Female candidates complete training for 2012 elections

Australia has helped to train more than 70 female candidates and their campaign managers from across Papua New Guinea.

In October last year the Australian Government announced almost K2.2 million to help women participate as leaders in their communities and run as potential candidates for Open or Regional seats in the 2012 Elections.

Higher female participation in political processes makes societies more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic. PNG is ranked 119 out of 121 countries on female political participation.

The training is funded by AusAID and delivered by the PNG Department of Community Development’s Office for the Development of Women and the Australian National University’s Centre for Democratic Institutions, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme.

Most of the candidates who participated in the training will contest Open or Governor’s seats in the upcoming elections, while others are preparing for LLG elections next year. The training has equipped intending women candidates with skills and information about campaign planning and logistics, including the management of finances and support teams, public speaking and electoral rules.

The Head of the Australian Aid Program in PNG Stuart Schaefer said there was a connection between the number of women in politics and the quality of decision making in a society.

“International experience has shown that countries with more female representation in political organisations are more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic. We also know that women face many challenges to participating in political processes including social, cultural and economic challenges,” Mr Schaefer said.

“The training will help female candidates understand electoral rules, develop a strategy and budget for their campaigns which will put them on more of an equal footing with male candidates in the election.

“We hope that there will be at least one strong female candidate for each available seat at the 2012 elections, and we expect that this training will have an impact well beyond the election by empowering women to assume leadership positions in their communities, districts and provinces.”

One woman who participated in the training, Loujaya Toni, will contest the Lae Open seat and said the training was highly valuable.

“I have seen the lack of basic services such as electricity, clean water and sanitation in my province and I want to do something about it. This training has given me self-belief and has enabled me to understand the mechanics of running this race, and I thank AusAID for the opportunity,” Ms Toni said. (ENDS)