



Peace & Conflict  
Studies Institute  
Australia

# PANGUNA DIALOGUE PROJECT POLICY BRIEF

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## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Over the last decade and a half, peacebuilding on Bougainville has come a long way. After the devastations of the crisis years in the 1990s, Bougainville peacebuilding is widely acknowledged as a success story all over the world. However, peacebuilding is not finished yet. There are still quite a number of crisis-related issues which have not been addressed or solved. There are still reconciliations outstanding, weapons disposal is not complete, there is the issue of missing persons, and there is still violence in the communities, the roots of which can be traced back to the crisis years. Domestic violence, caused by crisis-related trauma, or sorcery-related violence are cases in point.

Under the leadership of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), Bougainvilleans are in the process of rebuilding their lives, reconstructing governance institutions, social services and the economy, and thus making peace sustainable. In this context, the Panguna mine problem looms large, particularly now that Rio Tinto is trying to walk away from the mine and mine legacy issues (environmental, social and cultural), denying any responsibility. As the ABG President Chief John Momis rightly pointed out in his speech in the Bougainville House of Representatives on 20 July 2016: “The key issue here is not the re-opening of Panguna, or any commercial considerations about investment in Panguna. No – the key issue is the future of peace”. Indeed: How this issue will be solved will be of utmost importance for the sustainability of the peace process.

Then there is the referendum issue. The referendum on the future political status of Bougainville has been scheduled for June 2019, with 15 June 2019 as a target date for the conduct of the referendum. It can be argued that, with the referendum coming up, Bougainville peacebuilding is now in its final and decisive stage. In the course of the year 2016, the ABG and the PNG government have taken important decisions regarding the referendum process and have taken important practical steps in the process, for example the establishment of joint institutions such as the Joint Bougainville Referendum Committee, the Joint Bougainville Referendum Communications Committee and, most importantly, the independent administrative agency for the conduct of the referendum. The ABG and the four Bougainville members in the PNG parliament work closely together on the referendum, and so do the PNG National Coordination Office for Bougainville Affairs (NCOBA) and the ABG Department for Referendum, Veterans Affairs and Peace (DRVP). Various Bougainville factions, including the Meekamui movement, have joined the referendum process. The Meekamui Government of Unity has committed itself to participating in a weapons disposal process. It is clear that Bougainville has to be united for the referendum. And it is clear that all the communities on Bougainville have to become referendum-ready. Finally, it must not be forgotten that referendums can cause conflict. Therefore everything has to be done to prevent referendum-related conflict, before, during and after the conduct of the referendum.

A lot has still to be done, not only to get Bougainville referendum-ready, but also to secure sustainable peace and good governance more generally. Peaceful, well-governed communities form the basis of sustainable peace and good governance at other levels, from constituencies through districts to the level of the autonomous region and the ABG. The Panguna Dialogue Project (PDP) was designed to support peacebuilding, governance capacity-building and conflict resolution at this crucial grassroots community level.

The idea behind PDP is to bring peacebuilding closer to the communities and the people on the ground, particularly in those remote regions around Panguna where the crisis had started and

where people still feel somewhat marginalised. This is why PDP's regional focus is on the Panguna mine area, including the three constituencies of Bolave, Ioro and Eivo-Torau. Here communities have special needs with regard to community-based peacebuilding, conflict resolution and governance capacity building.

The focus on the Panguna area furthermore allowed for the inclusion of the Panguna Meekamui into project activities. And in fact, the Meekamui have come on board and have comprehensively participated in PDP. This also led to further constructive engagement between Meekamui and the ABG, and this is very important in view of the upcoming referendum. Several Memoranda of Agreement and Implementation between the ABG and Meekamui were inspired by PDP activities.

PDP's overall goal is to contribute to peacebuilding and the strengthening of grassroots democratic governance in Bougainville. Its aim is the empowerment of community leaders at the grassroots level – chiefs, elders, church leaders, women and youth leaders. These leaders have valuable experience in local governance, conflict resolution and the management of community affairs. However, due to rapid social and political change on Bougainville today, they constantly have to deal with new problems. This requires adapting to new challenges and acquiring new knowledge and skills. PDP supports them in doing so through a series of community dialogues.

The community dialogues respond directly to the needs of the people in the communities, building on the key values, skills and experiences, on the strengths and wisdom of community members. They offer an opportunity for participants to learn from each other and, together with the PDP team facilitators, to develop ideas and actions to address community problems. Shared visions for constructive change and village-centred action plans are outcomes of this process.

The foundations for the community dialogues were laid at the start of PDP, with a large gathering of community leaders of the three constituencies of Bolave, Ioro and Eivo-Torau, including Meekamui representatives, in Siimalaka village in Bolave in August 2015. This meeting came up with a Memorandum of Commitment, the 'Panguna Stakeholders Bolave Commitment – Panguna Dialogue Project', which laid down the objectives, activities and management arrangements for the project, and which identified the main issues and challenges which were to be addressed by PDP. A project steering group was established and a team of Bougainville project facilitators was formed. The Steering Group included, among others, the three members of the ABG House of Representatives for the three constituencies of Bolave, Ioro and Eivo-Torau, the Honorables Dennis Lokonai, Michael Lapolela and Clarence Dency, as well as Commander Moses Pipiro as Meekamui representative. The Bougainville facilitator team comprises of twelve members, six men and six women, from the three constituencies and from Meekamui, with a leadership team made up of Dominica Rovokea from Eivo-Torau, Bonaventure Kenulei from Bolave, and Francis Nazia from Ioro.

Facilitated by the Bougainville PDP team, which was supported by three colleagues from PaCSIA (Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia), a series of community dialogues have been conducted over the last months. They brought positive changes in the communities, in particular improved local governance and conflict resolution. For example, a number of reconciliation processes have been initiated, and new leadership structures have been established in some communities. Often community dialogues led to the development of community action plans, and the local facilitators accompanied communities in the implementation of these action plans.

In a later stage of PDP, stories of strength and stories of change were collected to demonstrate the effects PDP had in the communities. A special storytelling event was held with the Meekamui leadership in Panguna. This event was attended by several members of the Meekamui Government of Unity, including the President Phillip Miriori, the Vice-President Phillip Takaung and the Commander of the Meekamui Defence Force, Moses Pipiro.

Communities decided that they wanted their stories to travel, and stories were shared among the different communities. Moreover, communities also agreed to share their stories with a wider Bougainville public. So some of the stories are published in the book *We made reconciliations happen: stories from the Panguna Dialogue Project* which presents the results of PDP. These stories include important lessons for grassroots peacebuilding and governance, which are of significance for all of Bougainville, particularly in view of the upcoming referendum.

PDP's official title is 'Building Capacity in Governance among Community Leaders in the Panguna Mine Area, Bougainville'. It is funded by Misereor e.V., the development agency of the Catholic Church in Germany. PDP is supported by the Catholic Diocese of Bougainville and the ABG Department for Referendum, Veterans Affairs and Peace. The ABG Vice-President Patrick Nisira and Bishop Bernard Unabali have shown ongoing personal interest in the progress of PDP.

The challenge ahead is to ensure the sustainability of PDP's positive effects and the continuation of PDP-related and PDP-inspired activities. Community leaders, steering group members and Bougainville facilitators who have participated in PDP have committed themselves to continue working beyond PDP, which will come to an end at the end of 2016. It is obvious that the overall goal of PDP and its aims cannot be achieved by one single project. Continuous engagement is needed. Hence it is great news that, flowing from PDP activities, the Bougainville facilitator team has formed its own NGO – Bougainville Indigenous Dialogue (BID) which will do similar work. And it is also great news that, building on the success of PDP and its dialogical approach, planning for the conduct of Referendum Dialogues, to be carried out during the referendum process 2017 to 2019, is well advanced (see the last section of this Policy Brief).

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION BASED ON LOCAL KASTOM AND LOCAL STRENGTHS

The foundation of the Panguna Dialogue Project's community engagement and peacebuilding work were two processes that we have named "community dialogues" and "storytelling sessions". These processes were designed during a dialogue between the local Bougainvillean facilitators and the PaCSIA team and have been trialed, refined and adapted over a period of eighteen months. This section provides further insights into the project methodology and these processes.

During the initial visit in August 2015 the PaCSIA team discussed the Bougainvillean understanding of conflict resolution and community engagement with various ABG representatives and community stakeholders. What became clear was that Bougainville previously had been the target of numerous training programs in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, both at leadership and community levels. Almost all Bougainvilleans we talked with had a clear understanding of problem-solving methods for conflict resolution, such as mediation and conflict analysis. Training had been conducted by various international NGOs, and local infrastructure, such as the Peace and Security District Committees, had been established. Despite this history there was disappointment with the sustainability of previous programs and the benefits of previous training courses. Communities were hungry for change, not for more training from outsiders.

This clear message from the project stakeholders led us to focus on practical intervention methods, instead of training workshops. The Bougainvillean facilitators and the PaCSIA team decided to facilitate constructive discussions and exchanges of stories that were shaped by the needs of the particular communities that we visited. The idea of the "community dialogues" was born.

For us the word dialogue means that a group of people come together to exchange views, stories and experiences and to build and affirm relationships. In dialogue, every view is welcome and no participant aims to have the final word or to dominate the others. People in dialogue often come up with new ideas and find creative solutions to problems, because they discuss a lot of different ideas and have different opinions. The role of a dialogue facilitator is to create a safe space in which everyone present feels empowered to contribute and to have their voices heard.

The way in which we developed this dialogue approach and in which we developed the facilitation process we call "action research and action learning". As facilitators we shared experiences, planned the dialogue meetings, facilitated them and then met again to reflect on what we had done and what we needed to change to improve our work. This created a cycle of action, learning and planning that helped us to continually improve our work. In Tok Pisin our action learning cycle included the following steps: "kamapim samting; lukluk bek; kisim skul na kamapim senis". Throughout the project we met a number of times with all members from the team, guided by the lead facilitators (first Dennis Kuiai and later Dominica Rovekea, Francis Nazia and Bonaventure Kenulai).

Action learning also recognises that there is not one root cause to the conflicts and problems in Bougainville and communities on the ground, but that there are many historical sources of conflict as well as current dynamics that have contributed to the situation over time. Bougainvilleans have made significant progress in dealing with these and in creating the conditions for sustainable peace. PDP draws on these successes and nurtures local strengths and kastom, for example through the establishment of a local group of facilitators who have founded their own NGO,

Bougainville Indigenous Dialogue (BID). It views Bougainvillean communities as being capable of resolving their own issues and as the true experts on what needs to change and what needs to be maintained. The local facilitators and the PaCSIA team acted as guides and catalysts for processes of engagement and dialogue. Communities were always encouraged to find ways to deal with problems that did not require outside intervention or resources in the first place, but that focused on kastom and existing relationships in communities.

This idea of dialogue also connected well with the kastom of the three constituencies PDP worked in. Dennis Kuiai told us about the Nagovis word “wasisi”, the “talk around the fire”, that they use in Bolave. In “wasisi” people from the village come together, share stories and knowledge and make important decisions. They sit around a fireplace and talk in a circle. Everyone can have input into the discussion. We think the community dialogues carry forward the tradition of “wasisi”. In loro people call it “mumusinaa”, the confidential talk about important issues. In the Torau language dialogue is called “atoato amini”, in Askopan it is called “basisi”, and in Boira “tomosi nedned”. In Uruto they also call it “mumusina”. We have gathered these different words for dialogue during our work with the communities of loro, Bolave and Eivo-Torau and we believe they show that the dialogical approach that we have described has strong roots in the communities of Bougainville.

PDP’s approach to dialogue emphasises storytelling more than problem-solving. We call this a narrative approach to conflict resolution. The stories and worldviews of participants shape the way in which they understand conflicts and challenges to development. As facilitators we draw out these stories and also stories of strengths and resilience. When participants can see both types of stories, the good ones and the bad ones, next to each other, they can come up with ideas on how to solve problems and conflicts based on the strengths of their communities. This is what happens in community dialogues.

Participants also told us how other outsiders collected stories and recorded interviews with Bougainvilleans, but they never gave anything back to the people who told these stories. This sparked the idea of a different process of story sharing and story collecting, our “storytelling sessions”. Based on a process called “collaborative narrative practice”, we decided to re-visit all communities in which dialogues were conducted. During these visits we asked the participants to share with us and each other stories of change and stories of strength. The stories of change were about changes (both good and bad) that occurred after the community dialogue. The stories of strength were about achievements, knowledge, skills or values that sustained the communities and helped them through hard times.

The PaCSIA team wrote these stories down in English, with the help of the local PDP team colleagues. We then printed them and read them back to the communities. After we had checked that the stories were correct, and participants had a chance to correct or add to them, we printed out a book of the stories which we handed to the local community. These stories are documents of the hard work, resilience and striving for peace of the people of the Panguna area. We felt honoured that they were shared with us, and even more honoured that all communities allowed us to take their stories and to share them with other communities. The storytelling sessions created a record of the actions taken after the community dialogues and allowed the communities to continue their constructive conversations after the community dialogues. The story books created for each community also became symbols of achievement and a call to action to continue the striving for peace and improved living conditions.



Storytelling sessions were also used as a process for monitoring and evaluation that was meaningful to the communities involved. The stories are available on the PaCSIA website and in a separate book (in Pidgin) that was provided to the communities in Ioro, Bolave and Eivo-Torau.

## ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER THE PANGUNA DIALOGUE PROJECT

PDP activities were carried out in 2015-2016 by a team local facilitators in collaboration with partners from PaCSIA. At the core of PDP is the empowerment of community leaders at the grassroots level - chiefs, elders, church leaders, women leaders and youth leaders.

From 12 August to 25 August 2015 PaCSIA directors Dr Volker Boege and Dr Serge Loode conducted a scoping and planning visit to Bougainville. During the visit a broad spectrum of stakeholders were met and informed about the project, and their endorsement and support was ensured. Intensive and productive discussions and planning meetings of the PaCSIA and Bougainville team members were held. A project Steering Group was established and held two meetings. This Steering Group comprises of: The Honourable Dennis Lokonai, Member for Bolave; The Honourable Clarence Dency, Member for Eivo-Torau; The Honourable Michael Lapolela, Member for Ioro; James Tanis, Secretary Department for Referendum, Veterans Affairs and Peace; Volker Boege, Director, Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia; General Moses Pipiro, Commander Meekamui Defence Force; Angelyn Kobuko, Youth Representative; Angela Kabarui, Women Representative; and (a representative of) Bishop Bernard Unabali.

A local Facilitator Group was also formed. Facilitators come from the areas of Bolave, Ioro and Eivo-Torau, with women and men equally represented in the group. On 21 August 2015 a one-day Planning Workshop for the project was conducted at Siimalaka Four Square Gospel Church Hall in the Bolave Constituency of Bana District. It brought together community leaders from the project area and was attended by more than 80 community leaders from the Council of Elders (CoE) areas in the project region – chairmen and members of CoEs, chiefs, church, women and youth leaders. Also in attendance was a Meekamui delegation under the leadership of Commander Moses Pipiro, as well as the Catholic Bishop Bernard Unabali, the three ABG House of Representatives members for Bolave, Ioro and Eivo-Torau, the ABG Member for Central Bougainville Women Hon. Marcelline Kokiai, and the Secretary of the ABG Department for Referendum, Veterans Affairs and Peace, James Tanis. During the workshop the community leaders identified those problems and challenges of their communities which they want to have addressed in the PDP dialogues. The Planning Workshop adopted a Memorandum of Commitment and Understanding regarding the future work of PDP. This 'Panguna Stakeholders Bolave Commitment' was signed by more than 20 representatives of the CoE areas present at the workshop, as well as by the three local members and MDF Commander Moses Pipiro, witnessed by James Tanis and Marcelline Kokiai. During the meeting, the participants also endorsed the members of the Steering Group and the local Facilitator Group.

From 30 September to 27 October 2015, a PaCSIA team consisting of Dr Volker Boege and Dr Serge Loode and Mrs Erica Rose Jeffrey travelled to Bougainville for the first round of community dialogues. Three community dialogues were conducted, in the CoE areas of Ioro 1, Bolave and Torau respectively. Ioro 1 was the first of the community dialogues and was held in a Meekamui Station in the Ioro 1 CoE area, in Orami village, followed by the Bolave Community Dialogue in Siimalaka village, and finally the Manetai Community Dialogue in Manetai Catholic Mission Station in the Torau CoE area.

Each community dialogue was attended by around 35 to 45 community leaders, including chiefs,

CoE members, women leaders, church leaders, representatives of youth and ex-combatants. More than 30 village assemblies were represented. The dialogues were facilitated by local Bougainville facilitators, with Dennis Kuiai as lead facilitator. The focus of the workshops was on problems and challenges related to peacebuilding, governance and development at the village level, on community strengths in addressing these challenges, and on community action planning. The strength-based approach of the workshops was highly welcomed as encouraging and empowering by participants. In total, 14 action plans were elaborated during the three community dialogues.

Before the community dialogues, the PDP team carried out a facilitator training from 2-5 October 2015 at Tunuru Catholic Mission Station, which was also used for the planning of the community dialogues. At the end of the trip a one-day PDP team meeting was held in order to reflect on the experiences of the community dialogues and to plan the next stages of the project. Furthermore, a meeting of the PDP Steering Group was held. A very important outcome during this time was that the local Bougainville team members decided to establish their own local NGO – ‘Bougainville Indigenous Dialogue’ (BID) – to conduct additional PDP-related activities.

In March 2016 the next three community dialogues were planned and implemented. They were conducted in the course of a four-week visit of the PaCSIA team to Bougainville from 22 February to 19 March 2016. The three dialogues took place in Pakia village (Ioro 2), in Lamane East (Bolave) and in Karato. They were each attended by around 35 to 45 community leaders, including chiefs, CoE members, women leaders, church leaders, representatives of youth and ex-combatants as well as Meekamu. The community dialogues were facilitated by local Bougainville facilitators.

Storytelling meetings to document stories of change and strength were held with four communities in March 2016 – the Meekamui Government of Unity (Panguna), Manetai, Bolave (Siimalaka village) and Ioro 1 (Okoni village). Each meeting was attended by 10-15 participants, mostly community leaders who had attended the previous Community Dialogues in October 2015. The focus of the storytelling was on the changes that had happened in the communities since then, and on strengths of the communities which could be built on in the implementation of action plans. This was an opportunity to show pride in the things that had been accomplished. The stories were written down, read out, verified and given back to the communities in a defining ceremony in the form of small booklets.

During this time a Steering Group meeting was held on 17 March 2016 in Pakia village, and a Facilitator Training workshop was conducted from 24-29th February 2016 at Tunuru Catholic Mission Station.

In July 2016, the PaCSIA team visited Bougainville again, from 15 July to 30 July. They were accompanied for a portion of the trip by Misereor e.V. representative Elisabeth Strohscheidt. During that trip there were three storytelling sessions in Pakia village (Ioro 2) and Sikunam-asi village (Bolave), and Karato. The storytelling sessions were attended by 15-20 people, mostly community leaders who had attended the Community Dialogues in March 2016.

Additionally, a facilitator training meeting and a Steering Group meeting were also held.

This latter meeting also included a project evaluation process with the Lead Facilitator team and the Steering Group members. The evaluation addressed the greatest achievements/successes of the Panguna Dialogue Project, greatest challenges/problems encountered and recommendations

for future work. This evaluation combined with input from the communities will be used to inform future work in Bougainville.

Due to the conscientious financial planning of the local facilitator teams, there was enough funding to conduct an additional community dialogue, returning to Ioro 1 in September 2016.

Throughout 2015-2016 in addition to the facilitation of community dialogues and storytelling meetings, the local facilitators have been engaged in various levels of follow-up with the local communities where the dialogues and storytelling sessions were held. As part of their follow-up, local facilitators assisted in traditional reconciliation processes, dialogue around changes in local governance and overall supporting communities to build on their own strengths.

During the course of PDP's work there were a number of additional meetings that occurred beyond the core PDP activities. These included meetings with: Bougainville Peace Building Program (BPBP), the Meekamu, Nasioi Peacebuilding Association (NPA), the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, and other community organisations.



## LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although PDP was a success, it also had its challenges. These challenges were mainly resulting from the difficult environment in which PDP was carried out. The project area is remote. Communities are difficult to access. Transport is an issue – getting to communities is costly and takes time. For community members it can be difficult to get to community dialogues; sometimes they have to walk over long distances to get to the venue, or they have to wait for transport longer than expected. For the PDP team members it can be difficult to come together for meetings at central locations (e.g. Arawa)– again, it can be costly and take time. So one crucial lesson is: to be flexible, to go with the flow. To be flexible in particular with regard to time. Allow enough time for people to come together. At the end of the day, all will work out fine. But most probably not according to a pre-planned time schedule.

**Take your time:** The time factor is also significant for the community dialogues themselves. People need time to share their stories. They need time to reflect on their experiences and to discuss ways ahead to address the issues in their communities – be it issues of leadership, of governance, of conflict and of reconciliation. It is not appropriate to rush things. People need the time to move forward at their own pace. Community dialogues were run over a period of three consecutive days and this seemed like a good pace.

**Provide safe space:** Closely linked to the issue of time is the issue of space. People need sufficient time to talk, as well as a safe space to talk. A major building block of PDP's success is the fact that PDP facilitators created this safe space. Everybody participating in a dialogue got the opportunity to talk, and to be listened to, nobody was excluded, and nobody was attacked, verbally or otherwise. People could feel safe in the community dialogue context. Community dialogues are all-inclusive. They include men and women, young and old, chiefs and elders, church leaders and ex-combatants. Of course, it is more difficult for some community members to participate – for example women, who have to look after their children or have to go to the garden or the market – than for others, and it is more difficult for some community members to make their voices heard – for example young people who feel insecure in the presence of chiefs and elders. The community dialogues addressed these issues, for example by providing time and space for special working groups for women or youths.

**Listen first, talk later:** A safe space is a space of listening. Often people who come to the communities from the outside – be it politicians or members of NGOs or representatives of international donor agencies – talk to the people, instead of keeping quiet and listening first. Listen first, talk later – this is basic advice for such outsiders. The people need the space and time to tell their stories. Then it will become clear that the people have wisdom, valuable experiences, skills and ideas that others can learn from. Then there are things outsiders can talk about – their own experience and own knowledge. People are very interested to learn about the outside world, to listen to stories outsiders have to tell. People had been isolated during the crisis for a long time, their movements had been restricted and news from the outside had been hard to come by. And even today many communities still feel isolated and cut off from the outside. So it is very important to bring messages in, not least about peacebuilding in other parts of the world, about national and international politics and so on. In light of the upcoming referendum it is particularly important to talk about experiences with referendum processes elsewhere, for example in South Sudan, East Timor or Scotland and Spain. Talking about these events elsewhere should be done in a way that

opens the door for exchange of experiences and views, that is in a dialogical way.

**Dialogue, do not teach:** Closely connected to the above is the advice: engage in dialogue, do not teach. Outsiders have a tendency to assume that they know better, that it is only they who have to teach something to the people, and the people have to learn. But in reality, it is also the other way round. And this is what dialogue is about – it is a two way street, teaching and learning, talking and listening goes in both directions, outside-in and inside-out. This is why PDP in an early stage abandoned the term ‘workshop’. It led to false expectations on the side of participants: they were used to a ‘workshop’ format where outsiders come in and ‘teach’ the locals, with the outsiders as the ‘trainers’, the ones ‘in the know’, and the locals as the passive recipients of outsiders’ knowledge and trainers’ exercises. But PDP activities are different: they provide the safe space for genuine two-way dialogue in which local participants can draw on their own strengths and knowledge, and a process of mutual learning emerges. Therefore the term ‘workshop’ was dropped, and terms for ‘dialogue’ from the local languages spoken in the Panguna area were used – for example ‘wasisi’ in Bolave, ‘mumusinaa’ in Ioro, ‘atoato amini’ in Torau.

**ABG – community dialogue:** This dialogical approach should also be a guiding principle for the interaction between the ABG and the communities, that is in the ‘vertical’ top-down or bottom-up dimension. Of course, the ABG has important things to say to the communities, but the same holds true also the other way round. People in the communities often complain that their political leaders do not come and listen to them, that they are too far away from the people on the ground, that people are left in the dark about important political developments. The ‘vertical’ connections definitely need improvement. Information from the communities has to flow to the political leaders, and political leaders have to constantly inform communities. This is particularly important in the light of the upcoming referendum. The information flow has to be improved. But not only that: communities also have to be engaged in dialogue about the referendum, they have to be given time and space to present their views and expectations, to make their voices heard. Often communities only need a little assistance from their political leaders (e.g. with regard to transport). By supporting communities with small things big things can be achieved.

**ABG – Meekamui dialogue:** Furthermore, the dialogue between the ABG and the Meekamui movement has to be maintained and intensified. PDP has already made an important contribution in this regard. But many people on the ground are still confused because of the uncertainties and frictions regarding leadership in Bougainville. They are confused by the claims and counter-claims of the various political factions. They want clarity, and they want unity. Ongoing dialogue, between the ABG and Meekamui, but also between other sections of leadership (e.g. between the Bougainville members in the PNG parliament and the ABG), is the only way to achieve this unity. There might be lessons in the PDP experience that can be of use in this regard.

**ABG – civil society dialogue:** Finally, dialogue is needed between the ABG and state institutions on the one hand and civil society on the other. The ABG and the churches and NGOs, women’s and youth groups, the associations of the ex-combatants and other community-based organisations have to come together and combine forces to address the challenges of governance, development and peace, in particular in relation to the referendum and the Rio Tinto issue. PDP has contributed to the rapprochement and reconciliation of churches in the project area. This can set a good example for other organisations as well.

**Dialogue – applicable to all issues of peace and governance:** The issues which have to be

addressed by such a comprehensive inclusive endeavour of state/ABG and civil society are very well known; they were issues that figured prominently in PDP activities. They are: reconciliations, which are still outstanding (crisis-related or contemporary), weapons disposal, missing persons, community governance and leadership, community-based development, land disputes, displaced persons and communities, crisis-related trauma, law and order issues such as home-brew, domestic violence and sorcery. PDP shows that dialogue is a way to deal with all these issues, even issues which seem particularly 'intractable', for example sorcery accusations.

**Maintain and expand pools of dialogue facilitators:** PDP has shown how important it is to have teams of local facilitators who can prepare, organise and conduct dialogue processes and who can accompany communities in the implementation of activities emerging from the dialogues. These teams are a key resource for the communities, they have to stay together and be enabled to work continuously. More dialogue teams for specific areas should be set up so that when disputes or problems arise, local dialogue teams with facilitation and mediation skills are available. In particular, teams are needed for the conduct of referendum dialogues. The maintenance and expansion of facilitator teams needs to be supported by the ABG and its respective departments, by national and Bougainville members of parliament, and by international NGOs and donors.

**Focus on strengths, not weaknesses:** The PDP experience very clearly demonstrates that all these issues should and can be addressed from a strength-based approach. Not to focus so much on what is missing, what the weaknesses, deficits and problems are, but to focus on what is there, what the strengths and problem-solving capacities are. Bougainville communities are strong and resilient. Strength and resilience is grounded in Bougainville culture and kastom and in the Christian faith. Culture and faith are the two pillars of the Bougainville peace process. The only thing PDP and other projects can do is to bring this kastom-based and faith-based strength and resilience to the fore, to contribute to making strength and resilience work in everyday community life. Closely connected to this is the following:

**Focus on relationships, not material goods:** People often complain about today's commercialisation and monetisation of reconciliations and say that this is against the spirit of true reconciliation Bougainville-style. People are not happy about the hand-out or 'cargo' mentality that is spreading all over Bougainville. But they also complain that there is no outside assistance in form of money and other material goods, that there is no tangible material development. PDP has shifted the focus. While money and outside development assistance can be important and much needed, it is even more important to build on, strengthen and widen relationships. Bougainville society is grounded in relationships; people are strong not so much as individuals, but as members of networks of relationships; relationships of mutual support can move mountains – they can build roads and schools. Ownership and self-help of communities, based on relationships, can be more important than money and externally driven development projects. And if need be, relationships can also be used to bring money and funding for development projects in. PDP has significantly contributed to strengthening relationships.

On the basis of the lessons learned and recommendations above, peace, good governance and development can be sustained and improved in the crucial historical phase which lies ahead for the Bougainville people.

## FROM THE PANGUNA DIALOGUE PROJECT TO THE BOUGAINVILLE REFERENDUM DIALOGUES

PDP has provided a new and innovative way for communities deeply affected by the Panguna mine and the crisis to gather and to engage in constructive dialogue. It has brought important changes and improvements to the communities of Ioro, Bolave and Eivo-Torau.

As stated by members of the PDP steering group, the community dialogues helped communities to resolve long-standing conflicts, some crisis-related, others involving sorcery cases. Dialogue is also the first step to development, because people learn to recognise their strengths and understand their weaknesses. This adds to social stability in Bougainville and builds community. In the past, peacebuilding efforts have often focused on the material side of peacebuilding like logistics, money for food or compensation. PDP is different, it has focused on relationships, communication and ownership of disputes and their reconciliation.

PDP has created a counter-movement to the commercialisation of reconciliations and has encouraged communities to progress kastom reconciliations with what they can afford without outside influence. The optimistic approach which builds on local strengths has provided ownership and agency to the communities and has emphasised the importance of relationships and the need to work together. It has shown people that they play a major role in deciding their own future.

Dialogue also carries spiritual strength. Talking about problems in dialogue brings out hidden issues, anger and deep-seated problems. It can prevent “silent killers”. The dialogues were rooted in local kastom and were conducted to a large extent in Tok Ples. The communities were further strengthened and reassured by the fact that the dialogue facilitators were members of their own communities, and that they could see how the facilitators developed their skills, confidence and capacity to create safe spaces for discussion.

PDP has empowered traditional leaders, such as chiefs, but also a new generation of younger leaders. This has helped village governance and conflict resolution. In a similar vein, the Panguna Meekamui have been fully integrated into PDP and have been involved in all dialogues. This is a very important achievement since the Panguna Meekamui have also strengthened their engagement with the ABG and have declared that Panguna will be weapons-free and referendum-ready soon.

A major concern that was brought up in nearly every community dialogue was the issue of the upcoming referendum to decide the future political status of Bougainville in June 2019. Many community dialogue participants expressed a lack of knowledge of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the purpose of the referendum and its consequences for their communities. In some communities there were also fears expressed of what might happen after the referendum. Bougainvilleans are acutely aware of the threats to peace and social order that referenda have created in other countries, such as South Sudan or East Timor. They do not want similar things to happen in Bougainville. They have expressed clearly that more discussion and dialogue is needed, between communities and the ABG, but also within communities themselves. During some of the community dialogues additional referendum awareness sessions were conducted by representatives of the ABG Department of Referendum, Veterans Affairs and Peace (DRVP), and these were highly appreciated and led to engaged discussion during the community dialogue.



Building on the PDP experience, we are planning to conduct Referendum Dialogues which will provide the space for community members to make their voices heard with regards to all aspects of the referendum process. This is why we will focus in the future on bringing community dialogues to all political constituencies of Bougainville to prepare the communities for the referendum. PaCSIA, the DRVP and our colleagues from Bougainville Indigenous Dialogue are currently working on a plan to conduct such dialogues all over Bougainville between 2017 and 2019. What is needed is involvement of all Bougainvillean constituencies. The Bougainville Referendum Dialogues will need more skilled and confident facilitators who are willing to travel to all the constituencies and to create the safe spaces to dialogue about the future for all Bougainvilleans.



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