VOTE 123 LPV

Now that's fair!

Limited Preferential Voting
is the new way to vote in
National Elections.

You are now required to vote
for your 1st, 2nd & 3rd choice.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION
Papua New Guinea

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ACRONYMS

FPTP   First Past The Post

LLG   Local Level Government

LPV   Limited Preferential Voting

NGO   Non-government Organisation

LIMITED PREFERENTIAL VOTING

OVERVIEW

Since independence until the 2002 National Elections, Papua New Guineans have been electing their leaders to represent them in the National Parliament through the *Simple Majority Voting* also known as the "*First-Past-the-Post* voting system. The National Parliament amended the *Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections* to provide for the introduction of **Limited Preferential Voting** ("**the LPV**") in National Elections. It must be clearly understood that the LPV would only be used in National Elections. The Local Level Government elections will continue to use the current "Simple Majority Voting" or "First-Past-the-Post voting system.

Introduction of LPV

Amongst many reasons, the forth National Parliament opted for LPV basically to allow the voters to choose or select a most preferred leader to represent them in the National Parliament, which is the highest law making body of the country. As a result, the LPV system was passed to be effective in any by-election(s) that may arise immediately after the 2002 General Elections and to be fully implemented during the 2007 National Election and in the future national elections.

Electoral Commission ("the Commission"), as a government agency responsible for administering and facilitating elections in Papua New Guinea, has a legal obligation to educate every citizens of this country on the LPV system during this difficult economic times. Despite the fact that the commission has limited resources, being under funded and also untimely provision of funds by successive governments, it is generously appealing to other relevant government agencies, at national, provincial and community levels and the NGOs to assist wherever possible to effectively and efficiently educate our people.

It is the aim of this working paper, that would eventually be developed into an informative and or educational material to educate all the citizens of this country by effectively addressing most or if not all of the issues directly relating to the voters.

Furthermore, this paper has anticipated its broader audience at all levels with diverse cultural backgrounds throughout the country (educated & uneducated, young & old, rich & unfortunate). It therefore would attempt to logically and carefully explain the procedures involved in Limited Preferential Voting system.

The discussions would begin with definitions of some important terms, which will be used all throughout this paper. It would be followed by explaining in detail the LPV system – its main operation features, basic requirements on how the ballot papers would be marked and further examine its advantages and disadvantages. Finally, the paper would be concluded with a step-by-step scenario using six candidates to illustrate the procedures involved in the whole counting process in order to fully understand and appreciate the importance of Limited Preferential voting.

Difference between LPV and First-Past-the-Post (FPP)

First-Past-the-Post (**FPP**)
Previously the system used was called ***First-Past-the-Post, or Simple Majority*** where whichever candidate received the highest number of votes is declared the winner. The voter was expected to put a single mark either (a tick or a cross) against the name of the candidate of his/her choice.

Limited Preferential Voting (**LPV**)
LPV is a system that is based on the principle that the winner must have the ***support of an absolute majority*** (50% + 1). Preferential voting is seen as more indicative or reflective of the will of the electors. In LPV, the voter is given an option to choose at least three candidates amongst the names on the ballot paper by placing the number "1" as the first preference, indicates the second preference with number "2" and the number "3" for the third candidate.

7.   Advantages and disadvantages of LPV

7.1   Advantages of LPV.

7.1.1   It ensures that only a candidate with the support of an absolute majority of an entire electorate can win. Eliminating the possibility of minority winners. In other words, the winning candidate is the "***most preferred***".

7.1.2   It ensures that voters can support minor parties and independent candidates, knowing that their preferences may be used to decide the winner. Thus, votes for minor parties and independents are not wasted.

7.1.3   It allows parties of liked-minded philosophies or policies to "***exchange preferences***" in order to assist each other to win.

7.1.4   It promotes and encourages candidates and their supporters to be electorate-wide minded in their campaign strategies than strongly opposing each other. This may reduce or eliminate tribal fights amongst supporters of rival candidates.

7.1.5   It has a very good or high turnover of candidates during elections.

7.2   Disadvantages of LPV

7.2.1   It increases **Exhausted Votes**.

7.2.2   **Declaration** may be delayed because of long counting process.

2. DEFINITIONS

As mentioned earlier, it is necessary to define and clarify a few but equally important terms at this stage to help better understand the subject of discussion – LPV.

2.1 Preference

This word stems from the root word "**Prefer**", which simply means *to choose or select*. *Oxford Advanced Learners* dictionary defines preference as *"a favour or an interest shown to one person or group than another"*.

Therefore, in LPV, voter's preferences are strictly limited to three (3) only and are indicated by the numbers "1", "2" and "3". They are:

2.1.1   *First Preference* – is represented by number "**1**";
2.1.2   *Second Preference* – is represented by number "**2**"and;
2.1.3   *Third Preference* – is represented by number "**3**".

2.2 Formality

2.2.1   For a ballot paper to be accepted as formal, it *must have the numbers* **1, 2** and **3** marked on the ballot paper, clearly indicating the voter's three preferences and initialled at the back by the Presiding Officer.

2.2.2   Where there are only *three* candidates contesting, the ballot paper is formal if it has the numbers 1 and 2 marked, indicating the voter's first two preferences. The candidate with a blank square is deemed a last preference.

2.2.3   In a case where there are only *two* candidates contesting, the ballot paper is formal if it has the number 1 marked on the ballot paper as the voter's first preference. The candidate with a blank square is deemed a last preference.

Note: *Above situations have been further explained with illustrations under sections 4.1 to 4.4 on page 5.*

2.3 Absolute Majority

An absolute majority is defined as half of the total formal votes plus one (**50% + 1**) that a candidate <u>MUST</u> receive at the conclusion of any one count in order to be declared a winner. A simple mathematical formula for Absolute Majority is shown below:

$$AM = [TFV/2] + 1$$

Where: AM is an Absolute Majority
            TFV is the Total Formal Votes

Please note that any fraction component of the calculated result is always ignored. Therefore, an *absolute majority* (50% +1) is a required number of votes a candidate must secure during a count to be declared a winner at the end of that particular count.

2.4 Excluded Candidate

Throughout the distribution of preferences, if no candidate receives an absolute majority then a candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded at the end of each count. This process is called an *elimination* and/or *exclusion* of candidates.

2.5 Distribution of Preferences

Where a candidate has been excluded, his/her ballot papers will be sorted to the next available preferences marked on the ballot paper. The preferences marked on the ballot paper are used to sort out the ballot paper to the elector's next preference and the vote is re-allocated to the continuing candidates.

2.6 Exhausted Ballot Papers

An exhausted ballot paper is a ballot paper that has numbers marked given to candidates who have been excluded/eliminated from the count. It cannot be further distributed to other continuing candidates.

3. What is Limited Preferential Voting (LPV)?

Limited Preferential Voting is a system that is based on the principle that the winner must have the *support of an absolute majority* (50% + 1). This system is seen as more indicative of the will of electors.

It is a system of voting whereby electors preferences are strictly limited to three options only and are indicated by the numbers **'1'**, **'2'** and **'3'.**

As far as the voters are concerned, this voting system would be better understood if the following commercial slogan from CHM's is applied to this situation:

"AS EASY AS: **1, 2, 3"**.

4. Main Operation Features

The main features of the operation of Limited Preferential voting are as follows:

4.1 Correct Method of marking a Ballot Paper   Section 139

Formality of the ballot paper is very important in the counting process. The ballot paper's degree of accuracy or correctness would be primarily determined by voter's action in the marking process.

4.2 Ballot paper containing more than three (3) Candidates

It must be emphasized again that for a ballot paper containing more than three (3) candidate, all three preferences of the voter must be clearly indicated by numbers 1, 2 and 3. These are elaborated below and further illustrated with sample ballot papers. That is:

4.2.1   Voter's *first preference* must be clearly indicated by number "**1**" against the candidate of his/her choice;

4.2.2   Voters are then required to place the number "**2**" against the name of the other candidates listed on the ballot paper to indicate their *second* preference

4.2.3   Finally, the voters must place the number "3" against the name of the candidate as their *third preference*.

Candidate name	
Gima PURPLE	3
Ezekiel RED	
Michael GREEN	1
Terrie YELLOW	2
Stella PINK	

Sample ballot paper 1

Explanation on ballot paper marked on the left are as follows:
- **Michael GREEN** has been selected or preferred as the first candidate;

- **Terrie YELLOW** as the second best candidate; and finally

- **Gima PURPLE** as the third preferred candidate.

4.3 Ballot Paper with three (3) Candidates only *Section 153 (3)*

If there are only three candidates, the minimum requirement is to put the numbers "**1**" and "**2**" against candidates names indicating the first and second preference respectively, while the third box maybe left blank, as shown in *sample ballot paper 2*

Candidate name	
Gima PURPLE	2
Ezekiel RED	1
Michael GREEN	

Sample ballot paper 2

Voter's choices on the left are as follows:
- **Ezekiel RED** has been given the first preference;
- **Gima PURPLE** as the second choice; and
- **Michael GREEN** has been left blank, however, this would be accepted as third preference

4.4 Ballot paper with two candidates only *Section 153 (2)*

If there are only two candidates contesting for an open electorate seat, then the minimum requirement is to place the number 1 against the candidate for whom the elector has a preference. This is illustrated by *sample ballot paper 3*.

Candidate name	
Gima PURPLE	
Michael GREEN	1

Sample ballot paper 3

In this case, the voter's preferences are:
- **Michael GREEN** as first preference.
- **Gima PURPLE** box has been left blank but it will be accepted as his second preference since they are the **only two** candidates contesting.

4.5 Informal Ballot Papers   - SECTION 153 (1) -

According to Section 153(1) of the Organic Law on National and Local Level Governments Elections and the Regulations, a ballot-paper becomes informal where: -

    4.5.1   A ballot-paper that is marked with 1, 2 and 3 and is not initialled by the Presiding Officer;

    4.5.2   A Ballot Paper is not marked with numbers 1,2 and 3;

    4.5.3   Ballot-paper has any other mark or writing by which the voter could be identified.

5   Scrutiny of Votes in Elections   - SECTIONS 154 & 168 -

The result of an election would be determined by scrutiny in the following manner:

5.1   All the Ballot boxes for an Open Electorates would be brought to a central counting centre.

5.2   All the ballot boxes will be opened one at a time to identify the formalities (formal & informal) of the ballot-papers from the entire electorate to determine the total formal ballot papers.

5.3   Once the total numbers of formal and informal ballot papers are determined, the *first preference votes* also known as the "**primary votes**" are allocated to each individual candidate.

5.4   When allocation of first preference votes is completed, then counting of first preference vote for each candidate takes place. If no candidate secures an absolute majority of the primary votes, then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is "**eliminated**" from the count.

5.5   The ballot papers from the eliminated candidate are examined and re-allocated to the continuing candidates according to the "**second preference**" votes which is indicated by number "**2**".

5.6   If no candidate has yet secured an absolute majority of the vote, then the next candidate with the lowest number of votes is again eliminated. Where a second preference is expressed for a candidate who has already been eliminated, the voter's "**third preference**" is used. This preference allocation and candidate elimination process continues until an absolute majority is reached or obtained by a candidate.

5.7   Where on any count being conducted, on Third Exclusion there is a possibility of identifying exhausted ballot papers. The existence of exhausted ballot paper(s) lowers the total number of formal ballot papers remaining in the count and it is necessary to re-calculate the *Absolute Majority*.

6.   Ties between candidates   - SECTION 168 Subsection 1, Clause g.

In situations where there is a tie between candidates, it would be solved by conducting a draw as stipulated under Section 168 (1) clause g on the Organic Law on National and Local-Level Government Elections that:

6.1   During the elimination process, if there is a tie (that is two or more candidates have an equal number of votes), then one of them has to be excluded. The Returning Officer will immediately conduct a draw to determine the candidate to be excluded. The candidate drawn out from the lot is excluded.

6.2   In the final count, if two candidates have an equal number of votes, then the candidate drawn out from the lot by the Returning Officer is declared the winner.

6.3   **Detailed procedure for drawing lots**:

As clearly stipulated under Section 168(3) of the Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections that a draw must be conducted in the following manner:-

6.3.1   the Returning Officer shall immediately after the conclusion of the counting, in presence of all parties involved obtain a slip bearing the names of candidate having equal number of votes, enclose the respective slips in the separate blank envelopes and deposit the envelopes in a locked empty ballot-box; and

6.3.2   the Returning Officer shall then thoroughly shake and rotate the ballot-box and shall permit any other person present, if he so desires, to do the same; and

6.3.3   the ballot-box shall then be opened and an officer shall take out and open one of the envelopes; and

6.3.4   the candidate whose name appears on the slip enclosed in the envelope taken from the ballot-box is *excluded from the count* or is *declared winner* as the case may be (in the case of the final two candidates).

9 - SCENARIO FOR LPV INFORMATION SESSION

Finally, the paper would be concluded with a step-by-step scenario using six candidates to illustrate the procedures involved in the whole counting process in order to fully understand and appreciate the importance of Limited Preferential voting.

There are six (6) piles of formal ballot papers, which have been sorted and allocated to each individual candidate according to first preference votes. At end of this exercise, this simple result table will be eventually developed into a *Result Tally Sheet*.

Candidate Name	Number of 1st Preferences votes
Gima PURPLE	14
Ezekiel RED	35
Michael GREEN	12
Terrie YELLOW	18
Stella PINK	11
Joseph BLUE	10
Total ballot papers	100
Absolute majority	**?**

Tally Sheet 1- *Distribution of **first preference votes** to six candidates*

In *Simple Majority* voting system, **EZEKIEL RED** would have been declared a winner according to the tally sheet-1 above, with a simple majority of 35 votes. It can be seen that he is liked by 35%, whereas the 65% of the total voting population "*disliked*" him.

In contrary, the above result will be carefully analysed using LPV's counting procedures based on *absolute majority principle* to determine the final winner. To achieve this result, it requires one of the candidates to secure the support of an *absolute majority*, which is more than half of the total formal votes plus 1 in a count.

Question 1: In this example, there are total of 100 formal votes. What is the *absolute majority* for a candidate to secure in order for him/her to be declared a winner?

> **Answer**: $[100/2] +1 = 50+1 =$ **51 Votes**

Question 2: Since no candidate has obtained an *absolute majority* of *51 votes*, how are we going to determine the winner?

> **Answer:** We use the exclusion or elimination principle. That is exclude the candidate with the lowest number of votes and re-allocate his/her ballot papers to the continuing candidates according to the next available preferences indicated on the ballot paper.

9.1 FIRST EXCLUSION

Since **JOSEPH BLUE** had the lowest number of votes from tally sheet_1, he has been excluded and his ballot papers re-allocated to other *continuing candidates* according to

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second preferences. This distribution of votes is shown in column "3" titled "*first exclusion*" of *tally sheet_2* below.

Candidate Name	Number of 1st Preference votes	First Exclsn.	TOTAL 1
Gima PURPLE	14	1	15
Ezekiel RED	35	2	37
Michael GREEN	12	3	15
Terrie YELLOW	18	3	21
Stella PINK	11	1	12
Joseph BLUE	**10**	**-10**	**Excluded**
Total Ballot Papers	100		100
Absolute majority	**51**		**51**

Tally sheet-2.   After **Joseph BLUE** has been excluded and his votes re-allocated to other continuing candidates.

Result from *tally sheet_2* reveals that after the first exclusion the absolute majority remained unchanged at 51, however, no candidate has yet to secure this absolute majority.

Question 3   *What can we do now?*

> **Answer**:   Continue eliminating/excluding candidate with lowest number of votes. In this case**,** exclude **STELLA PINK** from the count since she has the lowest number of 12 votes.

9.2 SECOND EXCLUSION

It is important to note that **STELLA PINK** has 12 Ballot Papers of which 11 came straight to her by first preference and 1 ballot paper that came to her from **JOSEPH BLUE**.

When these ballot papers are further distributed, we consider the next available preference. On the ballot paper that came from **JOSEPH BLUE**, we would look at the preference number "3" as the ballot paper was initially marked with: "1" for **JOSEPH BLUE**, "2" for **STELLA PINK**, "3" for whomever.

On the ballot papers that have a first preference for **STELLA PINK**, again we look for the next available continuing candidate. If there are any ballot papers that show 1 for **STELLA PINK**, and 2 for **JOSEPH BLUE**, then we disregard the "2" because they have been excluded so move to preference number "3".

Candidate Name	Number of 1st Preference votes	First Exclsn.	TOTAL1	Second Exclsn.	TOTAL2
Gima PURPLE	14	1	15	3	**18**
Ezekiel RED	35	2	37	1	38
Michael GREEN	12	3	15	3	**18**
Terrie YELLOW	18	3	21	5	26
Stella PINK	11	1	12	-12	0 - Excluded
Joseph BLUE	**10**	**-10**	**0**	*First exclusion*	
Total formal ballot papers	100		100		100
Exhausted					
Absolute majority	**51**		**51**		**51**

*Tally sheet_3: Result after **Stella PINK's** ballot papers have been distributed*

After second exclusion, an absolute majority remain unchanged at 51 and still no candidate has yet reached an *absolute majority* so the elimination process would continue. Interestingly, there is a *tie* between **GIMA PURPLE** and **MICHAEL GREEN**.

Question 4: Since there is a **tie** between two candidates, what do we do?

Answer: In such cases, the Returning Officer would conduct a draw to eliminate one for the candidate. The candidate whose name drawn out from the lot would be excluded.

At the time of this exercise, a draw was actually conducted and **Gima Purple's** name was drawn out of the two, and therefore, he was eliminated. His ballot papers were further distributed according to the preferences indicated.

9.3 THIRD EXCLUSION

This stage of scrutiny is called **Third Exclusion** because **Gima PURPLE** was the third candidate to be excluded. After **Gima PURPLE** was excluded, his ballot papers were re-allocated to other continuing candidates. Result of the distribution of **Gima PURPLE'S** ballot papers is shown in Tally Sheet_4 below.

Candidate Name	Number of 1st Preference votes	First Exclsn.	TOTAL1	Second Exclsn.	TOTAL2	Third Exclsn.	TOTAL3
Gima PURPLE	14	1	15	3	18	-18	0
Ezekiel RED	35	2	37	1	38	4	42
Michael GREEN	12	3	15	3	18	4	22
Terrie YELLOW	18	3	21	5	26	9	35
Stella PINK	11	1	12	-12	0	Second Exclusion	
Joseph BLUE	**10**	**-10**	0	First Exclusion			
Total formal Ballot papers	100		100		100		100
Exhausted						1	
Total formal ballot remaining in count	100		100				99
Absolute majority	51		51		51		50

Tally sheet_4: Result after **Gima PURPLE'S** ballot papers were distributed to other continuing candidates in the 7th column titled "***third exclusion***".

Result from tally sheet_4 indicate that one of the ballot papers from **Gima PURPLE** could not be distributed any further or re-allocated to other continuing candidates because all three preferences from that ballot paper have been used. This ballot paper is called an ***Exhausted ballot paper*** because it no longer has preferences available to be transferred to continuing candidates.

According to the *tally sheet_4*, the exhausted ballot paper was placed under 7th column titled "***third exclusion***" and along the row titled "***Exhausted***". Obviously, this ballot paper was initially allocated to **Joseph BLUE**. During the distribution process, it went to **Stella PINK** at second exclusion and finally to **Gima PURPLE** as the third preference. If this particular ballot paper was carefully reviewed and examined to see how the preferences were marked, it would look something like this.

Ballot Paper	
Candidate name	
Gima PURPLE	3
Ezekiel RED	
Michael GREEN	
Terrie YELLOW	
Stella PINK	2
Joseph BLUE	1

The existence of this ***exhausted ballot paper*** had obviously lowered the number of formal ballot papers remaining in the count and therefore, it is necessary to re-calculate the *absolute majority*.

According to *tally sheet_4*, the total ballot papers remaining in count is now 99. Absolute majority after third exclusion has been reduced to 50. That is,

$$AM = [99 \text{ divide by } 2] + 1 = 49 + 1 = 50$$

> *Again it is important to note here that any fraction component of the result obtained is always ignored.*

During this elimination process, the number of candidates had been reduced from six to three (3). The last three candidates after third exclusion are: **Ezekiel RED** with 42 votes, **Michael GREEN** with 22 votes and **Terrie YELLOW** with 35 votes. However, none of these three candidates has obtained the new absolute majority of 50 votes, so elimination process will continue. This leads us to **fourth exclusion**. That is **Michael GREEN** will be the fourth candidate to be eliminated since he has the lowest number of votes - 22.

9.4 FOURTH EXCLUSION

In this example, there were four exclusions. In other words, the number of exclusions indicates the number of candidates eliminated or excluded during the entire counting process. After **Michael GREEN** was excluded and his ballot papers distributed to **Ezekiel RED** and **Terrie YELLOW**, the total ballot papers remaining in count has decreased. This was due to evolving or emerging of exhausted ballot papers from **Michael GREEN**. This in turn as affected the absolute majority.

Candidate Name	# of 1st Prefernc	First Exclsn.	Total_1	Second Exclsn.	Total_2	Third Exclsn	Total_3	Fourth Exclsn	Total_4
Gima PURPLE	14	1	15	3	18	-18	0	Third Exclusion	
Ezekial RED	35	2	37	1	38	4	42	5	47
Michael GREEN	12	3	15	3	18	4	22	-22	0
Terrie YELLOW	18	3	21	5	26	9	35	13	48 *
Stella PINK	11	1	12	-12	0	Second Exclusion			
Joseph BLUE	**10**	**-10**	0	First Exclusion					
Total formal Ballot papers	100		100		100		100		**100**
Exhausted						*1*	1	*4*	**5**
Total ballot papers remaining in count	100		100				99		**95**
Absolute majority	**51**		**51**		**51**		**50**		**48**

Tally sheet_5: Results after **Michael GREEN** was excluded and his ballot papers distributed to **Ezekiel RED** and **Terrie YELLOW**.

The *absolute majority* has once again decreased, as there are only 95 formal votes in the count. That is [95 divided by 2] + 1 vote = 48.

At the end of fourth exclusion of the scrutiny, Simon had achieved the absolute majority of 48 votes therefore he was declared a winner.

In comparison, with *Simple Majority* or *FPTP* system, **Ezekiel RED** would have been declared the winner with his 35 votes. However, with LPV system, **Terrie YELLOW** turned out to be the winner despite the fact that he only had 18 *first preference votes*. **Terrie YELLOW** is the most preferred or liked candidate. This is the direct effect of second and third preferences playing an important role in determining who should be the best, preferred leader.

In conclusion, the following important points were highlighted by this simple exercise. They are:
1. When no candidate receives an absolute majority after counting the first preferences, the exclusion or elimination process begins with the candidate who has the lowest number of votes.
2. Existence or emerging of exhausted ballot papers lowers the total formal ballot papers remaining in the count during the entire counting process.
3. As a result of this change, the absolute majority must be re-calculated. The fraction component of the result is ignored.
4. In case of ties between candidates, a draw is required to be conducted by the returning officer to determine which candidate is to be excluded.
5. A candidate who receives an absolute majority of votes is declared a winner.
6. It must be noted that voters' second and third preferences do make a difference in determining who would be the best and most preferred leader.

<u>NOTE</u>

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