

## 6. Reconciliation and reintegration

### Reconciliation

Local reconciliation efforts began ‘almost as soon as the conflict began’ (Regan 2005a:15), gathered momentum throughout the 1990s and continued at the time of writing. There has long been recognition in Bougainville that reconciliation takes decades rather than years. In some areas, reconciliation processes following intertribal fighting occasioned by World War II continued into the 1980s (Londey 2004:224; Nelson 2005:196).

Every village-level story of reconciliation was unique. The village where John Braithwaite lived in 1969 had been the base of C Company of the BRA. In 1991, they had been involved in assaults on the PNGDF at Buka after swimming across Buka Passage with their weapons. A PNGDF patrol-boat supplied by Australia had fired on the village. Starting in 1990, when the war became chaotic, voices in the village began to be raised in favour of adopting a position of neutrality. Women from across Selau organised a peace march followed by an all-night vigil for peace that it is claimed 5000 attended—most of the population of Selau (van Tongeren et al. 2005:124). The war had opened up some old internal divisions. There were allegations that the local BRA commander had used his position to murder a man who was much disapproved of because of sorcery. He was also fearfully reviled by many because he had married his own daughter. In turn, there were allegations that the combat death of that local BRA commander was ‘friendly fire’, which was in fact ‘unfriendly fire’ from loyal kin of the murdered sorcerer within C Company. Others dispute this. Reconciliation within the area and between the PNGDF and the village was accomplished in August 1991 after the women seized the peacemaking agenda with the council of chiefs and the village declared itself neutral (Saovana-Spriggs 2007:195).

Both the villagers and the PNGDF officer who attended the reconciliation ceremony remember it as moving and a turning point towards local peace. It was a peace that created an island of civility (Kaldor 1999)—a peace zone—in the Selau region, which demonstrated the advantages of peaceful neutrality to those living in adjacent conflict areas, in a similar way that the North Nasioi peace zone did after 1994 in Central Bougainville. The PNGDF loaded all the BRA weapons from that part of Selau onto a helicopter and Sister Lorraine Garasu and elder Bernadette Ropa dropped them into the deep water just offshore from the village as part of the ceremony. This sealed the peace and the weapons disposal

in this little corner of Bougainville many years before the peacekeepers of the Truce and Peace Monitoring Groups arrived. The story of such a single village reveals why we must always be circumspect with the grand narrative of the Bougainville peace that says it was negotiated at Burnham and Lincoln. It was in fact a cumulative peace that took quantum leaps at Burnham and Lincoln, but was still an incomplete peace even at the time of writing for those who lived in the persisting no-go zones of different factions of the Me'ekamui Defence Force. Some PNG security forces personnel who attended reconciliations such as that in Selau reported them as the most positive memories of their time in Bougainville, saying that the aspect of the ceremonies that most moved them was when both the soldiers and the villagers had the opportunity to speak about their personal feelings of loss for particular individuals who had fallen. One of these officers said Bougainvillean women peacemakers changed him as a soldier:

I was a very aggressive traditional soldier. Very tough on people. As a result of my experience on Bougainville, I changed. I listen to my soldiers more now. I think negotiation is more important. [He explained how he was particularly affected by the compassion of women with children who had lost their husbands]...I wonder if my own wife would react that way if it was me who was killed. (PNGDF interview, Port Moresby 2007)

The Selau region has a population of only 7000, but the chiefs told us in April 2006 that they had participated in 87 separate formal reconciliations by then. While hundreds of large reconciliations have been held across Bougainville for big groups, and thousands of smaller ones in relation to hamlets, families or individuals, a widespread perspective a decade after the war is that most of the reconciliations that are needed still remain to be done.

The peace in Bougainville is two stories. There is the story of top-down peace ultimately negotiated under New Zealand auspices in 1997 and 1998, and ultimately under UN facilitation of the political settlement between PNG and Bougainvillean factions in 1999, 2000 and 2001. And there is the story of zones of local reconciliation (see Boege 2006:11) starting soon after the onset of war and continuing the struggle to expand its reach two decades later. The continuation of this story into the late 2000s is well illustrated by the large spike of reconciliations associated with the Youth Cross (Box 6.1). Most accounts assume the top-down story is the master narrative and the bottom-up reconciliations are subsidiary. But in important ways the bottom-up micro-narratives subsume and infuse the top-down peace. This way of thinking—that peacebuilding starts in families and ripples out from there—was repeatedly emphasised in

our conversations with Bougainvilleans (Tanis 2002b).<sup>1</sup> In that way of thinking about the peace, the ‘failed’ Arawa peace of 1994 that led to the Miriung vision of the North Nasioi peace zone and a transitional government that empowered chiefs, women, church and youth leaders to lead local reconciliations under councils of elders is an intermediate narrative that infuses the master peace narrative. It laid the foundation, for example, for 700 women to come together again in Arawa in 1996 to assign specific peacebuilding objectives to women leaders from every corner of Bougainville (Rolfe 2001:51). This was supported by the Uniting Church in Australia (Eagles 2002). Peter Reddy’s (2006) PhD thesis, moreover, shows that just as Bougainville is not a master narrative of successful peacebuilding, Somalia is not a master narrative of failed peacebuilding. He read Bougainville as a story of successful peacebuilding in three-quarters of Bougainville and (at that time) failed peacebuilding in one-quarter (the no-go zones), while Somalia was the reverse: a failed peace in three-quarters of the nation and a flourishing peace in one-quarter (Somaliland).

### Box 6.1 The Youth Cross

We have seen that one of the strengths of peacebuilding in Bougainville is the Church. And a strength of the international peacekeeping was that it worked this strength by giving its three chaplains—‘The Three Amigos’—free rein to work the churches as a central plank of its peacebuilding strategy. It was the Church that gave the most important base to the peacebuilding work of the women. The Youth Cross story is about how in the post-post-conflict period it gave an organisational base to youth leaders who wanted to take reconciliation to a new level. The Youth Cross story also shows that while the big story of reconciliation in Bougainville is about indigenous traditions of peacemaking, almost as big a story is the grafting of Christian traditions of healing onto the peace process.

World Youth Day—a huge gathering of Catholic young people—was held in Sydney in 2008. A lead-up in 2007 was the Youth Cross travelling to many countries of the world on its way to Sydney. The Youth Cross came to Papua New Guinea, but to the dismay of Catholic youth in Bougainville, not to their island. So the youth of Bougainville made their own little cross, travelled to Rabaul to place it on the Youth Cross, then placed it on their own large wooden cross back in Bougainville.

<sup>1</sup> More widely, Bougainville looks like a case where social capital (trust building as well as peacebuilding) ripples out from local accomplishments (Job and Reinhart 2003). We thought of this after attending a ceremony for the arrival of a large number of water tanks in a Siwai village. The paramount chief said: ‘This is no small thing we have done together. What a great leader we have found in the chairman we appointed for this water tank project. And what a great committee he had working with him. Look what we have accomplished here.’

The Catholic Youth of Bougainville decided that the theme for the visits of the Youth Cross would be 'peace and reconciliation'. The youth believed they could show their elders how their generation could take reconciliation up to a new and more spiritual level. While it was a Catholic event, the Protestant churches were all invited to join in, which they did when they saw what a huge following the cross was attracting to Siwai. During our 2007 fieldwork, we followed the Youth Cross from Siwai into Bana District. For much of its journey, the cross was followed by thousands of people. Days of fasting and prayer preceded its arrival in most villages. At that point, it was stopping at every village for three days and we were told that the plan was that it would stop in every village in Bougainville. It should have been clear that there was not time to accomplish this before World Youth Day 2008. And in any case, we are told that the enormous ecumenical momentum we saw the Youth Cross to have in Siwai waned as some Protestant communities further north took offence at some of the iconography of preparing roadsides for the arrival of the cross.

Miracles occurred as the cross moved from village to village and some who were the subject of the miracles then became celebrities following the cross around the island. For example, one man, a village drunk, cursed at the cross when it entered his village. He instantly dropped dead. Half an hour later, miraculously, he returned to life. While he was dead, he saw many wonderful things, met many long-dead ancestors and was able to report messages from them to the crowd.

At all of the dozen villages about which we made inquiries in south-western Bougainville, major reconciliations in front of the cross relating to the nine-year civil war occurred. A Catholic priest told us that in Siwai alone, 500 separate war-related reconciliations had occurred in front of the cross. Unfortunately, he said these did not touch the remaining really major conflicts in Siwai. Reconciliation did occur, however, between the police and Noah Musingku's Palace Guards over the 2006 fire fight at the 'Royal Palace' and it was said this paved the way for opening the roadblock on the road to Tonu.

Some reconciliations related to killings, rapes and other serious crimes, where the perpetrator(s) went before the cross as it stood in the village to ask forgiveness from the victim or their family. Many were groups who went before the cross asking forgiveness from their victims. One of these (see Figure 6.1) involved a young Me'ekamui fighter and raskol who had robbed a micro-finance bank with a gun that he cut in half in front of the cross. During the robbery, shots were fired and a stray bullet hit a young mother with a baby. During negotiations in the days before the cross arrived in the young man's village, the local police sergeant gave the young man a '100 per cent guarantee'

that he would not be prosecuted if he asked for forgiveness from the mother in front of the cross and changed his ways. We asked the sergeant if anyone in the community criticised him for not prosecuting such a serious crime. No, he said, everyone in the community thought it was the right thing to do and everyone felt safer when a young raskol destroyed his gun and committed to obey the law in a spiritually profound reconciliation like this.

Rarely was monetary compensation paid in the reconciliations that occurred before the Youth Cross. The cross arrived in a village in the late afternoon and reconciliations occurred right through the night into the next day. It must have been exhausting (but exhilarating too) for the local priest. In Siwai, awe-struck children sat closest to the cross under cover, with the adult audience standing at the back in the sun.

The celebrations before the cross were theologically interesting. As a priest scowled at John Braithwaite, he said that some people would have us believe that Jesus was a waitman, when in fact Jesus was born in Nagovis. In some villages, when the time came for the procession of the cross to move down the road to the next village, those who would lift the cross from its base announced that it was stuck. 'The cross is stuck', reverberated around the gathering. 'Someone must step forward to ask forgiveness before the cross leaves.' And someone would step forward, finally finding the courage to ask for forgiveness.

This was a very different reconciliation context than the traditional one. The short time frame between the impending arrival of the cross and the proposed reconciliation before the crisis gave victims little time to come to terms with the reconciliation on big matters. One of our neighbours in Siwai was told by a former BRA commander as the cross was approaching the village that he had killed her husband and he pleaded for forgiveness before the cross. She had no idea that this man had killed her husband. It was a lot to digest, yet it was a successful reconciliation that moved the whole community. But in other such cases the cross moved on to the next village with the parties still working on the healing process through planned future reconciliation meetings.

John Paul Lederach (1997) influentially argued that peace must be not only top-down and bottom-up, but also middle-out. Bottom-up connects the grassroots to the political projects of elites; top-down connects capacities that can be mobilised only by national elites down to lower levels of the society. Middle-out complements these vertical capacities with horizontal capacities to move back and forth across social divides. Organisations in civil society that are intermediate between the state and families/hamlets often do this middle-out work. Yet in his more recent book, Lederach finds a web metaphor more useful.

What he calls the middle-out capacity is in fact strategic networking that ‘creates a web of relationships and activities that cover the setting’ (Lederach 2005:80). The women of Bougainville certainly did this with peace marches that wound across the island, connecting new women to the network at each hamlet they passed (Ninnes 2006). So did the next generation of youth with the journeys of the Youth Cross. Lederach (2005:91) perceptively sees the key to weaving these webs as ‘getting a small set of the right people involved at the right places. What’s missing is not the critical mass. The missing ingredient is the *critical yeast*.’

In Bougainville, women such as Sister Lorraine Garasu were that yeast and many local male peacemakers were as well. Gradually enough yeast is connected to the project of building the bread of peace and the mass of the bread rises. Lederach (2005:90) connects this to Malcolm Gladwell’s (2002) idea from marketing of *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell’s subtitle is ‘How little things make a difference’. The Bougainville peace is a classic illustration of how little peacemakers finally linked together to tip momentum towards peace to a critical mass. This happened even as top-down peacemakers such as Theodore Miriung and John Bika were assassinated and even as the leaders of the war (Ona and the PNGDF) remained spoilers of sorts,<sup>2</sup> and even as profit-seeking international spoilers (Sandline and the shadowy multinational mining interests backing them) butted in. Once the tipping point of bottom-up support for peace was passed, progressive elements in the BRA and in the PNG military and political elite moved around the spoilers to join hands with the Sister Lorraines and the great mass of Bougainvillean peacemakers they had leavened. Gradually more elements of the Me’ekamui Defence Force right up to the time of writing in 2009 have joined in reconciliations and joined the peace.

While reconciliation of the more traditional kind, as opposed to the religious kind such as we see with the Youth Cross, is transacted in somewhat different ways in different parts of Bougainville, reciprocal gift giving by the two sides to a conflict that is intended to restore balance and social harmony is universal (Regan 2010). Pigs and ceremonial shell money are mostly the gifts involved and often small amounts of cash, which are not intended as reparation but as symbols of sorrow for the spilt blood. While the commercialisation of reconciliations by demanding large amounts of cash as reparation is not the widespread problem of ‘manipulation of custom’ (Fraenkel 2004) that it is in the Solomon Islands, it

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2 While at the time of the assassination of Bika, it seems accurate to call Ona a spoiler, Edward Wolfers makes the thoughtful point in a comment on this paragraph that at later stages Ona became more an absentee than a spoiler: ‘While Ona remained a determined hold-out, he was not a “spoiler” of the peace process overall. He did not, on the whole, try to disrupt what others were doing. The parties’ willingness to keep moving ahead, combined with the national government’s repeated invitation to Ona and the Me’ekamui Defence Force to join in the peace process, meant that they were absentees rather than “spoilers”.’

is a worry in Bougainville that such demands have arisen in many cases. Patrick Howley of the Peace Foundation Melanesia has articulated the view of many concerned Bougainvilleans:

To the outsider the gift may seem to be compensation (blood money). However, to most Bougainvilleans compensation (blood money) is repugnant. A gift is to wash away the tears; it in no way is a payment for the loss incurred. Compensation is for gain and is equivalent to setting a value on the life of a loved one. With a gift, one asks for forgiveness; with compensation there is no forgiveness and the person is attempting something which is impossible, that is putting a value on something that cannot be bought or paid for. With our experience (Peace Foundation), we have decided that if people want money for compensation (blood money), then we refuse to mediate and tell them to take it to the court... Not only does the blood money fail to produce reconciliation but it also leads to further disputes and fighting. (Howley n.d.)

In a small number of cases, post-conflict reconciliations have included an exchange of young women to marry into the enemy group, using kinship bonds to consolidate the peace. Traditionally, this was a widespread element of reconciliation. With the near-complete demise of arranged marriages as the norm in Bougainville, however, we have seen this particular form of arranged marriage also disappearing. At a reconciliation meeting we attended in Buka, one of the older men argued this was the only way to reconsolidate bonds deeply between the two groups; a few people sniggered, some smiled at each other at such an impractical, backward-looking suggestion, some frowned and most ignored it. Betel-nut is usually shared and chewed together as a ritual of greeting among friends or introduction of strangers. There is singing and dancing. In some cases, return of the bones of a person killed in the conflict is the most important exchange. A rock may be buried or a tree planted to symbolise permanency of the peace, the growing, restored relationships and a weight that is put away forever; spears, bows and arrows may be broken. Our interviews (like Reddy's 2006:246) testified to the ethos of permanence with reconciliations, though there were suggestions that in the south reconciliations could be less irrevocable than in the traditions of central and northern Bougainville. The weight of social disapproval from renouncing a reconciliation was reported to be enormous. 'The moment the hatchet is buried, it stays buried. Anyone seen to be digging up the buried hatchet will get the most severe punishment. This means death' (Interview with President Kabui, ABG, 2006).





**Figure 6.1a: Young women lead the Youth Cross as it arrives from one village into another.**



**Figure 6.1b: Young men with panpipes kneeling behind thousands following the Youth Cross as it travels from one Siwai village to another.**





**Figure 6.1c: A young Me'ekamui fighter surrenders a reconditioned World War II weapon to be cut in two in front of the Youth Cross and is forgiven in Siwai. He recently shot a woman in an armed robbery and this reconciliation became a catalyst for opening a roadblock on the road to Tonu village and for local police–Me'ekamui reconciliation**

Photos: Anonymous Siwai photographer or John Braithwaite, 2007

*Tarout* or vomiting—as discussed earlier in the description of the Burnham peace talks—often occurs as part of the whole process, though usually at the preparatory meetings where what will be exchanged is hammered out. A long sequence of mediation meetings between dozens of chiefs builds up to a public reconciliation ceremony that hundreds, even thousands in rare cases, might attend. This is why this form of peacebuilding is at the heart of the highly participative peace accomplished in Bougainville. At the large final ceremony, both sides express concerns and remorse. Apologies by men are often tearful and can be responded to with tearful, loud, demonstrative displays of sadness and very often forgiveness by the women who are the closest family to the victims who are subjects of the apology. Christian traditions of prayers of solace and pleas for forgiveness are normally intertwined with the indigenous traditions of the reconciliation ritual. Both their indigenous origins and their Christian elements gave this path to peace special legitimacy in the eyes of Bougainvilleans (Regan 2005a). 'Women's leaders and groups also initiated many

such efforts, often drawing on long-established traditional dispute-settlement roles of women' (Regan 2005a:16). The sheer spread of such local reconciliations put 'pressure on leaders of all Bougainville factions' (Regan 2005a:17), including Francis Ona and other potential spoilers, not to unsettle the peace.

Dr Bob Breen, who is writing the official Australian history of peacekeeping in Bougainville, and who served as a senior military advisor to the Australian commanders in Bougainville, thinks the greatest contribution of the peacekeepers was in accelerating reconciliations that would have eventually occurred naturally. That is, one of the hardest things with starting a reconciliation for inter-group killings is for someone to take the risk of proposing a meeting. According to Breen, this was the most valuable single thing peacekeepers did: simply going to one group and suggesting that it would be good if they met with another with a view to making peace locally—and offering to be in attendance to provide a kind of third-party security guarantee for the risky meeting. Australian and New Zealand peacekeepers particularly learnt from ni-Vanuatu peacekeepers how to set up a meeting in a patient Melanesian way.

There are two sides to traditional Bougainvillean reconciliations. On the one hand, there is the commitment to rituals of forgiveness that puts revenge aside (usually permanently). On the other hand, when a person becomes a recurrent potential spoiler of the peace—particularly when they flout a reconciliation agreement of which they are a part—a much less frequently used aspect of traditional Bougainvillean social control is for their relatives to kill them (by surprising them on a hunting trip, for example). Many informants agreed that in the Bougainville peace process, more than a few spoilers on both sides were killed by their own kin to preserve the peace—perhaps as many as 10.

During 2009, when this book was being written, major new reconciliations occurred. One was between local commanders of the Me'ekamui Defence Force and the Wisai Liberation Movement (WILMO) in May 2009. Another was held in Tonu between BRA Buin commander, Thomas Tari, and Me'ekamui Defence Force southern commander, Damien Koike—according to one report, with 3000 people in attendance. This reconciliation also encompassed the attack Tari led on Noah Musingku's U-Vistract headquarters at Tonu in 2006. A major reconciliation between the PNGDF and the people of Buin over the Kangu Beach massacre was also at an advanced stage of planning. In June 2009, Sir Julius Chan, supported by the whole cabinet of his New Ireland Province, and traditional culture groups participated in reconciliation ceremonies all day on 13 June at which Sir Julius apologised for his role with Sandline. The festivities continued with his group's participation in the fourth anniversary of the Autonomous Bougainville Government on 15 June 2009. During 2009, ABG President, James Tanis, energised yet another wave of important reconciliations with different Me'ekamui factions and other armed factions in the south, including Noah Musing'ku, with whom amnesty was discussed during 2009.



**Figure 6.2 Bougainville President, James Tanis, washes the feet of former PNG Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan during their 2009 reconciliation**

Photo: Aloysius Laukai, New Dawn

## Restorative justice and the new Bougainville justice system

There is a desire in Bougainville to develop a criminal justice system different from the one seen in the retributive behaviour of the PNG riot police that was a cause of the war. The *Report of the Bougainville Constitutional Commission* makes numerous specific references to shifting away from the PNG criminal justice system and towards restorative justice (Reddy 2006:249). One of the most prominent restorative justice advocates on Bougainville—whom our ethics policies prohibit us from naming—ordered his BRA unit to destroy Bougainville’s only prison. Today he works at trying to rebuild the Bougainville criminal justice system from the ground up as a more restorative system. Almost two decades on from the burning of the prison, Bougainville still does not have a jail. It is not high on Bougainville’s long list of state-building priorities, though it is on the list. Australia has been pushing for it to be higher and is offering to fund a new prison. Bougainville respondents to the National Research Institute



(2005:47) survey rarely rated 'harsher penalties from the courts' as one of the 'government initiatives to make your area safer from crime'. Their priorities in response to this were, in descending order: youth activities, more jobs, more police, better living conditions and fighting corruption. There are human rights problems with crowded police lock-ups, though most detainees are free to roam the vicinity of the lock-up during the day and eat meals with their relatives.

While the *PNG Constitution* provides for a 'Police Force', the *Bougainville Constitution* provides for a 'Police Service' that will 'develop rehabilitatory and reconciliatory concepts of policing', 'work in harmony with communities and encourage community participation in its activities' and 'support and work with traditional chiefs...to resolve disputes' (Regan 2005a:40). We attended high-quality restorative justice training for the police provided by the Peace Foundation Melanesia. Scheye and Peake (2005:258–9) contend that the war created an opportunity for chiefs to deputise community members as what Dinnen and Braithwaite (2009) might prefer to conceive as more like indigenous *kiaps* than police. Post-conflict, Scheye and Peake contend the writers of the new Bougainville constitution had the wisdom to deputise these already working 'police' as 'community auxiliary police' still under the control of the chiefs, still leaning on traditional means of regulating crime and other major social problems such as the making of home-brew. The policing model in Bougainville today is heavily reliant on these part-time village-based auxiliary police who answer to a village Peace and Good Order (or Mediation) Committee. The New Zealand Government also had the vision to see the virtue of a new post-conflict hybrid that continued to empower the de facto village constables and a new town-based full-time police in Buka, Arawa and Buin. The Western policing model is, however, hegemonically in the hearts even of some of the by and large kindly New Zealand constables<sup>3</sup> sent to assist and among indigenous Bougainvillean police trained in Papua New Guinea sent back to build the new, mostly unarmed Bougainvillean police.

## Reintegration of combatants

Three of the 41 seats in the Bougainville House of Representatives were reserved for former combatants. One of the problems of such reintegration through guaranteed power sharing in a democracy is that in Bougainville three seats reserved for combatants also means three seats reserved for males. There were no female combatants in this war. What kind of message would this have been to the women who displayed such magnificent leadership in pushing for peace?

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3 Australia has also supported police capacity building on and off during the past decade in Bougainville.

So, three seats were also reserved for women. All voters (not just women and ex-combatants) voted for these six seats. The special seats would exist for a maximum of 10–15 years (Wolfers 2006a:9).

Most estimates of the number of Bougainvillean combatants in this war are about 5000 at a maximum. But 15 000 registered as ex-combatants with AusAID's BETA fund to reintegrate ex-combatants through business and training opportunities. In the end, this program funded 2734 applications—mainly from groups of combatants—to a cost of US\$2.4 million. There was much fraud. Many men who never fought in the war were funded (UNIFEM 2004:27). In 2006, the PNG Government paid K10 million to Resistance fighters. The final list of claimants totalled 4085.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this was not such a large amount of money for something that was seen as necessary to push combatants along in seeing the benefits of weapons surrender. Some of the businesses and training that were supported doubtless delivered benefits, but for most this was a hard case to sustain. Trade and hardware stores were funded, provisions were made of stock, feed, agricultural projects, piggeries, bike shops, chicken farms, saws, copra driers, carpentry workshops, boats and motors for fishery, welding supplies, and so on, plus many education projects.

Most of the new recruitment of full-time jobs in the police and as part-time auxiliary police went to ex-combatants. This being so, it is interesting that Bougainvilleans have a reasonably positive attitude towards their police (National Research Institute 2005). An even larger number of ex-combatants got jobs on the AusAID road and bridge rebuilding and repair projects. Only a few of the more senior and more educated combatants got jobs in the Bougainville administration, though many won seats in the House of Representatives beyond those designated for combatants. It is common for younger ex-combatants to feel excluded and 'betrayed' by the comparative success in business and government of their former leaders, while they remain poor (Boege 2008:36).

## Refugee rehabilitation

Refugees (mostly in fact internally displaced persons, or IDPs) suffered terribly in the war, after one-third of the population of Bougainville fled their burnt villages. Some suffered in hiding in the mountains, but most were in military-controlled IDP camps called care centres. All of these returned quickly to their villages when peace returned to their region. Unknown but large numbers of the 15 000 to 20 000 mainland New Guineans who fled (Regan 2005b) never

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4 We are grateful to Edward Wolfers for this information.



returned, largely because they had no BCL-related jobs to return to. The Chinese community never returned to rebuild their businesses because they felt they would not be welcome or free to do so.

Maria Kopiku, in an interview with Patrick Howley (2000:24), recounts insightfully the nature of the damage the care centres did to people and cultures:

People were crowded together with no privacy; their village groupings were broken up; the network of mutual relationships, associations, interaction and mutual social obligation was suspended. The cultural glue that binds the villages and people together was lost for ten years... Without this glue many people, especially the young lost their sense of respect and shame. Adultery, stealing, domestic violence, lack of respect for elders....became so commonplace...The soldiers who administered the camps were often inconsistent and violent when thwarted. They killed suspect BRA and used their position to steal things and demand women to sleep with. Only now are we seeing the moral damage of the camps in our children who are growing up lacking the values of our society.

There was a considerable investment in trauma counselling in the years immediately after the war. The Marist mission, the Sisters of Nazareth, Caritas and Harvard University played prominent roles in this work, which delivered group or individual counselling to some 20 000 people suffering trauma. While this was a considerable investment, it was not sustained for many years and most people still suffering trauma a decade after the war had no access to professional help. Victims of the war with physical disabilities also did not receive long-term therapy and rehabilitation (Ahai 1999:131).

The Solomon Islands are easily visible from the south of Bougainville, so many people fled there—perhaps 2000 (Reddy 2006:217)—especially the wounded. The PNGDF gave chase into the Solomons at times. This spread aspects of the conflict to that country and worsened the ultimate disintegration of that nation into violence, as we will see in the next *Peacebuilding Compared* volume on the Solomon Islands.

## Conclusion

Refugee and combatant reintegration was much less adequately resourced in Bougainville than in any of the nine Indonesian and Timor-Leste conflicts discussed in the first and fourth volumes of *Peacebuilding Compared*. In spite

of this, kin networks helped most people to rebuild houses and re-establish gardens, and helped them with support from the Church to cope with their trauma. Many years on, the anguish of trauma remains etched on many lives.

The depth, breadth, duration and local ownership of reconciliation are the great comparative strengths of the Bougainville peace. This is even though Bougainvilleans say most of the work of reconciliation remains to be done. This very attention to the glass half-empty reflects the resilience of Bougainvillean reconciliation in comparative perspective. It is hard to think of a case where peacebuilders could learn more from how restorative justice can play a more central role in a peace through studying how indigenous approaches to expanding a peace from islands of civility. That local reconciliation work instructs the peacebuilder to be wary of grand narratives of what a war is about as pointing to the things that need to be reconciled in a particular place. In Bougainville, a particular piece of land or an act of sorcery could be a big issue in what the war was about in that village. Top-down peacemaking does not get at this. Yet these problems can ignite a conflict, just as very local inter-generational conflicts were so vital in starting the conflagration in the first place. We are all familiar with grand narratives as to what World War II was about. For Bougainvilleans, it meant none of these things. They lost many lives in World War II fighting on one side for very different, very local reasons or loyalties. Some chiefs seized on the civil war as an opportunity to settle scars from these World War II conflicts between one village on the side of the Japanese and the other on the side of the allied forces. The historical lesson here is that resilient peace requires attention not just to the top-down settlement of grand geopolitical narratives. It also requires locally meaningful reconciliation that attends to micro-narratives of resentment.

It is to the credit of the Truce and Peace Monitoring Groups that they came to understand the disparate local plurality of conflicts and the trust they could place in local traditions for healing them. Bob Breen nevertheless puts his finger in this chapter on a useful role the internationals played as catalysts. He points out that the hardest part of reconciliation is starting it. And fear of violence is one reason why ordinary folk tremble at making the first move. Truce and Peace Monitoring Group peacekeepers repeatedly made a great contribution in making the move of suggesting a first meeting under their security umbrella. They then had the wisdom to understand that once the conversation was under way, the locals had skills in mediation that they could never attain.