



“WAI MANGA! WE WANT A PEACEFUL HELA!” — PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF PEACE AND JUSTICE IN HELA

Report



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This publication is the result of conversations conducted by a dedicated team of 15 researchers from Hela, including Peter Ale, Minister Gabriel Andalu, Rev. Alfred Angoise, Bernard Anthony, Rev. Francis Ibule, Emmanuel Komengi, Pastor Binowi Konea, Dorcas Mai, Jenny Samson, Rev. Milton Tainu, Rev. Magaya Talive, Steven Tipawi, Rev. Alusa Topel, Albert Wale, and Rev. Nelson Wiayaka. The publication would not have been possible without them.

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ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

Conciliation Resources
Local Level Government
Papua New Guinea

CR
LLG
PNG

Papua New Guinea Defence Force
Young Ambassadors for Peace

PNGDF
YAP

Compensation	In Hela, 'compensation' refers to the payments that must be made to relatives of members of a fighting group if a member loses their life in battle. The owner of the fight (see <i>wai tene</i>) is responsible for making the compensation payment to their allies. The value of the payment is calculated using a complex multiplication system. Compensation can be significantly lowered if the death of an ally is avenged. If compensation is not being paid, whole sections of the clan of the opposing <i>wai tene</i> can be held responsible and become victims of retributive violence.
Conflict resolution	Refers to initiatives that focus on resolving disputes. In Hela, this can involve facilitated negotiations for the payment of compensation, ceasefire or peace agreements. These processes focus on the cessation of violence and fall short on addressing the underlying causes of conflict.
Conflict transformation	Involves processes that focus on addressing the underlying causes and effects of conflict, including a transformation of relationships between conflict parties (e.g. reconciliation).
Conflict system	This report employs a systems thinking approach to conflict. Systems thinking is a way to see the interconnectedness of structures, behaviours and relationships in conflicts to help identify the underlying causes and uncover opportunities for change. Through a systems thinking lens, conflicts are understood as dynamic, adaptive and unpredictable systems made up of interconnected factors that reinforce each other.
Displaced people	People forcibly displaced by violence, who left their customary land and settled in other locations throughout Hela or in other provinces in PNG.
Fighter and former fighter	A male who starts, associates, engages or has previously engaged in violent conflict.
Displaced people	People forcibly displaced by violence, who left their customary land and settled in other locations throughout Hela or in other provinces in PNG.
Haus man	An exclusive decision-making space for men, which also allows for mentoring and initiating young men into culture and manhood.
Peacebuilding	An inclusive long-term process that seeks to involve everyone affected by conflict to address underlying causes and prevent future violence. Peacebuilding considers the reasons why people fight and the systemic issues that create the conditions for the conflict to turn violent. Peacebuilding focuses on transforming relationships and reforming conflict management practices, supporting groups to manage differences without resorting to violence.
Peacemaking	In this report peacemaking is used as an umbrella term for initiatives that aim to stop violence, resolve conflict or prevent violence.

Retributive justice	Involves a form of penalty placed on an offender, directly proportional to the harm they caused. The punishment can take material form (e.g. monetary compensation) or deprivation of certain rights (e.g. incarceration). The focus of retributive justice is on the past. Punishment is a response to a past injustice or wrongdoing. It acts to reinforce rules that have been broken.
Restorative justice	Focuses on the harms and needs of the victims of violence, their broader community and the offenders. Restorative justice seeks to transform broken relationships and prevent violence from reoccurring. The focus of restorative justice is on the future. It usually involves an inclusive and collaborative process between victims, offenders, community members and broader society, who work together to redress wrongs and renegotiate a shared future.
Rehabilitation	In this report refers to post-violence restoration of services and infrastructure, mental health and psycho-social support and resettlement assistance.
<i>Wai tene</i> (Huli)	The individuals who start an original fight. In doing so, they become known as the <i>wai tene</i> , which translates to 'war source' or 'owner of a fight'. Traditionally, each <i>wai tene</i> has the right to call on eight generations of supporters, four on the mother's and four on the father's side. Today, fight supporters include and extend beyond clan members to include friends and allies of the <i>wai tene</i> . The higher the individual's social status, the larger the fighting party they can call on. ' <i>Wai tene</i> ' is often used interchangeably with 'warlord'. The term 'warlord' assumes that the owner of the fight has a significant level of power, support and resources available to them.
<i>Wai manga</i>	A call for stopping the cycle of retributive violence. It translates as "I don't want tribal fight". Alternative terms used by participants were: <i>wai waha</i> [stop tribal fight] and <i>hendore hama</i> [let's stay peaceful].
<i>Wantok system</i>	A system of mutual social obligations of kinship that provide social cohesion and welfare.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The scale and intensity of interpersonal and intergroup violence in Hela Province, PNG is having devastating effects on communities. Displacement, physical injury and loss of life are prevalent in Hela. In addition to the visible effects of violence, people are living in fear and with trauma. Mistrust is widespread in the province, and many people feel isolated.

Responses to this violence (both national and international) tend to take a reactive law and order and/or development approach. To build on and support these responses, it is important to address the underlying drivers of violence. This understanding necessitates an awareness of how people and communities in Hela experience, engage with, and are shaped by peace, justice and conflict.

The “*Wai manga! We want a peaceful Hela!*” perspectives and experiences of peace and justice in Hela report provides a nuanced analysis of violent conflict in Hela. It hones in on individual perspectives and experiences of peace and justice to surface the components of the conflict system in Hela. The report analyses the perspectives on peace and justice of 160 Hela people with diverse identities and experiences (e.g. fighters, displaced people, women, youth and elders). Using a listening methodology,¹ this research unearths the meaning of peace and justice within Hela communities, their experiences of using available mechanisms for peace and justice, and their vision for change in Hela.

The report is organised around seven themes that emerged from the research as a helpful analytical framework for understanding conflict in Hela and people’s most pressing concerns and needs. These themes are strongly interconnected and represent both the underlying causes and the effects of conflict:

- 1. People’s perceptions of peace and justice:** How peace and justice shape interpersonal relationships and people’s engagement in conflict transformation processes. People’s understanding of peace and justice has a direct effect on violent conflict and peace and justice mechanisms.
- 2. People’s experiences of peace and justice mechanisms:** the factors determining people’s perceptions, engagement and level of trust in peace and justice mechanisms. It includes a critical exploration of the role of compensation in approaches to peace and justice, the landscape of tension points and opportunities that surround it.
- 3. Trauma, fear and isolation:** The state of mind that underpins and morphs interpersonal relations, conflict transformation processes and people’s ability to envision pathways for sustainable change.
- 4. Leadership and breakdown of social structures:** The infrastructure that both enables the emergence of violent conflict and also holds the potential for peace.
- 5. Unmet needs and lack of rehabilitation support:** Driving factors and symptoms of violent conflict, as well as manifestations of a leadership/governance infrastructure that is largely failing people.
- 6. Tense relationships between displaced host communities:** An overlooked micro system in the conflict that exploits vulnerabilities in inter- and intra-community relationships.
- 7. Proliferation of fights and engaging with fighters:** How violence manifests and the opportunities that exist to remove the perceived incentives presented by engaging in violence.

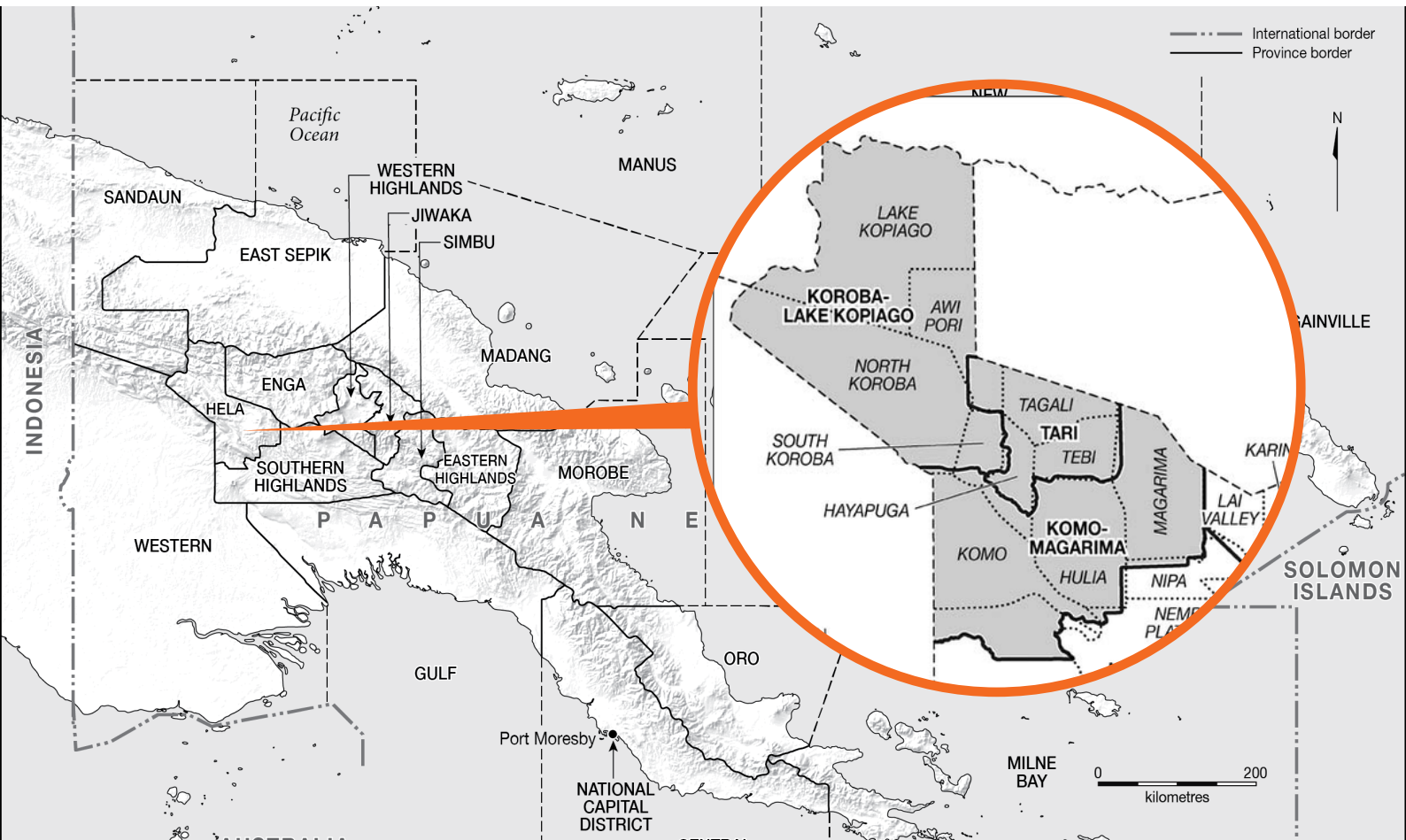
See the *Summary of themes and recommendations* section, which includes findings under each theme from page 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research also surfaced stories of people in Hela demonstrating conflict sensitive leadership, humanitarian spirit and compassion, and is illustrative of the momentum for peace that has emerged in Hela. The recommendations presented in this report aim to build on that momentum, ranging from considered short term actions (e.g. an urgent call for humanitarian and rehabilitation support) to longer term and sustained processes of transforming norms, relationships and attitudes. They invite concerted action from government, law and order, development and peacebuilding practitioners to collectively challenge and shift multiple parts of the conflict system in Hela.

Broadly, the recommendations focus on the following key areas:

- Transforming interpersonal and intergroup relationships
- Transforming norms around leadership, gender and conflict resolution
- Rethinking approaches to conflict and enhancing their complementarity
- Addressing basic needs and restoring people’s sense of safety and freedom



Provincial borders and province names in Papua New Guinea. Map by CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

INTRODUCTION

Hela Province is experiencing significant rates of interpersonal and intergroup violent conflict, which has increased in scale and intensity in recent decades. There are multiple and interconnected conflict dynamics underlying the violence that tend to reinforce one another in a self-perpetuating system of retributive violence. International and national support for law enforcement, development and peace-making initiatives (e.g. United Nations led programmes that commenced in the aftermath of the 2018 earthquake) have sought to address this violence. Many initiatives have succeeded in temporarily ceasing some of the violence. However, as these initiatives tend to be reactive and short-term, they typically have limited effect on the underlying drivers of the violence.

The “*Wai manga! We want a peaceful Hela!*” *perspectives and experiences of peace and justice in Hela* report complements existing analysis to provide a visceral description of people’s pursuit of peace and justice in Hela and the extent to which the mechanisms they have available support their pursuit. The report includes the perspectives of 160 (15 researchers and 145 participants) men, women, young people, elderly, displaced people, people with disabilities, fighters, former fighters and community leaders.² The report provides a heterogenous reflection of perspectives, experiences and aspirations that call for a re-thinking of current approaches. The report invites a reflection on the interactions between the granular nature of people’s daily lives (e.g. ability to move around freely and to eat) and the systemic factors that influence their sense of safety, freedom, justice and peace (e.g. political or justice systems).

In 2021–2022 Conciliation Resources conducted a study to understand peacebuilding needs, as well as existing capacities for peace within the Hela province ([see report](#)).³ This study was followed in 2023 by a pilot project implemented in partnership with the Young Ambassadors for Peace Centre in Hela, which focused on strengthening the capacities of community leaders to manage community level conflict and prevent violence. These projects have surfaced a number of questions in relation to how violent conflict in Hela is understood and addressed, some of which are investigated in this research report.

This “*Wai manga! We want a peaceful Hela!*” report responds to the following issues identified in the 2022 report:

- There is a need for enhanced understanding of the interactions between localised dynamics and systemic issues that are driving violence in order to promote effective and locally owned solutions.
- Community perspectives on what justice is and how it can be achieved (e.g. through compensation or retributive violence) can be at odds with introduced concepts of justice and human rights, limiting the effectiveness of existing peace and justice mechanisms.
- There is a gap in understanding of community perspectives and experiences of engaging with peace and justice mechanisms (e.g. policing, courts, peace and order mechanisms). This gap in analysis makes it difficult to identify what works and what needs to change.
- Current conflict resolution and justice mechanisms can struggle to get broad buy-in and personal ownership. This often translates into conflict issues being addressed in isolation from each other.

WHO IS THIS REPORT FOR?

“PEACE IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. YOU CAN HAVE PEACE IN YOUR COMMUNITY, BUT IF YOUR NEIGHBOUR HAS CONFLICT, WHICH WILL SPILL OVER TO YOURS, SO YOU SHOULD WANT TO FACILITATE PEACE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURS. CONFLICT IMPACTS NEIGHBOURS, SERVICES, GENERATIONS.”

Unidentified

A clear statement from the 145 contributors to this research project is that the responsibility for change lies with everyone who holds a stake in creating the conditions for sustainable peace in Hela. This includes individual community members and leaders, former and current fighters, civil society, government

(local level, district, provincial and national) and the international community. All these actors are challenged to work collaboratively to provide sustainable solutions for peace. The findings captured in this report can contribute to forming the basis for designing an inclusive peace process for Hela, plan tailored peacebuilding initiatives, initiate a new policy making process and adapt current programs.

This report aims to be a resource for peacebuilding and development practitioners, governance, security, law and justice policy makers and implementers. The analysis and recommendations included in this report aim to inform approaches by testing assumptions and highlighting the need for adaptation or development of more efficient strategies. It hopes to enhance analysis of peace and conflict issues and nuance understandings of drivers and exacerbators of violence, of what is needed to respond and what may work to drive sustainable change. Ultimately, this report's objective is to contribute to the improved effectiveness of peace and justice mechanisms in Hela.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The report hones in on individual perspectives and experiences, and attempts to capture and relay the authentic voices of these individuals and groups. To support the reader, the report is structured around a number of themes. The author has created a *'Summary of themes and recommendations'* section to help the reader to navigate the depth of information and analysis in the much larger *'Perspectives, analysis and recommendations'* section.



Airstrip in Tari © Laura Raicu/Conciliation Resources

SUMMARY OF THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Figure 1: A snapshot of the interconnectedness of conflict drivers

The spread and escalation of violence throughout Hela exists in a conflict system that sustains itself through strong reinforcing links between causes and effects.

1. PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

There is an interdependent relationship between people's perceptions and experiences of peace and justice and the proliferation of violent conflict in Hela. How people envision justice and peace is shaped by their experiences of conflict. Justice is typically seen in terms of retribution, not a formal justice system. These understandings and experiences of peace and justice then determine approaches to addressing disputes, managing interpersonal relationships and providing leadership.

The absence of longer-term peace and justice has led to the acceptance of short-term and reactive actions that provide temporary relief from violence as feasible solutions for what are more systemic issues (such as longer-term inter-group relations or norms around conflict resolution or leadership).

Key recommendations

- Implement peace, justice and human rights education across a broad section of the population focusing on supporting people to reimagine their society in the absence of violence, reconceptualise their rights and responsibilities and develop practical conflict management skills.
- Design and implement inclusive and participatory dialogue spaces that facilitate interpersonal connections and trust building between community members.

2. PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF PEACE AND JUSTICE MECHANISMS

A key message that emerged from the conversations was that building peace needs to go beyond treating the conflicts in Hela as a law-and-order problem. Participants acknowledged that law enforcement approaches alone are not sufficient for providing lasting solutions to the scale of violence experienced. Limiting the lens to law and order to describe conflict in Hela results in inadequate responses that may treat short term symptoms but do not address the interconnectedness of all the underlying factors that contribute to violence.

Key recommendations

- Shift focus of peace making initiatives from conflict resolution to conflict transformation and violence prevention. Aim for a transformative approach to compensation practices as the most effective strategy for sustainable peace. This approach should provide alternative avenues for addressing grievances and a focus on renegotiating interpersonal relationships.
- Reconsider the role of government as a legitimate mediator and substitute or complement their role with legitimate civil society representatives who are trusted and perceived as impartial by communities.
- Complement rule of law approaches with post-violence rehabilitation support that focuses on addressing the psycho-social effects of conflict, restoration of services and resettlement of displaced communities.

COMPENSATION

The issue of compensation emerged as a key sub-theme that needs closer attention and analysis in order to understand the challenges and opportunities it presents for transforming conflict resolution practices in Hela (see pages 25–29). Compensation as a mechanism for achieving justice in Hela, is a complex and divisive issue that is little understood by outsiders. It involves a complex accounting system of compensation payments made by the person who starts a fight (known as '*wai tene*') to their own supporters, often representing a web of kinship (that can extend to eight generations of relatives) and other members of a person's social network. The obligations that are associated with the compensation system, as an expression of justice, place significant burdens on the financial resources and relationships within a community. The principles of reciprocity and collective responsibility that underpin the compensation system draw whole communities into any conflict, providing the conditions for small disputes to escalate into widespread violent conflict. Views on the role of compensation in solving, causing or exacerbating conflict in Hela exist on a broad spectrum,⁴ as do the recommendations related to how to use or not use compensation practices to address conflict and achieve peace and justice.

3. TRAUMA, FEAR AND ISOLATION

Trauma, fear and isolation influence interpersonal (e.g. lack of trust) and intergroup (e.g. between displaced and host communities) relationships, exacerbate frustrations over unmet needs, and undermine the legitimacy of leaders and their authority. Trauma, fear and isolation underpin the other dynamics in the conflict system, both as a symptom and as a cause of conflict, reinforcing cycles of violence. Communities reported experiencing trauma symptoms and the need for contextually relevant mental health and psycho-social support. This is seen both as a need to address the devastating effects of violent conflict and as a prerequisite for the effective engagement of communities in sustainable peacebuilding processes, to transform relationships and prevent further escalation of violence. Witnessing, being threatened by, or experiencing violence has left many people in a constant state of fear, has limited their freedom of movement and positive engagement with other community members. This isolation from others (both physical and psychological in terms of mistrust) hinders people's engagement in conflict resolution processes and impairs their ability to identify constructive solutions for peace.

Key recommendations

- Provide culturally appropriate and contextualised mental health and psycho-social support with a focus on addressing individual and collective trauma related to intergroup and gender-based violence.
- Establish rehabilitation programmes that integrate mental health and psycho-social support, family reunification, resources for reconstruction of infrastructure (e.g. housing or schools), re-establishment of gardens and livelihoods training.
- Facilitate shared safe zones that support the incremental reintegration of conflicting parties into a shared community life. Reintegration should be assisted by peacebuilding experts to ensure that it is done in a safe and conflict sensitive way and supports re-establishment of trust between community members.

4. LEADERSHIP AND BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Broadly understood as a source of guidance, decision making, service provision and authority, the concept of leadership was closely associated with the causes and the solutions to conflict in Hela. Ineffective or corrupt leadership was referenced as a cause of violent conflict, as was the lack of legitimacy of elders in the community, along with the limitations of government

to provide services and exert authority (e.g. capacity to effectively enforce the law). There is also a lack of trust in government leadership within communities. Social norms that sustained interpersonal relationships, cultural observations and spiritual life have been eroded with the introduction of new knowledge systems (e.g. through colonialism, introduction of state-based governance, capitalism and social media). Such social norms have been morphed by more transactional principles that monetise human life (e.g. the compensation system), promote self-interest and sustain a client-patron relationship between individuals and who they perceive as leaders.

Key recommendations

- Facilitate the emergence of inclusive leadership and decision-making processes in communities that promote community ownership and the participation of people with diverse identities in analysing issues, providing solutions and implementing actions.
- Design and implement a gender and conflict sensitive leadership skills training programme for community and local level government leaders, enhancing their ability to analyse conflicts, identify trends and implement early responses that prevent violence.
- Implement a human rights, peace and gender education programme for young people with a focus on challenging forms of masculinities that contribute to the proliferation of violence.
- Enhance public trust in government and strengthen provincial and local level government accountability systems, including through increased opportunities for public scrutiny and government-community engagement.

5. UNMET NEEDS AND LACK OF REHABILITATION SUPPORT

Closely linked to leadership, the lack of or limited access to basic services was noted as one of the causes, exacerbators and effects of conflict in Hela. Violence is seen as an expression of people's sense of injustice and of not having alternatives for meeting their basic needs. The specific needs of those displaced by conflict (e.g. humanitarian assistance or resettlement support) are largely unaddressed, exacerbating vulnerabilities and the potential for tensions to arise.

Key recommendations

- Increase access to livelihoods through skills training and livelihoods programmes.
- Deliver urgent humanitarian support for displaced

communities including food, water and building materials.

- Make the restoration of basic services a priority in conflict affected communities once the security situation is under control.

6. TENSE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DISPLACED AND HOST COMMUNITIES

Conflict related displacement is widespread in Hela, and similar to other themes, it is both an effect and exacerbator of violence. Displacement is putting significant pressures on the material resources (e.g. food and housing) and also the fragile social structures and interpersonal relationship in host communities. These pressures are creating tensions between host and displaced communities, giving rise to new sources of potential conflict. Displaced people are often blamed for causing social issues or for exacerbating conflict where tensions already exist. The perceived ineffectiveness of peace and justice mechanisms makes the safe and voluntary return of displaced people to their homelands difficult, leaving both the displaced and host communities in limbo.

Key recommendations

- Facilitate inter-community dialogue processes between host and displaced communities to identify needs, build trust and develop strategies for addressing points of contention and preventing violence.
- Develop and implement policies for managing conflict related displacement, including a framework for needs assessment and provision of assistance for both host and displaced communities.

- Prioritise the commencement of peacebuilding processes in conflict affected locations to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of displaced people when the situation allows. Peacebuilding processes should be accompanied by humanitarian assistance, restoration of services and the provision of psycho-social support.

7. PROLIFERATION OF FIGHTS AND ENGAGING WITH FIGHTERS

Perspectives on peace and justice, available peace and justice mechanisms, the *wantok* system and patron-client framework that guides relations in Hela all converge into providing support systems for fighters and incentives for fights. Unmet needs, gendered identities and leadership models manifest in forms of masculinities that glorify violence and gun ownership and provide incentives for becoming a fighter.

Key recommendations

- Implement a contextually relevant violence prevention programme that enhances young people's awareness of the realities of conflict and engages them in a critical analysis of masculinities, violence and leadership.
- Implement a tailored reintegration and rehabilitation support programme for former fighters, focusing on providing psycho-social support, peace education and livelihoods training opportunities.
- Engage former fighters in peacebuilding and restorative justice processes that facilitate reconciliation, reframing of their identity and restoration of relationships with other community members.



Entrance to Tari Airport © Laura Raicu/Conciliation Resources

RESEARCH APPROACH

METHODOLOGY

The findings and recommendations presented in this report are the result of a listening project implemented by Conciliation Resources and the Young Ambassadors for Peace Centre (under the United Church PNG Development Unit) with the support of 15 researchers, known as 'listeners'.

The listening methodology used in this project involves a peacebuilding research approach that surfaces and analyses the direct experiences of individuals. It supports the exploration of ideas and insights from people living in, and affected by, a particular situation, and is used to identify key themes, trends and common issues from a cross-section of people. The methodology was first developed by CDA Collaborative Projects,⁵ and adapted by various organisations, including the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia.⁶ The methodology has been used in many contexts both as a research, monitoring and evaluation tool, as well as a valuable peacebuilding tool, supporting access to less-heard voices in situations of violent conflict, post-conflict and peace processes, with a focus on understanding narratives of those most affected by the situation.

The framing of the methodology is biased towards building peace (including in this project) and is generally future oriented, looking for practical, grounded solutions from people who are directly affected by conflict. When used in peacebuilding, the methodology creates opportunities to elevate those voices that are less often heard. It supports the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives in the design and implementation of peace and justice initiatives, creates spaces for dialogue and supports the transformation of relationships between actors. See Annex 1 for an overview of the methodology.

The listening methodology was chosen for exploring peace and justice in Hela due to its suitability to:

- facilitate a platform to share opinions on peace and justice challenges and opportunities in Hela and to identify common and alternative narratives related to community experiences
- facilitate the inclusion of less heard perspectives of marginalised groups in Hela (e.g. women, youth, displaced people or people living with disability) in the collective narrative of people experiencing conflict
- deepen understanding of community perspectives on conflict, peace and justice and test assumptions that underpin current approaches
- broaden peacebuilding actors' understanding of the effectiveness of current approaches and ensure peace and justice strategies are informed by people's direct experiences and are responsive to their needs
- identify context relevant solutions for the improved effectiveness of peace and justice mechanisms.

LISTENERS AND LISTENING

Fifteen trained listeners (2 females and 13 males) had flexible and unscripted conversations with 145 people in approximately 60 locations across Hela. Listeners were identified in consultation with Young Ambassadors for Peace staff, through their various networks, mediation work and through other Hela community members with known respect and leadership roles in their communities. The 15 listeners represented the four districts of Hela — Koroba-Kopiago, Tari-Pori, Magarima and Komo-Hulia — and included church leaders, peacebuilders (self-identified), social workers and teachers. The listeners included individuals from Hela who are familiar with the context (geography, language), were trusted and were able to move around freely. The listeners were an integral component to enabling a relaxed and trusted conversational space.

The listeners heard diverse and varied viewpoints from a cross-section of people with direct experience of conflict and peace and justice mechanisms. The listening conversations created an environment where participants felt comfortable to share concerns and messages that are important to them in an honest way, without self-censorship and outside of pre-defined parameters. The conversations had limited controls (asked targeted groups of people about targeted topics)⁷ and trusted the listeners as researchers. The conversations focused on surfacing the feelings, opinions and experiences of people in Hela as legitimate sources of information for the analysis underpinning this report.

Conciliation Resources and Young Ambassadors for Peace provided training for the listeners and research oversight and facilitated the initial processing of information gathered with the listeners. Conciliation Resources and Young Ambassadors for Peace

conducted further synthesis and analysis of the data and drafted the final report.

Value of the listening methodology and applicability to Hela

“THE 12 PEOPLE REALLY LIKED TO TALK TO US, THEY WANTED TO SHARE WHAT THEY KNOW ABOUT TRIBAL FIGHTING. I GAINED CONFIDENCE TALKING TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE, WARRIORS, WARLORDS.”

Female Listener, Koroba

“IN OUR SOCIETY, WHEN SOMEONE TALKS, WE TALK AT THE SAME TIME. WE DON'T LISTEN. THAT'S A BIG PROBLEM. WE NEED HUMILITY, FORGIVENESS, LOVE AND PEACE IN OUR SOCIETY IN HELA. WHEN THIS IS MISSING, THEN PROBLEM COMES.”

Male listener, Hulia

The project directly impacted the listeners on a personal, professional and community leadership level. The experience of participating in the project surfaced reflections related to personal communication and leadership skills, their own approach and engagement in peacebuilding and their own understanding of peace and conflict issues. The project was an opportunity for participants to reflect on the leadership and communication culture in Hela and how it impacts on the Hela conflict system and peacebuilding approaches. Leadership in Hela is often linked to oratory skills and being able to convey information to audiences in a convincing manner. Participants suggested that this often has a negative effect on peacebuilding as mediators do not feel equipped enough to use active listening skills and analysis to guide parties away from entrenched positions, facilitate dialogue and work together towards sustainable solutions. In some instances, the outcome of these processes can lead to misunderstandings, exacerbate feelings of injustice and trench divisions. Participants noted that the listening methodology and the communication skills it embodies could be applied to facilitate inclusive dialogue processes and support mediation by enabling the parties to develop shared understandings of each other's needs, shift perceptions of each other, transform their relationship and move closer towards lasting agreements. Most of the participants suggested that they will be using the principles and approaches of the listening methodology in their peacebuilding work, beyond the life of the project.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND GUIDANCE ON READING THE REPORT

Data limitations

The perspective included in this report and the associated quotes were subject to several translations (from Huli into Tok Pisin and then into English). They were also processed through several layers of filters and biases including those of the listeners, project team and report reviewers. Some initial wording choices or intentions behind a message may have been altered in this process.

The analysis lens applied to the data is informed by a peacebuilding perspective and recommendations are biased towards peacebuilding as an approach for sustainable peace. However, the report aims to stay as close to people's perspectives as possible and provide alternative narratives. The report acknowledges that culture (as a system of beliefs, structures and practices) is not static and is constantly transformed and influenced by the environment within which it exists. The report is refraining from qualifying different knowledge systems as bad or good, and instead it provides a reflection of people's observations on how they are experiencing those changes in the system.

As most communities in Hela are experiencing active violent conflict or are recovering from recent violence, the environment in which the conversations took place was not always conducive to having open conversations as the methodology intends to facilitate. People feel unsafe in Hela and there is widespread mistrust. The perspectives people chose to share were informed by their current circumstances (e.g. displacement or association with a conflict), their identity, the identity of the listener and their relationship with those individuals.

Identity of listeners and challenges related to the methodology

The listeners engaged in this project had limited prior peacebuilding training and they were themselves part of the same conflict system, experiencing the same issues and levels of distrust and trauma. Their own understanding of concepts, principles and framing of issues was informed by their own experience. This limited their ability to mitigate personal bias and guide the conversations away from generic answers and solutions.

Most of the listeners were faith leaders in their communities. Due to their role, their engagement with community members usually involves one-way communication, whereby leaders convey information to community members. The methodology required a reversal of this role. Listeners were asked not

to provide opinions or judgement on what is being conveyed. It is unclear to what extent the listeners refrained from inserting their own opinions, judgment and comments and what impact this may have had on the data.

Sample group

Listeners were given a set of parameters for defining their sample group (gender, identity, locations, experiences). However, their ability to engage with all the groups they identified was limited by their own gendered identity, status or role in those communities and perceptions of them. Considerations for their personal safety were also a determining factor and limited access to certain locations or communities.

Locations

Initial plans to cover all the LLGs in Hela were not successful (e.g. Awi-Pori area was not covered in the research). Changes in listeners' personal circumstances and access issues were the main reasons for the reduced coverage. Locations are assigned to quotes based on where the research took place. As a large proportion of the population in Hela is displaced, the situation people are describing may not be necessarily in relation to the location where they were at the time of the conversation — e.g. the conversations located in Tari included people who have been displaced from other districts or LLGs in Hela.

Gendered perspectives

Representation of gender diversity amongst listeners and participants was limited. Two out the fifteen listeners and 28% of the participants identified as women. This is a direct reflection of gendered power dynamics prevalent in Hela and the impact these have on: male-female interactions (e.g. norms that constrain the ability of male listeners to speak with female participants); the opportunities that women have to speak about issues and share their views, or to take time away from their gendered roles and participate in the project as a listeners; and the level of freedom they have to move around safely, without the risks of experiencing gender based violence.

The women who participated in the project were more likely than men to talk about the psychological effects of the conflict and the trauma they are experiencing. Many of the displaced people the listeners talked to were also women. Women participants shared perspectives and experiences related to their gendered identity. These experiences include reports of sexual violence, difficulties in fulfilling their caring responsibilities due to displacement and destruction of gardens. They also expressed concerns for the future of their children (e.g. related to trauma and lack of access to education) and limited agency in preventing the men from engaging in violence.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1: Number of conversations per district

District	LLGs covered	No.	% of total
Tari-Pori	Hayapuga	44	30%
	Tagali		
	Tari		
	Tebi		
Koroba-Kopiago	North Koroba	22	15%
	South Koroba		
Hulia-Komo	Hulia	40	28%
	Komo		
	Benaria		
Magarima	Upper Wage	39	27%
	Lower Wage		
	Magarima Central		
Total		145	100%

Table 2: Number of conversations per district

Gender	No.	% of total
Male	105	72%
Female	40	28%
Total	145	100%

Table 3: Number of conversations with specific identity groups (self-identified or based on listeners' knowledge of them)

Identity	No. of conversations	% of total
Fighters/former fighters	9	6.2%
Displaced people	35	24.14%
Youth	21	14.5%
Elderly	22	15.17%
People with disability	11	7.6%
Community leaders (e.g. chiefs, LLG reps, youth or women leaders)	21	14.48%

PERSPECTIVES, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PEACE AND JUSTICE — UNDERSTANDINGS

The project focused on hearing the perspectives of people of Hela on how concepts of peace⁸ and justice⁹ and their experiences of processes for achieving peace and redressing injustice. Listeners asked people in communities about what comes to their mind when they hear of peace and justice as concepts and how they see these manifesting in Hela.

The interdependent relationship between people's perceptions of peace and justice and the proliferation of violent conflict in Hela was apparent throughout conversations. How people conceptualise justice and peace is shaped by, and determines, approaches to addressing disputes, managing interpersonal relationships and providing leadership. The absence of peace and justice has shaped people's perceptions and expectations of a peace process or a justice mechanism (whether customary or state-based), leading to the acceptance of short-term and reactive actions that provide temporary relief from violence as feasible solutions for systemic issues. Approaches are focused on addressing the symptoms of conflict, with limited consideration to the long-term effects of such approaches or the underlying causes of conflict.

For many people in Hela a peaceful and just society was something they haven't experienced in a long time. People noted that peace and justice were no longer present in Hela. In the past, social structures were able to provide a sense of peace or justice, but those systems are no longer functioning as they were meant to. People also mentioned that they were not able to explain what justice is, because they do not feel like they have experienced it.

“PEACE AND JUSTICE NO LONGER CORRESPOND TO WHAT THEY USED TO BE IN THE PROVINCE. SOCIAL STRUCTURES ARE NOT CONDUCTIVE TO PEACE AND JUSTICE ANYMORE.”

Elderly male, Komo

“THERE IS NO PEACE IN HELA. WE LIVE IN CHAOS.”

Female, Koroba

Perspectives on peace

People envisaged peace as a state of normalcy and order where people are working together for the benefit of the whole community. They described peace as the absence of violence, absence of fear and freedom of movement. Some of the perspectives described a situation that usually exists in the presence of security forces, in the aftermath of a peace agreement,¹⁰ or after compensation is paid. These perspectives had a short-term outlook that mainly considered the relief that comes from being able to move around freely, engage in activities such as gardening and marketing and, for those displaced by conflict, being able to return to their homelands.

“NOW THAT THE DEFENCE AND POLICE HERE, WE HAVE PEACE. CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL, WORKERS ARE BACK AT THE HEALTH CENTRE, MOTHERS ARE IN THE MARKET. BUT WE STILL CANNOT GO TO THE BUSH TO GARDEN BECAUSE WE ARE SCARED.”

Male community leaders, Koroba

“THERE IS NO PEACE IN HELA AT THE MOMENT. AT LEAST IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS IN KOROBA WE DIDN'T HAVE PEACE. DEFENCE AND POLICE CAME AND NOW THERE IS ONLY A LITTLE BIT OF PEACE. WHEN THE DEFENCE IS HERE AT LEAST WE SLEEP WELL AND WE CAN EAT.”

Male community leaders, Koroba

While some referenced peace in relation to the temporary cessation of violence, there were people who provided a longer-term vision for peace. This vision was linked to a restoration of social structures, transformation of attitudes and behaviours, trauma healing and rehabilitation. Achieving this vision of peace requires a renegotiation of social norms and interpersonal relations, returning to a sense of shared responsibility for the wellbeing of the community. It was also linked to changed practices around conflict resolution (e.g. compensation), a shift in leadership values and practices (e.g. leadership that is underpinned by values such as fairness and service to others) and spiritual development.

“PEACE MEANS BEING FREE FROM TROUBLE AND THE SOCIETY MINDING ITS OWN BUSINESS. PEOPLE LIVE ON THEIR OWN. THEY REACH SOLUTIONS AND AGREEMENTS AND THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION.”

Male, Koroba

“PEACE MEANS NO FIGHTING AND BEING PART OF THE COMMUNITY, LOVING EACH OTHER, BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN UNITY AND HAVING A CLEAR MINDSET. PEACE IS ABOUT LISTENING TO EACH OTHER AND LIKING EACH OTHER. IT’S ABOUT RESPECT, CHURCH AND HUMBLeness. WE DO NOT HAVE PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY. WE LIVE IN FEAR AND ANGER. WE ARE HUNGRY AND WE HAVE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS.”

Displaced female, Koroba

Peace was also described as a state whereby basic needs are met, people are able to access services and engage in community life (e.g. market or church). The absence of services and people’s limited avenues to meet their most basic needs have been associated with the lack of peace in Hela.

“I WOULD LIKE A PEACEFUL HELA. I WOULD LIKE US TO HAVE A MARKET WHERE WE CAN SELL OUR GOODS WITHOUT DISTURBANCE. I WOULD LIKE SCHOOL CHILDREN TO HAVE PATHWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO GET EMPLOYMENT. TRIBAL FIGHT IS NOT GOOD; IT MAKES US LIVE IN FEAR, DISTURBS MARKET ACTIVITIES AND MAKES US HUNGRY. WE DON’T HAVE ENOUGH REHABILITATION CENTRES AND WE NEED MORE PEACE EDUCATION.”

Female, Koroba

“PEACE IS ABOUT WELLBEING AND FORGIVENESS. IT MEANS NO HOLDUPS AND ROADBLOCKS ALONG THE ROAD IF YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO YOUR VILLAGE. IT’S ABOUT GETTING RID OF GUNS AND STOP FIGHTING. GOING TO CHURCH, SELL PRODUCE AT THE MARKET AND HAVE SERVICES. WE DON’T HAVE JUSTICE. THERE IS JUST GREEDY BEHAVIOUR. PEOPLE DON’T WORK TOGETHER.”

Young male fighter, Koroba

People’s experience with leadership in government structures was also referenced in relation to the absence of peace. Some of the feedback noted that government structures are not only failing to provide access to services, but also failing to provide a sense of being cared for and protected, and as a source of ethical leadership.

“THE POLICE IS HERE, THE ARMY IS HERE, WE HAVE A MEMBER, WE HAVE A COUNCIL AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF PNG IS FROM HELA. BUT WE DO NOT HAVE PEACE IN COMMUNITIES. NO ONE IS THINKING ABOUT US, THE MOTHERS AND THE CHILDREN. PEACE MEANS LIVING A GOOD LIFE AND HAVING A GOOD ATTITUDE. IT’S ABOUT MAKING THE COUNTRY STRONG AND DEVELOPING IT. IT WILL MEAN THAT WE HAVE GOOD SCHOOLS AND SERVICES. THAT PEOPLE LIVE HAPPILY WITHOUT FEAR.”

Displaced female, Koroba

Perspectives on justice

Justice was mainly referenced in relation to material compensation for wrongdoings, mostly focused on personalised retributive justice and less so on restorative elements, such as transformation of interpersonal relationships and reconciliation. These perceptions of justice have a direct impact on how peace is envisaged and the avenues that people see as legitimate for achieving peace. When the focus of justice is on material compensation, at the expense of investing in restoring relationships and creating systemic change, the temporary and quantifiable nature of peace becomes a legitimate outlook. Those whose expectations are limited to achieving retributive justice — expressed either as compensation or retaliation — can justify ongoing or reoccurring conflicts as a symptom of what is perceived as a failure to fulfill compensation obligations. Maintaining the conflict alive even after signing a peace agreement is, from this point of view, a legitimate way to convey that justice is yet to be achieved.

“IF THERE IS NO COMPENSATION IT SHOWS THAT THE DEMANDS ARE NOT MET. WE NEED TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE RELATIVES OF THE DEAD. IF THE DEMANDS ARE MET FULLY, THAT IS THE FINAL SOLUTION. FIGHTS ERUPT AGAIN BECAUSE DEMANDS ARE NOT MET PROPERLY. SO, WE NEED TO ANALYSE — WHO DEMANDS, WHAT IS THE LEGITIMACY.”

Displaced female, Koroba

Some people reported not being able to clearly describe what justice was and whether it was practiced in their communities. They also expressed uncertainty over what they could expect from others in terms of just behaviour. A lack of justice was linked to widespread mistrust in others and in authority (whether state-based or customary), broken interpersonal relationships, exclusion, loss of moral compass and ineffective leadership and community structures. Some people mentioned that what they witnessed was one sided decision-making, bribery and favouritism often given to those who were educated, people in power or those who were politically appointed. Lack of accountability for wrongdoings and a sense of dispossession and disadvantage are compounding the negative perspectives on justice. Lack of clear and shared norms around what justice is in context undermines legitimacy of leadership in communities and government.

“JUSTICE IS WHEN YOU ARE PART OF DECISIONS, WHEN THERE IS A FAIR IDEA, UNITY, LOVE AND CARE. THERE IS NO JUSTICE IN THE COMMUNITY. PEOPLE ARE SELFISH, SELF-MINDED AND FULL OF JEALOUSY. WHEN SOMEONE HAS SOMETHING, NO ONE SUPPORTS THEM AND THEY ARE JEALOUS.”

Female, Koroba

“JUSTICE WILL BE WHEN THE GOVERNMENT TAKES CARE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND ENFORCES THE LAW. HELA IS A CHRISTIAN PROVINCE BUT WE STILL HAVE TROUBLES. THIS IS A NEW PROVINCE AND WE SHOULD BE MANAGING THINGS WELL. THERE IS NO JUSTICE IN HELA. THERE IS CHEATING AND RAPE AND NO ACTION IS TAKEN TO BRING JUSTICE. THERE IS FIGHTING OVER MONEY GIVEN BY THE MEMBER. THERE IS NO CARE CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OR UPGRADES OF THE EXISTING ONE.”

Female, Koroba

“JUSTICE TAKES COMMITMENT. PEACE AND GOOD ORDER COMMITTEES MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING JUSTICE. BUT THERE IS NO JUSTICE IN HELA. JUSTICE WILL BE WHEN PEOPLE TALK HONESTLY AND ACT HONESTLY.”

Displaced male, Koroba

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement peace, justice and human rights education across a broad section of the population focusing on supporting people to reimagine their society in the absence of violence, reconceptualise their rights and responsibilities and develop practical conflict management skills.
- Design and implement inclusive and participatory dialogue spaces that facilitate interpersonal connections and trust building between community members.
- Increase opportunities for facilitated dialogue between communities and government structures with a focus on disseminating information and facilitating community input into service delivery.

“TO CHANGE OUR COMMUNITY IS TO CHANGE OURSELVES, OUR FAMILY, TRIBE, COMMUNITY DISTRICT AND PROVINCE, GOING TO CHURCH IS NOT ENOUGH. WE MUST GIVE OUR HEART TO GOD NOT THE HEAD. OUR OWN HEART IS CAUSING THE PROBLEMS. PEACE EDUCATION IS WHAT’S NEEDED, EVERYTHING ELSE WILL TRANSFORM ON ITS OWN AFTER THAT.”

Male, Koroba



Youth Ambassadors for Peace sign © Laura Raicu/Conciliation Resources

PEACE AND JUSTICE — MECHANISMS

People shared experiences of using the customary and state-based justice or peace-making mechanisms available to them. With few exceptions, overall, the feedback reflected dissatisfaction with the results produced by these mechanisms in relation to their ability to prevent violence or redress grievances.

State-based law and justice services

People shared accounts of using state-based law and justice mechanisms to resolve disputes as an alternative to retaliation or customary compensation. There were examples of people having a satisfactory outcome as a result of using state-based mechanisms. These accounts, albeit limited, signal a level of trust or hope in pursuing justice through the legal system.

“MY DAUGHTER WAS PARALYSED BY A MAN AND NEVER COMPENSATED AND I LEFT THE MATTER IN THE HANDS OF THE LAW. I HAVE BEEN CHOPPED BY MY IN-LAW AND I PUT HIM IN THE POLICE CUSTODY AND WILL FACE THE LAW.”

Unidentified, Tari

“IF THERE WAS A PROPER POLICE STATION AT KOMO STATION, THERE WOULDN'T BE FIGHTING. NO GOOD LAW AND ORDER IS IN THE KOMO LLG SO FIGHTING KEEPS ON GOING ON.”

Young male, Komo

“I DIDN'T TELL MY TRIBESMEN ABOUT MY HUSBAND'S AFFAIR. INSTEAD, I BROUGHT THOSE PEOPLE TO THE TARI COURTHOUSE TO GET A DIVORCE PAPER. I FELT VERY ANGRY, BUT I KEPT CALM. AS A WOMAN LEADER I MUST BE THE ROLE MODEL TO MY FELLOW WOMEN IN MY COMMUNITY, DISTRICT, PROVINCE, AND THE COUNTRY. IF YOU ARE A TRUE LEADER, YOU MUST HAVE AN OPEN MIND, SELF-RESPECT, SELF-CONTROL AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS. YOU NEED TO BE CARING, HONEST AND HUMBLE.”

Female, Komo

Many of the shared experiences illustrated unsatisfactory results. The following stories describe a system that is perceived as being corrupt, with officials seen as being treated as personal service providers who fail to fulfil their duties or follow due process. Additional examples of the perceived ineffectiveness of state-based law and justice mechanisms include the abuse of power and office, and a lack of expertise when fulfilling law enforcement roles.

STORIES

My husband took a new wife and left us on our own. For years he didn't come home. I was sad but didn't seek legal justice but put all my efforts in sustaining my living. Some years later my husband came home for first time since he left. He took the first born with him and argued with my family for returning the bride price. Following day, he hired police and defence force to claim for the returning of the bride price and took me to jail. I stayed in jail for two days and when I attended the court, they didn't consider my welfare because the arresting officer wrote the one-sided statement from the husband alone, which wasn't accurate. They said that I had been living as a prostitute for all my life alone with the kids. Therefore, court made the decision that the family should return his bride price. He threatened my relatives and harassed them for the bride price wherever he met them.

Female, Komo

I have seen police officer failing in their duties. I have come across a lot of cases concerning violence against women and child abuse. I make a warrant of arrest and legally hand it to the police officer but they never attempt to take it seriously and exercise their professional duties. Because of this, many people in Komo, particularly those illiterate, live in fear of experiencing violence and abuse. Police officers fail to arrest the wanted people and to make charges accordingly. Their cooperation with the village magistrates is very poor. The work of the village court has become hopeless and problems are unsolved.

Male, Komo

STORY

I was a grade 10 student of Komo Junior High School. It was on a Saturday I caught a PMV bus that was heading to Hides four. On our way towards, many passengers were dropped along the way. At the place called Hipagu, one passenger from there asked the driver if they could go and pick up some cargoes at Irawi up on hire condition. The driver got consent from the passengers and we took off. As we arrived at Irawi, he got his cargo which was wrapped in stockfeed bag and they drove back toward Hides, around 4pm. At the point of Tagali bridge, two police vehicles drove forward and parked across the bridge and allowing everyone to get off the bus. The police officers went in the bus and they found that there was a gun wrapped in the stockfeed bag. All the male passengers were pushed in the police vehicle and were taken to the Tari police station and were locked up in jail overnight. The next day, without hearing their case, we were all sent to the prison block where major offenders were kept. I stayed in that prison for five months and missed my grade 10 examination. After all I was found at no fault and got released. I am desperately worried about my education because I missed my national examination.

Young male, Komo

Investigating and prosecuting intergroup violence is difficult and almost never occurs. This is partly because perpetrators receive support from people in positions of authority or their own community, or because it is easy for perpetrators to hide within the province or flee to other provinces. This suggests that the justice system is inadequate in its attempt to respond to the complexity of conflict in Hela. The web of relationships underpinning the conflict system and the multitude of actors, pressures and interests involved surpass the limitations of the state-based justice mechanisms (i.e. law enforcement and court system).

“22 PEOPLE KILLED IN ONE SINGLE NIGHT IN 2020 IN KARIDA. INVESTIGATIONS WERE DONE AND FEW MEN WERE IDENTIFIED BUT THEY ARE STILL WALKING AROUND FREELY. MURDERERS MUST SURRENDER THEMSELVES TO THE LAW OR THEY MUST COMPENSATE THE DEATHS.”

Male, Tari

“DECISIONS ARE ONE-SIDED. LEADERS ARE BACKING THE BIGMAN AND DECISIONS FAVOUR THE BIG SHOTS. LEADERS GET ENOUGH FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY GET NOTHING. THERE IS A LOT OF GREEDINESS. THERE IS NO JUSTICE.”

Young male fighter, Koroba

Peace making

Peace making mechanisms are reactive in nature and offer short-term solutions such as temporary containment or cessation of violence, restored freedom of movement on main roads and at times restoration of basic services (e.g. reopening of schools or market activities). In most instances this relief from violence is facilitated by the presence of security forces such as the defence force, mobile police units or local police.

“WE DON'T HAVE PEACE IN HELA AS WE LIVE IN FEAR. WHEN THE DEFENCE IS HERE, WE ARE NOT FEARFUL. BUT WHEN WE GO TO FIND FOOD IN THE BUSH, WE ARE SCARED OF THE MEN THAT ARE THERE.”

Displaced female, Koroba

“SINCE THE POLICE AND ARMY CAME, WE HAVE PEACE. THERE IS ALSO A MEDIATION TEAM. BUT WE STILL LIVE IN FEAR. THERE IS A LOT OF KILLING, RAPING OF WOMEN AND STEALING OF MONEY.”

Displaced female, Koroba

“THERE IS A RISE IN SOCIAL ISSUES LIKE VIOLENCE, FIGHTS, RAPES, STEALING, KILLING OF INNOCENT IN THE REMOTE PARTS OF HELA PROVINCE. LACK OF LAW ENFORCEMENT LIKE POLICE PERSONNEL AND MILITARY PEOPLE IN THE ELECTORATE AND PROVINCE RESULT IN THIS LAW AND ORDER ISSUE.”

Unidentified, Tari

“THE FIGHT IS GOING ON IN THE BUSH, BUT WHEN THEY SEE POLICE THEY WILL STOP. BUT THEY KNOW THE POLICE WON’T GO THAT FAR, SO THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH BURNING HOUSES, SLAUGHTERING PIGS AND RAPE.”

Unidentified, Koroba

Views on the presence and role of security forces in keeping peace were mixed. While people welcome and call for increased security presence as a deterrent for violence, communities acknowledge that this comes with risks. These risks are mainly associated with the potential for security forces to use disproportionate force and abuse their power. People also noted that security forces are not necessarily trusted in communities as they have experiences with corrupt security forces who are collaborating with fighters by supplying ammunition, overlooking wrongdoings or helping them to hide.

A key message that emerged from the conversations was that building peace needs to go beyond treating the conflicts in Hela as a law-and-order problem. Participants acknowledged that law enforcement approaches alone are not sufficient for providing lasting solutions to the scale of violence experienced. Analysing and addressing the root causes of the conflict is equally important, including through initiatives that focus on transforming relationships, attitudes and behaviour. Addressing the systemic causes of the conflict (social, political and economic) needs to accompany a security focused approach. Providing rehabilitation support to communities affected by violence (including trauma healing, restoration of infrastructure and services, economic opportunities) and providing alternative avenues for managing community relations are a prerequisite for ensuring the sustainability of peace beyond the cessation of violence.

“WE ARE WASTING MONEY FOR AVENUES TO PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY, PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE AND GOOD ORDER COMMITTEES, BUT WE HAVEN’T SEEN ANY GOOD SOLUTIONS, THE KILLING IS STILL GOING ON. THEIR MOTIVES ARE DIFFERENT. WE NEED SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.”

Female, Koroba

“EVERYONE IS SICK OF FIGHTING. THERE IS A LOT OF FEAR AND LIFE IS NOT BACK TO NORMAL EVEN THOUGH THE POLICE AND DEFENCE ARE HERE.”

Male, Koroba

STORY

Listening very carefully to what people’s concerns are. Reaching them with mediations and bringing solutions to the community will not work until we get to the root and the bottom line, of what the people have in their hearts. If we dig it out, that is when we will come to solutions. They never blamed anybody for the problems that created conflict, they never pointed their hands to others, they pointed it back to themselves. They were blaming themselves for the fights. They had to take ownership. In fighting and solutions. They need someone to help, but in their own Melanesian context. Lasting peace needs lasting solutions and compensation. It’s a social problem, not a law and order problem.

Male listener, Komo

Peace making processes that are led by the government (beyond the provision of security) are not seen as legitimate or effective. This is partly because these processes tend to have a short-term outlook that pursues quick fixes to complex and interconnected issues. This includes a focus on negotiating with the owners of the fight and providing incentives for them to stop fighting (e.g. payments and ceasefire agreements that fail to address broader community grievances) at the expense of addressing the effects of the conflict on the broader community and the conditions that allowed for the conflict to escalate.

In the case where the pursuit of political power is a cause of the conflict, it becomes difficult for the government to have an impartial role and facilitate peacebuilding processes that are effective, particularly if those associated directly with a fighting party have become a representative of the government. The line between conflict parties and mediators becomes blurred, and the legitimacy of the government as a peace actor is undermined.

STORY

I talked to people affected by the tribal fighting between two candidates contesting for the 2022 general election supporters. Six men killed on the other side and four the other side. Many permanent houses burnt down, health centre was burnt down and community centres were burnt down. Some were shot and got paralysed, people got scattered out, families divided and many of them fled to other provinces. Although fighting stopped for one year and six months. The government peace makers, police, defence forces stopped them, yet they haven't come to a solution, still pending. Many people are finding it hard to come back and resettle. Both sides want peace and restoration. Some mothers and fathers are traumatised. They want church to do the mediation. But churches are closed down. They want services like health centres to be built again and roadblocks to stop. Their member hasn't done anything to help them and they are suffering.

Listener, Magarima

“LEADERS TAKE SIDES AND RECEIVE BRIBERY AND THIS CAUSES THE PROBLEM. THERE IS NO JUSTICE AND PEACE WHEN SUCH HAPPENS. POLICE SHOULD COME AND WATCH OR FACILITATE THE PEACE SIGNING AGREEMENT WHEN THE COMPENSATION IS GIVEN. LEADERS SHOULD NOT TAKE SIDES AND BRIBERY FOR THEY MUST ACT AS A MIDDLE FIGURE AND PLAY FAIR ROLE IN BUILDING THE PEACE IN THE COMMUNITY.”

Unidentified, Tari

Government led peace mediation teams are also seen as lacking the peacebuilding expertise necessary to provide lasting solutions to conflict. Participants noted repeated attempts by peace mediation teams to solve conflicts, only for the violence to reoccur. The reasons cited by participants for the ineffectiveness of these mediation efforts include the perceived lack of impartiality of the mediators, perceived abuse of office and reported lack of legitimacy and trust in their authority amongst communities. The peace mediation teams are reportedly failing to facilitate inclusive and constructive peace processes that would allow the parties to reach a sustainable outcome

and provide a plan for preventing and addressing the effects of violence. These processes have resulted in only a temporary cessation of violence at best and are perceived to have failed.

“UNFAIR DECISIONS WERE MADE BY PEACE MEDIATION TEAMS SO AFTER MANY YEARS PASSED BY, THE FIGHTING GOT UP AGAIN. PEACE MAKERS HERE IN HELA MUST MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION BY GETTING BOTH PARTIES' VIEWS AND MAKE DECISION IN ORDER FOR BOTH TO AGREE. IF WE GO FOR BRIBERY AND MAKE ONE SIDED DECISION AFTER ALL THEY WILL STILL BE KILLING GOING ON. BECAUSE OF CORRUPT DECISION, LIKewise TO POLICE FORCE AND DEFENCE FORCE. IN HELA BRIBERY IS HAPPENING. THEY ARE NOT TAKING KILLERS TO JAIL. WE NEED JUSTICE IN THE PROVINCE AND THEN THERE WILL BE PEACE.”

Unidentified, Magarima

“THE GOVERNMENT TRIED FOUR TIMES TO DO PEACE AND RESTORATION AND IT DIDN'T WORK. MANY PEOPLE ARE SCATTERED TO OTHER PLACES, CHURCHES CLOSED DOWN AND MANY ARE IN NEED OF HELP AND SUPPORT TO RESETTLE.”

Unidentified, Magarima

Some also noted that peacebuilding itself had become a lucrative business for peacemakers (government associated or community based) and fighters alike. The arrival of international humanitarian aid in Hela (likely since the aftermath of the 2018 earthquake) provided access to additional financial resources for peacebuilding and development. People suggested that some of these funds may have been used for corrupt purposes, diverting resources from peacebuilding and creating additional conflict.

STORY

Donor aid coming from other countries are abused and misappropriated along the way. Some people are becoming rich along the way, and they're not reaching the bottom line, they disappear along the road. When victims feel they deserve something but it disappears along the line. We want you to come direct to us, not Papua New Guineans because they may pocket some, there are thieves here. Such as 2018 earthquake, lots of the resources for Hela were "lost" or misplaced, misused, abused.

Listener, Magarima

Compensation

The role of compensation¹¹ in the Hela conflict system is complex and a divisive issue amongst people in Hela. There is a wide spectrum of opinions on the role of compensation in peace making and in causing conflict. Perspectives can be loosely placed on a spectrum that ranges from peacebuilding needing a reinforcing of compensation practices, to more transformative actions.

Figure 2: Spectrum of perspectives and recommended actions related to compensation



1. COMPENSATION AS A PREREQUISITE FOR PEACE

Compensation for losses (human or material) is a prerequisite for achieving a sense of justice and an effective peace-making process. There are strong advocates for compensation in its current form as the only way to achieve peace. The following perspectives highlight a strong belief that conflicts surface or are ongoing because the current or previous owners of fights failed to meet their compensation obligations and provide a sense of justice to victims. The payment of compensation is perceived as the element that needs to be prioritised all throughout the peace process.

STORIES

Abusing, misusing and delays for compensations are causes of ongoing proliferation of tribal fights. Donors have contributed publicly or privately to supporting clashing parties. They've been supporting them by paying compensation to the clans and families of the dead. When there are practices of misuse and abuse, those are known to those peace loving people. Those of have been working for peace have lost interest in spending their time and resources for bringing peace when they see these practices. Selfishly, some warlords have or are collecting supports and they are having good life hiding away in towns and cities for their own safety and they are secured. The state does not want to bring them down to solve their problems but are becoming friends while investigations and meditations are applied to victims and displaced. If they want good results the issue is to be dismantled by bringing down those criminals/warlords and start solving their problems by compensating with the supporting communities.

Unidentified, Tari

A tribal fight over a land dispute between two tribes separated out the entire Tagali LLG, Porgera in Enga and even spread to Port Moresby. All deceased, from both parties are yet to be compensated. It involved high powered firearms that are yet to be surrendered. Innocent lives were lost and they need to be investigated and the responsible warlord must make compensation payment for those deceased.

Male, Tari

Compensation should be prioritised from all parties concerned. It's a shortcut for lasting peace. Unnecessary mediations must be considered after settling demands for compensations from relatives of those who lost their lives in fighting. In the cultural context, compensation has always been prioritised by ancestors which brought about lasting solutions for peace. Peace demands compensation for any means of solutions. Enforcement of laws, ceasefires, mediation should be prioritised after compensation. Without compensation peace making won't last long because the memories of lives lost will be recalled by parents and immediate clans and therefore fights will erupt at any time again. During the time of mediations for peace and negotiations, awareness of compensation obligations must be facilitated for all parties concerned.

Male, Magarima

The fear, displacement and the peace process are prolonged by delays in talking about compensation and settling the issues once and for all. Due to delays in compensation and peace negotiations process, the warring parties have seen the chance of going out hunting for enemies and killing continues, from this kind of actions we have seen the mass killing of people including children, youths, widows elderly and innocent lives suffer under the fight between two single people. And we continue to live with fear, worry, poverty, hunger and a stop to children's education, businesses, church life because people have flown away searching for a safe life.

Unidentified, Tari

2. COMPENSATION IS ONE OF THE MANY NECESSARY COMPONENTS OF A PEACE-MAKING PROCESS

Views amongst this group agree that the peace-making process should go beyond the payment of compensation and should include initiatives that focus on transforming interpersonal and intergroup relationships, prevention of future violence and addressing underlying conflict issues. Community feedback through this project did not provide a clear explanation of how the compensation payment is being made and if it has the potential to facilitate the coming together of the opposing parties. It is unclear if the payment of the compensation (in the event that it happens) could serve as an opportunity for parties to start a more comprehensive peacebuilding process (e.g. dialogue).

There is no law and order. We must give a lot of attention to rehabilitation programmes from all parties concerned and seek better ways for a lasting solution. The warlords must come out and consider for compensation and not hiding away.

Unidentified, Tari

STORIES

In our culture, compensation works, but it's a bandage solution. Its temporary and then erupts again. Traditionally, it is the only means to peace, but today, there are many things. We have to go negotiation, then compensation, then mediation, then education and spiritual empowerment.

Unidentified

Compensation will not work on its own. After, there's always one thing that's missing. Reconciliation is missing. If the two parties don't meet after compensation, they are forever enemies. Unless they sit together, shake hands, then there is peace.

Unidentified

The tribal fighting occurring in Hela is not a law and order problem. It is a social problem caused by us within our own society. If we started it ourselves, then we must finish it ourselves. If man can have plans for destruction, he must have plans for mending. Man must think twice. The first thought is negative that brings a lot of destruction, but we must finish it by having another thought that brings about a lot of good in a peaceful way. People need to take ownership for creating problems. Likewise, he must leave aside gunfire and start mending by compensation to the relatives of the fallen without further delays. Who will mend it for us?

3. COMPENSATION PRACTICES NEED TO BE TRANSFORMED

Compensation in its current form places an unfair burden on anyone related to the owner of the fight, regardless of whether they were involved in the conflict directly. This group suggested that the owner of the fight should take full responsibility for compensation and be held accountable for their actions. In reality, the social structures and norms make this transformation of compensation difficult. In the Huli context, the owner of a fight can call upon support from eight generations of family relatives. This social norm creates an expectation that the relatives of the fighters can be held responsible for the costs of the conflict, irrespective of their involvement. These social obligations are difficult to circumvent in a society that relies heavily on reciprocity and kinship as sources of protection and social welfare. The web of relationships and reciprocity underpinning the *wantok* system has been hijacked by conflict, meaning it is used to spread further conflict and the resulting effects of violence.

STORIES

When there is a small or big dispute within the village or with another village, the problem causing people will many times have high expectations towards their contribution to make peace. That is on top of the losses I experienced now another loss again in my business while helping the contributions to both parties.

Female, Komo

I'm sick and tired of killing going on every time. I have relatives in both LLG areas. I do most of the negotiations and mediations for peace and contributions for compensation payment. I see that we people in these areas are getting poorer each day and that most of our resources are spent on compensation payments. At the same time, they are living in daily struggles because they are not living on their own land but as a refugee. Many of the people from these areas migrated to towns and cities in PNG.

Male, Tari

We spend money on compensation instead of education and business. Our focus is on helping those people on the street, and we are wasting our resources on them.

Unidentified

The current compensation model, whereby relatives of supporters are the ones being compensated, is believed not to work as it provides an incentive for community members to support fights for the prospect of material gain. This group suggested that owners of the fight should also be required to compensate the losses caused to the other party of the conflict, not just their supporters. This change in the compensation system should remove some of the incentives and increase the accountability of the owner of the fight to all affected communities. However, the owners of the fights rarely fulfill their compensation obligations and the initial decision to start or join a fight is not necessarily considerate of the material or human costs associated with it. It is often an emotive reaction to a perceived injustice or wrongdoing rather than a calculated thought process. It is unclear if these changes would be effective in preventing violence or preventing support for the fight once the conflict escalates.

Is this compensation right? If I damage something that belongs to someone, I have to pay for that. I will not ask someone else to pay for that. If I fight with my brother, I have to say sorry to him, I don't ask my father to say sorry to him. If I was the one who killed them, I should do the compensation, but then the father does the compensation. If the person who did the killing was responsible for the compensation for the other there should be less killing.

Unidentified

4. COMPENSATION IS CAUSING OR ESCALATING CONFLICT AND NEEDS TO STOP

People in this group suggested that the practice of compensation should be removed from the peace-making process. They noted that expectations of compensation reinforce a form of retributive justice that can inherently incite or justify violence. Expectations of monetary or retaliatory compensation for the loss of a human life or property are not compatible with the other components of a sustainable peace process. People in this group noted that it is difficult to focus on transforming relationships through dialogue, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing (e.g. restorative justice) when human life and human relationships become transactional. People in this group also noted that the compensation system has created its own economy that perpetuates conflict. This has shaped attitudes and behaviours in relation to conflict and conflict resolution that undermine the principles of communal life and a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of the whole community. The compensation system fosters the pursuit of personal interest, jealousy and mistrust. This in return has an impact on how people are able to resolve disputes, respond to issues and manage community relations.

STORIES

Community doesn't have peace when fighting can come up. People don't know how to solve problems without fighting. They all get angry quickly and retaliate. There shouldn't be compensation. Both parties should be able to talk to each other and find out what exactly the issue is and try to solve it. When there is pressure or conflict good words can cool them down. We should listen to the parties and find out what the issue is and then work with them, so it doesn't come up again. We should train the leaders on how to solve conflicts in a way that addresses issues and doesn't allow conflict to come back.

Male community leader, Koroba

The government thinks they can make peace by giving money to the owners of the fight. But they just take the money and buy more guns and bullets. Even after compensation is paid, payback still happens. It's hard to go to the bush to garden for food because we are scared. Justice can happen when we don't have the *wantok* system and we make good decisions. I

would like us to stop being greedy and causing issues. We need services and to rebuild our place. We need peace training to change our mindsets.

Unidentified

Peace is not a thing to buy but we still buy to make peace which sometimes turns into long lasting tribal fight.

Female, Tari

All this time I've worked in Hela I've never seen someone say sorry to someone. When you say sorry, there's something coming out from within. People think when the village court magistrate says so, when compensation happens, people say peace is here. But peace comes from within. Real peace is people saying I'm sorry, forgive me. We should tell warriors to say sorry. You feel relieved. It's not just physical, it's spiritual healing.

Unidentified, Tari

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Design and implement contextually relevant peacebuilding education programmes for a diverse range of community members to enhance awareness of non-violent approaches to conflict and develop practical conflict resolution and violence prevention skills.

PEACE MEANS THAT PARTIES REACH A WIN-WIN SOLUTION, THERE IS COMPROMISE AND THEY ARE BOTH SATISFIED. PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES MUST CHANGE TO HAVE PEACE. THIS CAN BE DONE THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION AND TRAINING. PEOPLE NEED SUPPORT TO LEARN HOW TO ADDRESS CONFLICT IN NON-VIOLENT WAYS. NEED FOR ANALYSIS, DIALOGUE, PEACEBUILDING TOOLS TRAINING AND MINDSET CHANGE.

Male listener, Tari urban

- Conduct further conflict sensitive analysis of the socio-economic causes, effects and manifestations of the compensation system, exploring opportunities for transforming norms that contribute to the proliferation of conflict.
- Shift focus of peace making initiatives from conflict resolution to conflict transformation and violence prevention. Aim for a transformative approach to compensation practices as the most effective strategy for sustainable peace. This approach should provide alternative avenues for addressing grievances and a focus on renegotiating interpersonal relationships.
- In communities where compensation remains the preferred justice mechanism, seek to complement the process with peacebuilding initiatives that promote sustained dialogue, reconciliation and restoration of community relationships.
- Strengthen the security, law enforcement and the court system through adequate resourcing and upskilling of personnel.

“WE NEED POLICE BARRACKS IN KOROBA. AND ALONG THAT WE NEED PEACE EDUCATION.”

Displaced female, Koroba

- Enhance collaboration between security, law enforcement, the justice system and civil society representatives.

- Ensure that law enforcement and justice personnel are equipped with human rights knowledge and peacebuilding skills to ensure responses are conflict sensitive and adequate to addressing complex conflict issues.

THE LAW-AND-ORDER PROGRAMME MUST BE FULLY FUNDED AND START TO CARRY OUT AND IMPLEMENT FOR ALL CLASSES OF PEOPLE. AND REAL JUSTICE AND PEACE WILL START TO BE SEEN. CHURCH LEADERS, GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERS AND RELATIVES ALL MUST WORK TOGETHER TO EASE THE PROBLEM AT THE BEGINNING BEFORE IT GETS BIGGER. GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE A FULL BUDGET. ENGAGE INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS AND THE CHURCH MUST COORDINATE A PEACE BUILDING PROCESS.

Male listener, Tari urban

- Enhance public trust in the state-based justice system and increase the accountability of the security, law enforcement and justice system including through a demonstrated commitment to penalising abuse of office, favouritism and bribery.
- Reconsider the role of government as a legitimate mediator and substitute or complement their role with legitimate civil society representatives who are trusted and perceived as impartial by communities.

The PNG Government and the international community should provide technical and financial support to legitimate civil society actors to implement inclusive peacebuilding processes.

“CHURCH MUST COME AND HELP WITH MEDIATION. THE GOVERNMENT POLICE, DEFENCE FORCE SAID STOP FIGHTING AND NOTHING. MANY OF THE YOUTHS WHO WERE DOING HOLD UPS HAVE STOPPED BUT SOME ARE STILL DOING THAT.”

Unidentified, Magarima

- Complement securitised approaches with post-violence rehabilitation support that focuses on addressing the psycho-social effects of conflict, restoration of services and resettlement of displaced communities.

TRAUMA, FEAR AND ISOLATION

The psychological effects of violent conflict are a prevalent theme throughout Hela and have a direct correlation to all the other themes reflected in this report. They shape people's perceptions of peace and justice and inform their engagement and approaches to conflict resolution.

“MANY PEOPLE FLED AWAY TO RESETTLE IN OTHER PROVINCES DUE TO THE 2022 ELECTIONS FIGHT. FOUR TIMES THE GOVERNMENT TRIED TO BRING PEACE BUT FEAR OF ENEMIES WAS GREAT. SERVICES WERE DESTROYED AND BURNT DOWN. MANY ARE IN NEED TO REBUILD THEIR HOUSES, MAKE GARDENS.”

Unidentified, Magarima

Trauma, fear and isolation influence interpersonal (e.g. lack of trust) and intergroup relationships (e.g. between displaced and host communities), exacerbate frustrations over unmet needs and undermine the legitimacy of leaders and their authority. Trauma, fear and isolation sit at the centre of the conflict system, both as a symptom and as a cause of conflict, contributing to the proliferation of violence.

Trauma and fear

People reported living in constant fear for their lives and those of their families, under intense stress, traumatised,¹² and without any form of psychosocial support. Spiritual support, usually provided by churches, is often not available in the aftermath of violence as churches close down and people are not able to move around freely. Social structures (e.g. community or family) are also destroyed by conflict and ensuing displacement, removing the social, emotional and economic safety net people need. People reported feeling unsafe, isolated, forgotten and unheard. The conversations revealed an underlying sense of hopelessness and powerlessness about the situation in Hela.

“PEOPLE FULL OF FEARS, FRUSTRATIONS, CONCERNS, EXPECTATIONS, IT GOES ON AND ON. OUTCOME OF THIS IS THAT NO ONE HAS CONCERNS FOR THESE PEOPLE. THEY JUST NEED SOMEONE WHO CARES FOR THEM. NOBODY CARES ABOUT NOBODY.”

Male listener, Tari

STORY

I heard a lot of complaints from displaced and traumatised people. They've shared the challenges and trauma in their past lives. Lots of agendas for their national leaders, pastors, community leaders and neighbours. A lot of the people we approached have been isolated. They have not been approached by concerned people around the community. So when we talk, they reveal all the secrets and complaints they've been carrying. They haven't seen peace and justice, they need someone to take control and take care of them. There is a lot of hopelessness.

Male listener, Tari urban

“I AM CONFUSED ABOUT HOW MY COMMUNITY WILL BE BACK TO NORMAL. WHO WILL HELP? WHERE WILL I SEEK HELP? HOW LONG WILL I BE WITH THE HOST COMMUNITY? WE WANT PEACE.”

Unidentified, Magarima

“THE FIGHT IN OUR COMMUNITY JUST TORN US APART. I FEEL LIKE I WOULD DIE. WHAT WILL I CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THIS SITUATION, I RATHER DIE. THE PEOPLE FLED AND THE ONLY PERSON LEFT IN THE COMMUNITY WAS ME AND MY SISTER WHO IS ALSO DISABLED. WE WANT THIS PLACE TO BE PEACEFUL.”

Young disabled male, Tari

“FIGHTING AFFECTS PEOPLE'S LIFE AND CAUSES THE SHUTTING DOWN OF SERVICES, WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE AT INCREASED RISK. FAMILIES ARE BROKEN DOWN, PEOPLE HAVE TO FLEE AND ARE HOMELESS. PEOPLE ARE FEELING WORRIED, ARE UPSET AND FRIGHTENED. THEY ARE HELPLESS, WITHOUT RESPECT, SICK, HOMELESS AND AT RISK.”

Unidentified, Komo

People noted that the restoration of services and freedom of movement in the aftermath of violence does not necessarily equate to their life returning to normal. The prevalence of fear and the effects of trauma are usually a long-lasting symptom of the conflict, which limits their freedom of movement, ability to engage in daily activities and also peace processes. This has been one of the main arguments made in favour of complementing security focused activities with rehabilitation (including psycho-social and spiritual support), reconciliation, resettlement of displaced communities, and attitude and behavioural change programmes.

“FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FROM TARI TO KARIDA HAS BEEN RESTORED AFTER THE MASSACRE BUT WE STILL SUFFER FROM TRAUMA. BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY. RELATIVES OF THE DECEASED HAVE NOT RETURNED TO KARIDA. WE NEED TO FIND LASTING SOLUTIONS.”

Male, Tari

“FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS I’VE BEEN LIVING IN FEAR. EVEN THOUGH I LIVE AMONG MY OWN PEOPLE, I FIND IT TOO DIFFICULT BECAUSE SEVERAL TIMES I HAVE BEEN SHOT WITH A HIGH POWERED GUN BUT I ESCAPED WITHOUT RECEIVING ANY WOUNDS ON MY BODY. I LOVE TO LIVE IN PEACE. I DO NOT GET INVOLVED IN ANY TRIBAL FIGHTS.”

Male, Tari

“WE ARE STILL LIVING IN FEAR BECAUSE THE OTHER PARTY IS STILL HOLDING GUNS AND NEVER SURRENDERED. ALL HOUSES HAVE BEEN BURNT DOWN BY THIS CONFLICT AND WE ARE RELOCATED IN OTHER VILLAGES AND WE HAVE ALL SURRENDERED BUT WE NEED HELP TO RETURN TO OUR LOCATIONS. WE NEED FOOD, MATERIALS AND WE ALSO NEED PEACE AND NORMALCY.”

Unidentified, Hulia

Women were more likely to talk about the psychological effects of the conflict and the trauma they experience. This is partly due to a gendered conditioning that allows them to be more comfortable talking about emotions and displaying vulnerability. Additionally, women face increased risks to their safety, whilst also holding most of the caring responsibilities in the family and the community. As men get killed in combat, are fighting or are in hiding, women are left with the burden of caring for the rest of the family, often whilst displaced, with no access to food or shelter. Women also reported facing the additional threat of gendered violence including rape, abduction and forced marriages, compounding the traumatic impact of the conflict on them.

“IN MY YOUNG AGE AND CHILDHOOD, LIFE WAS VERY GOOD AND WE ENJOYED IT. NOW FIGHTING AND KILLING TAKING PLACE EVERYWHERE IN HELA AND AS A MOTHER MY SAFETY IS NOT GUARANTEED. I AM LIVING WITH FEAR EVERYDAY. WE THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN NEED PEACE. JUST PEACE.”

Female, Tari

“WE LIVE IN FEAR AND HUNGER. I CANNOT SLEEP WELL, EAT WELL, GO TO THE BUSH AND GARDEN TO COLLECT FOOD BECAUSE THE RAPISTS ARE EVERYWHERE. WE DO NOT HAVE FREEDOM TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY.”

Female, Koroba

“I WAS ABUSED BY THOSE MEN WHO WERE IN A FIGHT. THE TEAM LEADER OF THE FIGHT JUST ORDERED ME TO WAIT FOR HIM. I REFUSED BUT THE MAN SAID ‘YOU ARE JUST ANOTHER CAT THAT I CAN SHOOT WITHOUT FEAR’. SO THEN I WAITED FOR HIM WITH FEAR. THE MAN ORDERED ME TO BE HIS WIFE AND NOW I HAVE THE FIRST GIRL. ALL THE TIME HE ALWAYS ABUSED ME IN HIS ACTION AND WORDS. I AM SICK AND TIRED.”

Young female, Tar

Women also expressed concerns over the generational impact of conflict and the trauma experienced by their children. Women noted that their children are forced to live in an environment where they witness violence, loss and displacement and this has an impact on their aspirations for the future, their sense of safety, justice and peace.

“THERE IS NO PHYSICIAN ON THE FACE OF THE WORLD WHO CAN HEAL A TORMENTING HEART. IF I AM TORMENTED, I FEEL MY TWO CHILDREN ARE ALSO SUFFERING AS I DO. BUT WHAT WILL THEY HARVEST FROM THAT? I KNEW VERY WELL THAT THE DEAD WILL NOT DO ANYTHING GOOD FOR US AND THEREFORE I SENT BOTH OF THEM TO SCHOOL FOR THEIR BETTER FUTURE. I HAVE TOLD MY SONS TO FORGET THE PAST AND LOOK FORWARD TO A BETTER FUTURE.”

Female, Tari

“AS A MOTHER OF FOUR KIDS AND ALL THOSE FOUR ARE IN SCHOOL, I AM SO WORRIED FOR MY KIDS BECAUSE TRIBAL FIGHTING IS WHAT FORCED THE SCHOOL TO CLOSE. I AM A SINGLE PARENT AND CANNOT MAKE IT TO OTHER PLACES OR PROVINCE SO I REALLY WANT PEACE HERE.”

Female, Tari

The social fabric of Hela is characterised by widespread mistrust amongst communities, including family members, suspicion, secrecy and jealousy. Families and communities have been torn apart by violence, either due to displacement, loss of lives and properties or differences over how to respond or manage the conflict resolution process (e.g. decisions about retaliation, compensation or the peace process). This breakdown of community life and family units removes the support system for individuals who need it the most. It also feeds directly into the lack of avenues for providing guidance and mentorship for young males who are vulnerable to being persuaded into entering fights or those who are currently engaged in violence.

“MY FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND ABILITY TO LIVE WITH MY WIFE AND CHILDREN IS NO LONGER THERE. MY WIFE AND KIDS ARE LIVING WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS WHILE I LIVE WITH OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS. HOW WILL MY FAMILY AND I AS THEIR FATHER REUNITE IN ONE HOUSE? I AM SO WORRIED. I FOR ONE CANNOT CHANGE THE BEHAVIOUR OF OUR YOUTHS WHO ALWAYS CAUSE PROBLEMS THAT ESCALATE TRIBAL FIGHTS. I HOPE GOD GRACE UPON YOUTH FIGHTERS SO THAT PEACE WILL BE IN THE COMMUNITY.”

Displaced male, Tari

“MY FATHER WAS KILLED IN FRONT OF ME. I CAN'T BELIEVE MY FATHER IS DEAD. IT IS LIKE A MOVIE TO ME. I RAN AWAY SOME DISTANCE AND THEN I COME TO A SENSE THAT THIS PLACE IS NOT A SAFE PLACE SO I HAD TO RUN AWAY TO ANOTHER PLACE TO SAVE MYSELF.”

Displaced young male, Tari

STORY

Because of fear I fled from my homeland and living as a refugee in Tari urban LLG. My two wives and seven children have been separated for the last three years. I'm not sure yet when we are going to come back or re-unite. My uncle got killed and he was innocent. Nothing has been investigated and who will take responsibility for compensating his death? I still fear for my life. It's very hard for me to come back and resettle here on my own land. Warlords and supporters still have high powered firearms. The government should do something to get rid of these firearms from the hands of criminals and assist us to return to our homeland.

Male, Tari

The prevailing sense of fear, isolation and trauma also creates an environment where small arguments can easily escalate into large scale violent conflict. People reported that fights often erupt as a result of not having an alternative outlet for expressing their grievances or for being unaware of alternative approaches to conflict resolution. People have become accustomed to a reactive way of addressing disputes that does not consider the longer-term consequences of their actions in their own lives or the impact on the broader community.

“WE FOUGHT BECAUSE OF LACK OF LEADERSHIP AND NOT LISTENING TO SOMEONE ELSE.”

Male, Koroba

“WE ARE DISPLACED EVERYWHERE AND IS STRUCTURED IN SUCH A WAY THAT POVERTY, OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE ARE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES FELT BY THE LOSING COMMUNITY. VIOLENCE CAUSED BY THE VICTIMS AROUND THEIR HIDEOUT PLACES ARE PROTESTS AGAINST LEADERS TO BRING DOWN THESE CRIMINALS TO THE GROUND LEVEL TO SETTLE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS AND WE WILL RETURN TO OUR OWN COMMUNITIES.”

Unidentified, Tari

Fear and mistrust, along with a sense of disempowerment also motivate gun ownership as a means to provide a sense of security and power. The proliferation of guns is compounded by limited enforcement of firearm controls.

“THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO FIND OUT WHERE THE FIREARMS AND MARIJUANA ARE COMING FROM AND THROUGH AND NEED TO STOP THEM FROM COMING INTO THE PROVINCE. I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHERE THEY NORMALLY GET THOSE POWERFUL WEAPONS. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD OPEN THEIR BIG EYES.”

Male, Magarima

“VICTIMS SHOULD BE COMPENSATED AND FIREARMS SURRENDERED. BUT I AM SEEING THAT THERE ARE HIGH POWERED GUNS STILL IN THE HANDS OF CRIMINALS AND WARLORDS. IT LOOKS TOO DANGEROUS FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES. SO THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SEND MORE ADDITIONAL MANPOWER AND SEAL THE TARI-HAWA ROAD. WARLORDS MUST CONSIDER MAKING COMPENSATION FOR DEATHS AND MAKE LASTING PEACE.”

Male, Tari

“THESE MURDERERS AND SO-CALLED WARLORDS STILL HAVE THE HIGH-POWERED GUNS IN THEIR HANDS SO LEADERS OF THE COMMUNITY SPECIALLY ALL COUNCILLORS AND MPS AND TOP PUBLIC SERVANTS AT PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS SHOULD DO SOMETHING TO MAKE LASTING SOLUTIONS TO LET PEOPLE LIVE IN PEACE.”

Male, Tari

Lack of freedom of movement

The proliferation of violence, including risk of sexual violence, destruction of infrastructure, roadblocks and hunting of enemies, has limited people's ability to move around freely, access services and engage in their daily activities. People shared accounts of roadblocks and fear of being attacked by enemies disrupting education, gardening and market activities. The impact of this disruption goes beyond people's inability to meet their basic needs; it reduces interactions between individuals and groups, removes opportunities for restoring cohesion and prevents the transformation of interpersonal relationships. Instead, this disruption continues to feed mistrust and suspicion while leaving people isolated and without support.

STORIES

I am a grade 7 student. It was on Monday morning as we were about to assemble in front of the assembly ground, suddenly a gun shot was fired and war broke out between two tribes. We were all sent home. All of my family moved to the nearby village and settled with my parents in the home of other people. We felt at home at first but as days went by, life was changing bit by bit as to sustain ourselves we depended on money. We were living with fear and I used to have nightmares. I was worried about my education because the tribal fighting is affecting my study. I don't want to repeat grade 7 and I am wondering how and where I could enrol next year if the fighting continues.

Young female, Komo

Fighting really affects the education of the young ones. I have seen many students wanting to go back to school from their homes after their holidays, but since violence can happen at any time and someone can be killed or hurt and the casualties may be from someone living along the road, the relatives of the hurt person would be monitoring school students along the road. Once they find a relative of the culprits, they will definitely kill them.

Male, Komo

There is no peace and justice in Tari and in Hela. The government has no concern for the people because the law and order issue continues. Before, Tari town was good and we have seen peace because people from Tebi and Tagali and other places had access to move around freely. We had sports, social events like celebrating independence, going out for worship programs, etc. but today we have no freedom for such life.

Unidentified, Tari

Freedom of movement is reportedly not an issue for fighters who move freely between locations, often to hunt down their enemies. Their unhindered movement is spreading the effects of violence to other communities and exacerbates the sense of fear amongst those who escaped violence and sought refuge in other locations.

“WE LIVE IN FEAR OF WARLORDS WITH HIGH-POWERED GUNS WALKING AROUND FREELY.”

Male, Tari

STORY

Fighters from other districts and LLGs are coming to settle in our area. Hunting and killing enemies and people every day. We never saw this before, no guns and no trouble but today we do. Now the government should send them back to their own districts and LLGs. District managers, LLG managers, presidents and ward councillors should be the front people to engage youths, women, church leaders and community leaders to plan out how peace and justice should prevail in our society. We are victimised, traumatised and live in fear and worry.

Unidentified, Tari

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide culturally appropriate and contextualised mental health and psycho-social support with a focus on addressing individual and collective trauma related to intergroup and gender-based violence.
- Establish rehabilitation programmes that integrate mental health and psycho-social support, family reunification, resources for reconstruction of infrastructure (e.g. housing or schools), re-establishment of gardens and livelihood training.
- Facilitate shared safe zones that support the incremental reintegration of conflicting parties into a shared community life. Reintegration should be assisted by peacebuilding experts to ensure that it is done in a safe and conflict sensitive way and supports re-establishment of trust between community members.
- Facilitate dialogue processes that address collective trauma and support communities to process the past and shape a collective vision for a shared future.

“BOTH PARTIES FEEL SECURE WHEN ALL CHILDREN FROM BOTH PARTIES ARE IN THE SAME SCHOOL WITHOUT FEAR, WHEN BOTH PARTIES ARE RECEIVING MEDICAL TREATMENTS FROM THE SAME HEALTH CENTER AND BOTH PARTIES ARE USING THE SAME MARKET AND PUBLIC GATHERING PLACES.”

Male, Magarima

LEADERSHIP AND BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Social structures and leadership

Huli social norms that sustained interpersonal relationships, cultural observations and spiritual life have been eroded with the introduction of new knowledge systems (e.g. through colonialism, introduction of state-based governance, capitalism and social media). Expectations of reciprocity, conflict management practices and decision making mechanisms promoting restraint, collective responsibility and safeguarding of community life, have been morphed by more transactional principles that monetise human life (e.g. the compensation system), promote self-interest and sustain a client–patron relationship between individuals and who they perceive as leaders.

“LIFE, SYSTEM, WORDS AND THE PRACTICE TODAY IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE. THE CURRENT LIFE IS VERY COMPLEX AND CHALLENGING. LOVE AND MERCY HAVE GONE AWAY.”

Unidentified, Tari

“PEOPLE’S LIFESTYLES CHANGE AS WESTERN CULTURE INFLUENCES MORE PEOPLE AND FROM THERE FAVOURITISM AND NEPOTISM DEVELOPED. SITUATION GETTING WORSE THAN EVER.”

Elderly male, Komo

Similar to other themes presented in this report, this transformation of social norms and structures has been cited as both a cause and effect of violent conflict. Intergenerational conflict and a corruption of moral compass due to a breakdown in social structures and norms were cited as one of the main drivers of conflict. People talked about the loss of cultural practices that helped to guide and mentor young people into adulthood, helping them to navigate life decisions and make informed choices for their future. Family separation and displacement due to conflict, tensions at the intersection of cultural norms and the introduction of new ways of living make it increasingly difficult for elders in the community to fulfill their role as mentors for the younger generation. Elders have lost the avenues (e.g. *haus man*) through which to pass down to the younger generation concepts of what is right or wrong, bad or good according to Huli culture and Christian values.

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF MEN’S LIFE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE BEING CHANGED AND THIS IS SLOWLY CAUSING MORE HARM.

Unidentified, Tari

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE PEOPLE IN HELA BEING LIKE IN THE PAST, WHEN WE DIDN’T HAVE FIGHTS, PEOPLE WERE ORGANISED AND WERE WORKING TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY.

Displaced female, Koroba

FIGHTING IN HELA IS TAKING PLACE BECAUSE PEOPLE DON’T LISTEN TO EACH OTHER, THEY FEEL UNHEARD AND ARE UNEDUCATED. EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE EDUCATED BECAUSE EDUCATION WILL OPEN UP THEIR MINDS AND HELP THEM UNDERSTAND GOOD AND BAD.

Female, Koroba

Elders have also lost the authority and respect in the community. Unable to fulfil their role in managing community life, resolving conflicts and protecting the community from violence, elders’ authority was replaced by a glorification of fighters as heroes and of guns as a means to provide security, gain power and authority. This new source of authority links leadership potential to fighting power.

STORY

When anyone in our village brings a factory-made gun in, the owner of the gun does not care for himself or the community. They are controlled by the guns and are so proud and become heroes in their tribe. And they do not care for anybody, anywhere at any time. They just go for rape, kill pigs belonging to their neighbours and do all the wrong things. They underestimate others who haven’t got any fire aims. There the tribal fight blows out from bad to worse. After that the peace makers, church pastors, government and police try to bring peace in.

Male, Magarima

“YOUNG MEN ARE DOMINANT VOICES. OUR YOUNG THAT ARE DISPLACED DON’T RESPECT ELDERS. THEY THINK THEY ARE SOMEBODY, SO THEY DON’T CARE ABOUT OUR LEADERS.”

Unidentified

“I CAN’T BELIEVE THIS GENERATION’S BEHAVIOUR. IT’S JUST GOING WORSE. HOW CAN IT BE MINIMISED? IT WAS NOT LIKE THIS IN MY YOUNG AGE. IS IT A CURSE? HOW CAN WE COME TO A SOLUTION?”

Male chief, Tari

People expressed concerns about the emergence of new forms of leadership and values systems that are linked to being able to provide material benefits for supporters. Much of the feedback noted that people were not promoting ethical leaders who can provide moral guidance, instead following those who promise an elevation of their current status in the community – either through material wealth or a sense of authority. The patron–client system manifesting in Hela guides interactions between individuals in the community, as well as communities and political leadership. Reciprocity in the *wantok* system as a guiding principle for supporting collective wellbeing, has been morphed by the power dynamic that exists between a person of power, wealth, or status and a person of perceived lower position (client) who benefits from their influence. This system involves a much more personalised relationship that contains loyalty and obligations between the patron and the client. The welfare of the broader community has less prominence in this relationship.

“WE ARE NOT FOLLOWING WHAT LEADERS SHOULD DO. WE WANT A LEADERS TRAINING TO KNOW THE WORK OF LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY FOR BRINGING PEACE.”

Female, Koroba

“THE GOVERNMENT NEED TO FUND MONEY FOR ROAD CLEAN UP AND ENFORCE LAW TO THE LAW BREAKERS. ALL PEOPLE HAVE FLOWN TO OTHER CENTRES ONLY A 16 A YEAR OLD AND 14 CHILDREN ARE LIVING WITH ME IN THE CONGREGATION. WARD COUNCILLORS AND CHURCH LEADERS NEVER VISITED US. LEADERS NEED TO DO SOMETHING IN THE COMMUNITY.”

Unidentified, Tari

“SEVERAL TIMES INCIDENTS HAPPEN BUT POLICE FORCES USUALLY COME IN BY HELICOPTER. HOWEVER, THEY ONLY SEEK SOLUTIONS FOR THE COMPANY AND GOVERNMENT BUT THEY DON’T CONSIDER IT SERIOUSLY BECAUSE IT’S THE LAST LLG OF HELA AND ONLY MEANS OF TRANSPORT IS BY HELICOPTER, MAF OR FOOT WALKING.”

Male, Komo

The nature of this system allows the emergence of new leaders at any given time, as long as they are able to access the resources (material or human) and support that would allow them to compete with others. This loose leadership structure has a direct impact on the conflict system. Anyone can become a leader, an owner of a fight or a fighter. This translates into dynamic and amorphous conflict parties that are difficult to identify and contain.

“POOR LEADERSHIP CREATES PROBLEMS. WE HAVE GOOD LEADERSHIP IN SOME PROVINCES, BUT THEN WARLORDS ARE PROVIDED GUNS AND MONEY AND, IN THIS WAY, LEADERSHIP ISN’T WORKING WELL. WARLORDS SHOULD BE PUT IN THE HANDS OF THE LAW, BUT THEY AREN’T. THEY NEED TO PROVIDE SECURITY WHERE THEY CAN LIVE IN UNRESTRICTED AREAS DURING THE TRIBAL CONFLICTS.”

Unidentified, Tari

“THEY THINK THAT ONCE THEY HAVE A GUN, THEY ARE BIG MAN, THEY CAN GRAB WOMEN AND PIGS. LEADERS SHOULD ILLEGALISE AND TAKE THEIR GUNS.”

Unidentified, Tari

People noted that the current leadership in Hela is not guided by the Huli system of values, Christian principles or a sense of service to people. People cited lack of access to faith services and education as a cause of this. Poor service delivery, displacement or destruction of schools and churches by conflict have reduced the sources of guidance for people and are seen as both a cause and effect of the violence.

“I SEE THE YOUTH TODAY ARE THE WORSE YOUTHS COMPARED TO MY TIME. BECAUSE OF DESTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE OUR KIDS ARE NOT COMPLETING THEIR EDUCATION, WHICH LEADS TO DISTRACTIONS. AS NOW I AM SPEAKING, WE NEED TO TALK TO OUR GOVERNMENT AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO CREATE MORE SPACES FOR OUR YOUTH. WE NEED SOME TRAINING AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL AWARENESS TO HELP CHANGE OUR MINDSET.”

Male chief, Tari

“WE NEED TO ENGAGE THE YOUTHS IN ACTIVITIES. THE RISE IN LAZY YOUTHS CAUSES MORE TRIBAL SIGHTS AND WANTED CRIMES AND NEEDS TO STOP.”

Unidentified, Tari

“IN MY PLACE THEY FOUGHT BECAUSE MANY OF THEM ARE UNEDUCATED AND EVERY TIME THEY JUST GO SEARCHING FOR TROUBLE. TO AVOID FIGHTING, EVERY CHILD MUST BE IN THE CHURCH AND SCHOOL.”

Female, Koroba

The pursuit of political power brings an additional dimension to how leadership is perceived and raises the stakes in the patron–client relationship. Elections can exacerbate existing divisions within communities or

generate new divisions along candidates' lines. Political candidates reportedly exploit the loose leadership structure by empowering individuals to rally support for them. Political candidates have been reportedly inciting violence during elections or have been known to support fighters (e.g. setting them free, providing money, access to guns and manpower) so as to build a controllable voters base. This symbiotic relationship can continue beyond election time, regardless of whether the candidate is successful. Candidates can continue to provide incentives for fighters to maintain their allegiance until the next elections. Fighters are dependent on this support in order to maintain their lifestyle and authority in communities. Reducing this support can create new sources of conflict as fighters may seek to back another political leader who promises increased benefits. This system places the focus on the political leader–fighter relationship, at the expense of services to constituencies. If votes can be won through the use of key individuals in the community, then there is less accountability back to constituencies and politicians have little incentive to invest in development as a way to secure votes.

STORIES

Positions of favour and authority in public sectors lead to chaos. During the time of [PNG] independence the leaders themselves have succumbed to their positions of favours and authority, the leaders united themselves to condemn the colonial rules and made their own rules. But they are doing exactly what they condemned the colonial rule for doing and even worse than that. Health, education and justice sectors have turned out to be bribery centres, warlords and criminals are brought to justice but released upon receiving bribes and based on who you know in the system. If we are to have any liberating effect on our torn apart province, then we must do everything in the spirit of truth and honesty. If we use public offices to maintain positions of favour and authority for the people we have professed to serve, then we are enslaved by our own mistakes and cannot bring peace back to our people.

Unidentified, Tari

Leaders and council members are all friends with the fighters and they don't make fair decisions. The member is not bringing us peace. They are looking after the fighters and no one is looking after us – the displaced – and we are hungry.

Displaced female, Koroba

STORIES

Everything that happened in Hela falls back to the people. People vote their leaders and their leaders lead them into such disaster. If we want our government to see that we want change, we have to have peace in our family then to the extended family then to the community as so on. But how will we become a change people?

Male, Tari

Politicians are the worst leaders in our district. When they get the votes and win the seat they forget about us not talking to us or even give us any project or give money. We feel angry with them. During casting of votes they forced us to vote. They are so called big man educated leaders but we said we are not their sales. They gave us warning shots and shot one of our young man. From there fight broke out, destroying schools, villages, services and all community.

Male, Magarima

Nepotism and patronage compounded by a sense of injustice and perceived lack of alternatives, have instilled a sense of dependency and hopelessness in some people. People look up to people with access to any form of power or resources for help, often putting pressure on them to solve problems in the community. This pressure also translates in the role that those with perceived access to resources play in conflict resolution and the burden they must hold to contribute towards compensation during the process, regardless of whether they were directly involved in the dispute.

STORY

People coming to me asking for help, because I am the company worker, so people think that I have enough to support them and fix their problems. Every day of my life I am facing many challenges and sometimes it causes me heart aches, headaches, stress and anger. Being a leader is not easy as the moment you relax you will be facing more problems and yet you will be committed to any activities taking place in any situation. I have eight generations in Hela so as a leader I must contribute anything so that my relatives and community must be in peace by solving their issues. It's hard for my community to have peace and justice. While I try to address other people's problems, my own problems are

not addressed and I was forced to get loans to pay for my kids' school fees. People need mindset training to be self-independent.

Male, Komo

The breakdown of social structures and ineffective leadership have eroded the efficiency of mechanisms that were able to contain violence. Customary rules of engagement are no longer effective and once fights erupt, violence and destruction are difficult to contain or stop.

STORIES

In the traditional war zones, nearby villagers give way for both parties to travel freely back and forth in search for their wanted enemies. Villagers never got involved in killing or they never even betray. During the war all the men from the same *haus men* could distribute among themselves to the two parties according to how they are related in the two parties in war. They brought the casualties from the different parties back to the same *haus men*. What was interesting was that they never had an argument or betrayal because they believed in God and had great respect that he is watching down to them from above.

Elderly male, Komo

During my life I have seen some tribal fight but note like the one we had during 2020-2022. That was the worst ever. I went through difficult times as I saw many lives lost – 57 in total, excluding 22 lives murdered in Karida. Many babies and children died of disease and hunger, Girls and women were raped but this was never made known to the leaders and law enforcing agencies. Basic services were destroyed and not yet restored. Deceased and victims haven't been compensated. Firearms are yet to be surrendered.

Male, Tari

This is compounded by unresolved historical grievances (often due to ineffective peace making processes) which get drawn into more current disputes and amplify the scale and intensity of violence. Casual disagreements between or perceived insults between individuals can ignite stagnant issues that extend over generations. This can escalate into violent conflicts that result in death, destruction of properties and infrastructure, closure of services and displacement. Any individual can start a fight that has the potential to engulf whole communities in violence and destruction.

STORIES

A fight broke out between two tribes for flashing light to other's eyes. They started arguing with each other and got angrier. They started through their hands at each other, and the other men chopped another one's hand off and from there fighting got worse. A man from Komo was at his house with his family and the other men from the other sides came and shot him down and chopped him into pieces and left without no good reason. So the other party got up and said this man you killed is innocent so they went ahead and fought each other and killed three more men on the battlefield.

Male, Komo

My relatives had a dispute over the unfair sharing of the bride price. They fought and three lives were lost. My family side made compensation payment for the victims. But the other side are yet to do theirs. That's why manhunting is still at large. Women and children are tired of this conflict. We need both parties to come together and make peace mediation. They have high powered guns which they need to surrender.

Female, Tari

My son was innocent but he got himself into an unexpected trouble and took someone's life by slashing him to death. The matter should have been solved in a peaceful way but it turned out differently and now every one of us is affected.

Male, Tari

While we were busy doing our class activities in the class with our teachers, we heard a gunshot and rushed out of the class and heard that there fighting broke out between two tribes for pig stealing. Fighting got worse and school had to close down. Teachers, students and people flew away from their homes, houses were burnt, stores were burnt, gardens destroyed, everything closed and me and my family left our home and went to another village looking for a safe place to stay. I missed my grade eight exam and I am worried about my education. Fighting is not good because it leads to loss of lives, property damages, and services stop affecting children's education. Also, very risky for girls and women during fighting days. Currently people from that council ward are fleeing all over the place, worrying, wandering, helpless, homeless, fearing for their lives.

Young male, Komo

Instigation or escalation of violence is often fuelled by the consumption of drugs and alcohol. People noted that intoxication with alcohol or drugs encourages more reactive responses to disagreements and makes people less considerate of the consequences of their actions. Drinking places also attract more violence as intoxication makes people more vulnerable to attacks from enemies. People have called for more stringent control over the sale of alcohol and cannabis.

STORIES

The relationship between drinking and peace mending in Hela, as in so many communities around the province, is disturbingly clear. Excessive drinking is among the top major causes of death, and venues of alcohol is a breeding place for targeting enemies. More retaliations of tribal fighting and paybacks normally happen at drinking places. The motives for drinking are not only pleasure but as a way to escape from hardship poverty and mistreating. There are so many killings and violence erupting every time of peace mediations and laws imposed. The fault lays within government sectors. Several people have stores and places for selling illegal liquor apart from bars and companies who sell them to collect their cut of the profits. The government must enforce laws to strictly forbid liquor in troubled places like Hela.

Unidentified, Tari

Banning illegal drug sales in the concerned provinces. Need to close bars and home sales. One cause of killings and retaliations happening is at the drinking locations or opportunities of paybacks are targeted especially when people are intoxicated.

Male, Magarima

Tribal fighting is not easy, it brings very big damage in the tribe, in the community, district and province. During fighting the young men smoke marijuana and go by force to fight. They do not come into their life and just go forward and destroy all classes of people. They burnt schools, aid post, and all the buildings in the community. They cut all the trees and destroy the garden as well. Those who smoke marijuana involve themselves in tribal fighting. They turn the places upside down. They turn the beautiful colourful green valley into the Sahara desert.

Male, Magarima

Conflict sensitive leadership

In contrast with the leadership practices described above, participants in the project provided numerous examples of individuals demonstrating alternative types of leadership. People shared accounts of individuals choosing to provide leadership for peace, either by advocating against retaliation in the event of harm caused to them or their family, or intervening to stop fights. These examples illustrate the conflict fatigue that people in Hela are experiencing, the potential for incremental changes in the way people approach conflict resolution and the values they expect their leaders to demonstrate. These examples provide evidence for the momentum for peace that exists in Hela and the foundation upon which change can happen. They also signal an entry point for peacebuilding initiatives that focus on long-term transformation of conflict management practices and interpersonal or intergroup dynamics.

STORIES

I never join them in fighting. I normally run away. When the fighting stops, I come back, bring peace and make compensation with pigs and money. I, as an old man I never get involved in problems. I hate fighting. I love to live with peace in my family community and in my district. I teach and encourage my children and the young generation to live in peace, talk in peace in our community. I teach and encourage them to follow my example or my steps.

Male, Magarima

I am a peace advocate so I will make sure that both parties of the deceased and my clan men will not take up arms and fight. My son is already in the hands of the law and I am at home now to meet the compensation payment for the deceased. I love peace. I hate tribal fights which cause destruction and loss of lives. I'm showing examples to the people of Hela and PNG.

Male, Tari

Once one leader sets a behaviour of non-retaliation, other people realise that's an option. My brother was killed, and I made the decision to say "no" to retaliatory violence. When I say no to fight, then that's where the fight stops. I didn't want to become the owner of that fight and carry that burden for the rest of my life. I want to be free from the death of my brother. *Wai manga!*

Male, Hulia

Standing up against the norm and driving change comes with risks. People shared experiences of experiencing violence or threats as a result of wanting to intervene or provide an alternative, non-violent course of action. Challenging the status quo can make people stand out and that may attract unwanted attention from those who benefit from the conflict system.

STORIES

During the 2022 general elections I was trying to stop the fight with stones and sticks and I stood in the middle and one of the sides shot me on my leg. That's the time the fight broke out using guns and I am now using a support walking stick now.

Young male, Magarima

Many reserve police lost interest to work as volunteers and left but I still continue. Sometimes we conduct peace awareness all around the village in Komo LLG about doing away with guns, marijuana and fighting. While me and my team were doing awareness in the marketplace there were boys who used to be involved in gang activities who shouted at me and said 'what kind of peace fool reserve police are enforcing' and a guy with a bush knife cut my forehead. I felt unconscious. One of my colleagues took me to Komo Health Centre. My relatives were trying to attack the perpetrators, but I said no to them. I take risks working as a volunteer police reserve to bring peace. No one considers my hard work. There were more than 50 reserve police officers doing volunteer work to bring peace to Komo. They experienced threats everywhere in Komo. Unlike before they were very strict and people were not carrying bush knives and other weapons in the marketplace. But as many of the reserve police lost their interest, these things now happen.

Male, Komo

An erosion of respect for community leadership also puts leaders at risk of violence. This is compounded by a deep sense of injustice and unmet needs. These frustrations are expressed through acts of violence against leaders who are held accountable for the lack of services and poor decision making.

STORY

Being a leader either at the top level or at the community level is very challenging and very risky. In any decision making or in contributing you have to deal with other people's problems. If the leader doesn't contribute there is gossiping going on at the back. Leaders take on extra problems to their own problems. There are a lot of expectations placed on leaders and it's challenging. Leaders sometimes have to take risks and are worried. They need help. Some are worried that people have went ahead and chopped their leaders while they do awareness about issues in the community. Leaders have to be wise to solve issues with good heart.

Unidentified, Komo



Tari town © Laura Raicu/Conciliation Resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Facilitate the emergence of inclusive leadership and decision-making processes in communities that promote community ownership and the participation of people with diverse identities in analysing issues, providing solutions and implementing actions.
- Facilitate intergenerational dialogue processes that support different generations to collectively identify specific needs and develop strengths-based strategies for reconciling points of contention.
- Design and implement a gender and conflict sensitive leadership skills training programme for community and local level government leaders enhancing their ability to analyse conflicts, identify trends and implement early responses that prevent violence.
- Support communities to conduct localised conflict analyses with a focus on auditing gendered norms that contribute to conflict and designing contextually relevant strategies to transform them.
- Implement a human rights, peace and gender education programme for young people with a focus on challenging forms of masculinities that contribute to the proliferation of violence.
- Enhance public trust in government and strengthen provincial and local level government accountability systems, including through increased opportunities for public scrutiny and government-community engagement.
- Strengthen law enforcement in relation to the illicit trade of firearms, alcohol and drugs and work with communities to develop community owned bylaws that have broad community buy in and are enforceable by community leaders.
- Implement an advocacy skills programme for community leaders to strengthen their effectiveness in representing the needs of their communities and improve engagement with government and other relevant stakeholders.

UNMET NEEDS AND LACK OF REHABILITATION SUPPORT

Lack of public services was most frequently cited in remote/geographically isolated locations that are not accessible by road or cut off from other communities by rivers and in communities that have recently experienced an escalation of violence (e.g. Koroba in 2023 and Magarima in 2022). In these locations people reported poor standards of living with a lack of access to basic health care, education, or economic development opportunities.

“JUSTICE IS THE DISTRIBUTION OF BASIC SERVICES EQUALLY, REGARDLESS OF POLITICIANS, NEPOTISM AND BRIBERY. THEN THERE WILL BE PEACE IN WHOLE HELA. BECAUSE IN A SENSE, WHERE THERE IS NO BASIC SERVICES GIVEN, THOSE ARE THE REAL HOT SPOTS WHERE MOST OF THE PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY TRIBAL WARS.”

Female, Komo

“NO BASIC SERVICES AVAILABLE IN WHICH THEY COULD DEPEND ON TO IMPROVE STANDARD OF LIVING. NO PNG POWER CONNECTED, NO HEALTH CENTRE OR AID POST NEARBY, NO SCHOOL AND NOT EVEN ANY FORM OF BASIC SERVICES AVAILABLE.”

Female, Komo

“GOVERNMENT SERVICES SHUT DOWN WHENEVER THERE IS FIGHTING, CAN'T GET MEDICAL HELP, CHILDREN CAN'T GO TO SCHOOL.”

Unidentified, Komo

“I VISITED THE MAGARIMA GENERAL HOSPITAL AND FOUND OUT THAT THEY ARE SHORT ON MEDICINE AND WATER TANKS. DISABLED PEOPLE DON'T GET THE TOOLS TO HELP THEM MOVE AROUND. PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT HELPING.”

Listener, Magarima

“NO FOOD IN THE MARKET. THE RICE PRICE HAS GONE UP. WE ARE HUNGRY.”

Female, Koroba

Poor standard of living and lack of prospects for improving quality of life were cited as one of the main motivators for violent conflict and engagement in illicit activities such as stealing, substance abuse and trade, gun ownership and joining one of the fighting parties. Engaging in violent conflict is seen in these instances as a lucrative endeavour, as a means to access resources (money, pigs and even spouses) and gain a sense of authority and power in the community.

“WHEN THE POOR MAN STARTS A FIGHT, THE RICH SUPPORT THEM. THEY DON'T HAVE HOUSES, THEY'VE NEVER BEEN TO MORESBY, BUT SUDDENLY THEIR NAME IS IN THE NEWSPAPER AND MEDIA AND PEOPLE WHO WANT PEACE INVITE THEM TO MORESBY AND THIS GIVES THEM POWER. STARTING FIGHTS GIVES PEOPLE POWER.”

Male listener, Hulia

“EVERYTHING IN HELA IS CAUSED BY POOR AND LAZY PEOPLE. THE RICH SUPPORT THE POOR AND USE UP THEIR RESOURCES AND BECOME POOR WHILE THE POOR BECOME RICH. FIGHTING IS SOMEBODY'S PROJECT. GOVERNMENT IS FUNDING, EIGHTH GENERATIONS OF FAMILY TIES ARE CONTRIBUTING AND SUPPORTING.”

Male, Hulia

Violence is also an expression of people's sense of injustice, of not being cared for and not having alternatives for meeting their basic needs.

“POVERTY BREEDS VIOLENCE. THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT WORKING. ALSO PEOPLE NEED PEACE EDUCATION.”

Male community leader, Koroba

“TRIBAL FIGHTING IS DESTROYING THE WHOLE COMMUNITY. THE WHOLE ENVIRONMENT, EVERY HOUSE AND ALL VILLAGES WERE DESTROYED AND TURNED UPSIDE DOWN. SINCE 1975 GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE NOT REACHING INTO OUR COMMUNITY. THAT IS WHY WE EAT AND FIGHT LIKE FOOLS. ONLY THIS YEAR WE OPENED OUR EYES AND SAW WHAT SERVICES ARE.”

Male, Magarima

“WHY ALL THE VIOLENCE? JEALOUSY AND HATRED, DELAY IN NEGOTIATIONS. OWNER OF THE FIGHT MAY CALL FOR PEACE BUT THE BROTHER OF THE DECEASED CAN BECOME POWERFUL IN RETALIATION. ILLITERACY, UNEMPLOYMENT, POVERTY CAN ALL CONTRIBUTE TO THE TENSIONS.”

Unidentified, Tari

Once violence erupts, accessing services becomes even more difficult. Violence causes significant disruptions to the already limited services. Restoring them requires substantial investments that few are willing to make without the certainty of stability and a sustainable solution to conflict. Government interventions are limited to containing violence and are not providing post-violence rehabilitation support to affected communities. This compounds the precarious situation that communities affected by conflict experience, who find themselves displaced, traumatised and without means to sustain themselves.

The unmet needs of displaced communities were a prevalent theme in Koroba and Magarima districts where people reported experiencing food shortages. Accounts of local pastors or other community members running out of food while caring for displaced communities illustrate the scale of the issue and urgency of the situation. People in these locations have called for critical rehabilitation and restoration support.

STORIES

There's a lot of displaced people in Koroba-Kopiago, and they're angry. They want a rehabilitation centre so they can be safe there. A pastor was caring for them, but we don't have these centres in Hela where we can care for disadvantaged people. It falls on families, pastors or other Christians.

Female, Koroba

I have been looking after many conflict people from three different conflict areas. We need urgent help such as water, food and clothes for children. Many students from Hela are here because the Magarima station is a peaceful school. In this place people lost all their properties even the primary school was burnt down in the conflict and more than 8 people have been killed. We need materials such as roofing iron, nails, water, and food because the food has run out in taking care of these people.

Male, Magarima

Ten men died in this area because of the 2022 national elections conflict. We need to bring a peace agreement and urgent need for them to restore normalcy because we want the high school to start in 2024. Most of the people want to live in peace and they want to rebuild the rundown primary school and road because we are in the remote area where cars never reach. People have tears on their faces. They really need food, nails, roofing iron and support.

Male, Magarima

I used to be a subsistence farmer and used to look after livestock and sell them at Komo local market. While business was progressing, suddenly tribal fight broke out between some tribes due to land issues. Since then, the means of survival was difficult as fighting extended from one area to another, so I left everything behind and migrated to Wapi in Hulia. I had to cross the big Tagali river with the cane bridge which only men used to cross. I am concerned about how I would get used to living in a strange environment while I'm grieving the loss of my properties. I have no means to sustain myself. I am traumatised and stressed.

Elderly female, Komo

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to livelihoods through skills training and livelihoods programmes.
- Increase access to education through restoration of infrastructure and services and scholarship programmes, including opportunities to pursue studies outside of the Hela province.
- Deliver urgent humanitarian support for displaced communities including food, water and building materials.
- Make the restoration of basic services a priority in conflict affected communities once the security situation is under control.

“IN MY PLACE THEY FOUGHT BECAUSE MANY OF THEM ARE UNEDUCATED AND EVERY TIME THEY JUST GO SEARCHING FOR TROUBLE. TO AVOID FIGHTING, EVERY CHILD MUST BE IN THE CHURCH AND SCHOOL.”

Female, Koroba



The market in Tari Town © Laura Raicu/Conciliation Resources

DISPLACED – HOST COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Displacement is putting significant pressures on the material resources (e.g. food and housing), as well as the fragile social structures and interpersonal relationships in host communities. As resources are already scarce throughout Hela, host communities find it challenging to meet the needs of displaced communities. Host communities reported not receiving any support from the government or non-government organisations in meeting these needs. There were many reports of unmet basic needs such as food, water and housing as well the lack of physical and psychological support needed for the rehabilitation of displaced people.

“THEY ARE TRAUMATISED AND DISPLACED, PSYCHOLOGICALLY AFFECTED. THEY GREW UP UNENGAGED. THEY WILL HAVE TO MAKE PEACE; WE CANNOT TAKE PEACE TO THEM. WHO WILL MAKE PEACE? THE PEOPLE WITH THE GUNS.”

Unidentified

“MY RIGHT HAND HAS BEEN CUT OFF BY MY SON AND I NEED HELP PROVIDING FOOD. WE ARE DISPLACED BECAUSE OF CONFLICT AND PEOPLE ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT HAVING TO FEED US SO WE NEED ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD HELP.”

Female, Magarima

“WE FLED FROM TRIBAL CONFLICTS IN TIGIBI AND BENARIA AREAS IN HULIA AND WE NEED HELP. WE NEED PEACE AND NORMALCY IN OUR AREA AND CURRENTLY WE NEED FOOD SUPPORT. WE ARE NOT LIVING A COMFORTABLE LIFE BECAUSE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LOOKING AFTER US FOR MANY MONTHS AND YEARS AND THEY NEED THEIR OWN HOUSES TO LIVE.”

Unidentified, Magarima

These pressures are creating tensions between host and displaced communities, giving rise to new sources of potential conflict. Displaced people are often blamed for causing social issues in what are perceived as peaceful communities or for exacerbating conflict where tensions already exist. These sentiments were mostly prevalent in communities in and around Tari town, where a lot of people fleeing conflict seem to find refuge from fighting. Displacement and the movement of people between districts are held responsible for proliferating violence throughout Hela.

“PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS ARE CAUSING THE ISSUES AND THEY COME AND CAUSE PROBLEMS IN THE URBAN AREAS AND THEN GO BACK.”

Unidentified, Tari

“LIFE IN TARI BEFORE WAS NOT LIKE IT IS NOW, IT WAS MORE PEACEFUL. NOW ITS NOISY AND RISKY. WHAT IS ONE OF THE MAIN CAUSES THAT BRINGS THIS BLOCKAGE? THE PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN DISPLACED, HAS BEEN FLOWN INTO OUR AREA AND CAUSING THE PROBLEMS. WE IN TARI DID NOT HAVE GUNS. THEY SAY THEY ARE LOOKING FOR PEACE BUT CAUSING NOISE. DISPLACED PEOPLE SHOULD GO HOME, WHETHER THEY WANT TO OR NOT. RATHER THAN VIOLATING PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES. WE ARE NOT THE OWNERS OF THE FIGHT. THEY DON'T HAVE RESPECT FOR THE PEOPLE TAKING CARE OF THEM.”

Unidentified, Tari

“THEN THEY END UP IN OTHER VILLAGES AND LLGS AND EVEN FLOWN TO OTHER PROVINCES. IN OTHER PLACES THEY STILL FIND THEIR ENEMIES AND THIS BECOMES A VERY SERIOUS THREAT AND ISSUES IN YOUR FAMILY, TRIBE, COMMUNITY, DISTRICT, PROVINCE AND THE WHOLE NATION.”

Unidentified, Tari

There have been reports of host communities mistreating displaced communities as a reaction to the resulting pressures of hosting and the perception of displaced people as the source of conflict in their communities. These tense relationships act as a new source of violent conflict.

STORIES

It is about time that all concerned parties consider the most affected communities which have no links to the Hela tribal fighting. Such places like Hoyabia are providing quality education services to the Hela Province and beyond but are most affected by evil social activities. The crime rates in those peace-loving communities have refuelled violence as they host people engaged in retaliations. This has caused the death of innocent lives. As we try to analyse the causes of these violent acts, we see that they are not one wilfully but there are signs of poverty, dislike of treatments given by host communities, etc. they do it deliberately as a means of protest against warlords, government and NGOs because they want to resettle back to their own lands for freedom. Resettlement will provide sufficient relief for both host and displaced communities.

Unidentified, Tari

Mother is very old and about to die but due to being unsafe from tribal fights I came to Tari and staying with some people who I never met before. People I stay with mistreat me and I stay with the pigs and eat pigs left over food. I have not seen peace or justice. I need someone to care for me and an orphan's center funded by the Government.

Young male Tari

The proliferation of violence is also facilitated by members of host communities getting involved in conflicts associated with those who are displaced. People noted that members of the host communities support those who are displaced to retaliate or track down enemies. The consequences of these decisions to provide support are significant and have ramifications for the whole host community. Any association of an individual with a conflict party, automatically draws into the conflict their whole kinship system and any relative can become responsible for compensation or a target for retaliation.

STORIES

Sometimes host communities are irresponsible and support displaced communities with their fight. Displaced communities lack food and have no choice and they end up stealing, raping and violating peace in peaceful communities.

Unidentified, Tari

People are sick and tired of unnecessary delays to resolutions. This should be prioritised by the warlords and concerned clans. They should think of the innocent victims who have no part in their fighting. We (host communities) are prepared to support them with our resources to compensate those who have lost their lives in the tribal fights. The warlords must come down to the community level and stop hiding in towns and cities. If we took action for fight, then we must act for solutions as well.

Unidentified, Tari

Most of the time, people who are displaced are willing to return to their lands but are unable to do so because conditions are not conducive to resettlement. People are unable to return without their safety being guaranteed (many fear retaliation) or without creating the conditions for engaging in a peace process. This is often difficult if they have obligations related to paying the compensation they or their relatives owe. They are often unable to meet the high costs of compensation expectations which means that the peace process cannot commence and that they remain in limbo, displaced in another location.

STORIES

The displaced are unable to resettle back to their own land without assurance of dialogue of the warring clans about compensations. If agreed by both parties for compensation as a treaty for peace. The state must consider rehabilitation programmes for the returning communities for safety and security purposes.

Male, Magarima

“WE CANNOT GO BACK TO OUR OWN LAND BECAUSE THERE ARE TOO MANY MEN TO COMPENSATE AND THE DEMAND IS TOO HIGH FOR US.”

Unidentified, Magarima

Often, people are unable to return because they lack access to their homelands. This may be because roads or bridges have been destroyed in the conflict or because their homes and gardens have been destroyed and they don't have the means to rebuild everything.

“PEOPLE WERE ACCOMMODATED BY OTHER GROUPS OF PEOPLE BECAUSE OF POLITICAL CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO TRIBES. PEOPLE WANT PEACE AND REHABILITATION SO THEY CAN COME BACK TO THEIR ORIGINAL COMMUNITY. THEY NEED URGENT HELP. PEOPLE WERE TRAUMATISED. THEY COULDN'T GO BACK BECAUSE THE WIRE BRIDGE WAS CUT OFF. THEY NEED URGENT HELP TO REBUILD THE BRIDGE.”

Unidentified, Magarima

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Facilitate inter-community dialogue processes between host and displaced communities to identify needs, build trust and develop strategies for addressing points of contention and preventing violence.
- Develop and implement policies for managing conflict related displacement, including a framework for needs assessment and provision of assistance for both host and displaced communities.
- Prioritise the commencement of peacebuilding processes in when the conflict affected locations to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of displaced people situation allows. Peacebuilding processes should be accompanied by humanitarian assistance, restoration of services and the provision of psycho-social support.

“REHABILITATION SHOULD BE THE STEPPING STONE FOR PEACE. GOVERNMENT MUST LOOK FOR OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS AND NOT JUST NEGOTIATE ISSUES.”

Unidentified, Tari



Listening processing workshop in Tari © Bianca Monteiro/Conciliation Resources

PROLIFERATION OF FIGHTS AND ENGAGING WITH FIGHTERS

Perspectives on peace and justice, the mechanisms available, the *wantok* system and patron–client framework that guides relations in Hela, converge into providing support systems for fighters and incentives for fights. Leadership can play a role in encouraging support and instigating retaliation for grievances. Elders share stories about the past and pass down the responsibility for redressing injustice to the next generation. Historical grievances and customary practices around generational support requires young men to support their relatives in redressing injustices suffered.

“ONE THING THAT LEADS TO INJUSTICE AND LACK OF PEACE IS IN HULI CULTURE. WE USED TO CARE FOR EIGHTH GENERATION SO THAT LEADS TO GET INVOLVED IN FIGHTING ALL THROUGH OUR LIFE. IT IS GOOD TO DO AWAY WITH THAT. WE CAN TEACH PEOPLE NOT TO EXPECT ANYTHING FROM OTHERS.”

Male, Komo

The owner of a fight relies on their ability to source manpower and material resources by drawing upon eight generations of relatives or clansmen. Once someone joins or starts a fight their whole community becomes associated with it and can become a target for attacks. Close or loose association with a fighting party makes young males a target for attacks and, thus, they are dependent on their social network for protection. This makes it difficult for fighters to leave a fight once they join it.

“I WAS ALWAYS ON ALERT WHEREVER I WAS, READY TO FIGHT. I WAS DESPERATE TO STOP FIGHTING. BUT BECAUSE I WAS NOT THE OWNER OF THE FIGHT, I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING OR SAY ANYTHING. THE POWER TO MAKE PEACE AND SEEK JUSTICE IS WITH THE OWNER OF THE FIGHT.”

Young male fighter, Komo

“IF I START A TRIBAL FIGHT, I HAVE THE FOUR GENERATIONS FROM MY FATHER'S AND MY MOTHER'S CLAN. THAT HOOKS UP EVERYONE FROM BOTH SIDES. THEY NEED SUPPORT – PIGS, MONEY, GUNS. WARLORDS GET THEIR STRENGTHS FROM SUPPORTERS. SO HOW CAN WE DISCOURAGE THESE SUPPORTERS TO CONTINUE TO FIGHT? TO MINIMISE TRIBAL FIGHTS, WE NEED TO DISCOURAGE THIS SUPPORT. THOSE THAT START FIGHTS GET THEIR STRENGTH FROM THEIR SUPPORTERS. WE NEED TO BUILD PEACE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WARLORDS ABOUT THEIR REVENGERS.”

Male listener, Hulua

Feedback from conversations suggests that discouraging this generational support is key to containing the violence. There are examples of leaders taking a stance against perpetuating the cycle of violence and refusing to support retaliation.

STORIES

The key word is 'support'. Pig and money support guns and bullets, manpower support. The warlords get their strength from the supporters. Our idea and aim is to discourage that support to minimise the tribal fight in Hela. Decision making is important. The right decision needs to be made by the owner of the fight. When the owner of the fight says he wants to retaliate, he opens the doors for dying, killing, destruction. When they say they want peace, they stop every bad thing. We need to discourage family generation relationships. That is when somebody starts a problem it affects the eight blooded generation from both the mother and father side. *Wai manga, mupalia holne ame lero!* I don't want to fight but I want peace. That should be the decision of the victim of the fight. Refusing retaliation.

Male, Hulua

My uncles were killed at different times and in different locations. I am a village court magistrate and I do not want to take up firearms and fight. I discouraged my relatives from fighting. Tribal fighting brings destruction of properties and lost lives and it is very difficult to restore basic services. Murderers must get out of their hiding places and surrender to the law. Relatives must pay the compensation in the community to slow down the high tension of people.

Male, Tari

I want Hela to be gun free, peaceful, filled with love, honesty and justice. If someone starts a fight people shouldn't support them. They should jail those who start fights. I would like a new Hela.

Displaced male, Koroba

I just want peace. I don't want to hear news of my relatives or clans involved in any tribal fights or other violence which only leads to problems which will lead to fights. My life and my family's well-being are in danger as of now and how will I find a solution? The only solution is to forgive and forget and live a peaceful life.

Male, Kupari

Conversations with fighters and former fighters suggested that the decision-making process around whether to start or support a fight is influenced by interconnected factors such as the prospects of monetary gain, acquiring power, respect and a new status. Fighting is perceived as a lucrative endeavour as the power that comes with holding a gun and being feared, gives fighters access to resources either through being paid directly by the owner of the fight for providing support or by being able to access someone else's property. The emergence of mercenary practices are also a manifestation of a corrupt compensation system and generational support. People with enough influence and resources have commercialised the system to hire men (not necessarily related to them) and firearms to enhance the prospects of winning their fight.

STORY

Murderers should be arrested and even taken their lives away. Government is not doing enough to settle issues and overdue tensions and turn into politics. Local warriors are taking advantages and making money or commercialising the tribal fight. Especially to collect money, pigs, etc. I don't want to stay for a long time displaced and staying with fear, displacing my wife and children. The two of us fought but many were affected and they might put a curse on us so we better give up, compensate, call for peace talk, sign an agreement, go for compensation and see what happens.

Male former fighter, Tari

Attached to these material incentives is also a desire to redress past injustices. Young men often end up being part of fights due to social or peer pressure, influenced by romanticised ideas of what it means to hold a gun and be a fighter. Joining a fight can give young men a sense of power and control over their situation, particularly if they don't have any other opportunities or avenues to assert themselves.

“FIGHTING IS THE ONLY WAY THEY BENEFIT BECAUSE THE MPS AND OTHER BIG BOYS BUY GUNS AND GIVE IT TO THEM JUST TO BE FAMILIAR IN THE COMMUNITY AND PROVINCE AS A WHOLE. THAT'S HOW WE THE YOUNG BOYS ARE BENEFITING. WE ARE ILLITERATE AND WE ONLY SURVIVE FROM FIGHTING AND AT THE SAME TIME WHO IS GOING TO FEED ME AND MY FAMILY.”

Young male, Tari

In many instances starting or joining a fight is used as a means to demonstrate their leadership potential in the community. Once they hold a gun or are associated with a fighting party, they gain authority either because they are feared or because they are seen as heroes and leaders who take ownership to solve problems. This new hero or leadership identity is associated with the role they have in protecting a community against or revenged the community or because they are associated with (or seen as being in service to) someone who is perceived as having power and authority (e.g. politician, warlord or 'big man').

“US YOUNG FIGHTERS BECAME LEADERS AND STARTED SOLVING ISSUES IN THE VILLAGE. THOSE WHO HAVE DIFFERENT THINKING AND WANT TO START TROUBLE AGAIN, WE SENT THEM TO HAGEN AND PORT MORESBY. WE BOYS WHO USE TO INVOLVE IN TRIBAL FIGHT NOW HAVE BECOME AS LEADERS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS. SOME BOYS WITH DOUBLE THOUGHTS WANTING TO CREATE PROBLEM AGAIN WE SEND THEM AWAY TO HAGEN AND PORT MORESBY.”

Young male former fighter, Koroba

The prospects of material and immaterial gains are overshadowed by the reality of being part of a conflict, living in fear, displaced and in hiding.

“US FIGHTERS, WE WOULD LIKE TO BECOME LEADERS AND HAVE NO MORE FIGHTS. WE SAW THAT FIGHTING IS NOT GOOD. NOW I KNOW NOT TO START TROUBLE. WE ALSO NEED A REHABILITATION CENTRE. FIGHTING IS NOT GOOD. MY WIFE LEFT ME AND MY KIDS WERE TAKEN AWAY. I HAVE NO FREEDOM. I LIVE IN CONSTANT FEAR WHEREVER I GO.”

Young male fighter, Koroba

STORY

I used to live in the house men together with other boys. Suddenly fighting broke out between two tribes, so I got involved in the war. One of the boys from the *haus men* I was sharing the bed with was killed in the battlefield. Following the incident houses were burned down. While some people were crying over the death of the boy, some were in fear of the war escalating. People were also lost due to their expensive houses being burned down. Me and my age group boys carried on in the battlefield exchanging bullets with our enemies. We wanted to take the revenge killing. When the police came to stop the fighting, we paused, but we were still searching for each other secretly in our own areas. Had sleepless nights all through that period and never had shelter to hide ourselves in the rainy days. We stayed out till morning and we had only 10–30 minutes of rest during the day. I started losing weight. We were feeding on sugar and bananas because we had no time to prepare food. We would always carry weapons, even into the toilet. My mother was severely sick at the time and it was difficult to take her to seek treatment. With the help of the police, I arranged to be taken to the Komo health centre. But I couldn't tend to the facility to be with her and I was worried that she would die without me being able to be there.

Young male fighter, Komo

Participants suggested that an effective strategy for preventing young people from joining fights would be to increase their awareness of the realities and effects of conflict. Sharing accounts illustrating the realities of a fighter's life could counter narratives about the perceived benefits and help reduce support for violent responses to conflict. Peer mentorship, rehabilitation support and engagement in education, sport and spiritual activities were also amongst the strategies suggested by participants to reduce motivation and support for fights.

“WE NEED TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE FIGHTERS. WE NEED TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FIGHTING AND LET THEM MAKE THE DECISION.”

Male, Hulia

“I AM A YOUNG BOY AND I SEE THAT I DO NOT HAVE A FUTURE. EVERY TIME I SEE MY PEERS MOBILISE AND DISCUSS ABOUT FIGHTING, I WONDER HOW WILL THE LIFE AFTER THIS YEAR BE IF OUR GOVERNMENT IS NOT OFFERING ANYTHING IN OUR ELECTORATE. SO MANY SWEET TALK ABOUT PEACE AND GUN SURRENDER BUT NOTHING CHANGES THE MINDSET OF THE PEOPLE. AS YOUNG WE NEED MORE TRAINERS AND SELF-CARE TO CHANGE OUR MINDSET. IF WE CHANGE THE MINDSET OF A BOY, WE CHANGE THE COMMUNITY.”

Young male former fighter, Tari



Hela Province viewed from the sky © Bianca Monteiro/Conciliation Resources

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement a contextually relevant violence prevention programme that enhances young people's awareness of the realities of conflict and engages them in a critical analysis of masculinities, violence and leadership.
- Implement a tailored reintegration and rehabilitation support programme for former fighters, focusing on providing psycho-social support, peace education and livelihoods training opportunities.
- Engage former fighters in peacebuilding and restorative justice processes that facilitate reconciliation, reframing of their identity and restoration of relationships with other community members.
- Leverage the influence of former fighters with an interest in supporting peace and provide them with peacebuilding skills training to enable their engagement in peacebuilding.

WE, THE HELA YOUTH, NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACTS OF TRIBAL FIGHTS. WHILE WE FIGHT, WHAT WILL OUR CHILD AND WIFE, GRANDMA AND GRANDPA BE DOING? ARE THEY OK? I NOW REALISE THE IMPACTS OF TRIBAL FIGHTS SO LET'S WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS NO TRIBAL FIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT.

Young male former fighter, Tari

- Create opportunities for peer mentorship for young men, integrated with activities such as sports, creative arts, church or school.

WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE, MENTOR AND REHABILITATE THEM.

Male, Koroba

I LEARNED MOST PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS ARE SIMILAR. THEY DON'T WANT TRIBAL FIGHTS. THEY HAVE SOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS. MOST SOCIAL ISSUES THESE DAYS ARE CAUSED BY YOUTHS WHO ARE DOING NOTHING. THEY NEED TO ENGAGE IN SOMETHING THAT IS BENEFICIAL THEN THEIR MINDSET CAN BE CHANGED, THEN WE WILL HAVE A BETTER HELA. IF ONLY THESE YOUTHS CAN ENGAGE IN CULTURAL TASKS, SUSTAINABLE FARMING, THEN THEY WILL BE BUSY DOING AND THERE WILL BE LESS PROBLEMS. NGOS AND GOVERNMENT SHOULD LOOK INTO THIS.

Male listener, Tari

CONCLUSION

This report provides an invitation to develop a more nuanced and granular analysis of conflict dynamics in Hela, to allow people's individual perspectives and experiences to define a vivid and dynamic landscape of challenges and opportunities for building peace. This report does not provide an absolute solution to violence in Hela but instead provides an opportunity to reassess and build on current approaches, including building on the assumptions and understandings that underpin current approaches. It aims to provide opportunities to explore new entry points and build new pathways towards providing people with a renewed sense of achievable justice and peace.

The perspectives captured in this report depict a collective desire to break the cycles of violence and move towards creating shared norms and a vision for a just and peaceful Hela society. The examples of conflict sensitive leadership, humanitarian spirit and compassion exhibited by so many people participating in this research project is illustrative of the momentum for peace that has emerged in Hela. The growing interest from the international community to support peace, development and justice initiatives has facilitated the emergence of many leaders and actors for peace who are willing and ready to advance their work with the right support. It is important that efforts for peace and justice are informed and led by Hela communities themselves, with the dedicated support of the local, provincial and national government. This report lays the foundation for a broader dialogue process in Hela that develops shared understandings of individual and collective responsibilities along with a commitment to peace and justice amongst all key actors – communities, government and non-government leaders, law enforcement and security sector, community-based organisations and the international community.

It may be tempting to simplify the analysis of issues and solutions in order to provide timely responses. This report invites the audience (e.g. development, peacebuilding, law and justice practitioners and policy makers) to pause and listen to what those most affected by violence experience, feel and think. This report does not intend to provide a critique of current approaches but instead initiate a reflective and constructive discussion on how to best strengthen the existing pathways towards sustainable peace.

ANNEX 1

LISTENING METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Table 4: Overview of the listening methodology

Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal conversations (unscripted, open-ended) between listeners and specific groups of people, allowing participants to express their most important opinions in relation to a particular topic/situation.
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and analyse people’s perspectives as evidence of an issue and to inform a process, approach or policy; • Facilitate a systematic exploration of ideas and insights of people who live in and are affected by a situation; • Create an opportunity for individuals or groups whose voices are less heard to share their views on an issue, situation or plan; • Create a collective voice by identifying themes from a cross-section of people. • Provide entry points for dealing with tension and conflicts; • Build ownership and legitimacy through participation and support agreements to be more stable, appropriate and sustainable.
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and understanding of people’s experience and their suggestions for the future; • A snapshot of how groups of people perceive or experience a situation.
How the findings can be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To start a broader dialogue process that is inclusive of diverse perspectives; • To create alternative narratives and open spaces for dialogue; • As an early warning mechanism; • As part of a planning process for a peacebuilding initiative; • To inform the design of initiatives relevant to described issues most important to the people, their wishes and aspirations; • To inform the work of civil society groups and government decision making; • As a feedback mechanism to policies/programmes (monitoring, evaluation and learning).
Sources of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from people belonging to an identified group; • Diverse and varied viewpoints (cross-section) from people who have direct experience of an issue are the most relevant to the project situation or context; • People who are the subjects of a programme/policy and are directly impacted by it.

Table 5: Overview of the listening methodology

Steps	Activity Description
1. Initial project design and identifying the listeners	<p>Conciliation Resources and Young Ambassadors for Peace agreed on overall design of the project and identified the listeners from across all Hela districts. The project team worked together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define the problem/gap in analysis the project is seeking to address in relation to approaches to peace and justice; • explore the different ways the gap can be addressed (brainstorm potential solutions/ approaches) and decide on a preferred approach; • identify the locations for the conversations and define the sample group; • identify the guiding questions needed to support the conversations;
2. Listeners training workshop	<p>Listeners were introduced to the project idea and their role and practiced communication and conversation skills necessary to conduct conversations. The training ensured that the listeners had a clear understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their role in capturing people’s direct experience without correcting their opinion or sharing their own thinking on an issue; their role in giving people an opportunity to express themselves and be heard. • the group of people they will be talking to and the importance of covering diverse locations, identities and experiences; • the listening process, including the recording and processing tools they will need to use to enable the first stage of analysis at the end of each day; • communication skills, how personal bias can be detrimental to the process and how they can mitigate it.
3. Listening conversations	<p>Immediately after the training workshop listeners went in teams of two or on their own for 5-7 days to speak with a cross section of people from the identified ‘group/s’.</p>
4. Listening processing	<p>After conversations have been conducted, the listening teams met for a processing workshop. The processing workshop focused on identifying key messages and main themes that emerged from the conversations and on capturing differences between groups of people.</p>
5. Initial analysis and sense checking	<p>A team of CR staff from across different programmes sense checked the initial analysis of the data.</p>
6. Analysis, synthesis and drafting of report	<p>The preliminary themes were further analysed and refined and the information collated in the report.</p>

ANNEX 2

TOPICS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Table 6: Topics and guiding questions

Key words/Topics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice: what is it and how can it be achieved? • Peace: what is it and how can it be achieved? • Mechanisms for redressing injustices: concerns related to current approaches and mechanisms; do they work? • Approaches to peacebuilding: concerns related to current approaches to achieving peace; do they work? • Solutions: for the improved effectiveness of approaches and mechanisms for justice and peace • Personal actions: identifying personal changes or changes needed in communities • Vision for change: imagining a new future and identifying what needs to happen to get there 	
Guiding question	Key areas
What does justice ¹³ mean for you personally/your community?	Perspectives/Understanding of justice
What does peace mean for you personally/your community?	Perspectives/Understandings of peace
What are the main challenges to achieving justice for you personally/ your community?	Justice challenges, mechanisms for redressing injustices, experiences
What are the main challenges to achieving peace for you personally/ your community?	Peacebuilding challenges, approaches to peacebuilding, experiences
What solutions can you see to these challenges?	Peacebuilding and justice challenges, solutions
What could be done by you/your family/your community to solve these challenges?	Peacebuilding and justice challenges, solutions, actions to be taken by you
What do you want to see in the future for you/your family/your community?	Vision for change, future hopes
What are the steps to get there for you/your family/ the community?	Vision for change, future hopes, actions to be taken by you

ENDNOTES

1. See the Research Approach section for more details on the methodology. The methodology uses open, informal and non-censored conversations with a cross-section of people experiencing violent conflict.
2. See participant demographics on p. 16 for data breakdown.
3. See Conciliation Resources, *Conflict Challenges and Opportunities for Building Peace in Hela Province, Papua New Guinea* [Report, 2022].
4. See p. 25 for a graphic illustration of the spectrum of perspectives.
5. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects used the methodology to listen to communities receiving humanitarian aid and then to provide feedback on the aid delivery systems.
6. For more information on the use of the methodology by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, including examples of projects, please visit <https://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/listening-methodology/>
7. See Annex 2 for the list of topics and questions that guided the conversations.
8. Translated as *gutpela* sindaun in Tok Pisin and as *mopalia holene* in Huli language.
9. Translated as *stretpela pasin* in Tok Pisin and as *manatai gapi* in Huli language.
10. Peace agreements in Hela are usually the result of a negotiation process that focuses on reaching an agreement on the compensation amount to be paid by the conflict parties. It also involves an agreement to cease violence. The agreements are usually fragile in nature and often they do not prevent violence from reoccurring.
11. In Hela compensation payments must be made to relatives of members of a fighting group if a member loses their life in battle. The owner of the fight is responsible for making the compensation payment to their allies. The value of the payment is calculated using a complex multiplication system. Compensation can be significantly lowered if the death of an ally is avenged. If compensation is not being paid, whole sections of the clan of the opposing wai tene can be held responsible and become victims of retributive violence.
12. It is unclear to what extent people understand trauma in a clinical, social or spiritual sense and how they see its connection to the proliferation of violence.
13. These concepts were translated in Tok Pisin and Huli.

Conciliation Resources is an international organisation committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies. We work with people impacted by war and violence, bringing diverse voices together to make change that lasts.

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