

EPILOGUE

Helen Hakena and Agnes Titus

After SCP2 finished in March 2004, our workload decreased dramatically. Nevertheless, we obtained a small amount of funds (K95,000) from the PNG Community Development Scheme for a number of projects. First, we extended and furnished the Leitana Nehan offices behind DJL Enterprises in Buka. Four more rooms were added, which are used for administration, counselling, and the Women's and Children's Referral Desk, and one is rented by an MP, providing a small amount of revenue.

The purpose of the Women's and Children's Referral Desk is to consolidate all the counselling services provided by NGO and government agencies. It provides an avenue for victims of violence to get help in a neutral, safe and friendly setting. We counsel them and, where needed, we contact the police to come and take the victim's statement and the doctor to come and examine the victim. The doctor will write out a statement. Cases then go to the courts. We have a twenty-four hour service. Counsellors help with other women's issues as well, such as maintenance claims by deserted or single mothers.

Second, the CDS funds were used for awareness workshops in three communities or schools in each of the 13 districts. However, the funds did not allow us to do any follow-up workshops. Many primary schools had undergone a top-up process which involved adding grades 7 and 8 to the existing 6 grades. However, many schools noticed that bullying had increased during this process, so the CDS-funded workshops in schools specifically focused on bullying issues and children's rights.

Third, the radio program continued weekly, with a particular emphasis on sexual violence and child abuse, as well as programs

educating people about issues relevant to the election of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), since the election was due in the first half of 2005. Topics covered included good governance and leadership qualities. We received lots of verbal feedback from individuals on the topics presented. Then, after the ABG's inauguration, the radio program presented the topic, '*lukluk bek*' or evaluation of the election process. Again, we received some very positive feedback from a number of individuals.

Fourth, we used the CDS funds to do some community development training, including community mapping. We held two training workshops—one in Tsiroge (for north Bougainville), which George Lesi conducted before becoming ill, and one in Arawa (for south and central).

Helen was nominated to be organiser of National Literacy Week in October 2004, in her role as Chair of the Provincial Literacy Committee. The committee received K70,000 funding from the PNG Department of Education. We used K40,000 to launch national literacy week in Tinputz, and K30,000 to host the closing ceremony in Buin.

Although no funds were available for these programs, Helen conducted training for police and hospital staff in Buka on gender awareness, domestic violence and other women's issues, and for women at Kekesu in Tinputz on women's rights. We have been facilitating youth training in our own time, such as with the Hanpan Youth Organisation. We also participated in meetings with other NGOs and women's groups to plan 16 days of activism countering violence against women from 25 November–10 December 2004. During this period we were involved in marking World AIDS Day, World Human Rights Day, and World Disability Day, among others. During these celebrations, the Hihatuts and Youth to Youth theatre troupes performed and speeches were made. Funding came from various sources, such as the Bougainville AIDS council, while we also used the radio program to reinforce some of these topics at the time.

During 2004, a local grade 7 student was raped and later died of her injuries. The perpetrator was known to the community, but was being protected by his family. We organised a march in protest against the inaction of the police, and submitted a petition to the

government. This forced the police to arrest the perpetrator, who is now serving a long gaol term.

We were involved in a range of cross-sectoral meetings. We attended a forward-looking meeting for Bougainville NGOs in Arawa to discuss how the NGO sector and ABG could support each other. We also attended meetings of the Consultation, Implementation and Monitoring Council, a body of the PNG National Executive Council, when it met in Rabaul. In addition, the islands region recommended that Agnes present their recommendations at the National Development Forum at Parliament House in Port Moresby.

Funding limitations have restricted the amount of international networking that we have been able to do. Nevertheless, Kris went to a workshop on non-violence and social empowerment in Orissa, India, and in June 2005 he attended a seminar in the Netherlands on 'Security When the State Fails', presenting a paper outlining a case study of Ieta village, which was completely burnt down during the crisis (see Chapter 2).

During 2004 we were successful in our proposal to NZ Aid for K380,000 in funds to continue the various counselling programs in Buka and in the districts. Although we hoped to start in 2004, the first tranche of project funds were only acquitted in February 2005, which meant that the project would not run until February 2006. While we were waiting for the funding to arrive, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre conducted a 'Basic Counselling' workshop in Buka. The NZ funds have been used to support two counsellors (usually one male and one female) in each district. Most of these counsellors had already been trained as part of, and worked in, the SCP projects, so they already knew about relevant issues and strategies. They live in their own homes, but work closely with the nurses in the sub-health centres in the districts, and identify a specific day when they are available in the health centres. This provides women who report domestic violence issues an opportunity to see a counsellor as well as a nurse. The counsellors also see clients in other places, such as their own homes, and neighbouring villages and constituencies. They sometimes sit in on court cases in the districts, especially those involving women's issues. The locations of the counsellors have been advertised through the radio program and in letters to district managers and local churches. The radio program is also used to inform

people about other agencies that provide counselling and related services, although most of these services are based in Buka. Unfortunately, the districts are large, and people cannot always access the counsellors. For major problems or legal issues, clients are referred to the Buka Leitana Nehan office counsellors. Bianca Hakena and Elizabeth Behis, the senior counsellors in Buka, also travel to the districts to support the counsellors. Nevertheless, the NZ Aid funds have made a large difference to the extent to which we have been able to provide counselling services. In the last 12 months of the SCP 2, we averaged 55 clients per month. In the 12 months from when the SCP finished and the NZ funds became available, we saw an average of 12 clients per month. In the last seven whole months that the NZ funds have been available, we have seen an average of 53 clients per month.

One of the major activities for 2005 involved Agnes' campaign for the northern region women's seat in the election for the ABG. We travelled around many parts of the region meeting people in communities and talking about the ABG and various issues. It was a learning experience for us, but also we used the campaign talks to educate people about what to expect from the ABG. There were good turn-outs everywhere we went, and we used our networks to publicise meetings, and many Leitana Nehan volunteers provided translation services in their communities. Some volunteers also promoted our campaign in their home area. This helped reduce costs. We did not campaign in Kunua because we did not have much of a network there, but it is a big area and not campaigning there probably cost Agnes votes. The communities we visited really respected us. We received no verbal abuse like some of the male candidates did. People did not hold anything against us. The chiefs in particular were very respectful. Some of the chiefs standing in the individual constituencies also helped us out and had joint meetings. Sometimes we would give these chiefs a lift in our vehicle, whereas the male candidates did not tend to help each other out in this way.

After Francisca Semoso won the north region women's seat, Helen organised for all the female candidates to come to the Leitana Nehan office so that Sharon Rolls from Femlink (Fiji) could interview them. They shared their experiences about campaigning. Agnes maintained a good relationship with Francisca because they campaigned together.

During the campaign we knew more about the issues than the men, and were able to speak about them. During the campaign we did not make any promises, because we knew what the ABG would face. We talked mainly about the fact that the peace agreement allows for the gradual drawing down of power from the national government to the ABG, and the fact that the ABG would not have many powers to start with. We realised that many people did not understand this aspect of the peace process and the move to autonomy. Even some of the candidates were making promises that they would not be able to deliver, because of the nature of the peace agreement and the gradual move to taking over national powers. Now that the ABG is in place, people are noticing that it is really moving very slowly—they are sitting on the same spot. As a candidate, Agnes was not unhappy about losing because she now realises that Leitana Nehan has the capacity as an organisation outside the government to support the winning and losing women candidates and to continue to educate them about women's issues and good governance. We can also support women in general, and continue to negotiate with the government. We have a very good relationship with Francisca, and the Minister for Women, NGOs, Youth, and churches and local level Government, Magdelene Toroansi.

Another good thing about this campaign was that all the women candidates for the north region would go to one community together to campaign. They would each take turns speaking, and then the voters could make up their own minds.

Some candidates were promising large pots of money, as if it would be like the national MPs' discretionary funding, but we told the people that no such thing would exist in the ABG. We had realised through the SCP that it is important to educate people and tell them the truth, because many people are not aware of how the system works or how the wider world connects. With our connections, we can assist the three women members. They are learning a lot from us. Recently, for example, we had a meeting with them about women's issues in the province, and informed them about some local controversies.

We were very sad when our long-time colleague and assistant executive director George Lesi died in August 2004. He was committed and always put other people first. He was not selfish with his time or skills, and he

was a very good mentor for us. We learned so much from him. We haven't been able to find anyone like him who was always there for other people, and always doing things with people so that they learned and took on the responsibility. He was never overpowering, but always guiding and giving us time to do things. He always encouraged us to find our own solutions and to think through the issues.

In March 2005 we advertised the position of assistant executive director. Four people applied, and the successful candidate was Agnes Titus, our team leader from Nissan. She took up the position after the election, in May 2005.

In Bougainville, the NGO sector is becoming very strong. In the north we have an umbrella organisation known as BACDA; in central Bougainville, Nikana Matara serves this function; and in south they have the Southwest Alliance of Community Development. In the north, we are now planning an NGO show-and-tell for donors and the government, profiling the members of BACDA, which consists of Leitana Nehan, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Bougainville Interchurch Women's Forum (BICWF), Peace Foundation Melanesia, Bougainville Trauma Institute, Bougainville AIDS Council, Bougainville Microfinance, Caritas PNG, Callan Services, Catholic Family Life, World Vision and Bougainville Provincial Council of Women. The idea is for each NGO to share its work, objectives, history, and who they are, hoping that when the donors and government hear what we do, we can work better together and strengthen links with donors and government.

We have continued our advocacy work. For example, recently there was a strong debate about women and girls wearing trousers and shorts. On one occasion, about six women from Haku came to the office. They were not just ordinary women, but leaders and chiefs. They said, 'Mrs Hakena, we have a problem in Haku. The men and chiefs in Haku are saying we should not wear trousers. It is against culture and against religion'.

Soon after, some other women from Wakunai came into the office. They told us that the council of chiefs in Wakunai had had a meeting and decided to impose a K50 fine on women wearing trousers. When she heard this second report, we notified Goretty Kenneth, a Buka-

based reporter for the *Post-Courier* newspaper in Port Moresby, and we also sent a press release to Radio Bougainville, who carried the story on their news. Our press release pointed out that it was unconstitutional for men to discriminate against women in this way. After it was on the radio, three more women came from Gogohe and said that a politician had gathered the chiefs and told them that women should not be wearing trousers. Soon after, some women from Petats came to the office and said that three years ago they had been banned from wearing trousers and that those unable to pay the K50 fine were made to cut grass. Agnes went down to the police station to see the officer in charge of keeping records of complaints. She asked how many women had complained about having to pay the fines and discovered that seven such cases had been reported to the police already. After the media release, three women came from Pokpok Island and stated that they had each been made to pay a K50 fine for wearing trousers a year earlier. Also, after hearing the radio announcement, women from Siwai, who had been wearing trousers under their laplaps, started wearing them on the outside and came up to Buka to thank them for exposing the issue. Then, an MP, whose wife was one of the first to come to Leitana Nehan and complain, came and said the chiefs were going to take Helen to court or else demand a pig. He reported that the chiefs said that Helen should not talk about all the UN conventions, because we are here in Buka and we can make our own laws.

These kinds of patriarchal attitudes to women are still common. Recently, Agnes went to Kunua with the police and the AIDS council for a training workshop. There were 124 people present, including students, community people and community auxiliary police. One of the men got up and said, 'you know with regards to rape, it's you women who must be careful to dress in a way that does not attract men. You women are too fancy, you pluck your eyebrows and wear dangly earrings', and he went on and on. Agnes got up and said to the audience, and especially that man, 'if your body is attracted to earrings, then go and rape the earrings, don't rape the woman. If the clothes excite you, rape the clothes, don't rape the body. We are against rape because you rape our bodies and do a lot of damage to us. This idea about women being the cause of rape is not true. Just because you hear

it, doesn't mean it is true. Even women who are wearing grubby clothes, or who are small children, get raped'.

Many of the team leaders and members from SCP have gone on to take on other leadership roles in their communities. Dorcas Tutou, the team leader from Siwai, is training to become an elementary school teacher. Anne Rangai, the former project officer, is a counsellor as well as a district women's facilitator for the Education Department. Paul Kauori, the deputy team leader from Paruparu, is now a counsellor and a male nurse in that area. Ezekial Lames, who was the team leader for Northwest district, has his own theatre troupe, Youth To Youth, which is raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. Fabian Kotsin is still the director of Hihatuts Theatre Troupe, but was a field worker for CDS for six years, and is now also working as a volunteer for UNICEF. Susan Pakoi is a district women's facilitator and chair of the Buin's Women's Council and secretary of the Provincial Council of Women. Laura Ampa, formerly a team member in Buin district, is now a parliamentary member for the south regional seat. Stanley Pakita from Tinputz facilitated the community development training with George Lesi in 2004, and now works as a volunteer with World Vision on an *ad hoc* basis doing community mapping. Benedicta Noneng, one of the project officers, has started a kindergarten in Arawa, while Rose Trongat is secretary of the Catholic Women's Association for Gogohe as well as for the Bougainville diocese as a whole. Joy Vanahe, a counsellor, went on to become a community health nurse. Although many of our former volunteers have gone their separate ways, many of them still maintain a sense of solidarity with each other and support each other when they can. They drop into the Leitana Nehan office, and support our work when they can. They are like a family.

Even today, when funding is a bit slow in getting to us, we are still working to our full capacity. We enjoy the work. We love working with our communities. We are affected by what happens in our communities. Therefore, we must continue the community development work because we want to see and enjoy peace.