

7 PARTNERSHIP, POST- CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE-BUILDING

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In the study and practice of development, the concept of partnerships has been both pervasive and contested. In this chapter I analyse partnerships in post-conflict development and peace-building from four perspectives, using Leitana Nehan as a case study. The first section of the chapter explores the concept of partnership, the various theoretical perspectives related to the notion of partnership, and common types and models of partnerships. The second section describes the kinds of partnerships Leitana Nehan has engaged in, based on the various models described. The third and concluding section of the chapter analyses the strengths and weaknesses of partnership-building approaches. It summarises key issues emerging from this analysis and provides a reflection on the theory and practice of partnerships in development and peace-building.

PARTNERSHIP IN CONTEXT

Currently, there is overwhelming agreement that development, poverty eradication, and peace-building can best be achieved through establishing partnerships both at the national and international levels. The discourse of partnership dominates many major international and national development declarations and instruments. For example, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for Sustainable Development, and UNESCO's International Year for the Culture of Peace stipulate the importance of establishing partnerships as a means to achieving other objectives. However, while partnership-building sounds rosy and optimistic in theory, the concept of

partnership is difficult to implement in practice. There is no level playing field in partnership-building because the concept is political, and the participating organisations may have their own agendas that create imbalance.

The change in the nature, size, value, mission and objectives of many development organisations, both from the North and the South¹, especially with regard to development and aid, has resulted in the adoption of the concept of partnership. As Fowler (1991) contends, the concept of partnership has, since the 1970s, been widely used and given multiple meanings. It is often used synonymously with 'relationship'. Lewis (2001) adds that the term is used interchangeably with 'collaboration', 'coordination', 'cooperation', 'accompaniment', and 'complementarity', which he says have entrenched themselves in development discourse. Originally, the concept of partnership was used and understood to reflect humanitarian, moral, political, ideological or spiritual solidarity between the northern NGOs and those from the South, who also shared a common vision—facilitating social change.

In its basic form, the term 'partnership' means a strategic alliance or coalition between two or more entities that are involved in pursuing a particular issue but share resources and responsibilities in order to achieve a common goal (Fowler 1997). Fowler (2000b, in Brehm 2001:11) further extends this definition from the perspective of whether such partnerships are authentic or not. He argues that, 'authentic partnership implies...a joint commitment to long-term intervention, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power'.

Lewis (2001) critiques the absence of proper scrutiny of how the concept of partnership works in the development and aid arena. He notes that the lack of balanced partnerships has resulted in a complex dichotomy, where those involved can become active or passive partners. As Fowler (2000a:26) argues, 'the phrase "partnership in development" has become virtually meaningless and discredited because too often it camouflages aid-related relationships that are unbalanced, dependency-creating and based on compromise in favour of the powerful'. For example, Fowler observes that the dependency

and power imbalance can be exacerbated by, among other things, donors imposing conditionality that undermines NGOs' governance, accountability, comparative advantages, organisational behaviour and focus.

The various facets of these definitions contain a number of underlying assumptions, which form the fundamental ingredients of an effective partnership. Whether these partnerships are in form of coalitions, alliances or networks, Fowler (2000c) and Lewis (2001) argue that effective partnerships or relationships are anchored in mutuality. It is also vital to note that those involved in the partnership have an important part to play as equals while maintaining their organisational independence.

TYPES AND MODELS OF PARTNERSHIPS

Analysts of aid and development (see Leach 1997; INTRAC 2001; Fowler 2000c; Tvedt 1998; Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen 2003) have formulated various models of partnerships to reflect the complexity of these interplays between the two entities. My focus will be on the following kinds of partnerships

- NGO–donor
- Inter-NGO
- NGO–government
- NGO–local community.

NGO–donor agency partnership

It is widely acknowledged that the study of partnerships should focus on the dynamics of power (Lister 1999). According to Lister, many theories of power are behavioural, largely concerned with the extent to which the actions of one organisation can have such a significant influence on the behaviour of the other organisation. Given that the aid and development industry is based on resource transfer, one question whose answer remains elusive is the extent to which Northern and Southern NGOs are really partners in a reciprocally accountable relationship. Many partnerships are believed to be founded on a shared vision, hence, the common 'visionary patronage' model of partnership; others are based on desires or needs for collaboration; while still other

partnerships focus on resources, capacity enhancement and/or mutual trust. I discuss each of these in turn below.

Visionary Patronage Model

According to Leach (1997:6) visionary patronage is a partnership where an international NGO (or a consortium of international NGOs) collaborates with a local or national NGO (or consortium of NGOs) on the basis of a strong, shared development goal or vision. Leitana Nehan and International Women's Development Agency reflect this model in many respects. For example, Leitana Nehan's vision aims to 'meaningfully contribute to the restoration of peace on Bougainville by promoting non-violence and women's rights and empowering women as agents of change to improve their social status' (Carl 2000:10). Likewise, IWDA's vision seeks to 'support women's efforts to improve their life and choices and those of their families and communities, and to advance women's human rights, with emphasis on women who are particularly marginalised or suffer poverty or oppression' (IWDA n.d.). The emphasis on the improvements of women's social status underlines the argument. While the emphasis is on the vision, there is no obligation for shared strategy. What is common in this model of collaboration is joint formulation of goals for specific project activities, the monitoring of outcomes and reporting. Very often though, partners in a visionary patronage model of partnership have had a working relationship before. In the case of IWDA and Leitana Nehan, the two organisations established this collaborative partnership prior to the NGO forum in Beijing in 1995 (see Chapter 2) and consolidated it through a joint project, which was later funded by the Australian government, through AusAID (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Funding, capacity and trust

In addition to the visionary patronage and collaborative relationships between NGOs and donors, these relationships can also be further conceptualised in terms of

- funding-based differences, with 'a funding-only relationship at one end of the spectrum and a partnership based on policy

- dialogue with no funding at the other end' (INTRAC 2001:3)
- capacity-based differences, ranging from an NGO with limited capacity to implement programs on its own at one extreme, to an NGO that is self-sufficient in terms of resources and experience at the other
 - trust-based differences, ranging from the situation where one partner, usually the one with resources, takes total control of the recipient NGO, to a situation of unconditional trust between the two (INTRAC 2001).

Inter-NGO partnerships

Partnerships between and among NGOs vary. In some instances, they can take the form of temporary alliances, coalitions or simple platforms (Fowler 2000b). Some inter-NGO partnerships can be formal and legally established. One such example is NGO partnerships formed under umbrella or NGO-coordinating organisations. In this section, I critically examine inter-NGO partnerships from three perspectives. First, I look at the partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs. Second, I examine inter-NGO partnerships within NGO coordinating bodies and, third, partnerships arising from networks and coalitions.

The North–South divide

Brehm (2001) contends that partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs have become an important aspect in the development process. However, while Southern NGOs have been coerced into the concept of partnership, the practical aspects of the concept are not only complex but are also hotly contested. Too often, inter-NGO partnerships are largely driven by aid-related issues, which ultimately result in patron–client relationships. According to Fowler (2000b), when Southern NGOs fall into such partnerships with Northern NGOs, it is usually the Northern NGOs that impose their external development models and policies and the Southern NGOs are coerced into following them, raising the question of who owns the funds. Further imbalance in resources often results in what Nwamuo (2000) calls 'senior partners' who erode the aspect of ownership. Under such

conditions, the Northern NGOs tend to control and determine priorities, budgets and activities, and this ultimately interferes with the autonomy of the local institutions.

Inter-NGO partnerships in NGO umbrella organisations

Over the years, the dynamics of NGO partnerships have taken a different dimension with many umbrella organisations formed to facilitate coordination in response to rampant tensions among NGOs. Korten (1990) recounts that 'jealousies among them are often intense, and efforts at collaboration too often break down into internecine warfare that paralyses efforts to work together towards the achievement of shared purposes. Ironically, it at times seems easier for some to work with government than with other NGOs' (1990:130–31).

Locally mandated frameworks or government-legislated NGO coordinating bodies are proving to be useful structures, although in some countries they are seen to interfere with NGO's independence. Such partnerships are not without problems. Bennet (1997) argues that they work best when they have both local and foreign support and they do not duplicate the functions of the member NGOs unless such duplication is specifically sought. Bennet further maintains that the effectiveness of NGO coordinating bodies may also depend on forming other network structures such as sector networks. In addition, he observes that these coordinating organisations should be endorsed by governments and other civil society actors as interlocutors on issues affecting the NGO sector. How member NGOs comply with codes of conduct devised by NGO coordinating bodies is another contentious issue.

Coalitions and networks

Networks have become fashionable in NGO partnerships. A conglomerate of NGOs may team up and form coalitions for various purposes, for example, advancing a policy reform issue. A number of UN summits have witnessed such networks or coalitions at work (Fisher 1993). Such coalitions and networks usually operate on a common interest and agenda, with a particular theme as their focus. For example,

the Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights, Bougainville Interchurch Women's Forum, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, are among many such networks.

NGO–government partnerships

One of the fundamental aspects of NGOs' success in their development efforts in general, and their peace-building endeavours in post-conflict situations in particular, is their relationship with the state (see Ropers 2001; Galama and van Tongeren 2002). State collapse in conflict situations causes complex challenges for reconstruction, which vary with context and the degree of state failure. For example, the conflict in Bougainville had such a devastating effect because it was an internal conflict, weakening the judicial, fiscal and administrative structures, and hence the possibilities for NGO partnerships important to the reconstruction process.

Identifying the partnership models that best facilitate sustainable development and peace-building in post-conflict situations is a complex issue, rendered even more difficult by NGOs' inability to establish meaningful partnerships with government given the absence of appropriate institutional structures. However, depending on the ceasefire mechanisms, there are ways in which dialogue can be initiated between civil society organisations and the government structures. As such, it is vital to explore what the literature says about the NGO–government partnership models in general, before identifying which models Leitana Nehan adopts in its projects.

Commentators on the NGO–government partnership discourse (see Gidron et al. 1992) suggest that there are four types of government–NGO partnerships: the government-dominant model, the third-sector dominant model, the dual model, and the collaborative model.

Government-dominant model. This model is characterised by the government's leading role in both the funding and delivery of services. Where possible, however, the NGO sector is contracted to deliver services on the government's behalf. Post-conflict situations may not always fit into this category. Nevertheless, as the role of the NGO sector becomes increasingly vital in post-conflict situations, their engagement could facilitate reconciliation and community mobilisation.

Third-sector dominant model. The major feature in this model is the dominant role played by the NGO both in the funding and delivery of services. This model is common in post-conflict situations where government services are limited or non-existent. Very often, NGOs will seek funding, identify needs, implement, monitor and evaluate their programs with very little or no government participation.

Dual model. As opposed to the two models above, the NGOs in a dual model, also known as the 'parallel track' model (Tvedt 1998:5), supplement the services provided by the state and deliver similar kinds of services. One distinguishing strategy is clear, however—in a 'dual model', NGOs give priority to the communities that are marginalised by state service provision, adopting the primary role of filling the gaps left by the government.

Collaborative model. One of the most conducive models, and perhaps one that strikes a balance, is the collaborative model. This model allows for the two sectors—government and NGOs—to work together. In this model, NGOs can act as agents of government programs (collaborative-vendor model) or, alternatively, can retain a considerable amount of autonomy and direction (collaborative-partnership model) (Tvedt 1998). The extent to which NGOs in post-conflict situations adopt this model largely depends on the stability of the post-conflict situation, particularly whether or not structures are in place to facilitate dialogue between and among different parties.

However, as can be deduced from the four models above, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint which model can work best in a given situation. The framework of relationships within which NGOs operate may vary from country to country. It is possible that a single model or a combination of two models or more can be adopted. As alluded to earlier, it may depend on the prevailing social, political, economic and cultural climate of the day.

NGO–local community partnerships

NGO relationships with local communities can be understood from the perspective of the extent to which NGOs engage local community members in their projects, that is, how the local people participate in NGO programs. Going back to the fundamental principles that

govern both participatory development and effective partnerships (Fowler 1997, 2000a, 2000c), it can be deduced that both participation and partnerships are effective where there is high degree of information/resource sharing, consultation and decision-making, and where beneficiaries initiate action. Therefore, effective NGO–local community partnerships can be realised where NGO programs provide feedback to the beneficiaries or where consultation between the two is not a one-sided process but stems from mutual trust. Second, unless the beneficiaries are involved in the decision-making process on issues that affect them, partnership is more likely to fail.

LEITANA NEHAN'S ROAD TO BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Since its inception, Leitana Nehan has been engaged in various forms of partnerships with other stakeholders. While these partnerships seem discrete, they overlap in their fundamental principles and can be placed in the four broad categories discussed above, namely, NGO–donor, Inter-NGO, NGO–government, and NGO–local community. Leitana Nehan has had a long-standing partnership with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), an organisation predominantly funded by AusAID. As noted in Chapter 2, IWDA and Leitana Nehan first came into contact when IWDA sent Rae Smart and Sharon Laura to the 'Bougainville Reunion' in 1994. IWDA then sponsored two of Leitana Nehan's founders, Agnes Titus and Helen Hakena, to attend the Fourth Global Forum on Women in Beijing in 1995, allowing Leitana Nehan to put itself on the global stage for the first time by openly sharing with other participants Bougainville women's experiences in the conflict. The immediate effect of the Beijing forum was the establishment of a formal partnership with International Women's Development Agency. The partnership, however, reflects a set of sub-models, particularly Leach's (1997) 'visionary patronage' and 'collaborative operation'.

It is no coincidence that IWDA and Leitana Nehan share a fairly similar vision of women's role in peace-building and development, which underpins the collaboration. Both organisations focus on improving women's social status, among other fundamental issues.

As already alluded to earlier in the chapter, Leitana Nehan's partnership-building with other stakeholders, particularly AusAID and the International Women's Development Agency in Australia, New Zealand Aid and Oxfam New Zealand, were engineered by the organisation's vision, which is to 'meaningfully contribute to the restoration of peace on Bougainville by promoting non-violence and women's rights and empowering women as agents of change to improve their social status' (Carl 2000:10). This ambitious vision, in essence, meant embarking on a rigorous campaign to establish meaningful networks and funding, both from within Bougainville and the international donor community.

IWDA's intermediary role in the partnership

The pursuit of the visionary patronage model of partnership (within the broader context of the NGO–donor partnership) between AusAID and IWDA on the one hand, and between IWDA and Leitana Nehan on the other, is unique and has particular strengths and weaknesses. IWDA is a direct recipient of AusAID funding. In theory, Leitana Nehan has, to a large extent, been in a visionary patronage model of partnership with AusAID due to its (AusAID's) mandate to assist its recipients to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. In terms of funding mechanisms, however, Leitana Nehan is an indirect recipient—IWDA is the conduit through which funds are channelled. According to AusAID (n.d.) all Australian aid is supposed to 'promote the Australian identity', and that the role of the intermediary organisations (like IWDA) is to be 'responsible for the design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of the activities, submission of reports and acquittals, and for fully accounting for funds provided by AusAID' (AusAID n.d.:n.p.). This 'tied aid' policy potentially posed significant problems for the partnership between IWDA and Leitana Nehan. Two fundamental questions arise from this. Who benefits from these visionary partnerships? Who owns the aid package?

In theory, the visionary patronage model of partnership provides the flexibility for the maintenance of organisational identity. In practice, however, there are contradictions. In the case of the partnership between IWDA and Leitana Nehan, the contradiction

is clearly seen in the conditions attached to the aid package. These conditions interfere with the many advantages which the visionary patronage partnership are supposed to provide, such as

- frequent visits
- exchange of information through reports
- mutual learning, particularly of the international NGO, and its ripple effects to other related projects
- enhanced learning by the recipient NGO in program strategy and financial management
- adaptability in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Conversely, the visionary patronage model of partnership has a number of disadvantages both to the donor agency and recipient NGO. As Makuwira (2003) points out, the fact that donor agencies and other international NGOs (acting as conduits for donor agencies) are not fully engaged in the day-to-day operation of the project results in a significant loss of learning. Every development project produces lessons for improved practice. Furthermore, partnerships are highly embedded with elements of power. Where the recipient NGOs fail to articulate their mission and strategy clearly, they risk being swallowed by donor influences. Leitana Nehan has to deal with two critical issues, directly or indirectly—first, finding appropriate balance in its relationship with IWDA and, second, dealing with AusAID's influence on IWDA, which has the potential to affect Leitana Nehan's work. These issues are discussed later in the chapter.

COLLABORATIVE OPERATION

When partnerships are established on the basis of shared vision, expectations of collaboration are usually high. The challenge, however, lies in determining the degree of collaboration. Leach (1997) believes that the donor agency is supposed, under the collaborative operation partnership model, to be actively engaged in the governance of the project along with the recipient NGO. This model emphasises joint decision-making power during the project's design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Unlike the visionary patronage model, the collaborative operation model of partnership emphasises

shared agreement on vision and strategy, a condition that usually requires some kind of formal decision-making structure.

The partnership between Leitana Nehan and IWDA does, to a certain degree, reflect this description. During the 2003 International Women's Day Conference held in Hobart, Helen Hakena, the director of the Leitana Nehan provided some background which supports the view that IWDA and Leitana Nehan have been engaged, to a larger extent, in a collaborative operation model of partnership. In her speech she said pointed out that

[i]n 1994 International Women's Development Agency came to our aid, sending Ms Rae Smart and Sharon Laura to work with us during the peak of the crisis, to document the experiences of Bougainville women in the lead up to the Beijing World Forum on Women. This was the beginning of our valuable partnership with IWDA. In 1998 both organisations jointly devised a project called 'Strengthening Communities for Peace' (Hakena 2003a:3).

The frequent presence of IWDA staff at Leitana Nehan's office proved advantageous in many ways. Leitana Nehan has enjoyed a relatively long period of substantial funding from AusAID through IWDA. Not only has the relationship provided Leitana Nehan direct access to IWDA's expertise and staff experience, it has also allowed the organisation's staff to learn useful administrative and management skills, acquire knowledge of the politics of donor agencies and aid provision, and develop skills in fundraising and advocacy. Leitana Nehan has used all these skills very successfully in influencing policymaking in Bougainville. For example, Leitana Nehan, like other Bougainville local NGOs, has been in the forefront in contributing to the development of the Bougainville Constitution and other related activities (see Chapters 2–5).

There are also advantages to the partner international NGO (IWDA), most notably, lower staff costs and overheads, increased institutional effectiveness and opportunity for the agency to work in situations where direct operations are highly restricted, increased understanding of on-the-ground realities; and, in the case of IWDA, greater credibility with AusAID as an organisation that is willing to learn from its operations. For example, IWDA continues to receive support from AusAID, arguably not just because it satisfies many of

AusAID's requirements but because it shows a keen interest in pursuing mutual working partnerships.

The central dilemma, as is the case with visionary patronage, is where the parties involved draw the line between joint decision-making and interference. This partnership can be 'too close for comfort' because, if the donor agency or international NGO wields too much power and is insensitive to the needs of the beneficiary NGO, the beneficiary NGO risks losing control of its identity, culture, mission and strategy. This is probably the reason why many NGOs have fallen prey to donor agencies' conditionalities. Although this may be very hard to detect in the case of IWDA and Leitana Nehan, it is hard, given that IWDA is directly answerable and responsible to AusAID, to claim that IWDA and Leitana Nehan are operating on a level playing field.

Funding-based differences

Analysis of Leitana Nehan's partnership with both IWDA and AusAID does reflect this description. While these organisations do share a common vision and collaborate quite frequently on a number of fronts, the fundamental issue that underpins their relationship is funding. In other words, their partnership is by no means influenced by policy dialogue alone.

While Leitana Nehan has benefited from this model of partnership by successfully implementing its programs, its success stories are, to a larger extent, dependent on how the organisation has managed to negotiate the 'conditionalities' and/or strings attached to the aid package (see Stokke 1995; Sogge 2002). INTRAC (2001:4) observes that 'the control-orientation of funding systems is thought to be somewhat excessive even among the NGO staff themselves'. Donor agencies' indirect power and implicit influence can exert substantial pressure on recipient NGOs, ultimately reducing them to being mere followers rather than having the leverage to share the aid governance. My experience in conducting research in this field reveals that NGOs rarely criticise donors' neoliberal agendas for fear of losing funding, particularly when the recipient NGOs are completely donor-dependent. For example, in one attempt to discuss funding issues

with one of the three organisations, the officers concerned with the issues showed little interest in engaging in the discussion (Makuwira 2003). While this may be as a result of other genuine reasons, it does illustrate the dilemma inherent in the whole debate of aid and partnerships.

Capacity-based differences

What triggers many emerging NGOs to seek funding from the donor community is the fact that the NGOs themselves lack both strong human and material resource bases. Emerging NGOs in conflict and post-conflict situations can hardly be described as resource-rich. Leitana Nehan started out with relatively low-level capacity to undertake programs, compared to its international partners. Leitana Nehan's partnerships with donor agencies was mainly founded on financial need, since they had plenty of volunteers to fill their human resource requirements at the local level. However, the combination of outside financial support and local human resource support has resulted in a substantial increase in the organisation's capacity to develop, deliver and evaluate projects, thus overcoming some of the capacity-based differences between Leitana Nehan and its partners.

Trust-based differences

Trust is one of the fundamental pillars of aid partnership, although there are often disparities in practice. Leitana Nehan's partnerships with IWDA, AusAID, NZAID and Oxfam New Zealand are positioned at various points along the trust continuum. In a way, these partnerships can neither be described as 'total control' nor 'unconditional trust'. Accountability and transparency have become the barometer through which NGOs engaged in any form of aid partnership have to demonstrate their ability to comply with the 'standard' required by donors. Because donors hold an upper hand in terms of dictating the modalities of aid management, recipient NGOs are usually required to comply and demonstrate this compliance by being highly accountable to the donors rather than to the NGOs' own constituencies. Leitana Nehan's modest start, managing small amounts of funds responsibly and accountably and

submitting project reports diligently, seems to have won the trust of many donor agencies, particularly IWDA.

LEITANA NEHAN AND BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

Quite a number of cases demonstrate Leitana Nehan's collaborative partnerships with the various forms of the Bougainville Provincial Government. Over the past few years Leitana Nehan has actively participated in a number of constitutional review processes leading up to the election of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), and has frequently been involved in meetings and fora with some government departments.

The partnership model Leitana Nehan has adopted in its relationship with the government is predominantly a third-sector dominant model. As an autonomous organisation, Leitana Nehan seeks funding, identifies programs, implements, monitors and evaluates them virtually independently of government, although officers from some government departments may become involved to some degree as observers or workshop participants. Leitana Nehan also engages in a dual model of NGO–government partnership, largely because the current government does not have the capacity to provide services to every sector of development. As such, many NGOs in Bougainville, including Leitana Nehan, are 'gap-fillers'.

Precisely because governments and NGOs are organised differently and use contrasting approaches to development and peace-building issues, they are likely, at times, to come into conflict. In a region as diverse as the Pacific islands, government–NGO relations may vary with place and time. To begin with, the government has to establish trust with civil society organisations. This is not an easy thing to do, particularly an emerging NGO sector which may have different values and agendas to the government.

There is also an emerging trend in many countries now to formulate codes of conduct (Bennett 1997), which helps both NGOs and government to adhere to a particular standard of operation. Although this is a controversial issue among NGOs, who view this as limiting their freedom, it does have the potential to facilitate government–

NGO partnerships. Smillie (1995:74) takes the issue further and recommends that

Government can influence the climate for NGOs in a variety of formal and informal ways. On the informal side, government can foster what has become known as 'enabling environment' collaboration, consultation, assistance in coordination, and by sending positive messages to the media and to the public that NGOs have a beneficial and welcome role to play in development.

In the lead up to autonomy, and in the time since, communication and the sharing of information and ideas between NGOs and the provincial government have increased (see Epilogue).

LEITANA NEHAN AND OTHER NGO PARTNERSHIPS

Leitana Nehan's partnerships with other NGOs in Bougainville and in the Pacific islands have been well documented in earlier chapters, and also to a lesser extent in Böge and Garasu (2004). Leitana Nehan networks locally with a range of NGOs, including the Bougainville Interchurch Women's Forum, Peace Foundation Melanesia, Bougainville Trauma Institute, Bougainville Catholic Family Life, Bougainville Provincial Council of Women, and the Bougainville Provincial AIDS Council. These organisations share skills and resources as well as information. Leitana Nehan is a key NGO in these partnerships (Böge and Garasu 2004). Furthermore, one of Leitana Nehan's board members is also on the board of BICWF, while Agnes Titus is on the board of Bougainville Microfinance and the Bougainville Provincial AIDS Council.

With regards to the international NGOs operating in Bougainville, Leitana Nehan's staff have also served as members on some of their boards (personal comm., Helen Hakena, 30 September 2004). Internationally, Leitana Nehan is a member of many networks, such as International Action Network Against Small Arms, the Pacific Women Against Violence Network, the Women and Peace Building Network, World Vision, Callan Services, UNICEF, UNDP, and UNAids. These networks assist in advocacy, lobbying for policy changes and training. As noted in previous chapters, there has been substantial collaboration with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and, to a lesser extent, the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, based

in Malaysia. The Asian and Pacific Development Centre, 'through its publication and seminar programs, offered Leitana Nehan valuable opportunities to express itself and learn from relevant comparative experiences' (Carl 2000:13).

LEITANA NEHAN AND ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Leitana Nehan's success stories lie in their strategic direction, which are grounded in the practical applications of participatory development and empowerment discourse. It has organised and implemented numerous workshops using participatory approaches that encouraged participants to contribute to decision-making processes (see Chapters 3–5). Cox (2004a) documents the increasing number of people volunteering to facilitate Leitana Nehan's work, which demonstrates the working partnerships between the organisation and the broader community. According to Hakena (2003a), this spirit lies in the feeling of a sense of ownership.

WHAT LESSONS HAVE WE LEARNT?

Leitana Nehan's partnerships with other stakeholders, including its beneficiaries, illustrate the complexity of aid and aid agencies in post-conflict peace-building and development. To begin this analysis it is vital to reflect on the sentiments of Ahai who contends that

donor countries, as well as international NGOs, will need to be sensitive to the development aspirations of Bougainvilleans, even within the political framework of PNG, and design the delivery of their support in ways that are mutually beneficial. The current practice in a few international NGOs...of bringing in outsiders will simply promote the 'cargo development mentality' typical of pre-crisis development (1999:135).

Bougainville in crisis needed outside support from partner organisations capable of understanding the conflict's causes and history. The story of Leitana Nehan, as with other local organisations in Bougainville, is of passion and determination to initiate change amid internal tensions. It motivates the readers to reflect on what can be done when conflicts divide once-cohesive communities. Beyond this, the story challenges the simplistic view that aid is a means to an end.

More importantly, it elucidates that building partnerships for post-conflict peace-building and development is no smooth undertaking.

Partnership-building, as shown by this case, starts with an honest feeling and acceptance that something somewhere is not right. The media's contribution to making some of the conflicts known to the outside world varies in degree and accuracy, but when such conflicts are reported by insiders, the truthfulness of their reports can have a profound impact on the audience. For Leitana Nehan, revealing the conflict's effects on Bougainville women not only opened opportunities for collaboration with other organisations but also marked the beginning of funding and institutional capacity-building. Over time, Leitana Nehan's capacity to engage in a multi-partnership collaboration increased substantially. What is critical in Leitana Nehan's partnerships is its willingness to engage in such dialogue and partnering on the basis of shared vision and/or commonality of purpose.

As has been noted in the literature, the politics of aid raises a number of questions, especially with regard to its effectiveness, based on the modalities of donor coordination, the question of ownership, to whom recipient organisations should be accountable, and the dynamics of transparency in both donor and recipient countries (Stokke 1995; UNESCO 2000). Leitana Nehan's partnership with IWDA is, to a certain degree, a classic example of how two organisations with fundamentally similar vision and values enter into partnership. The case demonstrates that, where external factors and/or influences are kept constant, the potential for positive impact is very high. However, two issues need to be made explicit. While such partnerships may be driven by an organisation's missions and objectives, the donor agencies need to understand the sensitivities of post-conflict dynamics. The fundamental issue is ensuring that a partnership does not become part of the problem or exacerbate the problem. As an intermediary NGO, IWDA may be influenced by its funders' visions of how things should be done. Tensions can break out when beneficiaries' expectations differ wildly from those of the funding agency. In the case of Leitana Nehan and IWDA/AusAID, such contradictions have been minimal, largely because of Leitana Nehan's experience with international aid agencies and understanding of donor conditionalities.

Leitana Nehan's collaboration with other NGOs, as presented in this case study, equally offers some interesting parallels with the wider literature on inter-NGO relationships. While there are indications of good working relationships between and among NGOs in Bougainville, there is very little evidence, even within the wider literature in post-conflict situations, of what impact this collaboration has had, whether collaboration has been informal or formal, or whether partnerships go beyond mere consultation.

Similarly, Leitana Nehan's partnership with the government and its beneficiaries has raised many questions. Given the enormous developmental challenges of post-conflict areas, it is ideal that the government take the lead in crafting a post-conflict reconstruction plan. While evidence suggests that Leitana Nehan continues to contribute to development and peace-building activities in Bougainville, the fact that many of its activities are dictated by donor agencies' funding and influence raises questions about the impact of these on the organisation's relationship with the interim government. Further research could be done to ascertain the government's views on the role of NGOs and civil society organisations in peace-building and development in Bougainville. Furthermore, there is very little information on how the current interim government provides a conducive environment for NGOs like Leitana Nehan to maximise the results of their peace-building activities.

As noted earlier, Leitana Nehan's role in peace-building and development is seen by the extent to which beneficiaries are engaged in the decision-making processes that affect them. While evidence suggests that this has been accomplished through various consultative meetings and workshops in Leitana Nehan's constituencies, corroborating this claim is a challenging undertaking in post-conflict situations, as not many people will speak freely. Overall, what this case has done is to provide some snapshots of the kinds of partnerships that can be developed. In addition, it also provides an indicator of the difficulties that NGOs encounter when donor agencies use intermediary organisations as conduits for channelling funds to recipient organisations.

CONCLUSION

The analysis in this chapter attempts to provide grounds for further debate and reflection. Leitana Nehan's work concurs with Patrick (2000:37), who believes that 'to be effective, reconstruction assistance must be prompt, coherent and responsive to local needs'. Leitana Nehan has shown a very clear understanding of local social, cultural and political dynamics, and this has enhanced its partnership-building efforts. Whether or not donor agencies design the conditions to advance peace, however, is a question that needs further examination. Perhaps further reflection is required on the question of 'interest', in light of long-term benefits, not from the perspective of donors but the intended beneficiaries. From a social justice perspective, any partnership in which a large outside donor focuses on self-interest is in danger of proceeding at the expense of the poor, displaced or marginalised, should be called into question. Leitana Nehan, however, has for the most part averted this danger by partnering with international NGOs who share the same visions, are willing to collaborate as equals, can provide suitable levels of resources, and with whom they can develop relationships of trust.

NOTE

- ¹ We are using the terms 'North' to denote countries in the developed world, and 'South', to denote countries in the developing world.