



BOUGAINVILLE REFERENDUM DIALOGUES **FINAL REPORT**





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FOREWORD

I am proud to present to the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the people of Bougainville, the Government of Papua New Guinea, our Donor Partners and all the other stakeholders of the Bougainville Peace Process, the Bougainville Referendum Dialogue (BRD) Annual Report 2018.

This report is a product of the work of local Bougainvilleans. BRD Facilitators have engaged communities throughout Bougainville in dialogue about the referendum. This report shares the achievements and challenges encountered in delivering their work. I commend the hard work and dedication of these men and women, their tireless commitment and passion to engage in meaningful discussions and dialogue on the referendum process, and their carefulness to create opportunities for community members to express their own concerns, hopes and ideas about a more peaceful and prosperous future for Bougainville. I would like to extend my gratitude to Misereor e.V. for the funding support and to the wonderful hard-working team from PaCSIA in equipping the facilitators with the dialogue tools used by the BRD Facilitators. This could not have been possible without your support.

As partners of the Department of Peace Agreement Implementation (DPAI) I am proud to share with you all some of the successes this program has brought about. The facilitators not only helped to share stories about weapons disposals and reconciliations in respective constituencies, but the reports drafted by the BRD Facilitators also contributed to addressing the question to be put on the ballot paper, the criteria for the referendum eligibility, and the process to ensure that all 33 constituencies are referendum-ready.

Together with the reports from DPAI and the Constituency Referendum Committees the BRD reports helped form the ABG's position on the unresolved issues highlighted above and for this we are grateful for the partnership that we have established since 2017 in the referendum preparation phase. The BRD have gone into some areas where there was minimal or no government contact and we salute them for their tremendous efforts. As the government agency responsible for implementing the Bougainville Peace Agreement we are confident that while we may have limitations in reaching out to some remote regions of Bougainville we can rely on our partners from the BRD to help us. This has established a mechanism outside the formal system that creates an environment where ordinary Bougainvilleans can freely express their views on what their leaders and the ABG can do to improve their welfare and represent them through the formal system.

Finally, I would like to introduce the next project phase that the Bougainville Referendum Dialogues will evolve into, the Bougainville Transition Dialogues. This next project phase will commence in 2019. The aim is to assist Bougainvilleans to dialogue and contribute to activities that promote peace, unity, security and economic incentives during the conduct of the referendum and the post-referendum transition to ensure a free and fair referendum and a peaceful and sustainable future for all Bougainvilleans. Therefore, I want to conclude by appealing to all Bougainvilleans at all levels of society to participate and support the Bougainville Transition Dialogues so that we all can contribute to a brighter future that we all desire.

Amanda Masono

Director for Referendum, Department of Peace Agreement Implementation (DPAI)

INTRODUCTION

The Bougainville Referendum Dialogues have concluded their second and final project year and have delivered their intended project activities. This annual report is also the final report on the project and reflects on the achievements and challenges of the work. It is important to point out that this is mostly the work of local Bougainvilleans, the BRD Facilitators. They have tirelessly travelled through their constituencies to dialogue about the referendum with the population of Bougainville, and they have been successful.

It was the aim of the Bougainville Referendum Dialogues to engage communities all over Bougainville in meaningful exchange of information and discussions about all aspects of the referendum, the process towards the referendum and the implementation of referendum results. Dialogues did not only provide information about the legal and political processes and potential future impacts of the referendum but created opportunities for community members to express their own concerns, hopes and ideas about a more peaceful and prosperous future for Bougainville.

Originally the BRD was conceived by the Department of Peace Agreement Implementation (DPAI) of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and PaCSIA, which recruited the original group of BRD facilitators and constituency coordinators. In 2018 the group of local facilitators working for the project increased to over 100 people who conducted dialogues in all 33 constituencies. The following section of this report will provide statistics on the number of dialogues and the number of people reached. The numbers exceed the numbers for 2017 and the dialogues have now also reached constituencies that could not be engaged in 2017.

2018 saw progress on many issues related to the referendum, such as weapons disposal, reconciliations and declarations of referendum-readiness in a number of constituencies, but also some frustrations. In particular the slow progress of the establishment of referendum implementation agency, the Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) has frustrated many Bougainvilleans. While it was an important milestone that the commission has been established, and that the Chair, Bertie Ahern, has been appointed, the BRC has actually not started voter education or completed the update of the common roll because of a lack of funding. The Papua New Guinea Government still has not disbursed the promised funding for the referendum. Another ongoing issue is the lack of approved information and key messages from both governments. Apart from a relatively recent update video from the BRC no current official information is available on the preparations of the referendum. The last Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) saw the decision on the final referendum question (see next section) but the meaning of the term “greater autonomy” and its differentiation from independence are unclear to people in the constituencies. The BRD facilitator team has felt the lack of official information in 2018 as many questions from dialogue participants had to be taken on notice to be referred to the ABG. Despite such delays the BRD has achieved its objectives and has positively contributed to make Bougainville “referendum-ready.” Dialogue participants have acknowledged a significant increase in understanding the referendum process and their feedback has been passed on to the ABG, BRC and other stakeholders.

On the following pages we outline the work that was conducted in 2018 and also the major themes that have emerged from the final year of the BRD.

BRD WORK CONDUCTED IN 2018 AND IN TOTAL

In 2018 the BRD has conducted the second round of planned community dialogues about the referendum and BRD facilitators have managed to extend the activities to the constituencies that were not completed in 2017 and to involve even more people in the community dialogues about referendum.

Because of some savings from the budget in 2017 the teams were able to engage in a number of additional activities in 2018. In addition to the 33 official constituencies they have also held additional dialogues in the no-go zone in Konnou, assisted with the reconciliation of the Motunoi sub-clan in Siwai and facilitated dialogues in the Carterets. They have also conducted a special dialogue for people living in the Arawa urban township area.

CONSTITUENCY	NUMBER OF DIALOGUES	MALE PARTICIPANTS	FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Atolls (Carterets)	9	135	136	271
Baba	5	109	74	183
Baubake	7	231	206	437
Bolave	30	145	138	283
Eivo-Torau	8	328	245	573
Hagogohe	10	131	115	246
Haku	30	758	545	1303
Halia	10	225	229	454
Ioro	7	138	160	298
Kokoda	10	204	189	393
Kongara	21	288	333	637
Konnou	16	304	219	523
Kopii	10	125	64	189
Lato	10	171	211	382
Lule	8	273	225	498
Mahari	10	317	221	533
Makis	8	341	349	779
Motuna Huyono Tokunutui	10	89	122	211
North Nasioi	12	361	455	816
Peit	10	283	200	483
Ramu	10	100	119	219
Rau	6	119	90	209
Selau	4	159	132	291
South Nasioi	16	316	279	595
Suir	10	422	364	788
Taonita Teop	6	126	134	260
Taonita Tinputz	6	122	143	265
Terra	10	199	208	407
Teua	20	540	551	1091
Tonsu	17	140	176	316
Torokina	19	127	110	237
Tsitalato	7	169	145	314
Special Dialogue Konnou Koike	15	41	30	71
Special Dialogue Siwai Motunoi Subclan	10	28	28	56
Special Dialogue Arawa Township	8	236	341	577
Total	405	7800	7286	15188

In total the BRD has far exceeded the expectations of the project team, the local facilitators and our donor. Early on in the project we decided to shift the focus from constituency-level dialogues to ward level dialogues and to work with a significantly larger local facilitator team. At the end of the project the BRD has a total of 105 local facilitators who have worked with the project. They are divided into 24 separate teams that work through the constituencies. While there are still some constituencies that can only be covered to a small extent (in particular the Atolls and Nissan Island), facilitators have visited all 33 constituencies and have conducted referendum dialogues. At the end of the project we are proud to present the following total figures for 2017 and 2018 combined:

NUMBER OF DIALOGUES	MALE PARTICIPANTS	FEMALE PARTICIPANTS	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
707	15041	14336	29377

These figures suggest that the BRD has reached about 10% of the total population of Bougainville, an enormous effort for a small grassroots-peacebuilding project.

COMMUNITIES HAVE MADE THEIR VOICES HEARD

The BRD facilitators have recorded questions and feedback from the communities they have visited and have compiled brief and anonymous reports containing the questions and comments raised by dialogue participants. PaCSIA has collected and analysed these reports and has created summary reports with the recurring questions and feedback. The analysis of the data gathered by local facilitators shows some clear trends:

The process of facilitated community dialogue about the referendum and the political future of Bougainville is one of the most appropriate ways to present official information and to create a better understanding of the referendum process and the options available for Bougainvilleans. The facilitators have asked participants for feedback on the dialogue process and the information presented through the information videos provided by the DPAI. Participants have overwhelmingly appreciated this format, have asked for more dialogues and more frequent updates. They have also voiced that they feel much better informed after participating in referendum dialogues and a large number of communities have told the BRD teams that they feel “referendum-ready” now. We do acknowledge that for some participants the frequency of referendum dialogues was not enough, and they requested more frequent updates than the two rounds of dialogue over two consecutive years. In particular people in very remote communities (for example in Torokina or Teua), who might only have been visited once, felt that there was still not enough information provided by the BRD. Often BRD facilitators were the only source of information about the referendum as other awareness campaigns had not been able to reach them yet.

Communities also commented on the ability to provide feedback, ask questions and request more information. They thought this was a much more appropriate way to engage with referendum-related information than just being provided with information fact-sheets or awareness speeches. They often made ample use of the ability to provide feedback and the BRD teams have compiled hundreds of pages of reports. These reports and the summaries regularly provided by PaCSIA were shared with a variety of government and non-government organisations with permission of the DPAI. The information was shared with the DPAI and Department of District and Community Government, as well as with the ABG Media Bureau. It was also shared with the United Nations Office in Buka and the UNDP Programme PNG. Furthermore it was shared with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFAT). In PNG the information was provided to the National Research Institute (NRI) and through the UN to other parts of the National Government. Most importantly, after it had been established, the information was provided to the Bougainville Referendum Commission, as the implementation agency of the referendum. It was also shared with other NGOs, for example with Conciliation Resources. The ABG Media Bureau used the information to consecutively update the key messages and other awareness materials developed to assist with referendum preparations, and these materials were submitted to the JSB for review. The feedback and questions from Bougainvilleans in the villages have also informed the negotiation positions of the ABG in the JSB meetings. ABG negotiators have carefully studied responses from BRD dialogue participants with regards to the question for the ballot paper, voting age, referendum process and other issues.

It is acknowledged that not all suggestions from the BRD participants have been implemented or could be considered. Ultimately the agreement on the question for the ballot paper rested with the two governments and required careful consideration and negotiation. The final question published by the JSB is:

“Do you agree for Bougainville to have:

- (1) greater autonomy, or*
- (2) independence?”*

This is not the question that most Bougainvilleans who participated in the dialogues asked for. They wanted an “independence - yes or no” question. Even though the feedback from communities was not accepted it has significantly assisted the negotiation process. Moreover, after the referendum question was published, communities have now asked both governments to clarify the meaning of “greater autonomy” and the difference to independence. The BRD helps the communities to make their voices heard and to hold both governments to account.

BRD HAS PROVIDED BASIC INFORMATION ON REFERENDUM PROCESS

The BRD has helped to better inform Bougainvilleans about the referendum process. Not only do they say so themselves, the feedback reports from the BRD teams also indicate that basic questions (such as “what is a referendum”?) are voiced less frequently. In our previous annual report at the end of 2017 we listed several questions regarding technical and process issues regarding the referendum. They included feedback on the ballot paper question, suggested voting age, opportunity for non-resident Bougainvilleans to vote and updates of the common roll for the referendum. In 2018 we noted that questions and feedback from communities focused more on the future transition after the referendum. Many Bougainvilleans have shared their questions, concerns and suggestions about the future after referendum and have asked questions about the upcoming negotiations between the two governments and the ratification process after the referendum results are declared. Many Bougainvilleans have voiced support for a multi-year transition phase, so that Bougainville can develop a stronger revenue base and explore how to attract foreign investment and speed up post-conflict recovery and development. There are still many questions remaining about the ongoing process of weapons disposal, but we also note that many communities have declared that they are weapons-free or that the weapons disposal progress is continuing well.

REFERENDUM DIALOGUES HAVE SUPPORTED RECONCILIATIONS AND WEAPONS DISPOSAL

The referendum dialogues have also supported the ongoing reconciliation and weapons disposal process in Bougainville. Many BRD facilitators also serve as members of community government, on District Peace and Security Committees and as kastom mediators. In these functions they have supported the reconciliations that have taken place in Bougainville at family, village, ward and district level. Moreover, referendum dialogues have directly assisted reconciliation of a sub-clan in Siwai and the recent public reconciliation process in Haku. BRD facilitators have proudly informed us how they and their colleagues were able to support these important events.

Throughout 2018 the BRD teams have also developed important relationships with people in the two no-go zones in Konnou and Siwai. They have contacted the leaders of Meekamui factions there and have respectfully and in a kastom way asked for permission to explain the project. They have then reported back to the DPAI and have supported the ongoing process of unification of the factions under the leadership of the DPAI.

THEMES AND TRENDS EMERGING FROM COMMUNITY FEEDBACK IN 2018

Instead of listing the questions and suggestions from BRD participants here we want to point out a number of trends that we have noticed towards the end of the project.

1. In 2018 we were able to expand the referendum dialogues to previously not covered areas in Teua, Torokina, Atolls and Taonita Tinputz. As expected, communities who were not included in the dialogues previously have a deficit in information and ask very general questions about what the meaning of the word “referendum” is or how the voting works. In the areas that were covered previously there is a clear shift in the questions asked starting to focus more on the implementation of referendum results and the future transition after referendum.
2. The referendum question as agreed by the last JSB meeting has caused a lot of confusion and questions among Bougainvilleans. They want to know the meaning of greater autonomy and the difference to independence. Additionally there are a lot of comments on the design of the mock ballot paper. Many people find the use of two languages (English and Tok Pisin) confusing and argue for only one language on the ballot paper. Participants have also commented that the tick boxes are too close together on the ballot paper and need to be separated more clearly. This is feedback that we have seen from a number of dialogues in different constituencies.
3. We have also noted an increasing fear in communities that the outcome of the referendum could not be as clear as most people want (many dialogue participants seem to lean towards independence). Because of this, participants are asking or requesting that non-Bougainvilleans residing in Bougainville should not vote, that their votes should be separated from the other ballot papers or even that non-Bougainvilleans should leave the ARoB before the voting procedure starts. There were quite a few comments along those lines. On the other hand, participants clearly want an international observer force, and some are even asking for security to be provided by the international community.
4. There are still many questions about weapons disposal, but overall it seems that this is progressing very well at community level. Quite a few participants are proposing a buy-back scheme for weapons and also agree with the registration of remaining weapons.
5. Some people have asked if the government will change in case that the outcome of the referendum is an overwhelming vote for independence. There are also questions about what role the different Meekamui factions will play and if Bougainville is going to get its own currency. Finally there are questions about how the ABG will keep law and order and calls to strengthen the Bougainville Police Service which is seen as not very efficient. There are also some fears that there could be another war or armed conflict after the referendum.
6. Some dialogue participants are expressing frustration with the National Government of Papua New Guinea for not providing the funds necessary to conduct the referendum. There are also many questions whether a ratification in the National Parliament is necessary if the result is over 90% for independence. The Bougainville Peace Agreement and the Preamble to the referendum question decided by the JSB are clear on this matter: The outcome of the referendum on the future political status of Bougainville will be discussed by both Governments (the GoPNG and ABG), and will be presented to the National Parliament for final decision making in accordance with the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the National Constitution.

7. On the other hand there are still doubts regarding the capacity of the ABG to deliver the services that the population is expecting. There are also fears that Bougainvilleans could not attend school or university in PNG any longer after the referendum.
8. Many questions and comments relate to fiscal self-reliance of Bougainville before and after the referendum. Some people express doubt that the ABG will be able to raise sufficient revenue. Others state that independence should come first and then the revenue question should be tackled. More and more Bougainvilleans are voicing that it is important to pay tax and that the government should improve their tax collection system. There are also still doubts regarding the capacity of the ABG to administer the budget correctly and believes that corruption is present within the current government. There is also concern that Bougainville's leaders are divided and are not speaking with the same voice.
9. People in the villages have also started to ask whether a referendum could be repeated or if there was a chance to have another referendum at some time in the future. They are also asking what happens if the two governments cannot agree on a solution after the referendum results are declared.
10. Like in 2017 many people are asking about the post-referendum transition period. They want to know how long it will be and what priorities the ABG will have with regards to draw-down of powers.

FROM REFERENDUM DIALOGUES TO TRANSITION DIALOGUES

The BRD has been very successful in collecting the voices of people in Bougainville and in providing them with information about the upcoming referendum. The questions that people voice have shifted from general questions about what a referendum is and how it is conducted to the question, about what kind of options they can choose from for their future. There are many comments about the upcoming transition phase (whether this is to greater autonomy or to independence) and dialogue participants have clearly voiced the need for ongoing discussion, engagement and dialogue. We have conducted a participatory evaluation of the project with our local Bougainvillean facilitators and have discussed the next step in the process. The Bougainville Referendum Dialogues will evolve into the next project phase, the Bougainville Transition Dialogues, which aim to assist Bougainvilleans at all levels of society to participate and contribute to a transition to a more peaceful, just and developed Bougainville.

We have secured funding from Misereor e.V. and from the United Nations Development Programme PNG to respond to the call for continuing dialogue and to help Bougainvilleans develop visions and plans for a peaceful future. Because of this we have decided to rename the project into Bougainville Transition Dialogues to show that the project lives on beyond the actual referendum vote and to show that Bougainvilleans have chosen dialogue as their tool for ongoing political engagement and the development of their society. The Bougainville Transition Dialogues (BTD) will continue using the same method of facilitated community dialogue in the wards and villages of Bougainville. We have funding to conduct one round of dialogue in each year of 2019 and 2020. These dialogues will ask Bougainvilleans about their questions, concerns, hopes and visions for the post-referendum future, help to distribute information from the Bougainville Referendum Commission and the two governments with regards to the pre- and post-referendum period and bring voices from the village back to the governments and administration. We have commitment not only from the Department of Peace Agreement Implementation, but also from the Department of District and Community Government and the Department of Community Development to work with the BTD. We will also work with the Bougainville Churches, represented through the Catholic Diocese of Bougainville and the United Church of Bougainville as full project partners. This shows that Church, Government and Civil Society are working together to support Bougainvilleans through these uncertain times.

The BTD will showcase the voices of Bougainvilleans even more strongly through the use of short videos that the facilitators will develop with dialogue participants in the villages. These will show that people all over Bougainville are working for peace on an everyday basis and will allow Bougainvilleans from all regions to share stories of peacebuilding and reconciliation. We hope that this will further increase the confidence of Bougainvilleans to develop peaceful and sustainable solutions for a unified future.





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