



University of Papua New Guinea



# The unintended consequences of PNG's 'free' education policies

2016 PNG Update

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# Introduction

Tuition Fee Free policy was introduced in 2012, now the flagship policy of the O'Neill-Dion government

- A lot has changed since the policy was first rolled out in 2012
- Today we'll examine the impact of recent policy decisions on:
  - District administrations, the churches and school communities
- Outline:
  - *Policy Update*
  - *Aims and Methodology*
  - *Community engagement*
  - *District management of funds*
  - *Role of the Churches*
  - *Conclusion*

# Policy Update: 'Free' Education

- In 2012 full TFF subsidy paid to schools
- Now (2016 TFF policy):
  - a cash administration component of 40%,
  - a teaching and learning component (for school materials) of 30%
  - infrastructure component of 30%
- Although yet to be fully implemented, 2016 TFF policy means:
  - Schools will only be paid 40 per cent
  - Proposed establishment of District Education Implementation Committees (DEIC)
- In 2015 school project fees banned

**What impact have these policies had on schools and other institutions?**

# Aim and Methodology

- Aim: to better understand education, health and decentralisation policy reforms
- Qualitative and quantitative research
  - Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, informal interviews with district/provincial officials, and key stakeholders in 10 schools (5 each province); four districts
  - Snowball sampling
  - Quantitative interviews with head teachers
  - Around 200 participants
- Case studies:
  - Two districts in East New Britain (high performer) and Gulf (poor performer) provinces
  - Provinces, districts and schools chosen purposively based on service delivery performance

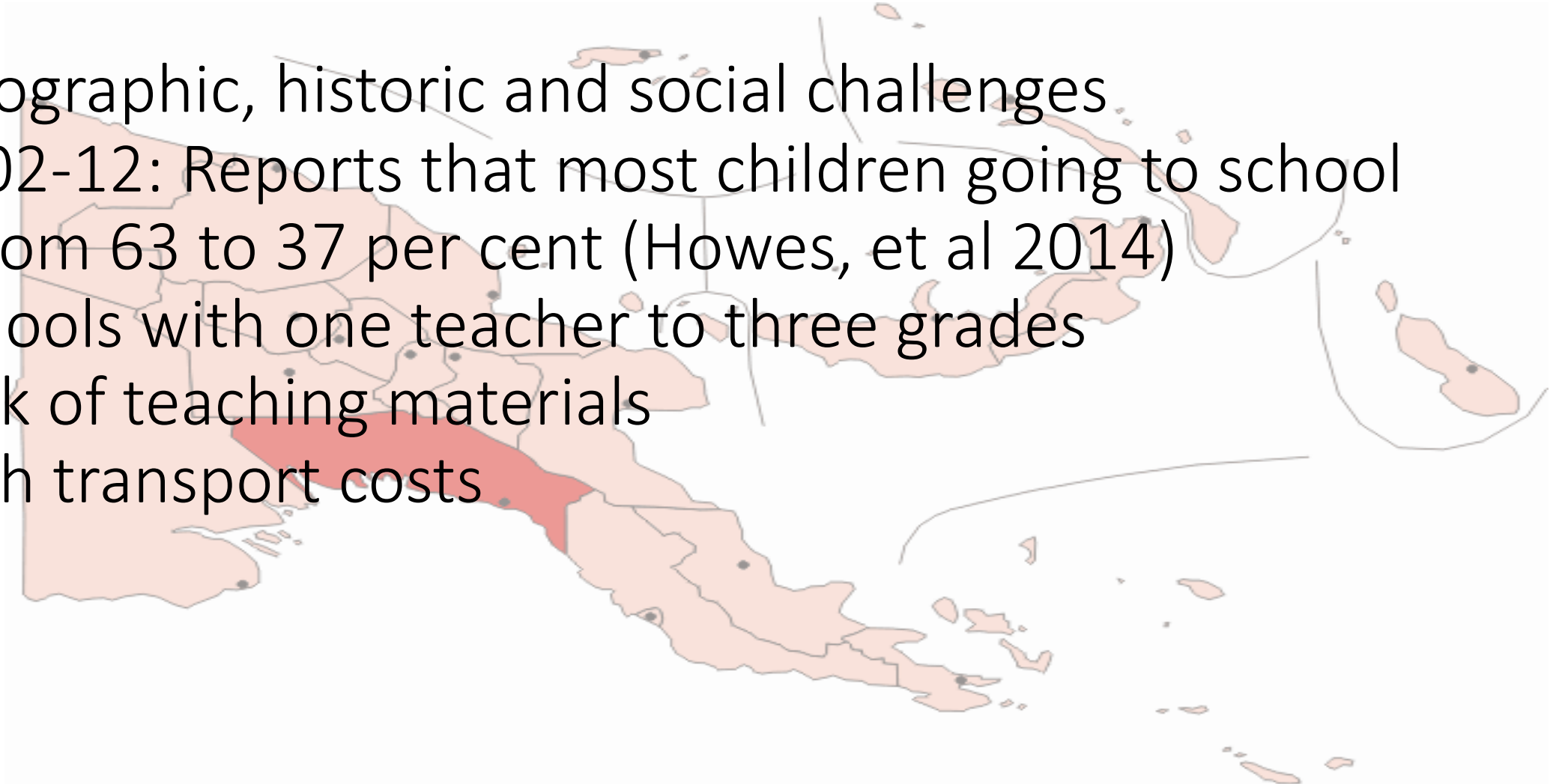
# EAST NEW BRITAIN, PNG

- Relatively good service delivery
- In part because of historical and cultural factors  
(Bray 1985; Errington and Gewertz, 1993)



# GULF PROVINCE, PNG

- Geographic, historic and social challenges
- 2002-12: Reports that most children going to school fell from 63 to 37 per cent (Howes, et al 2014)
- Schools with one teacher to three grades
- Lack of teaching materials
- High transport costs







# School Communities: Opportunities for engagement and conflict

- TFF Policy has helped empower communities
  - More meetings called
  - Boards of Management expanded
- Evidence that free education policies have helped exacerbate conflict
- Can lead to the establishment of 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

*The battles [we have here] are about the financial issues, only [a select few on] the board of management...have a say in management of those funds. Not the community, not the other members of the board of management, not teachers, not children, not church, not other stakeholders.* (Teacher, Gulf)



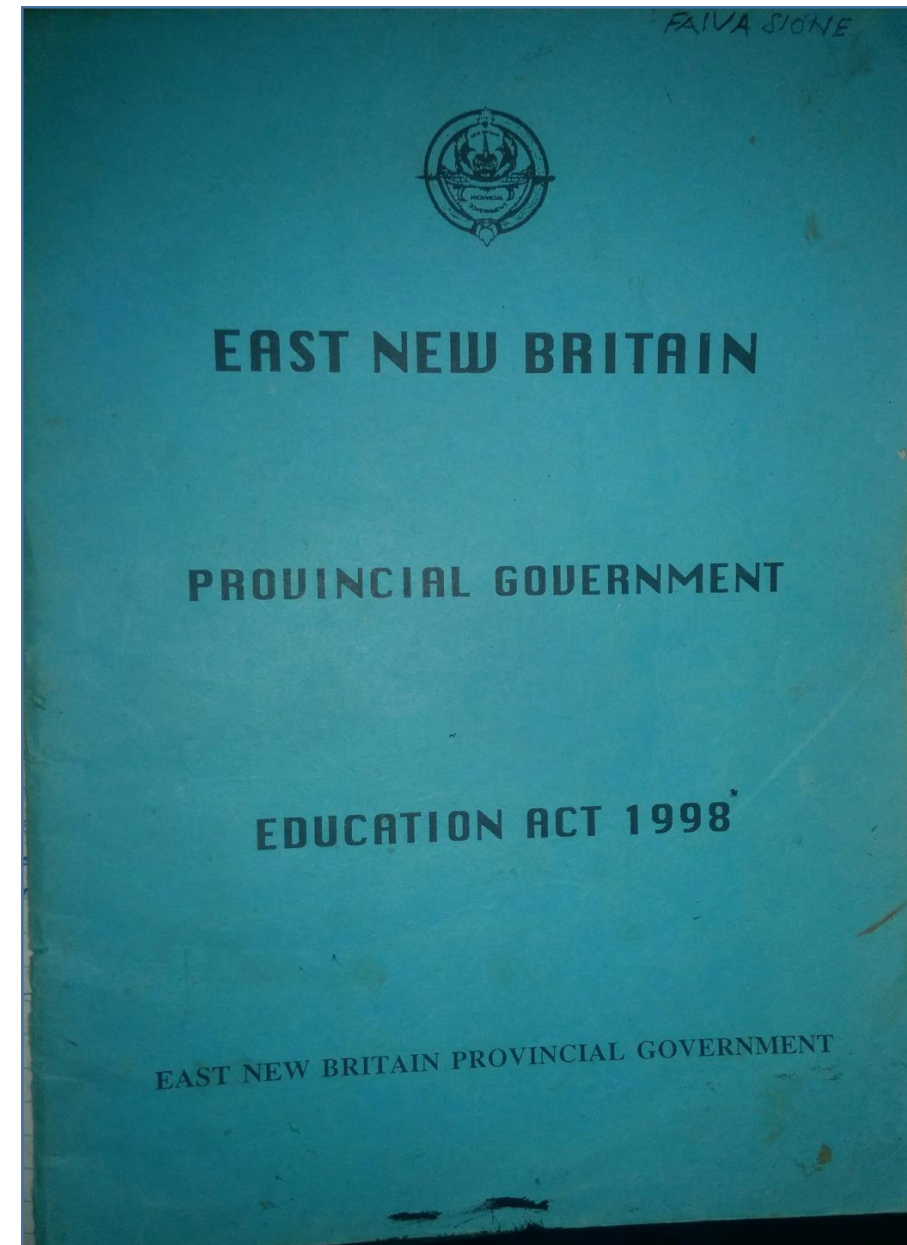
# School Communities: Diminishing volunteerism

- Schools rely heavily on the surrounding community to provide a range of services
- However, there is evidence that free education policies have helped reduce this engagement

*Before, the communities took ownership and took the responsibility in any activities that takes place in the school; but when the TFF funds were introduced, the community engagement and ownership started...dying* (District Official, Gulf)

*There is talk from the government that they will subsidize the project fee too. This is making some parents become very lazy...anything to do with finance they are starting to consider the government's responsibility.*

(District Official, ENB)



ENB's Education Act, 1998

# District Education Infrastructure Committees

- Great confusion and concern about the proposed DEICs
- Districts, particularly in Gulf, are already struggling to monitor and deliver services
- Concerns about management of DDAs, particularly where MPs are not held to account.

# Churches are losing control

*“Before it [government funding] was coming to the church and we monitored, and there was improvement. Now when [funds go] into the schools, the head teacher, the board, and the committee to control, infrastructure and everything else...we have no say...”*

(Senior Church administrator)

*[This school...] can be [classified as] a government school because there's no [financial] contribution from [the church]*

(Head Teacher, church school)



Dispute over NDoE Circular No. 6 of 2016,  
source: PNG Post-Courier, 3 May, 2016

# Conclusion

- We are (still) cautiously optimistic about the TFF policy
- Free education policies have put key education providers on a collision course
- Recent decisions have led to unintended consequences; addressing these will require:
  - allowing all schools to charge **project** fees
  - further delaying the roll out of District Education Implementation Committees (DEICs)
  - better monitoring communities
  - training for communities