



Report

LEGACIES OF CONFLICT IN THE PACIFIC

Dealing with the past



LEGACIES OF CONFLICT IN THE PACIFIC

Dealing with the past

AUTHORS:

This report was co-authored by Dr Mercy Masta and Dr Kate Higgins, with contributions from Ciaran O'Toole and Johanna Podlesak.

This publication is the result of conversations with and contributions from leading Pacific peacebuilding practitioners: Sister Lorraine Garasu, Yanny Guman, Francis Semoso, Paul Petrus, Dr Anouk Ride, Ruth Maetala, Willie Kerenga, Dennis Kuiai, Paulo Baleinakorodawa, Patrina Vulu and Dr Lavau Nalu.

JULY 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The authors would like to thank all the peacebuilding contributors and colleagues who have generously given their time and shared their experiences from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Conciliation Resources. The views expressed by each contributor in this publication are their own and do not necessarily represent those of Conciliation Resources.

Published by:
Conciliation Resources

552 Victoria Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
Australia

Conciliation Resources
Unit 1.1, First Floor, The Grayston Centre,
28 Charles Square, London, N1 6HT, UK

Design, layout and copyedit: Eliah Castiello
Cover Photo: Tsiroge, Bougainville, PNG © Conciliation Resources 2023
© Conciliation Resources

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
1. Histories in the Present: What Happens When We Do Not Acknowledge the Past?	6
Sister Lorraine Garasu <i>Interview</i>	8
2. Practices to Build Peace: What Does Dealing with the Past Look Like in Practice?	12
Yanny Guman <i>Interview</i>	14
Francis Semoso <i>Our Story, Our Past and Our Future</i>	18
3. Inclusion in Addressing Conflict Legacies: Who Is Involved in Deciding the Way Forward?	22
Paul Petrus <i>Tribal Violence in Hela</i>	24
Dr Anouk Ride <i>Poem: Riotous Telling, Interview</i>	26
Ruth Maetala <i>Dealing with legacies from the 1998 Tensions: The road to peace – A Solomon Islands woman's perspective</i>	29
Willie Kerenga <i>A Personal Review of the Successes and Shortcomings of the United Nauro-Gor Community in Simbu Province, Papua New Guinea</i>	34
Dennis Kuiai <i>Sustaining Peace by Peaceful Means in Melanesia – Bougainville Experience</i>	38
4. Envisioning the future: How can societies create transformative cultures of peace through understanding the past	42
Paulo Baleinakorodawa <i>Interview</i>	43
Patrina Vulu <i>Interview</i>	47
Dr Lavau Nalu <i>Poem: Same, Same but Different, Interview</i>	49
Conclusion	58
Dr Mercy Masta	58
Endnotes	62

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many contexts around the world are grappling with violent pasts. 'Dealing with the past' is an area of peacebuilding work that focuses on addressing the root causes of conflict through constructively engaging with conflict narratives and past experiences of violent conflict. This holds special significance in the Pacific, where history is central to recreating peaceful identities. Retelling history can be oriented towards building sustainable, peaceful futures.

This report is a collection of reflections on the legacies of conflict from prominent Pacific leaders engaged in the concept of 'dealing with the past'. These leaders are working in a myriad of ways to build peace in their communities and nations. The collection recognises that there are peace practices occurring across the region, but given the oral nature of Pacific societies, as well as the tendency to focus on national or broader geopolitical issues, the richness of this work is rarely captured.

In producing this report, Conciliation Resources compiled articles, pictures and poems, and conducted conversations with peace leaders from different Pacific contexts including various locations in Papua New Guinea ('PNG') (the Highlands, Port Moresby and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville), as well as Solomon Islands and Fiji.

While these contexts are significantly different, Conciliation Resources has drawn out five key common findings from the collected reflections on addressing the legacies of past conflict:

Histories live in the present

The contributions emphasise the importance of working with people to analyse their pasts in order to move forward. They demonstrate how historical narratives set present political agendas that can contribute to, or hinder, peace and security outcomes. The contributions illustrate just how many contemporary conflict challenges have root causes in legacies of violence and trauma, and express concern about uncertain futures should past conflict remain unaddressed.

Pacific peace practices are essential

A range of peace practices are discussed in this collection, including dialogue, mediation, formal and community-based peace agreements, and forms of reconciliation. In some cases, these efforts are externally resourced, but many are initiated and driven by local forms of leadership. These practices are largely orientated towards restorative forms of justice and rebuilding relationships, which is seen as key to community well-being and the prevention of future conflict.

Peace and security requires inclusion

The varied impacts of conflict on individuals make inclusive participation in addressing its legacies essential. This paper's contributions highlight the challenge of elite male dominance, the importance of women in peacebuilding and the negative effects of excluding youth. Dealing with the past provides an opportunity to transform power relations and build greater equality between men, women, young people, people of different ethnicities and cultures.

Institutional partnerships are key

Dealing with the past involves addressing unequal governance structures while enabling greater political participation. This includes participation from both community institutions and state institutions, as well as a range of different actors such as government, civil society and community leaders. Many contributions advocate for a multi-stakeholder partnership approach between different institutional actors.

Commitment to peaceful societies

Addressing past legacies of conflict is, essentially, about both envisioning peaceful futures and reflecting on Pacific values around peace and justice. These contributions reflect a strong, everyday commitment to peace, grounded in relationships that can be strengthened over time. Acts of retelling history can be transformed into acts of building peace.

Drawing on the findings identified from the contributions as well as bringing in lessons from dealing with the past in other contexts globally, Conciliation Resources has four key recommendations for supporting leaders building peace in the Pacific:

1. A concerted effort to understand local conflict histories should be part of all peace and security interventions, including understanding differing perspectives on those histories, and what has been done to date to deal with the past.

As the contributions to this paper demonstrate, people hold different narratives about conflict, interpret conflict through personal experience and often lack the opportunity to reflect upon the causes of violent conflict. There are established peace practices throughout the Pacific, such as dialogue and conflict analysis, that help people understand past events and

encourage active participation in efforts to address contemporary peace and security challenges.

2. Pacific Indigenous and local peacebuilding practices should be supported to address cycles of violence and build more peaceful societies.

The contributions highlight the knowledge, practices and capabilities that are operating in various contexts throughout the region. Many dealing with the past efforts are being implemented with minimal local resources. There is significant opportunity to support these efforts with funding and other kinds of support. Support can be a catalyst for, and an enabler of, further community initiatives, which may ultimately help build sustainable peace in the region. However, such support, its level and direction, must be informed by local knowledge and expertise to avoid doing harm.

3. Efforts to build inclusion in community, government-led and internationally supported peace and security initiatives should be increased.

Inclusion in dealing with the past, and peace efforts more broadly, is essential. Exclusion (intentional or unintentional) can drive divisions and tensions, contributing to harm. Putting effort towards mapping different relations within a context can avoid measures that merely 'tick boxes'. This might include considering who may be impacted or who may be involved in decision-making. Understanding inclusion through the lens of relations helps identify opportunities for

a range of excluded people to address past injustices and take an active part in identifying and implementing solutions. Meaningful inclusion is difficult to achieve and often requires time, resources and flexibility, including a readiness to adjust program timelines or slow implementation to ensure that no harm is done. Partnerships between non-state actors (such as civil society, church and community leaders) and state security and government actors will improve peace and security outcomes, especially where they are grounded in principles of community ownership and indigenous peacebuilding practices. As a priority, strategies that enable youth to lead on solutions is key, as is creating spaces for intergenerational dialogue.

4. Pacific Islanders must be supported to set their own agendas as to what constitutes a sustainable and peaceful future.

Amidst geopolitical tensions, disruptions from climate change, and a range of development and security challenges, Pacific Islanders at all levels — community, national and regional — must lead the agenda for a peaceful Pacific based upon the values they themselves identify. Peace processes and peace and security initiatives must be locally owned and embedded in both community and national structures and processes.

This report is divided into four sections, with each section detailing each finding. In most cases, the contributions speak to all findings, but for practical purposes are interspersed throughout each section.



The new site of Vunidogoloa village in Fiji. The original village was moved due to sea level rise © Conciliation Resources 2023

1. HISTORIES IN THE PRESENT: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THE PAST?

“... IF PEOPLE DON’T UNDERSTAND THE PAST AND DEAL WITH THE PAST PROPERLY, THEY DON’T HAVE A FUTURE BECAUSE THEY ARE HUNG UP ON THE PAST... WE CANNOT LEAVE IT FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OUR CHILDREN’S CHILDREN TO DEAL WITH IT.”

Sister Lorraine Garasu

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Across the Pacific, many communities experience the legacies of violence in diverse and complex ways. Some of these legacies are obvious, but some are — as Dennis Kuiai points out in his contribution — “intangible”, and underpin forms of insecurity such as social division, trauma and criminal activity. Contemporary challenges in postcolonial and post-conflict settings are often simplistically characterised as failings of the present. For example, a “lack of law and order” or a “failure of development”. All contributions in this paper challenge this notion and speak to how human experience and agency operates in complex contexts. They speak from, and carry the weight of, the histories they face in their everyday life and work. The past is either implicitly or explicitly viewed as essential to creating the future. As Paulo Baleinakorodawa says in Fiji, for Indigenous people “[our] past is always alive in us.”

UNDERSTANDING PAST CONFLICT

Conflict histories may have roots that reach back long before fighting began. As Dr Mercy Masta asks in conversation with Dr Lavau Nalu, “[w]hat about our own internal narratives as Papua New Guineans? We’ve been scarred by colonialism, but we take the hurt or the trauma forward and we kind of relive it and I think it’s important that the narrative changes”, to which he replies, “I guess dealing with legacies of the past is being able to learn from your history, because history is a big thing.” Dr Lavau Nalu speaks about how the past shapes identities in the present and how

reclaiming history is essential to the future. In Fiji, the nation is currently grappling with conversations about past *coups*, which began in the late 1980s, but as Paulo Baleinakorodawa discusses in his interview with Dr Kate Higgins, this is not enough and there is a need to go back to histories of colonisation and indentured labour. In Bougainville and Solomon Islands violent conflict has ended, but the issues that caused the conflict remain. Dealing with the past is about looking to the future by helping people analyse what happened and exploring ways to move forward.

VIOLENCE IS PERSONAL

When it comes to the impact of violence upon their society, the contributions encourage us to take a deeper look at how causes of violence have been understood by those affected, as well as the impacts of the violence they experienced. Conflicts focused upon in this collection include armed fighting in the PNG Highlands, the Bougainville Crisis, the Tensions in Solomon Islands and coups in Fiji. While much has been said about these conflicts, Dr Anouk Ride reminds outside observers that we often only see “a small side of the story”, for conflict is experienced locally, and the impacts of violence are often personal, forming part of the fabric of relations between people.

CONFLICT CYCLES

In her contribution, Patrina Vulu describes her “deepest concern” that the core issues of conflict have not been addressed in Solomon Islands even though the fighting has stopped. She speaks about how these issues manifest in daily life: “There are still people who are being traumatised and when they get drunk and you can hear them shouting and they are referring to things back from the past, they always remind you... The future is unknown because there is something missing”, she says. A key message from Sister Lorraine Garasu is that there is a need to settle issues whether they are “minor, medium or major” before they become “mountains” and build back up into violent conflict; into conflict cycles. Dealing with the past is about interrupting cycles of conflict to build a sustainable peace rather than just the absence of violence.

TRANSFORMING CONFLICT NARRATIVES

Narratives about past conflict may result in future vengeance and cycles of violence, threatening future peace and security. In his reflections on Hela province, PNG, Paul Petrus problematises the way children are being given names to incite future revenge. Likewise, Yanny Guman speaks of similar incidents working in Simbu Province: “They were like ‘these are my enemies, they killed many of our people before’ and they started telling their kids that. Those stories were told to younger generations and so we thought we have to put an end to them.” Conflict narratives about the past always contain political agendas in the present. Finding constructive ways to speak about past conflict is important. Francis Semoso encourages his fellow Bougainvilleans to move beyond “finger pointing” and instead take “progressive ownership of our conflict stories and help us to make new commitments... for our young people now and in the future.” He adds that remembering traumas and going through processes of grieving can result in new ideas and “form new alliances based on trust, empathy and a new value system and energy for going forward.”

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

Analysing and addressing the root causes of conflict is key to future conflict prevention. In Bougainville, Dennis Kuiu lists present conflict drivers, such as those around questions of identity, resource management and political competition. He points to the ongoing “general feeling of insecurity among the perpetrators

and the victims”, which remains until this day. This, he says, manifests in a range of “symptoms” such as a continued presence of firearms, alcohol abuse, trauma and a loss of respect for authority. In Solomon Islands, Dr Anouk Ride points out that regional law and order intervention, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (‘RAMSI’), put an end to fighting, but that “the underlying conflict issues are still there.” She goes on to say “the frustrating part sometimes is how little things have moved over the years”. The absence of violence is not enough. Dealing with the past is about addressing complex and challenging conflict drivers to ensure sustainable peace.

RESTORING RELATIONS

Dealing with the past can involve difficult conversations that people may prefer to avoid, choosing instead to focus on ‘fixing’ the present. Part of the difficulty in tackling past injustice is that it often involves a complex set of relations between communities and actors at different levels. In the contributions here, dealing with the past is primarily about restoring these relationships and building new strategic ones. This can be summed up by Sister Lorraine Garasu who demonstrates the importance of peacebuilding so that people “can rebuild their relationships from the past... and live in unity and harmony.”

While her contribution speaks to all five findings in this collection, we begin with Sister Lorraine Garasu’s conversation with Dr Mercy Masta to set the scene about why there is a need to address past violence in order to move forward.



Tsiroge, Bougainville, PNG © Conciliation Resources 2023

SISTER LORRAINE GARASU

Sister Lorraine Garasu is a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth and the founder of the Nazarene Rehabilitation Centre in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea ('PNG'). She was honoured as the 2009 PNG winner of the International Women of Courage Award and in 2011 received the Order of Australia in recognition of her peacebuilding work. Sister Lorraine contributed to the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and has been a leading figure in supporting women's participation in the Bougainville peace process.

Dr Mercy Masta: Tell me about yourself and your organisation.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: My name is Sister Lorraine, and I'm a congregation member of the Sisters of Nazareth of the Bougainville Diocese. I have been a member of this congregation for over 40 years, and I have been a sister. I have been involved in peacebuilding work for 34 of the 40 years. I was involved in this work both during and after the Bougainville crisis. At present I work at the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation — it is a program of the Sisters of Nazareth congregation, and this program was set up after the crisis in 2001 to respond to the needs of the people for rehabilitation and healing from trauma after the crisis. It also addresses issues of violence against women. We have set up safe houses to address the issues of violence that women were and are experiencing, especially domestic violence. This is so we can provide support services and at the same time address the issues.

Another thing that we do at the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation is provide a men's counselling service, mostly for perpetrators. This is so that perpetrators can deal with and address the issues they face through counselling and education about domestic violence or other forms of violence. We also have men's hubs where we work with young men who are abusing drugs and consuming alcohol. Apart from these programs, we also have another big program that we run in the community where we do education and awareness on the prevention and reduction of violence against women and children or domestic violence, family and sexual violence. In another community programme, we do peacebuilding, conflict transformation and trauma healing to help with the rehabilitation and the reconciliation. Through this work, we try to mend their differences and bring about peace and harmony in the community. This is just a little bit about the Nazareth Centre.

Dr Mercy Masta: Why do you care about this topic and what motivated you to contribute?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: What motivated me to share my experience is because of the important work that I am doing with the people in peacebuilding, which is to help them reduce violence and prevent it. Our hope and what we are already seeing is that — through our violence prevention programme, peacebuilding and conflict analysis work — we are seeing people

transformed and in many of the cases, people have reconciled and they are rebuilding relationships.

There are so many broken relationships amongst people in family and community, they are so divided over so many types of disputes, whether it's to do with what's left over from the crisis or there are new, emerging issues like land disputes, sorcery, family violence — whatever form of violence and conflict you can name. So, for me, the basic message I share is that conflict will not be removed, or it will not end, unless it is properly or correctly analysed. Therefore, we need to correctly analyse the conflict and understand the issues so we can negotiate for peace, reconciliation, harmony and goodwill. This is why I am interested in sharing the work that we do. Therefore, while we are providing education for peacebuilding, conflict transformation and trauma healing, we are, at the same time, helping people to analyse the issues and understand the root causes of these conflicts.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thanks for that Sister, this is very encouraging. Bougainville is currently undergoing post-referendum negotiations based on the Bougainville Peace Agreement between the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government ('ABG'), and so, in your opinion, how do you think that the work that you are doing will bring about lasting peace and assist towards addressing the results of the referendum?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: The referendum is already in place, all Bougainvilleans have voted in favour of independence. However, independence will not be achieved if the people are divided, independence will only come if people are united. Therefore, a key message that I have shared with people in my work is: if you have issues with somebody, you have to settle them, whether they are minor, medium or major issues. You can't leave them unresolved because, from my experience, too many issues have happened, and people have not been able to resolve those issues. That is why we are not able to build sustainable peace that is conducive to independence. That is why we need to build on what is conducive to independence and that is why I am doing this work.

Dr Mercy Masta: What does dealing with the legacies of past conflict mean to you and the people in your context?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Dealing with the past is difficult because sometimes people do not want to acknowledge and accept the past to move forward. So sometimes we need to educate people about the past, help them understand their past, accept their past, reconcile the past and move forward. That is why we do the work that we do at Nazareth Centre; to help people understand and give them the skills and tools to address these issues. At times, the issues or conflicts remain if they resolve it through the traditional systems and they do not do it correctly.

Dealing with the past is not easy, and sometimes people can talk about the past and they think they know what the past is all about, and sometimes the story about the past is not clear to them. At the Nazareth Centre, we have processes for intervention that can help them understand their own stories from the past and we work with them through unpacking these issues as it is not easy to deal with legacies from the past. People need to recognise that it is difficult.

Dr Mercy Masta: That is a really good point because sometimes people cannot remember the history of the conflict. In the case of Bougainville, I'm thinking about the current generation, they didn't experience the conflict themselves, but their parents did. However, they are dealing with the past legacies of the conflict. It is affecting them too.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Yes, it is affecting them — it's affecting their lives, it's affecting their ability to have a clear picture about the future and to understand that there is a future that they need to work towards. So, if people don't understand the past and deal with the past properly, they don't have a future because they are hung up on the past. The work that Nazareth Centre does in trauma healing is so important. I strongly advocate to people that they need to undergo trauma healing or conflict transformation, or at least some level of intervention that helps a person analyse the causes of conflict to resolve it. These are important processes in resolving all these issues and completely removing them from their lives. So, they can rebuild their relationships from the past.

Dr Mercy Masta: Sister, what you are saying is so important. This can bridge the healing between the generations too.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Yes, exactly.

Dr Mercy Masta: What are the key concerns in your context for dealing with past conflicts?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: I'll give an example that will explain and answer this question. One concern has to do with missing persons. For example, the relatives of the missing person want to deal with the past, and they want to let go of the past, but what they are waiting on is for the people responsible for the disappearance of the missing person to come forward and acknowledge the crime committed, do right by that person and by

the relatives of that person. They also want the person responsible to disclose where the body was buried.

When we are working with people in peacebuilding, one of the key messages that we give to them is that they should try to work on these issues and resolve them because we cannot carry those issues into the future. The future belongs to the next generation therefore the next generation cannot be responsible for the conflicts we create. If someone kills another person, we cannot let the next generation carry the blame or the burden of dealing with that. Before we move on in life, when we go forward to meet our Maker, God, we need to settle our issues. We cannot leave it for our children and our children's children to deal with it. This is the key message that I leave with them because the future generation should deal with the issue because they won't understand the issues well enough.

I can provide another example. Just this week, I had a conversation with some of the facilitators from our peacebuilding program. I told them: the vision for Bougainville's independence was not our vision. It is the vision of the past generation, most of whom have died. I asked them, 'how do we go about it?' because, in their minds, they know what they want, but do we know what we want? For the future, they wanted Bougainville to be independent from PNG. That's what they wanted — outright independence. So, for us to achieve that vision, what is our undertaking? What do we do to achieve that as the current generation?

Dr Mercy Masta: It's important to heal as a people and as a society and move on.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Yes, exactly.

Dr Mercy Masta: Sister, who are the key actors and how should they shape processes or practices of dealing with the past?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: For the peacebuilding process, there are different actors. At the government level, we have our political leaders like members of parliament or members of the House of Representatives. At the political level, their role is to make political decisions for the sake of peace and prosperity of a country. Some of the key actors are the people in the communities, and the citizens, they are also key actors.

Another group of key actors are civil society groups, like the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation or Sisters of Nazareth who are concerned for peace and justice. At the community level, our role is to educate the communities and to help them understand what peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peace-making are all about so that they can have a fuller understanding, even of their views.

Dr Mercy Masta: Do you think different actors are doing enough?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Well, oftentimes people use the excuse that there is no money to do something.

It's the usual — there is no money to improve the economy, health services or education services. I don't know whether they are excuses, but people will use those excuses. As for me, I mobilise communities and help them to understand what strengths they have and the resources we have to make something happen at our level, so that we are not just waiting for the government. If reconciliation still needs to happen between different groups or parties who are in conflict, the community doesn't necessarily need the government to do that. To help them do that, the Nazareth Centre supports them with funds so that they can do that. In our traditional societies in the past, we did not wait for somebody to do that for us, we did it ourselves. There are other resources or symbols of value in our traditional society that can be used but people in Bougainville have commercialised everything. We don't need to commercialise these processes. We do them because it was done in the past and they can still be done today. Based on our strengths and our resources.

Dr Mercy Masta: Do you think some communities are still doing it the non-commercialised way?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Yes, most communities at the local level make those undertakings. They don't need anyone to give them money; they just do it. I believe that as long as they follow the proper process of peacebuilding and conflict analysis, they will achieve reconciliation, rebuild relationships and live in unity and harmony.

Dr Mercy Masta: The analysis process is really important because, like you said, they truly understand the root causes of the conflict and address it. If you don't analyse and reflect, you won't know.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: The expression that I always use in analysis when I run these peacebuilding programmes is, 'analysis is how we examine, review, understand and resolve conflicts. Then to make peace in the community, we build unity, resolve grievances, and bring justice to those who have done us wrong.'

Dr Mercy Masta: This is very good. I like that expression a lot. Now thinking about people with diverse backgrounds, how does your work impact people with different backgrounds, young people or older people or people from different socio-economic backgrounds or ethnicities — how are they engaged in the work that you do?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: For us at the Nazareth Centre — the peacebuilding tools that we use — all these tools help these people of various backgrounds in understanding what we mean by analysis (examining, reviewing and understanding). I usually use the analogy of the onion tool to understand the worldviews of people from diverse backgrounds. The onion tool is perfect for explaining the different positions of people and the interests and needs of the different parties. After I give the analogy of the onion, then I tell them that there are all these different parties and these different parties have their positions, they have their interests and they have their needs, so by being able to examine, review and understand their needs and positions. Some of these needs, positions, and interests will be similar and so, when they realise this, it becomes easy for them to work together. So, when young people come to sit down with older people or adults, regardless of where they are from, they understand and are aware of their different positions, needs and interests. The onion analogy is a powerful tool.



The village of Tsiroge in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea © Conciliation Resources 2023

Dr Mercy Masta: What are some weaknesses? You have already mentioned a current weakness, which is money, and how money has been part of the process, commercialised and making it difficult, but are there any other weaknesses or — if there aren't any — what are some of the strengths of the processes and practices that are used to deal with past legacies of conflict?

Sister Lorraine: Sometimes in a past legacy, people are already divided, and they take sides. This can be a challenge. It's also challenging when no one wants to bring them together and mediate or remind them not to be that way. So, sometimes conflict from the past can be divisive because from that original conflict, another will emerge. When a new issue emerges, I refer to it as building a mountain. That is why I tell them that if conflicts are not resolved they become difficult to resolve, and so as new conflicts arise, they get added onto these already existing conflicts that eventually turn into a much bigger conflict. I therefore advise them to sort these issues one by one and not to allow them to build up. They must examine, review and understand the conflict at the different levels.

Dr Mercy Masta: What do you see as some of the strengths in the practices and processes you use?

Sister Lorraine: One big strength of our people, generally speaking, is that we are Christians. Most people in Bougainville are Christians and they follow the Church, whether they are Catholic, United, Seventh-Day Adventist or Pentecostal. Most of the time it is their beliefs and their faith that tells them this needs sorting out. This is one important thing that people strongly hold on to. We believe that, as Christians, we should not have divisions amongst ourselves, we need to resolve conflicts and live peaceful lives. It is a major part of people's lives and what drives them to resolve conflicts and issues in their communities.

Dr Mercy Masta: In terms of reaching people, the Church can reach many.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Yes and, also, it's about relationships. The people are related, and in their clans they are related. And so, the relationships among clan, family and community members are very important to the people. That is why when conflicts arise, they quickly want to resolve them because when issues or conflicts come up, it can bring shame and uneasiness to the people. It requires them to sort out their issues.

Dr Mercy Masta: What are some lessons that can be shared to make a difference in your context or even other contexts? How would you compare other contexts with Bougainville? For instance, where Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation peacebuilders did a comparative learning exercise with Hela Peacebuilders. Can you think of some of the lessons learnt from that process?

Sister Lorraine Garasu: Generally speaking, people in Bougainville are peaceful people. Hence, when a

conflict arises when there has been a conflict from the past or when a new conflict emerges that links to a past conflict, there will be uneasiness amongst the people. They will want the conflict resolved because they prioritise relationships. While we have various languages and belong to various villages in Bougainville, we recognise that each person has dignity and self-worth. We don't look down on anybody, and that's why they will want to resolve these conflicts. This is a valuable lesson that we can learn from the way of life of people.

When there is peace and order we can achieve and sustain development that is good for the people. When there are divisions, we cannot achieve this, especially when there is diversity. I think this is another lesson I am learning.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you so much for your time. That was the last question but if you have anything else you would like to add, please feel free to do so.

Sister Lorraine Garasu: The important thing that I wanted to share is the value of examining, reviewing and understanding conflict. This should be part of our daily life. Let's look at our lives — we dialogue or negotiate about the type of food that we want to eat, how we are going to cook it, and what we will use to cook it. We can apply that to prevent disagreement and division. That is why I wanted to speak about the process of analysis and what I say when I teach this process is very important too. It is important for everyday life, for where we work and who we work with. Especially the relationships, because most times in relationships people argue about decisions. Last week when I was talking to a group of facilitators, I reminded them that the vision for independence in Bougainville did not come from us, rather it came from our forefathers. If we are serious about independence, we first need to do something from where we are sitting or standing. This work needs to be done beforehand. Only then will we find inner peace individually and that will automatically translate into peace for the society and the country as a whole.

Dr Mercy Masta: This is all very inspiring. Thank you again for your time.

2. PRACTICES TO BUILD PEACE: WHAT DOES DEALING WITH THE PAST LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

“... RECONCILIATION IS A HEALING PROCESS THAT INVOLVES RECOGNITION, UNDERSTANDING, ACCEPTANCE, BREAKING OF BOWS AND ARROWS [(DISARMAMENT)], CEREMONIAL AND RESTORATION. IT IS ABOUT PROVIDING A SAFE SPACE FOR THE WARRING PARTIES TO ACKNOWLEDGE EACH OTHER’S HUMANITY, EMPATHISING WITH EACH OTHER’S SUFFERING, ADDRESSING AND REDRESSING PAST INJUSTICE, AND OFTEN EXPRESSING REMORSE, GRANTING FORGIVENESS, AND OFFERING REPARATIONS.”

Dennis Kuiai

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

In Sister Lorraine Garasu’s opening contribution, she spoke about a range of peacebuilding practices that she employs to assist people in analysing their own situation. Conflict analysis is an important practice that peacebuilders use across the region, yet she is not strictly envisioning it here as a workshop full of butcher’s paper and markers but, rather, the process of sitting down and engaging in meaningful and constructive dialogue. For example, *tok stori* or *talanoa* — to create a shared understanding of ‘what happened’ and what could happen next. For Sister Lorraine Garasu, “the important thing... [is the] value of examining, reviewing and understanding conflict.” This is a foundational part of peacebuilding processes, big or small.

RECONCILIATION

Recognising and understanding the perspective of others is a core aspect of conflict analysis and underpins a key conflict resolution mechanism employed in the Pacific — reconciliation. Reconciliation seeks to restore relationships between different groups of people. It has a local ‘flavour’ in each Pacific context.

Dennis Kuiai, in the quote above, describes what this looks like in Bougainville. In Fiji, for example, Paulo Baleinakorodawa talks about restoring relationships and economic activity at a very local (extended) family level, while in Bougainville and the PNG Highlands it is described as diverse formal processes with a strong emphasis on ceremony and ritual. In the PNG Highlands, it is also described as a result that is worked towards as part of a mediation-styled process. Reconciliation places a primary emphasis on restorative forms of justice, which allow people to once again “live in peace and harmony.” Its role in dealing with the past cannot be overlooked.

TRUE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Reconciliation practices have come under strain across the region due to the emergence of larger scale and more complex conflicts, as well as a focus on law and order. In Solomon Islands, Patrina Vulu is searching for “the steps involved in order to reach a genuine process of peace and reconciliation... for all parties,” and warns about the steps being free of “fraud” or specific political agendas. In Bougainville, reconciliations have been key to implementing the peace process, however there is concern that restorative values have been lost when carried out hastily or when reliant on money. Sister Lorraine says, “issues or conflicts remain if they resolve it through the traditional systems and they do not do it correctly”, and advocates on using “resources or symbols of value in our traditional society”.

LOCAL PEACE PROCESSES

Another key practice highlighted in the contributions from the PNG Highlands is the use of informal, community-based peace talks and agreements that incorporate different elements of global and traditional peace processes. These too are largely restorative in nature. For example, Willie Kerenga speaks about people acknowledging “their wrongdoings”, entering a peace process known as *burukim sugar* in Tok Pisin, which translates to ‘sugarcane cutting’. Likewise, in Yanny Guman’s mediation and restorative justice work, he speaks about addressing broken relationships and initiating dialogues to bring about community peace agreements.

NATIONAL PEACE PROCESSES

Dealing with the past is also implicit in 'formal' government-led and internationally supported processes. Peace processes at this scale are complex, and often require lots of moving parts. This is demonstrated by Dennis Kuiai's description of the Bougainville Peace Process, which deals with the past in Bougainville. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission ('TRC') process was held in Solomon Islands which, Patrina Vulu believes, has not been a straightforward process. At the time of writing, legislation has been passed to establish a TRC in Fiji, which, according to Paulo Baleinakorodawa, must deal with the whole past, beginning with colonialism, and must be inclusive of all and move beyond political elites if it is to be effective.

TRAUMA HEALING

Finally, there are practices that aim to bring about a peace mindset at both a personal and societal level. Many contributors talk about trauma healing as an important part of dealing with the past, and as something that can take place collectively through different forms of community mobilisation or traditional methods, such as peace symbols and feasting. Dealing with the past as peacebuilding practice can, therefore, take many forms. Ultimately, it is about restoring relationships and requires that people themselves are able to fully participate in individual and collective healing of past wrongs.



Tsiroge, Bougainville, PNG © Conciliation Resources 2023

YANNY GUMAN

Yanny Smith Guman was born in Simbu Province, Papua New Guinea ('PNG'). After graduating from PNG university of Technology with a Business Management degree, he joined the PNG National Volunteer Service serving remote communities. This led Yanny to further his experience in volunteer program management, not-for-profit management and achieve a post graduate qualification in Applied Conflict Transformation. Yanny later started a non-governmental organisation (the Community Development Agency) based in Simbu Province, focusing on improving the lives of marginalised communities.

Dr Mercy Masta: Hi Yanny, thank you for allowing me this time to be interviewed. Can you talk about the work that you are doing?

Yanny Guman: It started with my organisation mobilising communities. The first point of target were all our key stakeholders, key law enforcers or community leaders, they are mandated or natural community leaders and were at the villages including those that were part of the churches. We got them all together and we introduced the win-win mediation restorative justice programme. We got a little bit of funding from the Law Justice Sector under DFAT some years back for this work and so we basically trained people in the district so they can improve on mediation and restoring justice in the communities. There were almost five hundred and forty, if I can remember correctly, about that many people. We trained them so when they started taking up their roles and applying some of those skills and knowledge they'd gained, we are seeing improvement at a greater level.

There are so many conflicts. I mean smaller incidences that could flare into bigger conflicts were resolved by that stage. That was kind of a trigger for us, motivation for us to do a bit more, and even bigger, peacebuilding among tribal enemies who have got some past. They were like 'these are my enemies, they killed many of our people before' and they started telling their kids that. Those stories were told to younger generations and so we thought we have to put an end to them. So, what we did was we didn't have a standalone peace programme, but we integrated these into other work, for instance, livelihood work or our community mobilisation work and then started bringing in young people together. We started with young people but also brought key leaders like the church and community leaders as well as the law justice enforcers in the community. We brought them all together and then talked about intervening into those conflicts.

Other conflicts were from the past, maybe the past ten or fifteen years ago, perhaps they may not be fighting but they have always been enemies, they do not talk to each other. These are broken relationships that lasted for a very long time so we thought we should start at initiating dialogues between the two enemy tribes. The first conflict we resolved we called for a community peace agreement. We did that in one community that has seven tribes on one side, and then five tribes on

the other side. This was prior to the 2012 PNG general elections. We wanted to do something before the 2017 general elections, so it just puts an end [to the conflict] and we want to see some results there and that was the first one we did and in fact that was the very first time in 22 to 25 years that they've been experiencing extreme conflict. Almost every five years [election cycle] they were expecting conflict to happen and so when we did that community peace agreement where they signed agreements between themselves, we had to facilitate the ceremonies. We go back to all the traditional ceremonies, processes to bring about healing and peace, and that took us almost six months prior to coming up to that one-day event when we brought the parties together [to sign the peace agreement], the police and government officials, as well as the churches, to witness that particular event. That was a significant move, and so during the 2017 election we did not experience any tribal fights. They [both parties] upheld that particular agreement they built.

So, we then moved onto the next conflict in 2015, which comprises another major language group with seventeen tribes altogether. They had been fighting against each other and because they've seen results of that first one [the above intervention] — in fact, the bishop of the Catholic church, who is from there — wanted us to get involved in his community and so that's how we got involved in bringing the seventeen tribes together and doing the second peacebuilding intervention. That occurred in 2015 and 2017, just before the elections. We then worked with another language group in Gumini where we had to do another community peace agreement.

The processes had various stages — I mean periods of time depending on people's availability and readiness for that event. We don't force it, we just work with people, keep empowering and motivating them to come to that major event when they will finally make confessions. They will make rituals, they will have to host a feast, they will have to do whatever it takes to strengthen that broken relationship, and it's all done by themselves, nobody from outside — even ourselves, we don't pay anyone for anything. All we have to do is just facilitate all the meetings, all the gatherings, all the discussions, it's all that it takes for us to do.

So that was the third one we solved and then eventually that transpired to the next village where they have

been fighting amongst themselves for many years as well, they said 'okay we will do the same', so up to now we are working on the sixth peacebuilding intervention. We just did last Christmas where it's actually at the backdrop of the district, no accessibility to anything, people just killing themselves. Up to 43 people died in a 22-year conflict and so we have to go in and do conflict mapping, analysis of the trends and identify all the impacts. We have to bring the two communities together so that's how we do it. Once we did it, immediately after peacebuilding, we'd ask for the government to go back and restore services, especially health services and education facilities, and that's what we did in four of those locations, so the schools now are operating.

Since the first conflict resolution that we did, we've seen the best progression of restoring peace — restoring government services. In all these stages where we've brought about those peacebuilding community peace agreements, immediately there is peace. Since 2012, we have brought an end [to conflict], almost a hundred percent end, and so with the latest election we've gone through and there's no tribal fighting in those communities. That's a collaborative effort from everyone — the church leaders, the community leaders, the people themselves — taking leadership in wanting to resolve something that's been torn apart for many years, and they want to take leadership, they have been doing it to set a new pathway for the future generations and that's what they did for one district in Gumini, Simbu Province.

More recently, we visited Koroba and worked with two or three tribal clans up there for a small intervention but our hope is that if we find some resources to go there, we will try to replicate the same processes in Hela, which have a different cultural context, but I think it's good that we can try to apply some of those processes that we used here. That's our thinking for the future but as we said peace is the foundation for development and you will see the dividend and the peace, and the people will start recognising that businesses are going back: many people are engaging in businesses and most of those schools are now opening up and all that — kids are going to school. They are now involved in a lot of economic activities, many people are now building permanent houses and there are places where there were even no roads — they are building roads themselves without government support — and so those are some I guess probably anecdotal evidences of the work that we do in building peace. It triggers other forms of development and changes in communities, so that's something that we are very happy about. It's not just us or me or anyone: it's collective efforts of all the people who got involved in wanting peace as an outcome for that kind of work that we do, so anyway let me stop here for now.

Dr Mercy Masta: This is really good. It's about giving new perspectives on how to look at conflict and how to

build peace. It is such a rich insight, thank you so much. The next question is around key actors. Who are the key actors in your context, and how should or do they shape processes or practices of dealing with the past and also in relation to what these processes or practices should look like at different levels? Also, how is your organisation bringing in diverse people with diverse backgrounds? So, thinking of women — like, you've already mentioned you've included young people. How does your organisation deal with that? What are the key concerns in your context for dealing with past conflict?

Yanny Guman: I think it's an important question, because for us we started realising that without identifying the key actors, we couldn't proceed. We can't move further past what we wanted to achieve. Our initial work was around our relationship building with those key actors and we've identified the ones who support conflict. They are also the people who have power and who want to defend or hold on to it, and they don't care less about other peoples' lives so they keep talking about the conflicts and defending themselves even going out and getting more firearms, those are the key people we wanted to change their mindset.

Some of them are educated elites who are for and against and because they are working in towns, do not live in the village, they care less what people will do. During the election they will come with all the goodies, all the things they need to go and distribute to manipulate, influence, force, threaten and whatever they need to do so they can vote. We want to stop that. We have to educate our people to some level, so that's another level of elite groups that we need to also change their mindsets.

The other group of people are the victims — those people who are at the receiving end of conflict and those who are marginalised like the women, the elderly, the children. We talk to them to get their input and consensus because they are the ones who form the larger numbers, if they mobilise together, they can create an even bigger impact. The real people that wear the power are leaders and they have the community at their disposal. The community leaders and church leaders are always present in the communities. We identified the older leaders but then we also want to groom and develop new leadership through the young people because once the older leaders are gone, we want to help develop a new breed of young leadership to take forward the work into the future. That's why we target young people across the districts across different language groups. We also want to get some women involved as well because women play very significant roles.

Gender mainstreaming is important for our work, so we get women to participate at all levels. In the past they were not active, they were basically, you know — the gender and social norms are very biased towards men and it was difficult to break through for women.

We want to give women more prominence in leadership roles. We promote women's voices and spaces for them to participate in development so that they speak out on issues that affect them directly at different levels in the community. We identified those key actors, and we started doing a lot of relationship building exercises and hosted activities such as community leadership training to bring people together.

We see the church as an institution that needs to play an active role in terms of facilitating development. They shouldn't just focus on the spirituality of people, no, the church has to be holistic so that's where we brought them into a holistic picture so we got all those leaders must be empowered and involved, trained to support our work.

We developed two training modules. The first one is called Development Education Training, Community Leadership training and the second one is called Peacebuilding and Community Mobilisation Facilitation Skills. Through this training, we give people basic skills and empower them to understand the bigger picture and then get back to their specific scope of where they have some control and influence to make those differences. We mobilised and organised different people of influence, so they take ownership to some extent and resolve their issues. They have to do it themselves, but we spend a lot of time mentoring them. This requires resources as well as practice. We do it as we believe in people, people have the answers themselves, we don't believe in someone else from outside coming in and helping them. So, we are influencing in a way at different levels, at the bottom level, but also in the middle and then with leaders who hold most power and who sit up on the top.

We also realise the biggest group of people that we started to influence are on social media platforms such as Facebook group, WhatsApp group. We can influence the mindset of the elite group, those who are formally educated who are working outside. We keep telling them, 'know their place here, but if you keep throwing money towards buying arms and ammunitions and when you return to the village with bags of money throwing at people and then you leave, you are causing more damage than good'. We keep educating them to some level to influence their mindset and approach, so they realise that they also have the power and ability to mobilise and change according to what they think is good for them. That's the kind of level of change we want them to pursue and move towards. We want them to start thinking and talking about the realities of the development challenge our people are facing and how elite people can contribute in various ways.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you so much for sharing that. I hope by telling your story you can get the support you need. So, my next question is what are the current weaknesses and strengths you see in the processes and practices used in dealing with past legacies of conflict in your context?

Yanny Guman: All these sounds positive but now we have challenges and weaknesses as a small local NGO, especially in accessing resources and funding to deal with these, is our ongoing community work. We don't carry bags of money or are seen to be doing it with lots of money. We are working in a manner where it's less costly for us so we can cover many areas and reach many people and so, at the organisational front, that's a weakness for us. We are starting to utilise a lot of young people who are formally educated and have university degrees. Many of them are looking for jobs. This in itself is a strategy to influence them when they work with us even if it's for short-term assignments or a full-time job with us. We train them by developing necessary skills that they can utilise in community work.

Another challenge we face is that, while we started building peace agreements with communities, people were tempted to break those agreements if there is a lot more money, or if politicians are going into communities with bags of money and ordering people to do things. There was one instance where the first peace agreements were reached with one community, however just before the 2017 elections, politicians began throwing money at people, which then resulted in people fighting against each other for the money. When you talk about sustained peace, we have to make the people really take ownership of it. So out of the six or seven communities that we helped build peace, four of them are continuously celebrating peace on the days 25–26 of December. They did it themselves — they brought all the communities together, they brought their food and they celebrated on those days. They were basically reinforcing the peace after they realised the benefit of having peace in the community. If we don't do it, they could be distracted easily by other people who have other motives.

The kind of work we do is like an abstract, you know we are part of a bigger society where politics, and we talk about corruption and how it is having a direct impact on our work in the communities. So, we are talking to people about setting up market stalls and wanting to send their kids to school but school fees are high or there are no accessible market opportunities where they can produce to sell. When the government does not help the people then the people are faced with many challenges. But the way we see it is, we can do so much as long as people can have peace in their own community, then they can work on other developments within their capabilities. They might desire a decent house, ample food supply, open a bank account or financial security for when they face a disaster. I think these are the kind of milestones they want to achieve. The bigger problems are there, and we can't solve a lot of these big problems, but we can do what we can as people want to live decent lives and feel happy.

People appreciate living right and are moving to urban settings. This is becoming a trend here because they are drawn to settings where services are available.

We want to stop people from coming into towns, so we ask them to utilise their land by introducing livelihood programs or [small to medium enterprises] ('SME') and income generating projects to help improve their quality of life. When we started introducing the water and health sanitation programs, we talked to the community about beautification whereby people live in decent homes, fences for animals, a decent pit toilet, access to water, fish and honey projects. So, we are looking at appropriate ways, working with [the National Agriculture Research Institute] ('NARI') and utilising most of their new and appropriate research development and technologies. Importantly, for our communities, we have to give them skills to basically use the resources they have in the village.

So, in terms of processes and practices that we do, I mean we are trying our best and we keep learning, this is not the only and best way to do it. We want to keep learning and moving forward in that, so that's why there are schools for young people who are dropping out of school and even those who are graduating from universities are now looking for jobs. We thought that's one way of contributing to young people by connecting them back to their respective communities, so that they can utilise their land, take on leadership and address a lot of those issues. So again, for now, our key activity is to groom and coach them to become leaders.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you, I think that's wonderful to hear about the focus of your organisation on leaders of the next generation. A lot of times the focus is not targeted especially with this sort of work. There are a lot of young people that are in our communities and are disenfranchised and so it is really good to hear about this focus. My next question is, what are some lessons that can be shared to make a difference in your context, lessons from the work that you are doing and thinking of everything that you've worked on so far over the many years? What are some of the key lessons, whether it's to do with processes and systems, practises or people, or just the work itself in dealing with conflict? What would you say are some of the key lessons?

Yanny Guman: There are many lessons we can learn, but the key one for us is the idea that people can't do things for themselves. We realised in our work that if we start empowering them enough, they will do a lot of things for themselves, and so that's one lesson that we learned. By way of approach, we use it when empowering — believing in people; that they can do a lot for themselves utilising the resources they have, using the skills and values and the social capital in the context in which they come from. They can be able to do a lot of things for themselves. So, everything we do within our small organisation here is all about building people up. As long as people change their mindset, then things get rolling eventually. So, that's one key lesson that we do, and we don't replicate or duplicate the approach that the government is doing. It's all about

giving, serving, and large-scale development. Large-scale development can be well-rested on people's initiative and their own developments as a basis. But from the experiences we saw, when they keep talking about development, they go and put a water tank or water supply somewhere, the next time they come, they find out that those tanks were gone, and water supply pipes were cut. So, we said, 'Well, if people didn't get involved in it in the first place, unfortunately that's how people reacted these days'.

Also, sustaining our work is very difficult because changes happen, people move in and out of the community, leadership changes, and other factors like the pandemic. We had a difficult experience talking about it. It actually reinforces the way we talk about how they can utilise their time, resources, land, and everything for household production.

Of those twenty-seven young people who came out of our program, they were grade ten or grade twelve school-leavers. That's one of our success stories, and we have not done any formal training with them. But out of all these many skills training that we deliver to the people in the community. We actually make it a must for them to get those training. We are basically moulding, shaping and mentoring them in a way that we also build bridges for them to pursue their education. Five people have actually gone through postgraduate studies and gained master's degrees, about ten of them were able to get bachelor's degrees, and some of them are at the diploma level. They all got formal employment. Some of them are still working with us. So, for us, it's like a success story. This has inspired us to build an institution so we can formally put these ideas into a course that will sustain itself in the future.

Dr Mercy Masta: This interview has been so rich and insightful. Thank you so much again for your time. I wish you the very best in the amazing work that you do.

FRANCIS SEMOSO

Francis Semoso has supported community peacebuilding in Bougainville since 2000, focusing on addiction counselling, trauma informed support and awareness and gender based violence ('GBV'). Francis has worked with Leitana Neihan Women's Development Agency, Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, Autonomous Bougainville Government and Caritas mentoring community-based counsellors, providing crisis support, trauma awareness and advocacy on GBV. Francis has participated in the peacebuilding and trauma healing training at Mindanao Peace Institute and attended the UN peace conference for the Asia-Pacific region.

OUR STORY, OUR PAST AND OUR FUTURE

Community trauma as the result of the Bougainville crisis has never been given any prominence by successive governments and is still a huge gap today. Trauma from political and natural events in life can be shattering and can condition a person to a very difficult way of life. However, this has never been acknowledged by government leaders, community leaders and sometimes the churches, which are more interested in having a government as an authority, which is important for normalcy to happen and forgetting that the normality of the individual, is also important. This is an act of omission based purely on ignorance and acknowledgement of conflict war trauma.

As the saying goes, 'we can witness the same traumatic event but have a very individual and specific way in which Trauma from this event affects us'. This is very true for individuals, adults who are in their mid-40s as they were children then, families who have lost some of their members and have never reclaimed them nor know where they are buried to say the least.

The Governments of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea ('PNG') should investigate a way to allow survivors of the Bougainville crisis to have time to remember their traumatic events, grieve about them and receive the support they need to leave the past and move on to the future as survivors of the Bougainville conflict. This can be done as a memorial to remember the events of the crisis as it will give them an opportunity to recall and think about it and their feelings can be collected from the emotional bank account stored in their subconscious mind to relive once more in a safe environment for moving forward.

Another way will be to allow the processing of traumatic memories, validations, acknowledgement, and assisting the survivors to select a way to move forward as survivors. Again, bits and pieces have been done by INGO and NGO and the churches and others, but nothing concrete and conclusive has emerged from these efforts, as a community effort, to move individuals, families and communities from victimhood to survivors. This must be done just in case we try to forget, as it can be difficult to forget. There can also be an unconscious consciousness for those affected

who will never link that to a particular personal or community experience and this can have an adverse effect on individuals and long-term effects on families and communities.

I remembered my time at Mindanao Peace Institute in 2012 embracing once again the connectivity of the peace builders at the different trainings, as that helped me to deal with some of my traumas. Our society had gone through a terrible experience unseen since our ancestors formed our community, as it was peaceful, connected and had leaders that considered the livelihood of many people from many areas in Bougainville. That changed during the crisis as groups of different people were travelling around the two islands of both Buka and mainland Bougainville looking for enemies during the crisis. Earlier on, their enemy was the PNG Government and the PNG Defence Force, but when the army retreated these groups started to look for enemies within. That was quite destabilising for the community structure, and our chiefs were pushed to the side, and the young soldiers started to take control of law and order and lead the community. In effect they were creating law and order problems by arresting anyone that they suspected as going against them to control the people.

Life became very unmanageable and the whole society became much unconnected — seriously static, paralysed socially and economically and the feeling of being caged-in was visible everywhere. We were at the mercy of the soldiers from both sides. Predictability was lost and the people's lives were highly unstructured as the Bougainville Revolutionary Army ('BRA') soldiers controlled every space of our life. In total, we lost being in-charge of our lives and were now physically and emotionally paralysed. Again, there was killing everywhere and enemies real or suspected were killed and tortured.

While this was happening, some leaders secretly negotiated with the local chiefs to find a way to return the Papua New Guinea Army back to an island located in the North of Bougainville. These soldiers risked their lives and could have been killed, as killing of suspects who were seen to be aligned with Papua New Guinea was the norm of the day. Thanks to these brave soldiers, the chiefs ensured that the PNG Army were once again secretly landed on the western part of Buka Island to assume control of strategic locations once

more. That was the start of the return to civil control and some freedom.

There were no government services still, no schools, no hospital, nothing — but the people had finally spoken. All the leaders of Buka have now decided that government services must be returned and worked hard with the PNG Government to negotiate with the BRA and enemy factions to put down arms and negotiate for peace. This took another 10–15 years from 1995–2000 and beyond, where the first council of chiefs from all the chiefs in Buka who paved the way for forming the Buka Council of Elders that continued to support peace and negotiated peace with BRA, resistance forces and the Papua New Guinea Government and PNG Defence Force. All these efforts extended to other parts of Bougainville and, finally, all the areas had some kind of normalcy and the civilians through their chiefs started to assume leadership and continue to negotiate with the PNG Government once again. I was part of the Buka Council of Elders that provided the initial civil leadership, which eventually and progressively throughout Bougainville made way for civil rule to once again be the norm in Bougainville.

While writing this, the Bougainville government is still yet to address psychological issues resulting from the war. There has been very little that has been done in this respect. The Bougainville government has through its peace committee completed the main reconciliation ceremonies for the major parties of BRA, resistance forces, PNG Defence Forces, politicians and some survivors, and perpetrators for civil destructions and killings throughout Bougainville, but the traumas of these parties were never addressed at the deeper level to ensure that memories of the losses of husbands, family members and properties were once again recalled and a new story of these memories constructed and understood differently for the trauma not affect them continuously. A new memory of understanding helps to lessen the impact on people and these help people to forget and move forward.

Some steps need to be taken to harness nonviolence, respect for others, an ongoing step of reconciliation and solidarity, building inner oneness and stepping in to promote human rights and responsibility. These steps can be woven into the post conflict community to survivors and perpetrators. What happened has happened, but life needs to go on. And so, some bonding elements of living after the crisis are urgently important. Our life beyond the crisis can include the following:

1. Dismantling the culture of war;
2. Living with compassion and justice;
3. Intercultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity;
4. Living in harmony with the earth;
5. Cultivating inner peace; and
6. Promoting human rights and responsibility.

Ending the culture of war is necessary. Survivors need to win the hearts of their perpetrators to signal that they are free from the guilt of conflict to survivors and perpetrators. This transformation must happen in the mind and body. A new norm must be cultured with the help of everyone that promotes respect, reconciliation and solidarity. The 'shattered-ness' that is now here can be woven into a new structure and life of being in solidarity. A thought of life with the other and in others must be the tread that binds all the members. That was our traditional way and can still be our way but that must be nurtured.

Living and respecting and sustaining life. People were displaced as the result of the conflict, but they must now be resettled. Looking after the source of our life is utmost important and urgent. Cultivating inner peace for all is a way forward. Again, displacement and personal trauma is a threat to living with compassion and justice, intercultural respect and solidarity, living in harmony with the earth, cultivating inner peace and promoting human rights and responsibility. The traumas of war are a barrier to having this sense of self. The silence within is not happening, as memories triggered intentionally or otherwise are bound to make people recall their traumas. Cultivating inner peace is paramount and very necessary for going forward and beyond.

Living with compassion will allow us never to lose sight of the efforts put into dismantling the culture of war and honouring our suffering to strengthen our combined will for remobilising our people to a journey of life beyond our suffering. This is the new awareness.

Intercultural respect, reconciliation, solidarity and oneness are necessary for supporting the unique sense of self and support us to live with compassion and justice. All these different elements are very important to go forward. Living in harmony with the earth as the Bougainville crisis started because of the different view's clan leaders had about leadership and clan benefits from the mine. There is still a big gap between the awareness of clan, individual and the use of land and so a conscious use of land and environment care and protection is important. Land use must never be the reason for clan members suffering. Seeing together and using land together will ensure land is managed for all, by every member working together.

Cultivating inner peace is a journey that promotes living in harmony. It is the discovery that others are important for my sense of wellbeing. Extending this to others, even to my enemies, can go a long way.

During the conflict, Buka was a host to many people from the south and central provinces of Bougainville, and Buka itself from displacements, as people left their homes and were relocating to make their lives safer and secure. This is also a primary need in recovering from Trauma. There has been massive movement into Bougainville by people from other regions who were

looking for safe homes and security and something worthwhile to do but they have now settled into their current locations and need to go back home where they can really call their home. Buka in the north has been their home ever since.

Trauma healing may require long-term reintegration and rebuilding our lives in our own land and homes and is a security issue for long-term recovery. This must be done, and government and clan leaders must make some decisions about making this happen. It can be done and is necessary but done with care so that no uprooting similar to the crisis can happen. Although people can deal with their trauma by moving on with their lives, an understanding of the driving forces to this new life must be understood. That will ensure that a check is always in place to guide this new moving forward. That is also important for Bougainville as a nation going forward to independence. I have done some basic trauma education and group processing of traumatic memories that have helped individuals and families but strongly believe that this has not been adequate.

A new normality in all communities is a sense of disconnectedness amongst the young people and their parents and families. Many young people have now been displaced and parenting is now a huge challenge. Parents are not connecting with their children and drugs, music boom boxes, internet and other media spaces have become new parents. Children are using some of these substitutes as a way to comfort them from memories and messaging of inadequacy. This is quite prevalent everywhere in Bougainville and the youths, as a community resource for building and developing communities will never be realised.

There is a major need to re-create communities, but a clear vision can be something to point the way to the future for us. Youth reinsertion again to parents, families and communities is urgent and must be done.

Our culture has traditional methods of healing massive traumas of grief and loss. What I witnessed at a community in Buka was inspirational and contained all traditional methods and elements of remembering, grieving and re-integration. This was highly rewarding for community-based trauma informed peacebuilders and advocates. To describe it again, it involved:

1. Massive mobilisation of the community by chiefs and combatants and other leaders urging their members to reform their community again

Leaders in charge at the crisis period have now been restored as head in this village and the young who inherited the leadership were willing to assume their roles and bring members to come together again. This was useful and allowed return this role of leadership to the chiefs. When members of the community are in the radar of the leaders, they will feel connected and can progress together.

2. Planning together and discussions were held and attended by families and clan leaders who were willing to supervise family and clan initiatives to be part of the activities and ceremonies in the event

Again, regaining the authority and leadership were restored to the elders. This is important for trauma healing. All for all, planning the event and the purpose of the ceremonies and the community agreement on the various activities for remembering and grieving.

3. Making it happen was the task of all the clans

This was the physical representation of the discussions and included a community circle of clans and their clan symbols. Members converged into their clan space in the community circle, and this was the visible representation of the new community memberships and leadership.

4. The pledge and slogan

It is good to go forward but now our new identity is formed and launched. It is a reminder of the ceremonies today. The messaging from this event challenges us to be alive in our minds and should remind us of the legacy that we have travelled through or inherited as children. This is our message, our cornerstone.

5. The washing of the traumas for young people by chiefs and clan leaders

The consolidation using traditional peace symbols. There is no better way to wash memories, to separate from the past, to reassume our uniqueness and to return what is not ours. This is the separation and the restoration of community authority lost during the conflict by chiefs. This is our child becoming a man again.

6. The symbol of unity for the future was demonstrated by handing over the leadership from combatants to chiefs and the singing of the traditional peace song

This also included the weaving of the community peace and the 'weaving of the peace basket' by women leaders. Again, our song is our voice, our desire, alive and loud and urging us to go beyond the pain.

7. Feasting

This ceremony was the feasting together to consolidate the leaving of the past and entering into the future. I watched this ceremony and once more recalled my role as a Buka council of Elders in the peace building at government level and my training at Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute and again recalled the huge challenge of putting the broken glasses together again.

As I have implied in the past, Bougainville has experienced a lot of 'shattered-ness'. Bougainville from the past was a very united and strong island led by very wise and mature leaders until younger angry leaders came into power and started to influence young leaders to see only a one-sided painted story of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville Copper Limited ('BCL') as exploiters and thus the rebellion towards the two.

The other finger was pointing to us but never was a story to tell. Every event in life points outwards but also inwards. The real story was the inward story that every eye did not see. The 'US' story. How did we contribute as Bougainvilleans towards the conflict?

The 'us' component of the story can support us to make progressive ownership of our conflict stories and help us to make new commitments to the fast recovery for Bougainville, for us and for our young people now and in the future. Remembering our traumas helps us to leave the past and look into the future. After we grieve, we also think about our going forward. This also helps us to have new ideas about the future. It will support us to form new alliances based on trust, empathy and a new value system and energy for going forward.

The Bougainville government of the post conflict era have done institutional peace ceremonies, which included various aspects of remembering, grieving and challenging Bougainvilleans to construct a strong connectedness but this will be left now to the citizens of Bougainville to embrace and demonstrate in their lives.

Bougainvilleans really have this practical challenge. There are clear venues where this can be done. Our society is well-structured and key institutions well placed at the family, clan, community, and political levels. These are the settings where this can happen. The Bougainville government must look at the stories of reconciliations and peace building in the past and count these as the different benchmarks for Independence. Trauma healing through various ways is the weakest link and our development at every level must look into this. The Bougainville government and other Institutions have a challenging role to support us to remember our individual and community traumas, share our stories and identify with our shared stories to construct beautiful stories for the future.

That is our rainbow to mark a new Bougainville for our children, our grandchildren and us. This is what fathers, leaders and citizens must do for Bougainville.



Tsiroge, Bougainville, PNG © Conciliation Resources 2023

3. INCLUSION IN ADDRESSING CONFLICT LEGACIES: WHO IS INVOLVED IN DECIDING THE WAY FORWARD?

“DURING THE CONFLICT, WOMEN’S TRADITIONAL ROLE AS PEACEMAKERS RESURFACED AND WAS STRENGTHENED BY MANY WOMEN LEADERS AND WOMEN’S GROUPS... WHILE SUCH ACTIONS MAY SEEM INSIGNIFICANT TO OUR GLOBAL READERS, WOMEN HOLD SUCH POWER, WHICH CAN DRAW ATTENTION TO PEACE AND RESPECT.”

Ruth Maetala

GENDERED IMPACTS

Conflict affects people differently. Elites or rural people, men or women, and young people have different roles in, and experiences of, conflict. There are both global and Pacific stereotypes of men as fighters and women and children as victims. Yet, questions of gender and inclusion are complex, with a range of intersectional power dynamics operating in systems of conflict. Paul Petrus reports that women play a role behind the scenes, encouraging men to carry out revenge killings. At the same time, he shows how organisations such as Hela Women in Peacebuilding are working to challenge these norms. Inclusion of different perspectives, agendas and interests remains a significant challenge in dealing with the past. Ultimately, addressing the past selectively — whether by omission or by privileging certain narratives — raises questions about whether sustainable and inclusive peace and security has been achieved.

BEYOND ELITE MALE DOMINANCE

The dominance exercised by men, especially those in elite positions, remains a significant challenge in dealing with the past. In Simbu, Papua New Guinea (‘PNG’), Yanny Guman reflects that “the gender and social norms are very biased towards men and it was difficult to break through for women.” In his peacebuilding practice, he seeks to create spaces for “relationship building exercises” and hosts activities

such as community leadership training to create opportunities to bring all “people together”. Willie Kerenga speaks about inclusion from the perspective of community governance systems, which are a key mechanism of conflict prevention and management that need the involvement of women, young people and people in different kinds of institutional roles. Dealing with the past as community building or nation building is an opportunity to bring in diverse narratives, including those of women and youth. These narratives may also come from non-landowning ‘settler’ groups and other ethnicities, such as those Paulo Baleinakorodawa advocates for in the case of Indo-Fijian and other Pacifica communities in Fiji.

WOMEN’S PEACEBUILDING ROLE

The dominance exercised by male elites has been the focus of peace, security and development in the Pacific. However, many contributions also highlight the important role that women have played in peace leadership. Dennis Kuiai speaks about the successful influence of women’s peace advocacy, their role in taking risks and negotiating throughout the Bougainville peace process. In Solomon Islands, as the quote above shows, Ruth Maetala reveals that the use of women’s traditional roles may not seem important when viewed from a global western-democratic template but has been vital in working towards peace locally. Her contribution speaks to the successes and failures of women’s inclusion in post-conflict Solomon Islands.

INCLUSION OF YOUTH

Also in Solomon Islands, Dr Anouk Ride points to the need for the inclusive ownership of actions designed to build peace. She says, “we sort of view inclusiveness as something nice to do and it ticks our gender boxes and things” but warns that inclusiveness is not just “a nice thing to do” but “something essential for peacebuilding.” She believes that the institutions in Solomon Islands in which women and youth are participating are the ones that have sustained and promoted peace over time. She also warns that while there has been a large focus on the inclusion of women,

she, and many of the other contributors to this report, believe that inclusion of youth remains a big challenge — they are “locked out of most decision-making forums”. Dr Mercy Masta sums this issue up when she says that young men, in particular, are viewed “as disenfranchised or problematic.”

FOSTERING FUTURE LEADERSHIP

Several contributions in this report detail practices working with youth. Yanny Guman discusses community mobilisation actions that “develop new leadership... to take forward the work into the future.” Sister Lorraine Garasu employs strategies that look at the relationships between people, facilitating analyses of different people’s needs, interests and positions to find common ground. She says, “when young people come to sit down with older people or adults... they understand and are aware of their different positions, needs and interests”, which is important for building intergenerational trust. Yet, there remains a strong appeal throughout all contributions for more efforts to be taken to address the position of youth in dealing with the past. In Hela, Paul Petrus believes that “young people need to be

empowered with nonviolent approaches to conflicts and be aware of the issues affecting their future.” Willie Kerenga is seeking to find strategies to involve young people “in meaningful activities” and to address the “new normality in all communities” — “a sense of disconnectedness amongst the young people.” In Bougainville, Francis Semoso is seeking to combat intergenerational trauma passed down to young people.

REBALANCING POWER RELATIONS

Inclusion holds “creative” potential says Dr Anouk Ride. For example, she says youth are “more willing to challenge the structures that we have and the power systems that we have.” Accordingly, she “really think[s] involving youth is key.” In this way, dealing with the past inclusive of gender and other intersectional identities means working to transform different forms of power and seeking greater equality in the future. As Paulo Baleinakorodawa questions: “How do you create and recreate just peaceful societies? You create and recreate them by involving the people who make up that society.”



Participants take part in a sharing and collaboration workshop in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea © Conciliation Resources 2023

PAUL PETRUS

Paul Petrus is from the Western Highlands Province in Papua New Guinea. He is currently doing his final year in a Masters of Research Methodology at the Divine Word University. Paul has been a peace and justice advocate in various capacities with many local and international organisations and churches. Paul is a local peacebuilding and conflict resolution trainer with over 15 years of experience. His areas of interest are indigenous peacebuilding, social justice and peace education.

TRIBAL VIOLENCE IN HELA

Hela is one of the provinces with abundant natural resources. It is known for its liquefied natural gas. It was politically separated from Southern Highlands province in 2012. Hela has a population of over 200,000, with its political boundary bordering Enga in the east, Southern Highlands towards the south, West Sepik in the north and Western Province towards the western end. While the provincial capital Tari is at least experiencing meagre development, much of the province lacks the basic government services. Huli, Hewa and Duna are the major languages spoken in Hela.

The information collected is based on the discussions, formal and informal conversations with participants from a Conciliation Resources facilitated scoping project, workshops and peacebuilding training in Hela between 2021 to 2023.

Tribal fights have been a major contributing factor to the lack of development in vast areas of the remote areas. However, tribal fighting has been an acceptable form of traditional conflict resolution practiced in the Highlands region. Hela is no exception. It is one of the few traditions still very active, unlike other cultures dying out due to outside influence.

The style and level of fighting has changed dramatically. A former warlord boasted locals have more modern powerful weapons than the army and police. Modern weapons have replaced traditional bows and arrows. There are no more recognised battlefields with strict guidelines and boundaries. Today towns, markets, sports venues and district headquarters become battlefields. Enemies take revenge in a vigilante style. They attack the enemy anytime anywhere within the province as well as out of the province. No place is a safe haven for enemies until conflict resolution mechanisms are initiated and compensations negotiated and paid. The police, church leaders, government peace mediators and community leaders call for a truce and arrange compensations.

Tribal violence is a common daily experience among the many tribal groups in the Hela province. It has defied colonial explorers strict laws imposed. Pioneer missionaries' message of hope and forgiveness never penetrated the payback mentality of the Highlanders. An independent state with its law enforcing agencies

are not able to curb the ever-increasing tribal violence. Many government services worth millions of Kina and thousands of lives have been lost and displaced due to the continuous tribal violence. Why is Hela still experiencing tribal violence even though the state, churches and local and international groups interventions in various initiatives to address tribal violence? There are many interconnected issues that manipulates the increased violence in Hela. There are some cultural traditions that are still influential to some point in the contemporary tribal violence. Contemporary underlying issues also contribute to tribal violence reaching new trends and styles.

The traditionally known cause of tribal violence are women, land and pigs. These are the most valuable resources of a man and its tribes. These are the 'heartbeat' of a Hela man as one participant figuratively expressed. These give identity and status to a man in a tribe. Men feel insecure and undermined and seek revenge when their women, pigs or land is under threat. Today these vital resources continue to influence and be causes of intertribal conflicts.

This essay will shed light on the underlying traditional legacies contributing to the growing tribal violence in Hela, despite the many counter interventions for peace and development from various stakeholders. The two cultural traditions to be discussed here are name tagging and the mourning chants of women in a tribal fight related death.

Name tagging refers to names given to babies with figurative meaning. It is a common tradition in the Hela culture that parents often give a name with special hidden meanings. The names often denote negative meanings to remind the babies when they grow up of past misfortunes. For instance, a baby boy's father was killed in a tribal fight so the mother gives a name to remind him later. Some of the common names given in the Huli language are *paja* meaning killed, *tipaja* means they killed him/her, *tipule* meaning I will kill him/her and *pokaja* means they shot/chop him or her. When the baby becomes an adult, he has the duty and responsibility to payback. Thus, the violence over revenge continues from generation to generation.

Women's tone and style of mourning and chanting from tribal fighting related deaths are often really provocative and undermines the identity and status of the men. The meanings in the mourning chants insult and criticise the strength of their husbands and sons

to take revenge. Some of the common provocative messages include: all the widows will be married by those who are scared and still alive; our men are weak and our houses and gardens will be taken by enemies; our husbands and sons are physically men but have features of women inside so they cannot defend their territory, wives, children and properties. A participant described: this mourning ritual really drives the men mad and their suicide mode is switched on when in the battlefield. This ritual really adds more fuel to the situation. Thus, women play a pivotal role behind the scenes to allow revenge killings and continues for a longer period.

A local group, Hela Women in Peacebuilding is aware of these negative traditions and are taking the lead to advocate against such practice. For instance, members mostly women visit communities and advocate against parents giving negative names and change the tone of their chanting during funerals of tribal fighting related deaths. Some primary school teachers that attended the peacebuilding training described. During enrolment, schools request parents to change their child's name if they have such names. Two of the teacher participants went further to introduce basic peace education in their respective primary schools.

Political rivalry and business competition between local elites and leaders are contemporary causes of the modern tribal violence. A participant in a peacebuilding training further analysed, jealousy, greed and pride (identity) are underlying attitudes of leaders and elites that provoke tribes to engage in tribal violence today. Political power gives identity to a leader and his tribe. Tribal conflicts before, during and after national elections is a common trend in Hela. Conflicts often erupt between rival candidate's supporters. These conflicts are due to various reasons. Most candidates don't want to lose and, even worse, accept losing in elections. Thus, supporters look for opportunities to take revenge and conflicts occur. These fights often span for longer periods and even through many elections.

Business competition between elites and businessmen have recently been an underlying driving force creating tribal conflicts. A businessperson is a leader and exerts influence in community affairs. The tribe has to do everything possible to support the tribesman's business adventures. It promotes tribal identity and pride. A recent fight between two tribes was over a disputed property in Tari town. A lengthy court battle recognised only one party as the legal owner. The losing party did not accept the decision and a fight broke out. The property was destroyed and several men on both sides killed. Business competition creates tribal conflicts and it further hinders business growth in the province. Tribal fights impede business growth and business competition creates tension and conflicts begin.

Moreover, a community leader described jealousy over a neighbouring businessperson advancing in business

can create conflicts. The neighbouring tribe often looks for every opportunity to disrupt the business operations or even kill the owner. He added, if a rival candidate wins an election, he will use his political power to stop or block business growth of rival supporters.

What are the opportunities for peace in Hela?

The following suggestions are based on my experience in Hela. As an outsider from the neighbouring province of Western Highlands, my views maybe contradicting and unrealistic to Hela. But it is also imperative to take perspectives from an outsider with different lenses.

All relevant stakeholders must work in partnership. The provincial government must take the lead to coordinate and facilitate all peace initiatives. Honest and professional leadership is required to avoid all political agendas and corrupt practices to achieve true peace. There are many active local groups working for peace and development in Hela. The provincial government and international organisations should support their work. This is hardly visible in Hela. There is rampant corruption and *wantok* system in the provincial government system. As such, local groups are struggling but fittingly achieve Darwin's theory on 'survival of the fittest'.

There are many good, concerned peace-loving people in Hela, including former warlords and warriors. They should be targeted for trainings in peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills. In the past trainings there have been many positive effects. For instance, some former warlords in the training are now strongly condemning the tribal violence tradition and advocate against it. Participants must be able to identify underlying factors causing violence and critically analyse conflicts from the local perspective and identify key entry points relevant to the local context. Hela seriously needs many effective peacebuilders who have the heart for the people.

Peace education is highly recommended in all educational institutions to break the cycle of generational violence. Young people need to be empowered with nonviolent approaches to conflicts and be aware of the issues affecting their future. This is a sustainable approach to divert the attention of these innocent generations to love peace and hate violence.

DR ANOUK RIDE

Dr Anouk Ride is a researcher, film producer and award-winning nonfiction writer working in the Pacific Islands. She conducts research and multimedia productions to unearth new approaches to aid, conflict, disasters and environmental change. Current academic roles include Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs at Australian National University and Adjunct Senior Fellow with the Solomon Islands National University.

RIOTOUS TELLING

I don't want to tell you...

The black smoke and rumpled tin
my burned bank, store and place for printing
The graffiti against the PM, the police, the swearing
Our leaders who abandoned us without caring

I don't want to tell you...

The policeman who mocked me at checkpoint
based on my skin
My friend whose house was empty
A school classmate who cowered in fear
The boychild finding looted discards in ashes
The girl child who knows now gas causes tears

I want to tell you...

The jolly man filling my car with petrol
his smile giving me strength to go to town
My colleague with the big handshake
who calls these days "a headache" without a frown
A joker who tells the shoppers they are the good ones
who pay the proper cost
The lady with the cheap bananas who says all is not lost
The laughter of my family at my son's appetite for taro
That something better awaits in the Honiara morrow

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you, Anouk, for your time. Should we start? Please tell me about yourself and your interest in this topic.

Dr Anouk Ride: The media only really shows a small amount of reporting on conflicts and wars, and it really shows a small side of the story. How to build peace is actually a much bigger story. I went to Aceh and Bougainville and sort of thought about things and then I came back and I started on a PhD in Australia, and at that time I was with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at University of Queensland. Then, when I started delving into peace building a bit more, things sort of started to make sense. You know, all the news reports that I've been reading and writing and then I came to Solomon [Islands] thinking I'll just come for a short time to do my field research and then go back to Australia or somewhere else. Then I started getting more and more interested in the context and immersed myself in life here and ended up getting married to a Solomon Islander and stayed much longer than I thought. So, when I left my family in Australia, I said I'll be in Solomon's for a year, and I'll come back, and now it's been 15 years, and I am still here. I think that's the background.

Also, when you find that peacebuilding is really about networks, knowledge and just building up networks and having interactions with a lot of people over a long period of time, you can make some changes. I found that sort of work rewarding and at the moment I'm working with different kinds of people, researchers, people in communities, of course, the institutions and trying to talk to the police and others to try and open up more dialogue, and more understanding and actually just broaden out the understanding of peace and conflict.

Dr Mercy Masta: That's great. So, in terms of, I guess the projects, activities or work that you're involved in and the work that it involves like doing like peacebuilding research. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Dr Anouk Ride: My work at the moment is on research, so one of the things I am trying to do with all the different research projects is to use the opportunity of research to actually understand on the local level, what's causing conflict and violence and what local people think are the solutions. So, a lot of my work is like participatory research. For example, we have an action component as well as the research component.

Lately, I've been doing research on governance in Solomon Islands, on crime and corruption and also on riots and security incidents that happen in the capital city.

I've also been doing research around different levels of violence, like interpersonal violence, like family violence and violence that happens on a community level. I am looking at the conflicts and disagreements that come out around governance on the community level, as well as broader sort of security incidents, like riots and sabotage of mining and logging equipment and those sorts of things. So, a range of different research projects but they're all sort of related to peace, conflict, and government in Solomon's.

Dr Mercy Masta: Amazing, and I guess the other question is sort of dealing with the past legacies of conflict; our past conflict. What does that mean to the people of the Solomons in the work that you've been doing?

Dr Anouk Ride: I think one of the big challenges we have in the Solomon's is that we had the tensions and the conflict and then we had RAMSI, but the underlying conflict issues are still there. You know, conflicts around land and land use and who has the rights to make decisions about land, conflicts about governance and whether people have a say in what the government is doing. And, you know, we have a high rate of gender and family violence here, which is again causing all sorts of conflict at different levels. The frustrating part sometimes is how little things have moved over the years. But the positive part is that we have networks of women activists, researchers, police and others, who are thinking more broadly about how to respond to this and responding to conflict in more of a Pacific way.

Dr Mercy Masta: That's great to know. What about in terms of the context in dealing with past conflict? What do you think are the key concerns in the context? You were talking about your work in governance, what do you see are concerns or issues with governance in terms of dealing with past conflict?

Dr Anouk Ride: Yeah, I think that's really where most conflicts in Solomon began. It can be traced to the moment that the government is not the people's government, and that people don't have to participate in the key decisions around their lives. Whether that's a mining project or whether to have relations with China, or all these different players. Yeah, it comes back to this sort of alienation, between the people and the elite.

Dr Mercy Masta: And who do you think are key in terms of shaping processes or practices of dealing with the past conflicts in the Solomon Islands?

Dr Anouk Ride: Well yeah, it's funny. Because when you talk about who responds to incidents, like murders or family violence or things happening in communities. It's usually actually chiefs and local leaders. They're the ones that are there first. Yeah, really trying to calm the

situation down before anything happens. And then off course, you have the police and the government coming in. But those responses by the police and government can either inflame things or make them better as well. Also, it depends on how networked they are with the local leaders as to whether situations can be calmed.

Dr Mercy Masta: Then, you know, eventually the police and the government steps in and I mean, this is what we're seeing everywhere. And if the community has a good relationship with the police, it may work. Perhaps there is an opportunity to work together with the police. But in other cases, like you said, it inflames the situation. What about in terms of, I guess people of different backgrounds of diverse groups. What do you think are some ways of working with people, who may miss out in terms of the processes? Not everybody gets involved in processes because of the structures that exist in communities, especially those from marginalised backgrounds.

Dr Anouk Ride: Well, it's interesting in Solomon's because seven out of ten people are under the age of 35. So, the youth population is huge here relative to many countries. But at the same time, youth are kind of locked out of most decision-making forums whether that's like local communities or obviously from the national government. One of the key things, and I've found in several projects, is that the youth are the ones who think more creatively about problems and because they're not in power, they're more willing to challenge the structures that we have and the power systems that we have. So, I really think involving youth is key. Now, I mean, we talk about a lot about women and that, of course, gender and social inclusion is big as well, but really, if you're looking at peace and conflict issues, you know, a way forward to get the youth involved and open some of these forums to more young people.

Dr Mercy Masta: Yeah, I agree. I think the last time you and I met was when you presented and I talked a little bit about that and we both agreed on the point of inclusion of young people, especially my research on masculinity and how young men whom the community view as disenfranchised or problematic. The point you made is a good one in terms of sorting out these issues and a good point in terms of dealing with these sorts of issues.

Okay, and the other thing I was going to ask you was: what are some of the weaknesses and strengths if you see any in the processes and practices of dealing with past conflict? Whether it's processes that the government or community leaders are dealing with.

Dr Anouk Ride: Yeah, I think the big strength is something we just talked about when police and government can work well with communities. So, a good example, the police have a crime prevention strategy and underneath it, different suburbs or villages are supposed to set up crime prevention committees, you know, inclusive of women and youth, chiefs and

church leaders. Now where those crime prevention committees are working well, it's great because you have the whole community on certain rules. They might implement curfews, alcohol bans, whatever it is. They agree on certain rules, you know, just to cut down anti-social activities and violence and then the whole community works together and then if they need support, they also have a contact at the police. They can call for support if they need police intervention as well and really that sort of community level policing has solved a lot of problems or calmed down a lot of problems before they could have gotten way more serious. This [community policing] is an under-recognised strength in the Solomon [Islands], and one that the donors and others should build on.

Dr Mercy Masta: Such an important point, I guess my last question is around what you think are some lessons that can be shared across different contexts. You talked about your experience in Aceh and Bougainville, so from your observations or experiences, what do you think are some of the lessons that we can kind of take forward in this space?

Dr Anouk Ride: I think ownership is a big thing. Like whatever's been sort of implemented or suggested to try and keep the peace or to promote peacebuilding it must be locally owned otherwise it's never going to get the traction that it would need to succeed. That's been a big experience here in Solomon. There needs to be local ownership of everything. That's one key thing and that's the sort of learning that I took from Bougainville, that they've had some success there and the peace process was much slower and everything but at least people had a feeling that they were invested in and involved in it and had a say in how it went.

The second thing is inclusiveness, like we sort of view

inclusiveness as something nice to do and it ticks our gender boxes and things. But actually, if you look at, you know, the processes or the institutions that we have that actually have promoted peace and been sustained over a long time., they're usually institutions that are inclusive of women and youth, and I think that we need to think about inclusiveness, not as a nice thing to do, but actually as something essential for peacebuilding.

Dr Mercy Masta: Was there anything else that you felt like you needed to add to what you already talked about?

Dr Anouk Ride: I think the only thing extra may be to add is like how all this relates to the poem. We had this massive riot in November 2021 and the images went out to the world of burning buildings and crowds of angry people and stuff. But then, on the day after the riots sort of calmed down a bit. It just happened at the time of course, when I had no food in the house and no cash power, so I had to go shopping. So, there's people out on the roads, the day after the riots, it was actually really amazing. How many people went to work that day, how many people were smiling, how people were kind of joking around but supporting each other and making each other smile even though it was this terrible situation that we were all in.

I think it sort of just illustrates that even in terrible circumstances, there are local strengths. This brings me back to the themes of ownership and inclusiveness, that's what we need to bring into peacebuilding. It's the local strength that keeps the towns and villages survival going but we often don't see it amidst the chaos of the problem or conflict.

Dr Mercy Masta: I couldn't agree with you more. Thank you so much for your time and for the poem. It's lovely to chat with you again.



The village of Naviavia in Fiji. © Conciliation Resources 2023

RUTH MAETALA

Ruth Maetala is an indigenous woman from the province of Malaita, Solomon Islands. As General Secretary of the Solomon Islands National Council of Women, Ruth was involved in the peace process in Solomon Islands from 2001–2003. During this time, Ruth helped to broker the return of guns and supported women’s submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As former Director of the Research Unit at the Ministry of Women Youth and Family Affairs, Ruth has continued her research interests and contributed to peace, conflict mediation and peacebuilding publications and curriculums.

DEALING WITH LEGACIES FROM THE 1998 TENSIONS: THE ROAD TO PEACE — A SOLOMON ISLANDS WOMAN’S PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

The Solomon Islands experienced civil conflict in the period 1998–2000. In response to the law-and-order situation, a call was made for Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (‘RAMSI’) to intervene in the country. In August 2003, RAMSI landed on the Solomon Islands soil. RAMSI comprises the 14 Pacific countries of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (‘PIFS’). Scholars like Ruth Liloqula and Alice Aruhe’eta Pollard,¹ Louise Vella,² Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka,³ Judith Fangalasu et al,⁴ amongst others, highlighted the role of women in peacebuilding during the ethnic tension as important and necessary for an effective peace process. Regina Schevens highlighted women’s collective voice amongst women in churches was necessary for unity and effectiveness during the peace process.⁵ Women were perceived to take aggressive approach to peacebuilding by use of their power and position, taking food to bunkers and brokering the peace during the tension.⁶ At the global level, Kofi Annan cleverly offered that post conflict challenges for governments include the legacy of excluding women in peace negotiation tables.⁷ Consistent to Anan’s idea, recognition by the Regional Assistant Mission to Solomon Islands (‘RAMSI’) included efforts to amplify the voice of women in post conflict decision making processes and governance. It is from this perspective, that awareness is brought to understand that half the population is not considered in the key decision-making processes at local level. Alternatively, RAMSI intervention created a space for development of women’s policies as a measure taken to improve government machinery during the post conflict period 2003–2017. While this is a positive approach to the post conflict situation, the question can be asked: how does the RAMSI intervention and other post conflict activities influence women’s policy as a measure for peacebuilding? While RAMSI was reported very successful, its appearance into the Solomon Islands scene was built on a failed state contestation by Kabutaulaka in 2004.

This contribution offers several levels of thought and voice to contribute to the ongoing discussions on women in peacebuilding and the aid community, which refocuses on developing women’s advancement policies as measures taken to address post-conflict needs. While helpful for improving the government machinery, it has influenced the focus of peacebuilding towards women in government, rather than women as peacebuilders. This approach has impacted on areas where efforts have been made in alignment with donor priorities and contributed to the awareness around the importance of policies resulting in much effort concentrating on policy development at the expense of policy implantation and traditional roles of women in peacebuilding.

Due to the increased violence against women in Solomon Islands during the tensions, peacebuilding efforts included policy development and prioritising gender-based violence policy actions to improve women’s situation in the country. This approach was designed to respond to the level of conflict at the home level. Consistent with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2009) report, findings on violence against women found that one out of three women experience violence at home by intimate partners and family members.⁸ The country inherited the issue from the ethnic tension period as the tensions revealed increased tension related crime against women through encouragement of case reporting. Further, in the Solomon Islands Health and Safety Study (ibid, 2009) also reported an alarming rate that every two of three women experience violence from family members or intimate partners.⁹ Moreover, direct impacts of violence, exploitation and abuse of women and girls perpetrated both by migrant or local men raised by communities as a persistent and common feature adjacent to the logging industry and other extractive industries.¹⁰ The findings of Daniel Strachan et al were consistent with past findings where communities adjacent to logging industries reported increases against women and girls at the household level, commonly conflicts relating to the presence of logging and increased social problems amongst youth.¹¹

Further, Strachan,¹² Tania Herbert,¹³ Tessa Minter et al,¹⁴ and Ruth Maetala have also reported the systematic exclusion of women from both formal and informal decision-making structures and processes

due to little or no recognition of women's matrilineal rights to natural resources, impacts on women's roles including peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Solomon Islands.¹⁵ At the national parliament level, only four of the 50 Members of Parliament are women. Since independence in 1978, women's participation has been low. Since the tensions, the Solomon Islands Government ('SIG') has increased focus on gender equity and equality in policy and development strategies in a range of areas, although political will and resourcing are consistent impediments. A couple of examples are the Solomon Islands Police Force ('RSIPF') have a *Gender Strategy 2019-2021* aiming at accelerating gender equity and equality in the force, currently reaching 24 percent of female officers.¹⁶ On the other hand, policy development can be celebrated but implementation is challenged by the lack of resources and staffing to successfully do so. An example is the development of the Women, Peace and Security ('WPS') *National Action Plan 2017-2021*,¹⁷ which is a roadmap towards implementing the United Nations Security Council ('UNSC') *Resolution 1325* ('Resolution 1325').¹⁸

Importance of this contribution

The paper takes care not to water-down the situation of women to focus on policy development as an approach to peacebuilding. It resulted from the ongoing work of the author in the space of women's peacebuilding and development actions since 2000. Bringing this to the fore of the peacebuilding context would do justice to the ongoing efforts of the SIG to address women's issues as part of the overall mainstream peacebuilding efforts for holistic development. Based on experience and secondary information, this is a foundational brief to begin a journey of further research into the area at hand. Importantly, it recognises that women's low literacy levels in the country contribute to nonreporting of violence and cultured perceptions can impact on women's lack of knowledge and understanding of justice systems and mechanisms.

Situating Solomon Islands women and their traditional role as peacekeepers

During the conflict, women's traditional role as peacemakers resurfaced and was strengthened by many women leaders and women's groups. As Pollard said, 'different cultures in Solomon I lands provide for women and men to participate in conflict resolution in different ways.'¹⁹ In most Solomon Islands cultures women play a major role in keeping families intact. During the pre-contact period, tribal warfare was the pride of warring tribes. Tribal warfare was purposeful to

1. retaliate against a moral crime; and
2. settle land differences and tribal ownership of land.

Women were the voice of peace or war. In my studies of the Solomon Islands traditional systems, in Rennell, a

woman can cross safely between two warring parties while men cannot do that.²⁰ In Kwara'ae, the usage of the woman's clothes disempowers a man's fury or the intent for war. With the tensions, dissatisfaction with unresolved land issues was the main reason for conflict. While such actions may seem insignificant to our global readers, women hold such power, which can draw attention to peace and respect. Some of these practices have been drawn on during the ethnic tension.

Women's post-conflict needs

After the 1999 ceasefire, women's post-conflict needs grew immensely. During the tension, it was found that crimes against women included sexual harassment, rape, burning of homes and killings.²¹ One of the biggest key issues impacting women then was the lack of cash. The sexual abuse, family level violence and lack of cash created a new space for the development of specific policies that speak to women's needs.

The socioeconomic situation collapsed during the ethnic crises and to rebuild the economy without policy development is unlikely to contribute to peacebuilding. The economic crises that followed the conflict can be seen on the faces of many women who walked in my office to seek financial assistance for needs like school fees, cooking utensils and basic needs, as well as seed money for income generating projects.

Women's response to the situation faced in the village and communities was transpired to innovative ways to address household level economics. The financial crisis became a major factor undermining the effectiveness of basic social services like health and education. Many schools were shut down and there was a constant shortage of medical staff as many doctors left the country for more peaceful pastures. Schools were constantly closed for long periods, and this meant more pressure on women to look out for opportunities for their children which in most cases was non-existent. Strikes by the Solomon Islands Teachers Association ('SINTA') were common.

As a result of the conflict, these women faced the following problems: most were displaced from Guadalcanal, no land for gardening, reefs were destroyed by dynamite fishing and lack of economic activities, such as employment in the village and its surrounding villages. People seemed to live idle because of fear of landowners with guns. With limited land resources, women were not allowed to farm the land and children were threatened at the nearby school because they were not supposedly 'the landowners'. Militancy became the culture of the day, thus women from this small community approached the Community Peace and Restoration Fund ('CPRF') and secured funding for what they call the '30 system'²² Such efforts were stand-alone responses to the rehabilitation measures supported by the aid community to respond to the ongoing challenges faced by women in communities.

Unemployment of women and men was experienced post conflict due to the breakdown of systems and mechanisms for employment and labour hire. The conflict impacted employment opportunities, and the reform programs carried out by the Ulufa'alu government prior to the conflict in 1998 were also a contributing factor. Since the Ulufa'alu government and succeeding governments, women's post-conflict needs have become the focus of gender development policy. On one hand, this has created positive awareness for women's needs. On the other hand, focus on women's peacebuilding role has been overlooked.

Women's Collective Decision Making

Pollard documented that during the conflict, women in Honiara came together in 2000 to form the Women for Peace Group ('WFPG') to address some of the issues faced by women and the general law and order issue through the women's communique.²³ The communique was their submission to the peace process and the peace negotiations. The WFPG was the unifying factor for women of all ethnic backgrounds and groups. Women's decisions were channelled through several mechanisms:

1. Women for Peace forum;
2. the Solomon Islands National Council of Women ('SINCW'); and
3. the Solomon Islands Christian Association Federation of Women ('SICAFOW').

These women's organisations received funding from various donors to respond to women's post conflict needs.

On March 8, 2001, 60 groups of women and school students marched from the Women's Development Division ('WDD') to the National Cultural Centre ('NCC') with banners that showed the theme 'TOTAL DISARMAMENT' to mark the international women's day. Women took this opportunity to stage a peaceful march and hold a forum that would submit an appeal to then Prime Minister, Sir Allen Kemakeza to request total disarmament.

On March 12, 2002, the SINCW staged another peaceful march to mark International Women's Day under the same theme of the previous year. Special focus was on disarming the police special constables. In that year, sixty women representing twenty-four women's groups were present at that forum. Women marched again under the same theme 'TOTAL DISARMAMENT' but this time women called on the government to honour the Amnesty deadline. As women and mothers, it was recognised that men were still holding guns. Women approached the total disarmament campaign by utilising blood ties with the men and also emphasising that permanent secretaries were to be champions for peace. To meet the amnesty deadline, the government was urged to take precise measures on those that

failed to comply with this international law. The then Permanent Secretary for Youth, Sports and Women, Mr Haikiu Baiabe was the only male representative present with the women to communicate the peace messages to the government of the day.

Many women agreed at that time that they would go out and start gun collection from family members and relatives who were possessing weapons illegally. Further, they believed that as mothers of the nation, they would not sit back and watch as lawlessness and crimes continued to rage around us. It was also recognised at this meeting that women are the basis for a stable nation. According to a woman leader, a statement was made at the closure of that meeting to emphasise the important role of women in holding peace together: 'Without women, there is no home, without women, there is no nation.'²⁴

The women's and gender equity, equality, peace and security experience

In 2003, the Ministry of Forestry collaborated with women on the gender and forestry project, which aimed at identifying gender issues within the forestry division and the reforestation program at the time of national forestry development. The week-long collaboration put together a communiqué that was also submitted to the forestry department for consideration during the national forestry policy review.

Interventions such as the training of women gatekeepers in Human Rights Training and Awareness by the Regional Rights Resource Team ('RRRT') from Suva, Fiji. The project began at the end of 2001 with different sets of weekly training and awareness sessions on human rights issues that are raised by women and also education on the Bill of Rights chapter in the Constitution of Solomon Islands, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and other legal Instruments that were not known to women in Solomon Islands for decades.²⁵ Such training were interventions that provided the foundation for women's involvement and contribution to policy reforms and development of policy to address women's post conflict needs. It has also affected women's contributions to constitutional reform by empowering women with knowledge of International human rights laws and their contextualisation in Solomon Islands.

Peacebuilding has taken a new turn for Solomon Islands women. They can now go into negotiations with knowledge of their rights as citizens of the country and approach development from a peacebuilding perspective. While some may argue that women's contributions were minor, an important policy step began at the 1999 Beijing Women's Conference in China. Upon their return, a *National Women's Policy* was developed and launched. In 2002, the *United Nations Convention on the Discrimination of Violence against Women* ('CEDAW') was acceded and ratified by SIG. What are the implications on women's role in peace

building? Introducing international law at the local level can be challenging. Much awareness has to be undertaken yet the entry points of policy development for women's advancement can be identified through the commitments made to *CEDAW*. This was a major step moving forward for advancement of women in development. Due to the amount of violence against women and children during the conflict, focus on developing a gender-based violence policy was released in 2007. This was called the *National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women ('EVAW')*,²⁶ which was developed to align with the policy statements on women's health in the *National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development*.²⁷ Further developments of this policy strategy led to the establishment of the *EVAW* position within the Ministry of Women Youth and Children and Family Affairs ('MWYCFA') and, later, in 2014, the passing of the *Family Protection Act 2014*.²⁸

Crucial to achieving peace is the development of the *WPS National Action Plan 2017–2021* towards implementing Resolution 1325, housed by MWYCFA to address women's post-conflict needs. The *National Action Plan 2017–2021* is presently yet to be fully implemented due to a lack of coordination and resources to support its implementation and mainstreaming.

Constraints and opportunities for women in peace processes and development

There are two main reasons, in my view, for the lack of commitment to national women's development policies. First, many activities are developed to meet the gender policies and goals of the United Nations or other international organisations. Secondly, every national policy is either derived from *CEDAW* or the Beijing Platform for Action or developed alongside these

international instruments. Moreover, the political will and the lack of resource allocation contributes to the ongoing ill planned implementation of the policies.

A localisation strategy is unclear as to who should be leading it. Regional and international women's organisations often work through local women's organisations but missed the opportunity to build local women and would have to consider allowing professional women of Solomon Islands to lead in national projects. For example, the WPS Melanesia Project initiated by the United Nations Development Fund for Women ('UNIFEM') in the Melanesian region including Solomon Islands. In 2002, this project was cast to our women. Women met and presented a country paper in Suva in October of that year. It was in the initial stage of the project. To retain consistency and knowledge, keeping the same women leaders means the knowledge about the conflict and decisions remained within the women's machinery and the women's nongovernment organisation groups. However, quality services were weakened as the few women leaders were overloaded with campaigns, training, meetings and policy development consultations. Another key challenge was timelines were difficult to meet and deliverables were lagged because of the international, regional and local timelines for organisations, such as UNIFEM who were facilitating the funding for women's peacebuilding work.

There is an untapped resource pool of professional women. Professional women affiliated with the Solomon Islands Graduate Women's Association, which was founded in 2001 to serve as a resource pool for national women's organisations like the WDD and SINCW, are an untapped resource. While there is a



Men loading copra (coconut husks) into a truck in the village of Naviavia, Fiji © Conciliation Resources 2023

need for a pool of professional women to be database, recognition alone is insufficient to ensure effective and efficient policy development and implementation.

International gender policies must be considered with great care as to localise it within the provisions of the present constitution. Since ratification to the *CEDAW* in 2002, Solomon Islands is committed to report annually to the Commission on the Status of Women. There was a report for the Beijing +5 conference in New York in 2000.

The SIG has no reservations to any of the articles of the *CEDAW*. This leads to the uncertainty of future gender policy development as citizens are unaware of the policy development pathways ahead.

The conflict situation provided a wide range of opportunities for women. Because of the conflict women have more opportunities prior to the conflict. Semi-skilled women who were displaced by the events of the tension have the opportunity to practise in their local areas within their local structures. Funding opportunities for women's activities are readily available through various bilateral programs and non-government (civil society) networks and development driven activities. The opportunity for research and policy development is evident as many academics and consultations have taken place since the conflict.

There are opportunities for women's training in the informal education centre through programs like the Solomon Islands Literacy Association and the Rural Training Centres Programs. There is an opportunity to develop educational recovery programs within the primary education sector. The education of women and children must be given priority by the government and development partners. For example: the true history of Solomon Islands should be taught in classrooms.

Conclusion

Since 1978, Solomon Islands has experienced development in the colonisation sense. In the wake of 1998 ethnic tension, focus on women as a public figure has transpired into very important nation-building steps. The 1998 National Women's Policy and the establishment of the SINCW by government white paper in the same year has given the opportunity for consistent development of women's organisations like the Vois Blo Mere Solomon (VBMS), which were responsible for the Resolution 1325 agenda. The lack of political will at the national decision-making level and the lack of policy resourcing are among some of the key challenges experienced at the Ministry responsible for the tensions [[the MWYCFA]]. Peacebuilders in Solomon Islands have an opportunity to utilise the gender and women's focus policies to the benefit of peace and conflict resolution going forward.

Efforts to restore peace and order during the conflict have progressed to paying attention to household level conflicts, violence against women and children and

specific policy development to address the issues. In the long run, while cases like the Ailau 30 system worked during the conflict, new approaches to women's economic empowerment are captured in the *National Strategy on the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls* to accommodate the post conflict changes in family dynamics example dealing with remittances to communities from members working on the labour mobility scheme and impacts of climate change.²⁹ Lessons from these experiences can be shared for further exploration and research. Further, some lessons can be borrowed from experiences in the work that was done on gender and forestry which can create discussion for new areas for exploration and design for peacebuilding that is inclusive with agency and voice. Guidance for overarching policy implementation enhances sustainability. Policy challenges can be explored to provide strategic directions going forward. Monitoring and evaluating policies to align to the National Development Strategy (NDS) can also be rethought to capture gender equity and equality needs for holistic development.

New ways are developed by women to approach peacebuilding including the use of technology. Using improved technological advances to communicate and share ideas through smart phones have improved women's ability to engage in online platforms for learning and further innovation. The 2021 riot experience has opened new ways of responding to conflict by women from Malaita to deal with youths involved in the burning and looting of Chinatown. Women have increased access to smart phones and use of technology such as WhatsApp, messenger and email to communicate and develop submissions to leaders of parliament. Effective communication helped to bring women's needs and country level needs to the negotiating table.

Women come together in peacebuilding mainly for the cause of peace. Whatever the situation is, women have the natural instinct guided by the leadership of experienced women leaders but also bringing in the relationship built over years with national leaders to engage and provide solutions for peacebuilding. It is in such changing context that the future of women's participation in peacebuilding has become one of the key agenda for good governance and nation building.

WILLIE KERENGA

Willie Kerenga is a lawyer, scholar, and development specialist who focuses on helping disadvantaged people in his tribe and further afield in Papua New Guinea. He volunteers to work with people of diverse needs, identify solutions and transform lives and communities. His efforts in mobilising people to embrace peace and assist those who have been affected by conflict, chaos and greed have received accolades from peers, his constituency and international organisations.

A PERSONAL REVIEW OF THE SUCCESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE UNITED NAURO-GOR COMMUNITY IN SIMBU PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

United Nauro-Gor: Historical Contexts

United Nauro-Gor denotes the unification of seven sub-clans of the Nauro-Gor clan, after a three-decade-long conflict. With the help of partners, we established the United Nauro-Gor Association, the community governing body that unifies and administers local development initiatives and oversees the maintenance of law and order within the clan. Nauro-Gor people have become victims and survived horrific tribal conflict spanning over three decades. These conflicts have witnessed the worst events aggravated by breakdown in law and order, failed leadership and growing distrust amongst the people enmeshed in politics and allegiance to different tribal leaders.

High-powered guns have been used, along with traditional weaponry such as bows and arrows, in warfare. Since childhood, I have witnessed the exchange of firearms that killed many people on the battlefields, some of whom were my relatives. The scene was so deplorable as I watched mothers crying over their dead husbands and warlords planning retaliations. Many innocent lives have been lost, properties destroyed and public services such as schools and health posts were destroyed and burnt to ashes, including annihilating coffee trees and forests. Almost unavoidable is the mass exodus of the local inhabitants, which remained an unforgettable experience for many people.

I recall traveling at night with my siblings and my mum, accompanied by other mothers in the village with their kids. We traveled to a neighboring tribe after hearing that our enemies were planning an attack at night. We only got our clothes bag and a few belongings, and left everything behind. Our mothers had to go back in the morning to fetch food from their gardens in the village and return to the temporary place of abode before dawn. This continued as a daily routine for several days. As the fighting gained momentum, my uncle arrived at our temporary refuge and took my siblings and me to our maternal home. I grew up in my mother's place, completed tertiary education, and then returned to my birthplace. Things were still not organised and

remained chaotic. Having the empathy for my people, I stepped in to organise my people and help them to settle in our motherland.³⁰

A major transformation occurred in 2002, which was the beginning of the peace process. The leaders in the different sub-clans acknowledged their wrongdoings and the enormous damages the conflict has caused. They agreed to enter into peace talks and make amends amongst the conflicting parties. The peace process is technically referred to as 'sugarcane cutting' in English or '*burukim sugar*' in Tok Pisin, which every member of the community participated in. It involved pig killing, food ceremonies and cultural dances where leaders from all participating groups made their ceremonial speeches — witnessed by church leaders, police and government dignitaries — to never resort to fighting, and for people to venture into meaningful activities in life. The peace process was spearheaded by Father Jan Jaworski, who was later conferred the 'Paramount Chief' of the clan. Father Jaworski works as the Chief Surgeon at the Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Kundiawa General Hospital, one of the referral hospitals in Papua New Guinea ('PNG'). Father Jan Jaworski is also a medical surgeon. I work closely with Father Jaworski to design community-focused programs and source funding for developments within the clan.

The increasing hostility abruptly ended in 2003 after the peace ceremony. In the succeeding year, the leaders laid out a forward plan and came up with the 32 community-based laws and introduced the concept of 'community policing.' The 32 laws were to be the yardstick that would guide the conduct of the people to live peacefully and interact in a conflict-free society. The 32 laws prominently cover major areas such as, tribal fighting, politics and national elections, witchcraft (sorcery), drug and alcohol, rape and adultery, domestic violence and child abuse, compensation payments, gambling, stealing, cherry coffee, pig husbandry, marketing and business, government and church services, religion and church establishments, health, culture and environment, compulsory self-reliance, youth and sports, polygamy, bank account and Men's house.

The Simbu Provincial Police Command and the Catholic Diocese of Kundiawa provided financial support and technical assistance and, in the following year, we graduated 96 auxiliary policemen and women (peace officers). These peace officers would help address the

law and order problems in the village. In 2006, we set up the administration office and elected an interim management team to incorporate the Association and control the affairs of the clan. At the time, United Nauro-Gor Incorporated was born, and we celebrated this milestone as a united tribe. Anniversary celebrations are being held on the 29th of December in each calendar year.

The United Nauro Gor Association, since inception, and with the help of development partners, had pioneered many community projects notably in rehabilitating coffee plots, agriculture and livestock, in-land fisheries; whilst our young men, girls and mothers undertook skills training in business accounting and administration studies, carpentry, sawmilling, sewing, cookery, mechanical courses, etc. The Association also introduced training on community governance, male advocacy, and leadership for the Directors, including organising one for pupils and teachers on environmental stewardship and conservation. To improve our local vegetation, I organised the community into massive tree planting and introduced sustainable land and watershed management programs in our community.³¹ I foresee the importance of mobilising the people to create a haven for peace and prosperity through effective community engagement in projects and creating markets for small-scale farmers. We aim to build our community on strong principles of cooperation, equality, respect, justice and fairness, and lead them to a liveable future. A total of 13,000 people are bona fide members of the Association. The people are freely engaging in productive self-help activities for long-term sustenance and familial survival.

Executive management and the Community Governance Committee (Directors)

We adopted a two-tier community governance system that is deeply rooted in our traditional practices and locally accepted norms. They ensemble the basis on which our identity is founded. The Association employs an inclusive approach and is made up of Village Chiefs and Community Spokesmen and women, church and youth leaders, public servants (teachers), and project leaders who are appointed as Directors of the Association. The Directors become the apex body providing guidance, oversight and direction for the Association.

The executive team is made up of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, who implement the decisions of the Directors and administer finances and monitor projects from time to time. All Directors and executive positions are purely volunteer roles. I play an important role in securing funding and coordinating numerous projects, and expanding networks with national and international stakeholders. I organise and deliver training to build the capacity of the Directors, peace officers, Local Land Court Magistrates, LLG Counsellors, and mentor others who work for the Association.

Community policing and disputes resolution

The community police maintains peace, unity, and enforces the law in the villages where crimes, violence, and lawlessness are rife. The police recruits are volunteers and are equally selected from all across the sub-clans. The concept of community policing has been one of our achievements, but it has not been effective in recent years. The presence of community police ensures order and respect for the law, where people observe the community-accepted rules and norms without causing nuisance to others. I foresee the need for the Association to sufficiently compensate our hardworking policemen and women. Some have left because they cannot continue to volunteer for the Association.

The clan members work closely with the community police officers to curb lawlessness, address petty crimes, and other disturbing events in the village. I helped the management establish a 'Peace Committee' that is selected from the pool of Directors. The Peace Committee has a specific role of mediating very serious crimes and resolving them in the village, without involving the police and the formal courts. Some matters are referred to the Provincial Peace Mediation, the police or the formal courts when the Peace Committee cannot handle the cases at the community or family level. This has proven to be a successful initiative where we managed to resolve serious cases in the village and ultimately brought peace and justice to the affected families.

Successful initiatives and key partnerships

Our first breakthrough had been our fight against sorcery.

I documented a case study on land degradation in PNG, encompassing the community's initiatives on reforestation and conservation.³²

The members of the community police are normally assigned to or stationed at various locations within the clan boundary by continually patrolling villages and maintaining law and order in their respective duty spots. Although this had been the practice initially, the practice had not been upheld due to the inconsistency of support we receive from partners (e.g, the provincial government). Our police are sometimes engaged by the Provincial Police Commander or allowed to work with regular Police Officers in special operations such as the National General Elections.

They used to have a schedule of shifts to physically monitor and track down violent crimes and illicit activities in the village. We have to restore the good work of our police, i.e., when we started our peacebuilding work. To date, we have successfully brought peace and unity to the people and maintained a harmonious and carefree community.

The escalating cases of rape, drug abuse, stealing, and bush fires have significantly improved, and our people are resorting to acceptable practices and a change of behaviour. It is the presence of our community police officers and active policing, and strict enforcement of the local laws that have gradually reduced these illicit activities.

Coffee cherry buying is completely phased out. Coffee growers are now able to yield more coffee and sell parchment and green beans to registered buyers for comparably higher returns. In 2007, we were awarded the most prestigious award by Coffee Industry Corporation for being the organised community, producing a very high yield of coffee.³³ With successive drops in stealing, our farmers are now producing higher quantities of cash crops for marketing with comparably higher incomes.

Environmental awareness and conservation projects have taken a new toll. There is a considerable reduction in bush fires and unnecessary tree cutting, and we optimise protection for our local biodiversity and waterways, in partnership with the Global Environment Facility. We plant trees on a very large scale, intending to revive the natural beauty of our place, which includes restocking the native plants and animal species that have since migrated or disappeared due to human encroachment.

Living standards in the community have significantly improved after the community is restored (e.g., with proper housing), and the rate of dropouts from primary and high schools has progressively lessened. The performance of students in schools has been extraordinarily outstanding. Many have gone into colleges and universities, while an exceptionally higher number have undertaken technical and vocational training and are now gainfully employed. Most of these successful people are returning to their communities and helping young people to pursue their educational dreams.

There is increased cooperation with the local churches and nongovernmental organisations ('NGO'). The good news is that there is 'unity' where our people agree to be managed under one umbrella organisation. That is where we experience stability in our community and cooperate to plan and implement projects to transform our community. We produced a video documentary entitled 'NEW LIFE OF NAURO GOR'.³⁴

In 2014, I helped my community to win the 'Tomorrow's Peacebuilders Award' from Peace Direct, a global peacebuilding organisation. We were the first in PNG-cum-Pacific to win this global award.³⁵

Through my work in environmental sustainability and climate change, United Nauro-Gor has been given accreditation by the Network Coordination Committee of the Global Environment Facility Civil Society Organization ('GEF CSO'). I am now an accredited member of the GEF CSO network. The Nauro-Gor

clan is the first community in PNG to be granted membership to this global network.³⁶

Since 2020, I have been given the observer role (2021–2027) to the Climate Investments Fund, representing the Indigenous peoples and Local Communities in PNG and the Pacific. I represent my local constituency and the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific in international forums.

One innovative scheme we introduced was the collection of yearly contributions from community members. This scheme is called the 'Head Tax'. The scheme was applauded by our external partners as an excellent initiative where all members of a family contributed a dime every year towards the Association. This money was used by the executives to cover administrative costs and other special projects approved by the Directors.

Issues and challenges

As an organised community, we strive to keep young people out of illicit drugs and indecent behaviour, and involve them in meaningful activities, even against our financial and capacity drawbacks. I have observed there is a youth bulge in the community, which is directly causing many social 'ills and pains' in the community.

Of the many challenges we face, the most immediate is to improve the education sector performance (covering all formal, informal and non-formal education) and upgrade the learning facilities. There is an immediate need to help the grade ten and twelve drop-outs to upgrade their marks so they can proceed to higher learning (colleges and universities) or enter vocational and technical institutions. On the one end, we have many 'orphans' who lost one or both of their parents. For example, one of their parents has been killed in the tribal conflict or died from sicknesses (e.g., HIV/AIDS). This is an ongoing support we provide to our orphans, but a lack of funding has stalled this scheme, and we often fall short in assisting everyone who deserves our support. We also focus on sponsoring high school students, technical and vocational education and training, college and university students.

We also want to focus on reproductive, maternal, family, adolescent and child health (potentially targeting malnutrition) as this is causing havoc for my people. We built two community health posts to address the primary healthcare needs so we have a secured and healthy population.

United Nauro-Gor needs consistent funding from partners to implement many of the impact projects (e.g., agriculture) and establish the needed infrastructure, namely a 'community resource centre' or youth hub to train our mothers and young adults (including girls) in health, business viability, religious teachings and social enrichment programs. We plan to increase medium-small-medium-enterprise activities to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people.

Collectively, we will achieve them if we forge a strong alliance with key development partners that will assist in our development pursuits.

Concluding remarks

The United Nauro-Gor people embrace this Motto: God first, Community Law second, and Prosperity third. As a self-sustaining community, we have come a long way in the last 23 years without proper government support, although we are unnoticeably and rightly doing the work of the government — our focus has been and is on people. We thank our key partners who stood with us in these challenging times, even throughout the formative years. We believe this is our enduring strength and energy, which we can truly harness and enculturate to strengthen, innovate and create the stability to drive the change that is needed by my people. Regardless of our shortcomings, we are determined to maintain peace among the people and achieve long-term prosperity for our clan.

The Association is openly inviting the government, NGOs, business houses and donor partners (both

domestic and global) to come to our aid and help the community that has a long history in peace building, model of community policing and has a track record of setting new paces on sustainable peace and development over many years.

We aspire to create a peaceful and thriving community that is socially connected, economically stable, culturally enriched, environmentally sustainable, and a politically just society, and become a model community in PNG.



Kukul, Bougainville © Conciliation Resources 2023

DENNIS KUIAI

Dennis Kuiai is the Acting Regional Director for Central Bougainville on Justice and Legal Services in the Autonomous Bougainville Government ('ABG'). He is a former pioneer Senior Commander of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army from Bana District. As a transformed former combatant, he is a leading peacebuilder within the Government of Papua New Guinea and ABG. He has served as Peacebuilding Advisor and Political Officer in the ABG and has experience with not-for-profit organisations, policy analysis and strategic planning.

SUSTAINING PEACE BY PEACEFUL MEANS IN MELANESIA — BOUGAINVILLE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

In human societies, conflict is inevitable. Conflicts bring positive change when addressed tolerably by peaceful means. In Melanesian society, violence has had multifaceted causes that demand multidimensional approaches to resolve and to address its legacies.

In Bougainville, Papua New Guinea ('PNG'), an armed conflict began in November 1988 and formally ended in August 2001 with the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement ('BPA'). The BPA is founded on three pillars and its implementation is to be guided by 'Peace by Peaceful Means'.

There has been a substantial level of compliance in implementing the three pillars of the BPA since its implementation began in March 2002 when the parliament of PNG passed the constitutional law titled Peacebuilding in Bougainville — Autonomous Bougainville Government and Bougainville Referendum that gave effect to the BPA. The constitutional law that deals with the referendum issues and provides for the establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government ('ABG') came into operation after August 2003 when the completion of stage two of the three-phased Weapons Disposal Plan was verified by the United Nations Observer Mission on Bougainville.

In this compendium, I am drawing on practical lessons of the Bougainville peacebuilding process, conflict legacy issues are defined and discussed as the original drivers of conflict as well as both the direct and indirect effects resulting from the armed conflict. These results are either 'positive' and or 'negative' needing effective policy and peacebuilding interventions to avoid future violence. The increasing demand in Bougainville is to sustain peace by peaceful means in a bid to achieve a culture of peace.

Origins of peace by peaceful means in Bougainville

Peace by peaceful means is a translation from the Siibe dialect, *mala, kosii tabeng-nne*, Siibe is spoken by the Nagovis people of Bana District in southwest Bougainville in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, PNG. This peace principle was a result of research conducted by Tabolata Integrated Rehabilitation Research Centre.

The Research Centre was established in the jungles of Avaipa Area of Eivo in Central Bougainville under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Political Education, Peace and Reconciliation of the Bougainville Interim Government ('BIG'). The Research Centre was initiated and established in 1994 under the leadership of the late James Sinko to help address the analysis and commitment of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army ('BRA')/BIG to end the armed conflict by the year 2000. The armed conflict began in 1988 and if it continued beyond the year 2000, there was a high risk of permanent warfare in Bougainville. The next challenge was that of disarming and reintegrating the Bougainvilleans' warring parties. If the armed conflict ended, there was a risk of a very destructive Bougainville civil war.

The three principles identified and integrated to guide the research included the Melanesian dynamic dialogue process for solving conflicts. In dynamic dialogue, first, a safe democratic space is created for everyone to participate and contribute towards a mutual and amicable practical resolution and avoidance of future conflict and unrest. Secondly, the basic Christian tenet of love, 'do unto others what you want them to do unto you'. And, thirdly, recognition and respect of the universal human rights, which affirms that, 'every human person possesses equal rights and freedom'. When these beliefs and principles were consolidated, the integrated principle was, *mala* = peace, *kosii* = action, *tabeng-nne* = common good, literally meaning, 'peace by peaceful means'.

Achieving peace by peaceful means

In Bougainville's context, peace has three underpinnings. Firstly, peace as a means is achieved by the right relationship based on understanding, acceptance and commitment to address differences to prevent violence rather than revenge, withdrawal or flight. This demands provision of alternative problem-solving approaches rather than the normal violence or incident-oriented conflict resolution approach. Secondly, peace is achieved through a healing process that involves recognition, acceptance, reconciliation and restoration of relationships. This demands provision of a safe space for the warring parties to acknowledge each other's humanity, empathising with each other's suffering, addressing and redressing past injustice, and often expressing remorse, granting forgiveness and

offering reparations.

Reconciliation reflects a shift in attention away from blaming the other to taking responsibility for the attitudes and actions of oneself and one's own community. Finally, peace is achieved and sustained through systems and structures. This can be the customary system which includes the customary kinship system, the religious system and the governing system. Structure refers to how the relationship between the different levels of community or society is linked and the frequency of inclusive and participatory communication between these levels or classes of the society and community. The BPA of August 2001 adopted the slogan, 'peace by peaceful means'.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement — August 2001

The BPA was about a renewed relationship among Bougainvilleans and between the people of PNG and Bougainville. The task was threefold; (1) to end the conflict between the state of PNG and Bougainville and also within Bougainville; (2) to address and resolve the causes and aftermath of the Bougainville conflict means; problems that caused the original uprising and conflict with PNG that surfaced in 1988, problems and issues that arose from the conflict that caused unrest and conflict among Bougainvilleans; and, (3) to avoid and prevent future unrest and conflict including Bougainville's ability to govern its own affairs in post-conflict situations.

The problems and issues that were identified as causes and contributors of the armed conflict which are addressed in the BPA including the basic grievances regarding land, people, environment and culture, the aspiration and strong wish of the people for Bougainville independence, the conflict and division among Bougainvilleans (resulting in the crisis) including Bougainville independence, the destructions and damages to Bougainville industries and infrastructure (roads, bridges, schools, etc.), the weak economy (low government revenue) and the limited capacity of the ABG and its administration.

In order to adequately address these issues by peaceful means, the leaders (parties) resolved and decided that the best future political arrangement for Bougainville should be based on three pillars; a guaranteed but deferred referendum for Bougainville's future political status including separate independence, a high autonomy for Bougainville before (or leading to) referendum and a demilitarisation plan including weapons disposal, reintegration and reconciliation.

The 2001 peace agreement is a remarkable symbol of progress in peace-making, reconciliation and demonstrated widespread commitment to resolving Bougainvilleans grievances through peaceful means. It had three interrelated central aims. One was to end not just the armed conflict between PNG and Bougainville but also the internal Bougainville conflict — a pillar of demilitarisation including reconciliation. The second

was to provide a defined pathway to addressing and resolving the divisive causes and consequences of the Bougainville conflict — a pillar of high autonomy arrangement leading to the referendum, and in doing so, the conduct of the referendum to determine Bougainville's future political status to prevent future conflict by putting to rest the long-standing self-determination agenda — hence a commitment to peace by peaceful means.

The BPA is an evolving undertaking made by Bougainvilleans among themselves and with the Government of Papua New Guinea ('GoPNG'). The Bougainville autonomy arrangement grants Bougainvilleans the authority to govern their own affairs and through the referendum, determine Bougainville's future political status and through reconciliation and weapons disposals create a conducive environment for autonomy to grow and create an enabling environment for a free and fair referendum that shall put to rest the long standing self-determination agenda of the people of Bougainville since the colonisation era in the south Pacific region.

The Bougainville armed conflict legacies

In 2012, the GoPNG and the ABG jointly requested support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund ('PBF') intending to strengthen peacebuilding efforts in Bougainville. The government's eligibility request for the PBF was endorsed by the United Nations Secretary General in August 2012. In October 2013, a peace and development analysis ('PDA') was launched to provide a sound analysis that will help identify and implement peacebuilding priorities. The analysis focused on examining:

1. Where is Bougainville today with regard to the consolidation of peace?;
2. How strong are the capacities today to prevent new outbreaks of major violence?; and
3. What is being done to ensure that the referendum will be smooth and that its immediate and longer-term aftermath remain non-violent?

I was the team leader of the joint Bougainville PDA that consulted and interviewed key personalities in Port Moresby and throughout Bougainville. The results emphasised primary drivers of the initial conflict in Bougainville persist to this day, which I now discuss.

Resistance to outsiders because of a perceived threat to Bougainville's resources, culture, and identity

This has manifested itself in the past as modest resistance to colonialism, and a political movement for separation of Papua New Guinea since the 1960s. It manifests itself today in ongoing suspicion as well as the murder of foreign investors in Tinputz in North Bougainville and in Konnou in the south Bougainville. These also include suspicion of the foreign business corporations and traders and even development partners.

Unequal distribution of benefits and costs. The most visible example of this has been of course the Panguna mine in Central Bougainville, with resentments created about the distribution of benefits between Bougainvilleans and non-Bougainvilleans, and among Bougainvilleans, and the distribution of spiritual and environmental costs between Bougainvilleans. The question of re-opening the mine remains very controversial among the population and Bougainville's leading figures. There are at least four different perspectives, each with its arguments:

1. The mine should be opened as soon as possible;
2. the mine should never be reopened again;
3. the mine can perhaps be reopened after the declaration of Bougainville's sovereignty; and
4. the question of whether the mine can be re-opened or not depends on many conditions being fulfilled or not.

Other larger-scale investment projects, especially those with foreign involvement, have also caused disputes

The Torokina Palm Oil project, the Bana Economic Zone project, the Tonolei Logging project, the Tore and Isina Mining Exploration projects and the Panguna Tailing Rehabilitation project are some examples.

Internal jealousies and disputes

Traditional Bougainville society has many peacebuilding connectors but also a lot of dividers, factors that create social cohesion or antagonism and conflict. Sorcery killings are one expression of this and continue to be the major cause of manslaughter today. The biggest and increasing source of internal dispute however is over land. There is a lack of appreciation of the structural pressures on land, resulting from a big demographic increase, the expansion of cash cropping and climate change. The level of environmental degradation in Bougainville is often underestimated. Disputes in Bougainville risks spiralling out of control because of the use of payback in dispute resolution.

Leadership rivalries and divisions

Leadership rivalries are at the source of splits within the BRA and the Meekamui, leading to the persistence of armed groups that do not recognise the authority and legitimacy of the ABG, whom they see as simply another faction. Noah Musingku's 'Papaala Kingdom' is also a separate enclave but emerged from a different trajectory. Today, the natural resource owners' factions are a manifestation of the leadership rivalries and division.

There are also identified contributing factors that are either tangible or intangible

These factors are not drivers of conflict but that make it easier for a situation to turn more quickly or more seriously confrontational or violent. Tangible

contributing factors include heavy handed actions, which in Bougainville tend to have aggravated rather than resolved the situation; the presence of firearms; and the abuse of homebrew and marijuana. Poverty, in terms of income poverty, is not seen as a major factor in Bougainville, however, food insecurity may become more important, due to the decreasing availability and productivity of land used for subsistence farming.

The intangible contributing factors are marked by trauma, a general feeling of insecurity among the perpetrators and the victims

Weakened traditions and norms and values and irreversible cultural change: Bougainvilleans tend to highlight the connector rather than the divide factors in their tradition. Lack of relevant and trusted information and a practice of reasoning in which even educated Bougainvilleans have little access to timely, relevant and trusted information that would allow them to develop informed opinions and make informed decisions and choices and the scepticism about and distrust of the leadership. The public standing of the local leadership, notably the chiefs, varies, but is generally low when it comes to the Bougainville regional leadership. The presence of firearms, the level of alcohol abuse, the prevalence of trauma, the degree to which respect for traditional authority has been lost, and customary values and norms eroded, are new contributing factors that did not exist pre-crisis, or not to the same degree.

Sustaining peace by peaceful means

Firstly, as discussed earlier, peace by peaceful means in practice is: responding and addressing aggression and violence proactively both creatively and non-violently. On the part of the warring or conflicting parties, it is not about revenge, withdrawal and taking flight but to remain and work creatively in a non-violent way to resolve and prevent conflict and violence. This involves critical analysis of who we are, what we want as individuals and as well as shared commonality. This should be based on the understanding that a human person has unlimited potential to choose peace or violence. This person is a physical, spiritual and mental human being with inborn political, social and economic aspects. Therefore, aggression and violence must be addressed for personal integrity and cohesion as well as the immediate community. This further demands for any third party to advocate and intervene by providing a safe space for the realisation of peace by peaceful means.

As is common in other Melanesian societies, peace-making is a deeply appreciated part of Bougainville's traditional culture, reinforced by Christianity and other significant influences that paved the way for the success of peace-making leading to the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in August 2001. The significant influencing factors that spun the success of peace-making in Bougainville include:

- Bougainville's underlying traditional values and norms including strong totemic inter-connection within and between communities, something that by 1995 was increasingly recognised as threatened if the war continued beyond the year 2000;
- The interconnection of Bougainvilleans with their land and the natural environment, which meant that the tens of thousands of Bougainvilleans displaced from their own land while taking refuge felt a sense of incompleteness;
- The increasing inspirational power of civil society, and particularly the Christian churches through prayer and fasting as well as their messages related to the basic tenets of 'love your neighbour' and 'do unto others what you want them to do unto you';
- The growing awareness, and influence, of international law, particularly human rights and indigenous people's rights;
- The increasing roles played by women in peace advocacy (including taking risks in, decision-making in early stages), and in negotiations; and
- The increasing commitment and assistance of the international community encourages engagement and peaceful coexistence, including significant United Nations support.

Secondly, accomplishment of conflict resolution is signified by reconciliation and End of War Ritual ceremony, regardless of the issue and its contributing factors. There are three important and compulsory parts to a reconciliation. The past is addressed, in order to manage the present situation, and mutual commitment is made to prevent future conflict. There may even be commitments on how the parties will solve future conflict. As a bond between the parties, there is exchange of customary gifts, transfer of land-title ownership, and sometimes inter-marriage and naming of individuals.

In Bougainville, reconciliation is a healing process that involves recognition, understanding, acceptance, breaking of bows and arrows [(disarmament)], ceremonial and restoration. It is about providing a safe space for the warring parties to acknowledge each other's humanity, empathising with each other's suffering, addressing and redressing past injustice, and often expressing remorse, granting forgiveness, and offering reparations. Within Bougainville, and with PNG, there still exists the need for an End of War Ritual as required by Melanesian custom to signify the accomplishment of the healing process.

Finally, peace is achieved and sustained through systems and structures. In March 1990, the PNG authority on Bougainville was withdrawn with only the Christian churches remaining to at least provide a form of governance. In May 1990, a revolutionary government known as Bougainville Interim Government

was established incorporating village government as the local level government. In 1991, the first Interim authority in Bougainville was established under a special arrangement with the GoPNG. In April 1995, the Bougainville Transitional Government was established and incorporated the Council of Elders as the local-level government. In May 1999, the Bougainville People's Congress ('BPC') was established uniting the divided people of Bougainville. The BPC was focused on Bougainville peacebuilding, including weapons disposal. These systems and structures together with NGOs, civil society organisations, faith-based organisations and traditional authorities founded on the unique Melanesian social fabric were at the core of facilitating peace by peaceful means. With the establishment of the ABG in June 2005, the responsibility of peacebuilding and sustaining peace by peaceful means rests with the ABG.

In Bougainville peacebuilding and its experience of sustaining peace by peaceful means, the major challenge is that of working out an acceptable and respectable balance between traditional custom, religion (Christianity) and Western (modern) beliefs, concepts, systems and structures. This same challenge is probably prevalent in other Melanesian societies and other societies in the Pacific region. When this challenge is adequately addressed, then, Bougainville shall achieve a culture of peace by which conflict shall be resolved before it turns into violence, hence, self-sustaining peace.

4. ENVISIONING THE FUTURE: HOW CAN SOCIETIES CREATE TRANSFORMATIVE CULTURES OF PEACE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

“THERE IS A MAJOR NEED TO RE-CREATE COMMUNITIES, BUT A CLEAR VISION CAN BE SOMETHING TO POINT THE WAY TO THE FUTURE FOR US.”

Francis Semoso

CULTURES OF PEACE

One finding from these contributions is something less tangible — dealing with the past through a shift towards what Dennis Kuiai calls “a culture of peace.” Traditional Christian values and other contemporary principles — for example, “equality, respect, justice and fairness” as described by Willie Kerenga — are identified as critical to societies dealing with past (and present) conflict.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

At the heart of this is a focus on relationships and, in particular, the wide stretching kinship networks across Pacific Islands. These remain a primary motivation for resolving conflict and dealing with the past. As Sister Lorraine Garasu explains, “it’s about relationships. The people are related, and in their clans they are related. And so, the relationships among clan, family and community members are very important to the people.” She believes this is why people will be invested in peace.

PEOPLE ARE PEACEFUL

While there is an unavoidable focus on violent histories in this collection, many contributors are careful to talk about the existing capacities for peace in their contexts as an important foundation to build upon. Despite many cases of extreme violence in Hela Province, Paul Petrus says “[t]here are many good, concerned peace-loving people in Hela, including former warlords and warriors. ... [S]ome former warlords... are now strongly condemning the tribal violence tradition and advocate against it”. Paul says that this is an area of

peacebuilding education and practice that should be further supported. Likewise, Dr Anouk Ride reflects on the day after a riot in Honiara, Solomon Islands in 2021. She says despite the destruction, “people were kind of joking around but supporting each other and making each other smile even though it was this terrible situation that we were all in.” Drawing upon the past is also about drawing upon strengths of a society throughout history, as well as renewing a commitment to peace and nonviolence.

SHARED CULTURAL VALUES

In Bougainville, Francis Semoso talks about the need to end a “culture of war” through values such as compassion, justice, harmony with the earth, human rights and responsibilities and fostering inner peace. His quote above describes community building as peacebuilding, addressing the past through building the future. Likewise, Paulo Baleinakorodawa speaks about recreating the future at a national level by addressing the divisions of the past and including people of different identities within Fiji’s multicultural society.

A COMMITMENT TO PEACE

Peace requires an ongoing commitment. As Sister Lorraine Garasu says, “dealing with the past is difficult”. Yanny Guman speaks to this in his contribution when he mentions the patience and energy required in restoring relationships to create future peace: “We don’t force it, we just work with people, keep empowering and motivating them to come to that major event when they will finally make confessions. They will make rituals, they will have to host a feast, they will have to do whatever it takes to strengthen that broken relationship, and it’s all done by themselves”. For Dr Lavau Nalu, taking pride in being Papua New Guinean is key to building peaceful identities. Dealing with the past takes time and energy but understanding and addressing the root causes of violence and committing to building better futures creates more sustainable peace than simply addressing the symptoms of conflict.

PAULO BALEINAKORODAWA

Paulo Baleinakorodawa is an Fiji-based indigenous peacebuilding practitioner working with communities in the Pacific and Asia for over 30 years. Addressing the past is central to his peacebuilding practice. Healing is essential to prevent cycles of violence and his work creates opportunities for truth telling. He facilitates community dialogues that acknowledge historical injustices and support healing. By integrating indigenous knowledge with participatory methods, Paulo helps communities confront legacies of violence and trauma, fostering collective understanding and laying foundations for sustainable peace.

Dr Kate Higgins: When we talk about peacebuilding and we talk about having peaceful societies or peaceful nations, what does dealing with the past mean to you, and what happens when we don't deal with the past?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: That is a very good question. I'm conscious of the fact that I'm talking to you as an Indigenous person and what that means to me and my people when we talk about the past. So, the past is a very interesting concept in the iTaukei culture. When we refer to the past, we say *ena gauna e liu*. *Gauna* means time. *E liu* means in the future. So, we are actually talking about the past, but we are referring to the future. So *ena gauna e liu* literally translates to in the times ahead. But we are talking about the past. This means that our past is always before us. Your past is always before you. The past is before us because it is what we know. We know the past. We don't know the future, so therefore it's always before us and it is our lived and remembered history which holds our memories and our narratives of our experiences and existence as a people.

Our past is always alive in us, and it is part and parcel of our lives today and our lives in the future. It is the wellspring where our Indigenous knowledge and wisdom are sourced. We value the past because it teaches us and gives us lessons essential for our life today and in the future. So, the past defines the way we shape and construct our future. We cannot move forward to the future if we ignore our past. Our past lays the foundations on which our future is built. So, failing to acknowledge our past, and learn from the lessons the past teaches us, as iTaukei people, will only do one thing. It will only lead us to making the same mistakes of the past. We will only be stuck in a cycle of the past repeating itself and we will not be able to move forward to the future.

So, this is really very important for reconciliation work and in our work at Transcend Oceania when we are working with people, and we are talking about reconciliation. We talk here about a different kind of reconciliation. It is a process that not only builds, rebuilds and restores relationships but must be trauma and healing informed. Reconciliation processes, for us, must have that component of healing as part of the guiding principles. Otherwise, there will be reconciliations done for the sake of reconciling, and no healing takes place. So, reconciling and healing the

experiences of the past needs the full recognition of what has happened and its impact on our relationships and our communities. Because we live as communal people, whatever happens it's going to have an impact on individuals, on families and communities. Therefore, the process of moving forward into the future needs to ensure that healing has taken place from what has happened in the past. Rituals are used to express remorse and apologies followed by rituals of forgiveness and acceptance. These rituals are available for us as indigenous people but are used differently from tribe to tribe.

Now I'm talking as an Indigenous person. As you know we are a very multicultural community in Fiji. There are commonalities that exist among ethnic communities in Fiji. With the little that I know of the Indo-Fijian population, they do have rituals that express remorse and apology and rituals that also express forgiveness and acceptance. Depending on the type of conflict happening, the issues involved, people involved, the context in which the conflict is happening, depending on so many different factors, there are various ways of dealing and moving beyond conflict in different ethnic communities. What the past means for us Indigenous iTaukei people has a lot of commonalities with other communities in Fiji, the Rotuman community, the Polynesian communities in Fiji, the Micronesian communities as well as the Indo Fijian community we have. That is a very brief explanation and description of what the past means for us. So, it's always before us, and we refer to it when we are talking about today and tomorrow because the past teaches us a lot of things about moving forward into the future and also about now. There are different ways of dealing with the past in the way we try and do reconciliation in our relationships and in the way we interact with each other in our community.

Dr Kate Higgins: Could you give an example of what a reconciliation might look like in a particular situation?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: Let's say, for an example, if a young man stole something from a farm. There's a lot of thefts around green kava, because people get a good amount of money from selling kava as the demand is high. So, for example, a young man steals green kava from his uncle's farm, which is very common now in much part of the country where kava farming is widespread as a main source of income

for Indigenous rural communities. The community is notified that something wrong has happened and then people start to ask questions about who did it. The young man was eventually caught, and he was brought to the community meeting to answer questions from those who were affected. An elder, usually the village headman would lead the process of addressing what has happened where the offender is asked to explain why he did what he did, the direct victims and the community would share how this has affected them, and the community together think through what needs to happen to make things right and to ensure the offence doesn't happen again. In a particular case, the offender was then demanded to go and replant at least the exact number of kava plants stolen for the victim to make things right. With the support of his family, the young man was able to fulfil that obligation and has never done it again. When questioned afterwards, the young man said that what he feared most was facing his uncle and the community and having to tell the truth in front of the elders. The incident taught him a great lesson and he has never offended again since then.

The process has some restorative elements to it by bringing the whole community together and give the young man the opportunity to tell the truth, but also the uncle and other farmers in the community who were wondering 'who is going to be next'. So as a community, they acted as a body to safeguard the farms of the other people in the community.

Dr Kate Higgins: So, these practices are still happening, for people to be able to resolve issues which are based on Indigenous practices and values around restoring relationships, and a continual process of community building and setting the norms and expectation. My question is, how does this work, or how does this articulate with other systems of justice that you have in Fiji, such as the police and courts? How do these systems work together?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: More and more now, what's more common, and what's easier now, is for people to use as a conflict resolution approach to things that happen in rural communities, and in Indigenous communities, is to call the police. Now, a lot of people rely upon the police more. If the police have taken over the case of the young man above, he would have been in prison. And when he is in prison, the reputation of the community, the name of the community he carries with him, the name of his family, and the relationships are negatively impacted. In many Indigenous communities, traditional cultural practices are not very common now, because for a lot of people, the easiest way out is just to call the police and remove the person out from the community. I have heard in the case of drugs, which are now widespread in rural communities in Fiji, chiefs are calling for the expulsion of young offenders from their community. The people depend more on the criminal justice system to deal with the case rather than the cultural approaches that we have like the one above.

Dr Kate Higgins: What do you think the impact of that move to the criminal justice system has on the fabric of society? Does it provide a deterrent? Given all these contemporary challenges and the mix of systems and this move away from community ways or Indigenous ways of doing things, what impact does this have on the future of a peaceful Fiji do you think?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: When this kind of thing happens, when the criminal justice system takes over, when the police come and take over the case in the communities, I think it creates fear in the community. That fear might prevent potential criminals. But does it actually deter? I don't think it does. The bigger question behind deterrence is, does it actually solve the problem or no? For me it doesn't. Why? Because if for example, the young man in the case presented above was taken to prison, would that help to resolve the problem of the number of green kava plants stolen from his uncle's farm? Would that help to restore to replace them? Will the imprisonment actually help to solve the problem? I don't think it will help to solve the problem because the victim will continue to suffer from the loss of money from those kava plants, so the problem still remains. What about at the relationship level? Does it help to rebuild their relationship? No, because when the young man comes back into the community after the imprisonment what happens to the level of trust in the community?

Dr Kate Higgins: How is dealing with the past and actually resolving issues and restoring relationships linked to conflict prevention do you think?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: When dealing with the past is not only dealing with the symptoms of what happened but more important to pay attention to the root causes. When you work to address the root causes especially, you are actually doing prevention work, you are preventing the issue from happening again in the future. So, for example, in our work with men and boys on violence prevention, our belief is that because male violent behaviour which is rooted in toxic masculinity and patriarchy is structural in nature. Prevention that's focused on dealing with the root causes of problems is more strategic and sustainable. So, when you deal with the past, you actually try to deal with the root causes and the drivers of what has happened in the past to be able to prevent them from happening again in the future.

Dr Kate Higgins: I'm wondering if we can shift gears here a little bit and speak about how this interacts in the nation. Fiji has had a very interesting history through colonisation, independence, then political instability, authoritarian military led government and, of course, instances of conflict through the different coups that you have had. You seem to be in a particular historical moment with some level of reflection about the past at the national level happening in Fiji at the moment. I wonder if you could comment on that.

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: We've seen a lot of differences in relation to the type of government that we've had from the past 16 years and this current one we have. The hope of the people was that this new government was going to take us out from the sufferings, from the challenges of the previous government, which was very authoritarian, and was a very restrictive environment for people to live in. And of course, initially after the first year or two, they started doing things that were bringing back the freedom of the people. For example, the media decree that allowed people to express their opinions. So, we were going back to something we had experienced in the past, being able to write in the media about your opinion and share publicly your options, and you can stand up and protest. That has happened, and it is a good step in going away from the type of environment we had in the past 16 years. But the people of Fiji are needing more, it should not just stop where we are but we need more development of a democratic, free and just, a more coherent society for everyone. I think it's slow in moving that way. Very recently, we've had appointments of new ministers, and they are all male ministers. So, gender equality and inclusiveness at the highest level is again questionable here. While we have seen some changes, we need more to become a more democratic, free and just society where there's participation, there's inclusiveness, people's voices are heard in the process.

Dr Kate Higgins: One of the changes that's happened in this government is legislation to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It's of course early days and there's been a few actions that have been taken so far, but given your experience of both working out of community level and also nationally and regionally in the Pacific, firstly do you need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, if so, what do you think a good process would look like?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: I think the past, and when I talk about the past, I don't only mean beginning with 1987 with the first coup. The past leads way back to colonisation, when the Indo Fijian population was introduced into the Fijian community. It's about how the two races have lived side by side, but not together. As in the words of the late Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, '[w]e have lived side by side rather than with each other'.³⁷ So, when I talk about the past, I go back there. Then 1987 is only a symptom of the kind of relationship that existed from way back in the past, and how people have not been able to deal with the issues of the past since colonisation, this resulted in 1987 and the coups that have happened after that.

How long are we going to continue to live with the past haunting us in Fiji? I think it's time for the nation to begin to seriously look at how the past must be addressed, the understanding of the past that I've talked about for iTaukei people, you're only going to be repeating the past, and it has repeated itself many times now. Are we learning from it? Do we want to

end the cycle of continually repeating the past. I think it is time to do it. Whether we have a TRC, which is not really clear at the moment because it's in an early stage, or other processes are designed to fit the Fiji context? The TRC or other similar process designed for the Fiji context needs consultation with the people of Fiji. The consultation needs to be inclusive and participatory. So, the question about whether we need a TRC at the moment, I think there needs to be some kind of structure that might be a TRC or might be something else. But a structure needs to be put in place to actually address the past. It's long overdue which is what I have always mentioned in processes I have attended in relation to TRC in Fiji.

I mean, 1987 is almost 40 years now. For people who are affected then and are still alive, they have moved on. Involving them in the TRC would mean taking them back to 1987 and reopening that can of worms. Are we prepared to do that? Can we deal with that? Do we have the necessary infrastructure and facilities and resources to actually deal with them in a way that is going to bring healing rather than retraumatising people? But that's 40 years now, what happens if we don't do it now and take it back to 60 years? Imagine the challenges and the difficulties we would have to go through if we were to leave it for another 20 years. I think it's time to do something, whether it's in the shape of a TRC or any kind of process that we have in place, the past needs to be addressed for people in Fiji to move into vibrant, cohesive community where tolerance and understanding is there, because of the nature of our society in Fiji is, the context being multicultural, multifaith and multi many things.

Dr Kate Higgins: I guess that leads me to a final question in talking about tolerance and understanding, in having a peaceful Fijian society that can reconcile itself with the past, and is about the future, what do you think are some of the values that would create a sustainable peaceful society in Fiji do you think?

Paulo Baleinakorodawa: The one thing that I think needs to happen, particularly with the TRC, because it's not very clear at the moment and in terms of moving forward, we've got to start involving people in the process. The people who are affected by the past, those who were traumatised, and the trauma has become intergenerational trauma now. There's a lot of conversations around the young people and their behaviour now in Fiji. When you understand trauma, and the symptoms of trauma, you could link it to some of these behaviours of the young people today with transferred trauma from the people who have actually experienced what happened in the past. So, moving forward would mean their involvement. One of the key principles is the participation of the people.

How do you create and recreate just peaceful societies? You create and recreate them by involving the people who make up that society. So, it's not just the leaders and government or a TRC Commission

to be a designing and formulating what should be the way forward for Fiji in terms of dealing with the past. The people also need to be involved. Inclusivity means women, young people, people with disabilities, the LGBTIQ community, these people who are part of society, are often sidelined because of the patriarchal system that we have, and the structures that we have. So how do you include these parts of society in the designing of the way forward?

Being a peacebuilder we always advocate for peace and nonviolence. So, what other nonviolent ways that need to be taught to the people of Fiji on how to deal with their problems. Particularly problems and challenges in relation to the context of ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations and interfaith relations. So, those are some of the key principles I think we need to remember as we create and recreate our current and our future.



Community members take part in a peacebuilding workshop in the village of Naviavia, Fiji © Conciliation Resources 2023

PATRINA VULU

Patrina Vulu, from the Guadalcanal Province of Solomon Islands, entered the field of peacebuilding in 2022 when she joined the Peacebuilding Program at the Oceania Peacebuilding Institute. She has actively engaged in mediation, dialogue and negotiations processes in the Solomon Islands, contributing to the resolution of long-standing tribal disputes and resources-based conflicts. Patrina is particularly experienced in applying indigenous knowledge systems and contextual cultural approaches to peacebuilding.

Dr Mercy Masta: Tell me about yourself and your organisation:

Patrina Vulu: My name is Patrina Vulu, I am working with Dignity Pacific as a researcher in peacebuilding and I am from Solomon Islands, specifically from the Guadalcanal province of where Honiara city is located. Over the years, I have worked in various fields ranging from forestry, building and construction, human resources, gender and family violence and peacebuilding.

In 2022, I attended a training on the Fundamentals of Peacebuilding at the Pacific Theological College in Suva Fiji. It was a process of how peacebuilders resolve conflict in the Pacific. Also, after having graduated from the Fundamentals of Peacebuilding, I also attended training about arts, culture and peacebuilding. This training was really amazing because it helped me to think creatively on various forms of artwork. There are stories behind how peacebuilding through performing arts can lead to education and awareness. I liked how arts performances can help to create peace in the world.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you for that. Can you tell me a little bit more about your current organisation, Dignity Pacific?

Patrina Vulu: Dignity Pacific is a local consulting firm. I am a research consultant, normally contracted with them to work with non-government organisations.

Dr Mercy Masta: Ah okay, I understand. So, why do you care about this topic and what motivated you to contribute to this topic? What does dealing with legacies of past conflict mean to you and the people in your context?

Patrina Vulu: Well naturally we live with conflict. For example, climate change, pollution, population growth, advancement of technology and scarcity of resources, which often create major sources of conflict. This then leads to psychological, physical/health, economical and spiritual issues. All the above listed issues affect the human being in its totality. In order for a person to survive against odds he or she needs to find a way to compromise or resolve the conflict or the challenges that he faces that could affect the environment that he or she lives in.

Basically, all human beings have conflict on their own and when the conflict interacts with others in society,

we have to look for ways to best resolve the conflict. We human beings have to get the right information about the conflict through investigation, interviews, and consultations. After all the information has been gathered, we will be able to resolve the conflict and also need assistance from someone to cross check the process.

My motivation is to explore and understand various methods to resolving conflict. This will help us improve in our practices and approaches. I feel that this generation needs to apply appropriate aspects of peacebuilding that improve the process of conflict resolution, that is using the correct set up in and around us. For example, in a simple community inquiry system related to land issue cases, the members of the house of chiefs have the duty to apply the process of conflict resolution at their level using a simple inquiry system. But when conflict resolution is a challenge, matters may go higher to the local court where further investigation should be carried out through information provided. This is basically to check the consistency of the process and the information that has been provided. Using existing local systems and approaches is important as a first step.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you for explaining that. Tell me, what are the key concerns in your context for dealing with past conflict?

Patrina Vulu: The first is justice. Justice must be done. The process must be done properly and correctly to avoid the repetition of the conflict. We believe that bad resolution will create ongoing conflict and good resolution is conclusive. This is key to addressing past legacies of conflict.

Dr Mercy Masta: That's actually a good point. What about actors? Who are the key actors and how do they shape processes or practices of dealing with the past? What should these processes or practices look like at different levels? How does this work affect people of diverse backgrounds differently (inclusion and diversity)?

Patrina Vulu: The key actors firstly are the conflict party, the second mediators, and the third would be the national government and provincial government. Ah yes, and RAMSI in the case of Solomon Islands. RAMSI acted as a mediator in the peace process. The consultative process starts firstly with the government and leaders of the conflicting parties helping by

increasing understanding and acknowledging their grievances.

Second, the leaders of the conflicting parties and government can involve the police at this stage. Once their grievances are known and acknowledged, the conflicting parties then make possible options for resolution known to all the parties. The next thing to do is to follow up conflicting parties to ensure options/proposals by conflicting parties and key actors are best understood as a way forward to peace and reconciliation. Taking advance steps by agreeing to sign a memorandum of understanding, taking into account amnesty and criminal aspects, is important. Providing avenues for a face-to-face discussion and signing the memorandum of understanding is also important.

Another thing is that Christian perspectives help to acknowledge faults and failures of the past and to seek forgiveness from each other and from the divine mercy of the almighty God.

Dr Mercy Masta: What are the current weaknesses and strengths of processes and practices used to deal with past legacies of conflict?

Patrina Vulu: I think one major issue is fraud in terms of management and enhancement of the reconciliation processes. In some cases, foreigners involved in a conflict bribe their way out and leave the country permanently while others make ways to return. Others who seemingly had interest in other parties or the government had no real reason to leave and this is where the TRC reports should be made available by the government for a final resolution of the conflict.

A strength is being able to bring parties, conflicting parties, together to sign the Townsville peace agreement with their minor reconciliation aspect carried out under the natural, national reconciliation program. This really brought peace to the nation and the various communities. That is a strength, if you look at the weakness, we can clearly see that 99 percent of the Townsville peace agreement has never eventuated. Basically, from the total ignorance of the national government. This, in turn, slowed down development that could have increased; that could have addressed the poverty level and created new opportunities for the national population of Solomon Islands.

Interestingly, the successive governments of the post-conflict era had feared disclosing the content of the TRC report. Because of fear, the government feared that the TRC report might disclose some concerns. The fear of being accused of contributing to the conflict.

Dr Mercy Masta: So, you mentioned briefly about the Townsville reconciliation. Is this in relation to RAMSI?

Patrina Vulu: No, the ethnic crisis recently in Solomon Islands.

Dr Mercy Masta: Do you mind talking a little bit about the ethnic clashes? I know it's all over the media and I

can go and look it up but it would be nice to get a little bit of background about the conflict itself, so that we can set the stage for your contribution. It would be nice to hear you talk a little bit about that, is that okay?

Patrina Vulu: Two provinces in Solomon Islands, that's Malaita and Guadalcanal province. This occurred in 2008-2009. This is not the recent burning down of Chinatown but rather the one that brought in the RAMSI mission.

Dr Mercy Masta: What lessons can be shared to make a difference in your/other context(s)?

Patrina Vulu: Stakeholders that are involved in the investigation of reports need to be totally independent so impartiality can be recognised. This goes back to all the steps involved in order to reach a genuine process of peace and reconciliation, so as to make peace a greatest yearning for all parties whether the issues of conflict are big or small, the process involved should be the same. So that's the lesson I want to share.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you so much for your time. Was there anything else you wanted to share or anything else that you wanted to highlight that's important?

Patrina Vulu: Yeah, actually, this topic has given a boost to my mind. It's my deepest concern that it has been overlooked, it has been overlooked and we didn't really find the core issue of this conflict. There are still people who are being traumatised and when they get drunk and you can hear them shouting and they are referring to things back from the past, they always remind you: keep focusing on what is from the past. By keeping focusing on what is from the past, we carry it forward to the present so it's not as hard to reach the future. The future is unknown because there is something missing. There is something missing so this topic is why I have to express what I've shared and experienced, which is like keeping things suppressed inside so this is the only way where I can speak up.

Dr Mercy Masta: That's wonderful. Thank you that you feel that this is a really good avenue to have your opinions and thoughts about the world and the work that we do in trying to build sustainable peace in our communities. So, thank you so much and that brings us to the end of our interview. I'm sure it's quite late over there. You might want to start preparing for other things like cooking, you know dealing with family or whatever it is, but thank you so much and lovely to connect with you.

DR LAVAU NALU

Dr Lavau Nalu is a Blak multidisciplinary storyteller, researcher and humanitarian. His work centers Indigenous knowledge, public health, and cultural heritage across the Pacific. Co-founder of Instagram account, @archiveples, he reshapes visual narratives of Melanesia through decolonial media. With training across Papua New Guinea, Australia and Vietnam, he champions equity, access and justice in global health, storytelling and advocacy from his base in Washington, D.C.

SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT

I have Bukawac blood.
But I've only ever been there once.
My name is Ngaclu
But my passport says Nalu.
Same, same but different. Right?
I can't even coordinate my tongue to pronounce it.

I like to think that I'm Australian,
But I've never lived there once.
PNG is a former colony.
Same, same but different. Right?
When I go home,
My people will speak, dance and welcome me with pride.
But I won't understand.
All I can do is cry, dance, and return in English, hoping for a response.

I'm American though,
But I've only ever been there once.
I'm a Melanesian Pacific Islander.
But in the eyes of my government, I am the 'other' Pacific Islander.
Like Hawaii, but not really.
Same, same but different. Right?
And no, I can't identify as black.

"You speak so well for someone from Papua New Guinea"
"Do they still eat people?"
"If it were like Fiji, I would definitely go."
And that is what I'm trying to understand.
If I speak so well, why are you not listening?

These lines represent my truth, my trauma, and my journey back to my ancestors.

Colonial trauma runs deep in our communities and I'm glad to be on this journey with so many to rediscover our power. I want us to take ownership of our stories and be seen by the world on our own terms — retelling colonial history and combating false assumptions about our people.

@archiveples is for us all.³⁸

Dr Mercy Masta: So Lavau, tell me a little bit about yourself.

Dr Lavau Nalu: I grew up in a very privileged family in Papua New Guinea. I'm not a son of a politician, but I was also not part of the lower end of the spectrum, I hate using that term. Growing up in the middle and my family sacrificing all their money to put us into good schools, into the private international schools that really gave us a really good view of the disparity in our community. Like we were able to see that there was a lot of bad in our community but there was also a lot of good and so being in that position growing up it really moulds our mindset that, you don't exist in either side of the world but there's a lot of good you can do on both sides, if that makes sense.

And so that formed a big part of my identity as a contemporary Papua New Guinean man, so I always thought about that growing up. I thought about that in all the different decisions that I made with my life and one of the biggest decisions that I made after high school was to go to medical school in Papua New Guinea — and that is one of the best decisions I've made with my life because before that point I was always seeing Papua New Guinea through the lens of the bubble that I was in. I was seeing Papua New Guinea the way that my classmates moulded our image into, and my classmates consisted of politicians' kids, diplomats' kid, expatriates living in our community — and I hate using the word expatriates because it's only used to describe white international people in our community — and so that's there was always a rough image that we painted ourselves. And so when I started getting into university work and I was talking to Samira about her experiences, [what] our experiences were like, I like to use the term like 'same-same but different', which is the poem I have contributed to this compendium. We both are co-founders of Archive Ples [village, community].

She [Samira] grew up here in America to a Papua New Guinean mother and an Iranian American father. People would call her cannibal, or they make comments like your people eat people. It's all those little things, or they ask where Papua New Guinea is and, like one of the biggest things here in America that eeks me so much, is when people don't even pronounce it Papua New Guinea right. It's like it's all these little things that turn into big things.

So going through different things, and both Samira and I, we both have a passion for the arts and about telling stories, and I became very interested in the work of archives and oral histories that we have of our people, because I know that as a modern-day Papua New Guinean living in Port Moresby, we don't live in our villages. We don't have the full experience of being from where we say we are from, like I can say I'm from Morobe and I'm from Central Provinces. I can understand for the most part of my language but there's some cultural nuances, and some cultural barriers that I won't be able to identify, and these are some things that unfortunately. I don't like blaming people, like I don't want to blame my parents for not teaching me things because, again, the colonial history of how our society was built was put in a way where you need to go to school, you need to learn how to speak English, you need to get a good job and you need to get rid of all these different things. My parents tried their best to get out of that, but they tried to perfect it with us. Like with me, that's why when I went to medical faculty, like Andrea — Andrea can justify my story. Everyone thought I was the whitest Papua New Guinean ever, and that was like, that was a big thing that hurt me a lot, but it was also a big eye opener that I needed to change a lot of things about myself.

I took that as a negative, but I talked to my family and I did a lot of self-reflection, and I was just like, there's a lot of good things that can come out of it. I use that as an opportunity to be able to learn the cultural nuances as much as I could. Things that I may have missed growing up, I can learn them now.

Dr Mercy Masta: Yes, it's never too late to start anything or anywhere.

Dr Lavau Nalu: It's never too late to learn bits about your culture that you have no sense of. I still remember from one of my first clinical exams of a patient, a patient refused to talk to me when I went to the hospital because of my Tok Pisin. Well now I can speak Tok Pisin fluently but when I first started in medical school, I could not speak it and it didn't roll off my tongue as fluently as they expected and so now when I was talking to patients, all our history taking, all our exam would be done in Pidgin. The patients are mothers from the village, it's important to build that trust or rapport with them.

That was a big wake up call for me and that really struck a chord, and it really amplified all the different

things that I wanted to achieve and so that, alongside all my other lived experiences of Australians like how they treated all the white people in our community, versus how they treat themselves. This really reflected on all the work that me and Samira wanted to do in our community and that's why we started Archive Ples.

Dr Mercy Masta: That's so good, I follow the @archiveples Instagram page. It gives a sense of hope and pride seeing the photos and stories that you and Samira post. We have issues in our country, corruption, the lack of basic services being provided and the increased socio-economic pressure. All these things we experience but as a people, our culture and traditions are our capital and if we can go back and, and try to link up with what we, what our forefathers and our grandfathers and people like that back in the days, the values that they've held and what they saw Papua New Guinea would eventually become. I think there are a lot of lessons to be learnt in all of that.

Dr Lavau Nalu: Absolutely, like that is a big portion of everything and where we started out.

Dr Mercy Masta: Tell me a little bit about the organisation, could you explain exactly how @archiveples works?

Dr Lavau Nalu: @archiveples was a project that was started by Samira and me in 2019 in order to reclaim the way the world sees Papua New Guinea but also, most importantly, the way Papua New Guineans see themselves. It started from a personal project where we wanted to show our friends the best parts of our culture but then it sort of segued into a bigger project where we want to make sure Papua New Guineans are proud of who they are, especially who they are post colonisation. We are proud people. We have valuable insight to offer the world that is separate from that which was given to us from Australia and so what we are doing is encouraging people to talk about the process of decolonisation to deal with past harmful legacies.

We talk about decolonisation in a sense where the colonisation process is never complete. The colonisation process was never complete, meaning that Australia came and governed without consent into our country, telling us 'this is how you live, this is what you do, and you must follow it'. That is what happened across the world but for us they came, told us what to do but then they abruptly left with incomplete systems. They did not teach us how to exist in the system so, when you leave people without living the instructions and how to exist in the system, that's a recipe for disaster and it's interesting because they discounted all the knowledge that we already have and told us that what know and what we were doing is wrong and that we should follow their ways. But don't, we won't teach you how to get there. So, we started with that. Both of us are artists and so we love using photography as a way of telling our stories.

Dr Mercy Masta: I also think it comes down to your

worldview or value system, right? Like what we see as stylish and what we appreciate may not be appreciated by someone else but that's fine because that's how they see the world; their standard. For us in Papua New Guinea wearing a *meri* blouse, you know, men in *bula* shirts, *sulus* women in *meri* blouses or whatever it is. I mean that too is very modern, but you know what I mean, it's just our Indigenous identity reinvented.

Dr Lavau Nalu: I'm wearing a *bula* shirt right now.

Dr Mercy Masta: Well, there you go. That's stylish and that too is how we define our identity, what we value.

Dr Lavau Nalu: The biggest point with our project was we wanted to take control of the Western gaze. The world has only seen with the eyes of the white man, we've never had the power to tell our own stories and so all the world sees, all that America sees, where we're from, only sees what was brought back to them, and so when people talk about cannibalism, when people talk about corruption, when people talk about sorcery all of that. That is true, but a narrative can be spun anyway.

People should be able to tell the story how they wanted and so the big part of our project was to essentially facilitate the space, we consider ourselves curators where we only hold space for people. When we invite, we invite Papua New Guineans and we tell them, 'I want you to come and retell your stories'. We use photos from archives, but we also get photos from families as well. We ask them like we want you to retell these stories how it is meant to be told.

We love to put photos of Papua New Guineans achieving great things not just now but in pre-colonial eras, such as photos of the first broadcasters, the first Rugby player, the first anything showing photos of happiness because a lot of the photos that the world sees are negative portrayals of Papua New Guinea ('PNG'). I've been to museums in London, Washington DC, Germany, and different parts of the world. The photos that people see of Papua New Guinea are the most depressing. Imagine photos where you were forced to be in front of the camera — no smiling, nothing and that is how the world sees Papua New Guinea. So, it's all about reclaiming the narratives.

Dr Mercy Masta: The next question is why do you care about the topic and what motivated you to contribute to this compendium?

Dr Lavau Nalu: I guess the biggest component of it was I like to do things that are personal to me, that's my big thing. A lot of the work that I do both in medicine and public health or public affairs are things that actually mean something to me that I can draw from lived experiences and I feel like this encompasses a lot of the different things that I do already, but my relationship is just being able to exist in all these different worlds is definitely very hard. You don't know where you fit in, and for me this is a big thing. I didn't know what community

I belonged in but at the same time I didn't understand what it meant to be a Papua New Guinean growing up.

Dr Mercy Masta: What about our own internal narratives as Papua New Guineans? We've been scarred by colonialism, but we take the hurt or the trauma forward and we kind of relive it and I think it's important that the narrative changes not only for people outside but ourselves which is what Archive Ples is trying to achieve.

Dr Lavau Nalu: Absolutely, that is the type of insight that I especially like. My family as well my parents are a classic example. My parents and siblings take up space in all these different countries, but they are also scarred by the white men. They will always tell us that our generation will be able to speak back to the white men. Whilst for them [(my parents)], they will speak back but they will not put up a fight. So that's a big generational issue in Papua New Guinea where there's a lot of intergenerational traumas that are learnt and like, a classic example is — in our culture — we will not speak back to a white man in Port Moresby; always treating the white men better than a person of colour. So, we will always be regarded as second-class citizens, not just by everyone else but also by ourselves. I saw that in the hospital system when I was working there. I saw expatriates coming in and they wouldn't have to wait in the line. All these different things and that was a big factor to me and like, parts of my culture as well.

Dr Mercy Masta: What does dealing with legacies of the past mean to you or the people in your context?

Dr Lavau Nalu: I guess dealing with legacies of the past is being able to learn from your history, because history is a big thing. We have to learn to navigate past our troubled history with our colonisers. Dealing with the past means dealing with colonial history. When dealing with the past we have to go through so many different levels of learning and unlearning because the German way of learning is very different from the British way of learning and then the Australian way of learning is very different from the British way. And then learning how to be Papua New Guinean again after all of that is a struggle.

Dr Mercy Masta: This may take a while.

Dr Lavau Nalu: Yes, it will take a long time, but we became an independent country a lot faster than a lot of countries in the world. And that is difficult because we were asked to be our own people very quickly but not being our own people, we were asked to be a prototype of Australia more quickly than we anticipated so we were not left with systems that were properly built to support our people. When I talk about systems, these are systems that need to be based on the people, they need to be based on how they can best support and care for the people that belong to the community. The current systems are not built for us and so it becomes difficult to deal with past conflicts and past colonial.

Who we are today, and I feel like that's a big struggle with our government and our people of today because we don't know who we are. We are trying to figure out how we can best support ourselves and there's not a lot of education systems in place to be able to support our story and cultural history. If I went to school, I wanted to study indigenous studies at the university level. Where would I learn that?

I've always loved indigenous affairs and being able to do that a lot more and I did and so that's why I left, and I had to make the bold decision to do away with what I wanted to be able to return with the skills and knowledge of our culture.

Dr Mercy Masta: In America you're exposed to various indigenous groups and how they deal with their struggle to also decolonise their practices and identities.

Dr Lavau Nalu: Yes, you're absolutely right. I mean America is not probably the best place to start because they don't want to decolonise. But I feel that learning about the indigenous culture is the best way to be able to understand the community and the needs that they have. I feel like a lot of the politicians don't understand the culture and for many leaders in PNG stand for elections because of the money that's involved.

Dr Mercy Masta: Our values have change from customary values to now capitalism and monetary values, etc

Dr Lavau Nalu: Absolutely, our values have changed and also the economic setting has changed. It all revolves around money and right now with what's happening in PNG with the bank devaluing the PNG Kina. It is showing that the system is broken.

Dr Mercy Masta: What do you think are the key concerns in your context for dealing with past conflicts or what do you think is limiting people to actually dealing with past conflicts?

Dr Lavau Nalu: There's a couple of things on however, the biggest thing is the lack of exposure as well as the learning process. I again draw from personal experience when I was going to school at the medical faculty. I saw this as a great opportunity where students from Australia and America are coming over, running a health program but half of my classmates were terrified to speak to the visiting medical students and doctors.

Exposure comes with privilege, and I will not discount that I have privilege in the Papua New Guinean setting. Many people in Papua New Guinea also don't try to acknowledge their own privileges.

Dr Mercy Masta: In terms of how your work addresses people of different backgrounds, could you explain how you do this?

Dr Lavau Nalu: It's interesting how our work has really recently featured in the Metropolitan Museum of

New York. Our followers on Instagram are certainly of diverse age, gender, cultural, etc, backgrounds. Even though those who provide photos and stories are also from diverse backgrounds. I guess we would want to do more and reach more people but this is a passion project. We don't have the bandwidth like, now, both Samira and I have full time jobs. We want to expand this but again the world works on money. We would love to do this full time but it's not possible at the moment so we try to do as much as we can and like that's the thing about facilitating a space like, it's hard because people want so much of you but you don't have so much to give. So, the work that we do requires hours and hours of work. We go through photos that have been submitted and then we vet everything before we decide which ones are appropriate to send out.

That's the message we're trying to show in a certain way that we want people to be depicted but also, we are also going through national archives, we're doing our own work going through different photos and archives. These things are like ten thousand photos long and we are going through a lot of them trying to see what are the best images, trying to have a balanced view of Papua New Guinea. We don't want a biased view, we don't want too many photos of the highlands and we don't take too many photos of the coast.

Dr Mercy Masta: That's really good, it's a representation of the diversity we have in PNG.

Dr Lavau Nalu: Absolutely, that's an important thing because there's a lot of regionalisms in Papua New Guinea.

Dr Mercy Masta: What about current weaknesses and strengths in terms of dealing with past legacies?

Dr Lavau Nalu: I guess like weaknesses is not having structures, not having structures in place to have these conversations and so people don't want to have critical conversations. That's inherently human nature and so when you are put into a room with people with very different opinions and very different views it can be a lot of bad but it can also be a lot of good. But I would love to challenge their views. It's important to ask important questions and try to really narrow down to see people's true intentions. There always has to be a person that asks the tough questions and I feel like in Papua New Guinea unfortunately we don't always do that. Papua New Guinea, to be far in a very tough place to live in and if you ask a tough question, you are putting yourself at risk. It's very risky, if you say something wrong in parliament or say something against a politician, you can have the family members coming to attack you the next day.

Dr Mercy Masta: Everything we do has to be culturally and context sensitive, knowing the power imbalance that exists.

Dr Lavau Nalu: Absolutely and that was a tough part just seeing that other side, like you can't say anything

about politicians because their families may attack you if you say something on Facebook. It can be offensive especially when having these difficult conversations. You need to have them, but I found even within my family we find it hard to have difficult conversations. We will just cover it up and things get bottled up, things don't get talked about and that's the issue with not just past conflicts with colonisation but with everything. Again, that stems from colonisation where you can't talk back to the coloniser. If the white man says something, that is final. Don't speak back, don't raise your voice. That sort of mindset is something that is very pervasive in Papua New Guinea and we are dealing with, we have to unlearn that and honestly in like my, to cut everything short we need therapy. Papua New Guineans need rehabilitation so, in a way, what we are doing at Archive Ples is visual therapy.

Dr Mercy Masta: What do you think are some lessons from your work and experiences that can be shared to make a difference in your context or in the work that you do?

Dr Lavau Nalu: I want people to take the time to unpack what they know but also be open to learning. I want especially when people see the work that we do, I want people to be able to take the time to think critically, think about what they know and actually take time to learn about the people. Learning from the book is one thing but really taking time to see the world from

a particular point of view. For expatriates it's about seeing the world through the point of view of locals and learning from them. I want us to think about who we are, who we want to be and we were before and use that to better ourselves. We should be able to learn from our past to make a better future and I know that's like a very cliché way of saying it but we don't necessarily do that all the time. Like we say we want to be a better country, but it will take time and effort and I know it's a big ask but I want you to be able to feel proud of being Papua New Guinean. Right now, I am one of the proudest Papua New Guineans and I want the world to see how amazing Papua New Guinea is but I want Papua New Guineans abroad and in Papua New Guinea to feel proud of their culture. I don't want us to hide anything about our culture. I want people to tell their families that we have sleepovers with twenty of our cousins, we go to the village, we use pit toilets, all the different things, just embracing who we are, like one you have that open communication and are proud of who you are that opens doors on its own.

Dr Mercy Masta: Thank you so much for your time. It was great talking to you.

Dr Lavau Nalu has provided personal photos from his own collection, some of which are also available on the Instagram page @archiveples. These can be viewed on pages 54–57.



Kukul, Bougainville © Conciliation Resources 2023



Bubu man (Grandfather), one of the earliest native educators in Papua New Guinea, teaching my cousin Patricia (his first grandchild) how to read, circa 1988. He continued to teach in the village until his passing in August of 2021. © Lavau Nalu on @archiveples



Bubu man (Grandfather) in Switzerland in the early 1960s. Travelling and taking up space at a time when natives were prohibited to leave the country. © Lavau Nalu on @archiveples



Dad and Vele, 1991. Dad carrying my eldest brother Vele at his university graduation in 1991 at the University of Papua New Guinea. © Lavau Nalu on @archiveples



Mom, Dad, and Vele, 1995 at Mom's Graduation at The Queensland University of Technology. Mom graduated as a software engineer. The first from her District. © Lavau Nalu on @archiveples



Lavau, New York City, 2022. Son of Immigrants. Indigenous Affairs Advisor based in Washington DC.
© Lavau Nalu on @archiveples

CONCLUSION

The Pacific region largely consists of oral cultures, and it has been the aim of this collection to document the rich peace practice that occurs across the region. As the contributions show, much of this is about addressing legacies of colonialism and violent conflicts of the past. Each contribution highlights strengths to build upon over the different themes — history, practice, inclusion, governance relationships and futures. In a final contribution, Dr Mercy Masta speaks with her co-editor, reflecting on these themes and on the work of the leaders in this collection.

DR MERCY MASTA

Dr Mercy Masta is a Researcher and Development Practitioner specialising in Pacific masculinities, gender equality, violence prevention and peacebuilding. Dr Masta is currently a Research Fellow at the Department of Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University. In addition to her academic work, Dr. Masta serves as a Gender Equality Disability and Social Inclusion and Safeguards Specialist for the Australia Awards Women Leading and Influencing program and an Associate with Conciliation Resources.

Dr Kate Higgins: Mercy, what we see in the contributions here is that history is incredibly important in people's lives. For societies to move forward there needs to be reflection about, and addressing of issues and challenges of, what has occurred in the past. What are your reflections upon the role of history in building peaceful societies in these different Pacific contexts?

Dr Mercy Masta: I think that the thing with history is that if we don't tell it, we lose it, especially when considering the importance of including the younger generation. For example, in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, where conflicts occurred over a period of time, some of the younger generation may not remember these events. By telling these stories, we help the younger generation understand the context, enabling discussions about the future. People who have experienced these events might lose their memories over time, making retelling crucial. Important aspects, such as the people involved and other significant information, are vital to preserve. As Melanesians, we are a very oral society. We talk a lot about these things, but we don't document them as much. Therefore, projects like 'Dealing with the Past' help us document this valuable information for future generations when reflecting on conflict.

Dr Kate Higgins: Do you think that the retelling of those stories is an important in terms of future conflict prevention, that is, understanding what went wrong and not repeating those mistakes? One contribution talked about the need to retell those histories in a constructive way that points towards peace and nonviolence. What are your thoughts?

Dr Mercy Masta: I think retelling helps us today. Those of us who haven't experienced the conflict ourselves but are working in these spaces, especially doing research or practice, benefit from retelling. It helps us feel and experience in the moment what people have gone through, fostering more compassion and understanding of what has happened. I am grateful that we are able to document things because, over time, we are losing the history. It is so important to retell these stories to find solutions and the way forward within those stories.

Dr Kate Higgins: Moving to the second theme, which talked about practices. One thing that really struck me was that they are mixes of peacebuilding practices such as mediation and peace agreements that happen across the world, but they are all embedded in cultural practices and also in other values such as Christianity. What stood out to you in terms of how people actually practice peacebuilding or build peace in a way that is really sensitive and addresses what has happened in the past?

Dr Mercy Masta: So, I think when I was talking to the different contributors about practice, and even my own research into peacebuilding, if we are looking at indigenous peace practices, it is really about how society deals with relationships. It is about relationships at the end of the day. It is about trying to keep peace and harmony and extend relations among each other. So, peace practices are there to help maintain relationships, because that is how we benefit from living together and supporting each other, through the relationships that we have. So, with the different peace practices that were mentioned in the different

contributions, what I have seen, a lot of it is there, it is in our culture, in our everyday life, in negotiating, in how we help each other when there is a community need, how we come together and manage it. Peace practices are part of everyday life. So, a lot of these practices, they exist, they are in our communities, it's part of our everyday way of life and it comes out more during conflict, we just need to look deeper into our cultural practices to find them.

Dr Kate Higgins: The third finding was something that is very much in line with the work you have been doing, particularly around masculinities. It is about inclusion in addressing these conflict legacies. It's about who is involved in deciding what happens and how these things are dealt with. All the contributions speak so strongly to this, and the barriers that people who are affected by conflict face in participating in actions to address insecurity. Barriers that not only just come from traditional 'bigman' or patriarchal kinds of cultures, but also from government and from internationals in terms of what donors choose to support. These barriers exist in all systems. Why is inclusion so important in addressing past legacies of violence?

Dr Mercy Masta: I think that's such a good question, and it is so good to see that all the different contributors I have spoken to have addressed this in one way or another. Inclusion is important because it ensures that all the different voices, needs, and interests of people are heard. Often, when conflict occurs, people think that those on the frontline, usually men, are the ones most affected and should be consulted. But women are also crucial, as we can see in different contexts. For example, in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, women have sometimes provoked violence. In cases such as Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, women were known to be the peacemakers or peacebuilders, traditionally playing that role.

It's important to hear all voices, not just women as a larger category, but also young women and their experiences. Especially those described as the 'crisis generation,' who didn't go through the conflict but are bearing the aftermath as trauma. When we think about inclusion, we should not just focus on the broader categories of women and men but also look at young women, young men, children, young girls, young boys and people with disabilities. All these different people are affected by war because they are part of it.

I think the other bit about inclusion, which is where my research comes in, is looking at the roles of men and their contribution to the conflict, but also how they can contribute to ending the conflict. A lot of times with gender programming, the focus is on women. For example, we have the women, peace, and security agenda. These are really important and have their place because women face a lot of the brunt of conflict. But if men are the perpetrators of most conflict, why don't we have programs that specifically focus on men to equip

them to end conflict in a constructive way? When we talk about gender inclusion, it has to be about both men and women.

Women play such an important role. I'm always inspired by Sister Lorraine when I hear her stories. She tells us about the time women from the Nazareth Centre, during the blockade, would travel from camp to camp when people couldn't travel. They were the ones carrying the message of peace, telling people at these camps that peace is coming and that the Bougainville government is starting to talk about negotiating for peace. Only the women could play this role, and that's very inspiring.

Dr Kate Higgins: Very inspiring, and we also heard the same about women from Ruth Maetala in Solomon Islands. Mercy, we know that the population of the Pacific is incredibly youthful. You have said in relation to young men, in particular, that they are viewed by communities as either 'disenfranchised' or 'problematic'. What do you think needs to happen there to address this perception and transform societies in a way where young men are driving peaceful change?

Dr Mercy Masta: Several of the contributors talked about young people and how they want to educate the next generation in the Pacific. Young men and women, but mostly young men, because they make it to the news. They are the ones you hear about when there are riots because most riots in the region are led by young men. It may have been started by older men, but it's the young men take the fighting to the streets, destroying property and all that. It's so important for us to engage young men, within our own communities and societies in the Pacific. We also need to deal with intergenerational trust-building, with the older generation making space and being willing to support young people, to mentor them and guide them as they step into those roles.

I think it's also important to create more spaces where young people can dialogue among themselves, both men and women, where they can talk about their challenges, their tensions, their worries as well as their dreams. There are bits and pieces of this happening around different concerns, like climate change, and issues like that. But overall, we need spaces and programs to support young people, and it starts with our own traditional leaders, parents, and individuals within society who are considered older, to give space, mentor and build that trust.

Dr Kate Higgins: Onto the fourth finding, which is about governance and the role of different actors in dealing with the past and building sustainable peace. When you look at peacebuilding from a global perspective there are certain blueprints, or global peace infrastructure — peace processes, agreements, truth and reconciliation commissions. There is also a kind of assumption that governments are the ones leading the process. But what was striking in these contributions is that these peace practitioners, many of whom are working

in or with government, who are some of the most prominent peace leaders in the region, and who are very knowledgeable of their national politics and international dynamics, are actually speaking about community life. The focus of these contributions is very strongly about community life. What do you think that tells us about the role of different actors, at different political levels, in building peace?

Dr Mercy Masta: You know, peace activists and advocates who are working in this space have realised that while the government is leading and there are key international supporters of the government's work in some places, there is still a huge gap in reaching the greater population, especially in remote villages. This gap exists in terms of being consultative and including different groups in the communities in various dialogues and interventions. The need to bring in the power and strengths of communities into the conversation is essential. Institutions like the church and locally led organisations strengthen what we know as community.

From my experience as a Papua New Guinean and seeing for myself how the government hasn't really provided the services that are needed by communities throughout the country, it shows that the government cannot do it on its own. They need the strength of the community, where the majority of the people live, operate, and have institutions. The government needs to almost flip things upside down and focus on the community, letting peacebuilding, reconciliation, and healing work be led by the community and then come in to support. Instead of the government trying to take the lead on dealing with conflicts started by the community itself. This is why I liked the contributions on community policing because I think this is how it could work. It allows the community to take the lead using the resources we have in the community to deal with conflict.

There is also a lot of reconciliation that needs to happen between state institutions and communities. In Papua New Guinea, many citizens have lost faith in institutions such as the state disciplinary forces. We have seen many times in the media that they themselves are the abusers, going into communities, burning houses down, and beating people up. So, people are not 100 percent in support of the government because they themselves have been hurt by these state institutions. There is a level of reconciliation that needs to happen between these state institutions and the community, with the government giving the community the chance to lead on these issues.

Dr Kate Higgins: The last finding was something that's less tangible. It's not just the structures or the practices or partnerships — while all these are important — a final finding was that there also needs to be a mindset shift, a cultural shift, creating a 'culture of peace'. One thing that struck me was that this already exists. I guess what are your reflections on creating a society

that is committed to building peace?

Dr Mercy Masta: As I was reflecting earlier, peacebuilding is sort of our way of life. I was thinking about my own experience growing up in Port Moresby, and the different cultural and ethnic groups within the community I grew up in. It's the little interactions and our reciprocity among each other, and taking time to talk to someone, that's already building peace because these practices allow us to live together in a peaceful way. It exists in our culture because, at the end of the day, people want to live in harmony, right? They want to live in harmony and get along with people because it's a reliance on our 'wantok' system. It is so important to build this system because it is our socio-cultural network of support when the government is not there, and in building that, we are actually applying peacebuilding practices. It is keeping the relationships going among ourselves because we depend on it to live harmoniously.

We need to have these ongoing relationships, and in doing so, there are all these different nuances in terms of practices and ways of being and living in the community to maintain peace. But I think not unpacking or analysing conflict when it arises is an issue, which was what Sister Lorraine emphasised in her contribution. It may be conflict legacies not dealt with over the years, but also those stemming from living in the contemporary Pacific where we are faced with all kinds of socioeconomic deprivations. So, continuing a mindset of peace is important to deal with our trauma. It's important to have dialogue and remind ourselves from time to time of the importance of keeping peace, whether it's in Port Moresby, another urban dwelling, or a traditional village. I would say that continuing the mindset of peace and dealing with our trauma is important. We have this [project] to talk about dealing with the past so that we can continue the narrative of peace or a culture of peace.

Dr Kate Higgins: Final question, what was the experience of talking to and documenting these Pacific leaders and what are you taking away from it?

Dr Mercy Masta: Oh, that's a brilliant question. I learned so much from the collection of stories. Everyone who contributed was so passionate and brought diverse perspectives. We have young people like Lavau, and then we've got someone like Anouk, who is a peacebuilding academic, and those who have lived through the conflict like Francis and Dennis, and then people who are working in different local organisations addressing ongoing conflict. I feel so inspired and feel that there is hope in dealing with past, current, and future conflict, because there are people who are passionate about these issues. People who are in it, working on these things, and in their various ways are trying to build peace and the image of their society or country.

I remember the interview with Lavau, and his reflections on his own identity was memorable. How he

envisioned the future but also the future of Papua New Guineans. His approach is different from what the other contributors have worked on which is through traditional peacebuilding approaches. Lavau's work as he explains is about taking pride in who we are as Papua New Guineans and reminding the younger generation through an archival photo story telling project called 'Archive Ples' that this was how we used to be — recalling our history — and we've always been peaceful people and people who took pride in our cultural identity. That narrative is so important, and it was so good to end with his contribution. I think for young people, they will resonate.

We hope that this collection will be something that people in the future can take on, especially the younger generation, to retell the story, talk about the history, but also look to the future and the kind of future we want.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Ruth Liloqula and Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, *Understanding Conflict in Solomon Islands: A Practical Means to Peace-Making* (Discussion Paper 00/7, The Australian National University, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2000) p 10.
- 2 Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, 'Resolving Conflict in Solomon Islands: The Women for Peace Approach' (2002) 53 *Development Bulletin* 43.
- 3 Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, "'Failed State" and the War on Terror: Intervention in Solomon Islands' (2004) 72(March) *Asia Pacific Issues* 1.
- 4 Judith Fangalasu, Ruth Maetala, Patricia Rodi, Anah Vota and Elsie Wickham, *Herem Kam: Stori Blong Mifala Olketa Mere-Women's Submission to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Submission, International Center for Transitional Justice, 28 September 2011).
- 5 Regina Schevens, 'Church Women's Groups and Empowerment of Women in Solomon Islands' (2003) 74 *Oceania* 24.
- 6 Liloqula and Pollard (above n 1); Dalcy Tovosia Paina, 'Peace-making in the Solomon Islands: The Experiences of the Guadalcanal Women for Peace Movement' (2000) 53 *Development Bulletin* 47.
- 7 Kofi Annan, K (2020) *Women's Participation in Peace Process – Is It Enough?* (Opinion, Kofi Annan Foundation, 4 December 2020).
- 8 *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence against Women and Children* (Report, Secretariat of the Pacific Community for Ministry of Women, Youth & Children's Affairs, 2009).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Tessa Minter, Grace Orirana, Delvene Boso and Jan van der Ploeg, *From Happy Hour to Hungry Hour: Logging, Fisheries and Food Security in Malaita, Solomon Islands* (Report, Penang, Malaysia: World Fish Program, July 2018).
- 11 Daniel Strachan, Kirsty Teague, Katherine Gilbert, Ruth Maetala and Kabini Fa'ari, *Understanding Peacebuilding in Communities Affected by Extractive Industries in Isabel Province, Solomon Islands* (Report, United Nations Population Fund, International Organisation for Migration, 2002).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Tania Herbert, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Solomon Islands: A Report Focusing on the Presence of the Logging Industry in a Remote Region* (Report, Christian Care Centre, Church of Melanesia, Solomon Islands, July 2007).
- 14 Minter et al (above n 10).
- 15 Ruth Maetala, 'Women and Natural Resource Development in Solomon Islands: An Insider's View' (2010) 1(2) and 2(1) *The E-Journal of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies* <<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/pacificurrents/maetala.htm>>; Ruth Maetala, 'Matrilineal Land Tenure Systems in Solomon Islands: The Cases of Guadalcanal, Makira and Isabel Provinces' in Kristina E Stege, Ruth Maetala, Anna Naupa and Joel Simo (eds), *Land and Women: The Matrilineal Factor – The Cases of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu* (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2008).
- 16 'Police Participate in International Women's Day Celebrations', *Solomon Times Online* (online, 9 March 2021) <<https://www.solomontimes.com/news/police-participate-in-international-womens-day-celebrations/10685>>.
- 17 *Solomon Islands Women Peace and Security National Action Plan 2017-21* (Plan, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children & Family Affairs, 2017).
- 18 SC Res 1325, UN Doc S/RES/1325 (13 October 2000).
- 19 Pollard (above n 2) 9.
- 20 Interview with Anonymous (Ruth Maetala, August 2020).
- 21 Fangalasu et al (above n 4).
- 22 The '30 System is a shell money system that was birthed in Langalanga lagoon to use shell money beads up to 30 beads in exchange for store bought food during the ethnic tension.
- 23 Pollard (above n 2).
- 24 Interview with Anonymous (Ruth Maetala, 2002).

- 25 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, GA Res 217A (III), UN GAOR, UN Doc A/810 (10 December 1948).
- 26 *National Policy to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls 2016 to 2020* (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Solomon Islands, 2016).
- 27 *National Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy* (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Solomon Islands, 2016).
- 28 *Family Protection Act 2014* (Solomon Islands).
- 29 *A National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls 2020-2023* (Strategy, Solomon Islands Government, 2020).
- 30 United Nations Development Programme, 'The Warrior', *Medium* (online, 2 November 2016) <<https://medium.com/@png.undp/the-warrior-febe7bf20357>>.
- 31 'Celebrating Indigenous Communities' Contribution to Forests Conservation', *SGP: The GEF Small Grants Programme* (online, 20 March 2014) <<https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/news/celebrating-indigenous-communities-contribution-forests-conservation>>.
- 32 *Addressing Land Degradation in Nauro-Gor – Papua New Guinea* (Report, SGP: The GEF Small Grants Programme and United Nations Development Programme, 2011).
- 33 Our brief story can be accessed from <www.coffeecorp.org.pg>.
- 34 See New Life in the Nauro-Gor Community (video, 2012) <vimeo.com/36333525>.
- 35 See Peace Direct (website) <www.peacedirect.org>; Insight on Conflict (website, Peace Insight) <<https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/authors/insight-on-conflict/>>; Holly Spencer, 'The Power of Tomorrow's Peacebuilders: Willie Kerenga', Peace Direct (online, 15 August 2015) <<https://www.peacedirect.org/the-power-of-tomorrows-peacebuilders-willie-kerenga/>>.
- 36 PCADMINPNG, 'Local Civil Society First to Join Global Network', *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* (online, 24 November 2016) <<https://postcourier.com.pg/local-civil-society-first-to-join-global-network/>>.
- 37 See Joni Madraiwiwi, *A Personal Perspective: The Speeches of Joni Madraiwiwi* (IPS Publications, 2008).
- 38 @archiveples (Instagram) <<https://www.instagram.com/archiveples/?hl=en>>.

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.

Conciliation Resources
552 Victoria Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
Australia

Conciliation Resources
Unit 1.1, First Floor, The Grayston Centre,
28 Charles Square, London, N1 6HT, UK

@ cr@c-r.org

+44 (0)20 7359 7728

www.c-r.org

in Conciliation Resources

f ConciliationResources

Conciliation Resources Australia Limited trading as Conciliation Resources Australia
ABN: 94 642 321 640

Conciliation Resources is a charity registered in England and Wales (1055436)
and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (03196482)

