

**SHARING AND EXPLORING PACIFIC APPROACHES
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FROM PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**



BOUGAINVILLE PEACE AGREEMENT

THE BURNHAM I AND II DIALOGUES



UNDP Pacific Centre

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Title: Bougainville Peace Agreement: The Burnham I and II Dialogues


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BOUGAINVILLE PEACE AGREEMENT THE BURNHAM I AND II DIALOGUES

SUMMARY

After eight unsuccessful attempts at peace, the Bougainville Declaration was signed, committing warring factions to a peaceful solution to the conflict. Among the eight unsuccessful peace efforts, two processes were employed that were more dialogic in nature than the various other attempts. These contributed to the formation of "the Declaration" which served as the first step towards a comprehensive peace under the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001. These dialogues, Burnham I and II, were hosted by the New Zealand government on the Burnham Army Base and are the focus of this case study.

1. CONTEXT

Bougainville is an island province of Papua New Guinea (PNG) situated 800 kilometers to the east of the capital, Port Moresby. The Island is the largest land mass in the Solomon Islands group. However, Bougainville's status as a province of PNG is an historical anomaly, shaped by the geopolitical fortunes of former colonial powers, namely Germany, Britain and Australia. In 1886, Germany and Britain, both with growing and competing interests in the region, agreed to split the Solomon Islands Group with the northerly islands – including Bougainville – going to Germany. Following World War I and World War II, PNG (including Bougainville) became a protectorate of Australia by the League of Nations and the United Nations, respectively.

Bougainville is rich in minerals such as copper and gold. In 1964, large copper deposits were discovered in the Crown Prince Range near the center of Bougainville's main island. The first calls for Bougainville independence came shortly after the find, as people grew disgruntled over the Australian colonial government's administration of the mine's operations. Papua New Guinea formally declared its independence in 1975, but not before the Interim Provincial Government in Bougainville announced its intention to secede from PNG the same year. The Bougainville independence movement drew considerable strength from a shared sense among Bougainvilleans that they were linked culturally and otherwise to the people of the Solomon Islands. In fact, Bougainville's Interim Provincial Government made attempts in the 1970s to join the Solomon Islands but the efforts failed.

Meanwhile, the operation of the Panguna mine by Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) generated a growing number of grievances among Bougainvilleans. Environmental degradation, compromised livelihoods, high rates of labor migration, social and cultural dislocation of Bougainvilleans, and divisive revenue sharing formulas, generated a critical mass in support of an armed uprising. The controversies surrounding the Panguna mine and the related questions of Bougainvillean identity and national sovereignty sparked an armed rebellion in 1988 that quickly turned into an internecine struggle for power.

Civil war raged for over ten years. By the time the war drew to a close, an estimated 15, 000-20, 000 Bougainvilleans were dead and 70,000 (out of a population of 180,000) were displaced.¹ The destruction of public

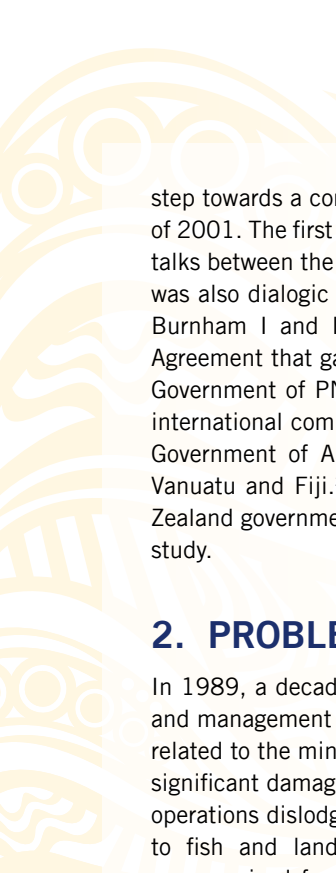
1 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Bougainville Peace Process, [undated], http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/png/bougainville_peace_process.html (accessed 2 April 2012); "PNG: Tackling Clan Conflict," IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, 7 January 2011, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/91559/PAPUA-NEW-GUIN-EA-Tackling-clan-conflict> (accessed 25 April 2012); Regan 26.

infrastructure and the loss of private sector productive assets brought the economy to a standstill. The emigration of skilled labor and the civil servant class created large capacity deficits in government ministries. Deep political divisions among Bougainville people and the violence it generated left lasting psychological scars.

By 1996, a series of eight failed peace agreements, coupled with significant war-fatigue by members of all parties, quite suddenly intersected with a political crisis in PNG, providing an opening for both local actors and international interveners to reignite a credible peace process. After a botched invasion (Operation High-speed II, 1996) of the Bougainville main island led to many PNGDF casualties, confidence in the PNGDF ebbed to new lows. Further, reports from the United Nations Human Rights Commission on conditions in Bougainville encouraged Australia to end its technical and material support of the PNGDF through its annual budgetary allocation. In this context, the PNG Prime Minister signed a secret contract with the mercenary group, Sandline International, in a desperate attempt to bring an end to the conflict by any means necessary. When news of the deal went public there was a significant backlash which briefly united the public, the PNGDF, BRA and the BRF behind a common stand. All parties stood ground against the introduction of foreign mercenaries to Bougainville; the stage was set for a true and lasting peace agreement.

Among the eight unsuccessful peace efforts, two processes were employed that were more dialogic in nature than the various other attempts. These contributed to the formation of “the 1997 Bougainville Declaration” which served as the first





step towards a comprehensive peace under the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001. The first official political dialogue that immediately followed Burnham talks between the Government of Papua New Guinea And Bougainville Leaders was also dialogic in nature to a certain extent. The Lincoln Dialogue followed Burnham I and II at Lincoln University, New Zealand. It was the Lincoln Agreement that gave birth to the Bougainville Peace Agreement signed by the Government of PNG and the Bougainville Leaders; and countersigned by the international community which included the Government of New Zealand, the Government of Australia, The UN Peace Keeping Group, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji.² The Burnham I and II dialogues were hosted by the New Zealand government on the Burnham Army Base and are the focus of this case study.

2. PROBLEM

In 1989, a decade long civil war broke out in Bougainville over the operation and management of the Panguna mine. There were three principle grievances related to the mine that led to the start of the conflict.³ First, the mine caused significant damage to traditional livelihoods and human habitats.⁴ The mine's operations dislodged copious amounts of soil that rendered rivers inhospitable to fish and land incapable of supporting agriculture. Food security was compromised for both large populations near the mine but also in the many river valley communities below it. Villages were razed to make way for the mine's operation, creating land use conflicts between resettled occupants and host populations.⁵ More widely, the loss of land to commercial interests had significant psychological consequences for Panguna's tradition-bound people.

As John Braithwaite explains, "The mine was a large physical scar on the land, but a deeper spiritual one for communities whose landscape was intensely implicated in their spiritual life."⁶

Second, a large influx of PNG labor migrants to the mine brought significant social disruption to Panguna's once quiet communities.⁷ Throngs of young, single men, newly arrived from PNG allegedly patronized prostitutes and

2 Moses Havini, Bougainville Negotiating Team. Interview. July 2012.

3 Anthony Regan, *Light Intervention: lessons from Bougainville* (U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2010) 17.

4 Regan 15; U.N. Economic and Social Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mr. Bacre Waly N'diaye, submitted pursuant to Commission resolution 1995/66. (E/CN.4/1996/4/Add. 2) 27 February 1998: para. 21.

5 Alan Campbell, *Mediation in the Asia Pacific Region* (Routledge, 2009) 112.

6 John Braithwaite, *Reconciliation and Architectures of Commitment: Sequencing Peace in Bougainville* (ANU Press 2010) 14.

7 Regan 15.

harassed Bougainville women. Public drunkenness became commonplace and widespread. Immigrant workers were also significantly over-represented in mine operations, leading to labor tensions.⁸ Bougainvillian employees demanded preferential treatment from management in pay and hiring practices but were rebuffed, creating further rifts.

The third grievance driving the conflict involved Bougainville Copper Limited's compensation policies towards land owners.⁹ BCL policy paid out substantially higher rents to older, established landowners than an emerging second generation. In 1987, young land owners, under Francis Ona formed the New Panguna Landowners Association to petition for new revenue-sharing proposals. The association demanded K10 billion and 50 per cent of profits with a transfer of BCL to Bougainvillian ownership after a five year period. The offer was rejected and large public demonstrations followed, some of which involved attacks on BCL assets. In November, 1988, Francis Ona and a group of followers attacked BCL's mining infrastructure with explosives, shutting down BCL operations. The attack was apparently welcomed by Bougainville's long-aggrieved population as other attacks against the government spontaneously erupted around the island province. Soon, young men rushed to support Ona and his newly formed Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA).

The attacks and subsequent closure of the mine in 1989 spurred the PNG government in Port Moresby into action. As a first measure, the government deployed riot police stationed in Bougainville.

The Police Riot Squad used indiscriminate violence against the public.¹⁰ Though effective in suppressing dissent in some areas, the police-led crackdown largely backfired, as popular anger fueled a spike in attacks against PNG government assets in multiple sites around the province in March, 1989.

The conflict escalated further in April, 1989, when the Papua New Guinea Defense Forces (PNGDF) were deployed to Bougainville and a state-of-emergency was declared. The PNGDF allegedly, resorted to some very hardline measures to contain the strife.¹¹ The war intensified. Then, in March, 1990, the PNG government agreed to a withdrawal the PNGDF from Bougainville, leaving the police to maintain law and order. The BRA agreed to lay down its

8 Braithwaite 23.

9 Braithwaite 19.

10 Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions para. 28; see also, Braithwaite 24; Peter Reedy, "Peace Operations and Restorative Justice: Groundwork for Post-conflict Regeneration" (PhD thesis paper, Australian National University, 2006), 216; Regan 20.

11 Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions para. 28; see also, Regan 21.

guns. However, contrary to government orders, when the Defense Forces quit the province, so too, did the police. The police released prisoners into the general public as it pulled out. The BRA quickly took up their arms again.

The PNG police and army units left a gaping law and order vacuum in their place when they withdrew from Bougainville.¹² Undisciplined BRA units turned their attention to local populations, and sought to settle old grudges and local land disputes.¹³

Other elements engaged in common criminality such as looting. Amidst the banditry, rape and pillaging, another rebel group emerged in an attempt to cap the growing chaos: the Bougainville Resistance Force (BRF). Soon armed rebel groups were fighting amongst themselves as the conflict morphed into hundreds of localized conflicts. Two layers to the conflict emerged: 1) a secessionist struggle between the BRA and PNG and; 2) a violent contest between two rival Bougainville groups, BRA and BRF. The BRF increasingly drew its logistical support and supply of arms from the PNGDF. Suddenly, any move towards Bougainville succession from PNG carried significant consequences for members of the BRF and their sympathizers. Bougainvilleans were now pitted squarely against one another on an issue that once drew them together.

The Bougainville people were caught in the perfect storm. On the one hand, rival armed groups and organized criminal groups were killing each other and



12 Regan 23.

13 Regan 24.

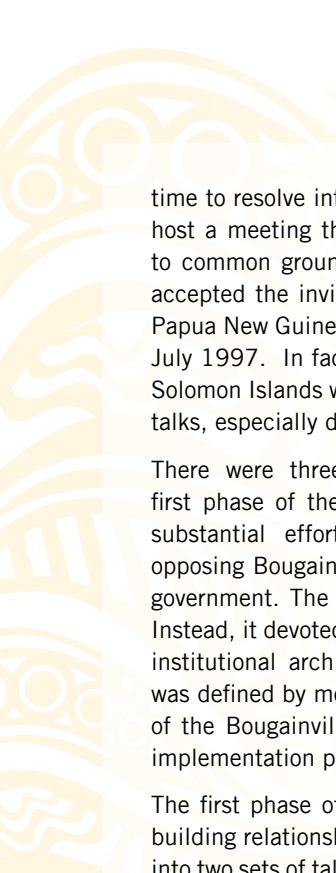
civilians. On the other hand, there was no trust that the PNG government could bring justice and security given the number and kind of violations committed by PNG police and Defense Forces. Furthermore, with the withdrawal of PNGDF, the government enforced an air and sea embargo of Bougainville, leading to a critically short supply of medical supplies, including medicine. The government withdrew ALL public services. It turned off communication links and the banks and all business and commercial interests followed suit. The result was a total blockade of Bougainville – sealed in from any contact with the outside world. This blockade lasted from 1990 till the Peace Agreements of 1998. An entire generation of Bougainvilleans was born into civil strife, ruled by the power of the gun and no understanding of freedom of movement, association, civil and political rights, human rights.

Atop these factors, was the disillusionment and distrust that attended a growing history of failed peace agreements between PNG, the BRA, and the BRF. These failures included: a cease fire agreement in February 1989; a peace package proposed by PNG in June 1989; a cease fire agreement in March 1990; peace talks hosted by New Zealand on the Navy Ship Endeavor in 1990; the Honiara Declaration in January 1991; the Arawa Peace Conference also in Honiara in 1994 and; peace talks hosted by Australia in Cairns in 1995.

The reasons for the failure of these peace agreements are varied. Mostly, the failures came down to a lack of appropriate security guarantees, good faith, adequate time-frames for discussion, and the vague wording in agreements which spoiled significant attempts at peace. Never-the-less, each effort provided important lessons to designers of the peace process that was eventually held in New Zealand at Burnham.

3. PROCESS

It is against this backdrop that New Zealand's intervention received a warm welcome. It was by now widely agreed among the Bougainville and PNG parties that because of the significant levels of distrust between them, an international intervener was required to help move a new peace effort forward. A trusted and seemingly neutral international actor was found in New Zealand's Foreign Minister, Don McKinnon. In June 1997, McKinnon facilitated a discussion among leaders of the BRA, its political wing the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) and the BRF, as well as the Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG), created by the BRF. The parties explained to McKinnon that earlier attempts at peace had not succeeded because they had insufficient



time to resolve internal disputes. The Bougainville parties asked McKinnon to host a meeting that gave the factions the time and space required to come to common ground and speak with one voice at talks with PNG. McKinnon accepted the invitation and sent former New Zealand High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea John Hayes to lobby for what became the Burnham talks of July 1997. In fact, the support from senior diplomats from Australia and the Solomon Islands was also critical to keep leaders engaged in the peace process talks, especially during the early period of discussions.

There were three identifiable phases to the overall peace process. The first phase of the peace process (June 1997 – June 1999) started with a substantial effort to build bridges of common understanding between opposing Bougainville factions and then between these factions and the PNG government. The first phase did not focus on achieving a peace agreement. Instead, it devoted attention to establishing a peace process and the necessary institutional architecture. The second phase (June 1999 to August 2001) was defined by more traditional political negotiations and involved the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The third phase is understood as the implementation period. This case study focuses only on the first phase.

The first phase of the peace process utilized dialogue as a principle way of building relationships between parties. The dialogic components were divided into two sets of talks – the Burnham talks – and were held at the Burnham Army Base on New Zealand’s South Island. The selection of Burnham Army Base was significant. Security concerns of the various parties attending any peace initiative were very real - particularly after 1995 when BRA representatives returning home Cairns, Australia, after signing a peace agreement came under fire from the PNGDF.

In fact, an initial offer by Solomon Islands as a venue was rejected as Bougainville parties did not believe security could be guaranteed there. New Zealand eventually hosted talks on their army base on the South Island, emphasizing a commitment to security. According to Robert Tapi, “Tight security and the military atmosphere of the camp helped to reduce the fear and mistrust that had haunted Bougainvilleans over decades. This enabled people to speak freely about the pain and frustration of the war and the cathartic confrontations were important icebreaking.”¹⁴ New Zealand Defense Force officers were also present during some proceedings.

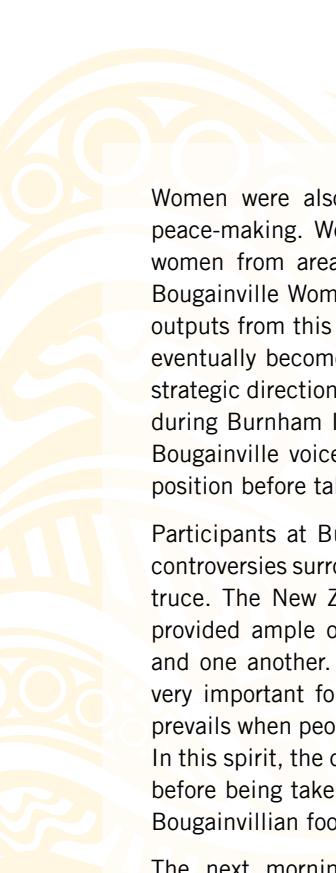
14 Tapi, 26

The first set of talks, known as the Burnham I talks involved the leadership from the principle Bougainville factions, but also chiefs, church leaders, and women's groups. Over 100 delegates from Bougainville were in attendance. The delegates invited were recognized leaders with links to various localities and experience reconciling groups over localized issues. These actors were important to informing their constituents of the progress being made at Burnham. The inclusion of local leaders may have also strengthened the Burnham process by helping to justify, with their presence and tact, a Melanesian approach to peacebuilding that ultimately led to a sustainable peace agreement. After the two principal Bougainville rebel groups came to a common understanding at Burnham I, talks began with the government of PNG during Burnham II.

Burnham I

The design of the talks took place several weeks before the Burnham I talks were to begin and involved a decidedly non-western approach. Delegates would not be seated around tables, facing off with one another in business suits. Instead, issues would be addressed gradually after confidence building exercises including song, traditional ceremonies and outside cultural events took place. Maori advisors to the Prime Minister assisted in incorporating Maori practices into the design of the talks. Women involved in the design process ensured sufficient space for relationship-building and dialogue.





Women were also important advocates of a pan-Bougainville approach to peace-making. Women's leaders based in Australia brokered efforts to bring women from areas under both BRA and BRF control to participate in the Bougainville Women's Forum and develop position papers and strategies. The outputs from this forum assisted in developing the architecture to what would eventually become the Burnham I and II Talks. Women were also forceful on strategic direction during the talks themselves. In particular, women demanded during Burnham I, that both the BRA and the BRF resolve to speak with one Bougainville voice; neither party could note reservations on points in a joint position before talks with PNG.

Participants at Burnham I were given two weeks to dialogue around various controversies surrounding the war and chart a path forward towards a negotiated truce. The New Zealand facilitators did not dictate a timetable and instead provided ample opportunities for invitees to get to know their surroundings and one another. According to Victor Boerge, "This [approach] proved to be very important for overcoming the tense atmosphere which almost naturally prevails when people who have been at war for years commence negotiating."¹⁵ In this spirit, the delegations were first welcomed at the AIRPORT ON ARRIVAL before being taken to Burnham where the delegation as given hot, traditional Bougainvillian food.

The next morning, the participants enjoyed a Maori greeting ceremony, involving a hongi. Delegates were to shake hands with one another, and touch noses and exchange the "breath of life." They were asked whether they had come to Burnham in peace or for warfare and were presented with a feather on the ground. If they were in Burnham in support of peace they were told to pick up the feather. The invitation was said to have had a profound effect on the Bougainville attendees.

Following the ice-breaking and welcoming ceremonies, the New Zealand Prime Minister Jon McKinnon made an opening address. His participation was welcomed as the highest-level engagement in any Bougainville peace process to date and gave participants a sense that the world was truly vested in a successful outcome. Delegates sang before each speaker rose to deliver a speech from prepared statements at an open-air meeting on the 'sacred' parade ground with Maori leaders in attendance. This government acknowledgement of indigenous custom impressed Bougainvilleans with the genuineness of this approach to negotiations.

¹⁵ Victor Boerge, *Traditional Approaches to Conflict Transformation – Potential and Limits* (Berghof, 2006), 13, <http://www.berghof-handbook.net> (accessed 23 April 2012).

Following the formal welcome ceremonies that involved the New Zealand army and Government leaders, Bougainvilleans were provided with everything required for privacy and security to meet between themselves for the remainder of the fortnight. Within the privacy of a secure conference room, introductory speeches from Bougainville leaders under the format of a traditional “taraut” session were then called, providing an opportunity for participants to debate issues. Participants were allowed long periods in which to present their views. Again, no timetable was dictated. Later, separate or break-out taraut sessions took place in which smaller groups would discuss issues. Some sessions were extraordinarily challenging, as the taraut process was also employed to expunge (or “vomit” as described by participants) bad feelings and ill will. One participant offered the following eye-witness account of the taraut at Burnham:

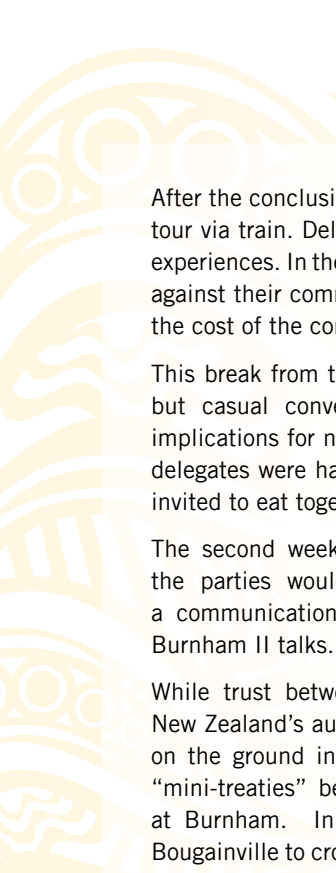
There were no specific procedures—we went into the room with New Zealand Defense Forces in between our factions—we were ready to throw punches. The vomiting session united us and from then on we stood back as one. The BRA and the BIG were housed together, but separate from the BRF and BTG. There was real enmity. It was really very difficult. Someone would shout to another person, ‘You shot my brother, you murdered my brother’. And they would jump across to do violence but the New Zealand military were in between. This went on until nothing was left inside. The women played a very important role, they would say ‘Look, I am here, there is my son over there, and over there is my other son. And all of you, you are all our sons.’ During this time there was no agenda and it was so important to vomit it all out.¹⁶

Parties were also given private convening spaces to discuss the talks, develop agendas and positions, and communicate with constituents back in Bougainville. These “secretariats” were critical to preserving confidentiality, but also in serving as places for prayer and other means of shoring up emotional strength and psychological comfort. Participants from the two factions slept in separate sleeping halls and ate in separate dining halls.

Over the two-week period, the delegations from both sides met for two sessions a day. New Zealand officials facilitated and observed the meetings as co-chairs with Bougainville officials. The New Zealand team also intervened to ensure security, cool discussions down or create space for smaller groups to brainstorm solutions to particular problems. As Alan Campbell explains, “When the talks were underway, the focus remained on the processes of healing and relationship-building rather than on specific outcomes.”¹⁷

16 Reddy, 228

17 Campbell, 123.



After the conclusion of the first week, participants were taken on a sightseeing tour via train. Delegates attended cultural events that offered shared learning experiences. In these unfamiliar surroundings, “Bougainvilleans were thrown up against their common ethnic and national identity and forced to acknowledge the cost of the conflict.”¹⁸

This break from the talks also brought a much needed levity to proceedings, but casual conversations between participants continued with important implications for negotiations later. Upon return to the Burnham military base, delegates were happy to find that members from both factions would now be invited to eat together in one room.

The second week of the Burnham I talks were focused on agreed actions the parties would take upon return to Bougainville. Initiatives included a communications strategy, steps to free PNGDF hostages, and plans for Burnham II talks.

While trust between leaders of opposing parties was strengthening under New Zealand’s auspices, the Burnham I talks also evolved with developments on the ground in Bougainville. In particular, the growth in the numbers of “mini-treaties” between combatants encouraged cooperation among leaders at Burnham. In turn, progress made in Burnham, encouraged women in Bougainville to cross BRA and the Resistance territories and form joint agendas for peace. The combined efforts of grassroots actors, including the chiefs, church leaders and women’s groups, working at reconciliation in Bougainville, and delegate participation in dialogue at Burnham created the conditions necessary for the BRA and the BRF to form a joint position. After two weeks of talks, the parties drafted and signed the Burnham Declaration of 18 July, 1997, in which the Bougainville factions agreed to work together toward peace with PNG.

Upon the return from Burnham, women delegates assisted in the further coordination of women’s groups to assist in the spread of information around Bougainville. Women crossed barriers separating the different forces and sensitized people to the Burnham discussions. In this way, women were instrumental in preparing the population for the peace agreement to come. Indeed, there is broad consensus that without the push for peace at the local level, the Burnham talks would have failed. The exercise of personal contacts between women, chiefs, church leaders and the combatant men, and the outcomes of village reconciliation activities and traditional peace keeping efforts were critical to making the Bougainville Peace Agreement a reality.

18 Tapi, 26

Burnham II

The next step in the process, known as Burnham II, took place between October 1 and October 10, 1997 and involved the PNG government. Similar methodological and planning approaches to Burnham I were employed. Again, large numbers of delegates – including significant numbers of young commanders – were invited to ensure wide stakeholder buy-in. Like Burnham I, the welcome ceremony involved a traditional Maori welcome. Informal discussions were immediately held between leaders of the delegation to agree on an agenda and working arrangements for the meetings to follow. This was followed by a taraut session which lasted two days. At the end of talks, representatives of the PNG government, BIG and BTG, as well as commanders of the BRF and BRA put their signatures to what was titled the Burnham Truce.

Lincoln Agreement and Beyond

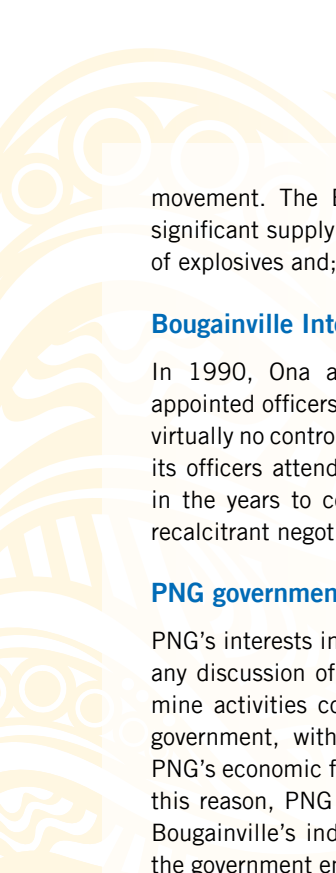
The next major meeting after the Burnham talks took place at Lincoln University in January of 1998. This location had important symbolic value, as it was notably lacking in military hardware, discipline and austerity. Here, formal negotiations took place between the PNG government and the Bougainville leadership, resulting in a formalized truce and establishing the Bougainville Reconciliation Government, a process for the disposal of arms and the withdrawal of PNGDF, and the granting of amnesties and pardons. The Lincoln talks called for the establishment of successor to the international monitoring group known as the Truce Monitoring Group (TMG), which thereafter evolved into the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG).

On 30 August 2001, a comprehensive Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in Arawa. The agreement provided for a weapons disposal plan, elections for the establishment of an autonomous government on Bougainville, and a non-binding referendum 10 to 15 years after the election of an Autonomous Bougainville Government on the issue of independence.

4. PARTICIPANTS

Bougainville Revolution Army (BRA)

The dispute over compensation policies gave rise to young and seemingly restless group of Panguna landowners. Led by Francis Ona, the New Panguna Landowners' Association was created in 1987 and evolved into an armed group known as the Bougainville Revolution Army (BRA). Attacks on the mine led to its closure and signaled the start of the armed conflict phase of the independence



movement. The BRA drew strength from its large numbers of supporters; significant supply of WWII munitions dug up and reactivated; skills in the use of explosives and; strong familiarity with the local terrain.

Bougainville Interim Government (BIG)

In 1990, Ona announced a Universal Declaration of Independence and appointed officers to the new Bougainville Interim Government (BIG). BIG had virtually no control over BRA and provided little in the way of public service. Yet, its officers attended many peace conferences, including the Burnham talks, in the years to come.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Ona himself became an increasingly recalcitrant negotiator overtime.

PNG government/PNG Defense Forces

PNG's interests in reopening the Panguna mine were significant and ruled out any discussion of Bougainville's independence. Compensation from Panguna mine activities constituted a significant proportion of revenues for the PNG government, with some analysts and government advisors suggesting that PNG's economic future hinged on the resumption of the mine's operations. For this reason, PNG opposed Bougainville's calls for independence fearing that Bougainville's independence would fuel similar aspirations elsewhere. Thus, the government employed a hardline response to the crisis to make its position understood. Over the course of the civil war, the PNGDF seemingly acted on their own orders throwing peace efforts between the PNG government and the BRA off track.

Bougainville Resistance Forces (BRF)

The sudden departure of the police and PNGDF left a law and order vacuum that was quickly filled by criminal elements and rogue BRA units. The BRA's targeting of groups that were perceived as sympathetic to PNG, including esteemed community elders, led to the formation of the Bougainville Resistance Forces (BRF). The BRF obtained munitions and support from the PNGDF who they welcomed back to BRF controlled areas in Bougainville in 1992. The BRF was eventually represented in peace talks by the Bougainville Transitional Government.

¹⁹ Reddy, 218

Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG)

In mid-1994, the Prime Minister of PNG, Sir Julius Chan made repeated attempts to resolve the Bougainville conflict by diplomatic means. One of these occasions was the 1994 Honiara Talks planning for the proposed 1995 Arawa Peace Talks. The Bougainville Delegation was headed by the BRA leader General Sam Kauona. These were ultimately unsuccessful, as BRA leaders were unwilling to engage at this stage for a number of significant reasons that must be noted in fairness to the record:

1. Sir Julius Chan was fully in control of the talks and he expected the BRA delegation to fall into his obviously pre-planned strategies,
2. During the signing of the “Status of Force Agreement” in Fiji, Sir Julius Chan tried to use General Sam Kauona as a ‘rubber stamp’ and, for this reason, Gen Sam Kauona refused to be part of the party to Fiji.
3. The Cease-fire Agreement that was signed in Honiara did not have any effective mechanisms (the BRA were required to stay in their jungle camps, the ‘no-go-zone’ which was a buffer between the 1995 Arawa Conference Venue and the PNGDF camp at Loloho), which was continuously breached by members of the PNGDF unit (in civilian clothes).
4. PNGDF lay in wait around the Arawa town perimeter to attack the BRA leaders who attempted to attend the talks in Arawa (in fact Ishmael Toroama narrowly escaped death when he was fired upon with automatic fire on attempting to attend).²⁰

For these reasons, Francis Ona, refused to attend the talks in Arawa. The BIG/BRA were advised by their intelligence network, that it was too dangerous to be present in Arawa. The Arawa 1995 peace talk were a failure even though everyone really wanted peace at this stage.

In April 1995, with Chan’s strong support, the Bougainville Transitional Government was established. The BRA refused to take part in the newly constituted government. When the BTG looked like it, too, would fail to produce national-level peace dividends, Prime Minister Chan decided to resolve the conflict using military force. On the local level, the BTG empowered chiefs, women, and church and youth leaders to lead local reconciliations.

These reconciliation efforts led to “peace zones,” or villages that committed themselves to non-violent behavior and peaceful relations with neighboring villages. The idea contemplated peace “rippling out” from local sources and slowly diminishing space for violent conflict.

20 Moses Havini, Interview. July 2012.



Australia

The Australian government played a significant role in the Bougainville civil war, siding decisively with the PNG government in the war's early phase. Australia's interests in a united PNG were strong. It did not wish to see the nascent country break apart into warring provinces. Further, the Bougainville Copper Mine (BCL) was a subsidiary of Conzinc Rio Tinto, a large and politically influential Australian company. The Australian government, under the advice of Foreign Minister Gareth Evans supplied PNG with significant military hardware and training to be used in Bougainville, going so far as to pass legislation authorizing the use of Australian mercenaries on PNG soil. Australian donated military hardware was implicated in atrocities committed by PNGDF against Bougainville civilians.'

These factors, coupled with a history of grievances against Australia did not endear the BRA to Australian offers to facilitate peace talks. Yet, Australia hosted significant peace efforts in Cairns in 1995 that while failing to stop the violence, served as a critical foundation to what would ultimately be the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Australia also reacted strongly against the introduction of mercenaries to the Bougainville conflict, a stand which would improve relations with the Bougainville people. Lastly, Australia involved itself deeply in the Bougainville Peace Agreement process, covering much of the costs, and facilitating processes where requested.

New Zealand

As noted earlier, New Zealand took up the role of honest broker, when the opportunity for a negotiated settlement seemed ripe. New Zealand's Foreign Minister, Don McKinnon played a key role by facilitating discussions among the various factions in Bougainville. When the parties explained to McKinnon that the needed sufficient time to resolve internal differences he listened. He sent former New Zealand High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea John Hayes to lobby for what became the Burnham talks of July 1997. New Zealand played a role in keeping other senior diplomats from the region informed and involved in keeping other leaders engaged in the peace process talks. New Zealand also worked to ensure that the design of the Burnham talks was consultative. Maori advisors to the Prime Minister assisted in incorporating Maori practices into the design of the talks.

Women's Groups

Though the Arawa Peace Conference in 1994, noted above, failed to secure a peace agreement, the Conference was successful in bringing large numbers of women's groups together to network and develop peace strategies. A handful at Burnham I became a significant number at Lincoln. They worked with local chiefs and church leaders to promote reconciliation between parties on the ground and pressured leaders committed to military solutions to consider alternatives. In this way they helped enable moderates to steadily take up more senior positions. In turn, these moderates were pivotal to the success of the Burnham talks and the negotiations that followed. The "informal" or "bottom-up" efforts of women's groups were key to the success of the formal talks attended by senior officials.

Women's groups working outside of Bougainville were also instrumental to the success of Bougainville. The Bougainville Women's Forum, held in Sydney in 1996, Australia developed a position paper that eventually influenced the design of what would become the Burnham Talks. Women's involvement at the talks themselves ensured engagement and momentum throughout. Most notably, the insistence from women delegates at Burnham I precluded either the BRA or BRF from lodging reservations to a joint position to be tabled before PNG delegates. All disputes between factions had to come to an end before further talks ensued.

5. CHALLENGES

Re-Building Trust

Over a decade of failed negotiations and broken promises had led to nearly terminal levels of distrust between the parties. As early as February 1989, at the very start of armed conflict, the then PNG Prime Minister attempted a cease-fire and re-negotiated compensation package for Bougainville. An agreement was reached with BRA on the issue, but PNG police arrested BRA's negotiation team as they left a celebration party, and the cease-fire came to an abrupt end. Such was the pattern of attempted negotiations thereafter, with other formal attempts at peace in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1995 dishonored as quickly as they were signed. The parties required a means to verify that the terms of this agreement would hold, especially where the agreement called on armed factions in Bougainville to dispose of weapons.

Security

After a peace agreement was signed between BRA and the PNG government in Cairns in 1995, BRA combatants returned to Bougainville. Enroute they were fired on by PNGDF. Ensuring security was a major challenge for any attempt at peace, especially where the PNGDF seemed to operate under its own orders.

Legitimacy

Convened by an international actor, whose interests and role in Bougainville lay on the fringes, it was not clear to many that the talks would be any more successful than previous attempts at peace. This was especially true after the failed negotiations at Cairns, Australia in 1995.

Recalcitrant leaders

Francis Ona was a charismatic resistance fighter of the BRA who served to mobilize his people towards the goal of independence. Unfortunately, he proved an unwilling or uninterested in making peace after early failures. Even as a large consensus was forming around the need for a peaceful conclusion of the conflict, Ona held out and refused to attend the Burnham talks. It was not clear that the talks would lead to a durable outcome without Ona.

Independence

After the Burnham talks, the Bougainville parties once at odds on the question of secession, found common ground in calling for independence from PNG. However, this was an untenable position for the national government as they feared that other parts of the country would be inspired to make similar demands. Further, the PNG government may have held out hope for a resumption in the Panguna mine's operations and with it, the revenues it once afforded the state.

Weapons Disposal

The PNG government eventually called on the BRA and BRF to move weapons to a secure storage space (what is referred to as "stage 2 disposal") before removing PNGDF from Bougainville. However, effectuating this part of the agreement would suddenly put Bougainville's armed groups at a very vulnerable position. This issue was a major source of friction between parties.

6. BREAKTHROUGHS

Re-building Trust

The trust deficit between parties was formidable but was addressed through several key approaches at Burnham I and II. Ultimately, it was the trust created at Burnham made the breakthroughs obtained at the Lincoln Talks possible. First, the Burnham process allowed a broad range of invitees sufficient time and space to get to know one another. Strict timelines on processes were not imposed on discussions; ample time was provided for relationship-building. Second, traditional reconciliation measures also played a significant role in breaking down walls of distrust and acrimony. The taraut exercise signified a means for which angry sentiments could be given voice in a constructive and patterned way, recognizable to all on both sides of the divide. Finally, participants were given significant control over the peace process, its design and implementation. Thus, there were fewer complaints about the rate of progress, less room to accuse regional powers of pre-determining the outcomes, and less pressure to come up with “the answer” to all the problems of Bougainville.

Security

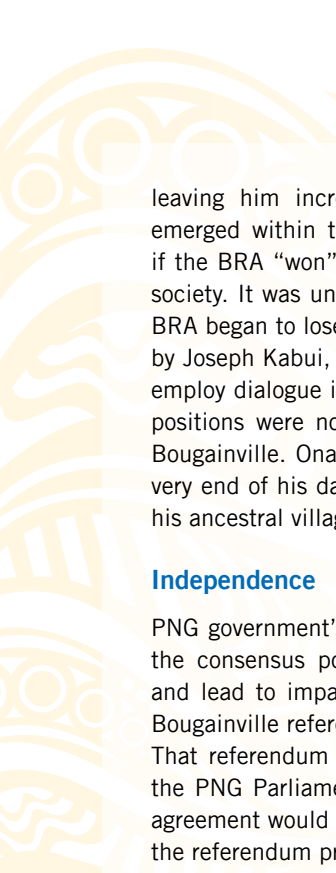
As noted earlier, the selection of Burnham Army Base enabled tight security measures and the military atmosphere of the camp helped to reduce the fear and mistrust. New Zealand Defense Force officers were present during some proceedings to ensure security.

Legitimacy

The New Zealand ambassador to PNG put the weight of his office into the effort to broker peace and was himself directly involved in organizing the talks. The New Zealand ambassador also spent a significant amount of time and financial resources to ensure the widest possible range of leaders attended. His success at ensuring different levels of representation proved critical to garnering public buy-in, infusing the process with enhanced legitimacy.

Recalcitrant Leaders

Since the movement towards peace was being increasingly compromised by the intransigence of the BRA leader, Francis Ona, the Burnham talks wisely involved the participation of dozens of young BRA commanders from all corners of Bougainville. These ground commanders became invested in the talks and its outcomes, and their support further undermined Ona’s hardened positions,



leaving him increasingly isolated. In fact, behind the scenes moderates emerged within the BRA, and increasingly voiced their concerns that even if the BRA “won” the war they would inherit a hardened and terribly divided society. It was under these conditions that Francis Ona and hardliners in the BRA began to lose their grip on the BRA rank and file. A moderate faction led by Joseph Kabui, now had the confidence to act independently of Ona, and employ dialogue in service of peace. By the end of the Burnham talks, Ona’s positions were now outside the mainstream of discussions of the future of Bougainville. Ona remained recalcitrant and grew ever more eccentric to the very end of his days, lingering in a self-proclaimed “no-go zone” surrounding his ancestral village until his death in 2005.

Independence

PNG government’s legitimate concerns over sovereignty were pitched against the consensus position of Bougainville’s factions calling for independence and led to impasse. The deadlock was broken when parties agreed that a Bougainville referendum on independence would be deferred for 10-15 years. That referendum would also be non-binding and subject to the approval of the PNG Parliament. To satisfy Bougainville’s concerns that this part of the agreement would simply be ignored overtime, the PNG government embedded the referendum provision in its constitution.

Weapons disposal

Lingering but significant deficits in trust dogged progress on provisions governing PNGDF withdrawal and Bougainville weapons disposal. In response, an architecture of interlinked and sequenced steps was developed that helped guarantee compliance. Thus, Bougainville’s obligation to dispose of weapons arose only after PNG’s Parliament made amendments to the constitution that incorporated key provisions of the Bougainville Agreement. To ensure that weapons disposal continued in earnest after the amendments were made, the agreement stipulated that only an independent verification of weapons disposal triggered the amendments coming into force. Any lack of compliance would delay UN authorization of new elections for the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

7. RESULTS AND IMPACTS

The primary objective of the Burnham I talks was to set the stage for a negotiated settlement between PNG and Bougainville's armed groups and thereby put an end to nearly ten years of civil war. Dialogue was a part of the process of getting to a stage where parties felt negotiation was possible. Too many botched attempts at peace settlements in the past led to a widely held sentiment that grievances needed to be aired first, that familiarity had to be cultivated, and that some initial steps towards reconciliation was in order, before negotiations could begin. Dialogue, in short was considered the best alternative to alleviate tensions and bridge understanding. In the overall context of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, Burnham I, was considered the foundation of a lasting peace.

The Burnham I talks led to the Burnham Declaration that committed Bougainville factions to a peaceful resolution to the conflict. This declaration gave momentum to talks involving the PNG government, known as Burnham II. Burnham II in turn, resulted in a truce between PNG and Bougainville's armed groups. Following the Burnham talks, the Lincoln talks called for the establishment of an international monitoring group known as the Truce Monitoring Group (TMG), and thereafter, the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG). These monitoring mechanisms assisted in developing a greater sense of security on the ground upon which parties could continue to build trust in one another.

The TMG and PMG were important follow-up elements to the Lincoln talks. Forming into small patrols and explaining the peace process to remote communities while listening to complaints and concerns, the TMG and PMG units acted as vectors of peace. The TMG and PMG also sustained momentum in women's leadership in peacebuilding.

On 30 August 2001, a comprehensive Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed. This Agreement involved a weapons disposal plan, and elections for the establishment of an autonomous government of Bougainville. Lastly, and most controversially, the Agreement provided for a referendum on Bougainville independence 10 to 15 years after the election of the autonomous government. The Autonomous Government of Bougainville was established in 2005 after elections deemed fair and transparent were held making Joseph Kabui President.

8. VALUES

The Burnham I talks involved significant attention to dialogic values such as inclusivity, joint ownership, learning, investment in long-term perspectives, and empathy. As mentioned, the talks involved a wide range of leaders at the local level, including women's groups, as well as senior leaders of BIG and the BTG. Participants were given great leeway in designing the process at Burnham I, enhancing levels of joint-ownership with New Zealand government officials. As articulated by the Burnham Declaration, a willingness to learn through listening produced a consensus for peaceful co-existence and reconciliation. Participants expressed their commitment to finding a long-term solution by not rushing the Burnham talks to a conclusion. Indeed, the entire process leading up to the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement required four years of committed work. Lastly, participants demonstrated the value they placed on empathy through holding the tarout ceremony. Here, expressions of poisonous, ill-feeling emptied participants of their anger and assisted in the process of reconciliation.

9. LESSONS LEARNED

Building trust first

The Burnham I and II talks were successful in ensuring a solid foundation of trust between combatants was in place before more difficult negotiations transpired. New Zealand offered delegates ample time to get to know one another. This approach also aligned more specifically with Melanesian conflict-



resolution practices, where emphasis is put on healing and rebuilding than on disciplined scheduling, and strict adherence to process design.²¹ The levels of trust cultivated at Burnham I enabled the BRA and the BRF to form a joint position, facilitating negotiations with the PNG government during Burnham II.

Ensuring security

Attacks on BRA officials following peace talks dissuaded the BRA leadership – in particular, Francis Ona – from attending peace conferences or sending high-level deputies. Thus, New Zealand security guarantees were critical to getting key leaders at the table and speaking to one another. Participants were able to focus more on the substantive issues where the hosts placed a premium on security.

High levels of inclusivity

The inclusion of stakeholders at all levels of society was critical to the success of the Burnham I Talks, laying a foundation for further success at Burnham II and the Lincoln Talks. Participants from outside BRA and BRF leadership circles – notably women’s groups, church leaders, village elders, and local BRA and BRF commanders – made significant contributions to the Burnham I Talks and provided necessary momentum and focus. The broad participation guaranteed the stability and implementation of agreements reached as the signatures from a wide array of actors, including local commanders, helped ensure buy-in on the ground.²²

Women’s participation

Women’s participation was key in building reconciliation between BRA and the BRF at Burnham I (13 of 75 delegates were women), setting the stage for successful talks with PNG thereafter. Women acted as important go-betweens, introducing former enemies to one another and managing sensitive talks. Their continuous pressure ensured that male leaders stayed focused on the peace process at hand and were not derailed by personal rivalries. Women reportedly had a calming influence on the talks, allowing the spirit of respect and non-aggression to prevail. On return from the Burnham talks women were instrumental in conducting awareness raising events that helped ensure public support and acceptance of its outcomes. They also brokered traditional reconciliation efforts that encouraged civilians and combatants to leave their care centers or bush camps and return to their lands of origin.

21 Boerge 13; Campbell 122.

22 Boerge 15.

