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**‘Women of War, Women of Peace:
Politics, Empowerment and Women in
Post-conflict Bougainville’**

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Abstract

The involvement and experience of women in any new sphere of life can be the basis for changes in perspectives and the re-prioritization of values. Women’s contributions to the political processes of peace and post-conflict reconstruction in Bougainville acted as a catalyst to changes in perceptions regarding women as decision-makers. It challenged notions of gender equity and attitudes to inclusive political participation. Women's groups were instrumental in working for peace and reconciliation at local, national and international levels. Women created opportunities to stimulate dialogue, participated in peace talks and were part of the constitution building process. Despite their valuable and much recognized contributions women still found themselves greatly under-represented during the 2005 elections. This paper considers the political gains that occurred and their relationship to the engagement of women with political action in the post conflict era; however it will also underscore the reality of limitations to women’s participation. In doing so it takes into consideration the spaces women occupied within the conflict and post-conflict environments. Drawing on aspects of communitarianism as a window through which to frame the women’s movement, the paper reflects upon the development of women’s networks and their subsequent engagement with peace negotiations. Despite this involvement, like the greater majority of nations both rich and poor, political equity eludes the women of Bougainville. For women on the ground however, even the limited gains to date signal a positive trend for the future.

Introduction

The involvement and experience of women in any new sphere of life can be the basis for changes in perspectives and the re-prioritization of values by not only the society in which women live, but by women themselves. Women’s contributions to the political processes of peace and post-conflict reconstruction in the Papua New Guinea Autonomous Region of Bougainville acted as a catalyst for change. These changes in perceptions within

Bougainville in regard to women as public decision-makers have been subtle, but are obvious viewed through the gains women have made in political representation. The involvement of women in political processes over the past decade challenged notions of gender equity and attitudes to inclusive political participation. Women's groups in the region, such as the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA) were instrumental in working for peace and reconciliation at local, national and international levels. Women created opportunities to stimulate dialogue; they participated in peace talks and were most importantly a part of the constitution building process. Despite their valuable and much recognized contributions women still found themselves greatly under-represented during the 2005 elections. This paper considers the political gains that did occur and their relationship to the engagement of women with political action in the post conflict era; however it also underscores the reality of limitations to women's participation. In doing so it takes into consideration the spaces women occupied within the conflict and post-conflict environments. Drawing on aspects of communitarianism as a window through which to frame the women's movement, the paper reflects upon the development of women's networks and their subsequent engagement with peace negotiations. Despite the extent of their involvement, like the greater majority of nations both rich and poor, political equity eludes the women of Bougainville. For women on the ground however, even the limited gains to date signal a positive trend for the future.

There is clear evidence that, for women, the end of war time violence sees the beginning of an increase in gender based violence (Meintjes Pillay and Turshen 2001, 4). Structural violence such as experienced through social conditions including repression, domination or exploitation are, according to Ibeanu, often inflicted on women in the post conflict phase (2001, 193). How then, do women move from that of powerless victim to empowered agents of change? With political establishments dominated by male hierarchy,

women find themselves on the periphery of processes that lead to conflict and more often than not are excluded from negotiations for peace. It is, therefore, a radical change in the perception of women's roles in conflict, peace negotiation and post-conflict transformation that leads to empowerment. While women are rarely involved as initiators of violent conflict, or included at the negotiating table, they are actors within the conflict and as such must be viewed as participants (Bop 2001, 20). Women may have little control over the preconditions of war however they have proven that, once caught up in the malecentric activities of violent confrontation, it is not only advantageous to become involved but often necessary in order to survive.

In examining the strategies women utilize to engage as peace initiators or post conflict re-constructionists, it is useful to take into account the mutual forces that produce common goals. As women, the position that is held in the cultural context of mother, wife or daughter produces a form of 'moral authority'. Baxi (1999, 126) argues that this can act as a catapult for women to take extraordinary steps in peace building. The Asia-Pacific provides many examples of women's organizations at the coal face of conflict resolution and reconstruction of civil society. The Solomon Islands Women for Peace worked on a voluntary basis and as Alice Pollard (2000, 44) points out it deliberately took a 'motherly approach' in encouraging a culture of unity between government and communities to overcome a political crisis. At the 1996 conference 'Towards 2000 and Beyond' held in Sydney, the National Council of Maubere Resistance in Timor (CNRM) discussed the role of women in the resistance movement and in the wider struggle for survival in Timor-Leste, defining the concerns of women as central to any peace process (Goodman 1997-8). Milena Pires, a Programme Coordinator for UNIFEM outlined the reason she considered most integral to the women's successful involvement in political processes in the lead-up to the first Timor-Leste elections. One of the most significant factors according to Pires is that of

unity. Through a unified approach women developed the Platform of Action for the Advancement of Timorese Women to be used to lobby for women's rights (UNIFEM 2004).

In a further example from the Pacific Islands, one women's movement in Bougainville has attracted international acclaim for their proactive stance against civil war and their ongoing efforts to rebuild communities across the islands of Bougainville and Buka. LNWDA rose to prominence partly due to their collaborative approach to women's efforts. In 2003, 165 women from the province of Bougainville gathered in Buka for a one-day meeting organized by the agency. The purpose of the meeting was to 'support the peace process through discussion of key issues and development of collective recommendations' (PeaceWomen 2003). Women addressed issues that included sensitive matters such as the disposal of weapons, law and order, withdrawal of the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG), and constitutional reform.

Women 's Spaces

Given that women in the Melanesia are not traditionally at the centre of public political action how is it that they are motivated to dramatically change their perceptions of themselves and their engagement with political processes? The nature of war brings with it changes to peace-time roles of both men and women. Women are often catapulted into head of house positions as men are caught up in the militarization of the state. Women who may once have been subjected to social and cultural restrictions can find themselves suddenly in positions of sole decision maker for their family, performing tasks previously seen as traditionally 'men's work'. This in itself is an empowering exercise, one that stretches the perception of women from passive to active. However for women who have experienced gender discrimination at private, community, or state level, the necessary *independence* of women during conflict can open up opportunities to view themselves and their position in society from an alternate perspective. Discourse changes from what will happen *to them*, as may be the case in the period leading up to the start of conflict, to what *they need to make happen* in order to survive. The resulting actions from this discourse are embedded in the process of empowerment for women. By reviewing the strategies for success in reconstructing the role of women from passive victim to that of active participant in conflict transformation, the shift is made from discourse on the status of the passive victim to that

of the empowered activist. Bronwyn Douglas (2003, 7) has detailed how, in Melanesian societies, it is mostly women as part of local women's groups, substantially made up of Christian fellowship groupings, that 'bring traditional and Christian values to bear on cautious, pragmatic engagements with modernity' and thus the 'collective, organized local face of modernity is frequently female'.

This 'bringing together of values' can be seen in the commitment to community service and communitarian attitudes of women during the extreme hardships of the conflict period. While the church and its teachings foster an awareness of 'community' in a western sense, the traditional importance of the matrilineal line, and clan unit, in Melanesia is a reality that normally overrides the western perceptions of community (Macintyre 2003, 127). Schoeffel (1997) commented that the community in Melanesian terms has always been a fragile commodity at risk of disintegration and the idea that a communitarian approach to development might dissolve some of the problems associated with community building has not always been successful. When conflict destroyed traditional networks however, and forced people to relocate, the development of some aspects of a 'communitarian spirit' was a necessary step in overcoming or at least surviving imposed hardships. Daniel Bell (2005) describes a component of communitarianism as:

Communities of memory, or groups of strangers who share a morally-significant history. This term...refers to imagined communities that have a shared history going back several generations. Besides tying us to the past, such communities turn us towards the future... They provide a source of meaning and hope in people's lives.

Therein lies the intersection between traditional and modern perceptions of women. The mobilization of women acquired a communitarian tone as women in all parts of Bougainville created and maintained important networks to bring about humanitarian aid, to support men caught up in fighting, or sustain families that were isolated by the divisive

nature of the conflict. These networks sometimes though not always, crossed over traditional clan memberships and affiliations.

One strong point of communitarianism lies in its capacity to foster social unity and exploit benefits derived from its egalitarian values for endorsing equity and avoiding abject poverty and hunger. This approach provides a basis for building 'social capital', or 'features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam 1993, 35-42). When women sought to create support networks aimed at the alleviation of suffering during the conflict, the success of the initiatives was reliant on the building of social networks that would cross over boundaries of clan politics and factional allegiances in order to reach people from all sides of the conflict. Indeed, for women living behind the blockade in the mountains, even previously taboo clan groups and separate church denominations were drawn together to form new communities (Havini 2004, 69). Challenges to the communitarian theory of women's networks appear in that even though, during the conflict and in subsequent years, a number of cohesive women's groups did emerge, there was not one united women's movement and difficulties surrounding the politics of identity could be one explanation for this. As with any community groupings in Bougainville, notions of the groups identity and perceptions of others identity, impacted upon relationships. There was however a number of groups working in and for localized communities to which they had affiliations, often with opposing political views (UNIFEM 2006).

While the practices of engagement may be problematic for women, women not only contribute to the welfare of other women in conflict situations but can be instrumental in instigating dialogue between hostile partners, as proved to be the case in Bougainville. During the years of the conflict women with the benefit of high family status used their position to negotiate within their local communities. Additionally, they used their influence

when acting as go-betweens with warring factions to maintain productive dialogue, adding an extra tier that would be recognized by both sides as a valuable component of the peace process. In some instances practical strategies for peace bypassed fragile relationships between opposing parties, becoming community based and focused rather than factional. It must be noted at this point however that not all women had this interest at heart and many were heavily involved with supporting hostilities. To generalize would be to oversimplify the situation on Bougainville.

For those actively involved in peace building however, applying practical strategies advanced their aim to remove the ‘dehumanization’ of individuals that can be brought about by a culture of violence and war. It also highlighted individual and community sacrifices and sufferings. Examples of these strategies included mothers venturing into the bush to attempt to bring their sons home, and women negotiating directly with local Revolutionary Army members (Garasu 2002). As a result of these women’s actions many young men did disarm and return to their families (Morriss, 2006). A number of case studies highlighting the power of women in extreme conditions can be found where for example women standing their ground while beseeching militants to disarm were threatened and abused, but eventually won over the men with reminders of their women’s status as ‘mothers’ of Bougainville (Spriggs 1998, 65). This reinforces the usefulness of women’s ‘moral authority’ in peacemaking.

The barriers to participation in peace building exercises and post conflict reconstruction stem from a number of sources, often traditional cultural and social images of women contribute to the marginalization of women during conflict, making it harder for them to take on leadership roles. Male dominated political and military spheres also tend to keep women away from the negotiating table, however women’s movements have proven

time and again that perseverance has ensured their voices are heard. The reaction of the international community to the role of women in peace processes has resulted in the development of mechanisms to overcome gender discrimination and include women at all levels of political and social debate, decision-making and application of policy.

Political Participation and Political Gain

Bougainvillean women maximized post-conflict opportunities to make significant political gains by ensuring rights to political participation and representation were protected under the new constitution. Indeed this, in and of itself, is a significant gain. Women unabatedly exercised their right to be heard throughout years of complex peace negotiations. Their involvement with peace and post-conflict reconstruction processes paved the way for an examination of how mechanisms to facilitate gender equity should be incorporated into new political structures and institutions. This section of the paper examines how Bougainville reflects recent trends in women's participation in political structures. In this context it analyzes the results for women's seats in the 2005 election of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) by focusing on voting patterns. These results are placed in a national and regional context highlighting the significance of the three reserved seats for women as a major political gain at a local, national and regional level. The section then turns its focus to state-based support; the formation of the new constitution; responsibilities pertaining to international conventions; and the use of quotas as a mechanism to ensure gender balance. The argument is made that despite their significance in being a first step toward gender equity, the gains experienced by women in the 2005 election are fragile and risk becoming tokenistic unless there is enduring public and governmental support.

The past decade has born witness to significant examples of unrest in the South Pacific region. Academics have made comparisons with Africa, and there have been a

plethora of reports drawing upon rhetoric such as ‘arc of instability’ and ‘fragile’, ‘failed’ or ‘failing’ states (Spence and Wielders 2006, 7-8). Bougainville, Solomon Islands, East Timor, and Fiji have all suffered varying degrees of state instability. Gallop International reported to the World Economic Forum in 2003 that in the Pacific region no more than 15% of people interviewed rated their national security situation as good, with approximately 50% rating it as poor (Gallup Int. 2003). For Bougainville, recovery from prolonged conflict has been due in part to the determination of women to engage with political processes. This engagement highlights the existence of a parallel process of political maturation for women, reflecting a desire to give a gendered perspective to concerns about national security.

In 2004 the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW) convened an Expert Group Meeting to examine the role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equity and the empowerment of women. As this body of experts critically analyzed the effectiveness of various infrastructure, programs and legislative changes that occurred as an outcome of the Beijing Platform for Action resulting critiques and recommendations provided a foundation for policy formation dialogue. The report refers specifically to the term ‘national machineries’, established in the 1970s and 1980s, which included women's ministries and women's departments, bureaus or desks in other ministries with broad mandates covering a number of issues. As it was recognized that Government structures differed from State to State, Region to Region, it followed that the bodies established to promote women's advancement were found to be diverse in nature and composure. The aims of national machineries were identified as being to: ‘*advocate for attention to women's advancement, provide policy direction, undertake research and build alliances*’ (UNDAW 2005). One challenge the group identified was the ability of political parties to become more responsive to women’s concerns. In particular the meeting was

concerned with the ability of women to influence party platforms and in doing so improve 'political will' to support gender equity in government. In comparison to their male counterparts women are substantially under-represented in political structures around the globe. With a world average of 16.6% of total parliamentary representation as at April 2006, discourse on gender equity and gender mainstreaming remains a critical area of concern some eleven years after the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (IPU 2006). The conference identified political equity as, among other indicators, a mandate for United Nations member states.

Therefore under-representation of women in political spheres is not unique to politics in developing nations. On the contrary it is evident in countries of every level of socio-economic development. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reported in 2005 that some of the most prosperous developed nations have low percentages of women in political leadership roles. From 187 parliaments worldwide women average 16.2% representation in lower house, or unicameral positions, and just 14.8 % of upper house positions. This represents an increase of only 3% over a ten year period despite targeted efforts of women's advocacy groups, NGO's and the United Nations (IPU 2005). These figures fall far short of the benchmark target of 30% set in Beijing and endorsed by regional bodies (Elson & Keklik 2003, 40). There is however significant evidence to show that countries identified by the IPU as being in a phase of post-conflict reconstruction rate among those with the highest percentages of parliamentary representation for women. Of the top twenty countries with 30% or more female representation one quarter are deemed to be 'post-conflict' nations. The IPU reported in 2006 that there is often a rapid political gain for women during transition phases, sometimes realized in as little as one election cycle (Ababa 2005). Furthermore, they emphasize increased opportunities for women when they

are engaged with the 'drafting of electoral and political party laws', particularly during the processes associated with drafting new constitutions and related legislation.

In 2005 twenty-five women stood as candidates in the election of the first ABG held between May 20 and June 2. Bougainville has a system of universal, adult citizen suffrage, and the voting age is 18 years (Bougainville Constitution Part Iv. 14.2). There were approximately 133,000 citizens enrolled to vote. The United Nations provided an observer team to monitor the elections that included representatives from the Commonwealth and Pacific Islands secretariats, as well as from Australia, New Zealand and Japan (Australian Parliamentary Library 2006). There were thirty-nine seats, excluding the position of President. Figures released by the Bougainville Election Manager indicated two hundred and ninety-three people planned to contest the thirty-nine positions in the new assembly, with five candidates for the position of President. An analysis of election results show the actual number of candidates was two hundred and eighty-six inclusive of the Presidency (PNGEC 2005). Female candidates chose to stand for only three seats, these being three reserved seats for women. Three seats were reserved for ex-combatants and as such were not by their nature available to women. There was no female candidate for the Presidential position. Bougainville constituencies consist of groupings within three regions - North, Central and South Bougainville. North Bougainville comprises fourteen individual parliamentary seats. Overall there were one hundred and eight candidates for the North region, six of whom were women. Central Bougainville has eight seats, there were sixty-four candidates, eight of whom were women. South Bougainville has eleven seats that drew ninety-three candidates, eleven being women. While there is little overall difference between the total percentage of women in parliament (7.5%) and the percentage of women as candidates overall (9%), there was a marked difference between candidacy rates within the three districts.

In the North women made up 6% of total candidates, in Central region 13%, and in the South they constituted 12% of the total. As all female candidates were contesting the reserved seats it is impossible to comment on the receptiveness of voters to female candidates other than to compare voting habits between general seats and reserved seats. In the North there were 28,164 total votes with 436 informal votes for general seats, giving a grand total of 28,600. Women's reserved seats attracted 27,950 total votes and 533 informal votes with a grand total of 28,483. The discrepancy of 117 votes represents a negligible percentage of votes and as such it can be concluded that voters displayed equal concern for the election of women representatives as for general constituency representatives. In Central Bougainville there were 13,368 total votes, 136 informal votes and a grand total of 13,504 for constituency representatives. Women's reserved seats attracted 13,340 total votes, 185 informal votes and a grand total of 13, 525. South Bougainville had 22,852 total votes with 126 informal votes for general seats, giving a grand total of 22,978. Women's reserved seats attracted 22,844 total votes, 126 informal votes and a grand total of 22,970. As for the Northern region, differences in voting habits were minimal for these two regions. This is a significant step forward for Bougainville as it demonstrates a willingness in the electorates to support women in bridging the gap between cultural traditions that discouraged women from participation in public political spheres, and contemporary democratic systems. Comparatively with ex-combatant seats, patterns are similar with only slightly lower numbers of informal votes recorded for ex-combatants.

Once women's representation is realized, the challenge of gaining credible recognition within the parliament is of critical importance if political gains are to be maintained and increased. Women in the Bougainville parliament have attained a high level of recognition. Francesca Semosa, Women's representative for North Bougainville was appointed Deputy Speaker of the Assembly (WGWL 2005) Magdalene Toroansi, Women's

representative for Central Bougainville, was appointed Minister for Women, Religion and Traditional Authority (Pacific Magazine 2005,). The attainment of these positions elevates female politicians from Bougainville to among the highest positions held by women in politics throughout the Pacific, including that of Australia and New Zealand.

As of 30 September 2005, a total of eight countries had no women in their national parliaments, five being Pacific Island states namely: the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. The average for the Pacific region (excluding Australia and New Zealand) is 3.2% (Ababa 2005). Table 1 shows a breakdown in regional percentages for those states where the IPU has obtained data. Bougainville statistics have been added by the author to enable a comparison with more established states. The figures demonstrate the range of representation women have throughout the broader Pacific, and contrast the negative trends in some areas with the Bougainville experience. With three out of forty seats, Bougainvillean women have 7.5% representation. While still well short of the 30% target set by the UN this marks a significant political gain for women as it is well above national and most regional averages. The propensity toward minimal or negative gains over extended periods of time as recorded by other Pacific states is a challenge that the ABG will need to give careful consideration to as it develops its gender equity strategies.

Table 1: Women in Pacific Parliaments

	1/7/1995			1/7/2000				1/1/2005			
	Women	Total Seats	% of women	Women	Total Seats	% of women	gain/ loss% '95-'00	Women	Total Seats	% of women	gain/ loss% '95-'05
Australia	14	147	9.52	33	147	22.4	12.9	37	150	24.67	15.14
New Zealand	21	99	21.2	37	120	30.8	9.6	34	120	28.33	7.12
Fiji	3	70	4.3	8	71	11.3	7	6	71	8.45	4.16
Kiribati	0	41	0	2	41	4.9	4.9	2	42	4.76	4.76
Samoa	2	47	4.3	4	49	8.2	3.9	3	49	6.2	1.87
PNG	0	109	0	2	109	1.8	1.8	1	109	0.92	0.92
Marshall Is	1	33	3	1	33	3	0	1	33	3.03	0
Fed States of Micronesia	0	14	0	0	14	0	0	0	14	0	0
Palau	0	16	0	0	16	0	0	0	16	0	0
Solomon Is	1	47	2.1	1	49	2	-0.1	0	50	0	-2.13
Vanuatu	1	46	2.2	0	52	0	-2.2	2	52	3.85	1.67
Tonga	1	30	3.3	0	30	0	-3.3	0	30	0	-3.3
Tuvalu	1	13	7.7	0	12	0	-7.7	0	15	0	-7.69
Bougainville^a	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	40	7	7.5

^a Bougainville figures are for the April 2005 election for comparative purposes only and sourced separately from the

PNG Electoral Commission, 2006. Source: IPU Women in Politics 1945-2000; IPU Women in Politics 1945-2005

Why the Shortfall in Women?

Reflecting on these figures it can be said that for all intents and purposes in the majority of Melanesian society's political inclusivity of women has not been a reality in post colonial models of democracy. That is to say, even though democratic institutions do not exclude women in political processes, nor is there necessarily any legal impairment to participation, women are subject to a number of social, cultural and traditional impediments (Thomas 2002, 3). Resistance to women standing for political office is often masked by gendered suppositions, and as Morgan has noted, an implied conflict between 'Christian principles' and women in leadership roles (Morgan 2005, 11). Although these concepts refer to what has happened to women in regards to political representation, or rather what women have made happen for themselves. While this is an important aspect of assessing political gains, it is useful to consider how masculine perceptions of politics have operated in order to understand how the shaping of women's own notions of identity influenced their decisions to either participate in, or refrain from entering into, political activities. As mentioned earlier, Melanesian women did not traditionally take on a public role in leadership. Even though women have held matrilineal rights over land and enjoyed high status in Bougainville, a combination of traditional protectionism toward women, and western marginalization of women in development and politics, combined to place men in a dominant political position.

Morgan argues that a prominent feature of Melanesian political culture is that of 'emphasis on constituting the executive' and the significance of dominating state resources (Morgan 2005, 2). The patriarchal nature of Melanesian society has seen the control of state resources very much men's business, with men's perceptions of development and governance generally failing to take into account women's perspectives. For example, in

the instances that led to the beginnings of the conflict, it was men that mining officials met and negotiated with over land rights and mining royalties. This was despite women having traditional custodianship of the land and voicing their objections to the mine (Denoon 2000, 66). Further to this, according to recent research, the conflict environment endured in Bougainville for a decade may well have enabled a situation whereby patriarchal ideologies could be reinforced (ACORD 2002).

As Bougainville is a province of Papua New Guinea it is also appropriate to consider briefly the political status of women within a national context. In Papua New Guinea to date, excluding the current ABG, only four women have been elected to parliament although women have been candidates in nationally convened elections since 1964 (Sepoe 2002, 39; Morgan 2005,11). Josephine Abaihah was the first successful female candidate in 1972. Prior to this success however there had been no more than four candidates in total for the 1964 and 1969 elections. In 1972 there were four and in the following years, perhaps encouraged by the success of Abaihah, although still a minority group, the candidacy rate increased dramatically. The 1977 national election, the first since independence saw ten female candidates; 1982 seventeen female candidates; 1987 eighteen; 1992 sixteen; and 1997 there was a total of fifty-five women contesting seats (Sepoe 2002, 39). The 1977 election was the most successful for women with three women elected: Nahau Rooney, Waliyato Clowes (winning seats) and Josephine Abaihah (retaining her seat). Since then Lady Carol Kidu is the only other woman to be elected and she remains the only female Member of Parliament. Kidu and Rooney are also the only women to become Cabinet Members. Rooney was Minister of Corrective Institutions and Liquor Licensing from 1977-79, Minister of Justice in 1979, Minister of Decentralization 1980-82 and Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation 1985-87. In 2004 she was unsuccessful as a candidate for the post of Governor-General (WGWL 2006). Kidu has

been Minister of Welfare and Social Development since 2002 and a Member of Parliament since 1997. Although these successes have proven to be effective in increasing numbers of female candidacy throughout Papua New Guinea, to give the success some balanced perspective it must be pointed out that there are a total of 109 Members of Parliament in the PNG national government with, as at 2006, only one woman representative. Sepoe (2002, 40) observes that this is despite the concerted efforts of women activists who ran numerous workshops and capacity building initiatives. She further suggests the failure to make gains is in part due to the tendency of women to become casualties of a political culture that has as yet not 'readily absorbed liberalism'.

Within the broader regional experience, early attempts to improve the status of women in the Pacific resulted in the Pacific Platform for Action, prepared in 1994 which formed the basis for the Pacific's contribution to the 1995 Beijing women's conference. The platform was a promising document which included strategies for improving gender mainstreaming (PWB 2004). Since 1995, most Pacific governments have translated their commitments into national plans of action to address issues of concern for Pacific women, such as increased gender equity and particular provisions for women in National Plans. However despite this encouraging beginning UNIFEM, in reference to the Pacific, notes that:

According to data, despite governments' strategic plans and public statements in support of the Millennium Development Goal to increase women's participation by the year 2015, progress towards achieving this target has been slow and governments' political will often erratic (UNIFEM-PACIFIC 2005).

This prompted UNIFEM to develop a strategy to further promote women's political empowerment in six Pacific Island countries, including Papua New Guinea. The components of the resulting program are to:

- (i) Provide training in politics for women and ensure that such training is institutionalized through the establishment of National Women in Politics (WIP) organizations in each programme country.
- (ii) Identify potential women leaders in key government decision-making bodies and strengthen their capacities and political skills.
- (iii) Develop a database on the participation of Pacific women at all level of decision making (UNIFEM-PACIFIC 2005).

The WIP program was established in 2000 and since then has incorporated a number of activities aimed at training, strengthening, and identifying women leaders across the Pacific (Corner 2000, 24).¹ Bougainville was included in the Papua New Guinea program and received training on voter education and leadership. The workshops were conducted in Arawa, Bougainville during 2003 (UNIFEM 2006). At a recent WIP conference Semosa, commenting on the lessons learnt from the 2005 election, pointed out that ‘Strong emphasis has to be placed on educating women especially in leadership, campaign and voting systems to assist women to make informed choices’ reiterating the ongoing importance of programs such as WIP (Semosa 2006, a).

Educating women on the processes associated with political participation may well enable more women to become involved. This strategy in isolation will not however provide guarantees of success in the long term. To consider the question of if, or how, women can sustain gains once established, external examples may offer some insight. Africa provides a number of examples where women have made political ground following conflict only to find that in post-conflict times these gains have been lost or minimized due to a return to the status quo of pre-conflict environments. Community cohesion is a variable that sits at the ‘heart of the failure to consolidate wartime gains’ (Meintjes Pillay and

¹ This program formed a major part of the workshops and initiatives for PNG elections in 1996-7 as outlined in the previous paragraph.

Turshen, 2001, 10). The disintegration of networks and communication channels that are created during wartime means women must begin again to establish their political momentum once returned to pre-war communities. Geographical isolation and a lack of framework for action may inhibit a continuity of leadership and activist camaraderie. These issues were relevant for women in Eritrea, in Mozambique in the war against the Portuguese, South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle and in Algeria's war against the French. While women created large communities for action that in some instances even extended beyond borders they were unable to sustain them in post-conflict environments (Meintjes Pillay and Turshen, 2001,10) Women have also been shown to experience a loss in leadership despite gaining formal positions in governments. In South Africa, despite the highlighting of gender equality by the government and within the constitution, women have reported a continuation of male dominance although their numbers in parliament are high. Elected parliamentarians complained of being 'ignored' by caucus and being denied access to resources such as meeting rooms and basic equipment (Meintjes 2001, 75). In analyzing the South African example Meinjtes makes the finding that the crucial point for women to consolidate gains is in the immediate period following the cessation of hostilities. In participating in the brokering of peace and the structuring of the new order women can protect and build on their position. Meinjtes (2001, 76) found however this is also 'precisely the moment at which women are not present' and as such the need for an organized coalition or other organizational structure is paramount to future inclusion and progress. Bougainville presents a unique situation as women were present in limited numbers, however as shown earlier a cohesive coalition was not a reality.

Formation of the new constitution:

In Bougainville, the response to calls by women during the peace negotiations for increased access to participation in decision making and governance produced a constitution that both recognizes the authority of women in traditional roles and resolutely includes women in contemporary democratic processes. The Bougainville Peace agreement outlined the terms for the development of the new constitution. Included in the terms was provision for a Constitutional Commission (BCC) and a Constituent Assembly (BCA) (Bougainville Peace Agreement 2001). The effectiveness of the constitution in supporting the advancement of women is not yet able to be determined with the first autonomous government less than half way through the first term of office. However it can still be analysed in terms of the extent women's perspectives were taken into account during its development, what it offers women in terms of political inclusivity and how it incorporates gender mainstreaming into the foundations of Bougainville's legislative processes.

Where most States find themselves in the cumbersome position of integrating new constitutional legislation with old, Bougainville was able to develop an entirely new constitution. The BCC was formed to consult and draft the document as a prerequisite for the 2005 election. Three women representing North, Central and Southern Bougainville participated in the formation of the constitution as members of the BCC, assisting in laying down in legislation the requirements for inclusivity of women in political processes (BCC 2003). Francesca Semosa represented women of North Bougainville, Elizabeth Sawai represented Central Bougainville and Bernadine Kiraa represented South Bougainville (Semosa 2006). The Constitutional Commission comprised twenty-seven men and three women representing people from different sectors in the community. Of the total twenty-seven male commissioners, three were church representatives from mainline churches;

others were ex-combatants, village chiefs and traditional leaders. Commissioners were divided into three groups to represent North, Central and South Bougainville according to where they came from. The constitutional commission was funded by AusAID (Semosa 2006,b). The inclusion of the three women was a critical component in the development of a gender sensitive approach ensuring women's right to participate. Originally the women on the BCC, in an attempt to ensure maximum participation of women in the new government, asked for a total of twelve reserved seats. This was strongly opposed by the men who, according to Semosa questioned the need for any seats to be reserved:

When we started we asked for 12 seats and the men asked what the hell do you want 12 seats for women for? That was the language that they used. And in negotiation they wanted to cut it back to nothing ... (Semosa 2006,a)

The first draft of the constitution included only one seat for women which then increased to three in the second draft (BCC 2003). The increase in allocations from one to three, while failing to realize the initial desired outcome of the women, was a positive achievement for women in political spheres. It reinforces the need for women's increased visibility in parliamentary planning processes. It has created a benchmark for other Pacific states and has been broadly endorsed as a progressive first step for not only Bougainvillean but indeed for Papua New Guinean women generally (Somare 2005).² While Semosa acknowledges the role that a matrilineal system may have played in the final result she also points out:

Pressure from women and NGOs effectively triggered change. NGOs articulated the need to include women in politics always quoting that women have been in the forefront of peace making and therefore women had the most experience. Also men in Bougainville supported the creation of three seats reserved for women (Semosa, 2006,a).

In linking the role of women in the peacemaking process directly to the outcomes of the 2005 election Semosa strengthens her argument that increases in the role of

² . Mr Somare stated: 'There are other matrilineal societies in PNG and women from these areas should positively explore these opportunities to increase their participation in the decision making process ... this election on Bougainville is a demonstration for all women around PNG to know that it is possible to campaign and be elected as a representative not just of women but also of all people of your respective constituencies.'

women in the public domain of politics is not only deserved but critical to future stability.

In 2004 prior to parliamentary endorsement of the constitution Moses Havini stated the role of women during the conflict and peace process would be recognized through 'provisions that will ensure continuing participation in local and national governance and societal decision-making processes' (Ragogo 2004). The resulting three reserved parliamentary seats to 'represent the interests of the women of the Region' as well ensuring that one woman will serve on the Executive Council, are in effect designed to achieve this (Bougainville Constitution 2004 Part V: 54;79). There are also directives that women, together with representatives of other 'marginalized' groups, be 'fairly represented' on all constitutional 'and other' bodies (Bougainville Constitution 2004 Part iii: 19). Interestingly the second draft of the constitution had also required the government to consult with women's organizations on important matters such as proposals to amend the Bougainville Constitution (BCC 2003, 7). This was not specifically present in subsequent or final drafts although there is a direction to consult representatives of the traditional chiefs and other traditional leaders at district level and representatives of Churches in Bougainville which may in turn involve women's participation (Bougainville Constitution, 2004, Division 2. 217; Section .4 B &C). The constitution does recognize the 'role and welfare' of women in both traditional and modern Bougainville indicating an understanding that the scope and nature of women's roles are changing and evolving in the post conflict era Bougainville Constitution, 2004, 28).

The constitution leaves itself somewhat open to critical feminist analysis through the specific inclusion of women elected to government as representatives of 'women's

issues' as opposed to the issues of all Bougainvillean. As Linder has already pointed out it does not provide for inclusion of women in the Judicial branch, and although the constitution does not specifically contain language to protect it the President has since appointed a Minister for Women. At this early point in the life of the ABG it remains to be seen how the reserved seats will be utilized over an extended period. Their existence does guarantee that women be included in the governance of Bougainville and the constitution directs that the elected women representatives hold various positions on Committees and parliamentary bodies ensuring that women do not become invisible. While women's representation accounts for less than ten percent of total parliamentary seats, proportionally it places Bougainvillean women in a markedly better position than many of their counterparts throughout the Pacific Islands, and has the potential to assist the ABG to develop a focus on gender mainstreaming as the government matures.

Responsibilities pertaining to international conventions;

The issue of gender mainstreaming is more than merely a desirable element of a new constitution, it is a requirement of any country that has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and is inline with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 'Women, Peace and Security' (femLINKpacific 2005). By ratifying CEDAW, states indicate that they recognize discrimination and inequality. They recognize the need for state action to respect, fulfill and protect women's human rights and freedom. They commit themselves to legally binding obligations of the Convention and are willing to be held accountable at state and international levels for compliance standards defined by the Convention. Papua New Guinea acceded to the convention on the 12th January 1995 and therefore is bound to put the provisions of the Convention into practice(UNDAW 2005). Bougainville, though an

autonomous region, is still obligated to abide by international conventions adopted by Papua New Guinea under the national constitution. To echo concerns voiced by Sr Lorraine Garasu in 2002, even though there are now reserved seats for women under the Constitution, the issue of women's involvement in structures of the new government remains contentious.

With such a minimal representation the ability to change the patriarchal approach of men so as to incorporate genuine endeavors to take into account the effect of all policy on both men and women will be a genuine challenge. Anticipating the difficulties women would encounter in gaining access to political office, there was a call for the government to develop a 'Centre for Women' to assist women in gaining the necessary skills for public office as early as 2000 (Miriori 2000). Women's under-representation in the new political structures during the peace process, and prior to the election of the ABG was characterized by a minimum inclusion in high level bodies. Garasu pointed out:

When the Bougainville People's Congress was appointed, only six out of a total of 106 were women. During a debate it was decided that the time was 'not yet right' for stronger female representation. This has become a pattern in later political developments. The Bougainville Interim Provincial Government comprises four women members. The 52-strong Bougainvillean delegation at the September 2001 talks on autonomy, referendum and arms disposal included only two women (Garasu 2002).

Constitutional rights have been shown to be insufficient in isolation - education, literacy, and awareness of rights and processes that support access to rights also need to exist (Sorensen 1998) in order to enable capacity building and increases in critical mass of women. In Bougainville women and girls were denied opportunities for formal education during the conflict years and the need for a concerted effort to consolidate educational resources was identified at the Bougainville Women's Summit 2000 as an area the new

government should prioritize (Miriori 2000). In anticipation of the election, as mentioned earlier, training on voter education and leadership was conducted by UNIFEM for in excess of fifty men and women of Bougainville in Arawa during the last week of October 2003 (UNIFEM 2006). Additionally, three women from Bougainville were participants of a regional training on transformative leadership and citizenship workshop held in Fiji together with a regional congress on women's political participation. These measures aimed to empower locals to raise levels of understanding of electoral processes in their communities.

The use of quotas as a mechanism to ensure gender balance

There are a number of strategies in addition to education that governments can use to implement changes that will enhance gender equity. One common strategy for increasing parliamentary participation is the adoption of a quota system to ensure a minimum number of women will be represented. Quotas have been broadly considered a necessary strategy to enhance and encourage women's political representation (Tinker 2004). Regardless of this, the effectiveness of using quotas in politics has been debated widely. The debate often revolves around a lack of understanding and scrutiny regarding hidden assumptions about women and women's positions. The argument against quotas is predominantly that quotas are seen as 'discrimination and a violation of the principle of fairness', whereas the advocates of quota systems see them as a form of 'compensation for the structural barriers that prevent fair competition' (Dahlerup 2003, 4-5).

Implementing a quota system involves using a systematic approach to ensuring representation for a specific group. This can be through 'aspirant', 'candidate', or 'reserved seats' where minimum numbers of target group representation can be enforced at different

stages of election process.³ Bougainville has chosen to use the 'reserved seat' system whereby three positions are mandated for women under the constitution. This was a decision of the Constitutional Commission as discussed earlier. The quota system forced women to articulate a political commitment, manifesting in active political campaigning. Involvement at such a high level of politics was a new role for Bougainvillean women. As women had not previously been represented at this level of government the experience of the 2005 campaign has provided valuable insights into political participation and election campaign processes (UNIFEM 2005). In comparison to Bougainville's election outcomes, South Africa introduced aspirant quotas for women with very positive results:

For the first time ever, South African women and men of all races were eligible to vote on April 1994. The percentage of women in parliament has increased substantially since the 1994 elections and this can be attributed to the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) made a decision to include a 33.3 percent quota of women on their party lists. In the year 1999, women's share of seats was 29,8%. Thus, 23 women held a seat in Parliament. A similar pattern was reflected in the provincial legislatures where [which] women comprise 24% (UNIRTIAW 2006).

These results must be viewed with caution however given earlier examples in this chapter of women being subjected to marginalization once elected. There is also a danger in Melanesian societies that the use of aspirant quotas may not be enough to ensure women have a reasonable chance of participation. McLeod noted that among the many impediments to women's involvement in politics in PNG 'inadequate access to the financial resources imperative for political campaigning' is a key economic concern (McLeod 2002,43-46). The outcomes of the 2005 Bougainville election highlight the need for women and men to embrace a broad vision of women's rights, responsibilities and ability to

³ Aspirant quotas involve shortlists of potential candidates as used by the Australian Labor Party, Labour and Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom and the New Democratic Party in Canada. They would usually mean that the party has a policy whereby nominations must include women.

contribute. Once again, a point to emerge in regard to candidacy was the need for further education for women and men. Helen Hakena reported that many women did not understand that women could become candidates for seats other than the reserved seats (UNIFEM 2005). Lessons learned from South Africa show that while quotas may guarantee at least minimum representation, they cannot guarantee effective representation unless women are given the necessary support and access to resources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, trends toward women's political gains in post-conflict nations identified by the IPU have been reflected to some degree in Bougainville. While still a very long way from achieving thirty percent representation, Bougainville has seen a dramatic increase in both parliamentary representation and the general political engagement of women. The three seats occupied by women as a result of the 2005 election appear to be in a genuine spirit of embracing change and building pathways to gender equity. Most indicative of this is the appointment of women to senior positions in parliament. When viewed in a national and regional context there is a clear gain for women in so much as PNG and the Pacific reflect the second lowest regional averages for women in politics globally. An immediate entry into the first ABG places women in a position of empowerment to build on in future elections.

These gains do appear tentative though as female politicians articulate a reluctance on the part of some male counterparts to fully accept the need for special considerations for women. It has been shown that although educational programs for women in politics have been implemented for some years, women have remained under-represented in Pacific states. Education must be supported by political will and state structures if women are to advance their standing in political spheres. Bougainville has responded to this need by

exercising a policy of inclusivity of women in the planning and formation of the new constitution, and by implementation of a quota system for parliamentary seats.

The use of reserved seat quotas has assisted Bougainvillean women to gain prominent positions in government structures. Despite being less than the 30% representation prescribed in Beijing, the increase from zero participation in the past echoes experiences of other post-conflict states that have since achieved high levels of representation in a short timeframe. It is also an opportunity for the government to consolidate the work of women's organizations by implementation of international conventions such as the CEDAW and Resolution 1325. Increasing the critical mass of women in politics is the ultimate preferred outcome for the utilization of international mechanisms. Bougainville will need to watch closely the way in which women are supported and encouraged in the assertion of their rights in order to fulfill international obligations. Education programs have so far failed to guarantee increases in Papua New Guinea indicating that other factors affect outcomes for women. Lessons from Africa point to the need to create a structured support base for women that is capable of rising above geographical or socio-economic barriers.

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