

PASIFIKA PEACE TALANOA

PACIFIC PEOPLE BUILDING PEACE

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From Reaction to Prevention: Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace

In July 2005, a thousand peacebuilders gathered at a GPPAC civil society conference at the UN Headquarters in New York. They all felt that it was time to finally prioritise the prevention of violent conflict and to build a global peace movement. Together, we joined hands to launch People Building Peace: A Global Action Agenda for the Prevention of Violent Conflict.

A 15-member delegation conveyed Pacific priorities during regional consultations. They included Rev. Akuila D Yabaki, Noelene Nabulivou and Lillian Thaggard from Fiji, the late 'Akilisi Pohiva and Ofa-ki-Levuka Guttenbeil-Likiliki of Tonga, Judith Fagalasuu of SICA Commission, Solomon Islands, James Tanis of Bougainville, Bernie Lovegrove of ASPBAE and Reuben Kavoi of Peace Foundation Melanesia together with Carole Shaw, Dr Graham Hassall and Kieren McGovern and Bernard Choulai of UNDP Suva. At the time, Jone Dakuwula was the Regional Initiator for the Pacific region and the Citizens Constitutional Forum secretariat.

In 2020 the COVID19 pandemic has brought greater complexity to the work of Pacific Peacebuilders already dealing with issues including the climate crisis, progressing conflict prevention and human security, including political security priorities for non-independent territories and regions.

A key priority for the GPPAC Pacific network is to continue to progress an inclusive conflict prevention and human security approach taking a peace, development and humanitarian nexus approach. A key priority for the GPPAC Pacific network is to support our communities adapt to the changes that are being felt in their homes and communities as well as communicate their recommendations for the response and recovery efforts.

This includes addressing the prevention of violence, mobilising assistance to local communities, localising information and identifying solutions to ensure peace and security in homes and communities.

The GPPAC Pacific network is committed to deepen a collective understanding of peacebuilding and conflict prevention by supporting multi-stakeholder initiatives that continue to contribute to establishing a culture of nonviolence and prevention that will collectively promote Human Security, Inclusive Conflict Prevention and Climate action for Ecological Just'Peace.

What is needed is a new multi-actor consultative framework for regional peace and security that supports civil society representatives who can localize and operationalize Women, Youth and Civil Society Peacebuilding, Prevention and Participation frameworks. Women do not just need to be consulted, but supported to enhance our infrastructures for peace and security at local and national levels.

Members of GPPAC Pacific are the Pacific Conference of Churches, Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding, FemLINKpacific, The Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, Talitha Project, Vois Blong Mere Solomons and the Vanuatu Young Women for Change. Since July 2019 Transcend Oceania has been the Regional Secretariat. The Regional Liaison Officer is Adivasu Levu and Sharon Bhagwan Rolls is the Regional Representative to the GPPAC International Steering Group.



Sustaining Peace - Women Lead

BOUGAINVILLE stands on the threshold of becoming the world's newest nation after 98.3 per cent of the population voted for independence from Papua New Guinea.

While actual independence may take another five years, the referendum of December 2019 and the result of the vote guarantees a continued peace.

Wracked by civil war from 1988 to 1998, the resource-rich Melanesian Island east of PNG and north of the Solomon Islands was led to peace by its women.

For had the women not intervened, it is possible the men of Bougainville would never have laid down their weapons. And the death toll from the conflict could have far exceeded the 20,000 killed by war and disease.

Bougainville's men – who will lead talks with the PNG government on the future of the island – are quick to acknowledge the critical role women played in the struggle for independence.

Martin Miriori was a member of the Bougainville Interim Government as the island descended into war. He said women helped end the war.

"Women's groups played a critical role in negotiating for peace and bringing an end to Bougainville's civil war in 2001," said Miriori, a candidate for president in the island's 2020 elections.

"They have the power; In our matrilineal society the women own the land, and they used that influence to bring about peace."

On Bougainville, women are allowed by custom to exercise control in trouble spots and their peace messages were heard by all sides during the conflict.

Men are believed to have a duty to protect the land on women's behalf,

This gives women the ability to instruct men on different methods of protection.

"Coming together from across political, religious and regional lines, they mobilised to end the violence," Miriori said.

"Through marches, petitions, vigils and mass meetings, women's groups built and maintained the pressure required to chart a new way forward."

By 2001 the people of Bougainville had fought off a better equipped and organised PNG Defence Force. But now, factions had emerged between the islanders.

At peace talks in Burnham Barracks, New Zealand, the women were forced to step in again.

"The mother – that's how we made the breakthrough at Burnham," Miriori recalled.

"Out of the 75 (delegates) who went, there were 20 women leaders, so they made the difference and because of the mothers begging their sons to make peace."

Miriori said, however, that it was not enough for the women to merely achieve a peaceful outcome to the civil war.

"They are very instrumental in maintaining the peace and it's important that they continue to be involved in the process post-referendum.

"That is part of an inclusive approach to negotiations the government is going to include women ... they must be part of the negotiating team."

During the conflict, women carried peace baskets filled with essential supplies such as food and medicine into vulnerable communities.

These practical messages of peace supported by frequent radio messaging and broadcasts and prayer vigils encouraged solidarity and kindness.

Support for peace grew, as did the respect for women who, through leading figures like Josephine Kauona, were able to represent female voices and experiences at negotiations.

Former Deputy Speaker of Bougainville's Parliament, Francesca Semoso, said peace would not have been possible without women who now have three reserved seats in the 33-seat legislature.

But Theonila Roka Matbob, Independent beat her rivals to take the non-reserved Ioro Open seat and take women's representation in parliament to 12 per cent.

"Women were the backbone of the peace process – in the lead up to the referendum. I take my hats off to them for their perseverance. They provided that leadership, from traditional to cultural and government settings," Semoso said.

As Bougainville prepares to take its next step, it is clear that the women will once more play a significant role.

That is the spirit of Bougainville's women.

Netani Rika is an award-winning regional journalist and former Editor-in-Chief of The Fiji Times. He was the last recipient of the Tavake Fusimalohi Pacific Media Freedom Prize. Rika covered the Bougainville Referendum of 2019 for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Localising Peace Education

'Solesolevaki' is a concept of working together, contributing to Sautu or Peace. This includes Peace Education.

Several years ago the European Union and the United Nations Development Program Strengthening Citizen Engagement in Fijis Initiative (SCEFI) brought the Fijian Government's Itaukei Affairs Board, government departments and civil society organizations together to develop a training manual on 'Leadership, Good Governance, and Management for local-level leaders'. A specific module was dedicated to Conflicts, Conflict Management, and Resolution. This was an opportunity for civil society organisations, in particular peacebuilders to provide transformative actions to building peace-

ful communities explains Justine Maravu a community facilitator with Transcend Oceania who contributed to the development of the manual: "There is no one size fits all solution. The collaboration of different actors of society enabled a process of learning and reflection that resulted in the design of a manual for Peace Education for grassroots communities"

She adds that the peacebuilding community, including the faith community remain an important voices for the prevention of violence and conflict: "The next step is to bring together all of these resources for each conflict setting and implement it together for better results and change."

Lessons from the field: Sustainability through intergenerational learning

By Carolyn Kitone

The Pacific Feminist Forum (PFF) in 2016 was a major undertaking and a turning point in the journey of the Pacific feminist movement.

The event was a combination of years of organizing, networking and engaging in different spaces. It was – as the then Executive Director of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Michelle Reddy put it - "a space where feminist, women human rights defenders and advocates are able to recruit; a space to learn from each other, to share the challenges and hurt."

Dr Claire Slatter, who delivered the keynote address, shared her experience as a young feminist co-organising the first Pacific Women's Conference (PWC), after returning from the First World Conference on Women (1975) that was held at Mexico City.

"Interestingly, most of the women who attended the meeting were older women so it was actually a little bit of a reverse – younger women organizing a meeting with an early feminist agenda," she explained.

This "reversal" in dynamics is interesting because too often these days, young women aren't being brought into the fold over discussions that concern their future.

Even if we move away from the "feminist agenda" narrative and into the wider advocacy movement, who makes all the decisions? Who sets the agenda?

Because too often, young people aren't seen as partners for development, nor are we seen as leaders of today despite evidence to the contrary.

At a recent workshop, I was the lone youth (and female) voice in a table of aging men.

To say I was intimidated would have been accurate. That they were receptive to what I shared was another issue altogether.

For young women – and young people in general – we are working in systems that are not designed for us yet here we remain, challenging existing oppressive and patriarchal structures and transforming these spaces into more inclusive zones.

In recent years, there has been a shift in the overall understanding of young people's roles in our development culture.

In 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

This resolution, as well as Resolution 2419 (2018), recognises youths as positive role models in preventing conflicts and building peace.

It also urges governments and stakeholders to give us a greater voice in decision-making at all levels and includes setting up the mechanisms that would allow us to participate meaningfully in these processes.

Traditional structures rarely, if ever, entertain and much less welcome the vocal contribution of young people. The issue is made messier when it's the voices of young women that need to be heard.

In societies where tradition and culture still guide communal life, it is important to find allies and create structures that are conducive to young women's participation in decision-making.

A three-day cross-generational National Convention organised by the Fiji Women's Forum and Fiji Young Women's Forum in 2017 was an opportunity to develop strategies for women's political participation.

As a volunteer for femLINKpacific at the time, attending the convention was an almost surreal moment for me.

In the room, there were participants from different backgrounds and all ages coming together to map a way forward for the women's rights movement in Fiji.

There were moments that exposed generational values and created tension in the room but our ability to organise with a common goal is what eventually progressed conversations in the room.

For me, it was realising that the work we do for the future we want did not occur overnight. And that is the beauty of intergenerational spaces.

It provides us with an opportunity to learn about what's been done but also realising what could be done.

These spaces put us together with diverse groups of women: women with disability, the LBT (lesbian, bisexual, transgender) community, rural women and young urban women.

By providing that intergenerational space, we are allowing for intersectional conversations to take place. It forces us to consider the disadvantages someone faces because of their overlapping social identities.

And yes, there will be disagreements, but when we talk about sustainability of a movement we are talking about an inclusive human rights and peacebuilding approach that includes diverse groups of people.

We are carrying forward the visions of the women and human rights defenders who came before us and that's how we create sustainability in a movement.

Since the mid-2000s GPPAC Pacific has advocated for greater inclusion of youth perspectives in GPPAC global agenda. We have experienced in many of our regional crises and conflicts that young people are active agents of peace and have a key role to play in the prevention of violence and armed conflict as agents of change in peaceful conflict resolution. We also recognise that young women contribute to human security in their local communities, as well as at national, regional, and international levels. In recent years GPPAC has made a commitment to integrate youth mainstreaming as a cross-cutting priority because as a peacebuilding network we believe that sustainable peace can only be achieved with the participation of all members of society, regardless of any particular aspects of their identity, such as gender, religion, race, class, age, or nationality. GPPAC's strategy includes a focus on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2250, making youth participation in peace processes an absolute priority.

Redesign the Table:

By Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

The 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) serious consideration must be given to shifting the power to national and local women's rights actors, to strengthen agency, amplify voice, and build on collaborative opportunities including women-led coalitions and feminist best practices:

"Addressing gender-based violence... contributes to achieving personal peace. Once personal peace is there, we can find family peace, community peace, and the overall regional peace" – Agnes Titus, Program Coordinator at Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation

Elections in Vanuatu, Bougainville and New Caledonia this year have highlighted the need for greater resources to support women's leadership in ensuring peaceful elections, and the transitional peace and political processes that follow.

There is also an urgent need to end the violence in Tanah Papua, as well as proceed with a human rights investigation and an independent Pacific-led peacekeeping mission. Such a mission must be accompanied by gender and youth inclusive community level dialogue and mediation, peace education and trauma healing.

"2020 - It is time to redesign the table" is the central message in the publication "And She Persisted for Peace: Redesign the Table" of the GPPAC Pacific network.

The report provides a key set of forward looking recommendations for national and inter-governmental leaders and organisations

Redesign the Table was produced ahead of the annual convening of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and ahead of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR1325 addressing four key pillars of the WPS agenda: Participation in Peacebuilding and Prevention; Protection of Women Peacebuilders and Women's Human Rights Defenders; Relief and Recovery; and Accountability of State, Inter-Governmental Organisations and Multilateral Systems to the Sustaining Peace and Human Security Agenda.

The report draws on the rich experience and expertise of GPPAC Pacific network members in ending conflict and bringing peace to their respective countries including Fiji, Papua New Guinea including Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Since 2007, the GPPAC Pacific network have collaborated and engaged in local, national, as well as regional and global processes bringing attention to how the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda can be localised into peacebuilding, non-violence and conflict prevention action in the Pacific region.

The report was coordinated through the GPPAC Pacific Secretariat – Transcend Oceania, through the GPPAC WPS small grants facility, supported by SIDA drawing on the rich experience and expertise of GPPAC Pacific network members in ending conflict and bringing peace to their respective countries including Fiji, Papua New Guinea including Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Building Just Peace Communities in Changing Environment and Climate

Pacific Island people are on the forefront of climate change and as COVID19 arrived into the regions, we recognise that values of trust, collaboration and truth are important values that must be at the basis of the response said Rev James Bhagwan of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC). He was speaking at a recent consultation that saw GPPAC Pacific members– Transcend Oceania, Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding and PCC highlight how they are making connections between peacebuilding, conflict prevention and the climate crisis. This is about sustaining human security for communities who are on the frontline of climate change said Adivasu Levu, Executive Director of Transcend Oceania who are the local hosts of the consultation which is undertaken in collaboration with the Toda Peace Institute and Conciliation Resources and through a comparative learning ap-

proach: "We are bringing together the Toda Peace Institute together to explore conflict, peace and mobility concerns in the context of climate change in Fiji."

"We are addressing the key climate change challenges confronting communities in Fiji" added Kevin Clements the Director of the Toda Peace Institute of who reminded participants that climate change and COVID19 require maximum attention and collaboration to identify ways to contribute to the development of policies.

"This is one of the first times that we have had island countries closed to each other. This has important implications for the displacement and migration. There is a need to integrate the broadening of the security agenda in light of the adoption of the Boe Declaration" said Bhagwan

Food security, he added is an important indicator for crisis response and prevention: "You have to look at conflict situations, after natural disasters such as TC Winston in

2016 to recognise that food security is an important priority for communities."

"We are making sure diverse women are participating and the way in which they are consulted and participating – this is the purpose of the "sense making process" – taking into account the WPS agenda – and this is linked with the work we are doing with the Shifting the Power Coalition and so we are making this a priority" said Adivasu Levu of Transcend Oceania as she explained how a new Talanoa Storytelling Methodology is paves the way to the next phases of the Building Just Peace Communities in Changing Environment and Climate in Fiji.

It builds on the way in which Transcend Oceania has been convening listening exercises, to identify the experiences, the challenges and the opportunities to support peacebuilding approaches in two communities in Fiji who are dealing with the reality of relocation.

Voices from the Field:

Human security challenges in Vanuatu in 2020 have continued to be the climate crisis including the impact of category five TC Harold as the country was beginning to face the initial impact of COVID19 reports GPPAC Pacific focal point in Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Young Women for Change (VYWC).

These humanitarian crisis situations are impacting the target constituency of the young women-led network including out of school girls, single women, lactating mothers many of whom are unemployed or earn a living through the informal sector. Additionally the situation of women and girls living with disability and those residing in remote outlying communities and islands remains a concern.

As a member of the Shifting the Power Coalition, VYWC was able to access an emergency grant to provide humanitarian assistance to their members in Luganville and Malo:

"We were able to reach 150 young women and girls with at least reaching 300 children" says VYWC CEO Sabrina Brown.

The challenges of information and communication is being felt even by young women and girls living in urban Port Vila: "Mothers who cannot read find it difficult to read and understand COVID19 messages and therefore will need to have extra time given for them to better understand their roles and responsibilities to comply with the guidelines. Young women who previously were employed within the tourism sector are now more vulnerable due to the border closures". The hardship is felt at the personal and family level across Vanuatu society, she says.

Women not present in Political Decision Making

In the 2020 Vanuatu elections, 18 women campaigned and none of them got through again, just as in 2012 and 2016. While the Vanuatu National Council of Women created the Leleon Vanua Democratic Party, a woman-led party on 15 May 2018 challenges include access to funding. They did not field any candidates for the 2020 elections.

To address the gap in decision-making, the VYWC built on the outcomes of a 2016 GPPAC workshop that brought together 50 civil society organisations in a workshop that localised UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security).

This resulted in the establishment of the 'Storian Insaed Long Nakamal' (Local Dialogues). While the initial collaboration with 18 local chiefs was not as successful as anticipated, there is clearly an opportunity to continue to strive to shift the mindset and bring about political reforms that will result in women not only being nominated as candidates but also getting elected.

The adviser to VYWC Anne Pakoa, who was a candidate in the 2020 elections, says what needs to change is to garner support and understanding of why women need to be supported, and a deeper understanding of gender equality in decision making.

"Getting women in Parliament is a very challenging agenda and hope to draw more solidarity from our network sisters in the region to advise us on what to do to have some women in Parliament in 2024"

The Suva based Pacific Center for Peacebuilding (PCP) is providing a creative platform for 25 diverse young women and men to use creative expressions to communicate their ideas for peace and development. Ahead of a scheduled exhibition in 2021 participants are mentored in film-making, visual art, drama, poetry and photo-story, short stories, music and craft work. Content production is contributing to bridging inter-gen-

erational conversations and driving inclusion for the LGBTQI and disability community. It creates a safe space to express diverse opinions on a range of topical subjects, some which may be sensitive and uncomfortable to talk about. Through art, young people will express their own issues as it affects them, they become visible as individuals and through this platform others will identify experiences, emotions, hopes

and dreams with them. This recognition will contribute to network building and consolidating a collective voice for people with similar concerns" says PCP Executive Director Florence Swamy "This is critical as young people make up a large percentage of the population of Fiji yet formal decision making spaces still do not fully include their contributions and so this project aims to address this as well."

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