

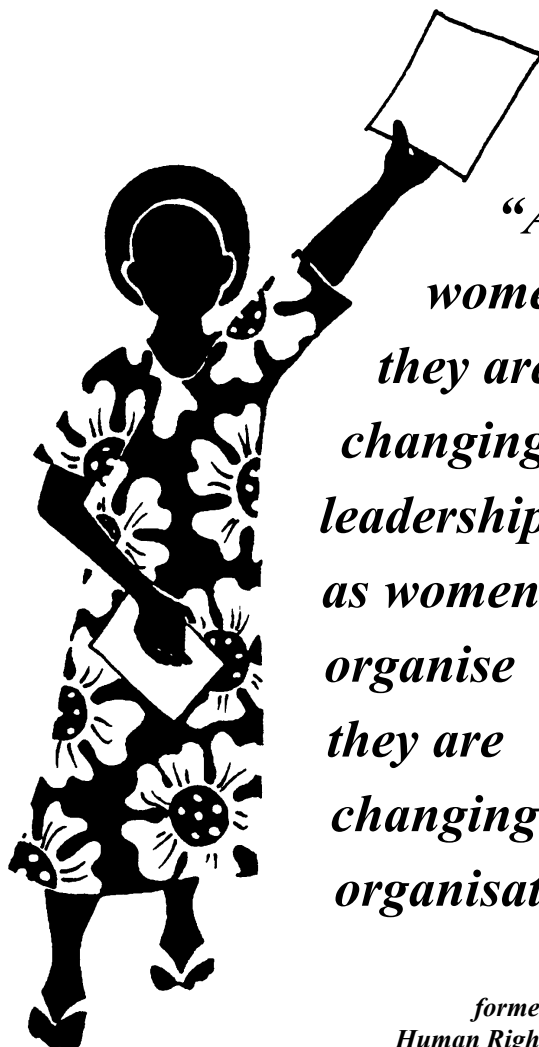
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International Fellowship of Reconciliation
Internationaler Versöhnungsbund
Mouvement International de la Réconciliation
Movimento Internacional de la Reconciliación
Movimento Internazionale della Reconciliazione

**Women
Peacemakers
Program**

“On Our Terms”: A Pacific Consultation on Nonviolence for Women Peacemakers



*“As
women lead
they are
changing
leadership;
as women
organise
they are
changing
organisations.”*

*Mary Robinson,
former United Nations
Human Rights Commissioner*

**24 January — 1 February 2004
Maubara, Timor-Leste**

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Cover illustration: Laurel Douglas, IWTC; all photos: S. Anderson
Proofreading: Amy Shifflette & Joyce Mumford; design & layout: Françoise Pottier

“On Our Terms”: A Pacific Consultation on Nonviolence for Women Peacemakers

INTRODUCTION

“We have achieved our independence, but we have not achieved our liberation.” A woman of Timor-Leste on the need for women’s empowerment.

The Pacific Consultation for Women Peacemakers, held 24 January to 1 February 2004 in Maubara, Timor-Leste, was the fifth in a series of six regional consultations organized by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Women Peacemaker Program (WPP). By providing a space where women can exchange their experiences, hopes and strategies around peacebuilding, the WPP hopes to empower women peacemakers.

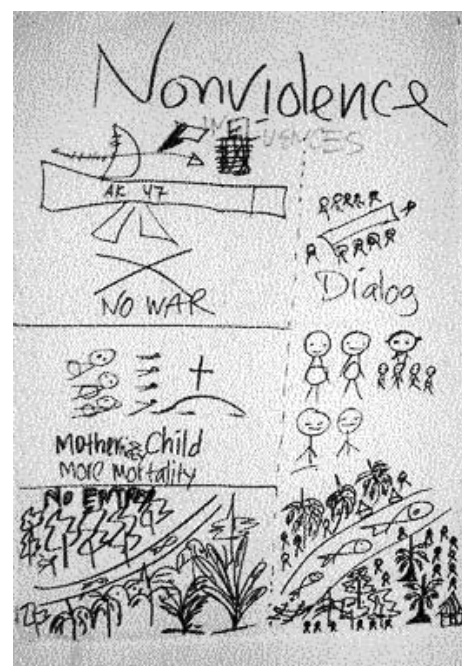
The specific goals of the Pacific consultation, as defined by a preparatory group of women active in the region, were to:

- help build peacemaking skills for all participants
- exchange strategies, experiences and information
- deepen the participants’ knowledge of and skills in active nonviolence
- solidarity and support among Pacific women peacemakers.

The consultation brought together 20 women from Bougainville, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. The Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) of Timor-Leste and the WPP were co-organizers of the consultation. The facilitation team, whose skills contributed so much to the consultation, included Koila Costello-Olsson of the Gender and Peace Program of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (Fiji); and Filomena Barros dos Reis and Jill Sternberg,

co-directors of the Peace and Democracy Foundation (Timor-Leste). It was regrettably noted that Sr. Lorraine Garasu, CSN, of the Bougainville Inter-Church Women’s Forum, was unable to join the co-facilitation team due to ill health.

The consultation began on 24 January with a warm welcome by PDF co-director Filomena Barros dos Reis, or mana Mena (‘mana’ is Tetun for ‘sister’ and a term of respect used by activists in Timor Leste). We are here, she explained, to begin to join hands together “to build peace. Not only to talk about it but how to realize it.” She greeted the participants on behalf of Timor Leste’s Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta. The Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) was founded by Ramos-Horta from his Nobel Peace Prize award; PDF’s goal is to make Timor Leste an ‘island of peace’.



DAY 1

PEACE MEANS NO POVERTY: OPENING REMARKS

The long-time activist Ms. Maria do Céu Federer gave an introduction to the current situation in Timor Leste. “Peace is not only physical,” she said, “it also means democracy, stability and no poverty....we in Timor Leste cannot claim we are working for peace and democracy if we cannot get our women out of poverty and offer them something better. Over 50 percent of our population are women, and 60 percent are younger than 20. There will be huge problems if they reach 25 years of age with no jobs, no hope for the future. This young population has the advantages of youth, energy, imagination, and hope. [Yet] our employment sector can’t absorb all the university graduates, we are so small. We have to come up with really good policies to look for the needs and ambitions of the next 10 to 20 years.

“We must make a difference for these young people. If the men are frustrated in their dreams, the women will suffer. There is profound domestic violence. Men have not been able to adapt. People were employed and suddenly found there were no jobs. They don’t know why. Independence was supposed to be good for everybody. Only 10 to 15 percent of our population can afford a house, a job, a business. What about the 80 percent who can’t? They are the ones who made possible your visit to a free Timor Leste. 600,000 of our population live under poverty. It is not the Indonesians, not the Portuguese—we have only ourselves to blame. The militias that were here were Timorese; they didn’t originate in Australia or Indonesia. If we don’t deal with poverty we will have militias again. We don’t have a stable peace. An apparent peace, yes, but underneath is a volcano preparing to erupt if we remain in the course we are taking.

“As a citizen of this country I can only say that Timorese people should not be proud of themselves until we take the 60 percent of the population out of poverty. Only then will there be peace. The Grameen Bank [editor’s note: the Grameen Bank is a Bangladeshi nongovernmental organization that provides no- or low-interest credit to the poor] took

25 years to get 43 percent of their population out of poverty. Today the world is ruled by trade and market forces. Our economy is not growing, but on the other hand, we don’t have inflation. Women, don’t wait for the politicians! We won’t have peace until we end poverty.”

Ms. do Céu Federer was then presented with a hand-woven *tais* (a traditional long scarf). Mana Mena introduced the Peace and Democracy Foundation (Fundasaun Dame no Democracia—PDF). “PDF is just an infant. We want to build a peace center to try to make the whole island a culture of peace, to bring enemies together. If we can achieve this we will be an example to the whole world. Our plan is to integrate small zones of peace, and to integrate development with peace. Our earlier focus was on winning our independence. We now must build our skills after 24 years of war, terror and suffering.”

TO WIN ANOTHER STRUGGLE

“We must win another struggle. We have developed a model of community mediation to help the justice system. We researched traditional methods of mediation and will present the results to the government. The community model we recommend gives power not just to the big men, the traditional chiefs, but it includes women and youth. We will conduct mediation training for women and youth so they can participate. We also conduct conflict resolution training in schools for teachers, and institute an annual prize for peace activists,” she said.

Mana Shelley then introduced the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). IFOR began in 1919, immediately after World War I. The founders were Christian pacifists who had opposed the war by refusing to fight, by visiting prisoners of war and by constantly advocating nonviolent solutions to the conflict. After the war they organized teams to go and help with reconstruction in the “enemy” countries. The founders felt that as war was now international, so too peace must become international.

IFOR now has about 60 branches, groups and affiliates around the world, and is a multi-faith movement for active nonviolence. IFOR has a small

international secretariat in the Netherlands, which coordinates communication among the branches.

The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) is a project of IFOR which began in 1997. It has three main parts: education and training; networking and capacity building (including documenting what women peacemakers are doing); and engendering the peace movement, in addition to a small pilot project organizing media workshops for women peacemakers. The WPP helps support nonviolence training for women by providing seed money, training materials and linking groups with a trainer in the region. The WPP has supported nonviolence trainings in Aceh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and for refugee and migrant women in the Netherlands, among other places. The WPP has also organized a series of regional consultations for women in conflict situations. These consultations have taken place for Europe (Hungary, 1998), Asia (India, 1999), Africa (Zimbabwe, 2000) and Latin America (Ecuador, 2003). An intercontinental consultation (the Netherlands, 2000) brought selection participants together from the previous consultations. The Pacific consultation in Timor Leste will be followed by a Middle East consultation (Cyprus, 2004), and another intercontinental consultation.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

The day continued with exercises so participants could get acquainted with each other, such as participants asking each other questions like, “What event made you happy or sad?” or “What person would you most like to meet?” One important issue that came up during the exercise was that of language. A multitude of languages are spoken in the region. Combined with the vast distances (the Pacific covers 69 million square miles, or one-third of the earth’s total surface) and differences in infrastructure, the challenges for communication and organizing are many. One participant commented: “Thank you so much for the good opportunity to learn. I’m very happy but it is difficult to understand English. I cannot speak out from my heart. But this motivates me to learn English!”

“TO LEARN MORE”: EXPECTATIONS

After a delicious lunch, the first of many provided by the nuns of the center, the participants gathered to discuss expectations. Three slips of different colored paper were handed out to each participant, for her to write her response to the following questions:

- what do you expect from this consultation?
- what do you want to contribute to this consultation?
- what do you want to achieve with this consultation and how can we do this?

‘To learn more about nonviolence and conflict resolution skills’, ‘To learn about other’s experiences in peacebuilding’, and ‘To learn more about how to build peace’ were the most common expectations. Learning about the experiences of the women of Timor Leste was especially voiced. The contributions offered included networking, sharing skills about negotiations between traditional chiefs and other leaders during conflict, and listening; while some hoped to begin a forum on peace and democracy; to establish a peace network and more nonviolence training; to develop ways to get more women involved in development; and to deepen understanding about reconciliation. “I want a clearer view of what peace and nonviolence means to us as women and less co-optation to men’s agendas,” said one participant. “I want to share the ideas and experiences of young women for independence,” said another. The exercise highlighted a strongly identified need to share peacemaking ideas, experiences and strategies.

Some ground rules were then discussed, such as being on time; respect for different language usages, and support for women who were uncomfortable using English; and equality of the participants, no matter what their age. There was a discussion on keeping the space women-only. Women need space where they can share and talk freely, especially when issues of sexual violence come up, argued some participants. Another responded, “Where is our gender balance? We want to promote the participation of men in our work. We need to get through the malestream mentality. If we are to make a difference we should include men because they are the ones making war and women make peace.”

The issue became more specific when the example of a personal visit to some participants by male Fijian United Nations (UN) peacekeepers was given. Some Fijian participants explained that they were proud of their UN peacekeepers and felt safer when they were around. Other participants responded that many Timorese women had had traumatic experiences with men in uniforms and did not feel safe around armed men in military uniforms. Jill gave some background about what had happened around Maubara in 1999.

“Liquiça (a nearby town) had a strong history of militia. The governor of the district was the head of the militia, which were funded and armed by the Indonesian occupiers (who also provided drugs for the militia). This is the very western province, so the Indonesian military also passed through here when they were leaving. The militia was very strong, threatening and dangerous. They burnt all the houses. People fled to the church in Liquiça, which the militia burned down with all the people inside.

“Today Timor Leste is one of the most peaceful places you can be [for visitors]. Yet domestic violence is the highest reported crime. There are still many people who are suffering from the violence of soldiers now,” she concluded.

Koila, continuing with the ground rules, said, “We will be sharing very painful things. We need to respect peoples own way of dealing with painful experiences. Someone may get up and walk out. We may need time for ‘time out’.”

“OUR ROLE IS IN THE WORLD”: SUMMARY

A summary of the first day was given by Vanessa from Fiji: “we spent the day getting to know each other and linking with our sisters. High on the list of expectations was the wish to share experiences, to learn from Timorese women and to find out more about peace. There were good opening remarks. Peace is not just the physical absence of conflict. The main threat to peace is poverty, which can be linked to women’s position and unemployment. The inequality between men and women and equal access to resources are also important to peace. For women, gender justice is essential to peace.

In terms of peace and women’s experiences, we need to think not only in terms of our region. September 11 and the situation in Iraq mean our role is not just in the region, but in the world. What do we need in the world to make peace on our terms? What are the threats to peace?

Different ways to maintain solidarity and networking also came across strongly. How do we achieve these? Some suggestions are to organize future regional nonviolence trainings, fundraising and a peace network. Our own political leaders are often the causes of the lack of peace in our countries, something we do not often acknowledge. Most of these leaders are male. We often struggle to get women into positions of power but they can’t make a difference yet.”

Working in pairs and small groups helped facilitate the sharing of experiences, as here between a Solomon Island and a Timor Leste participant.



DAY 2

NONVIOLENCE ON PACIFIC WOMEN'S TERMS

The day was opened with a song and prayer. Jill passed around several cards for participants to sign, in order to share their greetings with Sr. Lorraine, and with some participants who could not be at the consultation, including a Palestinian woman who was involved in organizing the upcoming WPP Middle East consultation. There was then a round, with each participant saying the word for peace in her language. "Violence has impacted on our lives, but so has nonviolence," explained a co-facilitator. Participants were then asked to draw or write (in 20 minutes) the different influences nonviolence has had in her life. "Focus on the nonviolence in your life, on how nonviolence has changed us." These were then shared with the larger group.

Many women noted how peace in their own family strengthened them as peacemakers. "Nonviolence to me means freedom of choice, speech, movement. We are a happy family, who respect each other, who play together," said a Fijian participant. "The most important nonviolent influence in my life is my husband and two children," said a Solomon Islander.

"I learn from my family," said a participant from Timor Leste. "We must create nonviolence in the family. The parents teach the children faith, even in those without religion. The peace we have inside is very deep. I drew a lotus as a symbol of nonviolence. Water is important for everyone in the world, everyone needs water. For me water is grace. Nonviolence and peace are natural, and like water, give us life."

Experiences during violent conflict also had a powerful impact. "When our home was burnt we ran to the caves. We were so shocked. Everyone was angry," said a participant from Bougainville. "We lost our home but we didn't lose our hands and brains. Lots of women and men were missing. We did prayer meetings while in hiding, which gave the women strength and helped allay mistrust. I organized with my schoolmates prayer meetings and a march for peace. We did a radio program to

demobilize the youth. We dialogued with women, and started an awareness campaign not to use arms."

"I WANTED A GUN"

"When Papua New Guinea came to Bougainville, that's when the war started," said another participant. "I wanted to get a gun and shoot, I wanted to join the fight for freedom. My parents were afraid of this and found me a school outside the country, but I smuggled myself back on a boat. I couldn't concentrate on studies when my heart was at home. Sr. Lorraine contacted me and asked if I could set up a women's forum, in the middle of the fighting. I said no way! She shouted at me, 'Women want peace! It's time to put down guns and talk!' We brought 700 women together, just to sit together and listen to the suffering of ten years. I just cried listening to all they had gone through. That changed my life from violence to nonviolence."

Political demonstrations began the journey to nonviolence for other participants: "A friend made me become involved. While at university my friends organized a protest to stop nuclear testing in the Pacific, and got me involved in creating a poster for the protest. I didn't see the relevance of nonviolence and agreed with armed struggle. Then a local nun asked for an essay on Gandhi, and in 1987 I was invited to a War Resisters International conference, to give a paper on Fiji. It was like water you needed at the right time. I am very frustrated with our male politicians. Women are the key to peace. I am still committed to nonviolence. I can't think of another way."

Another participant noted: "Education has been a real influence for me. Also growing up in a village and sharing communal life. In Fiji there is the concept of *sole solevaki*: accountability towards the common good."

This session closed with another round with participants saying nonviolence in their own language.

“RESPECT FOR ALL HUMANITY”: A DEFINITION OF NONVIOLENCE

The next exercise involved coming to a common definition of nonviolence, with women first writing down five terms which defined nonviolence for them, and then joining bigger and bigger groups of women to discuss and agree on a common definition.

Group one identified the following as important for a Pacific definition of nonviolence:

- Love and respect
- Open communication
- Justice
- Democracy
- Security.

“If there is no love and respect in families, there is no community,” explained the presenter. “Wars happen when there is no respect. The common basis for all is love and respect.”

It was pointed out during the discussion that love was a very broad term, and it was suggested that the first common definition should read “Respect for all humanity.”

There was a long discussion about the relation of open communication to democracy, and whether open communication includes dialogue and negotiation, with comments like:

- “There is a right to communication and a right to information.”
- “Men can’t communicate and that’s why they are violent.”
- “We don’t communicate freely in my culture because we have a culture of silence.”
- “When we have democracy people are free to say what they want.”
- “People are losing the right to communicate in the global environment because people don’t use their local language and dialect—English is everywhere.”
- “Too often in democracies only the mass media can communicate, not the people. Women’s voices are not included. We must protect our right to speak out, so we should say ‘open, democratic communication’.”

- “When we respect everybody, everybody can communicate freely.”

An alternative suggestion was made, to rewrite the principle as “An enabling environment for effective communication at all levels, personal and interpersonal.”

Group two identified the following as important for a Pacific definition of nonviolence:

- An environment free of weapons and war
- Truth, justice and fair distribution
- Respect for all humanity
- Exercising freedom of rights
- Upholding women’s and children’s human rights.

There were questions about the second principle. “We added ‘fair distribution’ because we felt we had to talk about the sharing of resources,” participants said.

The discussion then shifted when a co-facilitator asked the groups to reflect upon the dynamics within the group, in particular who was speaking. This led to an exploration on facilitation, authority and leadership. One group did not choose a presenter. One participant volunteered to present the group’s results. Jill asked how this felt. “I was scared. It was a big challenge,” was the response. What would it have felt like if the group had asked you to facilitate? “It would have been really different—they would have given me the authority.”

If somebody gives us support, Jill pointed out, it gives us courage and power. It is useful to pay attention to how we are functioning as a group. This can promote productivity, unity and effectiveness.

“IT’S ABOUT SHARING AND CARING”: SUMMARY

Vanessa concluded the day with a summary, explaining that the day began with a drawing exercise. “There were a lot of drawings of houses, home, our family and relationships were a strong part of feeling in a nonviolent, peaceful world. *Relationship* describes where we get our sense of well-being, of safety, of reference. There were lots of references,



Jill Sternberg, PDF co-director
and member of the facilitation team.

too, to community, to leaders, especially the role of chiefs to look after people and to lead people back to nonviolence. The communal lifestyle is very important in the Pacific—as someone said ‘it’s about sharing and caring’.

“Then there was the individual way of peace inside and the role of religion to help the commitment to nonviolence. Others spoke about the internal process of creating peace inside. Some people described events which strengthened their commitment to nonviolence: women’s peace vigils, forums, the strength of seeing women acting together. The opposite was also talked about: of losing serenity, or control over the environment. Violence—civil war, militias, occupation— forced people to leave their homes, and much of the talk on peace work was about reversing that loss. Women want their resources and communities restored.”

THE UNIVERSE BENDS TOWARDS JUSTICE: EVENING SESSION

During the evening session there was more work on developing Pacific women’s principles of nonviolence. The six principles of nonviolence developed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr (1929-1968), a leader in the US Civil rights movement, were explored. This is one of many approaches to active nonviolence, called the Kingian approach, named after Dr. King.

A handout with the principles and steps was distributed. Mana Jill asked participants to:

- get into four groups (named papaya, mangoes, avocado and custard apple)
- read the handout
- think of your own experiences in the light of the handout
- talk about your own organizations’/movement’s principles.

She asked, “What principles would you like to guide your movement, collectively? Build on the powerful work you did this afternoon.”

The Six Principles of Active Nonviolence according to Dr. King:

1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.
2. Nonviolence seeks to win understanding and friendship.
3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.
4. Nonviolence maintains that suffering can educate and transform.
5. Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.
6. Nonviolence is convinced that the universe is on the side of justice.

The Six Steps to Nonviolent Social Change are:

1. Investigation
2. Education
3. Personal involvement
4. Negotiation
5. Direct action
6. Reconciliation

Papaya group's principles were:

- Courageous women in time of conflict.
- Win friendship and understanding through networking.
- Widows' action for justice. Women demanding better pay.
- Women activists love each other through action.
- Women's unique gift from God is love, life and justice.

Avocado group's principles were:

- Nonviolence is a way of respect for all humanity. It is accepting people and recognizing their identity and rights. Resist violence of the spirit and of the body.
- Nonviolence is democracy and fair distribution of resources. It seeks to ensure freedom to exercise human rights. It ensures equal access to resources.
- Nonviolence is a way of creating an enabling environment for effective communication at all levels. It is freedom of expression. It provides better avenues for people to voice their opinions freely.
- Nonviolence is upholding truth and justice. It believes that God is a god of truth and justice. It enables fair trials for all.
- Nonviolence is having a safe and secure environment, free of weapons and war. It recognizes the true meaning of life. It disregards weapons. It ensures peaceful dialogue and transforms hate to peace.

Mango group's principles were:

- Nonviolence is a way of life of courageous Pacific women peacemakers.
- Nonviolence seeks to create friendship, understanding, tolerance and respect for the community.
- Nonviolence affirms that suffering can transform and educate positively.
- Nonviolence is unconditional.

Custard apple group's principles were:

"The key words are caring, and breaking barriers/ across borders. Making a stand in direct action. Nonviolence reaffirms the rule of law, law and order. It educates and transforms. We are actually quite a violent region. Nonviolence counters the principles of violence, which seek to:

- gain political power
- cover up greed and corruption
- institutionalize discrimination
- gain resources.

Nonviolence seeks:

- To uphold the rule of law
- Justice for all
- Restorative peace and security
- Respect and understanding for all sides
- Working for our common good
- Valuing the power of communication.



Participants Ethel (l) and Anne (r) of the Solomon Islands with Monica (middle) of Bougainville.

DAY 3

A STORM RAGES: WEST PAPUA

“There is no way for calm waters in the region as long as a storm rages in West Papua.”

West Papuan independence leader.

The day began with a presentation on West Papua. Indonesia considers West Papua part of Indonesia. The population of approximately 2.5 million people was colonized by the Netherlands, who promised the people independence. In 1961 the country celebrated this independence, but was invaded in 1962 by Indonesia. In 1969 West Papuan representatives were forced to sign the Act of Free Choice, under UN auspices, which claimed that West Papua wanted to remain within Indonesia.

An armed group called the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM) is fighting for independence. Over 100,000 West Papuans have been killed by Indonesian forces since the Act of Free Choice—some estimate the number killed could be as high as 800,000. There are widespread human rights abuses, including rape and torture, by Indonesian forces in West Papua. High ranking Indonesian military officials, including Major-General Mahidin Simbolon, responsible for serious human rights abuses in Timor Leste, are now stationed in West Papua. Javanese Indonesians are transplanted to West Papua and dominate jobs, schools and businesses.

West Papua has the biggest gold deposit and the third largest copper deposit in the world. These resources are operated by the transnational corporation PT Freeport (stakeholders include parent company Freeport McMoRan, the mining giant Rio Tinto (RTZ-CRA) and the Indonesian government). In some years the company is the Indonesian government’s biggest tax payer. A major polluter, the mining operations are guarded by Indonesian armed forces, who reportedly torture, intimidate and murder local people with impunity.

British Petroleum’s Tangguh gas project is now constructing facilities to tap gas reserves in Bintuni Bay, West Papua. The three gas fields involved will

be shared with Pertamina, the state-owned oil company of Indonesia.

After the presentation there was a check-in. Each participant talked about whether her expectations for the consultation were being met or not. The lack of fluency with English, which hindered communication, was mentioned by several participants as a frustration. One participant complained about a lack of “comfort”, while another said, “The setting is excellent for a consultation on peace—just to see nature is peaceful.” Many participants wanted more background on the conflict in Timor Leste. Most participants were satisfied with the program so far: “It has been really good for me. Before I came all I knew was we cannot reach peace without reconciliation, and that violence cannot be solved through violence.” “I am happy with all the topics,” said another participant. The presence of the younger women was especially noted: “It is hard in my country to find committed, unmarried girls. I appreciate having youth here. I like this group’s atmosphere.”

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

After lunch participants continued with country presentations, to include:

- an explanation of the history of the conflict in their country
- their role as peacebuilders
- what are the challenges they face (personally, organizationally, nationally, regionally and internationally).

These country reports took the entire day and evening. Participants found them very useful: “It helps build solidarity,” said one woman. “I understand more about our sister islands in the Pacific, and the root causes of the violence. It helped me understand well what women are doing to promote peace, and the divisions among Micronesians, Melanesians and Polynesians,” said another participant.

“THERE WAS NOTHING, NOTHING, NOTHING”: TIMOR LESTE

Timor Leste was colonized by Portugal in order to control its sandalwood. In 1974 the Carnation Revolution succeeded in Portugal, and the dictator was overthrown. The new Portuguese government began a decolonization process. As a first step, the establishment of political parties in Timor Leste was allowed. These included APODETI (Timorese Popular Democratic Association), which supported integration with Indonesia; UDT (Timorese Democratic Union), which supported federation with Portugal; and the FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor), which supported a free Timor Leste. In 1975 a civil war broke out in Timor Leste. This left FRETILIN, which had the support of the vast majority of the population, in power.

In November 1975 Timor Leste declared its independence. Ten days later Indonesia invaded. In 1976 Timor Leste was declared part of Indonesia. One third of the country's population died as a result of the Indonesian occupation—the highest per capita death toll of any conflict in the 20th century. Massive human rights abuses took place, including widespread rape. The Indonesia military organized and supported local militias to harass and kill independence supporters.

The popular struggle for independence continued despite the violence. In 1999 a referendum was organized under United Nations auspices. During the referendum, the two choices were autonomy and independence. The East Timorese voted overwhelmingly, despite the threat of violence from Indonesia, for independence. A vote for autonomy would have meant remaining part of Indonesia.

Reprisal from the Indonesian armed forces and the militias was swift and deadly. Up to 85 percent of the country's infrastructure was deliberately destroyed; looting, rape and murder were widespread. A United Nations peacekeeping mission was deployed to help Timor Leste make a transition to democracy. More than 150,000 people fled East Timor for camps along the border with West Timor. Many people were forcibly abducted. These camps

were controlled by militias supported by the Indonesian forces. An estimated 80,000 East Timorese still live in these militia-controlled camps.

“IT WAS BAD”

An East Timorese participant continued: “In 1999 I went to the mountains [to escape the violence by Indonesian forces and militias]. Everything was burning, even the trees. There was nothing, nothing, nothing. I saw many things in Dili, many uniforms and guns. The militia stole, then bombed the houses, then burned. It was bad. The military was very angry, they had already established the militia, arming them with guns and drugs, so they didn't know who they were killing, even their own wives, mothers and aunties were killed.

“But for 24 years when you walked around you saw soldiers. Our hearts wanted freedom. Even the little children were involved in the resistance. Timor Leste is small but the people are very strong. Now there is no intimidation as before. But *a luta continua*—the struggle continues. We have international donors support—for the moment. We have our political independence, but not economic independence.

“In our culture women are the center of peace. The first women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) dealt with illiteracy. 65 percent of our women are illiterate. We organized a meeting of 2,000 women after independence to think about our future. Our first recommendation was to have 30 percent women in the new Parliament. We have a strong women's network, but outside Dili there is little information, and if there is no radio, there is no access to information. We live under a patriarchal system.

“Domestic violence is a big problem now. Here the police may come and take the man away [if he is abusing the wife or children]. But this hurts women, too, because when he leaves, there is no money.” The speaker pointed out that male UN peacekeepers are also abusing women; rapes by peacekeepers are hushed up and not prosecuted. Peacekeepers are also abandoning women with their children when the peacekeepers leave.

“THEY TRIED DIALOGUE”: WEST PAPUA

A presentation on West Papua was given: “The Indonesians invaded [West Papua] and intimidate and discriminate against the people in many ways. The Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM—the Free Papua Movement) began in 1964 after the Indonesian invasion. The men of West Papua have tried a lot by gun but have not succeeded. They tried dialogue, but this was very hard, so now hope is placed on women and youth. The women must be educated to educate the youth. They are concerned about what will happen to the women and children so they work for dialogue, and a national dialogue between women. It is very hard to reach the people in the areas occupied by the Indonesian military.”

“International recognition of the West Papuan struggle for peace is needed. In 2000 there was a dialogue with the Indonesian government, to say that the West Papuan people wanted to be independent. After this talk the government promised to organize another meeting but this has not happened yet. The Indonesian government is offering another option to independence: autonomy. So the people are divided, some for independence, some for autonomy.”

“DIPLOMACY IS WEAK”: ACEH

There has been an independence movement in Aceh since 1976. The Indonesian armed forces are

active there; until 1998 Aceh was considered a ‘military operational area’. Some Indonesian military officers responsible for human rights abuses in Timor Leste are now stationed in Aceh. These include Major-General Adam Damiri, who in March 2001 was responsible for deploying thousands of troops against the GAM (Free Aceh Movement). Indonesian human rights advocates calculated that over 1,000 people were killed in 2000 by Indonesian military forces. In 2002 an average of 15 people a day died in Aceh in the violence. “Many are struggling for independence in Aceh, but diplomacy is weak. What are the strategies of the East Timorese to get more public support? To influence public opinion? People are frustrated. The Indonesian military makes many difficulties for the people there.”

“EVERYONE HAS BEEN AFFECTED”: SOLOMON ISLANDS

“Guadalcanal [both an island and the capital of the Solomon Islands] has gold resources, many people drifted to Guadalcanal for work, many from Malaita island. There were several years of social unrest. Militants believed in going back to traditional ways—women were told to go back to wearing grass skirts, even though these would catch fire in the kitchen. In some villages the militants started chasing Malaitans out. 23,000 people fled Guadalcanal. Then young Malaitan men formed an armed group (the Eagles) and so people from Guadalcanal ran away....



Ethel (l) and Genevieve (r) holding a T-shirt from the Solomon Islands White Ribbon Campaign to stop violence against women.

“The most affected were women and children. Women were abused by militants on both sides. The government was unable to provide social services. There was a breakdown of the family and an increase in domestic abuse, in incest and prostitution. In May 2000 women formed a round table discussion and drew up a communiqué for peace. We had meetings with militant leaders, and tried to support both Guadalcanal and Malaitan women to care for their families. Women were too afraid to go to their gardens for food. We distributed food, provided tents and basic household items, and started teaching counselling skills to get people back on their feet.”

“Everyone has been affected, most particularly Guadalcanal and Malaita people. It is confusing because the issues go deeper than just the conflict between the islands. There are land issues, and we have both matrilineal and patrilineal traditions, so these land issues are hard to resolve. We are in debt for millions of dollars now, and borrowing money from China in order to pay public servants’ salaries. Some of the militant leaders are now in jail; women are meeting with them because we are worried that the violence will begin again when they get out of jail.”

WOMEN’S VISION FOR PEACE: BOUGAINVILLE

Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) is a transnational corporation owned in part by the mining giant RTZ and by the Papua New Guinea government. BCL is also the largest open copper mine in the world. Furthermore, Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) new constitution limited traditional land ownership to just the top soil, awarding mineral rights to the state. This, coupled with the mine’s opening, displaced many and led to a movement to demand compensation. When compensation was refused, the conflict escalated into a struggle against the PNG government.

“Our conflict has lasted over a decade. Most land was owned by women and inherited through the female line. But women cannot pass on land any more because the mine displaced them from their land. Perhaps 20,000 people have died in the war. The government collapsed. There was an embargo,

so there was no food or medicine. In 1996 there was a big meeting of women, whose vision has helped steer the peace process. The war that we have experienced has devastated us. To survive we look to our tradition, culture and inside ourselves.

“Men were scared of other men, scared to negotiate. So women went to the mountains to persuade their husbands and sons to lay down their arms. Women have the power to veto decisions for war. Women build bridges. Our men folk rediscovered the value of women. As mothers of the land we take seriously our responsibility to rebuild the land. Locally women are in decision-making positions. Men are in high positions and making money from the crisis. They won’t give up their positions because of the money making. The constitution only has three permanent seats for women. But we are claiming our right to speak up and training women to run for political offices.”

“THE FIRST TIME I HEARD GUNSHOTS”: FIJI

Fiji consists of some 300 islands. During colonial times, the British bought or expropriated land; indigenous Fijians were unwilling to leave their communal traditional land, so indentured workers were brought in from India to work the land. Today almost half the population is indigenous and the other half descendants of Indian workers. In May 2000 there was a coup, and the president and many parliamentarians were held hostage. The coup leaders saw the government as an Indo-Fijian body that was a threat to the traditional indigenous control of resources.

Women and women’s groups (e.g., the Fiji Women’s Crisis Center, the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), the National Council of Women) mobilized quickly to denounce the illegal take over. Women organized delegations to speak with the Military Council and the Great Council of Chiefs, and began a daily peace vigil that continued to promote a nonviolent resolution to the crisis, and that offered support to families of the hostages. As reports of communal violence—including politically motivated rapes—increased, women also began to

address this. The women's peace efforts crossed community lines and included Methodist, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Muslim and Ba'hai women. The hostage crisis was resolved after about a month. In November of that same year, there was a mutiny at a military barracks in the capital of Suva –it was, according to one participant, “the first time I heard gunshots in Suva.”

The roots of the crisis remain and women's cross-community peacebuilding efforts continue. Meanwhile, Fijian women also continue to claim their political space. In May 2003 a Fiji Women's Peace and Security Committee was established, a successful joint government-NGO initiative. This committee has made a ground breaking submission to the National Defense Review Committee, using UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

DAY 4

WHY IS OUR REGION SO VIOLENT?

Several common challenges for Pacific women were discovered during Day 3's work. These challenges include leadership (how to empower women's voices for peace, especially at decision-making levels), trauma and self care (how to rebuild and heal communities after such violence, and how to maintain our own health and sanity while doing so) and fundraising (how to find the financial resources necessary for the work of peace). These issues were addressed in specific sessions during day four.

The previous day's country reports raised many issues for participants. Some of the questions and comments included:

- “We need to understand the root causes of conflict in our region – why is it that our region is so violent? Why is it only happening in our Melanesian region?” (Fiji)
- “We need solidarity for the struggle for self-determination; and sharing our strategies for peace-building.”
- “We see our commonalities and understand our uniqueness; we need to delve into the causes of conflict – is it that the larger island masses have

the greater economic resources?” (Fiji)

- “Where are the women placed in regaining the peace process and ensuring further conflict prevention?” (Fiji)
- “Across all our nations we know that we are not alone – scanning our region – we can gain strength from each other's experience.” (Bougainville)
- “Why all these conflicts? Why are all these things happening to ourselves? The root causes seem to be the same – if we are just moving with peace programmes we are only touching the surface, we need to address the root causes in order to ensure our peace programmes are truly effective. How long will it take us to implement peace strategies without weeding out the root causes?” (Solomon Islands)
- “As we hear the work of the struggle for peace and contributions women make for peace, we realise that the violence continues. Despite independence, despite political liberation, we still face violence. I ask our sisters to highlight and campaign for nonviolence. How can we analyse to better understand the roots of violence? We need to consider the impact of the violence on all the generations and we need a mechanism that will address the violence. During our struggle we struggled for liberation—but we continue in our struggle to seek the root causes of violence and therefore ensure conflict prevention.” (Timor Leste)

The presenter on Aceh said: “We have found a sense of solidarity. We need help to combat the propaganda of the Indonesian military that is being used to violently suppress the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). There is confusion over the movement: is it about Islamic faith or political self determination? How are we going to maintain and strengthen our collaboration because we need to send and share information. The grassroots people who struggle for liberation and work clandestinely are also physically suffering. They are prone to poor health caused by malaria and stroke, so we need medical assistance also.”

The presenter on West Papua said: “Our struggle for West Papua is similar to Aceh. As young women we need to learn from the older experiences. One clear difference [between Aceh, West Papua and Timor



Co-facilitator Koila Costello-Olsson of Fiji's ECREA.

Leste] was that Timor Leste had the support of the UN. You had positive intervention for peace, whereas in Aceh and West Papua there is nothing. They have women's groups in West Papua but it is very hard for the women to work because there is no one to help them. It is very difficult to undertake peace work because they continue to be monitored by the Indonesian government. We need support for women from the outside. Sometimes I get so confused, we share an island with PNG and I wonder why they or Australia do not come in to support our struggle. For over 40 years we still don't have third party intervention.

"I hope that the women can make a difference. We are also infected by the HIV as a result of the military presence. In most of the cases the people who have been infected are women: women who have been raped by the military, babies who are born HIV positive, so we also need to address HIV/AIDS. Even though we have dialogue for peace and there is no fighting, the women and children continue to

suffer, they will die because of AIDS; we need to take education programmes to them."

"It can be dangerous to establish groups," responded Koila. "How can we teach the skills for women to deal with the realities of women? What are the extra tools we can equip women with, especially when they face security threats and danger? It is also cost effective – we need to multi skill our women peacebuilders to also be community-based educators, as a way to reach their communities."

"The people in our communities are the entry points—such as through the women farmers, the sewing groups, women's clubs," said a participant from Bougainville.

"Addressing the root causes of conflict is often dangerous. In the Solomon Islands we network with existing groups. We can partner up, integrate and create awareness, so that the message reaches the women," added another woman.

"WE NEVER FORGOT THE WOMEN"

"From my experience in Bougainville we never forgot the women. It is a hard and risky job; but there are groups outside and inside the country who can help you. Link them into your work. Use the global/regional networks so that they are also a channel of information on your issues."

"Programmes to support women peace-builders also need to include leadership training so that women have the multi skills to be able to manage and administer programmes, including data collection. We also have to learn how to establish and maintain international networks who will support us on human rights and nonviolence issues; we also need to adopt the issues, to assist women in Aceh and West Papua to strengthen their women's networks for self determination. The activists must be strong and committed to work, aware of when to speak and when to act. We don't need to be high profile and loud. We learnt in Timor Leste to be more clandestine and underground with our actions," concluded a Timor Leste participant.

LEADERSHIP: LISTEN TO WOMEN FOR A CHANGE

“Obstacles for leadership include male and patriarchal attitudes towards women which regard women as male property or even consider it taboo for us to speak in our community meetings,” said a participant from Timor Leste. “Even though our rights are protected in our constitution, this is not enough to bring out greater women’s leadership. I would say our governments need to create affirmative action programmes for women’s political participation and decision making.”

Participants were very encouraged by the model shared by participant Genevieve Pisi, a member of the Bougainville People’s Congress:

“The women of Bougainville have been successful to secure three permanent seats for women in the new autonomous government (which will be established by September this year). We have achieved this because:

- more political awareness training at community level/grassroots level;
- women being unified in this goal;
- creating alliances with our male counterparts, with the support of our traditional role.”

Just having three places out of a total of 54 seats, is not enough, though. “We are continuing to train women to also run for the elections. In fact, we will nominate one woman for every possible seat whatever their social-economic background.”

“We fought for 50 percent of political representation, but we only managed to achieve a quota for 30 percent,” said mana Mena about Timor Leste. “So we fielded three independent women’s candidates and lobbied hard with the political parties to ensure that they also upheld the 30 percent quota for their own candidates.” Today the Timor Leste Parliament is almost 30 percent women representatives.

Participants agreed that more gender-sensitive and women-centred leadership training is needed. This would support women in increasing their confidence and self-esteem, which would in turn help enable women to harness their ‘soft power’ as a tool for conflict prevention.

Women’s leadership extends not only to the political or official level, but also the community level. There is always an important need to nurture and harness women’s leadership agenda, values and interests. Women are leaders in many ways. “We want women to lead because the world of male leadership has not given us the world we want. It is very violent and conflict ridden, and of course it is the women and children who suffer,” said a participant.

Sometimes, participants agreed, women leaders do not recognise or value their own leadership capabilities and contributions. The participants were also mindful that due to the many conflicts experienced in the Pacific region there is an important need for adult education for women. This education should help women become more effective participants in post conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Young women especially must be educated for leadership. In post conflict societies such as Timor Leste young people now make up 65 percent of the population. They must also be encouraged and mentored for leadership, or otherwise they will feel further frustration.

FUNDRAISING

Mana Shelley led a session on fundraising. “Peace work costs money. But fundraising is also about building relationships in and with our community. How you fundraise locally should be guided by your principles.

“Women peacemakers need resources for our work to continue. This includes having a base to work, like facilities and human resources (staff and volunteers). We need funds in order to sustain our work. A secure financial base means the ability to plan for the long term, so that we are equipped to continue to raise awareness and have a positive impact on our work. A good fundraising plan can help us disseminate information and increase the publicity around our work. In fundraising it is also important to consider self-reliance, and to try to have a funding plan that reduces our dependency.”

Dependency on large foreign donors can create problems: our priorities can shift towards satisfying

donors' demands, rather than the needs of our communities. Self-reliance is very important in order to keep control of our own agenda, and in order to empower our own communities. "We need to monitor international donors in Bougainville," said one participant, "because funding is destroying people doing things for themselves. And when aid is withdrawn, young men may start a conflict."

Participants shared some of their fundraising strategies:

"We have small income generating projects; for example the Catholic Women's League in Fiji undertakes catering and we also fundraise at traditional gatherings or during our annual general meeting. We also provide each branch with a funding target. You need to consider the timing of your events. Leadership is also important: you need a good coordinator; fundraising is not just for us to secure the dollar but also about making contact with donors."

A participant from Bougainville said, "We need to set goals; there needs to be a good reason for raising the funds. You also need to identify who you will target for the event. Building public relations is very important as well; you need a good team from your community; and to report back to your community and membership on the success factors."

Following your organisation's protocols and structures is also important. "For national events I have to inform the national finance committee of the church executive because it involves the members of the church," said a Fijian participant. "So if you are fundraising for good causes seek the approval of the leadership."

Conflicts also impact the capacity of women's groups in post conflict situations. Many women still lack proposal writing skills, or have no access to email or fax machines, and cannot access grant applications or donors. "We need to identify appropriate donors and to prepare a proposal that will support our efforts. NGOs are new to Bougainville, they have sprung up now because of the end of the war. So proposal writing is still new to us and that is why we need training."

SELF CARE AND TRAUMA: TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES AND OUR COMMUNITIES

How do we take care of ourselves as peace builders? That was a question raised in the session on self care, trauma and avoiding burnout. Participants drew on a range of experiences, especially in facing militarized presence and coping in conflict situations. The session highlighted the fact that the impact of trauma suffered as a result of conflict is experienced by people in various ways and can be addressed at an individual as well as at the community level.

Trauma can be defined as the effect of an incident or event on the life of an individual, family, community or nation physically, emotionally, spiritually or mentally. The consequences can include depression, withdrawal, suicide, illness, aggression, fatigue and/or feelings of helplessness and being unable to cope.

Trauma healing is an important component of the broader peace process, said mana Koila. "Trauma healing needs to be integrated into everything we do, because the work we are doing does affect us. We must learn to recognise the signs of burn out. Part of self care is to recognise where we carry the stress or tension, which are often more comfortable ways of referring to trauma. We are all connected to and affected by the conflicts around us"

Participants talked about ways individuals can heal (telling their stories, listening to music, seeking help, etc.) and the ways communities can heal (religious rituals and testimonies; organizing community trust building and healing activities, sharing stories communally, etc.)

"Healing is needed to deal with all the hurt and the pain of a crisis," shared Helen Hakena. She was referring to the impact of the Bougainville war on witnesses of atrocities as well as the position of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Women trauma counsellors began by introducing the process to clan chiefs and then just listening to peoples' stories.

It is important to have a support network: "We had community feelers [trained people who were alert to signs of trauma] who formed the initial support



Sharon (foreground) and Susana of Fiji.

group for those who were then referred to trauma counsellors,” she said. It was important to have a positive relationship with the police to assist in the community’s healing and rehabilitation. The trauma counsellors themselves also needed support.

The healing process, which is needed for both victims as well as perpetrators of violence, can take many forms including creative expression forms, especially when working with young people.

She added that during the conflict, the women were protected by their own men, but now that there is a ceasefire, there has been a rise in domestic violence, sexual abuse, incest and rape. Relocation has destroyed traditional values and life, and cultural constraints mean many of these human rights violations remain unreported. Home-brewed alcohol consumption has also increased and helps fuel violence.

Anne Solomon of the Inter-Church Federation of Women of the Solomon Islands highlighted the role

of the Family Support Centre in Honiara in curbing domestic violence and rape. “It is not over, but it has certainly reduced with the withdrawal of the militants, the dismantling of these fighting groups.”

Women’s groups are now involved in the rehabilitation work and trauma counselling of the former combatants, through the prison chaplaincy and RAMSI. “We fear that if the RAMSI [the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands] military intervention is not successful there may be a further outbreak of violence in the future. We need to counsel the rebel leaders who are presently detained – whilst mindful of the groups that still remain on outside of prison.” Those who are forced out or displaced would feel so much better if they could return to their own home, she concluded.

“Support groups are a very practical response to help families who are also facing trauma,” commented Susana Evening, referring to the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil that was staged during Fiji’s May 2000 crisis, which offered support to the family members of the political hostages.

WOUNDS STILL HURT: JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Mana Mena opened this session by reading a poem she had written. “I always ask myself: justice and reconciliation, what is it? I hope my poem will help you.”

“My tears still come down
Even I have got my freedom
Wounds still hurt
Even I have things to eat,
to use and everything
But I am not happy ...
Why am I not happy?
Why am I always sad?
Why am I always crying?
Why...why...why?
Because I’ve not find justice yet
Because justice is not here
Because nobody heals my wounds yet
Because justice is only theatre...

Because I'm not fine
The truth of reconciliation
Because this reconciliation is a play by the leaders
Forcing me as ordinary people
to complete their power."

"This poem talks about justice and reconciliation, not in its legal or academic form, but in the reality of Timor Leste women's experiences. In our country report we only skimmed the surface, provided you with a light version of our history. We didn't tell you what really happened from the depth of our heart. For 25 years Timorese women faced a lot of difficulties. When we started our work and went to our women, it was the first time the women in the villages opened up. For too long our reality was hidden from the rest of the world. Women were raped in front of their husbands and children. Who can then speak out for them? At that time they couldn't tell anyone for fear of their family's safety. They had to protect their husbands who were fighting in the jungles.

PDF co-director Mena and member of the facilitation team.



"I had to play my double life. I applied to work at a government level and I lied about my age. I said I was 18 otherwise they wouldn't have employed me. I did this to be able to really find the truth of the women, because all we saw was women crying in their black dresses. I was always on the move so that the military could not find out that I was in the underground movement. In the morning I would put on my camouflage and hide my emotions and painfully work with the Indonesian soldiers."

"THEY SAID THEY WERE DIRTY": SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING ARMED CONFLICT

"When we visited widows who had lost their husbands to the Indonesian military, they were isolated from their families. They said that they were dirty. At first we did not understand, but then we found out that they had been raped daily. We prayed for strength to be able to help our sisters even though we were not trained counsellors. All we could say was: keep sharing the hope for freedom and justice. It will come my mother, my sisters. We prayed because Jesus was about justice, he delivered justice."

"So what happened after independence? In 1999, we all chose independence. 78 per cent of the Timorese people chose independence despite threats from the military that blood would be shed. We chose to live with this threat because this was our homeland. Even if we had to spill blood at least our children and grandchildren will be free and will have justice. I escaped with my two daughters (now aged 12 and 20). The military was close by—close enough for me to hear that I was targeted not just to be killed but to be raped first. I kept on reminding myself that justice will come."

"After the destruction of 1999 I was one of the first to go to Maliana. All we could say when we met the victims was that justice will come. But we cannot find justice. The 'small fish' [i.e., low ranking Timorese militia members] were put on trial. That way they could accuse us of killing each other.

"We had hope in the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). But until

today we are still looking for justice. What was set up by the Indonesians and UN [i.e., trials for war crimes] was theatre. The UN mission came but women are still raped. The women cannot do anything with the international people. Women continue to suffer no matter who is wearing the uniform.

“What kind of reconciliation do our leaders want? I still ask myself. They have not spoken to the victims, the mothers and daughters who saw their sons killed, who had to kiss the boots of the military to beg them not to rape their daughters. How can they believe in justice and reconciliation when they still see the perpetrators driving around?”

“If our leaders asked the victims they would know the real pain. How can women really forgive the perpetrators? How can they be expected to just smile and forgive? They have even said that the women are lying. But those of us who have seen the suffering...we know the truth and we are still struggling for peace.

“Don’t be academic about the realities of our lives. We have to show the real justice and the real reconciliation. Don’t play the games our leaders play. Reconciliation is not just lip service. We have to admit the violence. We have to say the violence is continuing because of the unhappiness of the people, their inability to secure justice.”

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION FOR PACIFIC WOMEN

After this powerful presentation by mana Mena, the participants divided into three groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What would justice look like for Pacific women?
What would justice look like for me?
What is justice?
Justice for who and to whom?
2. What would reconciliation look like for Pacific women?
What would reconciliation look like for me?
What is reconciliation?
Why do we need reconciliation?

The first group defined justice as:

- equal treatment – gender, ethnicity, age
- fair and equal access to resources, education and power.
- respect and tolerance for human rights
- to pay for crimes or hurt caused

Justice and reconciliation takes place at different levels: personal, community, national (police, women’s groups), regional, international (International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court)

Justice for whom?:

- for all who have been hurt by the perpetrators, and all who have suffered
- for the military/militia, men, colonisers.

Reconciliation is:

- accepting the reality
- opening our hearts
- forgiveness
- apologising for the wrong committed
- rebuilding trust and relationship
- having compassion
- based on peace.

“As human beings we need progress and harmony, we cannot continue to live with the past. For reconciliation to happen we must establish the truth. The person who does wrong must admit this and seek apology. Justice cannot exist on its own. There are other elements that need to be addressed in order to lead to what we all want: peace and security. Both parties need to be honest participants. We can find relief from our religious belief, because if the police or courts cannot deliver justice, then God will set it right.”

On a personal note, the presenter said she felt that there was a need to practice a customary Fijian tradition in Timor Leste, that of asking the spirits of the land to accept us and to seek forgiveness in case we do something wrong. “I feel the spirits of those whose lives were taken so cruelly. The land here is crying out for justice. In Fiji, the soldiers involved in the military coups performed this ceremony. There was a traditional acknowledgement of admitting the wrong to the chiefs of the land.”

JUSTICE IS FOR EVERYONE: BOUGAINVILLE

In the case of Bougainville justice and reconciliation cannot be separated. The second group defined justice (in reference to the conflict in Bougainville) as:

- finding the bodies of husbands and sons so that there can be a completion of the ceremonies; their spirits are still restless in the jungles and must be put at ease
- the truth must be told by the army
- reconciliation and healing will only happen when the perpetrators accept responsibility for “the burning of the villages, the people who have destroyed our homes, who have raped our women and daughters, they have to apologise – and then the acceptance of the people who have been hurt. This cannot be forced by the government because we have seen the return to violence, nor can it be forced by giving money to the people. The hurt still remains, people have lived with the trauma without realizing the further hurt they are causing.”

Justice is for everyone – even the perpetrators – but there needs to be an end to the cycle of violence. This can only happen if people show they have truly changed. This is where the traditional ceremonies can help. Justice also requires mercy for those who have served their ‘time in jail’ so that they feel safe to re-enter society

“We need justice because there will not be true peace for individuals, families and communities until people know that justice has been done. That will mean that the communities will also heal and rebuilding can take place.

“In the Pacific, for us Bougainvillians, justice will happen if Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia reconcile with us for the ten-year blockade which stopped even humanitarian assistance. The people suffered dearly because of this. The international community only got involved when they were informed of the Sandline plans for mercenaries to be hired by the PNG and sent in. Australia funded and supplied the PNG war. The PNG government must also apologize for the crimes

committed against the women, the people, for the destruction they caused. We cannot rebuild without trust – people still do not trust. We must target the governments of the Pacific because they must talk about what is going on in our region. They did not speak out against the blockade. And we must forgive the enemy.”

Justice and reconciliation also involves:

- end of violence and armed occupation
- acceptance by everyone (men, women, children, ethnic and religious groups)
- a long term process
- must involve women in planning, implementation, documentation, compiling reports
- superficial ceremonies do not work, outcomes must be understood not just dancing, feasting and singing/cash compensation
- non-partisan mediators trusted by everyone
- real justice that all communities accept and understand
- justice tribunals should be community based
- specific training for women, in turn it will give women awareness so everyone can participate
- adapt UN conventions and commitments to our local and regional needs
- a vision that takes us on a mission that will result in truth, justice and reconciliation.

TIMOR LESTE

“The UN peacekeepers are as bad as the militia.”
An East Timorese woman

The third group looked specifically at the case of Timor Leste. Here, too, reconciliation and forgiveness cannot be separated. “In relation to West Papua and Aceh, the Indonesian connection continues. One of Indonesia’s presidential candidates is a former military man who helped the destruction in Timor Leste. Another former Indonesian commander here is now in Aceh, and a former militia leader is now training militia in West Papua. These atrocities were carried out under the UN presence. How can we just forgive? They will continue their abuses. They are already continuing them in other countries. There must be real accountability, real healing. Both the victims and the perpetrators are traumatised.”

This group identified several unanswered questions relevant to justice and reconciliation:

- How much are the UN-sanctioned processes trusted?
- How do you create restorative justice that will allow the rebuilding of communities? This cannot just happen with truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) because on an international level there is not the political will. At a national level we spend millions on TRCs which could be used for reconstruction, and millions on rearmament to protect ourselves.
- We need to demand that these men accept their responsibilities and not be given the power to brutalize us.

The session ended with a moving letter from a young woman of Aceh being read out loud by mana Mena. The letter also raised questions about the tension between justice and reconciliation, and about the fear of being judged by others.

LETTER FROM ACEH

"I want to share my history with you, about my suffering and the suffering of my people. As a woman, I love peace. I share this history as a way to take out all of my suffering. This story is a little stupid but it's the real story. I am a woman with my lover's heart. I am a woman...I only want to be loved. Only this. I'm asking for love but later on the suffering this country....come and look for us all of my dreams are broken. Broken all, my vision for years and years. They raped me, I am supposed to only give this to my husband who I love, in the night time they come and take all of this. Nothing I have. They rape me in front of my parents. Please think about this how it is painful for my parents and then they cut off my clitoris. They cut off my father's penis and gave it to him to eat it. It is horrible. The dark days come and come... I hate all of them; I hate all of the men and the men who use the uniform. Is it wrong if I take weapons? Is it wrong that I am angry with them? Is it wrong if I kill them? All of you



Maria of Timor Leste presenting group work on justice and reconciliation on Pacific women's terms.

can say I create the violence because you didn't know about it, because you never had something missing, because you never suffer like us. It is very, very painful, but all of you say I am wrong to do this.

Now I am living in the jungle....I walk around I never know the day or night because I am very shy to meet with my parents, with other people because they all look at me and feel sorry for me / pity me and they didn't do anything. I hate to look at them. I hate the word "poor" because it is a word used by people who have no memory ...my friends if one day I die please take care – take care of yourself and othersthis is the last letter I will write to you."

In the afternoon a dozen East Timorese women visited the consultation and spoke more about the situation for women now. The women came from different organizations such as OPMT, Ismaik, Rata Laek and Nove Nove. These last two groups are widows' associations. Their personal testimonies brought home the fact that little is being done to address the violations women experienced during the conflict.

DAY 5 AND DAY 6

(Special thanks to Sharon Bhagwan Rolls for notes on these days)

These two days were devoted to exposure visits. After an orientation, the participants divided into smaller groups to go on different field trips. All the field trips involved visits to either women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or projects run by women for the benefit of women and children. In Dare, for example, participants visited the medical clinic of Sr. Maria, a children's project and a new women's development organisation.

EXPOSURE VISITS

RATA LAEK

In nearby Liquiça, another group of participants visited a cooperative shop run by Rata Laek, an association of widows. Rata Laek is Tetum for "No Graves". The modest shelves of the cooperative held biscuits and tea and a few handicrafts. A large bulletin board on the wall had a somber display of photographs of husbands and other male family members—and a handwritten note of thanks from former Irish President Mary Robinson, from when she visited the cooperative in her capacity as head of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

The photographs were faces of some of the people killed and disappeared during the 1999 violence in Liquiça. This violence included the burning of a church where over 250 villagers had taken shelter. Many of the widows and their families are still waiting to recover the remains of their loved ones.

The widows are rebuilding their lives, led by Eliza Do Santos, a Peace and Democracy Foundation board member and a women's human rights advocate. Twelve women have come together to establish the small cooperative, which also houses a restaurant for residents and travellers through Liquiça. A safe house for women facing domestic violence has also been established, and the group members counsel abuse survivors. The group struggles for justice and to increase legal literacy to help families understand their rights.

"I was so encouraged," said a participant from the Solomon Islands, "to see how these women have picked up their lives and they are working so hard to rebuild their lives; we have been made aware of their needs to keep the project going. They really need our support from the outside to provide them with additional equipment, resources and also ideas to sustain their work."

FOKUPERS

Forum Komunikasi Perempuan Loro Sae
(Communication Forum for East Timorese Women)

FOKUPERS, founded in 1997, works towards the empowerment of East Timorese women, with particular attention to women affected by conflict, including women survivors of rape, torture, political prisoners and wives of the disappeared.

Its program work includes:

- providing support to women survivors and their immediate families
- documenting and analysing cases of violence against women in East Timor
- addressing issues around state and domestic violence against women as well as gender discrimination.

FOKUPERS works in partnership with nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and

Entrance to the women's NGO FOKUPERS, with painting commemorating those who died for Timor Leste's independence.



women's groups, as well as UNTAET/UNMISSET, CIVPOL, CNRT and the church throughout the country. It focuses on advocacy and education and awareness strategies including through their weekly radio program "Women's Voice".

Its social services arm includes counselling services and MAHON, a women's shelter; regular visits to women survivors in their homes; monitoring women's human rights; investigating and documenting cases of human rights abuses against women in East Timor; and a legal aid service that also accompanies victims throughout the judicial process. FOKUPERS, along with other women's groups, organized the first ever women's conference in Timor Leste on November 9 and 10, 1998. *Contact: fokupers@fokupers.minihub.org*

ET-WAVE

(East Timor Women against Violence)

ET-WAVE was founded in 1998 by Olandina Alves, who is also a board member of PDF. It was established in order to provide protection and equal rights for women and children. The adjacent restaurant Olandina is run to support the organisation's work.

ET-WAVE had to re-establish itself after the 1999 violence in response to the needs of women and children. The activists convened a meeting on the beach attended by 30 women who formulated a 10-point action. This plan included putting pressure on the UN Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET) to include more women in decision-making positions. Their demand for a quota in upcoming elections was initially rejected by the UN, but their pressure eventually ensured that there is now 27% representation by women in parliament. Olandina was one of three independent women candidates who ran in the national elections, supported by women activists. "It was also a way to challenge the political parties to remind them of their commitment to the women of East Timor," Olandina said to participants during the exposure visit.

The Centre was established, in response to the high increase in reported domestic violence and child



ET-WAVE founder Olandina (l) and Mena (r) in the ET-WAVE office with photo of the late Sergio de Mello, head of the UN mission in Timor Leste.

abuse. According to Olandina, 12% of the population has experienced domestic violence, and that does not include the violence experienced during the struggle for independence.

This increase in domestic violence is linked to how many men feel socially and economically displaced in post-conflict Timor Leste. Olandina believes the impending domestic violence legislation is extremely important for the women and children of Timor Leste. ET-WAVE works in six districts, including Dili, addressing issues of violence, but also establishing economic empowerment projects for women at the local level, from handicraft production to kiosks, to sewing and livestock farming. *Contact: ET-WAVE, Bidan Santa Ana, Dili, Timor Leste. Tel. +61 0419 829549.*

HADADIN

This is a small self-help group of widows and ex-women combatants. They operate a handicraft program for women. A network of handicraft production units was established in several districts as part of the reintegration and economic empowerment programme for women who were part of the resistance. 25% of sales go towards the women who work at the handicraft center, weaving colourful cotton fabrics which are either sold as traditional *tais* or made into a variety of bags,



Women of Hadadin working together to generate jobs and income.

wallets, mobile phone cases, and baskets. *Contact: via Mena at PDF.*

GFFTL

GFFTL is the former students' movement, initially established by a coalition of organisations, including the Australian Council of Trade Unions. There is a young women's group in GFFTL now working in literacy programmes, media training and empowerment. The women are keen to not just respond to media requests for information, but to produce their own material for radio, print, and the electronic media.

YAYASAN

Located in Dili, YAYASAN works for economic development and peoples' empowerment. It organizes a handicraft project for income generation.

OPMT

(*Organizacao Popular de Mulher Timor*—the Popular Organization of East Timorese Women)

OPMT is the FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionaria do Timor Leste Independente—Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor Leste) women's organization and began in 1975 to fight for independence. Now a registered NGO, OPMT works to support women and children, and to develop a political vision for how the country can support all

its citizens' needs. They operate a sewing program and English language program in addition to different social actions. [Not to be confused with OMT (**Organizacao Mulher Timor**), another women's organization that works to support women, in particular women involved in agriculture, and orphans.]

REDE: FETO TIMOR LOROSAE

(Timorese Women's Network)

It is a coalition of over 15 women's groups, established in March 2000. The Network provides a forum for women's voices on political and economic development in the country, in addition to sharing information on the variety of social, literacy, and economic empowerment work that members do. In order to establish a coalition of women's groups, local tensions had to be addressed and accounted for because of the divisions that had been created by the occupation; the women's congress in 2000 called for the UNTAET to ensure at least 30% recruitment of women in the police force—especially to assist in addressing gender violence issues.

PARLIAMENT

Many of the participants also visited the Parliament building, where a spokesman talked about policy challenges. These challenges included:

- youth unemployment. In order to stop young people going overseas as import labour/labour exchange, or being recruited into the special police, the possibilities of gaining work by cultivating untilled land, or creating youth volunteer schemes, are being discussed.
- land leases are becoming an issue. Some landowners had formal leases but others could not afford such a legal formality. Land was taken by the Indonesian occupation and when the Indonesians finally left they also left behind unresolved and outstanding land disputes.
- health services are needed. The government's goal is to establish a good national hospital and establish health care at local/district levels.
- the UN did guarantee initial security during a volatile period. However there are huge disparities

between what is earned by the UN staff and local staff. The government has recruited medical staff from Cuba and China who will work on local wages.

- Before the 1999 massacres the international community was unaware of Timor Leste, so there is a need for international awareness and support.
- The UN claims Timor Leste as one of its successes. Yet while militia activity has decreased somewhat, there is still a need for a peacekeeping presence especially along the border.
- there is a need to understand and heal the Timorese psyche, as violence still exists at a new and different level.
- the national budget is still dependent on donor contributions (currently 40 percent of the total national budget). The government is trying to retain a zero rate of borrowing but this may not be realistic.
- The current national budget is USD 74 million. It is difficult to provide social welfare funds from this; therefore, there is a need for greater coordination between NGO and government funding. Since 1999 some USD 360 million has been given to NGOs but there is no guaranteed sustainability for ongoing projects.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been successful in some ways but needs another process for justice: "Just hugging and kissing will not resolve the pain."

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION: THE CAVR

All the participants were honoured by a briefing at the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR), during which time participants met and asked questions of several CAVR commissioners. They were also given a tour of the historical building the CAVR is housed in. The building was the site of an Indonesian prison, where many East Timorese suffered imprisonment, torture and death. Graffiti from the prisoners has been preserved. Preparations for public hearings (public hearings on Women and the Conflict, Children and the Conflict, and others have been held) are now held in the large courtyard.

The Commission was first proposed in June 2000 during a meeting of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). It was established through the cooperation of East Timorese NGOs, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UNTAET Human Rights unit. It is mandated by the constitution and includes the formal participation of women. Its mandate is to inquire into human rights violations committed on all sides, between April 1974 and October 1999, and to facilitate community reconciliation with justice for those who committed less serious offenses. It does not grant amnesty. The CAVR is headed by seven National Commissioners. In addition to the national office in Dili, the CAVR has six regional offices, staffed by East Timorese, and supported by a small number of international technical experts. The commission has been mandated to work for two and a half years and will present a final report with its recommendations to the government for implementation.

The Commission has three main functions:

- **Truth Seeking:** The Commission will seek the truth regarding human rights violations in East Timor within the context of the political conflicts between 25 April 1974 and 25 October 1999. The Commission will establish a truth-telling mechanism for victims and perpetrators to describe, acknowledge, and record human rights abuses of the past.
- **Community Reconciliation:** The Commission will facilitate community reconciliation by dealing with past cases of lesser crimes such as

Timor Leste's truth and reconciliation commission, the CAVR, has held special public hearings to document what happened to women under the Indonesian occupation.



looting, burning and minor assault. In each case, a panel comprised of a Regional Commissioner and local community leaders will mediate between victims and perpetrators to reach agreement on an act of reconciliation to be carried out by the perpetrator.

- **Recommendations to Government:** The Commission will report on its findings and make recommendations to the government for further action on reconciliation and the promotion of human rights.

The CAVR has been involved, when asked, in a number of community reconciliation meetings. If it is contacted by a perpetrator, the CAVR will interview the perpetrator and pass on his or her name to the East Timorese legal system. Criminal records will be checked to determine if the perpetrator was involved in serious crimes (to include murder, torture and rape). If so, he or she is turned over to the courts; the UN serious crimes unit addresses the crimes linked with killings.

If not, CAVR workers will travel to the perpetrator's village and support traditional reconciliation rituals, such as a public meeting where the perpetrator asks forgiveness, a promise to not engage in such actions in the future, restitution (in the case of theft), and/or (often) community service such as cleaning churches

and schools. The focus is on community-based reconciliation, which can include truth seeking through collecting voluntary testimonies from people, both victims and perpetrators.

In cases of violence against women there has been some hesitation from women survivors to share their experiences. The CAVR has undertaken awareness raising programs for communities, their leaders and women. *Contact: CAVR, PO Box 144, Dili, Timor Leste. Tel. +670 390 311263. Email: info@easttimor-reconciliation.org Web: www.easttimor-reconciliation.org*

The exposure visits were of great interest to all the participants. During the debriefing participants spoke of the new insights gained both into the situation in East Timor and into their own situations. "All the places we visited were significant," said a participant. "The visit to the Parliament was very valuable. It is obviously a difficult time for the leaders here." Other participants observed how women's NGOs fill the gap for the lack of funding for social services. A visit to the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the site in 1991 of a massacre when Indonesian military surrounded several thousand East Timorese mourning the death of a student, "was very draining emotionally but very important because everyone was part of the struggle," said a participant.

Sharon (Fiji—with camera) and Anne (Solomon Islands, standing) visiting the Hadadin women's cooperative.



NETWORKING

During the last day the participants broke into three groups to discuss networking. They then listed and shared all the networks they belonged to, and spoke of the follow-up to the consultation that they would like to see.

The variety of networks they belonged to was inspiring. These included a women against violence regional network, small arms network, church networks, a network for countries in conflict situations, NGO networks and a young women's network. Linking up with partners, including partners with consultative status to the UN—thus allowing access to UN conferences and workshops—was valuable for many participants.

The women talked about the need to share skills, resources, and information; to give support and solidarity on issues; and to build relationships. They identified the need for a website and assistance to develop and maintain a website; and for ongoing skills training.

“Our work for peace must be rooted in the struggle for freedom, human rights and human needs; peace on its own is meaningless if it is not linked into a struggle. We need freedom from hunger and fear. We need independence,” said a participant.

Regional organisations such as the Pacific Concerns Resource Center (PCRC—Fiji) were cited. PCRC was established in 1975 for the anti-nuclear testing movement and the decolonisation and independence struggle in the region. The focus for the next three years is the struggle in West Papua; the current French territory and indigenous groups in Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia. PCRC has an environment desk working on reclaiming natural resources and one which coordinates regional environment diplomacy training. It also has a disarmament desk which is part of the small arms network.

Another important regional resource were women's media networks as a channel for women-centred information dissemination, documentation and production of media programs to highlight women's

experiences, free from the constraints of mainstream media policies and limitations.

More common challenges and needs included the training of local people; investment in training of trainers and staging of local activities; and the need for a way to exchange information on local mediation training. “The onus is also on national leaders, following independence, to ensure that they maintain and support women in their societies and to actively increase the support for self determination in our region,” noted a participant.

During the closing ceremony participants gave positive feedback on the consultation. The highlights were learning from the East Timorese experience and from each other in the Pacific region. “From day one I felt really supported and helped. Thanks for the translation! I learned so much during this conference. It is good for me to go back home. It was very important to see how East Timorese women struggled hard for independence and continue their struggle after independence. I really thank all of you,” said a participant.

“I have learned so much here,” agreed another participant, “I want to transfer the experience here to my friends and colleagues back home.”

“It is good to learn from East Timor,” said a Bougainville participant. “We are still going through the process of getting independence. It was good to see their Parliament setting, and the CAVR. This gives me the energy to carry on.”

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This report was written by WPP Program Officer Shelley Anderson. She gratefully acknowledges permission to use notes taken by Sharon Bhagwan Rolls for certain sections of this report. The consultation would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Pacific Consultation working group. The WPP expresses its heartfelt thanks to the working group members: Koila Costello-Olsson; Sr. Lorraine Garasu; Vanessa Griffen; Filomena Barros dos Reis, Jill Sternberg and the staff of the Peace and Democracy Foundation; WPP Education Officer Janne Poort-van Eeden. Many thanks are also due to the Sisters of the Maubara retreat center for the excellent and painstaking care they took of the consultation's participants. A special thanks also to Sepalika for all her work—and her laughter. Last but definitely not least, the integrity and openness in sharing often painful experiences by all the consultation's participants made the consultation a unique and thought-provoking gathering. Their commitment provides hope for true peace and justice in the region.

For the accompanying 20-minute video of the consultation please email the IFOR Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) at office@ifor.org

**This consultation was made possible
by a grant from the Netherlands
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**



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