cost of access.

I don’t like the internet because sometimes the network plays up. And also the use of internet costs money. (Female, 25-34, Central, urban) 57
Respondents said they liked receiving referendum information because it gave them more knowledge and contributed to their self-confidence. They felt it was their right to get information from their own government, and they demanded it. They felt that being informed and knowing what to do would allow them to support the ABG by voting correctly, and later, by giving active support where needed. In addition, respondents saw the role of the ABG in imparting information to the population demonstrated its good will, and the credibility and seriousness of its intentions.

The main problems identified by respondents were the confusion about the correct information needed for the population to make informed decisions, and the foreseen consequences of inadequate information. Notions of solidarity and interdependency were intertwined: the vulnerability of the less informed parts of the population would have an impact on the Bougainville population as a whole. If not addressed, their poorly informed vote might “endanger” the future of the region. Respondents often said that remote areas had not yet been reached with adequate levels of information.

Those respondents who were satisfied with their experience of awareness sessions said they understood that the BPA was a process, with consecutive steps that must be followed in the correct order, starting with weapons disposal and reconciliation.

Respondents viewed being informed as an important component of maintaining peace in Bougainville. Across the board, respondents supported there being a number of activities and channels to receive information (see Fig. 9). Radio remained one of the most popular media to receive regular and trusted information. However, a key component highlighted by respondents was the opportunity to ask questions, which might be provided through talkback radio shows or through community-awareness sessions. In particular, respondents highlighted the important role ward members and trusted community members played in conducting community-awareness sessions in which people felt comfortable to ask questions.

![Preferred Ways to Receive Information](image-url)

**Fig 9.** Preferred ways to receive information about the Referendum

*Note: Respondents were asked for their top three preferences for receiving information. Respondents also mentioned teachers and schools, and churches (all coded under Other).*
Print media was highly appreciated by respondents and has contributed to consistent messages being received by the communities, in particular through the factsheets, the Bougainville Bulletin and posters. Respondents requested more materials to be able to further understand the more complex aspects and components of the referendum and the BPA more broadly. Respondents used print materials to share information with others and facilitate discussions.

The assessment on the knowledge levels of respondents in this research demonstrates that not everyone has the same access to information and is provided with the opportunities to engage and ask questions. There are key audience groups that need to be considered in the process of information dissemination, both in terms of targeting them specifically and in terms of their role in providing support to share information with others.

In the next section, we focus on women, youth, veterans and people living in remote communities as key audiences identified in the study.
KEY AUDIENCE GROUPS

WOMEN

The findings show that women in general are less informed or less confident than men in what they know about the BPA and Bougainville’s political processes. About two thirds of female respondents (66.9%) felt they could freely express their opinion in their community, compared with more than three quarters of male respondents (78.3%, n=583). Female respondents said they welcomed awareness sessions, in particular, sessions with opportunities to ask questions and have discussions.

I like it when we have an opportunity to ask questions when we don’t understand things and they can explain it to us further. (...) Sometimes, I don’t like it because they are in a hurry and don’t explain things properly. (Female, 55 and over, North, urban)

Women of all ages were happy to participate in the interviews. Similar to the youth, some were shy to talk, resulting in very short interviews. Others, by contrast, were keen to find and share information, and express their views to the researchers. Women generally emphasised the need for more information across the whole population. What emerged strongly was women’s role in sharing information among themselves and within their families. Women saw themselves as assets in the society and in the process:

People of Bougainville are resilient, they in their own way try emotionally, economically, for example women in informal sectors, women in business is what is uprising at the moment. Women in top decision-making bodies, people standing up and speaking up for their rights. (Female, 45-54, Central, Urban)

Women emphasised safety in relation to weapons disposal, law and order issues, and peace more broadly.

The process of peace and reconciliation has to be done first to settle problems from the past. Like with weapons disposal, they must dispose of all guns so that there are no conflicts after the referendum. (Female, 35-44, North, rural)

Many female respondents said they received information from women’s groups or church groups, which are often linked. Women’s meetings were viewed as a good place to receive, share and discuss information, as well as ask questions. Most female respondents seemed to regularly attend these meetings, and as a place for discussing any issues and expressing their opinion, they ranked it second, after doing so with family and close relatives. In line with the broader population, women also commented positively on the use of radio and newspapers where they are being accessed.
YOUTH

Youth (14-34 years of age) are an important audience because the study’s results show that they are generally less informed than those above 35 years of age, and often seem to lack confidence in their knowledge and understanding. Young respondents often referred to ‘what they heard’ instead of stating ‘what they knew’.

Similar to the findings in the baseline study, the 2018 data shows that young respondents had less opportunity to actively engage in discussions and participate in conversations at the community level. They said they felt most comfortable expressing their opinion within their own families. In addition, they were less likely than older respondents to report feeling free to express their opinion. However, the data demonstrates a general increase in all respondents’ confidence in expressing their opinion freely within their community since 2015 (see Fig 6).

Young respondents were actively asking and looking for information about the referendum. Some commented that they read over the received materials several times to better understand them.

I have seen some posters and after reading the information several times I’m beginning to slowly understand. (Male, 18-24, Central, rural)

In addition, young respondents seemed to be more vocal about requesting information from official visitors, such as government staff or ward members or from official media sources.

I wanted to know because I wasn’t sure, that’s why I read the newspaper to get knowledge and understand the various things around the referendum. (Female, 18-24, Central, rural)

Less than a quarter of young respondents spontaneously mentioned youth groups as the place to go to voice their opinion or get information. However, respondents who were youth group leaders more strongly emphasised the opportunities these youth meetings offered. According to them, youth meetings and networks could be used as a place to share and pass on information. Many young respondents said they were actively engaged within church groups and networks.

Fig 10. Respondents who feel free to express their opinion in their community according to age

Free to express opinion

Percentage

14-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 over 55

Young respondents were actively asking and looking for information about the referendum. Some commented that they read over the received materials several times to better understand them.
Youth expressed various uncertainties about the referendum, for example, about the likelihood of a peaceful outcome. About half (53.7%) of respondents younger than 35 were confident in a peaceful outcome, compared with 69.3% of those over 45 years of age. Youths strongly commented on the need for community development and they associated hopes for positive change with the upcoming referendum, particularly with regards to education and employment opportunities.

Most of the services that are not functioning are services like schools for the children. Because most of the youth are grade 8 dropouts. We need more education. The government needs to restore such services. It needs to build more educational institutions. (Female, 18-24, North, rural) 61

A clear gap remains in knowledge levels and engagement among the young population. This group might be best addressed within their peer groups to receive information and participate in discussion; however, their lack of participation at the community level also needs to be addressed, and any programs must be strongly integrated with the wider community, and not happen in isolation. Both male and female ward leaders might be best placed within the community to develop programs specifically targeting and involving youths. Young respondents said they would like to be given the opportunity to be more actively involved, and, as a result, become better informed about the various processes involved in the referendum.

VETERANS

Because of their direct involvement in the Bougainville crisis, veteran respondents’ views appeared to keep a “before and after” (crisis) perspective and described the situation as evolving:

Since the establishment of ABG, there has been gradual development. If you travel out, you will see that there is development progress within Bougainville. When you are here in Bougainville, you don’t realise it that much, it’s only when you look at it from outside that you can see ABG’s work. (Male, 45-54, North, rural) 62

The veterans viewed PNG in a rather negative light, for example, saying that PNG was responsible for the slow progress of Bougainville’s development. They expressed their loyalty to the ABG as a token of gratitude for bringing peace and returning their life “back to normal”. Veterans expressed apprehension about a return to violence through the actions of the PNG government:

People are afraid when it comes to the ratification. They fear that although we will vote for independence that the PNG government might not support us in the ratification. (Male, 35-44, Central, rural) 63

But apart from this uncertainty, the veteran respondents were confident in a peaceful process. They appeared generally well informed and able to judge the present situation based on their past experiences. They best understood how the past has shaped Bougainville’s present and many had played a critical role in Bougainville’s referendum and peace process.

Among veteran respondents were two broad types. On the one hand, there were veterans who were actively involved, taking part and supporting reconciliations, expressing strong support for the ABG, and keen to receive all forms of information. On the other hand, we encountered other veterans who kept their distance and did not want to play an active role, and were less likely to express demands for information.

Veteran respondents appreciated receiving information through official media channels or from government. They mentioned radio, newspapers, the Bougainville Bulletin and community awareness involving ABG members as their preferred ways to receive information.
REMOTE COMMUNITIES

People living in remote areas are another key group that are important to consider with regards to providing updated information about the Bougainville peace process because they are less likely to leave their communities and access to their communities is challenging for awareness teams to reach. Respondents from remote locations reported generally being less informed and feeling isolated; they often commented on government services not reaching them, which contributed to them feeling left out.

What I think is not working is the financing. The money that is for all people is not reaching those in remote communities. (Male, 55 or over, Central, remote) 64

As a consequence of feeling left out, remote respondents reiterated how they felt their knowledge about their region’s political situation was neither complete nor adequate. They appealed for information, and for inclusion in the information process. In doing this, they looked towards the outside for help: they expressed the distinct feeling that the community did not have the resources to help themselves. Their ‘appeal’ was supported by respondents from rural and urban areas who regularly made the observation that remote communities had not yet been reached. Furthermore, the perceived lack of information reaching the remote population was considered a liability for the region as a whole because ill-informed voters may jeopardise the region’s future by “not voting well”.

If they provide good information then people will listen and they will understand it, they can then make the right decision, and we will all do well. (Female, 55 and over, Central, remote) 65

The best evidence that remote areas have received due consideration comes from respondents’ reports that well-trained visitors had come to see them – either “official” visitors or officially trained local people. Respondents characterised good awareness sessions as those that were repeated and included opportunities to ask questions, thereby contributing to self-confidence in their knowledge. These characteristics were deemed necessary so that people could digest and integrate the information.

They have to walk here to come to see us, and they need to give us the right information for us to understand, so we can make an informed choice during the referendum. (Male, 18-24, Central, remote) 66

Respondents from remote communities wanted to discuss the information with their leaders and those at the ward and community government level. They asked for printed materials to be distributed so they could be used in discussions. Examples given of trustworthy information were official messages in the Bougainville Bulletin and ABG factsheets. These respondents saw the ideal situation as one in which information was disseminated across various media, including awareness sessions, printed materials and radio where possible. Suggestions were made for the ballot paper to include a visual representation such as the Bougainville and the PNG flags to support the two options. In general, remote respondents asked for information to be made available to everyone in the form that they could best understand it.

Most respondents from all locations agreed that time and resources must be invested in taking information to the remote communities on mainland Bougainville without access to direct road networks and to the island communities such as Nissan and Atolls.
NISSAN ISLAND

Nissan Island can be accessed from Buka by boat, taking about 2-3 hours to travel when the sea is calm. Limitations to frequent travelling to the mainland include costs for transport and challenging sea conditions that increase risks for those travelling. In terms of accessing referendum information, many Nissan Islander respondents said they relied on what they heard from those returning to the island through word of mouth.

Respondents on Nissan Island mentioned the non-functioning mobile network as a key concern in relation to communication. Newspapers were accessed when brought from Buka, providing an important information source considered trustworthy by respondents. Some respondents mentioned very high frequency (VHF) radio as one of the main forms of communication and some regularly listened to SW radio. Those who accessed television accessed it via Digicel Playbox.

Nissan Islanders had received information on the referendum through community awareness sessions and through official channels at the ward level. Local respondents deemed the information received on the peace process, the referendum and its consequences insufficient at this stage. They appealed repeatedly for better information in the form of community awareness sessions through official channels and the need for more information via radio.

From the interviews, Nissan Islanders’ priorities related to their feelings of isolation and remoteness, the difficulties associated with transport and communication, and the perceived scarcity of government and social services. Central in their comments were aspirations for change – towards development – and the perception that such long and eagerly awaited change might only come with the opportunity for independence.

Respondents here viewed the ABG as mostly absent and indifferent. While some ABG effort was acknowledged through the presence of a school, respondents focused more on what was lacking, including organised transport to and from mainland, mobile towers in working order, and general services. Nissan was perceived as disadvantaged and in need of government services.

Nissan is a most disadvantaged area and ABG should make it a key consideration. (Male, 35-44, Nissan Island)

The Nissan Islanders’ desire for change was connected to the option for independence as a means to catalyse change: more powers to the ABG meant more possibility of development. As heard on the mainland, Nissan Islander respondents reported confidence that Bougainville’s resources could be used to develop the region. They repeatedly asked for more information from the ABG, particularly about the referendum questions, and the meaning of the option of greater autonomy. As on the mainland, the Nissan Islanders often sought reassurance about the various possible scenarios after the referendum, and PNG’s supportive attitude for a peaceful and satisfactory outcome.

I would like to strongly appeal to the people of Bougainville to come together and maintain peace in Bougainville (...) We must show the National Government that we can create a strong Bougainville. (Female, 25-34, Nissan Island)

Respondents from Nissan Island asked for a strong focus on inclusivity. Due to their relative proximity to Buka, they were aware of the information and communication possibilities and wanted to be involved in the ongoing dialogues about the referendum and Bougainville’s political future.
FUTURE ASPIRATIONS AND INFORMATION NEEDS

The audience study asked respondents to talk about their perceptions of the ABG’s performance to date and their expectations of their government.

When asked to talk about the ABG’s performance since 2005, respondents displayed a critical attitude closely mixed with pride in “their” own government, and the realisation that the ABG is their best hope to achieve the Bougainville they want. Respondents talked about the ABG with something that could be qualified as ‘tough love’. When asked about their level of satisfaction with the ABG’s performance since 2005, respondents were split, with almost half (48.8%) being either satisfied or very satisfied (see Fig 7).

![Fig 11. Level of satisfaction with the ABG since 2005](image-url)
RESPONDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ABG

POSITIVES ABOUT THE ABG

The mere fact that the ABG exists was seen as positive. The ABG has been and is the first government of Autonomous Bougainville. It has produced the Constitution and the First House of Bougainville Parliament, which has guided the first steps toward autonomy. The ABG started in difficult conditions, in a region in ruins. It has worked towards establishing and promoting peace in the region. Making things “better than the crisis” has been one of its achievements and its push for reconciliation has been fruitful.

Some of the good things that autonomy brought was that when we gained autonomy the good things we had are ‘peace and reconciliation’ in which I feel that this particular government succeeded in. (Male, 35-44, South, remote) 70

This is given as explanation by many respondents: the region had been effectively destroyed, so the ABG had to “start from scratch”.

A number of good things that came into existence were from the health sector and from the education sector. In terms of education. We had re-functioning of schools that trained our children to become literate children, you know. And in terms of the hospitals, in a way I am proud of having this autonomy, we had medication brought in. (Male, 35-44, South, remote) 71

Other respondents saw “superficial” accomplishments, which require more in-depth work in the remote areas:

According to my observation, ABG is carrying out its roles, however it has to come right down to the people in the remote areas. (...) From the top, yes, I see development taking place but in order to reach people, there are some areas, in terms of communication services we really lack it. (Male, 35-44, South, remote) 72

They don’t fund money. They never spend it wisely in the communities. Especially during that time when it was flowing into the community, a lot of people here usually complain about the disappearing of funds. (Male, 45-54, Central, remote). 73

President John Momis is regarded as a grand, trusted figure in the political landscape. The MPs generally, as the “local face of ABG”, are at the heart of respondents’ perception of the ABG: the satisfaction with Momis affected perceptions of the ABG’s performance. Conversely, disappointment reflects negatively on the ABG’s performance.

Some recent initiatives were mentioned as positive: the transition from CoEs – initially put in place to promote a return to peace – to community governments, had led to greater development and encouraging opportunities. However, the ABG was yet to make full use of this new institution.

We used to have the CoE (Council of Elders), however we now have the Community Government where male and female both have equal voices. Gender equality is in existence now. Therefore, this is the type of government that empowers the remote areas. (Male, 25-34, Central, rural) 74

The recent steps towards eradicating corruption, largely picked up from media reports, were perceived as a sign of the ABG’s credibility. Recent awareness efforts to spread information about the referendum were appreciated by their recipients as the evidence of the ABG’s commitment to a “free and fair” referendum.

They are carrying out their roles the way they should. They are trying their best to disseminate information right down to the people in order for them to understand what we need to do for the referendum. (Male, 25-34, North, rural) 75

One service that came about is the delivery of awareness documents for the referendum. That is one of the changes. (Female, 34-45, Central, remote)

The ABG’s work in the past years was acknowledged by those respondents to whom it was visible, usually in their area: schools, roads, aid posts, coffee projects and the airports.

I’ve seen small changes such as electricity flowing this way and poles being erected. The cables are being connected for electricity. As well as the re-establishment of schools (...) Schools received assistance from them such as classrooms. And the communities were supported, they were given materials bought by them. The government paid for that and offered it to communities. In terms of water supplies, tanks for instance. Lots of things happened. (Female, 18-24, North, rural) 76

Loyalty to the ABG included keeping a fair attitude about one’s responsibilities, the ABG’s and that of the communities. Overall, there was a latent or expressed loyalty to the ABG as representative of Bougainville’s aspirations. The ABG was regarded as “better than PNG”. This perception was
often based on disappointment with PNG’s performance in looking after Bougainville, but was also based on a negative perception of PNG’s financial management abilities.

The PNG government does not really fund us with money for the constituencies, the constituency fund us, you know. This money is purposely for that, so it should be given. (PNG) must hand these funds over, however they never do, therefore our Autonomous Government is unable to bring change because it is financially broke.

(Male, 45-54, North, rural)  

For some respondents, PNG was seen as “the bad guy” who caused the crisis in the first place. A lot of fear was still attached to the image of the PNGDF, and unsettling rumours circulated.

They normally update us on the events that occur because some people tend to scare us about having another war. Therefore, when awareness is being done, they tend to explain that ‘such things won’t happen.’ There’ll be all kinds of rumours happening such as the PNGDF are in training to start war if we vote ‘yes’ to gain independence.

(Male, 25-34, Central, urban)  

To some, then, PNG was seen as “a hindrance”, in the way of true and good development. This sentiment was particularly clearly expressed when respondents were asked about their view of what they thought would happen after the referendum: in essence, it seemed that once PNG was “out of the way”, everything good might be within reach.

For others, PNG had provided the support to get Bougainville to where it was. And some respondents saw both PNG and the ABG as an inherent part of the journey to the end goal, which was within reach: “We have come so far. One last effort.”

We have reached our final count down now and that is our vote for the referendum.

(Male, 45-54, South, rural)  

Yet, it was also clear to respondents that there were many steps involved after the referendum vote. The referendum, however, was considered an important point in time when people could make an individual contribution and show their support one way or the other.
NEGATIVES ABOUT ABG

Criticism of ABG’s performance was widespread, but focused on two related issues: the lack of services, and the misuse of funds and corruption. Respondents said the ABG had not delivered services as expected or promised, and the infrastructure was lacking, mainly in roads, education and health.

Towers, network, health centers and all these types of services are not, there is not really a sign of development taking place here. (Female, young, North, rural) 81

The only thing that I have seen and I am not happy about, is that we use road transport to travel into town however our roads tend to deteriorate often. (Male, 25-34, North, rural) 82

Respondents said the lack of investment in education disadvantaged Bougainville’s youth in terms of employment opportunities, and they longed for Bougainville to have its own tertiary establishments:

We simply don’t have enough resources really. The government has not revived most of the services. We have to have a university out here and even colleges as well should be in existence. The other provinces are well ahead of us. (Female, 18-24, North, rural) 83

Some respondents commented that the ABG had made promises, some of which turned out to be empty words. To them, the ABG appeared to display a lack of effort, and was simply not doing enough. This sentiment was particularly acutely felt in relation to education and business opportunities, but was also mentioned in relation to reconciliation and referendum awareness-raising efforts. Young and remote populations were particularly vocal about feeling left out, expressing an element of urgency, and of deadlines to be met.

From what I have observed, what I can say is, I think ABG is doing its work but it has not reached the remote areas. It is playing its role inside the office. However, for them to leave their offices and travel to the remote areas and make speeches and awareness directly to the remote areas is not happening. (Male, 18-24, North, rural) 86

Lack of effort was also mentioned in relation to the ABG’s failure to properly tackle law and order problems, and the double perceived threat of fear-inspiring veterans and restless, idle youth. Some respondents commented on inefficient village police.

But most expectations and negative perceptions emerged in the discussion about the ABG’s role in boosting the economy. The perception of corruption within the ABG and public services was widespread and readily mentioned by respondents, and may have been deduced from the lack of services. Some respondents felt that PNG and donors were handing over money that was not spent properly. The latest case was the money that was reported as allocated for referendum awareness-raising activities, but was not distributed.

What could be the reason to make sure that the member is actually spending money on this? The only way is to check the balance. If you go to the remote areas and ask the people and if their response is ‘no,’ then what are you going to do since the money is spent somewhere else. This is an important issue. Honesty in relation to work has to be practiced by the members of the ABG as well as the leaders who are taking the lead in this area. (Female, 55 and over, North, rural) 86

Respondents in rural areas felt the lack of funds more acutely. Paradoxically, judging by the choice of words used by respondents, it may be that this perception was heightened by the media coverage about the ABG’s recent anti-corruption actions, which actually threw light onto a problem that was latent.

Because I hear about it. A number of times I heard that there is corruption inside the government. A number of things like money has been misused. The members are still within the ‘Treasury Office’ and during that time I heard that a lot of money went missing. (Female, 45-54, Central, rural) 87

The perception of corruption was closely associated by respondents with deficient leadership that lacked quality, training and commitment. This perception lingered throughout questions about topics such as Bougainville’s
capacity for sustainable independence. Respondents closely associated the judgement on the ABG with the perception of the individual member in the area: where the member was deemed satisfactory, so was the government they represented. Conversely, unsatisfactory performance suggested to respondents that the ABG had failed to correctly supervise and mentor the local members, and therefore, had failed in their duty of care.

Many respondents deplored the distance between the ABG and its people, the physical gap made visible by the ABG’s lack of presence in the remote areas. This concern was reported as bringing the morale of the people down. Public servants were seen as estranged, bureaucratic, self-centred office workers, rather than closely involved “field” workers that would serve the public. Again, an individual MP’s performance played an important part in this overall perception.

They are never concerned about the people in the remote areas. They always have concern for those they know. Even if it means to help people working in offices they support them, but not to all of them. However, the services are not equally distributed to every single area. (Female, 55 and over, South, rural)

If the government cannot be an example to the people in the remote areas, then it is destroying the people’s moral, the impression on people’s minds back in the remote areas on how confident they would feel to come and vote during the referendum. (Male, 55 and over, North, rural)

Respondents perceived a disconnection between “us people” and “them government”: the ABG was reported as showing little or no effort to establish and maintain contact, to listen and to hear. The research team for the Audience Survey was actually perceived as the ABG’s effort to “bridge the gap”.

I am actually proud of the research you are doing. What you are really doing is you are capturing perceptions from the people in the remote areas towards this issue. Therefore, you are in a position where you are able to identify whether it is possible for us to go through it or whether we need to strategise some ways in order to go through this referendum. (Female, 35–44, North, rural)

Besides the idea of corruption, but associated with it, was respondents’ perception that the ABG relied too much on foreigners or advisors, maybe even on the western system, rather than favouring the ‘Bougainville Way’.

The thing that is not good about it is ‘I’ve had enough of this ‘yes, master’ business. ‘Yes master,’ is what I am already fed up with (…). In the ABG; well there are more than thirty advisors. We will have to terminate this group of people first before we start talking about the referendum because we don’t want foreigners in there. (Female, 18–24, Central, remote)

Such responses to foreign advisors by respondents were influenced by experiences where outsiders were perceived to not have Bougainville’s interests as their first priority. Yet, other times Bougainvilleans were seen to have demonstrated a strong capacity for partnerships and collaborations. An important component for respondents in forming their perceptions was the idea that Bougainvilleans could be in control and prioritise their values and not have an outside value system imposed on them.
WHAT DOES ‘THE BOUGAINVILLE WAY’ MEAN TO YOU?

The ABG Strategic Development Plan 2018–22 mentions “integrating the Bougainville Way into government planning”. We asked respondents what the ‘Bougainville Way’ meant to them, to trigger responses about unique characteristics of Bougainville or Bougainvillean and that could be used to inform communication strategies. Some respondents referred broadly to kastom (traditional practice), or pointed towards notions of unity and peace. Some respondents had more specific ways to explain the expression. We highlight the main characteristics expressed by respondents.

- Bougainville is matrilineal, respects women as custodians of the ground and customarily involves women in community discussions. This aspect of the Bougainville Way is upheld in women’s mandatory political representation.

  I’ve noticed in decision making that opinions from women are invited as well. We must also take part in decision making. And that is the Bougainvillean Way. (…) That’s why, whatever takes place in Bougainville, it’s inclusive. Both men and women are involved in decision making. (Female, 45–54, South, rural) 92

- Bougainville’s hierarchy gives a central position to chiefs who are respected by the people. Hence, chiefs need to be given prominence in the community and regional affairs. The constitution enshrines this aspect of the Bougainville Way.

  Even the Papua New Guinean or the Bougainvillean constitution has this recognition of this traditional Chief System. (Female, 35–44, North, rural) 93

- The Bougainville Way has particularly good methods to settle disputes and could therefore refer to complete reconciliation.

  The Bougainvillean Way, according to how it was before, was that we were well off. Our great grandparents rarely had disputes amongst themselves. Compared to nowadays, people tend to start up disputes over land, and argue and fight against each other. (Female, 14–17, Central, rural) 94

- The Bougainville Way is considered a destiny rooted in history; the blood of thousands of victims testifies to the region’s commitment. This very sacrifice shows the depth of this commitment, which should be honored by fighting for independence.

  They fought for independence and they lost their lives. They are heroes for Bougainville. If Bougainville is not going to prepare itself, it will most likely fail these heroes who lost their lives. So that is something important to consider. We don’t want another war to start. (Female, 45–54, South, rural) 95

- To some, the Bougainville Way means to not let outsiders lead the way. It means not waiting for others to do something for Bougainville, but for people to do it themselves and use Bougainville’s existing strengths.

  Whatever has happened must be sorted out our own way. For example; we must not wait for a white man to come and sort it out for us. We ourselves must stand firm and sort it ourselves. (Male, 35–44, South, remote) 96

- The Bougainville Way is a way of functioning from the “bottom up”, reaching community consensus using community resources, both people and land. This traditional way, according to respondents, must be taken into account, and it outlines the ABG’s obligation to be present and to listen to its people.

  The Bougainvillean Way is a way in which we always do things together. We are resourceful people like with human resources as well, we are resourceful. And we are also very good in hospitality. Though some regard us Bougainvillean as bad people but what we have, that unique character compared to others is to look after the people and the resources. (Female, 35–44, Central, remote) 97
EXPECTATIONS OF CHANGE

The referendum is generally perceived as an opportunity for change, welcomed by a large majority of respondents at various levels. The respondents’ way of talking reflected a strong amalgamation of the concepts of referendum and independence. For many of them, the referendum was but a step to go through, a formality, leading to the long-awaited goal of independence. In their comments, little room appeared to be left to – and little thought wasted on – the perspective of not gaining independence. While some expressed uncertainties about the future, many respondents associated various potential developments with the prospect of gaining independence. Associations with key development areas included infrastructure, economic development and education.

Referendum is just fine for us to cast our votes because we need to bring in some changes to Bougainville, start up some form of changes in terms of development, and infrastructure and all that. (Male, 18-24, North, rural)

A choice for greater autonomy was associated with little or no change: things would stay as they were. Respondents’ uncertainties about the term ‘greater autonomy’ and what it would mean for Bougainville played a role in their responses.

The pictures they conjured of the post-referendum landscape were varied: some had confident attitudes and others were more fearful and cautious.

CONFIDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD

Some respondents expressed a vision of blissful images, where the population would be provided with education and employment opportunities, adequate services for good health, improved law and order, transport, business and growth opportunities. Those in remote areas were particularly hopeful.

From my understanding, after referendum, most people think that there will be better services. People in remote villages will be free to move around (...) A lot of changes will emerge. It seems like people’s standard of living will improve, and new Bougainville laws will be understood and followed by the people. (Female 45-54, Central, rural)

The existence of resources reassured some respondents about the future of the region. The fact that Bougainville would manage these resources on its own was equally reassuring to them:

From what I think, forecasting the future, if we get referendum there’s going to be a big change. We have lots of resources in Bougainville, from the jungles down to the ocean. We are rich with all those resources. (Male 25-34, North Urban)

Some respondents saw a similar picture, which, to them, was really a return to an idealised time before the crisis. This model would, in effect, “erase” the bad times. Other respondents said they wanted to make sure lessons were learned from the past, particularly about resource management and mining issues. These respondents expressed overall feelings of trust and self-confidence, and the idea Bougainville would rise to the challenge because it had existing resources, both in the land and the people.

After the referendum, from my understanding and knowledge, if we are independent we will live free, everything will be run by ourselves without others ruling or assisting us. (...) We will come up with great things. Like cocoa, all cash crops will have factories for processing, we will have those institutions, we will have everything here instead of looking for it somewhere else. (Female, 25-34, South urban)

However, respondents were aware that, for success, the ABG would have to play its part by encouraging and enabling self-reliance, encouraging and supporting business, and providing quality higher education locally rather than overseas. Independence would also mean that the fear of PNG physical interference disappeared. To some respondents, independence meant that Bougainville would no longer be hindered by PNG, and would be “in full swing”.

I don’t want the referendum to be deferred until next year or whatever. We must do that now, so that we know our future and Bougainville’s political future. (...) I’m just happy for the referendum to happen sooner so real work can begin, because at the moment is only temporary. (Male, 14-17, North rural)

Respondents said that not choosing independence would only “prolong the wait” for the ultimate goal. Most respondents associated an independence vote with many positive development changes and an opportunity for Bougainville to rise to its full potential.

FEARFUL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD

Other respondents were more prone to envisaging negative scenarios and expressing deep fears – basically of going back to the terrible times of the crisis. These negative visions
appeared to be more often linked to a perceived lack of information, or remoteness. The less informed respondents had to rely on others to receive information. These respondents’ feelings of isolation and helplessness translated into a lack of self-confidence, and bred apprehension and even anxiety.

I’m a bit afraid of referendum because there are two groups within Bougainville, our Government and Mekamui. I fear these two groups. (Male, 18-24, North, rural)  

Many are afraid of the referendum. They say that when we vote and if we lose, if the majority go for greater autonomy instead of independence. That’s what I am worried about. I want more awareness and explanation on that. If they lose they might start up a fight again, first in a small group and then everyone will follow. (Male, 35-44, North, rural)  

However, this apprehension was also found among urban respondents, particularly young respondents whose fears came from what they had heard about the past, mostly from their immediate families. Doubt was a major component of their views, based on the perceived present reality: doubt about sufficient resources, the ability to handle the situation, the quality of leadership, the general preparedness, the ABG’s commitment and its ability to prepare for independence.

I have only two questions; Is ABG equipped with its development regarding human resource? Human resource is very important in the country’s development when it gains independence so is it capable of developing our human resource? (Female, 23-34, North, rural)  

The respondents’ projections of the future seem to depend on various factors, such as how well-informed they felt, and their personal experience of first-hand information; what they had heard, particularly disquieting rumours or interpretations; and their level of education and exposure to more in-depth reasoning, such as considering economic factors. When the overall balance weighed towards uncertainty, the respondents were more likely to wish for postponement of the referendum date, until all of the population was deemed properly informed. Some respondents tried reasoning about the fear factor:

What will, what might happen, from experiences in other countries, once they vote for independence, sometime later, a fight breaks out. I’m urging the Bougainvillean

that this is our home, there is no one to fight with. We don’t have an enemy here. (Male 55 and over, North rural)  

Other respondents clearly stated that they did not feel that Bougainville was ready to be independent, mostly because of the economy and the level of education among its population due to the experiences of the crisis.

What I for one want is, that we don’t have to separate from Papua New Guinea yet because of everything that our small Bougainville does not have. In terms of educational institutions and health and what not, we still go back to Papua New Guinea to these big institutions and hospitals. We simply don’t have all these things. (Male, 45-54, South, rural)  

Questions were asked about public servants, such as teachers and the police, and the certainty of their positions and funding after the referendum.

For us to go towards independence, there has to be public servants in place and people made known. That’s one of the fears people have. What will happen if PNG government withdraws all its public servants? (Male 35-44, Central, rural)  

Some respondents said the referendum was not about whether Bougainville gained independence or not; instead, it was about how people within the Bougainville government approached their work.

I don’t believe there’s going to be any changes if Bougainville gains independence. Change will happen if the mindsets of our members are focused for the better in a positive way. (Male, 35-44, North, rural)  

In some cases, the respondents bounced the interview questions back to the researchers – and to the ABG: How do we vote right? What is the right choice for Bougainville? What will the post-referendum period look like for Bougainville?

I just want to ask ABG to inform the people on what kind of plans it has after referendum, so that they understand what they are doing and the plans ABG will move forward with. (Male 25-34, North rural)  

In general, the interview respondents said the limited information about possible scenarios and strategies associated with the post-referendum period created uncertainties about the future, how they might vote and how they felt about possible change.
QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO THE ABG

We asked interview respondents if they had any questions or comments for the ABG. This part of the interview got respondents talking. Even those who had had little to say and hesitated throughout the interview found that they had questions to ask the ABG. The overall picture gained from the respondents was that more information, more clarity, or more reassurance, was needed at all levels. The respondents’ delight at being invited to ask questions was genuine because it translated into: “The ABG wants to listen to us.” Responses were categorised into the “genuine” questions, which were most often about practical details or reassurances, requests to the ABG, and challenges to be communicated to the ABG.

Genuine questions

Respondents asked for practical information and reassurance. Questions that came up repeatedly included those about the practicalities of the voting process; readiness for political independence, in particular Bougainville’s economy; peace and security; and post-referendum scenarios. Some examples of questions and comments that respondents made in the interviews are outlined below.

Practical questions about the process of voting

What exactly is the referendum? What does greater autonomy really mean? Is a date really set? How does the referendum date affect the elections? Can you explain the ballot paper, including questions and choice? Will the vote be confidential? Will you provide security during referendum?

Government must do something to send officers or whoever to go into communities and clarify the voting system to the people. How they will vote, they have to explain and clarify well the process of voting, that is very important. Most communities do not fully understand, ABG members don’t clarify them most of the time.

(Male, 55 or over, Central, rural) 111

Will they witness my vote when I go in to cast my vote?

(Female 25-34, South rural) 112

PNG’s position and peace

What is PNG’s position, and are there reasons to be fearful? If the referendum “fails”, what then? Will PNG give us “another chance”? Can we be independent without the referendum?

My question is; if this referendum, that everyone is talking about, if we don’t achieve it, what will be the outcome? Are we not going to gain independence without referendum? (Male, 35-44 South, rural) 114

Post-referendum process and scenarios

What will happen if we do get independence? Can you explain what comes with independence on a practical level?

If we vote for independence, what is it that we are voting for, what will happen and what is that independent Bougainville that we are talking about? So a clear awareness and explanation to the people, so we build that confidence in them and become united and we just go for a decision and know after the referendum, and that is the Bougainville we voted for. (Female, 35-44 North, rural) 115

That is my question. In order for any country to be independent, it has to have these three big things like currency, defence and foreign affairs. Before we become a country, we need to have those things in place. (Male, 25-34, North rural) 116

Requests for reassurance

Respondents repeatedly asked questions about whether Bougainville would be okay, reflecting their feeling of vulnerability and need for reassurance. These questions were often linked to concerns about possible violence erupting again:

One thing I want to ask ABG, my question is if we are serious for independence, what will ABG leaders like the president do for a better outcome, what better and peaceful means will happen in Bougainville? (Male, 25-34, South rural) 117

Requests and challenges

Respondents made very practical requests for support and intervention from the ABG. They requested more information; better services, in particular in remote areas; educational institutions; and more broadly, for the Bougainville government to be closer to its people. Some examples of questions and comments that respondents made in the interviews are outlined below.

Readiness for potential independence

With all the problems we seem to have, are we ready for independence? How will we perform on the economic side? Who will pay public servants? Will we need to reopen the mine and would that be beneficial? Will that endanger peace?

My question is; if ABG is successful with referendum and Bougainville mines are open, are all Bougainvillean going to benefit from the resources? (Male, 18-24, North, rural) 113
More information
Can you give us more information and the means to access it? Can you improve the radio network? Can you provide more awareness sessions and visits to our remote area, and more printed reference materials?

My other question is: can ABG find a way to help us communication wise, what ABG has created in the government in terms of awareness and communication. How will they communicate with us in the village? I want ABG to look for ways, like we already have ward members, if they can use our ward members to carry out ABG’s awareness so we can have access and know what is happening within ABG. (Male, 18-24, North, rural) 118

Provide more services
Other respondents’ questions referred to basic support that the community needed. Can you help with water supply (islands), food (islands), roads, and education/colleges? Can you support small businesses? Can you fix the radio network?

What I want the government to do is to build schools, build factories to make money and schools to improve the mindset of people, especially our future generation, instead of unnecessary spending on tangible items. The important thing is to build hospitals, schools and factories. (Male, 25-34, Central urban) 119

Educational institutions
Young people in particular requested that tertiary education institutions be available within Bougainville.

My question goes like this; Bougainville does not have colleges or universities. So we are preparing for referendum and, at the same time, are they going to build colleges and universities? (Female, young, North rural) 120

I think that, when going towards referendum, ABG must have plans in place for schools and colleges for our children to remain back here in Bougainville to be educated, rather than looking elsewhere. (Female 25-34, North rural) 121

Inclusivity, and for the ABG to be closer to its people
Overall, these requests echoed the main request to the ABG: “Be closer to us and show that you care for us”. Requests for closeness and visible support were made particularly by respondents living in remote areas, but we also heard similar requests from the war widows, another group that said they felt overlooked:

I want them to help us with our kids, especially widow mothers. We can’t afford school fees for our children. Some mothers don’t earn enough income. We lack funds to access medical services in the hospitals. We don’t have enough money. How will you help us with those issues? (Female 45-54, South rural) 122

They have to come down and help at the grassroots level so they can be as the ones above them. They can’t mistreat the grassroots, we want all to be on the same level. (Female, 55 and over, South urban) 123

Some of the respondents’ questions to the ABG were clear challenges, made in somewhat exasperated or defiant tones. For example, they questioned the ABG’s commitment to preparing people for the referendum, and to clarifying Bougainville’s financial position.

Clarity and commitment about finances
Respondents requested clarity about the money allocated to MPs and questioned the ABG’s commitment to be free of corruption.

We heard that every year the [MPs] receive fifty thousand Kina referendum grant. What are they doing with this money? That money they should bring it down to the community government members and they will go into their communities and make people ready for referendum day. (…) From time to time we hear about all kinds of funding, but every time they come down to us and tell us: “we don’t have money”. (Female, 45-54, South rural) 124

ABG’s position on independence
Respondents wanted to know if all ABG members supported the referendum and if most of them supported a vote for independence?

All of you ABG members, are you united to bring about that referendum to the people of Bougainville? If you are united together, I want you to understand because some members have shown that they are not ready for referendum. They are causing problems, they are leading the way of separating people. That is why I am asking the ABG government of today. Are you well informed of your members? Are you all united? (Female 34-45, Central remote) 125
Questioning the presence of foreign advisors

Access to independence was seen by respondents as an opportunity for Bougainville to “do things by themselves”. The presence of foreign advisors within the ABG was often criticised.

My question is: can they remove the foreign advisors, more than 30, who are now in ABG? We don't need foreigners, that’s all. (Female, 18-24, Central remote) 126

The ABG’s commitment and people’s hope for a peaceful outcome

Respondents’ first priority was peace. While they made many requests for addressing law and order issues in the community, their focus was often on reconciliation and preparing everyone to work towards a peaceful outcome of the referendum process. Respondents expressed a sense that much had been achieved and that Bougainville would move forward if a strong commitment was shown.

In regards to the referendum, I would like to say that we, the women, want a free and fair referendum. We don’t want another fight to happen. So, all these factions, they must reconcile and don’t make their issues become excuses for the outcome of referendum. (Female, 45-54, South rural) 127

Their issues cannot become their excuses. Issues like weapons disposal and all that. Bougainville must be clean and ready for referendum. Because we have come so far. This far we have come and now, we are at the point of no return. We are already seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. (Female, 45-54, South rural) 128

Towards the end of the interviews, a few respondents acknowledged the veterans and the police, and thanked the ABG for the services it had provided and for getting Bougainville as far as it had.

I would like to say thank you to ABG for fighting very hard for a better government. I want to thank our president, Momis, for fighting hard to ask the National Government to grant us our wish. A very big thank you to ABG. (Male, 35-44, South, remote) 129

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Police and the combatants, for working together to bring some change. A kind of move that is empowering our government. (Male, 25-34, Central, rural) 130

In summary, respondents across Bougainville appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to the ABG. While some individuals were more vocal than others, all respondents demonstrated a strong sense of solidarity and loyalty to Bougainville and the ABG. Part A of this audience study, focused on respondents living in Bougainville, has highlighted key audiences and key concerns mentioned by respondents that are important to take into account in preparing for the referendum and the post-referendum period.

Part B of this audience study focuses on non-resident Bougainvilleans. This group has not received much attention in any previous studies. In the next section, we discuss the results from engaging this group to provide their thoughts on the available referendum information and their perspectives on the BPA implementation.
This second phase of the research study captured responses of Bougainvillean who resided outside of Bougainville. This group’s links and contributions play an important role in Bougainville’s development and representation, and some of these respondents will also participate in the Bougainville referendum5. There is currently no statistical data available about how many people who identify as Bougainvillean live outside of Bougainville. This research was interested in capturing some of their perspectives, primarily to understand what might need to be addressed to engage and communicate with members of this population in relation to the referendum.

**Respondents’ profile**

Respondents included focus group participants and online survey participants.

Ten focus group discussions were facilitated in towns in PNG (Port Moresby, Goroka, Lae and Rabaul), as well as two focus groups in Brisbane, Australia. More than 60 people participated in the focus groups, with an almost equal number of men and women. The backgrounds of people were varied and the focus groups included students in many of the locations.

For the online survey respondents, 56% were men and 44% were women (n=166). More than half of these respondents (58.5%) had a university degree. Most (82.5%) resided in PNG, 11.4% in Australia, 2.4% in the Philippines and 1.8% in the Solomon Islands.

Data from respondents outside of Bougainville should not be directly compared with data from respondents within Bougainville. This is because the demographic profile concerning education levels and respondents’ access to information sources was very different to those living in Bougainville. This was largely due to the data collection methods used to collect responses from NRBs.

**RELATIONSHIP TO BOUGAINVILLE, STATUS AND IDENTITY**

The focus group participants identified as Bougainvillean through family ties, whether directly by descent or indirectly through marriage to a Bougainvillean. Most participants were either born in Bougainville, or born outside Bougainville with at least one Bougainvillean parent. Their reasons for living away from Bougainville included leaving because of the crisis, marriage, work or study opportunities.

*We left because life was hard, some people are good with earning money, some of us are not. We left our village to live in a town, so we could find work and earn enough money for our children’s school fees. (Female over 35, Rabaul Focus Group)* 131

*Many of us left, because there are no higher education institutions in Bougainville. (Female over 35, Rabaul Focus Group)* 132

Family ties included being in contact through visits, telephone, internet and social media. Visits were more regular for some respondents and less regular for others, but were reported as being especially important for funerals. Respondents said they found it easy to identify themselves as Bougainvillean because it was “home”. Importantly, the feeling of warmth and closeness to Bougainville became more pronounced as the focus group discussions unfolded. Distinct feelings of belonging and root connections were invoked. Even the word “patriotism” was sometimes used:

*Most of the Bougainvillean who live outside of Bougainville, we are so patriotic about our island and we will all, I am pretty sure, vote for independence, not higher autonomy. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)*

Feelings in relation to Bougainville identity often included trauma, anxiety, fear and regret linked to personal and family experience. History still had an impact on the respondents’ situations and attitudes, and some expressed feelings of being uprooted, almost in exile. In parallel to this, however, the physical distance also gave some respondents a feeling of comparative safety.

*The only connection is social media and phone. My husband and them, they were all born during the crisis, so I think there is fear to go back to Bougainville. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)* 133

*I think that because we live outside, at least we are safe. And for some who live on the Island they are worried. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)* 134

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5 The process for their participation in the referendum will be jointly decided by the PNG and Bougainville governments and implemented by the Bougainville Referendum Commission. Also see: Regan (2018).
The trauma of the crisis was still felt by NRBs, and they often projected their own fear on their village counterparts:

My in-laws, they live in the village and they don’t talk to about it. Every time we start talking about home or the crisis, it is painful, we don’t conclude the story. They feel the pain again and we end our stories in tears and silence, until another time when we meet again and someone tells another story on a different topic. And from there we start rebuilding again. There is never an end to our story. Our story never finishes because we always end up crying. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

To some people it’s still fresh. So, it’s repeating again for their children you know, I mean for us who live outside of Bougainville I’d say we wouldn’t be so affected. But for those people who have lived and have tried to re-build their lives again, having to go through this again is just torment (...) our people at home, they don’t want to talk about this. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

One respondent mentioned feeling safer living anonymously outside of Bougainville because of his personal experience during the crisis. Respondents often spoke about how history had shaped today’s Bougainville, and how the crisis had shaped the population’s responsibility towards the region.

Because it’s been a cry from our forefathers that we would have independence, and we lost lives and the blood of these people are still crying, and we have to put to rest their cries by voting for independence. (Male over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

We noted significant differences between the respondents in PNG and in Brisbane. The Brisbane groups featured a certain material comfort and a position as expatriates who depended neither on Bougainville nor on PNG. By contrast, the Bougainvilleanes in PNG all shared the same concern about a possible change in their status if Bougainville became independent.

What is this referendum going to bring for us as Bougainvilleanes living in Papua New Guinea? Is it going to impact me with my job, living as an overseas person, like a Bougainvillean living in Papua New Guinea. Will we be treated as overseas contractors? (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Links to the Bougainville territory were real and tangible for respondents. These links might take the form of financial support for school fees, health expenses, or simply living allowances to older family members. Respondents said they sent money regularly or for a particular occasion. More than two thirds of online respondents (68.4%) said they supported people living in Bougainville. Most of these (60.1% of all online respondents) provide financial support, ranging from less than 100 Kina to 5000 Kina per month.

For some, the home region is also perceived as a place of opportunities, particularly in business. Some respondents are involved in transport and trucking businesses, stores, or projects such as setting up schools. Because of their ongoing commitments and relationships, they feel close to the region. Yet, those living outside of PNG said they felt ignored by the ABG. In particular, the fact that they wouldn’t – at this stage – be allowed to vote, brought up feelings of resentment:

We are ignored by ABG: we can’t vote; yet, we participate in the economy. (Female under 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

We are studying here to go back and help the place. But we can’t vote while we are here, we cannot express our support. (Female under 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

It should be noted that the Brisbane groups did not mention the PNG Government nor bring it into the discussion. They addressed only the ABG and the Bougainville population. However, other NRBs perceived the PNG government as one key to a peaceful outcome – as was the case in the analysis of BiBs in Part A.

It’s now in the hands of the National Government. If they want to see a peaceful outcome then they need to ensure that there is a good process in place. Have dialogue and listen to each other, then we will have a good understanding about the referendum. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Among all respondents was a strong sense of identity as Bougainvilleanes and a strong link to family and relatives in their home region, whom they communicate with on a regular basis.
HOW NON-RESIDENT BOUGAINVILLEANS ACCESS INFORMATION ABOUT BOUGAINVILLE

All respondents were easily able to list their multiple sources of information. While the sources listed were similar, they were sometimes mentioned in a different order and depended on respondents’ physical location and the locally available media. For instance, printed newspapers were more readily mentioned by PNG participants than overseas ones; the internet was used by all overseas, but only some (or irregularly) within PNG. Respondents had different opinions concerning the media’s credibility. Unlike the data captured within Bougainville, for NRBs, social media occupies a more prominent position in respondents’ information landscape; however, levels of trust in social media varied.

It would be nice to bring all this information through the news, Post Courier or newspaper, because a lot of us don’t listen to radio. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

We usually use our internet in the library, and in most cases some of us use Facebook to get just a bit of updates on what’s going on in our island Bougainville but that’s not quite reliable, most of the times we are left out or we are way behind in getting up to date information from Bougainville. (Student under 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

For us living outside, most of us we are on Facebook. I think some of the members in the ABG, they created a page for ABG or something like that. So sometimes, we go out there and find out the updates and happening in Bougainville. (Student under 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

Social media provide respondents an immediate feeling of connectedness, of involvement. Members of social media groups said they belonged to a tangible group, and were given opportunities to interact, ask questions, make comments and receive answers.

All the information gets circulated through the social media, especially Facebook and the Bougainville Forum. It is a space and opportunity for any Bougainvillean to share his or her opinion. (Female under 35, Lae Focus Group)

Some respondents discussed the reliability of social media, and the necessity for critical awareness.

Not every information is correct. The information provided on Facebook is not always correct, the full content is not provided with regards to the referendum, so sometimes I am not really satisfied with that. (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

For the majority of online respondents, accessing Facebook and social media was an everyday activity, and their preferred way of receiving information, as well as print media, online news media and the ABG website (see Fig. 12 and Fig. 13). Facebook is appreciated because it affords opportunities to respond and ask questions. The most mentioned Facebook groups were Bougainville Forum and Bougainville Voice. Newspapers and ABG media are appreciated for providing reliable information. Respondents requested regular updates and responses from ABG media to strengthen dialogue. They considered information about the referendum and the related processes as most important, and, more broadly, updates concerning the well-being and activities of people in Bougainville.

In all cases, any information respondents accessed about Bougainville was then further shared through social media, emails, telephone calls and meetings.

For me, the information disseminates mostly via email, Facebook, phone and What’s App. To connect with the people back at home is currently not the problem because they are having access to mobile phones, so they normally update me every now and then. I go to Facebook because I’m registered to Bougainville Forum, all the information that we disseminate is in the Bougainville Forum. (Student under 35, Lae Focus Group)

Two fifths (40%) of online respondents stated that they were formally part of a Bougainville group. These include Bougainville community groups or associations in all focus group locations, as well as student groups at all PNG universities. Respondents said that many of these groups held regular, semi-formal meetings where information was shared and discussed. This was reported as a way for everyone to access information, whether they could connect to the internet or not.
Fig 12. Where do you predominantly get updates about Bougainville from?

Fig 13. Channels and sources accessed for information about the upcoming referendum (NRBs online respondents)
Student respondents mentioned the information sessions organised at their university, including those organised by the PNG National Research Institute. The students appreciated the quality of information and informants, and the possibility given to them to ask questions and get satisfactory answers.

We have a group from the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, some they are volunteers, they are from a group call East New Britain Bougainville Association so we use to get some information from them. (Female student under 35, Rabaul Focus Groups)

We also have another group, they came into our school and gave us some pamphlets about the referendum. There is information and questions inside these pamphlets, so it gives a clear meaning of what is happening or what will happen in Bougainville. (Student under 35, Lae Focus Group)

Focus groups inside PNG appeared to be conscious of the awareness-raising efforts within Bougainville:

In my opinion, there has been a lot of good information about the referendum, and some good discussions have come up (…). The awareness around this has been clear and all understand it. Most of them are supportive and happy about the referendum. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Mobile phones were not always mentioned spontaneously, but were perceived by all respondents as a very useful and important way of communicating with people and receiving regular updates.

Now people at home they have mobile phones, so the only way we can communicate with them is through the mobile phone. That way we get information on what is happening, especially with regards to the referendum. (Student under 35, Lae Focus Group)

While some NRBs said they could be reached via mass media, including social media, they expanded their reach by linking to locally organised social networks and groups. This practice is important in terms of reaching those who do not regularly access mass media sources or the internet. It also provides people with locally accessible spaces to discuss ideas and ask questions. These support networks could be harnessed to ensure that NRBs are informed about the various processes involved before and after the referendum.

PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT AWARENESS LEVELS

Unanimously, respondents wanted clear, reliable and updated information offering a complete picture of the current situation.

An honest information on the advantage and disadvantage of both (1) the autonomous arrangements and (2) the independence of Bougainville. (Male, over 55, online respondent)

The most important element in the referendum is to let the people be aware of the different scenarios that may arise after the outcome is known. How the ABG intends to handle the outcome must be made known to the people to prevent misunderstandings that may lead to confusion, frustration and eventual division, key ingredients of a conflict. (Male, 25-34, online respondent)

Autonomy versus independence

When asked what they knew about the BPA and the referendum, the answers differed according to their groups: students and overseas residents often communicated quite sophisticated knowledge, while others were more hesitant in talking about this. The majority of online respondents felt knowledgeable about the referendum: 82.1% said they understood the difference between autonomy and independence.

Most respondents in the focus groups said the concepts of autonomy and independence were fairly familiar to them. However, respondents had some hesitations about the accurate meaning of ‘greater autonomy’. They often asked whether that referred to the present situation, or if there was an extra step from the present situation to reach greater autonomy.

I don’t quite understand but from my understanding, it’s the process towards independence, right? So, first step is like Autonomy governing. Looking after yourself. Okay Greater Autonomy is a bigger step from autonomy, next is referendum right, after that is independence. That’s how I understood it but someone who is clear about the concepts can explain Autonomy and this process. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

In particular, respondents wanted practical information about the voting options and asked questions about the consequences of their vote and possible post-referendum scenarios.
What is the difference between that greater autonomy and the independence? We know simply what they all mean, but deep rooted we do still not understand what they are and what they mean and what’s going to happen to us if the Independence takes place. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

There are two options for the vote: independence and higher autonomy. So, if we vote for ‘higher, greater autonomy’ what is going to happen? And when we vote for ‘independence’ what is going to happen? (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

These expressed uncertainties about ‘greater autonomy’ and different possible post-referendum scenarios are similar to those expressed by the respondents in Bougainville (discussed in Part A).

Voter eligibility and registration

Most respondents were aware that the referendum voting age is 18, although some overseas respondents suggested that it could be lowered to 16. Most respondents were aware of the change of date to October 2019 – but then asked whether this would affect the deadline to register for the Common Roll. Similarly, respondents were aware of the change in referendum question (concerning the original explanation of having to vote by writing the words “yes” or “no”).

All respondents knew about registering on the Common Roll; some said their relatives at home could help with that, while others wondered where or how they would go to register.

I also found out by asking my relatives that the people in the village who know us would have listed us on their roll. Because they fear that, if they let us enrol ourselves from outside, other people may also give their names. If our own relatives at home enrol us, I think that’s the safest thing to do because they know us, they know that their children are outside. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Responses related to both people and the government being ready, and mostly focused on peace and reconciliation processes, or the Bougainville economy.

Post-referendum decision-making process

It is known by many that, after the vote, the final decision has to be ratified by the PNG Parliament (40% of online respondents say that the final decision is with the PNG parliament), though there is some discussion as who has the final say:

The National Government might handover some power to Bougainville, to give some power to run the province. An example I mentioned is, for example, that they would give some power around mining so Bougainville would be the ministry of mining. (Male under 35, Lae Focus Group)

In one of the focus groups respondents discussed the worry that Bougainville only had four MPs in the PNG Parliament that would ratify in favour of independence. However, the focus group reached the consensus that, “if there is a massive vote for independence, non-Bougainville MPs will not vote against the population’s wishes” (Male over 55, Brisbane Focus Group).
Most respondents thought that greater autonomy was Bougainville’s present status; therefore, only a vote for independence would bring about change. All focus groups often spontaneously started discussing possible post-referendum scenarios: positive visions were detailed as a landscape “at the end of a long road” that honoured the past, and calls for “patriotism” were heard.

**Post-referendum period**

Some respondents said that, for them, the issue was not autonomy or independence, but whether Bougainvillean readiness for the vote.

*I think the people probably do not need much information as far as I am concerned. What they probably need to be assured of is that our government, the ABG, is doing enough for us for independence. The issue is not so much about that we want independence or not, the issue is: are we ready for it because we are going to vote, is the government ready, are our people ready? (Male over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)*

Concerns were expressed regarding the early days, the start and initial phase of the potential independence period, and the relationship between Bougainville and PNG:

*How will we get started? My fear is, are we going to have the basis to start, are we going to rely on the PNG government, or are we going to rely on foreign aid? We can’t do that, and that’s my fear. (Female over 35, Lae Focus Group)*

*My main concern is PNG Government will not give his blessing to give us independence despite the results showing majority or all of us voted for independence. (Male, 25-34, online respondent)*

Some respondents voiced doubts or reservations, particularly about Bougainville’s “independence-readiness” on an economic or financial level.

*Financial stability for a new emerging country, that’s one of the big issues. Because we never know. What if we go ‘yes’ and then we move forward but then PNG withdraws its services. Where do we get aid from? (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)*

Bougainville’s resources were often described as “young”, not developed enough yet, or only exploited on a small scale and therefore insufficient to ensure revenues at a national level:

*People are very active in running their small businesses (…) but big businesses, they are not there, big institutions they are not there, so there is little money going around. But for us to be self-sufficient, we need more money there on the island to help us do a lot more. (Rabaul Focus Group)*

Another concern was the security aspect, the maintenance of peace and the need to avoid the much-dreaded return to violence. Respondents preferred the word “hope” to the word “confidence”. Fears brought back ghosts from the past: for older respondents, their own experience, and for younger ones, what they grew up hearing around them.

*I am concerned that some areas might not take part and that might lead to factions being formed amongst clan, tribes or even the province as a whole. (Male, 25-34, online respondent)*

*A concern specific for the NRBs inside PNG was how independence would change their status, and how this might affect practical issues such as passports and citizenship, position within PNG and work permits.*

*I’m a woman from another province married to a Bougainvillean - will they allow me in? For us women to gain access, because according to their custom women own the land, and not men. But our custom in the Highlands is different. So, will their government allow women from different provinces in PNG to gain entry into Buka or not? That is one of my question. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)*

NRBs appeared somewhat more sceptical than BiBs with regards to Bougainville’s economic readiness and the processes involved. At the same time, most NRBs expressed confidence and hope in Bougainville’s future.

**Hopes for a peaceful outcome**

More than half of online respondents (56.8%) said they were either very confident or confident that a peaceful outcome would be achieved in the process of the referendum.
We are ready... I believe that the work that is done on the ground, it has progressed, and weapons disposal has been done, reconciliations, a lot of reconciliations in the clans, in the families has been done as we were informed on the social media and yes, we believe in ourselves that things will go well. (Male over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

My hope is for Bougainville to be a strong and independent Island nation. Our people have struggled in the past, it is our time to show that we cannot take their fight for granted. (Female, 25-34, online respondent)

I’m hopeful that Bougainville can one day be like other small island nations such as Fiji, Vanuatu or New Zealand. To be the global world leaders that our forefathers and foremothers envisioned for us. To see improvement in infrastructure, easy access to basic services, finances and security. (Female, 25-34, online respondent)

Independence was also seen by respondents as a way to mend the relationship with PNG, a way of solving old disputes, or of honouring a long-time relationship:

There should be peace. The people of Bougainville should be happy that Papua New Guinea government is giving independence to Bougainville. This process will give peace to the men who fought in this civil war. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

It doesn’t mean that, when we get independence, PNG will cut off its services to Bougainville, no, we will still have that relationship where they come and help. And we look up to PNG as our father or mother something like that. (Male over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Overall, NRBs said they kept up to date with information as much as they could and were invested in Bougainville’s future. There were differences, however, in how respondents perceived the quality of information they received.

PERCEPTIONS OF INFORMATION QUALITY

NRBs’ perception of the quality of the information appears to depend on the audience segment, as well as the location of the focus group. For instance, in Rabaul, the groups of students said they felt well informed, while the other group, composed of Bougainvilleans in search of better work opportunities, did not.

I only heard about the referendum when I went for holidays in the village and that’s when they made a verbal declaration regarding the referendum. That’s the only time I got information about the referendum, but in Rabaul there has not been any information provided for the referendum. (Male over 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

Some respondents were not really satisfied with the information received, either for themselves, or on behalf of their village counterparts within Bougainville:

In my opinion, during my last visit to the village, information about referendum, about independence and higher autonomy - I was not that satisfied with the information, some of the information has not reached especially those living in the villages. I blame the committees carrying out the awareness on the referendum – I don’t think a lot of people have received information. (Female under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Suggested improvements included better targeting the content and the media type. For content, we heard requests for a complete, accurate picture.

Nobody has seen a document outlining the pros and cons of independence and autonomy. (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

The picture is not complete, it is fragmented; we are not sure that we know enough, all of us. (Male over 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

Otherwise the forms of media that we are getting information from, when we read it like ‘okay, so what about this?’ You see, we don’t have anyone there to answer our questions. We are asking ourselves, we are assuming a lot of things and we don’t want to assume. We want straight answers. (…) Yes, so Google is okay. It’s just telling us what it is. But Google cannot answer our questions. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Groups)
Suggestions for improvements to media included updating the ABG website and ensuring that people could send questions and get responses. Respondents said they thought the information level was different for people inside and outside of Bougainville. Most respondents outside of Bougainville, in particular, the online respondents, felt that they had better access to official information, for example, through the ABG website, social media that circulate information, and newspapers. This data may be biased due to the distribution of the survey via these channels, and the fact that we accessed focus group respondents predominantly in urban areas.

What happens is that, the ones living in towns, we receive information about referendum through social media and telecommunication, and we go back with this information to the communities and update our people in rural villages on what is currently happening in the region. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

I have friends that I discuss this thing with; referendum. And from our discussions we found out that a lot of Bougainvilleans who live outside of Bougainville, we are well aware of this referendum, and it’s a challenge just for those who are back at home whom the awareness about referendum has not reached like people in the rural areas. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

The level of education is mentioned as an issue for those in Bougainville. Respondents expressed concern that people might be provided biased information, and be told to vote for independence, contrary to the understanding of a fair and free voting process.

The information on the voting process being fair and free must be made known. We say fair and free but what exactly do we mean? What will make it fair? What will make it free? Do people in the villages know the meaning of this? (Female, 25-34, online respondent)

All respondents agreed that young people needed more information: both older and younger respondents said the younger part of the population was less informed, but also less able to process the concepts and information to form their own opinion. Arguments put forward for this concern were the lack of education opportunities, lack of prospects that generally demotivate young people, and cultural attitudes that young people’s opinions are subordinate to their elder’s opinions. When asked what respondents thought young people were feeling, the general answer was “confusion” because young people found it hard to make sense of present situation.

The following suggestions with regards to information access were made by respondents:

- Use existing networks: church works well and gathers people; priests know their people and can reach them effectively, including identifying who is not getting the information.
- Train the people who will pass on information well, so that they can answer questions, and train them in how to best present the information.
- Fix radio and mobile networks, and radio towers; and make mobile phone and internet more affordable.
- Use radio to communicate real-time, complete information, as “warm” media with trusted voices; all Bougainvilleans, even those living elsewhere, should hear the same message.

Information was perceived by respondents as available inside Bougainville, such as radio, mobile phones, the Bougainville Bulletin or factsheets. However, respondents also commented that not all areas received the same amount of information and that many individuals and communities relied on word of mouth and information relayed informally by family and friends.

When I come to visit, they ask me for information, they ask me questions. (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

They don’t know, they ask me as a visitor. We need awareness to go deeper. It depends on the local member, some take it seriously, to inform their people. (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

Suggestions for improvements to media included updating the ABG website and ensuring that people could send questions and get responses. Respondents said they thought the information level was different for people inside and outside of Bougainville. Most respondents outside of Bougainville, in particular, the online respondents, felt that they had better access to official information, for example, through the ABG website, social media that circulate information, and newspapers. This data may be biased due to the distribution of the survey via these channels, and the fact that we accessed focus group respondents predominantly in urban areas.

for the referendum. But I for one not having enough information, it is quite confusing to know whether I am for the referendum or not. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

I think the families or relatives living on Bougainville, they are more informed than those of us who are living outside Bougainville. I can understand from my own family’s perspective that every one of them are
Identify Bougainvilleans in each PNG province, for example, they should be time allocated for them to go to ‘Radio Goroka,’ ‘KBK’. If that person is here, then the government of Bougainville must appoint them to talk on behalf of the Bougainvilleans. (Male over 35, Goroka Focus Group) 150

We need to increase the network coverage area to places where there is no coverage. (Male under 35, Port Moresby focus Group) 151

I think we need to drop our data rates in terms of video call rates. We should see more communication about the referendum in Buka. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group) 152

The suggestions made by NRBs about media and communication resonate with those of the BiBs: both groups of respondents expressed the need for more in-depth information that targets specific key audiences, such as youth, and makes media more accessible for people where possible.

COMMENTS ON BOUGAINVILLE’S PERCEIVED STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Respondents found it easy to comment on the current referendum process, on Bougainville’s perceived assets and weaknesses, and on the ABG. Most respondents agreed that the start of independence would be hard work:

A lot of things need to change for a brand-new nation to progress. Law and order, urban drift, education, health, infrastructure. The core developments need to be priority for real progress. (Female, 45-54, online respondent)

The NRBs within PNG seemed to share the view that the PNG government was not honouring the financial part of the peace agreement:

The failure of the PNG Government to provide the necessary funding needed to conduct the referendum and not ratifying the final outcome of the referendum. (Male, 35-44, online respondent)

The funds, which the National Government is supposed to give to ABG to run this process, are being delayed.

Ministers of the National Parliament assigned to work together with ABG are still requesting the government to speed up process to allocate or release these funds quickly to ABG so they can do their work. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group) 153

Perceptions of Bougainville’s strength and weaknesses were mixed and demonstrated the changes Bougainville is undergoing, with respondents commenting on both hindrances and opportunities in the implementation of the BPA.

Perception of Bougainville’s assets

Respondents unanimously agreed that Bougainville had access to varied and proven resources, though most still needed to be developed; they also acknowledged sensitivities around mining and discussed possible alternatives.

Bougainville is very rich. That we can’t deny. We have so many opportunities apart from mining. We can look to agriculture and there is a lot of potential, a lot of opportunities on the land that we can use. (Female over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group) 154

Panguna mine is a sensitive subject to many people in Bougainville and to myself too. I feel that a good way in getting revenue for the country is through tourism, we have a lot of sites and places that can be used to generate a lot of revenues. (Student under 35, Lae Focus Group)

Other opportunities were seen by respondents as waiting to be further developed: tourism, agriculture, sustainable farming and stock/chicken/fisheries. Some respondents mentioned that they wanted the cocoa industry, a new-found source of pride, to be strengthened.

We have the best chocolate in the world. (Female under 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

Bougainville has the resources to produce and earn its own income, like cocoa, copra, marine resources like sea cucumber, Bougainville has resources like mining, we can be fully engaged in mining which are Bougainville resources. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group) 155
From the perspective of respondents, reopening the mine should be done by Bougainvilleanse alone, and must be done on acceptable negotiated terms:

Share fairly: not just landowners, not just government. It needs to be done with structure, plan, leaders. Involve all stakeholders." (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

With regards to finance in Bougainville, when the copper mine was operating, we did not benefit from it, so if we achieve the referendum, we would like a share in the mine profits among all Bougainvilleanse. (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

An issue important to most respondents was securing government income, by creating taxes for example, to equitably share the benefit from Bougainville’s natural resources.

To me the government is struggling, it cannot establish schools too. It cannot build roads, it cannot build houses for teachers and nurses in rural areas. If it did that, it should be very nice. But at the moment ABG is unable to because there doesn’t seem to be money. They must work in a way that money comes into Bougainville. (Student under 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

Bougainvilleanse would be able to benefit fully from their natural resources if the ABG would be able to generate enough revenue to fund its public service machinery. (Male, 35-44, online respondent)

Some respondents said they thought that financial support from the international community and donors could be positive because the money might go straight from PNG to Bougainville; such funds were viewed as an asset to “kick start independence”. Some mentioned the danger of mismanagement of funds and the need to not rely on donations.

The Bougainville population was seen by respondents as having proven its resilience and resourcefulness during the crisis. Repeated suggestions were made about the need to tap in to this resource, to channel its energy, for great results. An important component of the Bougainville identity that was mentioned was self-confidence and the strong sense of culture, which was partly traditional and partly reinforced at the time of the crisis: “We can use the experience of the crisis as a strength: we fought for our place” (Male over 35, Brisbane Focus Group).

In that view, the local population was seen as Bougainville’s main asset.

Even when we had blockades during the crisis, people were creative, so I strongly believe that people will come up with something to support Bougainville’s economy. (Male over 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

There are so many ways that we can make money, we just need to pull the right people together so we can capitalize on them. So, I don’t doubt Bougainville will do well after the referendum. We have the financial capacity because we have powered Papua New Guinea from the 70s, 80s, 90s until the crisis. (Student under 35, Lae Focus Group)

Fears of resurging violence were balanced by the “reality of Bougainville’s love for peace”. Indeed, the experience of the crisis was seen by some respondents to offer a guarantee for peace:

I don’t think Bougainville will have any problems after the referendum because they are peace loving people; the crisis happened because there was a reason. We cannot repeat another crisis; the reconciliation process which is going on has set a pathway for the people to recognize themselves as united people. (Student under 35, Lae Focus Group)

Some respondents said Bougainville’s past made it a leading province in PNG; however, Bougainville’s present made it an emerging province that “just” needs to get back to its “former glory”.

That brand Bougainville. When someone says ‘Bougainville,’ they think of the ‘Panguna Mine.’, but the positive side is now cocoa. We have the chocolate festival and the ‘Queen Emma chocolate. (…) So now when you say ‘Bougainville’, people are thinking chocolate (…) I think that's one of the strengths. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

Historically, the crisis started because of Panguna, but, for some, “it was just a catalyst, because of the artificial bond to PNG and the old colonial heritage” (Male over 35, Brisbane Focus Group).

We wanted independence in the 1970s and in 1974 they gave us provincial government and then we still cried for it and in 2005 the national government gave us autonomous government. There is nothing
Bougainville was seen by some respondents as path-breaking: it was an example of the practice of greater autonomy and the ABG's ability to run a government. Scholarships, for example, were mentioned as a Bougainville asset that supported tertiary education:

I am happy with one of ABG's programs, ABG liaised with an Australian University through a scholarship program where, every year, four students go to the university to study. ABG is investing in human assets for them to come back and educate the people. (...) That is a strength for Bougainville and I am happy. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

Many NRB respondents commented on Bougainville's strength and expressed their confidence in Bougainville being able to stand by itself, with the necessary experiences and skills to be successfully independent.

**Perceived weaknesses in Bougainville**

Visible examples of Bougainville’s weaker points mentioned by respondents were the lack of infrastructure, schools and health facilities, and the poor condition of the roads. Respondents said Bougainville’s image, particularly the image of its politicians and public servants, was tarnished by rumours of corruption, misuse of funds and financial mismanagement. Respondents underlined the need for transparency and for accountability to donors and citizens.

Many respondents wanted to raise the bar in the fight against corruption and wanted public servants to be role models. While respondents acknowledged that Bougainville’s leadership in the past 15 years had focused on restoring and keeping peace, they wanted further improvements, with a focus on building the economy.

Comments about the breakdown of law and order linked concerns about proper weapons disposal with idleness and substance abuse due to poor education levels and work opportunities.

Main concern is that many people have limited understanding of the decision that they are to make. The implementation of the peace agreement has been slow moving with many factions still to make amends with each other. (Male, 35-44, online respondent)

Are we really, really sure that our people back home do not have any more grudges against each other, or don’t have any grudges against the PNG government? Are we really sure that all the weapons have been disposed? (Male over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

A large majority of respondents said they regretted the perceived lack of “respect” – for people, for institutions, for values – that they saw as the consequence of the lack of infrastructure and opportunities. Some respondents told their own stories of leaving Bougainville to find work as examples.

Our youth is bored, helpless, hopeless: they resort to drugs and violence out of frustration; they need to be put back on tracks towards hope, self-esteem. (Male over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

They say those people are taking drugs and alcohol too because government is not motivating them to be active that's where they go into those things to keep themselves busy. (Male over 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

Anxiety over law and order issues extended to questions about the relationship with the PNG government, or even within Bougainville itself, because of “small-minded regionalism”, which, exploited by trouble-makers, could lead to “intra-Bougainville” violence:

In the event that it doesn’t go as some major groups plan, full Independence, my concern is that those who are dissatisfied with the result may disturb the peace by using firearms and harassing the communities. Reconciliation and arms disposal in all areas must be achieved. (Female, 25-34, online respondent)

We need to work together when it comes to addressing law and order in Bougainville, and better awareness and information must reach some of those people for them to change so that there is peace. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

Some respondents said they hoped for a better level of teacher training and resources. They thought teachers should be good role models, but some were perceived as lacking standards, and needed to be better supported and monitored. Respondents acknowledged that there was more work to be done, and investment in education and young people was seen as one key component that needed to be addressed.

Main concern is that many people have limited understanding of the decision that they are to make. The implementation of the peace agreement has been slow moving with many factions still to make amends with each other. (Male, 35-44, online respondent)
PERCEPTIONS OF THE ABG’S PERFORMANCE

Most respondents found it easy to comment on the ABG’s strengths and weaknesses. About half of the online respondents (49.1%) said they were not, or not at all, satisfied with the ABG. NRBs were more critical of the ABG’s performance than BiBs were, but many NRBs also remained neutral in their comments (28.4%) (see Fig 9).

NRBs’ positive points about the ABG were similar to the points made by respondents in Bougainville. The common narrative was one of ABG having the momentous task of re-establishing peace and helping the region to recover from a time of trauma and destruction; the ABG started from scratch in a place in ruins, physically and emotionally, in difficult circumstances, with no perceived real good support from PNG. Respondents’ spoke about the ABG being helped by great people, among whom Momis is a “Founding Father” figure. Beyond all that, respondents saw the ABG as “our own government”, better than any outside government.

On the side of weaknesses, respondents listed perceptions that the achievements to date were not enough: more efforts were needed and expected. Respondents said rumours of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds were widely circulated:

I’m satisfied to a certain extent for example - we have our own Parliament House, parliamentarians, mining laws, Bougainville police force, referendum office, no riot in parliament. (Female, 35-44, online respondent)

There are some setbacks in all the different governing bodies but Bougainville have actually displayed a strong governing leadership. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

There are no tangible evidences of the funds from the PNG national, as to how and where ABG spent the money which amounts to a couple of billion kina. (Male, over 55, online respondent)

To me there is not enough money circulation and government doesn’t have money, and government resources are poor. That’s the one that hold people down. We want government to be more active to uplift the people. (Student under 35, Rabaul Focus Group)

The ABG at times was perceived as “too remote from the population”, not putting enough pressure on its members for local actions. Some respondents were suspicions about nepotism and corruption:
They need to get out of their offices, get to the people and explain to them in the simplest way what the referendum is, how it will affect the people or if they say ‘yes’ and if they say ‘no.’ They need to tell them if Bougainville is stable enough to go ahead. All that kind of information. They need to get out. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

The confusion in information and the gaps in communication were often interpreted as reflecting the way the ABG functioned:

The information circulates, but never complete, always in little pieces. You are never sure you know everything. Even for NRBs with access to social media: information coming from ABG is not regular, not complete, it gives you the feeling you don’t know it all. And you don’t know about rumours, are they true?” (Female over 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

It’s the duty of the ABG people to come outside to the provinces and do their work. If you get outside and do your work, you get good result. (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

Generally, respondents wanted to see the ABG be closer to people and be as transparent as possible about its various processes. Communication and information were key components noted, including the need to provide ways for people to give feedback, have dialogue and provide comments to the ABG.

**QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO THE ABG**

Respondents were eager to pass on comments and questions to the ABG. The main questions were variations on the theme of: What will happen to Bougainville? Give us information. Respondents said they wanted some form of reassurance about the future.

**What are the assurances for safety during and after the referendum? What is in place? How credible are the present reconciliations and initiatives of weapons disposal?**

[Can] ABG look for some funds and a good way for weapons disposal, instead of allowing people to surrender their weapons; because we are not sure if the weapons are real or homemade weapons they just built and come to leave them. (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

I don’t think we are ready to receive the referendum, not until a lot of reconciliation takes place. There were reconciliations that took place in South Bougainville, Central and North. But are we truly reconciled with one another? There are still a lot of families that I know that are not fully reconciled. (unknown, Port Moresby Focus Group)

**Can you do better on the level of infrastructure and tertiary education?**

For the economy of the country, I think ABG must first carefully consider raising its economic status to an expected level agreed with the National Government, and to a point where it can sustain itself, and that it can hold a referendum and support itself as a country (Male under 35, Port Moresby Focus Group)

The big thing our members need to focus on is educating young kids or supporting them onto higher institutions where they are at the moment. They have to engage them in tertiary institutions so that, with the knowledge gained, they can go back and support the development in Bougainville. (Male under 35, Lae Focus Group)

**What will happen to NRBs within PNG, practically?**

When I’m living outside Bougainville, the ABG needs to come up with some ways on how I will go back or stay where I am now. For example, if I become a citizen of Bougainville after gaining independence, ABG will need to arrange for me to go back or to stay here in Goroka. (Male over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

What will happen to our spouses and our children? Are they going to break us away? Those of us that are married outside? (Female over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

**How can we vote?**

NRBs overseas reiterated their request – or demand – to be allowed to vote, invoking their economic participation, or their status as students and their future value for their region. Student respondents saw themselves as a resource for their country.
Make sure we overseas can vote. Especially students, we are outside of Bougainville temporarily, as an investment for the future. (Female under 35, Brisbane Focus Group)

I hope there are some possible ways the government of Bougainville can arrange for us to vote just like Papua New Guinea citizens vote or arrange specific locations for Bougainvilleans living within PNG to cast their votes and send back the ballot papers. (Male over 35, Goroka Focus Group)

How would the votes be tallied? Who will be responsible for tallying the votes? Who will be supervising the counts? Who is eligible to vote? How do we vote if we are not in AROB? (Female, 18-24, online respondent)

The online survey featured numerous specific questions about the voting process, including the vote modalities for NRBs. The large majority of online respondents (95.8%) said they planned to vote in the referendum.

In summary, NRBs demonstrated a strong loyalty to Bougainville and they maintained their connections to their home region. Some of their responses resonated with the responses from people residing in Bougainville, while others, such as questions about their status, were distinct for this group of respondents. NRBs provided support mechanisms to people residing in Bougainville and are a key group that needs to be considered with regards to the dissemination of information and the referendum process. Their responses in this research study provide some indication about how they would like to receive information and the mechanisms for further disseminating information among this group.
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, we have discussed Bougainvilleans living inside and outside of Bougainville. While our focus was on people living in Bougainville, the ABG recognises the strong connection and contribution of those Bougainvilleans living outside the region to Bougainville, and this study has attempted to uncover their unique access to information channels and information needs. This is in particular the case for those currently studying outside of Bougainville, as they provide an important human resource for the province.

KEY INFORMATION AND KEY AUDIENCES

Within Bougainville, information and access to information channels are considered an important component for a democratic and peaceful Bougainville. The research demonstrates that there is a concern among respondents for everyone to be informed and to make an informed choice during the referendum. ‘Leaving no one behind’ is an important part of Bougainville’s ongoing peace according to respondents.

In addition, this research demonstrates that while knowledge levels around the BPA and the referendum have increased over the past few years due to a variety of communications activities, there are gaps and uncertainties with regards to in-depth knowledge about the processes, including post-referendum processes. Responses with regards to reconciliations and weapons disposal in this study were mixed, and this is also evident in the uncertainties that certain key audiences expressed.

As pointed out as a result of the 2015 study, the engagement of key audiences who might be more vulnerable and less included in the process continues to be important. Progress has been made with regards to the engagement of women and youth, and this needs to continue. But strongly highlighted in this study is the need to also engage remote communities in the ongoing dialogue and for everyone to be aware of these activities, so that everyone has confidence in everyone else’s ability to participate in the political process. Veterans are an important group to engage to reassure ongoing peace.

Rather than seeing these groups as key audiences, it is important to consider the structural barriers and opportunities these key audiences might experience, and consider media and communication strategies as part of a holistic approach, that enhances their visibility and inclusion. This includes, for example, acknowledging the key role that women play in Bougainville’s society and building on the matrilineal tradition (see Heathcote 2014).

There is a need for the population to understand not just the basic concepts of the political process or the Bougainville Peace Agreement but also possible post-referendum scenarios. This finding confirms what has been proposed in recent studies led by the PNG National Research Institute (Bell & McVeigh 2018) and highlights the need for voters to understand the possible steps the governments might take depending on possible referendum outcomes. In addition, this approach to providing further information would clearly manage the risk of possible disappointment and therefore contribute to the aim of maintaining peace.

INFORMATION MATERIALS AND MEDIA CHANNELS

The research demonstrates that printed materials such as factsheets and the Bougainville Bulletin have been well received by communities, and by all key audiences. These materials are often seen as useful support for face-to-face dialogues because they can be re-read and considered, and offer information in a format that is seen as credible and authoritative. As mentioned above, there is a further need to engage with information about possible benefits of voting for independence or greater autonomy and how the various post-referendum scenarios would be managed by both governments.

Radio remains one of the preferred media and there is much need to continue upscaling radio coverage within Bougainville and to increase awareness around accessing SW radio. This would provide opportunities for regular up-to-date information via a channel that the population trusts. Audiences note a preference for interactive talkback programming that offers the opportunities for questions. Radio, together with face-to-face communication and community awareness sessions, remain the preferred ways of receiving information.

A key recommendation, supported by many respondents is the need to engage local and existing networks more strongly. This includes in particular the ward members and the church groups. Not only are they trusted by the community, they are also in a position to respond in local language and are closer to people; in addition, they can create a safe space for asking questions, an important feature in ensuring that key information is understood by people. This recommendation would also support the above recommendation of engaging with key target groups that can be accessed within their own groups within the communities.
Overall, it is recommended to use trusted media, such as print, radio and audio-visual media, to communicate further in-depth information to people while considering presenting the information in accessible ways and formats (simplified language, visual and mixed media concepts, and question and answer dialogues).

**EXPECTATIONS OF THE ABG AND CHANGE**

Respondents clearly associated change with a possible majority vote for independence, and had expectations about a better future, including infrastructure development, education facilities and a locally managed economy. Those that were cautious spoke of the ABG as not yet ready due to the economy, the existing factions, and the lack of educational institutions. When asked about the Bougainville Way, almost all respondents mentioned clear strengths such as traditional leadership structure, inclusion of women, traditional reconciliation processes and a commitment to its people.

Respondents expressed, on a few occasions, their dissatisfaction with foreign advisors, and a strong sense for Bougainville to lead its own way. The history of the peace process, however, demonstrates that Bougainvilleans appreciate the contributions of those who work in supporting ways and are willing to listen and open to learn about Bougainville culture (see Boege 2019).

- When foreign advisers are engaged it is important to consider how they are integrated in the Bougainville community and how their role and contributions are communicated to the people.

- The contributions of the ABG were appreciated by respondents in this study because they expressed their loyalty to their government. However, they were also critical of the ABG’s performance and vocal about their feedback.

- Key questions raised to the ABG during the research should be addressed in future engagements, and channels should be kept open for people to continue to ask questions and receive responses. Key information about the government’s plans should be provided regularly to guide people’s expectations.

Further, it is evident that the trauma of the past plays a significant role among Bougainvilleans inside and outside of Bougainville. This is not only for those who experienced the crisis, but also for young people who are impacted by the trauma their parents experienced and the stories they have been exposed to.

- Media and communication strategies must consider the way that the experiences of the crisis continue to impact on people. This might mean to include programs that contain personal storytelling or the creative arts to generate a dialogue about the past and bring out people’s contributions. Creative processes offer strategies to engage key audiences, such as women, veterans or youth, by creating safe spaces for engagement (see Bräuchler 2019).

- A recent project example worth mentioning is Women’s Wealth, which was exhibited in early 2019 as part of the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT9) at the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art. The project combined creative workshops with women across Bougainville with engagement of Bougainvilleans living outside of Bougainville and overseas audiences. The project “emphasises the ways in which women’s practices act as a quiet means of resilience in the face of major historical changes”. The project highlights, on one hand, the importance of the indigenous artistic cultures in Bougainville society and how they guide important social processes, and on the other hand, how such projects can strengthen connections with Bougainvilleans residing within and outside of Bougainville.

**ENGAGING NON-RESIDENT BOUGAINVILLEANS**

The study found that NRBs can to some extent be reached via mass media and social media, and through their local social groups. Dissemination via internet clearly offers opportunities in terms of the immediacy and costs, but does not include everyone. However, many NRBs are part of local networks that need to be harnessed to disseminate information.

- Social media and traditional mass media (radio, television, newspapers) might be used initially to reach out to Bougainvilleans residing outside of Bougainville, but locally organised groups are crucial in reaching those who do not access media and in providing spaces for discussion and dialogue. In this sense, those living outside Bougainville should not just be seen as individuals, but as part of wider communities outside of Bougainville.

Further trust can be built with these groups by engaging in regular dialogue with them, such as through providing responses via the ABG website or Facebook site.

NRBs in the study reiterated requests by people within Bougainville to improve the radio network and, in some places, the mobile towers, to ensure regular communication. Many NRBs also felt that their understanding of the political processes was fragmented and they identified a clear need for the ABG and the PNG government to communicate how they plan to manage the post-referendum period. A key component mentioned by NRBs in this study was the uncertainty of their status as either temporarily or permanently residing outside of Bougainville.

- Many Bougainvilleans residing outside of Bougainville provide support to people in Bougainville and demonstrate a strong loyalty to their region. Considerations must be given to methods for integrating those residing outside of Bougainville in meaningful ways where possible.

WORKING TOWARDS PEACE AND WELL-BEING

Bougainvilleans consulted in this research were unified in that they did not want another crisis, but to move forward towards a peaceful society. They expressed confidence that a peaceful outcome of the referendum would be achieved. Uncertainties and certain fears were voiced, but the overarching theme is that of solidarity among respondents and the desire to move forward as one society. While the general term ‘awareness’ has been used throughout this report, it would be more appropriate to use the term ‘engagement’ or ‘dialogue’ with regards to respondents’ requests for education about referendum process, including those by young people. Respondents wanted to understand the role that they could play in this process and ensure that they were informed.

CONCLUSION

With the date of the referendum confirmed for October 2019, there will be an increased engagement around the implementation of media and communication strategies and growing motivation from people to obtain information. The results from the research provide a current picture of information levels and information needs of Bougainvilleans who will be voting in the referendum. The research provides key information for the pre-referendum and post-referendum periods.

Respondents acknowledged that much has been achieved by the ABG and recognised the efforts that have been made to provide information to the people. While more work is to be done and challenges remain, many individuals and communities have made important contributions to this journey.

The ultimate goal supported by many of the respondents is that everyone who votes in the referendum can make an informed decision. A key component of this process is that no one is left behind and key audiences are reached and engaged. Maintaining dialogue and continuing to provide updates as regularly as possible is an important part of the ABG’s mandate to build a peaceful Bougainville.
REFERENCES


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Bougainville Referendum Communications Committee. (2016b). Joint Key Messages Fact Sheet No. 1 (June 2016)

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1. Mipla vote yes long referendum i gutpla bikos mipla Bougainville mipla i laik stap mipla yet. Mi no laikim turnas olsem bai yumi stap wantaim PNG. Mi minim olsem yumi ol Bougainville yumi mas break away from PNG.

2. Long mi yeti, [...] olemi yet mi kisin olekim referendum em minim olemi yeti yet laik long Bougainville.

3. Ol ini blong tok, referendum em olemi eleksem. Vote long eleksem blong flutsa blong Bougainville.

4. Taim ol i man i save kam givim awenes long ples, ol bai tokim ol man tasol long ples ol mas bung, ol mas vote long referendum. Ol imas putim talos yes long referendum long yumi yemi mas bruk tuss wantaim PNG. Long yumi mas stap yemi yet.

5. Long hia em olsem constituency member blong mipela em declarim referendum ready pinis but normally long tinglytting blong miipo ino referendum ready turnas. Bikos ol service delivery tu em ino flow down gut turnas, law and order tu, na rule of law, na respect blong ol elders na kain olemi ward members nambaut em ino gultpa turnas.

6. Yumi mas rekonsislen em we em sintim long ol toktok long em, that’s not the way to do rekonsislen, ol sintim olemi hia em rekonsislen program [...] disla yai ol no imen atensen turnas long filins blong ol pipol na olsem na ol man wok lo asink na warum bai yu givim mi kopenesem.

7. Olsem mipela redi na redi long referendum bai mipela mas wokim clean up long komvem long komvem, warum sintomi long hevi stap yumi mas reconcile na stat gap na waltim taim bong vote long referendum.

8. Long lukuluk blong mi ino sintim long komvem blong miipo, long mi yet mi ken tok olsem mipela ino referendum [red] yet bikos igat sampia usa we mipela still nid long strelim belo milo ino tokken tok miipo ino referendum [red].

9. Olsem na em waempla taim, em laspela taim bikos insit long konstituisin as amendim bai luk olsem, sospos yumi fallim dispela, bai nogart na makes pla dispela kai.

10. Bikos, long niuspepa a Post Koria a Boganvil Bulletin mi save rid na mi save kisin fimesesen osem hau Boganvil Pilis Agrimen save fom, hau ol man wok long redi long kisin vot long referendum na independens. (…) Mi save kisin likik fimesesen tasi em information about referendum and independent and go insait na long olemi arms disposal, ol save text na toka nios kam long ples na yumi save lukim long mobile osem.

11. Olsem na em laikim post koria a Arawa a go long main taun ol save kam bek bai ol save kam stori so miipo harim.


13. Mi save long rid na em na orait liklik long hia na mi planki dispit. But ol man tu wea ol ino inap long rid, mi laikim strelim ol osem igat tim kam wokim moa awenes long ples tu ol man komvem, wokim komvem.

14. Planti blong ol yangelia man hia, planti ol yangelia yuts, we bai ol kampap future generations, majoroti blong ol ino skul blong kraises na sospos ol no save long ol fimesesen na prosos blong yumi go long referendum, sam hau em ken kamapim bagapar. I mean, yumi ken kamapim hevi.

15. Em bai mi ken tok olsem ol man we a ol, ol igat sans longol save em ol man we bai mi ken tok olsem ol bikom, ol wokman na ol man igat ekoses long atendim ol sampla training i save on, ol estol i save givim aid fair.

16. Sampila long ol gavman membah, they are doing their very best to disseminate o bringim fimesesen iogo daun long loun blong ol lain long ples ah. Ol naраЪpar ol ino mekim dispela wok, they just doing it in general. Mi harim long wanlum membah, he she does, em wokman meri ah. How she has manage to hold through her electorate na make sure osem em hau em mekim long ah konstituisin blong em.

17. It everybody is given the opportunity to osem be given that awareness, honestly be given the pros and cons, givpla blong greater autonomy, givpla blong independens na nogat blong tupa salt, and then they will be able to give their vote.

18. Awenes ol kam wokim ya wanpla bikpla samting tru mi no, mi lukim em ino strel long tim mi taim ol leaders kam wokim awenes ol no save simplifiim ol English Terror. Long toktok long laik long wanlum garns root. So ol leaders taim ol kam wokim long long awenes wokim blong referendum ol mas usim ol simple terms wea bai ol ilitterate ol mas understandim.

19. [...] ABG i wokim gut wok blong em bat ol pipol talos so na abo ABG mas refox na go insait long wanwan vills, door to door long mekim awenes ol karim aut dispela vote long kamapim positive result.

20. Mi lukuk bek ken long ples yumi bin kisin dispia gavman, planti ol man meri insait long ples ya na ol yuts tu ol ino even save wanem samting em Otonomos Boganvil Gavaman, [...] nogat waempla likiki awareness i bin ken
39 Mi lukim olsem ol awenes team ol kam wapnla taim tasol, na ol mas con-
tinue long givim moa awenes na poster long level wea mipla istap long en so
that bai mipla ikila gut long wokabat blong referendum; bai mipla ikisim moa
save hau bai mipla mikos long kamap long referendum.
40 Em mi lukim olsem planti lain ino save kam long ol forums. Taim mipela
sinautimg miting long wapnlag lokesen, planti man meri ol no save kam. Sem
pipol mipela save kam bung na mipela save harim ol infomesen.Ol sampela
lain, ino in na ol istap longol tasol long plies.
41 Ol wod membma, olis mas indaktim in ola na ol mas karim wolf iko daun
long hamals. Na tu olsem ol infomesen peypa ya printhim long iinglis na tok pisin
wantaim.
42 Usim wod member lon tontok, bicos, mi ken askim bap savos mo kila
long wapnla queston lon tontok, mi ken askim (…) Wanpla samtong, wod membma
em i ples man yet na en is lo (long) mekim awenes na sa jusim mada tan ah;
tok ples.
43 Mi laikim redio bicos, mi no inap wokabat long le long go kosim, long
harim, long harim referendum awenes, bai mi stap tasol lasol haaus, na mi
tiunim tasol radioa na harim.
44 Sampela ol awenes ol laim wolong ples lain radio wolong wok long karim aut.
Em gutpela moa tasol mi laik bai mi wok longikim ol kain infomesen olsem
long regular bases, day to day, na dispela, em long dispela redio. Olsem em
ken inpruvim kaavina [il long lam hia] na mipelua tul long, ino ol Buka tasol,
yumi tu long kain hap ples olsem isolate long, ol mas sitim ap long kaavari em bai
kismipela moa sipelina kai gen at isoke ais long ol sem. Mipelua yet keny in long
redio na mipela kimis ol infomesen.
45 Long taim mi save harim long redio, mi save filim but, sampela taim mi
no save, mi no save filim gut tunas, mi no save dispela verbal ol tontok.
Sampla man i mas, igat wapnla tim isim kam strat na konfrenim long tontok
long maus haas. Na long radio, sampala taim mi save deautim olsem, em tontok
long samting i tru o, o giaman.
46 Redio ples lain, pes taim biling long marimor ol na lukim em ol man
wan-
pela women’s unification forum blong mipelua milong ol meri Saut Bognervil.
That forum was organizied by the women member blong ABG. Na ol redio ples
lain tu, ol bai kam. (…) Na ol ilin givim mipelua wanwan redio. Na mipelua stap long
ol hap mipelua bin slip, mipelua Aran Siwati Distrik ol bin aksesim naoul
infomesen mi bin Kisim, mipelua bin inap long kosim dispela wik. So mi lukim
long hap na mi bin laim strat. Na mi bin lukim olsem dispela seisim em gutpela
stred long ol pipol insait long Bognervil.
47 Ating em gutpela bikos mi save aslism first hand inform long redio.
Ino olsem ol man bai tontok nating na baihain bai yu harim. Redio em tingting
biling long strat em save tontok.
48 Oh wanpla samtong wokim mi kila, especially long TV skrin long Buka ya,
em save tontok long proses na intagriti biling yumi na haau ol wanwan grup
imas be well prepared.
49 Mi em wapnla taim i mi go raun na long bilbot ya, em mi lukim president
na ol bikman blong ABG, ol wok long tontok long disla peketses insait long
disla referendum ya. Em wok wolong stap tasol long skrin. Mi long rodin na
passim taim wantaim long taun, mi no bisim taim taisim so mi na kasim taidol
ol ikisim infomesen blong referendum.
50 Em long bilbot ya, ino gutpela long ol putim tasol long taun, ol mas kam
putim disla blong long ples bai etitl olgeta man save long wanenem ol awenesen
isa kam long ples lo ol bai kila gut.
51 Mi lukim tasol ol awareness especially ol awareness team olesem James
Taniss ol record long CD. Ol wokim ol referendum awareness long ol arms
disposal (…) Dispela yet em olsem ol em wok long explaiinim ol steps bilbow
referendum na haau em bai kampam em olsem (…) Wanem samtong ino gutpela
em yu ino inap askim ol question. Bikos one yet lukim em, em yet em bai
tontok. Em one way information.
52 Na ol wok long tontok na givim mipla gut ol information blong referendum
na mi kila. Sampala taim ol save soim mipla piksa.
53 Mi bin stap long skul na ol bin jas tokim ol mi olsem bai yumi kisim refer-
endum ol. Ol bin ringim mi na ol tak 2019 bai yumi kisim referendum. (…) Em
gutpela long isim ol message hariap long long sal long fon.
54 Mobile phone why mi laikim bikos em handy o kain olsem. Even yu stap
bus long o wanenem hap o yu go we o weanem, em still bai yu harim nui yet. Ok
dispela em hau em save helpim mipelua bikos long mobile phone yu ken askim
question sapos yu ino kila gut long sampela samtong.
55 Olsem bai mi, taim i save run, ol save salim meseg, ol meseg blong refer-
endum ya, ol salim kaam na tokol olsem, bai yumi go insait long referendum
(…) Long sal long bloong mabai ol savesin long rin, olsem mi save laik mobai,
olsem mi save harim kila ol tontok long referendum.
56 Ol samtong ino mi laikim em igat sampela false information i save kamap
long internet na facebook tu.
99 Long tingting blong mi, behain long referendum, plani, I think plani gutpla blong development, kisim sevis nambaut.

98 Referendum em olsem yumi yet imas sanap strong na stretim yumi yet, em.

96 Wanem samting ikamap yumi mas stretim long wei blong yumi yet ah. Em.

92 So mi save lukim olsem long ol disisens tu, in decision makings too, ol

91 Sevis ino equally distributed long wanwan aria.

90 Gavman ino bin wokim wok rerere blong em. Redim yumi long go long neks step. Nao yumi wok long wok like last minute long ol displa, rashim ol displa of steps long achievim referendum.

84 Mi no bilip olsem wanpela senis bai kamap sapos Bogenvil kisim indipendence. Ating, mi wanem, standard of living, ol nupla ol sevis bai kamap. Ol manmeri o ol man insait long bus ol i free long muv around kantris, onces ol vote independence ah, a month or some days later pari and buruh. Ak mi wok long urmium Boganvillian people, em pies blong yumi yunot, inogat man yu bai wantaim. We dont have any enemy here.

80 Yumi kam long fainol hap bilong yumi nau em dispela vot bilong referendum blong yumi.

79 Normally ol save updatim milpa long wanen samting wok long kamap. Bikos sampela man ol ba wok long poretim milpa olsem bai pait korai o kain olsem. So taim ol toktok ol bai explainim olsem em nogat. Bikos bai i igat kainkaim, milpa olsem o PNGDF wok long laik long train long kamap pait sapos yumi yunot ye es long independence.

78 Referendum blong em olsem yumi yet imas sanap strong na stretim yumi yet, em.

77 Askin blong mi em bai olsem. Sapos displa referendum o iae na aha i ol mine blong Boganvillenn na ogen. Bai milpa olgeta pilo blong Boganvillen blong Bougainville.

76 Yumi kamap bai long wok long wok na foreign affairs ah, em bifo yumi kamap kiri so do displa samting mas igat.

75 Bougainville laws we ol pipol bai andastendim lo na bihainim na olsem stan- dard of living bilong ol pipol bai i taim bai abimur.


73 Long laikim ol semia tunap long mekim ol displa wok. Inogat man bai yu poret liklik long displa referendum, bikos lotu insait long Bougain- ville igat tupla grup laik gavman na narapla em Mekamui. Olsem na mi save poret liklik long displa tunap wanen gen ya gavman ya.

72 Planti senis bai kamap. Ating, mi wanem, standard of living, ol rupla ol Boganvillen laws we ol pipol bai andastendim lo na bihainim na olsem stan- dard of living bilong ol pipol bai i bai abimur.

71 Planti senis bai kamap. Ating, mi wanem, standard of living, ol rupla ol Boganvillen laws we ol pipol bai andastendim lo na bihainim na olsem stan- dard of living bilong ol pipol bai i bai abimur.

70 Planti senis bai kamap. Ating, mi wanem, standard of living, ol rupla ol Boganvillen laws we ol pipol bai andastendim lo na bihainim na olsem stan- dard of living bilong ol pipol bai i bai abimur.
117 Wanpla samting mi laik askim ABG, so mi laik askim ABG olsem referenced, samas youmi, yurni minin independence na wanem ol ABG, ol didas olsem president, em bai mekim wanam na wanem guplta, wanem guplta peaceful mims bai kamap long Bougainville.

118 0k narapla toktok askim blong mi gen em olsem inap ABG i painim sampla pei long bai helpim mipla ol la in long ples pei long salt blong salim ol toktok ol wanem wanam ol samting wee ABG i wok long kamapim insalt long gavam ol ol aweners we kai osem ah, kominikeisen. Hao bai ol toktok wantaim mipla la in long ples. Na daum ol gavamat, mipla laik mipla mas stai long sem levol membas ah, saos ol i kai yusim ol wod memba blong mipla ah lai long wokim ol aweners blong ABG so that mipla olgeta ol la in long ples mipla ken gat access o save long wanem samting i wok long kamap insalt long ABG.


120 Ol waspam aket bai, em olsem ah yurni Bougainville ya, nyo ya nogat planti em ya tuma, olsem ol semmer college ol universities, so yurni ol, saos yurni wok long redi long referendum ya em ol bai harap long wokim wokim gen ya. Ol college ya wantaim ol universities.

121 Tingblong blong mi long wokim Bogenvili wey em ABG taim yurni ga tuwods referendum ABG mas plenim olgeta samting olsem oki semer ol semer osem kai ol wom kannol kai ol wang go long aut laim. Long gavaman wokim long kamap insalt long displey wokim long laim

122 0k laik bai ol imas helpim mipla long salt blong ol pikinni, mipla ol sampla mama, mipla ol wido ya. Mipla ino nap long bai long bui blong ol pikinni blong mipla. Na sampla ol sampla mama tu, ol ino save kai semer osem blong Long salt blong marasin tu mipla save sot tuma long laim long hausik. Mipla nogat inap mani. Olsem wanem, bai yupta helpim mipla tu long dispersa salt blong osem o?

123 0k laik kam daun na helpim i pipol pipol Boganvil, kam daun long grasnut levols, na hvilim ol grassnut iken stak sampla ol lai i stak antap, ol noken stak. Na daun ol grasnut, mipla laik mipla mas stai long sem levol membas ah, saos ol i kai yusim ol wod memba blong mipla ah lai long wokim ol aweners blong ABG. Mipla nogat mani. Displa osem, ol wod memba blong wanem wantaim. That money they should bring it down to the community government members na ol komuniti gavaman membas ol o impa long insalt long wanunu wok wokim onol wok wokim long dispersa salt blong osem o?

124 Mipla save harim olsem eva yia ol [MPs] save kisim fittai taussend Kina referendum grant. Dispela moni, ol wod wokim wantaim. That money they should bring it down to the community government members na ol komuniti gavaman membas ol o impa long insalt long wanunu wok wokim onol wok wokim long dispersa salt blong osem o?

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126 0k laik yupla askim ABG, so mi laik askim ABG olsem referendums o kai askim insait long region back. So wanem samting em olsem kai usait lain mipla stap insait long taun, bai daum ol wokim insait long wokim long ples, espesli disla referen- dum ABG mas plenim olgeta samting olsem kai insait long displa war.

127 0k laik yupla askim ABG, so mi laik askim ABG olsem referendums o kai askim insait long region back. So wanem samting em olsem kai usait lain mipla stap insait long taun, bai daum ol wokim insait long wokim long ples, espesli disla referen- dum ABG mas plenim olgeta samting olsem kai usait long region back. So wanem samting em olsem kai usait lain mipla stap insait long taun, bai daum ol wokim insait long wokim long ples, espesli disla referen- dum ABG mas plenim olgeta samting olsem kai usait long region back.

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132 0k laik yupla askim ABG, so mi laik askim ABG olsem referendums o kai askim insait long region back. So wanem samting em olsem kai usait lain mipla stap insait long taun, bai daum ol wokim insait long wokim long ples, espesli disla referen- dum ABG mas plenim olgeta samting olsem kai usait long region back.

133 I think the only connection nau em ya, social media na fone. Man biong mipla wantaim ol em bion long hap during crisis so I think fear em stap long go beken long pees.

134 So bikos I think mipla stap autsait ya em olsem mipla at least mipla gat sikiriki. Sikiriki blong mipla long; na ol laim stap long island yet ya ol tingling planti stap.

135 Ol tambai laim blong mi ya ol lai long ples ol no save laik toktok long em. Every time the stori blong ples na crisis kamap em bai mipla sa’ mipla no save laikim stori. Ol blong saim lai us em mipla sa’ mipla passim tasol wantaim ai waren i no silence until next day ol wanem namb aus na wanem wokol diferent man kam na stori long nara naple topic nau em mipla sa lat re-build ken, so us a, nogat ending blong mipla stap insait. Em save end wantaim I mean bai mi toke ol mipla save shot katim to, wantaim ai wara.

136 Salt blong dispersa ating dispersa nau em bai stap long han biong National gavaman a, saos laikim pipalaf autka mipla thel blong em bai yurni kamap wantaim gavplta aida blong insait referendum.

137 Not every information there is correct o em stet ah bai mi stap. (...) Facebook em sample taim em ino ratplta samting o bai givim ah. (...) Emi no content blong olgeta olgeta ass tingling blong referendum ah. So em sample taim em mi tok ya em mi no sa’n, mi no bini satys.
151 Yumi nid long inkreasm coverage area long sampela hap coverage ino save kisim long en.

152 Ating data rates blong yumi ating yumi dropim liklik long sait blong video, video call yumi dropim rate liklik long displa ating olain bai communic ate more long sait blong referendum long Buka.

153 Plan ti funding tu we National Government sapos long givim ABG long ranim displa process ya em dele wantaim National Government. Every day bai yu lukim long National Government displa ol ministers blong National Parliament ya uas ol asainim ol long wok wantaim ABG, still ol requestim government of speedim up process long locatim o reteasim displa ol mani go hariap long ABG so ol iken ranim hariap.

154 Bougainville is filthy rich. That we can’t deny. We have uhm so many opportunities apart from mining, olsem mining em save bagarapim graun ah, but we can look to agriculture and there are a lot of you know potentials, a lot of opportunities on the land that we can use long olsem taim mipla kisim independence.

155 Bougainville em igat ol resources istap we ol iken produsim na enim inkaim as I have mentioned earlier on like cocoa, copra, marine resources istap olsem ailan which is sea cucumber na mi ting olsem Bougainville em i gat resources olsem mining. Mipla iken go insalt tu long mining em ol displa em ol resource Bougainville igat.

156 Long sait blong finance long Bougainville em olsem, taim Kopa Mainim bin open befo, long mipla yet mipla save olsem mipla ino bin benefit stre tlong displa kopa mainim ya so mipla laikim olsem, sapos trutru, mipla vol long referendum na yumi kisim referendum, mipla laikim olsem at least mipla igat share namel long olgeta pipol blong Bougainville.

157 Even taim ibin gat blockaid during the crisis years you know people began to be creative so mi mi gat strongpela believe olsem ol man bai kamapiim sampla samting long sapotim economy blong Bougainville.

158 Na wanpla program blong ABG mi hamamas, em laise wantaim wanpla uni daun long Australia we igat displa scholarship program we every yia ol salim fopla (4) pikinini go long displa uni em ABG i wok long putim tu long human asset long kam bek gen (...) displa em strength blong Bougainville na mi hamamas.

159 Em needim wok bung wantaim long salt blong law and order insait long hap na kain olsem ol gutpla information o ol toktok imas igo long kain ol man olsem long ol bai cheing ah, so that gutpla sindaun mas kamap.

160 Igot wan wan set back in all the different governing bodies but Bougainville have actually displayed a strong governing leadership.

161 It’s the duty of the ABG people to come outside to the provinces and do their work. Get outside and you do your work, you get good result.

162 Sapos ABG ken painim sampla kain mani, sampla funds nambaut, wanpla gutpla wei long weapons disposal, instead long larim ol man ikam sarendarim ol wepons blong ol bikos yumi no save ol kam givim trutru gan or nogut ol givim hommade aste tasol ol sapim na kam lusim o displa kai.

163 Bipla samtin stre we ol members nid long tingting strong long em about educating young kids or supporting them on higher institution ol stimp long em. They to engage them in tertiary institution that ol ba go bek na helimp knowl edge blong ol long developim Bougainville.

164 Taim mi stap aut, em need long ABG long em mas givim sampla toktok, hau em ken mekim na mi ken go bek o mi ken stap long hia o kain olsem. For example, sapos mi kamap mi citizen blong Bougainville ah long displa taim bihain long independent em bai need long gavman blong mi long arrangim go blong mi o stap blong mi.

165 Mi hope igat sampla possible way wes gavman blong Bougainville ken wokim arrangement long mipla ken vote olsem nomol, hau yumi Papua Niugini citizen save vote long em ya ol ken arrangim olsem so that mipla ol Bougainville yet stap long wanem hap ya mipla bai ken makim sampla hap wea mipla ken go tromoi vote long em na bihain salim ol pepa go bek.
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