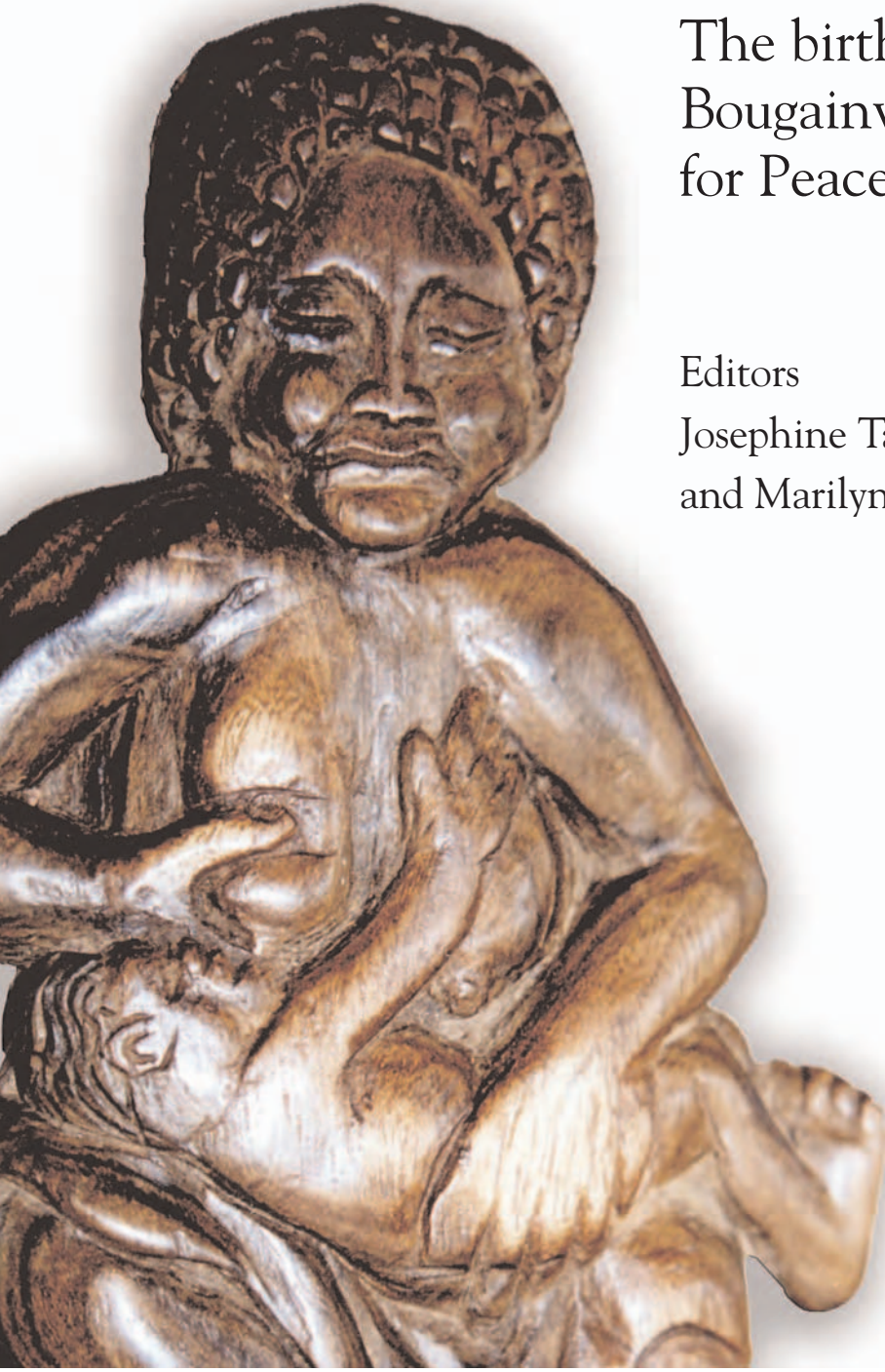


... *as*
MOTHERS
of the LAND

The birth of the
Bougainville Women
for Peace and Freedom

Editors

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi
and Marilyn Taleo Havini



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*To the children of Bougainville for whom, as mothers, we overcame all adversity.
We dedicate this book with the song of traditional storytelling that gave birth to it. Our desire
is for future generations to know how and why we have fought for peace and freedom.*

A SONG FOR THE PEOPLE

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

BOOM! BOOM! Goes the mortar bomb echoing in the still air, trembling through
the flesh of our land. The house I am sleeping in seems so small. I feel like moving
into the bush and sleeping underneath trees.

What a night to remember.

I leave my own village in fear of the Defence Force of Papua New Guinea.
Daughter Melanie is six months old. We have spent the past six months in the jungle.
I have become a mother 'on the run' after giving birth in the bush, underneath big
trees. I suffer postnatal complications, but thanks to mother ...
I survive to nurse my beautiful baby.

Never have I experienced a time of peace to bring up my child.
Only one week old when we started the journey of ten years of war, she does not
experience a normal way of life in the village.
No one for company, we are alone in our camp most of the time.

That is why we have come to my cousin's village, to have a rest from roaming the
damned wet jungle.

This night feels so warm and friendly among relatives.
So much going on within me. After my usual evening prayer ... I draw close to my
fragile baby, my hope for my future.

As I lie down to sleep, there comes a BOOM echoing ... through the dark, still night.
Cutting the thin air of our island.

Gets into my nerves.

I sit up with fright,

I remember, once again, I'm still in a war, still a 'most wanted' person.

In the dark of the night, I hear my daughter's heartbeat. I hold her; cuddle her in my
arms, to feel her warmth and remember my responsibility, to protect her right to live.
We need each other's strength. She is my strength, my hope. I pray with tears to our
Heavenly Father for protection.

I gaze into the darkness ... and see nothing.
Total darkness that echoes a bleak future.

Boom! Boom! Tong! Tong! Two different sounds, high-powered weapons from the
PNG troops. All are now awakened by the noise.
A big fight is on ... with our BRA, my husband in the lead.

I shake off sleep, I pray to God for protection. Baby soundly asleep, I'm worried,
frightened ... of what this crazy night might bring.

Boom! Boom! Tong! Tong! Again ring into the night. Prayers interrupted ... don't
know what to do ... cannot take baby now ... tonight, to move to a new location ...
With husband not here to move us to a new hiding place, my heart is heavy,
like a log that I cannot carry.

I ask, who brought me into this mess? This is not my plan. I'd hoped for an
enjoyable future for family. Was it my choice ... to be 'a most wanted person'?

So many questions running in my head ... *'Yes,' I say 'This is my birthright.
Born with it ... no choice but to suffer, as Christ suffered. I must be here,
with my own people.'*

Again, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
I grab my daughter on my lap, I cry and cry. Tears flow ...
Feelings pour out of me, no one knows the depth of my suffering.
No one to share with, I must be brave, to release my husband:
Lead our army! Defend our lives, and the future of our children!
My whole being confused, I feel lost, no future, my heart is torn to pieces.
Who will listen to me? Far away in the wilderness ...
My voice, gets weaker ...

I hear BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
I'm lost and hungry.
Boom! Boom! Boom! Sound from enemy fire rings in my head.
Memories will remain of that BOOM! BOOM! A foreign song composed in PNG.
A fearful 'tune' so terrifying ... from a strange land.
Let the future be without the BOOM! BOOM song.
It is evil ... has taken many lives of our people.
LET IT BE HEARD NO MORE ON OUR LAND
... the land of beautiful music ... filtering through the hills, valleys and mountains
where children love to play in the moonlit night
IN A FREE AND HAPPY LAND.

FOREWORD

Rt Hon Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary-General

HISTORY BOOKS GENERALLY TELL the story of how leaders, politicians and generals contributed to shape their country's destiny. They recount conflicts by focusing on troop movements, battles and tactical decisions. It is not often that we hear about the experiences of ordinary people, who work behind the scenes and, in many cases, make a significant contribution to the pursuit of peace and the development of their communities.

As Mothers of the Land is unique in this respect. It tells the story of one of the deadliest crises of the last decades — the Bougainville conflict — and the peace process that followed, not through the eyes of politicians or military leaders, but through the personal accounts of Bougainville aboriginal women whose commitment and determination played a crucial part in the resolution of the conflict.

I met many of these women when I was involved in the peace process. Indeed, some of them, like Josephine Tankunani (Kaouna) Sirivi — who is also the godmother of my son James, born in 1998 — became close friends of mine. I have witnessed first hand how their resourcefulness, their sense of hope and their sheer resilience contributed to turn the tide of violence in Bougainville.

This book tells the stories of women who had to flee their homes and take to the jungle to escape violence. It tells the stories of women who lived on the run, giving birth in leaf shelters and caring for the frail and the elderly. It tells the stories of women who used traditional knowledge and self-reliance to rebuild community structures in the heart of the jungle.

As Mothers of the Land is about women from all sides of the conflict who rose up against division and hatred and stood united in their determination to build a lasting peace. These personal accounts bring invaluable insights into the Bougainville conflict and peace process. They shed light on Bougainville women's unique contribution to the search for peace.

I have no doubt you will find their message of hope as moving and inspiring as I did.

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PREFACE

IN RELATING THE WOMEN'S stories and recording the remarkable events of these years, Josephine Tankunani and I have linked various accounts as told to us or recorded in original documents. Aware that the primary source material may be disjointed to those who have not followed our struggle closely, we have woven in our own personal accounts and records of the exciting and dangerous times we have faced together. Our contributors are all women from Bougainville, from diverse locations and political perspectives.

Josephine, married to the General of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), remained in the interior of Bougainville and behind the blockade for the entire war. After living through the first stages of the 'crisis', I was forced to leave Bougainville with my husband and children in 1990, just five days before Australia, New Zealand and other countries evacuated all their citizens from the island.

I had married a young, university-educated Bougainvillean in 1971 and lived in Bougainville until we were forced to evacuate to Sydney in January 1990 and seek shelter in my family home, which I had left in 1969. In Australia my husband Moses and I were requested by the blockaded Bougainville leadership to be their overseas representatives and their voice to the world. We accepted the appointment only 15 minutes before the communication satellite was shut down in Rabaul, East New Britain Province, by Papua New Guinea.

It is a privilege to introduce to the reader the individual members of the team who contributed their own written accounts to this book. Most of us were total strangers at the start of the war. Circumstances have brought us together during a decade of struggle and long years of suffering. Our love for our people and for the land of Bougainville has provided a common bond and we have come together to share a vision. Most of us have become involved in building a women's movement on a quest for peace and freedom.

As editors and authors of this compilation, along with our entire team of writers and contributors, Josie and I pay tribute to many wonderful people. Our brave Bougainville women and families inspire us. Our Bougainville leaders and capable negotiators, who continue to work for a just and free homeland, defend us. We have learned much

together about life in general, about survival as a people and about peacemaking in particular.

Bougainville is a matrilineal society in which women are the custodians of the land, some with chiefly roles. In this respect the leaders have recognised that the participation of women as a group has advanced the peace process since their inclusion in the 1997 negotiations. Women have been instrumental in the peace process, a fact acknowledged in countless speeches by Bougainvilleans and by the United Nations and political leaders of New Zealand and Australia, yet unless someone makes a permanent record of what they have done, there will be no history of women's valuable contributions to peace.

It is our intention in this book to record Bougainville's amazing journey and resurrection from the exploitation, rape, war atrocities and despair recounted in part one, to a peacemaking built on a clear vision of what constitutes freedom for a people and justice for a nation. We have attempted to analyse how our people created the conditions for peace and what part women have played in the struggle.

Women were used as political pawns and as an excuse for conquest by political forces that wanted to 'save the women and children from the rebels', little realising that these rebels were the fathers and sons of the women who were supposedly being rescued. Is it any wonder that the struggle to determine who owned the women and children became a quest for truth and justice? At some point, each woman had to decide where she belonged and a new political education process for women in Bougainville began. Part two explains how, through the communal effort and remarkable initiatives of ordinary citizens, including women, Bougainville has managed to survive and overcome all obstacles to reclaim the land for its indigenous people and rebuild its society into a modern construct of nationhood.

Part three of this book bears important witness to how Bougainville was able to resolve a war by peaceful means and how Bougainville women, who were formerly patronised or ignored by a colonial society, began to speak for themselves with a clear voice, reclaiming their traditional matrilineal roles.

In forums and countless meetings, from village discussions to formal meetings at all levels, our own people have addressed the root causes of this conflict. As a community subjected to the politics of division, we have risen above the disunity and strife to work for a better future for our children. We hope and pray that history will prove that we have acted wisely.

President Joseph Kabui and other significant leaders of the former Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) and the Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG) went to extraordinary lengths to secure a safe environment for women to participate in negotiations and the peace process. We witnessed their debates on this point and their recognition of the role of women in Bougainvillean society. The men overcame the natural fear of exposing women to potential danger and, breaking the century-old colonial cycle of imposed male rule, the men opened their hearts to include women.

This proved to be a breakthrough for the culture of peace to develop. The present Bougainville Peoples Congress, along with other interim governing bodies in the peace process, all have women members today — women who stood up for their people in dangerous times.

Overseas representatives Martin Miriori and Moses Havini deserve special mention for negotiating with Australian and New Zealand foreign affairs officers to arrange transport for women delegates from remote jungle locations and overseas destinations. The International Truce Monitoring Group and Peace Monitoring Group deserve special mention for all the logistics and safe road and air transport to meetings and peace talks.

In writing this narrative, Josephine and I acknowledge the love and support of our husbands, Sam Kauona and Moses Havini, and our children. They have encouraged us to develop leadership roles for women and have been our true partners in overcoming the trials of displacement from our homes and years living ‘on the run’. Our children have not known a ‘normal’ upbringing, yet they are a source of inspiration as they embrace, with moral courage, the values and beliefs for which we stand. In many ways, this book has risen from the fragments of our combined struggle.

Colonel Bob Breen, a historian of the Australian Army, initially inspired Josephine to begin writing while the peace process was under way in 1998. He gave her a small tape recorder to encourage her to begin recording her history as it unfolded. We are indebted to Bob for his inspirational prodding and for the confidence he gave Josephine to attempt this daunting task. We also acknowledge the assistance he afforded us with the publication of this book.

Once embarked upon the task, Josephine, as the founding president of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom (BWPF), rallied her troops of female peacemakers and nation builders. A team of wonderful women has contributed to the making of this book. Much of the content, written while enduring enormous suffering, has been retained to convey the authenticity of personal experiences. Other records of these times have been edited for continuity within the overall picture.

Assistance for the writing of this book has come to us by way of several overseas organisations: the Open Learning Centre — Te Whare Akonga, Palmerston North, New Zealand; the Waitarere Beach Women’s Corso Group, New Zealand; the Bougainville Freedom Movement (BFM), an Australia-wide solidarity network with international support; and individuals from Women for Bougainville, a committee initially set up in 1996 in Sydney, Australia.

Amateurs such as ourselves greatly appreciated the editorial assistance given to Josephine in Palmerston North by Kathy Dyson and her daughter Gaye and to Marilyn in Sydney by Marie-Louise Taylor. We are indebted to them and to June McGowan for time-consuming and dedicated proof-reading. Contributions from Vikki John of the BFM are also greatly appreciated.

Funding efforts to secure the publication of this book have come from Corso Pacific Programs, Caritas, Pacific Women Speak Out Trust Fund, PeaceFund Canada and the Peace and Disarmament Education Trust (PADET). We thank you sincerely and hope that the final product is worthy of your investment and the trust you have placed in us.

Above all, we acknowledge ‘the author and finisher of our faith’ (Hebrews 12:2), our Lord Jesus Christ, who has sustained us through dark years of suffering, who has provided for us generously in all our hardship and has blessed us with the ability to love and forgive all people and all things. On this foundation the BWPF seeks to partake in nation building that will enhance the life and culture of our people and enable us to be at peace with one another, our neighbours and the world.

Marilyn Taleo Havini

INTRODUCTION

Marilyn Taleo Havini

OUR WHOLE WORLD WAS turned upside-down in 1988.

I had just reached a stage in life where I believed I knew who I was and I was in harmony with a place to which I belonged. I had come to enjoy a unique lifestyle that encompassed a vibrant culture and politics and the inspirational development of a contemporary society. My new adoptive Buka family had welcomed me into their hearts to such a degree that I melded with the clan and all its expectations of me. Besides this, I shared with other Bougainvilleans a living faith in a mighty God, who had placed me among these amazing people. I had found acceptance as a ‘mama’ of the clan, earning respect by raising many children besides my own in the 20 years I had spent in the paradise that is tropical, beautiful Bougainville.

Why then should we suddenly be surrounded by armed soldiers and living under a 6pm–6am curfew? Why had thousands of people been flushed out of their villages and forced to live sweltering under plastic in our market-place in Arawa, their camp spreading to cover two large football fields?

Our hard-won security was suddenly shattered by bullets that chased villagers fleeing for cover under the floorboards of the modest house we had worked so hard for.

Why should I have to dive for cover and hide under the kitchen table whenever another gun or mortar blast exploded over the town? Why were helicopters flying overhead ferrying yet more bodies to the Arawa General Hospital morgue?

In our once peaceful environment, it was inconceivable that all the freedoms and living conditions we had come to expect could be swept away. How could life change so suddenly?

The Bougainville crisis

Since colonial times, Bougainvilleans were recognised as a proud and distinguished race of black-skinned people, who were trusted as intelligent, loyal and capable. Bougainvilleans reached the highest permissible levels in colonial society — in a racial hierarchy in which white people reigned supreme — yet they were not accepted as equals.

Bougainvilleans, however, never perceived themselves as inferior to white people. While the colonial administration maintained its paternal attitude, which treated the local population like children and assumed for themselves superiority as their right, Bougainvilleans retained their dignity, even as they appeared to comply. They were biding their time while they worked out how best to rise above the domination of their land and their lives.

Bougainville has endured occupation by many foreign forces. In 1886, Germany and Britain exchanged notes to divide the Solomon Islands between them and Germany took control of Bougainville. Australian involvement with the island began about the same time, when, from 1870–1905, slave traders known as ‘black birders’ took Bougainvilleans to work as forced labourers in the cane fields of North Queensland. After its defeat in World War I, Germany surrendered control of Bougainville to Australia, which administered the island as part of the Trust Territory of New Guinea. As early as 1935, European prospectors mined alluvial gold at Kupei, near Panguna, and, by 1937, white people had alienated 28,000 hectares of Bougainville’s prime arable land adjacent to shipping points.

Japan invaded Bougainville in 1942 and its occupation, as well as the presence of Allied Forces, intensified the desire among Bougainvilleans for ‘liberation’. World War II was remarkable for demonstrating to amazed Bougainvilleans that, not only Japanese, but black American GIs seemed to be considered equal to the white man. The island would never be the same after the war. International exposure and cultural comparisons had educated the black native to an interesting concept: the white master was not supreme.

Even as the United Nations appointed the ‘white *masta*’, Australia, to colonise Bougainville after the war, as part of the renamed, combined Territory of Papua and New Guinea, Bougainvilleans had decided they would no longer work the foreign-owned plantations in Bougainville. The Australian-administered territories were supposedly being held in ‘trust’ for a future UN act of self-determination, which was quickly adopted by many Bougainvilleans as the opportunity they were seeking to redress the colonial-imposed boundaries.

A Bougainville submission to the 1964 UN Visiting Mission on Decolonisation objected to the alignment of Bougainville with the Territories of Papua and New Guinea. The submission, which was part of a continuing cry to be reunited with the Solomon Islands, was ignored by all the political players.

Because Bougainvilleans refused to any longer be mere ‘lackeys’ on their own land, the Australian administration had to recruit labour gangs from mainland PNG to work the plantations and the copper mine. Most of the workers came from the Highlands of PNG. Hard-working, but very different to Bougainvilleans in culture and manner, the Highlanders were perceived by many as a threat to the homogenous society of ‘black’ Bougainvilleans.

At the time of PNG's independence in 1975, it had settled with Bougainville on a form of statehood to be known as Provincial Government, giving Bougainville some degree of financial independence. PNG, however, assiduously dismantled our means of sustaining this Provincial Government by starving our government departments of the funds needed to maintain public works, health and education. Thus Bougainville was unable, for lack of finance, to operate the very statehood it had been granted.

To the thinking of many Bougainvilleans, there was no way an inefficient central PNG Government could meet the continuing needs of a province that lay more than 1,000 kilometres away across the Solomon Sea. When, as PNG's independence date of 16 September approached, independence for Bougainville was denied, the island responded with its own declaration of independence on 1 September, 1975.

The support for this declaration was total across Bougainville. The PNG Government, however, responded with a campaign of surveillance and physical threats against my husband and I and other leaders of the revolution and our families. We were evicted from our houses and were forced to live in hiding for the best part of a year in the jungle-clad mountains of Central Bougainville. We were supported by the goodwill of people from all over the island, who collected money and produce to support and feed us and the other leaders.

Since first contact, the colonial appropriation of large tracts of land for European plantations and the Asian domination of towns and commerce was widely resented throughout Bougainville, but the Australian mining company, CRA, would soon become the focus of most resentment. In 1960, rich deposits of copper ore were discovered at Panguna, leading to the forced eviction of landowners by the Australian administration. While Bougainvilleans were forced out, the PNG workers were setting up shanty villages on the expropriated land. These squatter settlements then expanded to support a large, migrant population and extensive cultivated gardens. When these began to encroach on the Bougainvillean village borders, yet another catalyst for dispute was created.

No environmental impact studies were ever carried out to assess possible environmental degradation and pollution before CRA (Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia, now called RTZ — Rio Tinto Zinc) established its copper mine at Panguna in Central Bougainville.

In 1969, in a land struggle between the Rorovana landowners and the colonial administration (on behalf of CRA), women pulled up the survey pegs that would steal the land from beneath their feet and threw themselves in front of bulldozers. Police 'riot squads' were called in to drive the women off with batons. The minerals in the area were claimed as belonging to the Crown and compensation was paid only to those deemed to be direct landowners, and only for development above ground and to a depth of three metres. The male landowners responded that it would be better for the Government to kill them rather than take their land.

PNG accepted this giant mining venture from the departing Australian Government as an independence gift, a passport to economic prosperity. Bougainvilleans were told the project was for the good of the nation. Whose nation, the people wondered? Certainly not Bougainville.

No one involved with or benefiting from the mine tallied up the cumulative damage mining was causing to the land, the rivers, the air, animals and gardens, fruit trees and, especially, the health of the people. Experts called in from time to time by the company to appease growing local resistance explained everything away but no one could convince the original inhabitants of the so-called 'acceptable limits' of pollution.

When two much richer deposits of ore were discovered west of Panguna, at Karato and Mainoki, a moratorium on further mining was called for until negotiations could take place between the landowners, the North Solomons Provincial Government, the PNG Government and CRA (operating as Bougainville Copper Limited, BCL).

The 1967 Bougainville Copper Agreement, amended in 1974, stated that 'all parties shall meet together during the seventh year and at intervals of seven years thereafter, with the view to consider in good faith whether this agreement is continuing to operate fairly to each of them and with a view further to discuss in good faith any problems arising from the practical operation of this [mine]'. The PNG Government, however, was refusing to renegotiate the agreement with BCL, which caused great distrust among Bougainville landowners, who had hoped the newly independent PNG would protect its own citizens.

PNG directly profited from the BCL operation, but it also believed Bougainville was scoring all the so-called benefits of 'development' and the infrastructure that came with the mining operation. The race was on for other PNG provinces to follow Bougainville. In fact, many politicians actively sought out overseas investors to establish open-cut mines or oil and gas operations in their electorates.

Meanwhile, displaced Bougainvilleans found themselves dependent on the mining company, forced to live in new, Western-style villages. Resettled in hot, fibro boxes on the edge of mountain ridges, they had to overlook the largest man-made hole in the southern hemisphere — what was once their land. Beaches along Bougainville's east coast were taken from other clans to establish port facilities, infrastructure for other companies servicing the mine and for European recreation resorts. Prime land and clean, white-sand beaches were taken off Rorovana clans, who were relocated to sites with black, sticky volcanic sand and adjacent to mangrove swamps. Pristine rivers along the west coast were used as dumping channels for the tailings from the mine's concentrator. The chemical-laden tailings were flushed through a tunnel, down the mountain and into the Jaba River valley, depriving thousands of people of clean, safe water. The valley became a moonscape of slush and exposed bedrock and the estuary was swollen for several kilometres out to sea, cutting off traditional access for coast-dwellers.

The people's frustration led to the formation of the Panguna Landowners Association in late 1988. Perpetua Serero, an articulate woman landowner, led the group with her brother, Francis Ona. BCL and the PNG Government did not recognise the group and the new association saw this refusal to meet with them as a tactic to keep them ill-informed and to block their demands for compensation.

BCL began to streamline its production to improve efficiency and to speed up processing procedures in an attempt to exploit the minerals as quickly as possible. The PNG Government employed a company of New Zealand consultants, Applied Geology Associates, to conduct an environmental impact study in 1988. Francis Ona and others were excited to be able to attend the tabling of the report at a public meeting in Arawa in November of the same year. They were astounded, however, that the report appeared to claim that no environmental damage had been caused by the BCL operations. Ona branded the report a whitewash and, with his lieutenants, stormed out of the meeting, declaring he would shut down the mine. He was a total unknown to most of us, who would have nothing to do with the mine, and gossip was rife about who he really was. Even the mine employees were impressed by this mysterious character who dared to stand up against the might of a multinational corporation. Encouraged by the women of his clan and the new landowners association, Ona and his supporters embarked on a program of civil disobedience to shut down the mine.

Educated Kieta landowners Theodore Miriung, John Dove and Melchior Togolo had this to say about what was happening to their land: 'Land is our life. Land is our physical life — food and subsistence. Land is our social life; it is our marriage; it is status; it is security; it is politics; in fact, it is our only world. When you ... take our land, you cut away the very heart of our existence. We have little or no experience of social survival detached from the land. For us to be completely landless is a nightmare which no dollar in the pocket or dollar in the bank will allay; we are threatened people.' (Quoted by Dr John Connell, Dr Gene Ogden and others.)

Perpetua Serero told Australian ABC reporter Sean Dorney, 'We don't grow healthy crops any more, our traditional customs and values have been disrupted and we have become mere spectators as our earth is being dug up, taken away and sold for millions. Our land was taken away from us by force. We were blind then, but we have finally grown to understand what's going on.'

In 1989, the PNG Government responded to calls from BCL for protection from 'militants' with the deployment of a Police Riot Squad. This tactic, and the harassment of the general population at the hands of the Riot Squad, merely escalated the conflict. Bougainvilleans' sympathy lay with the landowners and the Riot Squad established road-blocks, searching all vehicles at gunpoint, expecting to find people ferrying supplies to feed the rebels in the bush. When the PNG security forces were called in to back up the Riot Squad, the flame of discontent spread throughout Bougainville and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) was born. The cry for self-determination was repeated and civil war between the BRA and the PNG forces erupted.

PNG called in its State of Emergency powers and sacked our Provincial Government. Realising too late its mistake, PNG then attempted a peace ceremony in Arawa to try to restore dignity to the office of the Provincial Premier, but its 'rescue package' was rejected outright by the people of Bougainville.

On 24 July, 1989 Australia showed its support for its former colony of PNG and its own mining magnates when it passed an Amendment Bill to its Foreign Incursions and Recruitment Act. This allowed Australia to dispatch four Iroquois helicopters, with Australian and New Zealand pilots to fly them, to Bougainville to assist PNG. The Australian High Commission sent officers to Bougainville to prepare an evacuation list of all Australian citizens in the event of the need to withdraw all personnel from the island. The evacuation did take place in January 1990 and PNG also withdrew all its public servants and closed down all banks, government offices and services, including hospitals, all medical clinics, government and community schools. The only services that would continue were those staffed by unpaid volunteer Bougainville employees and sympathisers who would not leave their posts.

PNG then imposed a complete blockade on Bougainville and refused to negotiate. By this stage, my husband Moses and I had moved, with our children, to Australia. We were told Australian advisors had predicted the capitulation of the Bougainville population within four months. The expectation was that a chastened Bougainville would accept defeat and beg for the PNG Government to return and restore its services.

Instead, our leaders moved quickly to form the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) in February 1990, and recognised the BRA as the defence arm of the Bougainville movement for independence. More formal power structures were set up in an attempt to prevent or at least limit anarchy and to prepare for negotiations with or to provide protection from PNG.

And so we were all caught up in the battle for Bougainville.

PART ONE

BOUGAINVILLE WOMEN IN WAR

PROLOGUE

WOMEN COPE WITH ARMED CONFLICT

Marilyn Taleo Havini

HOW DID WOMEN COPE? What was life like during those long isolated years when the lights went out in Bougainville?

To comprehend the situation women faced from 1988 until the establishment of the peace process in 1998, and until the time of writing in 2002, one needs to take into account the devastating effects of a 'divide and rule' policy that operated until the Burnham I negotiations in 1997 brought our leaders together.

Every coastal village and many more in the mountains became battlefronts of one kind or another. Guerrilla warfare establishes separate groups that can coalesce or split up according to ever-changing circumstances; they can change sides almost overnight. Families found themselves in need and had to choose sides just to survive. It took a decade for the course of war to play out its lethal game and for our people to declare to each other that they would become one. Only then did they feel secure enough to enter into negotiations, as one people, and face PNG across the table.

Everyone in Bougainville was forced at some time to take sides. Those who tried to remain neutral during the war — or, as the PNG Government called it, the 'internal crisis' — found they were victims of either the PNG occupation forces or the PNG blockade.

Those who agreed to cooperate with the State of Emergency powers imposed by PNG lived under permanent curfew, military rule and restrictions to normal living. The PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) cleared whole tracts of land to enable them to establish combat zones and thousands of people found themselves herded into 'care centres'. The alternative was to accept life on the run or to retreat into the mountains behind the blockade.

Those who witnessed the living conditions of villagers who were herded into the care centres in Arawa chose their freedom and were prepared to be cut off from the essential services denied those who refused to cooperate and side with PNG.

In 1989, the PNG Government realised people wanted desperately to resume a normal life. Our calls for a resumption of services gave PNG the idea that a withdrawal of the security forces, coupled with the closure of every kind of commercial and civil government service, would see Bougainville drop all its environmental and political

demands. It was calculated that the people would learn their lesson within three months and Bougainville would 'come to heel' and capitulate by mid-1990.

Initially, in 1988 and 1989, the towns emptied and most people returned to their home villages. The sudden over-population of extended clan families placed an enormous burden on the subsistence gardens. Village community schools were full to capacity and town scholars found themselves locked out of the education system. At this time the 'crisis' was confined to the Kieta, Toniva and Panguna areas of Central Bougainville, but the social impact was felt Bougainville-wide.

Women had to cope with the stress of relocating their families and the physical necessities of survival without an income from the expected sources such as wages, cash cropping, market garden sales or small business.

Subsistence gardening became the sole means of survival. This placed unfamiliar demands on town dwellers who were used to supermarkets, and brought the danger of tending gardens located some distance from the safety of a village. Fear and anarchy reigned in many places where loyalties were hard to judge and anyone could prove to be an enemy. Women could not choose their destiny — they were pawns in a man's world of armed conflict.

The forces that came to bear upon our lives included the PNG Police Riot Squads, who were identified by their black shirts; the PNGDF, in army uniforms, and their recruited militia forces known as the Buka Liberation Front (BLF), or their later replacements, the Resistance Forces. In opposition to all of these were the Bougainville rebels, the 'militants', who reorganised and developed into the BRA. To confuse the issue further, there were individual troublemakers who took advantage of the situation to steal and destroy property for their own agendas. The havoc they wreaked in the absence of law and order caused great confusion. Choices about where to go and what to do were not always ours to make.

Some of us lived on the run in the jungle with the BRA, others chose not to, or couldn't, run and therefore had to live in the care centres under PNGDF supervision.

Some lived in their villages and cooperated with the PNGDF and the Resistance Forces, choosing to survive with limited freedom of movement under PNG's reign.

Some lived in caves or on outer islands trying to escape detection or strife while others lived safely with relatives high in the mountains away from the conflict. These people lacked basic medication, education and other essentials in their isolation.

Medical emergencies and a chance to escape the hardships caused others to risk a dangerous border crossing in small outboard dugout canoes, outrunning the PNGDF patrol boats. They became refugees in the Solomon Islands.

Many educated families who had intermarried with Papua New Guineans or who had economic assets that enabled them to move to PNG did so for the sake of educating their children. They were not always safe in PNG; the traditional 'pay-back' customs

and the increasing lawlessness in PNG townships claimed the lives of many of our people.

Women were not politically strong at this time. They suffered. They expressed sorrow for the Central Bougainville people and felt great sympathy for their frustration, the loss of land and environmental destruction that had sparked the crisis.

PNG called the first phase of the war a 'crisis' and declared a State of Emergency that suspended our Provincial Parliament and all civil government, empowering the military to operate under police authorisation. This was particularly devastating in Central Bougainville where a policy of ambush and the destruction of homes and property was aimed at teaching the people a lesson and ending civil disturbance and protests.

PNG did not bargain on the resilience of the people, however, nor on the support the women would give to their husbands and sons to fight back.

Personal accounts by Bougainville women of what they experienced as victims of this armed conflict are essential reading to begin to understand the odds they overcame. It is the starting point to our narrative of how, in giving birth to their own political expression, the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom was born.

Chapter One LIFE ON THE RUN

WHERE IS KAEA?

Marcelline Kokiai Tunim

Marcelline lived in Arawa town but the events related in this account caused her to flee to the relative safety of her home village at Vito. Vito is a coastal village about 16km north of Arawa. The people are renowned for their hospitality to expatriate surfers who would travel to their beach to catch the best waves. They are not landowners for the mine and had no direct involvement with the Panguna struggle until 1990.

THIS INCIDENT HAPPENED THREE weeks before the attempted cease-fire in 1989. It was 8am on a Saturday. My children were eating their breakfast as they watched their favourite ABC-TV program, *Astroboy*. My husband was away on a business trip.

My youngest daughter was very sick. I put a wet towel over her face as I carried her in my arms and rushed towards the door. 'Where are you going and why are you in such a hurry?' my eldest daughter asked. The others were paying deep attention to their program. I explained to her about her sick sister and advised her to look after her younger sisters. As I left, I locked the door behind me.

As I proceeded downstairs I met my brother, Kaea. He held a big red fish in his right hand. 'Here is the fish! I bought it from the market, very expensive though,' he boasted. I told him to leave the fish in the house. I gave him five kina to go back to the market to buy coconut, onions, aibika (a green-leaf vegetable) and tomatoes. I told him that when he returned from the market, he could help my daughter cook it. I assured him that as soon as my daughter received medical help I'd return home. He proudly took the money and disappeared through the hibiscus flowers.

When I arrived at the hospital the place was packed with sick children, so it was a good while before I returned home. On the way home, my mouth watered as I imagined the fish cooked in coconut cream, aibika, onions, tomatoes and ginger.

When I arrived at the house there was a great silence, which was unusual. I had anticipated my girls and their uncle enjoying their fish. I knocked three times, but there was no answer. I knocked again and again, then banged on the door. It was one of those hot days, which Arawa knows so well. The heat was just about to kill me. I wanted to get

under the shower as soon as I got inside the house. I sensed that something had gone wrong and I began to lose my patience. So I yelled, 'Gani, are you there?'

'Oh, it's Mum,' she cried. They all came rushing towards the door.

What on earth was the matter ... why was there great silence?

'Is the fish cooked yet? I'm starving,' I protested.

My daughters told me that three men of the PNGDF had driven to our house. My girls were so scared of their fearful looks that they had hidden under the cushions and chairs. At the back of the truck sat two armed soldiers, in between them sat my brother Kaea. The driver, one of the PNG soldiers, knocked on the door but my girls didn't answer. Away went the truck with my brother.

My children knew that the PNG armed forces were cruel. We had previously witnessed the beating of a tuberculosis patient by some PNG soldiers. This had been a very bad experience for them. They knew their uncle would be the next victim. In hearing the news I forgot all about the heat and my hunger. I rushed out of the house and began walking to the Arawa Police Station. On the way I kept asking myself how to begin, which questions to ask.

Soon I was under the roof of the Police Station. My heart beat faster as I saw the angry faces of the police on duty. I sensed that I was not welcome. They paid no attention to me, so I interrupted by saying, 'Good day, Mr Honourable Sir ...'

'What do you want, black pregnant woman?'

'Kaea, my brother, was seen at the back of a white truck driven by the soldiers. Is he safe?'

'Oh, don't ask such silly questions, it's the responsibility of those soldiers. You can see that we're very busy and we have no time to waste answering silly questions.'

I looked down at my feet; I couldn't hold back my tears. Trembling with fear, tears rolling down my cheeks, trying to attract attention to myself, I was about to ask another question. Just then another policeman, who was sitting down, said, 'Be satisfied with what you're told and leave immediately.'

I fled across the road away from the wicked faces. I had never been so down-hearted before. With tears rolling down my cheeks, I bumped into two soldiers with their high-powered guns chatting with two beautiful Bougainvillean girls under a kumurere tree, where I had hoped to clean myself up. People in the street, especially Bougainvilleans, put their heads low, to show their respect when they saw my tears.

News about PNG soldiers butchering Bougainvilleans had grown worse each day, and Bougainvilleans were beginning to live in fear in their own land. The worst news had been of an infant and his mother who were shot at Pamu village near Aropa airport. Even the day before Kaea's disappearance, his best friend Kearimi had been butchered. Kearimi had been stopped while driving a 24-seater bus, was dragged outside and kicked to death before even being given a chance to know why he had been picked up.

With all these thoughts I began to fear that Kaea was being treated in the same way. What I really wanted to do was to try to save his life before something happened. But I was not given a chance even to know why he had been picked up.

By the time I arrived home I was exhausted. The minute I sat down I fell to sleep. I had had nothing to eat; only a cup of raspberry cordial satisfied my thirst. Everyone was quiet. The TV was off, lights off, not even the sound of footsteps was heard, nothing ... except the cry of my sick baby.

We waited the whole night for Kaea to come home. At every noise of a car we rushed towards the door, hoping to see Kaea. The hours passed very quickly. Morning came, still no sign of Kaea. We gathered around for our family worship, asking our Good Lord for Kaea's safety and return.

The day after that my husband returned from his business trip. He could see that I was dreadfully sad. He knew that something awful must have happened. His first thought was that one of our children was sick. He waited for the worst.

'Kaea was picked up by the soldiers a few days ago, since then he has never returned and I honestly don't know why,' I told him, almost whispering. Everyone was quiet. Even my children were looking very sad. My throat was like a lump of thick clouds. My eyes flooded with tears. In tears, my mouth trembling, I cried, 'I have a true feeling that I have been pushing off for days. I am 100 per cent certain that Kaea is shot dead by the PNG Defence Forces.'

I was proved right. This was really unfair because I had tried earlier to save him but no one would listen to my grievance. I now understood that this was the reason there were more men joining the BRA than before. The soldiers of PNG, the so-called 'Discipline Forces', had killed too many innocent people. They just picked up young men from their work places, from the streets, even from the sidewalks (as with Kaea) and labelled them as BRA.

As a last resort, my husband and I decided to go to the hospital morgue and look for Kaea's body. A message had been broadcast through the community announcements on Radio Maus Bilong Sankamap (the Voice of the Sunrise) for any family who was missing a relative to check at the morgue, because the morgue was full.

The hospital superintendent assured us that the morgue was completely full with corpses of young Bougainvillean men; most of them dead with wounds from high-powered guns. There were more than 10 bodies lying outside the morgue, thrown there by the PNG soldiers. These bodies were identified as 'black skins' of Wakunai (a town one and a half hours drive north of Arawa). Their relatives dared not come for fear of being shot by PNG forces. (Early the next morning the bodies had begun decomposing, so they were buried in Aropa by hospital security guards. I was glad Kaea was not one of them.)

Our hearts heavy, we did not hear what was being said to us. As soon as we entered the morgue we could smell blood. We looked around. I nearly fainted. There was blood everywhere. A woman and her daughter were mourning over their father. Suddenly, my heart ached, my tears rolled down. There beside them lay Kaea. I rushed towards him. I fell on him, staining my clothes in the process, when someone else pulled me back. I was covered in blood. Poor Kaea. He lay there, his heart blown out by a powerful gun, his body swollen all over. His front tooth knocked out by a powerful blow. There were signs of knife wounds all over his limbs. He lay there in a pool of blood — as if he was a criminal. It was the first time I had witnessed such a terrible thing. I looked at my neighbours and cried, ‘Whatever their excuses may be, they are doing something very terrible and very wrong when they kill. This is a great destroyer of peace.’

I stared at my dead brother. I wished he was someone else, that the real him was at work. ‘Why are you killed?’ I cried. ‘Talk to me, please ...’ I pleaded. ‘Four days ago you were very much alive. I can imagine the bulging muscle of your arms and your beautiful eyes as you lifted up the big red fish.’ But he did not answer me. He lay there, stiff and cold. He was speechless. He was powerless. He was, before me, a mystery.

I prayed, ‘Oh, my God, why did You let it happen? I know You’re powerful. Why didn’t You defend him? Is it because You called him that hour? Was it Your plan that he should see You face to face?’ I cried again.

The temptation of taking revenge appeared very clearly in my mind. I admit I had already planned evil. Then I prayed again. ‘No, my God; I, as a Christian, am not supposed to do that. I must forgive the person who tortured my brother. I am supposed to love my enemy right now! Give me Your courage and faith to do it!’

I cried, ‘Thank you, PNG soldier for not blowing my brother’s head off; otherwise I wouldn’t have recognised him. Thank you for giving him much suffering and pain. I thank you because, as a Christian, I am comforted to think about the deep and hidden value of his pain and helplessness. He freely united his sufferings with those of Jesus Christ, and became one with Him in His Redemptive Mission.’

I’m sure God will forgive you, Mr Soldier, because He is a loving and merciful Father. Kaea is in heaven today because he suffered so much at your hands. In the same way, Christ came earlier to redeem the world and it surely cost His Father something. The cost was His life.

One day, Mr Soldier, you too will die. Then you will see Kaea face to face. Then he can explain more clearly to you whether he was one of the BRA or just an innocent young father. Kaea will also reveal his secret to you. Yes, he is your brother. You came from the same loving hands of God.

The people of Bougainville will use Kaea’s blood as a weapon to win independence for future Bougainvilleans.

It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

PNG raid in Vito village, 1990

It was 3pm when three police buses, two army trucks and a few other small trucks arrived in Vito village, firing guns as they entered. They scared the villagers with gunfire and shot all the animals: pigs, dogs and chickens. They shot the walls and roofs of the houses and water-tanks. The PNG army was using automatic rifles, M16s and other sophisticated-looking weapons.

Vito village is made up of two smaller villages: Village One, which was the larger main village, and Village Two, which was home to five large extended families. I lived there with my family.

Everyone was screaming, shouting and running around aimlessly, not knowing where exactly the gunfire was coming from. The situation was chaotic and people were going insane from the noise of the gunfire.

The soldiers came to Village Two, where we were already assembled in front of the chapel, which was located in the centre of the village, so we would not be hit by the raging bullets. Everyone was told to lie face-down on the ground. I was seven-months pregnant with my daughter Kevina and was quite slow in complying with the instruction. My 18-month-old baby was crying because she was uncomfortable on the ground and a soldier started shouting abuse: 'Shut that bloody idiot up.' And he proceeded to kick me on the side of my pregnant belly. He then shouted at me to sit down and feed the baby, calling her a 'black idiot'.

They ordered us to run from there to the next village with the soldiers coming behind, their guns pointing at us. Even the very old and the sick were forced to run, including Thomas, who had a broken leg and was on crutches. Exhausted, we made it to the other group of villagers, and joined them lying face-down. We were eventually told to sit up after half an hour.

All the men were rounded up, put into buses and taken to the Arawa Police Station where they were interrogated for a week. The women and children who were left behind all slept together in the chapel, too afraid to sleep in their own houses.

LIFE ON THE RUN

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

LIFE ON THE RUN was a period of challenge with a lot of difficult situations and hurdles to overcome. I had not foreseen that the PNG Government would decide to deal with our economic and political problems by declaring war on Bougainville.

My memories of those times are still fresh and the experiences have contributed to shaping the character I am today.

It all began in 1989 when I was 22 years old, full of strength and energy, and anticipating a bright future. I had already made my decision to marry Sam, a young lieutenant from my village, who at that time was employed as a commander with the PNGDF. I could look forward to a secure job after graduating in Business Studies later in the year. Raising a good family and having a home after my marriage was also part of my dream.

In my dreams and visions, however, I never envisaged that I would become involved in the Bougainville conflict together with my future husband. I was home for the Christmas holidays when problems with the Panguna mine became very serious. The militant landowners stepped up the sabotage of the mine's power pylons and the destruction of the company's property. The PNG Riot Squad continued to burn down villages, mainly in the North Nasioi area of Central Bougainville. The PNG Government then declared war on the militant landowners. The declaration of war only intensified the situation and resulted in the militants securing more support from the Bougainville public. Observing the situation at home, I became ill. Because of this my parents would not allow me to return to my studies in PNG. We all agreed that I would return to school when I felt better and the political situation had improved.

During this time my health deteriorated. One weekend, my fiancé Sam came home to check if all was fine. He discovered that I had been hospitalised at Koromira Hospital. Because of my health he decided to stay for a week and took me to Arawa General Hospital. During this time the Riot Squad and militants started to engage in armed confrontation. While in Arawa, Sam attended a couple of meetings conducted by the militants. Consequently, a report was sent to PNGDF headquarters in Port Moresby. This reporting on Sam without anyone questioning him about his motives and concern made Sam seriously rethink his future with the PNGDF. Sam's home is Central

Bougainville and he naturally felt a sense of responsibility to his people who were being targeted as enemies of the State. He decided then not to return to Port Moresby.

He was now implicated as assisting the rebel landowners and put on a target list by the PNG Government. I also became a target. We married on the run and our marriage became the foundation for us to contribute positively to defending our people. We decided we would stay with our people and we came to understand that life in Bougainville was changing for ever. The thought of defeat never dawned on us. Our minds were occupied with positive thinking that one day there would be a victory for our people.

After our marriage, Sam became deeply involved with the BRA. He was often away with the young BRA guerrilla soldiers, training and raising people's awareness of political and military issues, including the impact of war. He would go out for weeks and sometimes months before coming to see us. For me, life in the village was becoming increasingly difficult. The everyday gossip women indulge in turned into meetings to talk about the imminence of war. Such talk made a lot of our people, especially the women, scared. Our people by then were building small huts in the jungles as more patrols by the PNGDF were made into the villages. My parents built two separate huts during 1989 and we moved our belongings there from our house at Damakoo for safety. That made us mobile and meant we would be ready to escape if the PNGDF arrived to destroy our home. Moving around the villages became more and more risky and dangerous for me as a lot of PNGDF informants were about. We did not trust everyone and I had to be extra careful about who I talked to.

There were times when I had narrow escapes from the PNGDF. The first took place at the Toniva Health Clinic when I went for a pregnancy check-up. I was pregnant with Melanie, my first daughter. The PNG soldiers came to check the records at Toniva Clinic. At the very moment my check-up was completed and I was walking out of the building, my uncle overheard the soldiers asking about me after checking the records. I had just passed those soldiers at the door. When I was informed of the danger I hastily got on the bus going towards home and escaped.

By mid-June 1989, the situation was getting worse. The villages were being raided, houses burned down and everything destroyed. People were beaten, women were raped and humiliated by the PNG soldiers. The second time I encountered the PNGDF was at a road-block. A Bougainvillean officer, who I had gone to school with, recognised me but thankfully he did not tell the PNG soldiers who I was and I managed to slip past. This was my last trip to town, to buy clothes for my baby; enough to last, and to keep her warm during the cold nights in the mountains where I knew I would now have to go to be safe. For the time being I was staying at Koromira Catholic Mission Station with my aunty, who was a nursing sister. I thought that by staying there my pregnancy would be more secure.

A very traumatic event for me was the killing of our close family friends, 14-year-old Joyce and her mother. The PNGDF caught them carrying their belongings between

two camps. They killed them, mutilated them and chopped off their breasts. The PNG soldiers placed dirt in their 'private parts' and dumped them at Arawa Hospital, in the front yard. They were unrecognisable.

I had thought a mission station would be a safe place from the PNGDF, but after this horrific incident I was not so sure anymore. When Joyce's brother Vincent built their coffins, I found myself a space to hide between the two caskets to ride to the main road. From there I could walk home to my village, Damakoo. The next Sunday, about 3am, the Koromira Mission was raided by the PNGDF. They staked out the mission and, as the congregation came to worship, they went directly to my uncle's house and threatened him for hiding Sam and myself. He was sick in bed, but the soldiers dragged him out, threw him off the veranda and kicked and beat him with their M16 rifles and heavy machine-guns, all the time accusing him of sheltering Sam and me. My uncle Kevin has been ill ever since, because of this beating and the injuries he sustained. The whole congregation was ordered out of the Church, men, women and children were lined up, threatened and questioned. A road-block was set up on the approach to the church to catch all the late-comers, who were forced to squat on the road in the sweltering sun. They were harassed and one poor young pregnant mother was mistaken for me. She was singled out for special treatment but thankfully was able to convince the defence forces that her husband and first-born child accompanied her.

Another incident that led to my taking refuge in the jungle was an ambush in July 1989 at Keraing Bridge, Aropa Plantation, on the main road. This road runs along the coastline forming the main route from the south to the north of Bougainville. The ambush led to the death of three PNG Riot Squad police and one young BRA soldier. It dramatically increased the animosity and tension in that area. The fear of retribution for these deaths was too much for me to take any more risks.

This is when my life on the run in the jungle began. I was seven months pregnant.

In July 1989, one fateful night at 8pm, Sam and I gathered our basic necessities and fled into the night. We came to a resting place in a small hamlet further into the jungle and I was faced with the realisation of what this actually meant. 'There is no garden nearby, what will we do for food? How and when are we going to get home?' Many such questions raced through my mind. And I worried for my baby. 'Will the baby be safe in the damp, wet jungle? Will I be okay in labour with my first baby?' I should have been at the hospital where people could help me. Being seven months pregnant and traversing the rugged mountains and wild terrain was really hard for me, physically and mentally.

Three weeks after setting off into the jungle, I gave birth to my daughter Melanie. It was a rainy day, 19 September, 1989. I was in labour for two days without any medical assistance. Complications arose as I had retained some afterbirth. My mother, who had sought me out in response to news of my protracted labour, administered bush herbal potions to expel the remaining placenta. This saved my life. I felt so ill that I could not

feed my baby properly for a week. I couldn't sleep because of the pain from the blood clots that remained.

One week later I resumed my journey on foot, not knowing how my baby would survive. From this time onwards I was living like a nomad. I had very little rest. I continued my journey, constantly on the move, through rocky creeks and rivers, along mountain ridges, always searching for a safe place to make a new camp. At times there was nothing to eat. This traumatic time often returns to me: the feelings of loneliness, isolation and vulnerability as I made this journey with a tiny newborn baby in my arms. Many times I would cry aloud as I nursed my baby alone in the mountainous jungle. The difficulties of what were basic tasks, such as drying nappies — which would give my location away if they were spotted by the helicopter gunships — proved very difficult in the jungle.

During the 10 years of war on Bougainville, mothers and children suffered the most because of the total blockade imposed on us by the PNG Government. There were no hospitals, no stores, no schools and no permanent secure homes in which to bring up our children. We could not get help from anywhere else. Prayer was our only solace. Through prayer we were able to support those who needed emotional help in mourning and offer hope for our survival.

We still met at our camps on Sundays for communal prayer services and our faith became a unifying force in our continued resistance and in our ability to sustain ourselves during the war and the blockade. The leaders felt guided and our younger people found strength for their endurance and the hardships they suffered. It was a source of comfort in times of loneliness and desperation, as prayers were an uplifting way to acknowledge that we were not alone in our suffering and that we were being protected. In many of the hardest times in my life I have prayed to God and, in so doing, found peace in my heart.

JOURNEY INTO EXILE

Marilyn Taleo Havini

THE EVENTS OF 1988, 1989 and 1990 were shocking not only to Bougainvilleans but to thousands of others. Europeans and Papua New Guineans who lived and worked on Bougainville, and all who passed through as tourists, were unable to comprehend the horror that was unfolding. We watched helplessly as brutality and physical violence imposed by PNG Government authority replaced our model Provincial Government. We were, in effect, under martial law. All human rights, such as freedom of movement, the right of assembly and other freedoms to live and work without threat or intervention, were controlled by arbitrary military decisions. As bad as things were under the curfew, and with check-points and surveillance for those who were on the run, nothing prepared us for the wholesale abuse of entire villages well beyond the original arena of conflict around the Panguna mine.

I continued to drive to school with my children through road-blocks, subjected to car and body searches by rough, crude soldiers. Machine-guns were aimed at us from behind sandbags at check-points while menacing soldiers surrounded the car and ordered all the occupants out. We would huddle together while the car and our personal belongings were searched. How could I continue to teach under conditions that made every day more difficult and dangerous than the last? Soldiers carried automatic rifles casually slung over their shoulders even when off duty. What right did they have to sling them over their shopping trolleys and stick their barrels up our noses in the supermarket line?

All our neighbours, locals and foreigners, were fleeing the country or evacuating to their home villages. Our schools were emptying; I had no idea who would be in the classroom from day to day. Panic, rumours and fear gripped everyone. A whole community, and especially our Bougainvillean people, were being terrorised. We heard new stories every day of torture, rape, bashings, battles, ambushes, detainment, abduction, executions, the strafing and violent dispersal of crowds.

The war came home to me personally on my return from school one day. I had climbed the steps to my house and was struggling with heavy bags of shopping and schoolwork as I tried to turn the keys to my front door. Suddenly, there was the sound of feet running up the stairs behind me. I turned to see Marcelline, my next-door neighbour,

collapse in despair into a chair on my veranda. She was crying and it was difficult to comprehend what she was trying to tell me. Gradually, in snatches, I could piece together her story about the abduction of her brother Kaea by the PNGDF and her frantic search to try to find him. Within her story was another detail that stuck in my mind as a horror in itself. Not yet comprehending Marcelline's fears for the safety of her brother, I was more gripped by her tale of what she had seen at the outpatients' clinic at the Arawa General Hospital.

While she had been waiting for her sick baby to be treated, two of Bougainville's most respected priests were brought to the hospital. Fathers Tangin and Woerster, both German Catholic priests, had plucked up the courage earlier in the day to go together to the care centre (or detention camp) in Arawa and demand to visit their parishioners. No one in the community had been allowed access to these villagers, who had been incarcerated for weeks since being flushed out of their mountain-top villages. The soldiers had refused even these priests entry and, when they insisted that they had a legitimate right to check on the welfare of their parishioners, the soldiers attacked them most cruelly. Both priests were hit on the head with the butts of automatic rifles, blood was pouring out of their ears, and Fr Tangin was later evacuated to Europe for medical treatment to assist his recovery from trauma.

Up to this point I had been worried for my husband's safety — as a Bougainville leader, he was a potential target, and being black could be enough to make one a suspect — but the realisation that no one was safe from these thugs, who relished their power to terrorise, made me burst out sobbing. Marcelline and I sat together on the veranda and sobbed our hearts out. At last, the pent-up fears and anger found expression as we cried, grieved, ranted and prayed together. This experience marks for ever, to me, the day I counted myself once more in the struggle. I had tried to ignore the war — weary from the 20-year-long haul of trying to develop Bougainville. I was struggling with a personal anger at PNG for its misuse of power, its refusal to face the root causes of our grievances and yet, on the other hand, I had even resented these young Bougainvillean militants who were threatening to destroy all of Bougainville's hard work.

Moses had meanwhile left his positions in government (as Provincial Government Chief Executive Officer) and the Provincial Assembly (as Clerk and then Speaker of the House) and was working towards Bougainville's economic independence through his work with the Bougainville Development Corporation (he was chairman of the Atolls Shipping Board and BDC Publications and Public Relations Officer). After six months of dusk-to-dawn curfews, he was confined to the house for personal safety reasons when BDC had to cease operations.

We were caught in a quandary. We thoroughly supported the Bougainville cause but we did not believe in violence as the method to redress wrongs — and both parties seemed determined to press their point with violence. There seemed to be no way to enter any negotiations as there was nowhere to go to debate, no venue at which to negotiate and when even the Provincial Premier, Joseph Kabui, with Michael Laimo, a member of the Provincial Government, was assaulted beside the Premier's official car as they were on

their way home from church, it was clear that reason and the time for talking were over. The two men were made to lick their own blood off the car doors and Michael Laimo lost an eye from the rifle butting by these so-called security forces. If the most respected man in the land, the Premier, was humiliated and treated like this, then absolutely no Bougainvillean was safe!

Media reports had alerted the outside world to the worsening situation.

Moses answered the phone early one morning to find my mother in Australia asking if we were OK. I had gone to school and she had missed me, but with this opportunity to plead with her son-in-law, Mum pressed upon him an invitation to bring the family to her home in Australia.

At about the same time, in 1989, our eldest son Rikha was arguing with his father about the question of the family going to Australia. He was adamant that we should stay, as he and all the children loved Bougainville so much. After Moses and Rikha had their discussion on the veranda, Rikha went inside for a shower. He was startled about 8pm by the sound of gunshots bursting around him, fired under our house by a soldier in hot pursuit of a Bougainvillean man who had escaped from the Reverend Jack Sharp Memorial Youth Centre, which had been turned into a care centre, and who was attempting to reach the morgue. This was a constant occurrence, as the incarcerated villagers were always anxious whenever they saw helicopters flying over the town and headed for the hospital. They were totally cut off from any news and were desperate to know if the helicopters that ferried the wounded and the dead from the villages and conflict zones had dropped any of their relatives there.

Rikha could at last understand why we were concerned about having to leave town but, as yet, Moses and I had no thought of accepting Mum's offer even though we could see that we were in a perilous position. No longer involved in the Bougainville leadership, Moses was suspected by both sides as secretly working for the other! We had just heard that his name was on a 'death list' made up by some youths who didn't trust any of their clan elders and previous leaders because they had not been able to secure total independence for Bougainville in 1975. We were also at risk from the PNGDF, which suspected we were leaders of this new movement.

We were considering our own evacuation to our home village and had begun to pack up and truck our personal belongings to Buka with Moses' sister's household effects. Meanwhile, as an Australian citizen, I had to report to the official who came from the Australian High Commission to Kieta to register all Australians ready for evacuation. My passport was due to expire so I thought this would be a chance for me to straighten out the paperwork so I could legally remain in the country. Instead, I found the Australian Government keen to place all my children on Australian passports as well as renewing my own. I clearly told the official that we were Bougainvillean and intended to remain. He insisted that the children and I would have to leave if the evacuation order came. This was shocking news to me. I asked, 'What happens to Moses — I can't leave my husband?' The official replied that he had been clearly instructed by the

Australian High Commission to prepare an evacuation list of all Australian citizens in Bougainville. I told him that I would rather go and live in the village or on the run, as I did in 1975 and 1976, than leave my husband. The official was perplexed and said he would check with his superiors.

A few days later we received in the mail application papers from the Australian Government for Moses to immigrate. We were astounded. Moses refused to entertain the idea and we ignored the papers for three months. Moses was far more concerned that our Provincial Government had been cancelled and martial law had been applied under State of Emergency powers. He was constantly importuned by Bougainvilleans to intervene in the situation and was asked to once more step into a leadership role. At that time, however, certain leaders who had recently swept into power with John Momis under the Melanesian Alliance Party were not prepared to entertain any leadership input from Leo Hannett, Alexis Sarei, Moses and others of their predecessors. Moses, in fact, dropped in to visit the Government, motivated by grave concern for the deteriorating conditions, and offered his services but party politics had swept aside all the former Bougainville leaders. Moses' overtures were rejected and they firmly told him, 'You have had your turn, this is our time now!' They obviously thought that they could do better than anyone from the past. I felt it was tragic that they would not unite and gather all Bougainville's leaders together, such as the older members of the suspended Provincial House of Assembly, chiefs, Community Government leaders and other more seasoned campaigners, including my husband, and especially our women leaders, who I knew from the Bougainville Women's Council. These people had all learned valuable lessons from the past and had analysed and researched our history and they may well have brought about different outcomes to the war we were being plunged into if they had been called into service at this time.

Our house was 'staked out' and we were obviously under nightly observation by people unknown to us. Rocks were thrown at our house and vandalism to the fibro created holes in the office and storeroom walls. People came to visit us from the bush to say we were on a list of suspects and they stayed and prayed with us for our safety. Moses was indignant that young Bougainvilleans, his own kin, did not know they could trust him not to collaborate with the opposing forces. He decided to walk up into the mountains to attend a graduation ceremony for young farmers who had trained at the Mabiri Catholic Agricultural School. Father Woerster was the officiating priest at that ceremony and he blessed and prayed for the graduating new farmers. Moses' courage impressed several elders present who wondered at the solidarity Moses showed for those who had been suspicious of him.

Then the defining moment came for me one night in September 1989.

A rare extension of the curfew to 10pm had allowed our small fellowship group to meet. We had enjoyed a shared evening meal and were singing away to our guitars when the sound of gunfire and mortar explosions from the Arawa water-tank hill made us run outside into the night and stand on the lawn to watch a miniature star wars!

PNGDF mortars had been fired over the town and were aimed at the hillside above the hospital and the water tower. Fearing that the water tower would be blown up, everyone jumped into their cars and scattered into the night to their homes to turn on taps and fill bathtubs before the water ran out. I, too, ran upstairs and through the house to turn on all the taps — full bore — but no water came out!

We were suddenly aware that our house was surrounded and there were eyes in the night watching every move we made. I had put all the children to bed and, with my heart beating out of my chest, I pleaded with God for protection. We could hear the spies sending bird calls to each other as we walked in and out of the bedrooms to check on our sleeping children. I grabbed my Bible, as one would grab a lifeline, and sat praying at our kitchen table, aware that the prying eyes watching me through the glass louvres could see everything. I had no idea where to start reading because of the panic rising within me so I allowed the Bible to fall open as I asked the Lord for help. This is how I came across the words that would not only help me that night, but would be my guiding light in the long years of exile to come. Certain verses from Isaiah 33: 14–16 shone from the page as if lit by a neon light:

‘Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning? He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hands from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil — this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied and water will not fail him.’

On cue, water gushed out of the taps and I ran through the house to turn them off as the water was restored to Arawa town. Initially, the leap of faith and the excitement of such a remarkable sign — not to mention the relief I felt at having the water return — was replaced by a deep inner peace regarding our safety. I took these words as a calling for how we were to live and trust in God from this point on. No longer did the rumours and fears of the night disturb me. No matter how insurmountable outside circumstances appeared, I have learned to trust in God to take care of things.

Moses was restless after six months’ confinement at home, curfew and the lack of significant employment. There was no place for our children in the already overcrowded school at Buka and we were conscious of the need to protect the village. It would not do to bring the threats to Moses home to Buka. We also needed my teaching salary to keep our two elder sons at high school and to support the family, as Moses and all BDC staff were on leave without pay. Moses obtained a special pass to override curfew so he could resume his law studies through the Arawa University Centre. He began to wonder if it would be worth applying as a full-time student to Sydney University. We calculated that a three-year period in Australia would allow Moses to graduate so that he could return to Bougainville and create an ombudsman commission — a particular dream of his. The children could continue their schooling in a safe environment and I could reapply to the NSW Education Department for a teaching position to support the family.

My Australian relatives were taking turns to phone us on a weekly basis to check that no harm had befallen us, so Moses asked them to inquire about the possibility of his applying for university admission. We had no funds for Moses to study as an overseas student and the only option would be to pay fees as a permanent resident. He therefore eventually obliged the Australian High Commission by filling out immigration papers to enter Australia. It was mid-October 1989 and only late fee entries could be accepted at the University Admissions Centre. Moses had 10 days in which to gain the immigrant status that would allow him to apply for university admission before the 31 October deadline. Moses was adamant that he would go to Australia only if he could study the next year! Thus began a merry-go-round of paperwork, medical and police checks and crazy days of difficult communication between all the institutions and government bodies. His police check came back to Bougainville from the PNG Police High Commissioner with a clean slate and he obtained a clean bill of health from Dr Charles Loubai at the Arawa Private Medical Clinic. (Later, when the private medical clinic had been destroyed, Dr Loubai from Buin, South Bougainville, continued to serve as the only doctor at Arawa General Hospital during the blockade. He eventually died in Arawa from the stress of responsibility for so many lives with no medical supplies and the hardship of limited, failing facilities.)

Moses was officially to immigrate to Australia some time after 31 October on the condition that he did not precede my entry to the country. We began to make plans for completing the school year in Arawa, spending Christmas in the village with our clan and then travelling to Australia in the new year.

In the midst of packing our belongings to be shipped ahead of us to Australia, three white men came looking for Moses. One I recognised as an Australian Christian friend from our church who worked in insurance. The other two formally suited gentlemen were strangers who had flown in from Melbourne that afternoon.

The men were insurance representatives who told us that, as insurers for the Panguna mine owner, BCL, they were refusing to pay any more compensation for damages done by the militant landowners beyond a certain time. Their argument with the company was that the crisis was an 'insurrection' and, according to a provision within their insurance policy, it was now a war; therefore they were no longer liable for damages.

BCL had promptly begun proceedings to sue the insurers in the Supreme Court of Victoria. These insurance representatives were looking for an expert Bougainville witness. Moses heard what they were saying with regard to the 'insurrection provision' in the insurance policy arguing that the crisis had now become a war. Bougainville's grievances and the State of Emergency was indeed far greater than a private company trying to claim insurance damage to mine property.

Moses agreed with this finding because, as he had noted in his diary on 3 March, 1989, the first deployment of the PNGDF on Bougainville constituted the start of war operations. The involvement of PNG troops had taken the conflict way beyond anti-mining and environmental protest, or even a 'law and order' situation (as PNG liked to

describe the situation to the international community). It was the first time since the granting of independence in 1975 that the Government of PNG had mobilised the army against its own citizens within its own borders. To most Bougainvilleans it amounted to a declaration of war.

Moses was concerned that if he was to assist these lawyers, it would only be because the situation was a true reflection of the people's struggle. Although the visitors were apolitical, they agreed to Moses' request for the freedom and opportunity to speak politically and publicly for Bougainville in Australia. Moses was eager to alert the world to Bougainville's plight and he was genuinely motivated to agree to provide his services to these lawyers on his conditions. But when the lawyers went on to say that they needed Moses urgently — the very next morning, in fact — to fly to Melbourne, Australia, to be their expert witness, I was horrified. The provisions of his immigration visa would be broken and he would have everything cancelled, after all we had been through!

Nevertheless, the next morning Moses was on that plane to Melbourne. While I remained teaching and arranging the shipping of our Australian belongings, Moses was caught up in Melbourne making statements to the media. He made some excellent contacts with non-government organisations in Australia and spoke to public forums that began to consider seriously the plight of the Bougainville people living under martial law. From our home in Arawa, I listened to his voice on the radio in news bulletins and knew that he was doing what he could to speak for our people. The insurance case was eventually settled out of court and Moses hurried home to rejoin us in Bougainville. As he passed through Port Moresby, he gave his passport to a relative and asked him to take it to the Australian High Commission for them to check whether he was still eligible to re-enter Australia. The officers inspected it and could find no evidence that the visa had been cancelled, so they returned the passport to Moses in Bougainville with the remark that he was a very lucky man.

We still needed to face our village and all the clan family in Buka to explain what had transpired. They had, of course, been expecting us to come home to stay. It was very difficult to explain that we would be gone for three years. We really believed in our hearts that Moses could complete his studies and return within this time-frame.

We eventually flew out of Bougainville on 5 January, 1990, after a very emotional series of farewells and reassurances to our clan that we were not leaving for long. Five days later, the Australian Government evacuated all its and many foreign citizens. Moses began his law studies at Sydney University and I did one term of casual teaching before gaining a permanent appointment as a high school visual arts teacher in Sydney. We hadn't realised how traumatised we all were until we found ourselves ducking for cover whenever a helicopter passed overhead or a car backfired or we found ourselves crying at the news and our ears were alert to every report. We were still mentally living out everything on Bougainville and our lives in Australia felt unreal — like a play being acted out by other people, but in our bodies.

After three months of settling our family of six into life in Australia and with Moses studying for his first law exams, there came the news that PNG was pulling out its troops and withdrawing all services from Bougainville. We first heard the news at 5am one March day in 1990. I was horrified and could not understand why the whole world was not up in arms! Why was Australia a party to such inhumanity? I had known too many deaths of loved ones in Bougainville from lack of medicine in even the best of times ... how would our people survive now? That night as I was cooking dinner a phone call came from Bougainville. It was very crackly on the line. It was a stranger called Martin Miriori who was asking to urgently speak to Moses. I told him to phone back later as Moses was at night lectures and would be available after 10pm. He said he would try but he didn't know if it would be possible, as all communication from Bougainville to the outside world was to be cut off by PNG at any time within the next few hours.

Martin told me that his reason for calling was to ask Moses to become the voice of Bougainville to the outside world from beyond the blockade. He was sitting in a meeting of all the combined leaders of the re-formed government. They were calling themselves the Bougainville Interim Government and Francis Ona would be President and our former Premier, Joseph Kabui, would be the Vice-President. Martin asked me to relay this information to Moses and for him to be ready in case they could successfully phone back. I found myself in a state of wonder at such news and my only thought was how could one refuse such a responsibility? A whole island population of 200,000 people was to be shut in behind a total air and sea blockade. Australia, the largest power in the region, had established the PNG army and police forces that would be maintaining the blockade and they had even donated the helicopters in support of it. My identity as an Australian and an adopted Bougainvillean was being challenged.

Moses came home and digested the news. We paced the house, we prayed, we talked everything through, but no call came. We worried that the satellite communications had already been severed, and at last lay down to a fitful sleep. Eventually, at 9.45 the next morning, the call came from Martin. Martin explained that Graeme Kemelfield from the Arawa University Centre had let the leadership know how to find us in Sydney and their lawyer, Reuben Siara, had vouched for Moses to the assembled leaders. Moses protested to Martin and said he needed more time to consider their request. From the distance, over a crackling line in Bougainville, Martin said, 'We don't have more time.' 'And how much time do we have?' Moses asked. 'Exactly 15 minutes,' was the reply.

Moses accepted the request with a very heavy heart. Sure enough, the line was cut 15 minutes later as they were talking. Bougainville was now silenced and blockaded from the rest of the world.

And so Moses began to lobby human rights organisations for assistance for our people, he tried to meet Australian politicians and leaders to represent Bougainville and he began to make media releases from the smuggled communications sent by mission radio

contacts through the Solomon Islands. Together, we spent every day and night writing and speaking to church groups, trade unions, aid agencies and anyone who would listen. Martin and his family moved to the Solomon Islands to establish a humanitarian office and build a stronger link to convey the latest news from home so that Moses could speak genuinely about the current state of affairs.

PNG responded by cancelling Moses' and Martin's passports, effectively sending both men and a few other suspected 'agitators' into exile. PNG did everything it could to block Moses from travelling and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sir Michael Somare, issued an extra directive for Moses' PNG passport to be 'captured'. Gareth Evans, the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, had Moses placed on a list of people to never be received.

Yet these bodies did not count on a God of compassion and righteousness who had led us into human rights work in partnership with people of all organisations and faiths. We have proven, for more than 14 years, God's amazing provision and answers to prayer. Moses has faced three attempts at extradition by PNG, which wanted to charge him with treason, for simply telling the world what was happening in Bougainville. Moses has been called a propagandist, vilified openly in PNG newspapers and sought by execution squads who reportedly even attempted to find us in Australia. We have lived under constant surveillance and Moses remains in exile today, but he looks forward to returning to Bougainville soon. He has travelled the world without a cent in his pocket; he has spoken to the UN and to many governments around the world. We have been so aware of the spiritual forces that have prevailed on our behalf.

The resilience of the people of Bougainville is something out of the ordinary. Our people are noted for their determination to succeed, for their commitment and belief in themselves and their unique identity as a people. All our trials have given birth to a struggle against successive colonisers for a free and independent Bougainville.

MMARURA INCURSION AND LOIS MMARI'S ESCAPE

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

IT WAS JANUARY 1990. We hadn't been able to celebrate Christmas with our normal holidays for two years because of the conflict, but we were able to set aside two weeks to visit Sam's family. They lived at Mmarura, a high-altitude village in No.2 Kongara Area. It is an inland home accessible only on foot through dense jungle. At this time the war was being fought only in Central Bougainville, concentrated on Panguna, Arawa, Kieta, Toniva, the international airport at Aropa and the road access between Aropa and Sisikai. Our mobile camps while living with the BRA were always located in the Dantanai Valley in the eastern foothills of the Crown Prince Range, overlooking the sea.

We came to Mmarura for a much-needed rest, bringing our daughter Melanie, who was a few months old. We were looking forward to showing Melanie to her aunties and it would be a great time for Sam's family to initiate our baby according to custom, thus accepting her as one of theirs.

Sam's paternal grandfather established Mmarura after World War II. The village had so far been enjoying peace, as the war had not yet reached No.2 Kongara. It was a great relief knowing that Mmarura Village was a safe place for my family to stay, so I was able to enjoy the company of my sisters-in-law. During the day I would go to the garden with my in-laws to harvest food and vegetables. Sometimes we would collect fire wood. When there was washing to be done, we would take it to the river and, at the same time, enjoy swimming in the cool, crystal-clear, refreshing Toovei River, which flows from the second-highest mountain in Bougainville, Mt Takuan. My baby was always being cuddled in the safe hands of relatives, and I would have her to myself only at night, or when she was hungry and cried. I wished the war would be over soon so that we could freely visit each other and enjoy living in the homes that our fathers and ancestors had established for us.

We were so much carried away by this village life and activity that we never anticipated any danger, nor did we suspect that any operation would be conducted by the PNGDF, which was about to sweep through the whole of Kongara. The enemy's plan was to conduct an air-supported sweep to clear No.1 and No.2 Kongara areas of BRA.

This operation was to involve two companies; one company was to be deployed in No.2 Kongara, the other in No.1. A mortar platoon was to be deployed to No.1 Kongara to provide indirect support. The number-one target village in No.2 Kongara was Mmarura. We were suspicious about the timing of this operation, coinciding as it did with our visit. There was a \$K.200,000 'dead or alive' ransom on Sam's head and we suspected informants from the neighbouring village were collaborating with the PNGDF and had alerted them to our presence.

Early on Thursday morning I had a dream. Sam and the boys had been planning a three-day fishing trip to start that morning. In my dream, an elderly person told me to leave the village, warning me that the village was going to be raided by the enemy and I was in danger. When I woke up I told Sam about the dream. He didn't think the dream should be taken literally so he decided to go ahead with the trip. Besides, he had already planned and prepared the fishing gear and those going, including his father, were up and ready.

The morning promised another fine day, perfect for dive-fishing. After breakfast the party took their gear and walked for about 10km to the fishing site on Bougainville's biggest river, the Lului. Their route took them past a disused airstrip at Bansikuna, about three kilometres from Mmarura. When they arrived at the fishing site the river showed evidence of light rain upstream, as it was dirty with a little flooding. Dive-fishing was not possible now and Sam wasn't feeling well. During the night it rained again, making fishing even more difficult, so, early the next day, they came home. We were quite relieved to see them back. The rain did not stop until later that afternoon.

On Saturday morning the enemy's 'D-Day' dawned with bright sunlight. Over the valleys and the base of Mt Takuan the morning fog had not lifted and the recent rain caused a humidity that prevented it from clearing. Trails of smoke from cooking fires in scattered villages were visible in the early morning and traces of them could be seen stretching down the valleys as they flowed together with the breeze. I was up early making a fire for Sam's mother to cook breakfast. Others in the village were just waking up, but Sam and Melanie were still asleep. For some reason that I can't explain, I had packed our belongings — mainly clothes — into my carry bag the previous night.

Unexpectedly, the downing sound of the powerful engines of Australian-donated Iroquois helicopters broke the early morning chorus, echoing between the mountains and valleys. Mmarura Village lies directly below the flight path between Arawa and Buin and normally the engines of any aircraft could be heard from a long way off as the craft passed over the Crown Prince Range from Arawa. On this day, however, the sound of the engines seemed to be coming from all directions, shaking the bush and the whole environment. The first machine swept directly over the village at tree-top height, in formation with three others. In seconds, they disappeared and landed at the Bansikuna airstrip. There the enemy troops disembarked and the choppers returned to make the next sortie. Thank God the enemy didn't strafe the village that morning as they usually did. Also, we were surprised that the landing didn't take place in the village itself, as there was a football field nearby that was large enough to accommodate

all four choppers. The choppers made another three sorties to disembark further troops before the enemy started to advance towards Mmarura, supported from the air by the helicopters.

The fact that these 'war machines' had dropped their troops away from the village gave us time to gear up and move hastily back to our camp in Dantanai Valley. Rose, my sister, who was doing the laundry by the riverside, hastily chucked my baby's wet clothes into a bag, ready to move. I wrapped my baby, securing her with calico to my chest, and we fled as soon as we were ready.

That morning, nobody in the village showed any further interest in breakfast. Sam's mum screamed as she picked up the saucepan of almost-cooked sweet potato and cast its contents over the fence to the pigs. Sam's dear grandfather collected his suitcase and, in shock, started marching across the village to relatives on the other side. Deaf and confused, he asked his niece what was happening as she passed others running in the opposite direction. No one in the village had time to secure their belongings before they escaped to the jungle. We left behind in the village the old folks who were not able to hide. We later learned that some good PNGDF soldiers felt pity for our elderly people wandering at the edge of the village and they walked them back to their houses, but not before they had attempted to set fire to Sam's grandfather's house. It was set alight three times, but each time the fire went out. The old man was watching from under some scrub some distance away.

The fearful thoughts that had accompanied my dream were confirmed. If Sam's fishing trip had been successful and he had not returned till later during the Saturday of the attack, we would have been separated. Without Sam to help me with the baby's knapsack and guide me through unfamiliar territory, I would have found it extremely difficult to escape. Secondly, if the choppers had dropped the troops directly into the village, we would have had no chance to escape. I really thank God for the protection that He gave us.

We were on the move once again. No one considered stopping to farewell one another because, in such a situation, everyone was forced to do what they could to save themselves. Normal pleasantries and manners would only endanger others. We were the first to depart and followed the main track towards Dantanai. We did not know which way our relatives went. The young boys were left to keep watch from safe positions and observe enemy movements as the PNGDF advanced through the villages. The main track that we took led us through several villages and over the swing bridge across the Lului River, then over the Crown Prince Range to our home area. When we had reached the swing bridge at Lului, we heard the last chopper making its final drop-off. By now it was mid-morning, but we felt no hunger as our small party moved swiftly onwards.

We would have made the journey back to our own camp had it not been for my cousin, who invited us to overnight with his family in his camp half-way along the bush track. It was already late afternoon so we accepted the invitation and spent the night with his

family. There were a lot of kids in this camp who felt no fear and had no intention of hiding from the enemy. The kids were playing, crying and climbing trees in this jungle hide-out. In reality, it was not a hide-out, as the whole jungle was alive with the sound of laughter and shouting from these rowdy kids having fun. After our day's experience and narrow escape, this bothered me a lot! I was accustomed to living in disciplined, noise-free camps.

The next day, Sunday, we stayed in the area but moved to a higher spot on the mountain from where we could see the whole No.2 Kongara Plateau, as we needed to observe the enemy's activities. Sure enough, we were able to see several villages being burnt to ashes by the enemy. In the village of Mmarura there were only two houses burnt; one of them belonged to Sam's parents. The village we saw completely burnt to ashes was Mataava. Sam decided to stay one more day at this vantage point to better observe the enemy's activities and gauge their intentions before we moved on.

On the final night we received a false report that the enemy was pushing through in the direction of our camp. This made me so nervous I convinced Sam to move camp. By the last light of the day, Sam erected a hut by putting some wild banana leaves overhead as a shelter for the night.

That night was the most uncomfortable night of my life. It rained very heavily, so much so that the rain poured into our little shelter. The only place we could make secure was where my baby and Sam's young brother, Oliver, lay. We had placed a small canvas and an umbrella over them for extra protection from the rain. Sam, Rose and I were kept awake all through the night as we kept sliding down the slope into a pool of water collecting at our feet. We were so cold, and the rain continued till about midday before we could make the last part of the trip. We boiled our last packet of rice before setting off.

When we arrived at our camp in Dantanai we learned that my parents were very worried, as they had heard that we were almost captured. It was a joy to reach this camp as it was our favourite. My parents were there and it was where Melanie was born. At last I felt secure. Whenever Sam was required to go out for his official duties I felt safe here. My parents became vital to my family's survival and also facilitated a contact point for our people and leaders who came to meet with my husband. They never complained and never got tired of their responsibility. I owe them a lot.

Lois Mmarii's escape

Sam's sister, Lois Mmarii, lived with her husband in Karioina village in the foothills of the Southern Crown Prince Ranges, which was a 20km walk from Mmarura village. On the Saturday when the PNGDF landed at Bansikuna and we fled Mmarura, Lois had, unbeknown to us, set out to visit us. She had heard that we had brought our new baby to Mmarura and she wanted to see us.

Lois had to walk through mountainous, thick jungle normally traversed only by hunters. About 4.30pm she reached the village of No'antavu, the first between

Karioina and Mmarura, and about six kilometres from Mmarura. No'antavu village is near the great Luluai River, which flows from here through spectacular ravines and gorges towards South Bougainville.

Lois saw no villagers on the outskirts of No'antavu, which was unusual because at that time of day one would expect to see people returning from their gardens with the day's harvest. Children also would usually be enjoying their last swim for the day in the popular pool one had to pass on the way into the village. Lois thought it strange that she had not met a single soul that afternoon and that there were no human sounds at all.

She had, however, noticed thick smoke rising over the scrub in the direction of the village. She had a strange feeling, but she continued towards the village, although cautiously. She reached the first building, with its bamboo walls and thatched-sago roof, at the edge of the village clearing and was stunned to see that half the houses in the village were ablaze. The fires were at their most intense stage and, at first, she could not see anyone. As she stood under this first building, the truth revealed itself. Walking from house to house were members of the PNGDF, their rifles hanging from their shoulders, setting fire to the houses. The villagers had apparently already escaped into the jungle.

At first, Lois could not believe her eyes. Then she prayed for strength, especially against the fear that was taking over her mind and body. She quietly retreated from the edge of the village. She realised now that the helicopter she had heard earlier was not following the normal route to Buin, but was operating within the No.2 Kongara Area. She had not heard any gunfire and had been completely unprepared to find the PNGDF, which had been strafing the village before they entered to destroy the houses. More importantly, she realised, no report had reached Karioina to warn others of the enemy incursion into the Kongara Area.

Slowly and carefully, Lois crept through the bush to the small creek that flowed near the village. When she felt she was safely out of sight, she was able to sit and collect her thoughts. While she was planning her next move, she heard an Iroquois helicopter approach from the north-west, land, then take off again from the village. Now, too, came the sound of heavy and small arms fire from the same direction. Lois guessed that Mmarura village had likely been occupied, too, but she gathered her strength and began to follow a narrow, ill-defined track towards Mmarura. When Mmarura came into view, she could see it was surrounded by smoke and she was certain the enemy was there. By now she was feeling extremely insecure, on top of which, the sun would soon be setting.

She was worried about what had happened to my husband, my baby and me, where we were, and where her parents were. How would she be able to find us? She had to decide what to do next. It had already been arranged that her husband would come to Mmarura the next day to join her. Somehow, she had to warn him not to come. No one in her village knew about the enemy incursion and any unsuspecting person who approached the area would likely be captured and killed.

Lois decided she would have to try to make it back to Karioina – a five-hour walk. There were only two possible routes home: one was the main track she had taken earlier in the day, the second was a rough, poorly defined fishing track, with many river crossings, ravines and cliffs. Lois knew she could not risk returning past No'antavu village, where she had seen the soldiers burning the houses. The enemy had likely spread even further by now, so walking anywhere was risky, but Lois decided to take the second route.

As it turned out, to reach the Luluai River this way, Lois had to pass the Bansikuna airstrip, where the enemy had landed that morning. As she walked towards the airstrip she could see the footprints of the enemy soldiers heading in the opposite direction to her. It was not until she had passed the airstrip that she was able to feel any relief and any sense that she was out of danger of the marauding force.

It was getting dark very quickly — as it does near the Equator — and she knew the journey would be especially difficult in the dark. She hated herself for not having brought a torch or matches with her, but she knew there was no turning back. As darkness settled in, she walked between steep ridges into a gorge, resting only briefly when she reached the river. She decided to drift with the current as it was too dark to properly see the walking track. She knew the river had its share of obstacles: dangerous rapids, deep pools and, because of the high elevation, the water was very cold. The only light was that from the stars, with which she was able to discern the contours of the terrain and figure out what objects were as she passed them.

She drifted through the rapids and when she reached a pool she either swam across it or scrambled up to walk along the bank. Her arms and knees became scratched and sore. She guessed it was about midnight when she reached the track that led to Karioina. From here there remained a steep walk over the hill and into the next valley to her village. Before setting out she rested for a while and again offered her prayers for the strength to continue.

By the time she made it to her village, the crowing of roosters indicated that it was the early hours of the morning. Lois was beyond exhaustion, suffering extreme hypothermia, hunger and weakness. She did, however, finally feel safe to be back in this secluded village in the interior of Bougainville's dense jungle.

She knocked on the door of her *saksak* (thatched) house. There was no answer. She knocked again, harder, this time calling her husband's name. When Masivai heard his name being called, he was initially confused and was unable to work out who could be calling him. He opened the door and shone a torch out into the darkness. He couldn't believe it was Lois — what was she doing back here, and at this time of night? Was it really her or her spirit, he thought? When he touched her hands she was extremely cold and when he spoke to her she began to cry with the joy of reaching home safely.

Sitting around the fire before dawn, Lois was able to tell Masivai and all her in-laws what had happened. As daylight broke, her husband and father-in-law hosted a *Kepu'Kepu'nu'* (small feast) to mark this unfortunate event, which had almost cost Lois her life. All the villagers came to listen to her story and were touched by her courageous endeavour.

Chapter Two BLOCKADE

LIFE IN THE JUNGLE DURING THE BLOCKADE

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

THE BLOCKADE IMPOSED BY the PNG Government meant Bougainville had no hospitals, no schools, no media, no mail services or telecommunications, no imports or exports, no banks or shops. Basically, we were cut off from the rest of the world. The PNG Government then rounded up all the people who had not fled to the bush and established so-called 'care centres' which they claimed were to 'protect' the people of Bougainville from the BRA. These care centres would supposedly provide people with the necessities taken away from them by the blockade.

Those of us who chose to remain in the bush behind the blockade had to spend most of our time in our gardens working tirelessly to produce sufficient food for our families and extra food supplies to support our BRA soldiers.

It was not an easy job working in the gardens. After a day of heavy work we would carry our harvest home. It was not sufficient to carry only one big bag, it had to be two or more bags full of fresh food and vegetables for our families. We women used to go to the gardens in groups for safety reasons and to help each other carry the food home. Because Sam was leader of the BRA, there were always extra mouths for me to feed.

Visitors would arrive at our camp at any time, often weary from long journeys on foot through the jungle, so I always had to have enough food in the home to feed them. I lived through a very difficult time. I strategically planted gardens in different locations far away from our camps. I used to walk for four hours over the Crown Prince Ranges and down on to the inland plateau to one of these gardens in No.2 Kongara. The other gardens were in the opposite direction towards the lowlands on the coastal plain.

I used to feel nervous going to the gardens on the coastal plains because they lay in the direction of the enemy's territory. I often asked my youngest sister, Rose, to accompany me to the lowland gardens to help me carry the loads back uphill. Our days in the gardens were always hurried and frantic and not like former times when women enjoyed watching their gardens grow. Gone were the days of chatting and socialising and discussing various harvests, or exchanging cuttings at leisure. Instead, we would be watchful, feeling threatened with our backs bent over as we hoed or planted or dug up the sweet potatoes, yams or taro. These furtive visits could not be as frequent as in times of normal subsistence living nor could we make the trip a day's outing among groups of laughing relatives.

We had such heavy loads to carry! Sometimes I would cry in my heart when I felt the weight on my back. I would have to make a few stops before reaching our camp, because the load was too heavy. Some moments of silence, however, were the most precious times I have experienced in my life. These contemplative moments were centred on thoughts of my daughters and how much happier they would be if I could come home with the fresh harvest. Such reveries gave me the courage and strength to go on.

One day I had a very tiring and stressful garden trip with my sister-in-law, Alice. On this occasion we made the four-hour trip over the ranges to our garden inland on No.2 Kongara Plateau. The air was cool and the freshness from the ranges caused us to lose ourselves in the peaceful environment. Alice uprooted some taro plants while I dug the sweet potatoes and collected some green vegetables. We were so excited that we continued on for some time before we realised that we had harvested too much! We had far too much to carry; we could not possibly manage so much food. But, at the same time, I did not want to waste the food, so I decided to carry the big load which stood piled from the ground up to my neck. It was quite a task for us to load the bags on to each other's backs and then pull each other up on to our feet.

We plodded along with great care, but when we started up the range, my breathing became difficult. Climbing up the hill to the top of the ranges was very hard. I had to make a few stops, as did Alice. I could feel myself becoming clouded by sadness; I began feeling sorry for myself. When my days were dark like that I would feel like crying. Sometimes, depressed and overcome, I would travel in silence for many hours, the tears flowing. Then, without realising it, I would discover that I had reached my destination.

This time, however, the daylight was fading by the time we scrambled to the top of the range. We still had a couple of hours' walk to make, yet we were both determined to succeed. It was difficult to see the track but we waddled down the steep hill, half sliding with the loads on our backs, groping and holding fast to the plants beside the track to keep us from falling.

When we got to the steepest part of the descent, I fell on my stomach and slid down the hill head-first, all the while gaining speed. I was lucky the heavy bag of food didn't crush my bones. My sister-in-law heard me shouting as I fell and asked what the matter was. I shouted from under my load, 'I fell down', but unfortunately the weight of my burden smothered me and she found it difficult to hear me, my face being squashed flat against the hill. Alice kept calling for me without being able to see where I was, because it was quite dark by now. She struggled for a few minutes to reach me, while I lay there spread-eagled and pinned beneath the heavy load.

It was a very nasty fall and I must have been a comical sight. It was very difficult for me to get to my feet. My stomach was aching where I had bumped against a big rock and a sharp wooden object that pierced my face just missed my eyes. Alice managed to get the load off me and I managed to sit up, wiping the dirt off myself. We sat down for a few minutes before deciding what to do next.

Reality set in and we decided that we would have to leave the bags by the track. We made our way home, partly walking and partly crawling down the hill. We reached our hide-out camp at 11 o'clock that night to find our families worried about us.

The next day, my body was aching badly, so the small boys went with Alice to carry the food home.

It really was a tough time for us. We never rested at home. We were the faithful gatherers.

We spent our lives always on the look-out for any danger from the PNGDF helicopters and soldiers. The soldiers used helicopters to spray machine-gun fire at people in their gardens, so our camps had to be constructed in hiding places underneath big trees.

We weren't allowed to cut anything around the camp, not even the creeping vines that draped over the jungle canopy. Our heavy cooking was delayed until late at night to avoid the smoke being seen by enemy troops on the coast.

The camps were small groupings or family-sized hamlets. People built their camps according to their needs rather than by the age-old dictates of land ownership. For safety reasons, people moved from one camp to another in small numbers to avoid making their movements obvious to anyone. Suspicion and privacy were always major issues and it was best policy to prevent people having too much knowledge about each other's camps. One never knew what pressures could be placed upon captured people to reveal the whereabouts of those in hiding.

Our camps were built from natural materials, which were usually cut at some distance from the selected site so that the cleared areas did not expose our location. We used small trees stripped of bark for house posts and rafters. Large bamboo poles provided the equivalent posts and rafters for more temporary shelters. These would become house frames when tied together with ropes made from split canes. The dry bamboo poles were slit open into flat strips that were easily woven for walling. Sago leaves, normally used as roof thatching, were also suitable for walls. Bamboo and palm planks made traditional beds and basic benches.

Our shelters were built in many sizes and various styles. Some people chose to keep the floor posts raised from the jungle floor, while others remained on the ground and raised only the beds off the ground. People built their shelters never knowing how long they could stay.

Sam always built us big houses on posts. He would spend weeks building some camps. It was very difficult at times because he had to come and go with his soldiers. Sometimes he would not finish the house but had to rush off to defend the area and engage with the enemy. We were lucky because my brothers and my father were always there to help us build our house. Our friends and relatives in our area provided invaluable support during our difficult days.

We made our jungle gardens small so they would not be detected from the air. Many old foods were re-established as staples in our new diet. We improved our food by inventing new recipes to make our meals exciting and tasty.

Traditional gardening knowledge was rediscovered by people who had abandoned several practices because of town living and access to supermarkets. Now we no longer had cash, paid work or any access to processed food, yet we were able to produce enough to feed our people and to share with others.

The barter system came back into existence because there was no money in circulation. No shops meant we had no tinned food for a full 10 years. The only food available for trade was the fresh food from the gardens. Our staple root crops were sweet potato, taro, yams, pumpkin and cassava. Our *habus* or accompanying vegetables varied, but included chokoes, pitpit, cooking bananas, all manner of green-leaf cabbages, watercress, ferns, pumpkin leaves, choko leaves, sago, breadfruit and coconut.

Our fruits in season were bananas, pineapples, pawpaw, pomeloes, grapefruit and mandarins, avocados, mangoes and several bush berries and native apples. Nuts were plentiful in season and included *galip* (native almonds) and many other native nuts.

For protein we fished the rivers for eels, prawns and fish of many native varieties. We hunted wild pigs, possums, birds and flying foxes. We gathered wild fowl eggs and kept domesticated ducks and chickens, which we fed cooked giant snails.

There was a surplus of food being produced by many families which made it possible for them to barter for other things. Coastal people would barter for rice and taro from the mountains. Inland people sought fish, salt, coconuts and *galip* nuts (dried and stored in bamboo containers) from the coastal people.

It was a time of sharing and caring wholeheartedly for one another.

Rice grown in the jungle was even sold to the PNG care centres. This was a variety of rice left behind after the Japanese occupation of the island during World War II. It had been used as duck feed after the war until it was revived as a staple crop. These agricultural initiatives, for the most part, rendered the blockade useless and, in some instances, the people in the jungle were better off than those in the care centres.

Of course, there were downsides to the blockade, especially for women during pregnancy and childbirth. Lack of clothing was another hardship that was difficult to overcome under these circumstances. Some families shared their excess clothes with less fortunate families.

The act of giving at that time kept us going as one people striving for independence. It kept us focusing on the future. We did not give up hope.

Traditional knowledge of bush medicine was also revived during this time and was integral to the survival of the people when there was no medicine and no hospital on the island.

When PNG closed the hospitals and medical services in March 1990, the tuberculosis and leprosy wards were emptied in Arawa and the patients had no alternative but to return to their villages. The number of leprosy cases increased markedly in our community, including among children.

The people most affected by the lack of medicines and hospitals were the older people, pregnant women and babies. We lost many people, especially mothers in childbirth. The following are some stories from my personal experiences.

A smile is a blessing

We watched Imelda's mother die. She died as a result of massive blood loss after giving birth to Imelda. There was no medicine at the hospital and we could do nothing to help her recover. She struggled very hard for three weeks and I am sure that if there had been medicines and a hospital to provide medical assistance, she would not have died.

It was a meeting day in Beiangko village when Imelda's father came to tell me that his wife, who was two hours' walk away at Pankauntu village, would like to see me and that she was very ill. I asked Sam and two-year-old Melanie to accompany me and we rushed off at once to see her. As we entered the woman's house, we could smell the strong odour of fresh blood and there, on a rough bed of banana leaves, covered with rags, lay the dying mother and her newborn baby asleep beside her.

At first, I could not breathe and felt very weak. After some moments of silence, I spoke: 'Here I am, what did you want me for?' She replied, 'I want you to take care of my baby. If I recover, I will see her, and if I don't then she is yours for ever.' I was so shocked and saddened by the state she was in. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I asked, 'How about your sisters? Can they look after her?' But she said, 'I don't think they will give her the good home and care that she needs. I know and trust that you will love and care for my baby.'

I wondered why this lady, who hardly knew me and who came from a different clan, would choose me to adopt her baby. I knew of her but had no cultural obligations to her or her children. This was a totally unexpected turn of events for me. I felt honoured by the trust she had placed in me and I felt I was being offered a precious gift. It seemed I had no choice but to accept.

If Sam and I were genuine in our call for everyone to follow our example in defending and protecting our people, how could we *not* accept the responsibility this woman now asked of us? In the best way she knew how, this mother of the land was providing a future for her child.

I wrapped the baby in old rags, said goodbye to her mother and we went home. We formally welcomed the little baby into our family and named her Imelda.

Before leaving Imelda's birth mother, we had arranged to return the next day to carry her to what remained of Arawa Hospital for proper care. Back home, we gave Imelda the first clean bath she had had since her birth three weeks earlier.

It was 1992 and Arawa was not under PNG control. The PNGDF had withdrawn in 1990 imposing the blockade, but had returned to Buka and was slowly making its way south from North Bougainville. When we took Imelda's mother to Arawa Hospital, it was empty of medicine and staffed only by volunteer nurses who could not neglect

their sense of duty to suffering people. They tried valiantly to do all they could for patients, but were frustrated by being limited to providing little more than basic first-aid.

Four days later we were told that Imelda's mother was not going to live much longer. Little Imelda and I made a two-hour trip back to Arawa Hospital but when we got there I realised that she was so weak she really was going to die. All we could do was to say our last goodbye. I showed her little Imelda all wrapped up in clean clothes, and she gave me a big smile and said, 'She is yours for ever.' Those were her last words to Imelda and I. She passed away some time after we had to set out on the long journey home to our village.

My main preoccupation then was feeding this three-week-old baby so she would survive. For milk I used very new, green coconut fluid, which is sterile and contains good nutrients. I had to supplement this with mashed pawpaw, pumpkin, sweet potato and greens ground up and mixed with boiled water to make a soup. Imelda thrived on this. We loved and cared for her just as we cared for our own daughter, Melanie. Imelda is now part of our family.

A difficult road

Her relatives had come a long way with the hope of saving the young woman's life. They were from Siwai region, on floodplains to the south-west of Central Bougainville and they had travelled for two weeks over the mountains from their hide-out.

The male and female relatives who had carried and accompanied the patient wanted to cross the border with this young woman to seek medical care in the Solomons. By now the young woman had become very weak. When they arrived at our relatives' village, the villagers told them that they had another day of walking to get to the boat's landing point. Our relatives then offered them shelter for the night before they continued on their journey. It was really a sad situation.

Unfortunately, the woman did not survive the night in my relatives' village. She passed away peacefully in their home. Her relatives were devastated and felt that they had failed her. The next morning, one of her relatives asked me for our plastic canvas to wrap the body to carry her back to their hide-out in the south of Bougainville. He told me what had happened to his sister. The news shocked me and I was in tears. I felt as if I had lost my blood sister. Then I gave the canvas to him and he stumbled off, feeling so low that he could not manage to walk properly on the track.

Melanie – 1995

We had moved to a shady, well-concealed hide-out built by my parents on a nicely shaped piece of land on the slopes of the Crown Prince Ranges called Tankapau. Tankapau was an elemental water spirit who, people believed, lived near a small spring we used for drinking water.

There was a look-out on a nearby hill which provided us with a great view. We used it as our observation base, as we could see if the enemy's patrol boats were on the sea and we could monitor the PNGDF helicopters on their patrol routes.

We all came to treasure this adorable place for its location and the protection it afforded. This is where my father passed away in 1994 during the worst part of the war. I believe he died of exhaustion and the worry he carried on our behalf.

We lived at Tankapau from 1992 to 1998, when we signed the cease-fire. We had easy access to nearby streams, so essential for our drinking water, washing and cooking. We made our gardens on the lowlands and on the hills away from our camp. But the place had its own dangers.

We never slept well during windy nights and the large trees attracted lightning during storms. We worried about the trees falling on us on such occasions and the thunder could be very scary. The trees would sway over our house and the branches would break and fall on to the roof. Centipedes lurked in the foliage and thick leaf mulch. On several occasions we were bitten; once I was bitten on my bottom as I slept in bed. These giant centipedes had a truly painful bite, which could be life-threatening to children and frail people.

My father had built the house I slept in. It was so large it was like we were back in a village. He wove the bamboo walls with the proper diamond and triangular patterns that cannot be found any more in our area. I enjoyed the company of my extended family once again and we mostly slept well at night, knowing that we were among relatives. I had support from my sister and my parents during the times when Sam went out with the BRA soldiers.

On this particular, cloudy day, I needed a rest. Six-year-old Melanie was the only one who was well. She collected fire wood and collected and carried water from the spring for us to cook. She did everything for me.

That night, she woke us up complaining that she had a rumbling stomach and it was aching badly. I hugged her close to me and told her I would see what I could do. I thought that it was going to go away and that some tender loving care would provide the comfort she needed.

But Melanie continued groaning, alternately lying flat on her stomach and sitting up. I held my hands against her rumbling tummy and discovered that it was burning hot. I was already confused and weak from the flu that I had been suffering with earlier in the day. I lay beside her with my eyes half closed when she settled in for a nap.

I got a fright when she woke me. Melanie was trying to get out of bed when she vomited blood all over our bed and on to the floor. I became weak with fright when I saw the large amount of blood. Sam and I sat with her all night while she continued to vomit large amounts of blood. I was desperately wondering what the matter was. By the afternoon of the next day she was experiencing more and more blood loss, even excreting at the same time.

I did not know what I could do as there was no hospital near us. The only hospital in Bougainville was a field hospital in Arawa, where the PNGDF soldiers were. We could hardly take Melanie there!

At the same time, we received news that many young children in nearby villages were experiencing the same problems and some of them had died. I did not want anything like that to happen to Melanie.

Sam and I held on together bravely asking for God's power to heal our daughter. I loved her so much and I would do anything to save her. As I watched over her, I prayed to God for His guidance on what to do next.

By the second day, she had no more strength. We needed to get her medical treatment as soon as possible. The only place we could think of was in the Solomons, but there was no boat available at the time. I realised I would have to take Melanie to Arawa after all.

The feeling of insecurity I lived with constantly during the war left me. I felt the responsibility to save my daughter's life; my life became less important. I told Sam that I was not frightened about going to the Arawa Hospital.

In normal situations, I feared the PNGDF soldiers as being like devils or monsters. I never wanted to come into contact with them. It was amazing that the fear disappeared and I was suddenly prepared to travel. Sam came with us part of the way but had to return to our camp to stay with our worried relatives.

Luckily, at the time of Melanie's medical emergency the PNG Government had announced an amnesty for BRA members in an attempt to convene further peace talks. Under this amnesty the BRA and blockaded civilians were allowed to go to Arawa to get medicines and services. None of our family had yet tried to approach Arawa or its environs since the announcement came into effect, although some BRA soldiers had successfully taken this opportunity to go to Arawa.

Even though the amnesty seemed to be genuine, we did not really trust it, but poor Melanie was by now in a coma so we had little choice. We went to where our old truck was kept and set out on the dilapidated inland road.

The threat to our long-term security was clear in our minds. Apart from the physical risks involved in the journey, it was strange for me to be in a vehicle and on the road again. The road was narrow and overgrown from disuse. I kept my family's prayers close to my heart as we rode to town.

We at last reached the trunk road that runs along the coastline through Arawa to Buin. We were passing the airport, about 16km south of Arawa, when another truck caught up to us from the rear. We identified it as belonging to a young BRA member and his soldiers from Buka. They were on their way to Arawa so Sam asked them if they could take Melanie and me with them to the hospital. They accepted the responsibility and assured Sam that they would take care of us. I assured Sam that we would be okay and asked him to pray for us. Sam told the boys that he was going to follow them for another eight kilometres to Kivirai village to be sure that things were fine.

A man from Kivirai named Henry Matua also offered to assist me and I owe him a lot for the help he gave me. Sam returned with my brothers to our hide-out in Tankapau.

When we arrived in Arawa, Henry and the boys knew where the outpatient clinic was and they took us straight to the emergency room. At the time there were no doctors, but the Health Extension Officer (HEO), a doctor substitute, attended me. I lay Melanie on the bed and held her hands. The HEO's quick examination proved that Melanie was dehydrated and he suggested that she be put on a drip. Unfortunately, her veins had collapsed and he tried for more than 20 minutes before he found one at her elbow.

The failed attempts at prodding Melanie's veins revived her and she screamed at me. I felt the pain myself as she held on to my hair and pulled hard. She also pinched and squeezed my arm. She was screaming, 'Why did you bring me here?!' I was in tears as I struggled to explain why.

After she was put on a drip we were told she would be admitted to the field hospital. Meanwhile, patients and other people had recognised me and the news had spread like wildfire. The PNGDF colonel, with his commanders, had already received news of my presence.

In the afternoon the colonel, whose name I can't remember, came with his staff commanders to visit us. When he came into the room he said good afternoon and asked me, 'Are you the boss's [BRA General's] wife?' I answered, 'Yes.' He went on to say, 'You are born to this system and this system will help you, don't worry about anything.' I told them, 'All I want is for you to save my daughter's life.' They were very calm while talking to me. They told me that some of the soldiers were former students of Sam's from the Goldie Barracks in PNG so they had come to see his daughter. Amazingly, there was also one of my schoolmates from Passam National High School. He said, 'It's a long time now that I have been here in Bougainville. I wanted to see you but I was told you were in the bush. We will look after you and your daughter.'

I heard the colonel giving orders to his soldiers to fill up the generator with fuel and keep it running until the next day. He also instructed the medics not to let anyone visit me at any time. The colonel appeared to be genuine in wanting to protect me from any renegade assassin when he told me that I should remain under their protection and visitors must report first before seeing us.

The first night approached with me standing over the bed praying and watching over Melanie. One of the nurses rushed an injection and the crystalline solution went into the flesh causing Melanie great pain in her hand. I had to carry her around on my back all night as I paced the ward, to comfort her. The drip was replaced in the other hand the next morning and I counted four replacements of the drip by midday. To my surprise, people came rushing into our ward with clothes and boxes of tinned food. Others came with cooked food ready for us to eat. The colonel brought a Seventh-day Adventist church group who brought cooked food and prayed for Melanie, which I appreciated because it comforted me.

Other patients were shocked to see the attention I received in contrast with the neglect they endured. They asked me what I had done to secure such treatment. I assured them that I had made no attempt to befriend these people, who seemed intent on winning my trust. Some of the food I gave to our roommates and some I put under the bed as I could not eat. I felt no hunger for two full days and nights. I smiled when I saw moisture on Melanie's lips and on her nose. I watched as she regained movement in her hands and legs. I prayed and thanked the Lord for His healing power and how He provided for us even in the hands of our enemies. When she finally opened her eyes, Melanie saw the PNGDF and asked me why we were with them. She said, 'Mum, are they the ones who are hunting for us?' I told her not to say anything. So whenever the medics came, she would cover her eyes and pretend to sleep.

By the second day Melanie seemed to be recovering quickly. She started by crawling. Then I held her hands and, although she was six years old, she walked like a two-year-old. I was patient with her and tried not to rush her progress. By this time the PNGDF medics had moved us to a different building away from the rest of the patients and no one was allowed to visit us.

At home, Sam was anxiously monitoring the PNGDF's high-frequency radio network. He heard soldiers talking about my being in the hospital with Melanie and he feared for our safety, so he sent his operations commander, Ishmael, on a rescue mission to get us out of the hospital.

When Ishmael got to the hospital, he found me carrying Melanie around the kitchen area outside the field hospital to get some fresh air. He pulled up, with his wife, in his twin-cab and casually asked us to have a drive with him, so as to not look suspicious to passers-by. I accepted the invitation without realising that he was going to take us home, leaving all our clothes in the field hospital. As we got into the truck, he drew level with the PNGDF medic's camp and pretended to head into town. Once we had escaped the confines of the army perimeter, however, he sped out of town and south towards Kieta. We were at last back in safe hands and in our own territory.

THE BLOCKADE AND FLEEING TO THE JUNGLE

Marcelline Kokiai Tunim

WHEN THE PNG GOVERNMENT withdrew its forces late in 1990 we enjoyed a short period of peace. Officers and members of the cancelled Provincial Government recalled my husband Bernard, who had been Clerk of the Provincial Assembly. They were planning to set up an interim government to provide for our people behind the blockade. When PNG realised that instead of begging for them to come back, Bougainville was continuing to seek independence — and had, in fact, set up its own government — they decided to re-invade.

The PNGDF would sweep along the coast in their patrol boats and fire at our coastal villages. Whenever gunshots were heard in the next village we would have to take off into the bush. I was forced to take my family inland to the safety of the jungle as we were too exposed to the security forces in our village on the coast. Some time after we left the entire village was burnt to the ground and we had to climb up into the mountains in the night.

In the jungle we had to sleep in the open. It was cold and we didn't have blankets and there were insects biting us. Almost everything was wet and damp and it was terribly hard to make fire and even to get sunlight, which was always blocked by the canopy.

We were constantly on the move because the army was not far behind. We walked every day for a week until we came to safety. The tracks we followed were muddy and slippery and usually very dangerous and we had to cross flooded rivers.

It poured rain every afternoon and the children were cold at these high altitudes, so used as they were to the balmy tropical breezes and heat of our former life on the beach.

We had to carry precious food as well as the young children and when we were too hungry, I would have to double back to our gardens in the hills behind our village, despite the ever-present threat of the PNGDF. We eventually established a bush camp in a valley behind a big mountain. We dug wild yams and had green vegetables for food and eventually made food gardens by planting runners from our abandoned gardens. We would live in one camp for a few months before we were forced to move again. We usually didn't get to harvest what we had planted.

Many old people died on the journey to safe areas, sick and exhausted after climbing so many mountains. We had very few possessions and essentials to survive on as it was not easy to carry many things up and down the mountains.

The sound of mortars being fired up into the mountains pounded in our ears and we had to be careful to keep beyond the range of its lethal, indiscriminate fire. The sound of helicopters always sent us diving for cover and the shadow of one passing overhead brought a sense of death.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND SURVIVAL BEHIND THE BLOCKADE

Daphne Zale

I WAS AMONG MORE than 3,000 women who met to address women's issues during the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. As part of the women's delegation from the Pacific, I represented Pacific women in general, but I was especially there for our women in Bougainville. I wanted to speak for those of us who had no access to the world from behind the blockade.

Although we came to Beijing from different parts of the world, from different backgrounds and cultures, we discovered that the problems women faced in times of war or under repression were the same for all of us, not excluding the women of Bougainville.

The effects of war on women and the atrocities and crimes perpetrated against them during wartime are the same the world over. Rape is very often deliberately used as a weapon of war, not only for self-gratification by an invading army, but to demoralise the opponent. Our women have been subjected to all these kinds of treatment since the war on Bougainville began.

Such treatment humiliates and denigrates us. The effects of rape and humiliation reach through to our men, our children and our communities. In all our societies it is the women who maintain our communities. As in Bougainville, women are the custodians of our land and, by attacking them, the opponent aims to destroy the very roots of our communities.

I am encouraged to know that the UN Commission on Human Rights, in its 52nd Session in April 1995, in Geneva, adopted a resolution to give further protection to and promote the dignity and human rights of women and girls. The UN called for all governments to enact legislation to better protect the rights of women and girls, and to punish perpetrators through criminal and civil measures.

It was against this backdrop that we, the women of Bougainville, called for an end to this seemingly unending war. We have suffered so much: rape, violence and even death at the hands of all those involved in this war.

Hundreds of crimes against women have been committed by all parties under arms since the war started 14 years ago. I have emphasised *all* parties, including the PNG security forces, pro-PNG Resistance fighters and some members of the BRA.

These examples represent only the tip of the iceberg in the record of the first eight years of violations against women on Bougainville:

- Rape and sexual harassment: a 16-year-old girl from Biruna village, Central Bougainville, was stripped naked and held up to public view by PNGDF troops.
- Rape: on 24 April, 1989, Mrs Barbara Kinima was stripped and raped at gunpoint by four members of the PNG Riot Squad.
- Abduction, rape and detainment: in December 1995, at the Manetai Catholic Mission, 16km north of Arawa, the PNG security forces rounded up all the young girls of the area, detained them in one of the nun's houses and used them for their sexual gratification.
- Rape: on 7 February, 1990, two PNGDF personnel raped the sister-in-law of Aaron Mirani Nawason in broad daylight in the Arawa supermarket car park.
- Rape and murder: in late 1989 a mother and her daughter were pack-raped and then killed in their food garden by PNG soldiers in the Kongara area in Central Bougainville. The PNG soldiers came across the women as they were trying to locate BRA soldiers in that area.

My account of life and survival behind the blockade

Women and children who chose not to go to the so-called care centres had to hide from the PNG military, otherwise they were rounded up at gunpoint.

A lot of women, including myself, chose not to go to a centre because we had heard from people who escaped that they were not free to come and go. They had to work at set times in gardens and carrying water and washing in rivers was permitted only under guard. It is not our custom to wash in the presence of strange men. Also, food shortages in these care centres were common at the best of times.

In areas controlled by the BIG and the BRA, we had gardens and built temporary houses. Our people travelled between camps and were free to come and go.

The BRA were, at times, angry with people who went to care centres for medicines and returned to the bush. This endangered the lives of people living in the bush as the PNGDF would interrogate everyone and would spy on anyone who wished to return to the bush. Many of our people were followed by patrols that would seek our people in hiding. In this way, several massacres of innocent villagers took place. If women went to care centres, the BRA preferred them to stay there.

Our families in the bush chose to stay with the BRA because we didn't want to give away our land and freedom and we believed that the BRA was fighting for our rights. We women were not, as claimed by PNG, prisoners. We were a free people behind the blockade and we were free to move from camp to camp and to visit our families. We were also free to set off, like myself, to seek medical treatment from relatives in care centres or across the sea, as refugees, from our relatives and friends in the Solomon Islands.

BRA members risked their lives all the time to bring the sick and injured across the blockade for medical attention. They did so without receiving any pay or favours. When we went on these journeys, we reported properly to the Solomon Islands immigration authorities and to the Red Cross camps. As soon as the people were well and strong they chose to go back to the mountains of Bougainville.

We felt safe under the care of the BRA forces. Those few BRA members who misbehaved were severely reprimanded by our leaders.

Not all men who chose to remain behind the blockade were BRA soldiers. Men could choose to go out fighting or to be 'civilians'. The PNGDF did not appreciate this distinction and treated anyone caught in the jungle as a BRA soldier or spy.

Some civilian men and women were given leadership responsibilities in the bush camps, carrying out administrative and law and order work in the villages. Others planned small training programs, or served as teachers, medical officers, nursing aides and agricultural officers. Such men and women trained and worked in our camps without any pay. Our reward for the work we did in serving others was what we made possible — a happy community. The joy we found in these years of hardship was genuine despite the lack of material possessions and any wage system.

Behind the blockade there was an acute lack of medicine and we were worried that the lack of immunisation for children and babies could be a potential problem, especially when the PNGDF began spraying chemicals from helicopters over the jungle, which affected the children worst of all. They would suffer bad coughs, severe headaches and swollen glands. Other proof of the harmful effects of these sprays was the sight of flying foxes and birds falling out of trees and dying. This loss was serious as flying foxes and some birds provided the only source of protein in the bush.

Because many people had to live in the high mountains to escape the shooting in the lowlands and on the coast, they suffered from the cold temperatures. In some areas a lack of clothing was critical. In some villages people ended up naked and they were ashamed to show themselves to other people. In the colder areas of the mountains, the lack of clothing affected the young and the elderly the most, making them vulnerable to illness.

People returning to Bougainville from the Solomon Islands would try to bring extra supplies with them, but they were limited by the small size of the canoes and the fact they could take only what they could carry themselves walking up into the jungle.

We were already practising the concept of 'independence' in the bush.

The people learned to survive on bush vegetables and fruits and local game. They no longer enjoyed the luxury of coffee, tea and sugar or tinned food items.

Many women were happy with certain aspects of our new life. We began to realise that if we could initiate programs and services to replace what we valued in education and health, we could reinterpret our own unique identity through what we learned in the years of suffering.

RUNNING THE BLOCKADE

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

BRAVE BRA SEAMEN UNDERTOOK daring boat trips to overcome the blockade. The Marine Force operated two banana-shaped Ray Boats, with several humanitarian groups and private boat owners also contributing vessels. They would sometimes team up and travel together, looking out for each other and providing rescue in difficult circumstances.

In Central Bougainville the landing points used were Aropa and the Koromira/Koianu areas. The journey from Central Bougainville across the international border to the nearest landing point in Choisel, Solomon Islands, took about two hours. The trip from the nearest southern point of Bougainville to Taro in the Solomons took about 30 minutes. The boats had dual outboard motors to make the journey as quickly as possible; a necessity because of the danger posed by the four PNGDF patrol boats, which were deployed at the sea boundary. These patrol or gun-boats were supplied through the Pacific Program to maintain the Exclusive Economic Zones and to repel illegal fishermen who came within the 20-mile boundary. They were not commissioned from Canberra to the Bougainville/Solomons border for the purpose of hunting down and killing citizens of Bougainville.

Accompanied by Australian-donated speedboats, these patrol boats were mounted with 120mm and 80mm mortars on bow and stern, to intercept and destroy any boats that could be seen crossing these waters. Initially, when the BRA was ill-equipped in terms of firepower, PNG maintained superiority at the border crossing. Many of our BRA members, as well as civilian passengers and those seeking medical aid, were intercepted and killed. Countless unarmed civilian boats were lost without trace.

There were some miraculous escapes but many people were left stranded on the wrong side. Bougainville is an island of sea-going people and boats were not initially in short supply. Fleeing Europeans had abandoned their high-powered recreational fishing boats and, in addition, there were some faithful European friends who remained behind the blockade with us. These brave men took pity on the sick and ran dangerous humanitarian missions, risking their own boats and lives for our people. It was particularly galling to them that the taxes of their fellow Australian citizens had paid for PNG's deadly patrol boats.

The BRA was determined to establish and protect the water route as its lifeline to and contact with the outside world. PNG had imposed the blockade to cut off any support the BRA might seek from our own kin in the Solomon Islands, and, beyond them, our sympathetic Pacific neighbours, not to mention the world. Of course, not everyone was sympathetic to us, and many believed PNG's claims of concern for our welfare and they shut their eyes to our plight. PNG maintained to all investigators and media that their military presence was to protect life and property from the 'militants', 'rebels', 'rascals', etc. Such names demonised us and provided PNG with the excuse that they were only putting down an 'internal crisis', which was no business of the UN and of no international importance.

Therefore, a sea journey across the blockade was our only route to assistance. It was our only means of travel to and communication with the outside world. It was how we later ferried our human rights representatives to the UN and international conferences. To win the battle for supremacy of the Bougainville Straits was paramount to Bougainville's success in our quest for freedom.

By running the blockade, the BRA was able to transport its wounded and civilians to hospitals in the Solomon Islands and, on the return journeys they brought back medical supplies, clothing and other humanitarian assistance donated by the international community.

On the whole, running the blockade was a very dangerous exercise and it would not have been possible without the help the Solomon Islands Government gave our people once they reached the border. Their own field forces would wait at check-points and legally process our entry to various ports in the Western Solomons. Once we were legally in Solomon Islands waters they would even defend us from pursuit; there were several international incidents that required UN intervention and negotiation between PNG and the Solomons.

My first trip across the Straits was in 1991 to establish first contact for our people with Chief John Bitiai of Faisi Island, Western Province, Solomon Islands. We also met with Sir George Lepping, the Governor-General of the Solomon Islands, so Sam could establish correct border protocols for our people coming to the Solomons. We signed a border treaty between Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. We reclaimed our traditional, ancient ties with our relatives in the Solomons and the treaty was signed by hundreds of chiefs from both sides. It was a very exciting event for me to witness as a mother of our land, but I was the only woman from Bougainville to accompany some of my Solomons sisters.

In September 1994, I ran the blockade for a second time for negotiations.

We waited for one week at the Koromira landing point before we could make a safe voyage in the early hours, before dawn. During that week, Michael Miringtoro, Warren Ivonaa and Peter Unou were lost at sea and were never seen again. It is believed strong

winds made it impossible for them to reach the mainland and they sought refuge on a small island where they ran into the PNGDF, who captured and killed them. Their relatives still mourn for them.

When I heard the news about these men, I felt so frightened! I needed faith and courage to keep me focused on a safe crossing. At the time, my daughter Melanie was five and Imelda was two. I left them with my parents in Central Bougainville. My father died during my absence and I was unable to attend his funeral. Sam's only brother died a short time later. This time of private grief was seriously disrupted by our national commitments and, to this day, I feel I was denied my right to grieve my father's death with my family.

The blockade was maintained and even heightened during the time of our crossing for the 1994 negotiations: we can only assume that if it was not politically motivated, it was prompted by spite and the desire to capture the prize on Sam's head, a very strange contradiction for 'peace talks'. Sam and I were forced to remain in the Solomon Islands for seven long months after our so-called peace talks with the PNG Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan. International diplomacy and millions of Australian dollars went into this exercise, yet it was dreadful for me to be stranded and separated from my two daughters for so long.

For people from inland and the southern and central regions of Bougainville, the difficulty of making the sea crossing was compounded by having to walk for days, carrying their sick or wounded, in order to reach the boat. Then there were further delays because of bad weather, enemy movements, lack of fuel or lack of money to pay for their share of the journey (some boats were private operations rather than the humanitarian or BRA service). There was no timetable to run the blockade and, in fact, it would have been too dangerous to ever establish a routine that could be monitored. A great element of chance determined whether people's lives were saved or lost.

Some people were buried in the Solomons because it was too risky to try returning their bodies to Bougainville. The families who remained on Bougainville found such cases very hard to accept and still hope to visit their loved one's graves to fully accept the loss.

It was heart-breaking for me to hear on the HF radio from the Honiara Humanitarian Office that a Bougainvillean had died in the Solomons because I would then have to convey this message to the relatives.

To run the blockade was an expensive journey for sick patients. People who had money safely stored from before the war were able to pay for transport and hospital bills. But those who could not afford to send their sick people across the Straits, lost their loved ones to preventable diseases.

ESCAPING ASSASSINATION AND REFUGEE FLIGHT OVERSEAS

Scholastica Raren Miriori

MY EXPERIENCE OF THE night our home in Honiara, Solomon Islands, was fire-bombed and of our life behind the Bougainville blockade is something that I still nurse deep within my heart. Being a refugee in a foreign land, many miles away from my relatives and friends, is heart-breaking. I sometimes find it difficult to talk about my experience and what my family went through during the crisis. It was indeed a great challenge to finally put my thoughts in this book and recalling my experience is like going through the crisis all over again. There are times when it is most difficult to hold back my tears while writing.

I crossed the blockade to the Solomon Islands hoping to provide a safe haven for my four children and the opportunity to send them to school and live a normal life.

With my husband Martin, we set up the Humanitarian Office for Bougainville, which we ran from our house in Honiara. Martin received threats from the PNG Government to leave the Solomon Islands immediately, to close down the humanitarian office and return to PNG.

I was shocked by the continual harassment of our people by PNGDF patrol craft and speedboats at the border, despite all the media exposure of the inhuman hunting down of refugees. The number of people crossing from Bougainville to the Solomons presented new problems for my family to cope with in Honiara. The high expectation that Martin could solve every humanitarian problem presented to him made life extremely difficult for all our family.

With my nursing background and the support role I gave to Martin with the Humanitarian Office, I was sometimes caring for very sick patients in an already overcrowded home. Then there were those who required review appointments weeks or months after discharge from hospital. These outpatients often stayed with us, too. Patients who were extremely ill would need us to arrange their transfers to other medical institutions.

Many people who were ready to return to Bougainville after being discharged from hospital had to wait for opportune times to run the blockade or lacked the money to return. I felt compassion for many of these unfortunate refugees whose needs were

greater than our resources could provide through the Humanitarian Office. I still grieve for those who died in Honiara Hospital with bullets still imbedded in their bodies. I still feel the anguish and pain of those who had to endure the removal of maggots from wounds that had become meatless due to many months in the jungles of Bougainville with no medical treatment. These blockade-induced cases continue to leave a sickening feeling, a permanent ache, in my body today. It is a great human loss when someone dies so far away from home.

Then there were the times when our leaders came for a summit, negotiations or preparatory and technical meetings, such as the 1994 peace talks in Honiara. There would always be so much to do, even for a small meeting. Martin and I would plan and arrange everything. Cleaning the house and guest rooms, catering, doing laundry, buying food and caring for my own family as well meant life for me in Honiara was difficult. By coping with all these experiences I grew strong and hopeful that one day things would be normal again.

This dream was short-lived when PNG operatives in Honiara fire-bombed our house.

A loud explosion shook our house at 2.30 one morning. There were nine people sleeping in the house including two kids who were staying with us while their parents were in hospital. Joan Talamits, an ex-nun, and Ali, our son, had been living with us for some months. My three daughters normally shared rooms upstairs but had decided to sleep downstairs with the two visiting children. The night was quiet and we had all gone to bed early. It was the first time in a long while that we had so few people in the house.

Martin was the first up after the explosion. As we reached the front verandah, he was already trying to put out the flames that were consuming the humanitarian supplies awaiting transportation to Bougainville. These supplies of books and flammable clothing were deliberately targeted — doused in petrol and set alight. The night was windy and the flames were spreading quickly; there was nothing we could do to stop them. Whoever was responsible wanted to create a fire large enough to kill all of us.

I realised that the kids were downstairs fast asleep. My screams could be heard from miles away calling out for them to wake up. We tried to break through their door but it was deadlocked from the inside. My screams finally woke them up. The wind was blowing and the flames were spreading fast now.

We were all confused and hysterical, and the kids were so shocked they couldn't remember where they had put the key before going to bed. Somehow they managed to find the key and at last opened the door. As we moved them anxiously through the corridor, out of the house, we realised that the five-year-old we were caring for was not with us. In confusion and perhaps shock, she had gone back into the room thinking that her parents were still asleep in there. I became even more hysterical when I saw the curtain in the room burst into flames. The room was already full of smoke and I feared there was no way the girl could survive in there. The second room was already in flames and there was no way anyone could go through the fire to reach her.

The middle of the house was beginning to collapse. We called out to the girl to drop low on the floor, while we struggled to break the window and the security wire enough to open a little space for her to get out of the room that way. Seconds turned into minutes and in our minds we feared the little girl was probably already dead. We had to break through the security wires and force it outwards so we could remove each of the glass louvres from the window. When we had removed the last of the louvres we could still not see a thing. My screams once again could be heard from far away, calling out her name and asking God to save her. At last we saw a little head popping out of the window. We got her out and immediately poured water all over her body. The heat was unbearable and it was indeed a miracle that she had only mild burns to the face, ear and shoulder.

Within 30 minutes our house and everything in it was reduced to ashes.

The next few days staying with friends in Honiara were risky. We were concerned that whoever was responsible for burning our house was still out there. Our lives and the lives of our friends and whoever might help us were at risk. We feared another attack could happen at any time. We were not able to rent another house because owners were afraid their homes would be destroyed. It was risky to let our kids go to school because of the possibility of kidnapping. Our freedom of movement was gone, our security became a 24-hour-a-day issue. I will never forget the feeling that there was someone out there trying to kill us.

The morning after the fire we joined hands as a family to thank God for saving every one of us. Whenever I think of how close my children came to dying in that fire I have tears in my eyes and every time I try to tell the story the reaction is the same.

On Tuesday 23 April, 1996, my husband received an urgent telephone call from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Canberra. The office advised us that The Netherlands Government had agreed to have our family relocated to Europe. They also urged that, as a matter of security concern, we had to be evacuated out of Solomon Islands as soon as possible. They wanted us to leave the country on the next available flight, which was on 25 April. Because the news was so sudden and we needed time to wind up things properly and pack some bags, my husband asked if we could be given seven days to complete these preparations. Their office agreed and finalised arrangements for us to catch a Qantas flight on Tuesday 30 April to Brisbane.

When the day came, however, and we were at the airport under a tight security escort provided by the Solomon Islands security forces, the airline's management in Sydney issued specific instructions to the agent in Honiara to stop us boarding the flight. The airline had been made aware of strong rumours that if our family was on that flight, the aircraft would be bombed or shot down. We were forced to turn back and we went into hiding with some very good Solomon Islands friends.

The next morning, my husband called the UNHCR office in Canberra to tell them of our whereabouts. They made emergency arrangements to have us evacuated that same

evening on a chartered VIP RAAF Falcon jet to Brisbane, where UNHCR officials were to meet us with the necessary documentation to take us all the way to Europe. We were told to be at Honiara airport on time because the aircraft would have only a half-hour turn-around. It had to be parked facing a certain direction so we could rush zigzagging to the plane. When we arrived at Brisbane airport about midnight, the aircraft was also required to park at a certain spot where the UNHCR officials came on board to escort us into special vehicles to take us to the terminal. Our entry to the terminal building was by a back door, and we were not even required to fill out any papers. The Australian authorities did not want us to leave any trace behind confirming that we had used their soil to transit through. They wanted to avoid any diplomatic complications with PNG, which might upset their strong political and economic connections.

Because the special operation was organised so suddenly and with the strictest confidentiality, a lot of people did not even know what had happened to us that night. They knew nothing until the next morning, when the media reported that we had already left the country.

At Brisbane airport we spent the night sleeping in the international departure lounge. The next day we boarded a Qantas flight to Singapore before boarding a KLM flight to Amsterdam, where officials from The Netherlands Refugee Council met us. On our arrival on 5 May 1996, we were taken to the Reception Centre where we were formally registered and completed all the necessary paperwork. We spent two months at the centre before we were moved to The Hague and given a house.

The family was able at last to experience some sense of real peace, security and the restoration of basic human rights. In particular, our children, for the first time, could easily go out and enjoy themselves with other children. They have formed special bonds with children who have come from other situations of conflict and war-torn places throughout the world.

A TRIBUTE

To Anna Moiru and all those we met at
Tanagai Refugee Camp, Solomon Islands, July 1998

Marilyn Taleo Havini

I MET ANNA AT a refugee camp in the Solomon Islands. We had driven out to the camp on a green, lush hillside across the road from the Tanagai Catholic Mission to find a couple of friends, who were reportedly camped there.

I was with my husband Moses and Ruth Saovana Spriggs and Kuntamari Crofts, Australian representatives of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom (BWPF). We were only passing through from Honiara *en route* to Bougainville to attend talks for the Peace Process Consultative Committee.

Unaware of what to expect at Tanagai, we were faced on our arrival with a crowd of about 100 men, women and children, who had been taken in by the Solomon Islands Christian Association and housed in the camp attached to the Tanagai Mission. Father Ben Arkwright had been instrumental in establishing Humanitarian Aid for Bougainville with Fr Herman Wooster, who was based at the Koromira Mission in Bougainville. Mission radio contact had facilitated mercy missions and medical evacuations from Bougainville across the blockade to the relative safety of the Solomons. Medical assistance and rehabilitation services were provided by generous civilian and government friends. The refugees at Tanagai had established subsistence gardens and had built small houses and communal facilities to care for each other as they awaited repatriation to Bougainville.

We were initially unaware that many suffering patients lay languishing inside huts even after the bell had been rung to summon everyone to congregate to meet us. The women were excited to see our team of women, and the men were excited to meet Moses. Everyone was anxious to hear about the progress of the peace talks. All the able-bodied refugees welcomed us warmly. Some of them had known us before the war and there were many tearful but happy reunions. The camp leaders decided a little more order was needed so we were ushered into a small classroom for a more formal meeting.

We had little time to be introduced personally to the mixed crowd that had gathered. I was overcome by the eager faces of those longing to hear news from across the water and I was conscious of the lame and the sick who hovered at the edge of the crowd.

We heard accounts of life in the camp and of the kindness of the Solomon Islands Christian Association, in particular, the hospitality of the mission priest, Fr Arkwright.

We were impressed by the efforts the whole camp had made to establish their flourishing gardens and to coexist as a community.

We asked to hear their individual stories of how they became refugees. When they registered our interest and saw my compilations of human rights abuses against the people of Bougainville, I was taken by some women outside to meet someone who was too shy to enter the classroom.

This was how I met Anna, who came towards me shyly on crutches. At only 31, Anna was already a widow and the mother of nine children, only one of whom was evacuated with her from Bougainville. Anna had been discharged from Honiara General Hospital a month before our visit, but she returned as an outpatient every three days for her wounds to be dressed. These massive wounds were sustained during a PNGDF raid in which her husband, several of her children and members of her extended family had been murdered.

Anna's 14-year-old daughter Victoria was 13 at the time of the incident and had been shot in both legs. She remained an inpatient at the Honiara hospital, some 18 months after the attack.

Anna, her husband Joseph, their seven daughters and two sons had been living in a small bush camp at Mokakulu in Siwaii in Bougainville. They had established the hamlet in what they thought was a relatively safe place in order to avoid being forced into a care centre at Sovele. Together with Anna's sister, the family had built two houses to accommodate 32 people, including Joseph's mother, Therese Maeru.

On the fateful night in December 1996 Joseph woke up to relieve himself outside and then sat on a rock behind the second house in the predawn darkness. More than 20 PNG soldiers and some Bougainville Resistance men in PNGDF uniforms suddenly surrounded the bush camp. They were all heavily armed with powerful machine-guns sporting suspended cartridges.

The soldiers opened fire into both houses from all directions. It was about 5am and still dark and most of the family members were shot in their beds. Some children managed to escape by breaking through the *saksak* walls and slipping off into the jungle, but later reports informed Anna that her children sustained several bullet injuries as the soldiers continued firing at them. Her 16-year-old daughter Gloria was shot in the bottom and 14-year-old Rosering was shot in the arm as she escaped with baby Beryl in her arms.

I was overwhelmed by the nightmare this brave woman was facing daily in her separation from her children, who must have been missing her as much as she longed for them. Anna kept hold of her right thigh and shifted position awkwardly as she valiantly continued with her story.

She estimated that the firing continued for a full five minutes in an attempt to gun down all the fleeing children. Once all who could had fled, six soldiers entered Anna's house and ordered those who remained outside at gunpoint. Christian Tonau, Anna's niece, sleeping in the other house, was heard trying to escape. She was shot in the head

and died instantly. Victoria Komai, only 13, struggled to respond to the order but was forced to cry, 'How can I stand up and go outside, you have shot me in both legs?' One of the Resistance soldiers replied, 'OK, you can lie back in bed.'

The soldiers then ordered Anna to stand up and go outside. She replied, as her daughter had done, that they had also shot her in the back and legs, so they told her to remain where she was. The soldiers then went out through the door and the broken wall.

Anna could see, in the first light of morning, her husband carrying his dying mother out of the other house. He was crying out to the soldiers, 'What has she done?'

Joseph could easily have escaped into the jungle, but he had gone to the aid of his mother, wife and children — into the line of fire — to plead with the soldiers. He defiantly 'told them off' for what they had done and Anna clearly heard him reminding the soldiers that the area had been declared a 'peace zone'! (Such arrangements had been agreed between South Bougainville chiefs and the PNGDF and had existed since the 1994 failed peace talks in Arawa.) The soldiers replied, '*Mipela no kauntim peace* [We don't recognise peace].' The PNGDF then shot Joseph dead before they ran off.

Killed in their wake were Joseph Moiru, his mother Therese Maeru, Christian Tonau (aged 21) and Rachel Kempe (nine). Injured were Anna Moiru with her children Victoria, Rosering, Gloria and son Robin (19), who was shot in the hand, leg and backside. Anna's 18-year-old niece, Bridget, was shot in both legs.

Those left behind were Jacob and Justin Morova (about 30 years old), with their surviving children Bernard (21), James (16), Andrew (11), John (four) and two small girls aged five and seven.

The escaping children ran into a BRA patrol about 9am and returned with BRA Siwaii Commander Kouro, Clement, William and a nephew of Anna's, Bernard Tomung. These men helped the family bury the dead and then cared for the survivors. Evacuation to the Solomon Islands involved construction of biers to carry the injured up to a day's walk to the south coast, near Buin, to await a dangerous trip in an open canoe.

As Anna showed me her dressings and the chunk missing from her leg and shared her story, I could not comprehend, as a mother, the incredible suffering she had endured. She had not seen her baby Beryl, now four years old, or any of her children who were left behind in Bougainville under such traumatic circumstances 18 months before. Anna's courage was evident, even as she expressed her grief. Loving refugees surrounded her to corroborate her story with their own details even as they had their own tragedies to recount.

This is but one of thousands of senseless massacres that took place.

Back in Sydney, news reached me via the Solomon Islands network of another massacre. A few days later I received an early Christmas card. On opening it, I was

surprised to find strips of photo negatives but no prints. As we had booked a display booth in the Paddington United Church for Human Rights Day the next Saturday, I took these negatives with me for printing.

What a shock to discover that the prints were of a church that had been attacked at the Malabita Care Centre. For weeks we had been confused by various accounts of a massacre, reported by several survivors who had made it to the Solomons for medical treatment. It was some time before we realised there had been separate incidents.

The prints that had reached me as visible proof (at last) that we were not lying to the world about PNGDF executions and the mass killing of civilians did not accompany any reports that had yet reached our Sydney office. There was no accompanying detail of the incident with the negatives and so we had to wait for more contact before we could untangle stories of three separate massacres in South Bougainville that took place within a week of each other.

On 28 November, the PNGDF had deliberately fired three mortars from a hill in Malabita, South Bougainville, hoping to wipe out an entire village while they were gathered in one place — celebrating morning Mass. Their *saksak*-leaf church in a 'peace zone' area was blown to pieces by a direct hit on the third attempt. Bodies were blown apart and children were sprawled in all directions. Nine people were killed, among them we had photos of Alvina Makunia (female, aged six), Danny Makau (five), Brenda Ruinai (14), Boisi Kauri (female, 50), John Tuburu (38), and Albert Makau (42). Francis Baubake (39) was one of the survivors who suffered horrific injuries, but the BRA successfully evacuated him to the Solomons for medical treatment at Honiara Central Hospital.

The photos of this massacre were so shocking that the less confronting images made the Australian press on the next Monday, 16 December, 1996. The *Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the massacre on the front page and in their world sections. SBS-TV followed up the story on Monday night's news. Suddenly photojournalists were willing to risk crossing the blockade in search of a far more sinister and bloodier war than anyone had believed possible.

Chapter Three OCCUPATION

RAPE, A WEAPON OF WAR

Scholastica Raren Miriori

I recorded the following report as told to me by Cecillia as I sat at her bedside in Buka Hospital. She was undergoing painful surgery to alleviate her injuries from rape in December 1999.

A report from a Bougainvillean woman from Buka Island, North Bougainville

DURING THE BOUGAINVILLE CRISIS the PNGDF and Resistance forces committed repeated rapes and other violent attacks against the women of Buka. Many children were born from unions between army men and girls from Buka. Many of the men abandoned these women and children when their postings were completed and they returned to PNG. Some of these soldiers had told the women they were single and were willing to marry. Today many Buka girls remain married to army men, some of whom left the army to stay in Buka. Other Bougainvillean women have children to army men who left Buka. Some women went with their army husbands away from Bougainville thinking they would be true wives to the their husbands only to be abandoned in PNG.

I was held at gunpoint and questioned by the army on many occasions, as my husband was a known secessionist organiser. Many men who were suspected BRA sympathisers were killed, even if there was no proof of any such sympathies. The army executed many innocent men. There were many killings and unexplained disappearances in Buka that should be investigated.

One thing the army did was to make men strip and commit anal sex with each other at gunpoint. People were afraid of the gun and would do these things to avoid being shot. Women and children ran away to the bush near Solos in central Buka and hid from the PNGDF and Resistance Forces. When the army members raped women they often used objects such as the handle of a coffee cup. These instruments caused internal damage to many women. On one occasion they pumped engine grease into two girls. The girls were sent to Rabaul for hospital treatment, but one died. Sometimes I think the PNG

army did not come to help Bougainville people, they came only for the women.

Buka saw much of this abuse because it was the main command post for the PNGDF.

Army men would seduce young girls in their cars and then they would hand these girls over to their friends for sex. Group rape was also a common practise during the crisis. In one case 14 men gang-raped a girl from Kerema (a province of PNG) and left her buried in sand up to her neck at Kokopau in Buka.

I know of another case where five Buka men were brutally treated by certain PNG soldiers when they first landed after the re-invasion of Bougainville. They tied ropes to these men and made them run. They would pull the ropes and the men would fall on the coral road. They made them strip naked, climb coconut trees and commit sex acts on each other.

There are many widows today because of the war, like Christine Raras, who has five children. The army killed her husband by throwing him down a toilet pit. These women suffer greatly trying to support their children as single parents. The army stayed here happily while the people, especially the women, suffered with no food, no clothes and no money. In one case, when the army found a doctor drunk, they made him drink their urine. The army always arrested men and questioned them. One question they liked to ask a man was whether he had had sex the previous night. Why ask a man that question?

The army used to take girls from the high school for sex. The girls needed the money. The army had money and that's why it was easy for them to find sex. They would buy sex from young girls and married women. All people in Buka were desperate to find money. The signal that was used by soldiers when the army would return from the bush operations and come to town was to stand with their hand in front of their mouths. This meant they were offering \$K50 for sex. This was a lot of money for us. They would always find a woman for this price. We needed the money to live and there was no other way to find money because of the blockade. On Sohano there was a young nurse named Teresa, who was a victim of the army and the BRA. She was their toilet. She would take letters from the BRA to the army ship where she would be used by the army. Afterwards she would return to the shore and be used by the BRA.

The army often used the Resistance to find women for them. The Resistance picked one woman from Malasang named Wendy. She ran away with her sister to hide in her house. The Resistance followed her and shot her. She was in the hospital for many months. The Resistance used to sell women to the army. When the army raped women they would spit on their penis before penetrating the women. The army put one of our leader's wives in jail at their camp and used her for sex.

The army used to kill the weak-minded, those who had emotional or mental handicaps, who knew nothing of the war because they could not understand. At the road-blocks going into town, anybody who was buying supplies was accused of supplying the BRA. The army or Resistance would then confiscate these supplies for

their own use or to resell. If they found Buka (who used to travel over the water looking for betel-nuts) boys on the mainland side of Bougainville Passage the army would suspect them of taking information to the BRA. They would beat them and make them swim back across the passage. So many bad things happened when the PNGDF was here that no one would ever know about because there were no outside witnesses. Some buildings in Buka are built over the graves of young Bougainvilleans who were killed and dumped in mass graves by the PNGDF. The Buka Police Station and the new Buka Hospital, built with Australian money as part of the peace process, are definite sites beneath which our people lie hidden. This information is from the women and girls who experienced these things. I am one of the victims of army abuse. A military policeman named Robin Monai raped me. He buggered me and he raped me wearing a coffee mug handle on his penis — he called it a bearing. This caused me internal damage. This man is still here in Buka and nothing has been done to correct this injustice. This is a man who used to cut the ears off and then kill our men. He is still here. Nothing has been done; there is no justice. There are many women's organisations, but they are of no help. They have funding but I do not know what they do with this money. They do not fight for our women's rights and they do not help us, the victims. Today we must try to forgive and forget.

PART TWO

BOUGAINVILLE WOMEN IN COMMUNITY

PROLOGUE

WOMEN IN COMMUNITY DURING THE BLOCKADE

Marilyn Taleo Havini

THE FIRST YEARS OF war, from 1990 to 1995, led to the displacement of thousands of families but forged a new sense of community. As the post-colonial social structures collapsed, pre-contact society mores were recalled and revised and a new awareness of being 'Bougainvillean' began to unite people. Two terms were coined in response to this communal self-awareness: '*yumi yet*' (we are capable) and '*mekim na save*' (learn by doing).

Mountain living drew together strange combinations of people, including interactions between previously '*tambu*' (taboo) clan groups and separate denominational church communities (Catholic, United Church, Seventh-day Adventist and Assemblies of God being the main ones) and many new non-denominational communities were formed. In the process of collating two volumes of human rights abuses, I have been overwhelmed by amazing accounts of mercy, love, faith and hope within communities in Bougainville, which contrast so sharply with the abuses of war.

Women, as well as men, put their own safety on the line in Bougainville's stand for land rights, human rights, justice, freedom and environmental protection. No longer prepared to live on the run and become statistics in a war, women began grouping together in various ways throughout the island. The imperative to create a future worth fighting for led women to create new communal initiatives.

By 1994, when Ruby Mirinka returned to Bougainville from the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, communities were ready for human rights training. They wanted to know what moral criteria would guarantee their case for Bougainville's cause in the international arena. By 1995, when Daphne Zale went to the World Conference of Women in Beijing, women and human rights issues were hotly debated in the international and PNG press and Bougainville women became pawns of the PNG Government, which presumed to speak for the women and children of Bougainville. By 1996, whole communities were formally establishing women's groups, organising their own social services, provisions or allocation of resources and human rights conduct.

PNG mortar bombs and the clearing of large areas of land for military operations destroyed almost the entire infrastructure of one of the most highly developed areas of the indigenous Pacific. With villages destroyed, more than 60,000 people were

contained in PNGDF-run care centres and those who were not prepared to live within reach of the invaders were hiding in the mountains. The BRA also contributed to some strategic destruction of facilities and bridges in defending and preventing the army's advances.

Behind the blockade men and women worked out how to process salt from the sea, others extracted a 'blockade soap' using the natural bleach in the white flesh surrounding cocoa pods, others held competitions to see who could develop the best oil lamp. Others invented fuel from coconut oil and then worked out how to use it to run generators and cars. Mechanical engineers who had been working or training at the Panguna mine worked out how to generate hydro-electric power from mountain streams and store it in used car batteries. Where there had been darkness in these mountain villages, now there was light!

Besides providing for the non-combatant civilians, women gladly fed the BRA men and boys whenever they came through the camps and villages. They encouraged these men and kept abreast of news by such means. The BRA would often reciprocate these kind services by bringing salt, smuggled clothing and much needed medicine inland to communities. As they criss-crossed the island in its defence, they even risked their lives by carrying the sick to the coast and taking them across the water in boats to the Solomon Islands for medical treatment.

Some women became 'mamas' for people who were trapped at long distances from their own communities. One such woman was Joycelyn, from my husband's clan in Buka, who is married to Daniel Tunsio from Rorienang in Central Bougainville. Together they moved inland to a high mountain village and Joycelyn became renowned for her hard work in subsistence farming. She was a loving, hospitable village woman of great faith. Joycelyn walked all the way up the mountains to Guava village near Panguna to see President Francis Ona and ask for support for her own community initiative called the 'Buka Trap Group'. Joycelyn had become known as the 'mama' for all the Buka boys fighting in Central Bougainville, who were cut off from their homes on the island of Buka and therefore had no 'mama' or family of their own to care for them. She was later selected by the BRA as one of the very first women to attend peace talks in New Zealand.

As families fled to the mountains, older men who remembered hunting and trapping passed on their knowledge and skills to the young. The elderly found themselves useful teachers as in the old days and this stimulation revived a return to a more traditional way of life. Young educated women such as Josie, who had been studying accountancy in Lae, now learned totally different subjects, such as how to use traditional medicine and herbs, from grandparents rather than lecturers. The courage to experiment and try these remedies in the absence of any doctors or Western medicine, proved effective and powerful. A new communal respect for traditional knowledge and jungle skills added to the pride in being Bougainvillean.

Everyone worked beyond their expected capacity or experience and many of these Bougainville women of little or no formal training undertook several of these programs. Teachers came from an education as basic as having completed grade two of primary school. If anyone was able to read and write, they shared what they knew. Love for children and the sharing of basic life skills was the other requirement to become a teacher. The BRA was not gun-running but rather ferrying pens and pencils, paper and textbooks from Australian schools, churches and families supported by the NSW Teachers Federation, the South Coast Trades and Labour Council, the Waterside Workers Union and alternative political parties of various persuasions, while they were being pursued and sometimes shot at by Australian-donated patrol boats manned by the PNGDF.

Women's groups began by forming family, church and non-denominational fellowships to feed orphans and widows, to teach, nurse, pass on recipes, seeds and agrarian skills such as permaculture, and to conduct technical and secretarial training. As such projects gained momentum, administrative structures and sustainable training courses began to be established. By 1996, several of these community initiatives had come together under an interesting name — the Bougainville Community Based Integrated Humanitarian Program (BOCBIHP). A leadership was set up to operate within Bougainville and an entire support network was established, with an office in the nearby Western Solomons and further south in the capital, Honiara. Maintained by Bougainvillean refugees who had settled in camps in the Solomons, the network established blockade-breaking access to and the ferrying of supplies donated by NGOs in donor countries.

Behind the blockade, by the time the peace process began in 1997, they had established 12 health centre bases that supplied 23 aid posts and 47 village health clinics. The nursing school in the jungle graduated trainees and health workers including 36 village midwives, 36 village aides and 23 aid post orderlies. BOCBIHP fielded 80 qualified schoolteachers and 113 volunteer grade-10 graduates as their assistants. They opened 71 community schools with an overall enrolment of 4,726 pupils. They had also opened a secretarial school and a bible college, which was run by two women. Women were part of the support network of school boards and special school committees, which would meet to ensure school needs were met. The secretarial school was popular and the communications school trained a small team to intercept the Morse code and radio messages of the advancing army.

Another community initiative set up a short-wave radio station, Radio Free Bougainville (RFB). This became the greatest method of communication across the region. Amateur radio operators from Australia assisted us in smuggling solar panels and radios across from the Solomons and there were small transportable units that could be moved every time the enemy tracked down the signal. Many times the PNGDF sought to bomb it or jam the signal and they then set up a rival station that screamed abuse at people. RFB was on air from 6–8pm whenever it was safe to broadcast. The programs consisted of warning messages, prayers, songs and words of encouragement that reached the people wherever they were.

International media reports were demonising Bougainvilleans as rebels and terrorists and PNG leaders tried to hold the high moral ground by claiming that all their efforts to subdue the independence movement were in the interests of the women and children of Bougainville. Once the women understood this propaganda, they realised the urgent need to travel and speak to the international community for themselves.

Chapter One OVERCOMING THE BLOCKADE

BUILDING A JUNGLE SOCIETY

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

Displaced people building a community

WHEN OUR LIVES REACHED the worst state imaginable living on the run behind the blockade, we had to make some attempt to rally ourselves to survive. All we had was our land and the natural resources it produced. We had to adapt to a new way of living.

It was a time of discovery and of learning to rely on our natural resources as well as inventing new ways to do the things we had taken for granted in our modern life.

Rice production

Our first idea was to plant rice, to experiment and learn how to grow enough for our own consumption. If we produced a surplus, we would be able to exchange it for the things we did not produce. We planted rice grains left from the Japanese occupation of World War II.

Within four months, we had our first harvest — a big bag full, which we dried on our iron roof. The hardest part of this rice production was working out how to husk the outer shell of the grains into edible grain. It was an interesting process, and even our immediate family members got involved with us to investigate the best process to husk the rice. People came in large numbers to our village to watch us husk the rice and to taste it. They would get excited and ask us for grains to plant out their own gardens.

So that is how we started to share the knowledge of rice planting. When the inland people began producing rice, they made lots of improvements with the husking process. They produced lots more than we did on the coastal lands. Then we started a barter system to get rice from them. Planting the rice and having our own rice for consumption was a major breakthrough for all of us. We were proud that we were able to produce and consume rice for free. We are happy that our people are still producing rice even after the peace process made store-bought rice available again.

Wooden spoons

Because of the destruction of property during the war and because many people had to abandon their possessions or lost them while on the move, basic items such as cutlery were in short supply. Since we had a proper tool to carve wood, we decided to make some spoons. During our women's fundraising we sold some of the spoons so we could assist those who needed aid, but most of the time we gave them away for free. We used these spoons for soup and to serve rice and vegetables.

Our desire to invent all sorts of utilitarian items to meet specific needs made our lives very exciting and we developed a sense of self-sufficiency that we had not known before the war. During this time of rebuilding our jungle society, there was so much energy in our people to develop new ways to do things.

Oil and soap production

The coconut became vital for our survival. The young green nut was used for food, while coconut oil became the most important of the tree's uses. We made soap from coconut oil mixed with caustic soda, which was left to dry for a month before use. We gave bars to our friends and families; it was especially useful for washing clothes. We found old bottles and filled them with coconut oil to make lamps and the oil was used also for cooking, as hair, body and massage oil, medicine, and in diesel generators and vehicles.

BRA soldiers ate dry and green coconuts and *kuru*, a type of crunchy, milky treat made from the evaporated coconut fluid. While out in the battlefield, the BRA would often survive for extended periods on a coconut diet.

The process of extracting and producing the coconut oil, however, is a time-consuming and tiring job. Many hours are consumed in collecting the dry coconuts, carting them back to camp and husking them on a sharp stake. The nuts are then cut in half and the white meat is scraped out — which can take up to a day. The meat is put in water in 44-gallon drums or other large containers. Once the water and coconut cream have mixed, the liquid is squeezed from the coconut meat and placed into another container where it is left to ferment for three days. During this process, the oil and water separate, with the oil rising to the top. It is collected and brought to boil over a fire, then it is ready to be used.

'Uncle John' was the 'coconut man' in our village during the blockade. He was an old but energetic man who had only one leg. He always had enough coconut oil for anyone who needed it. John sold oil from his little hut for \$K.1 a litre. Despite his disability, John would collect coconuts himself and husk them while standing smartly on his one leg. His grandchildren helped him carry the husked nuts back to his hut. John was well-known as a speedy scraper — he could scrape 200 whole coconuts on his own in one hour. He needed 12 whole coconuts to make one litre of oil.

We admired John for his energy and our women's group often asked him to help us scrape our coconuts. We used to support one another in this process, especially if we wanted to use the oil for our truck. A lot of oil was needed just to travel a few kilometres.

We used oil to run our diesel generator, which we used to recharge the battery for the high-frequency radio, the essential link in the BRA's communication network. Because we had no telephones, the BRA installed radios in all the main centres and the system kept people informed of what was happening throughout Bougainville.

The extensive planting of coconut trees by our forefathers meant we were able to remain mobile during the blockade even though we were denied access to other types of fuel. We were also able to trade our coconut oil for rice from the inland people, where coconuts did not grow. Home-produced coconut oil is still used today in Bougainville homes as an important and cheap fuel.

Cocoa

We experimented with cocoa to produce bleach. People had realised during plantation work that whenever they got the sap from cocoa pods on their clothes, it bleached the colour out of the cloth. So, during the blockade, many people used cocoa juice as a stain remover. They would soak their clothes with wet cocoa beans for a day and, by the time they washed and rinsed the laundry, the clothes were clean and bright. Those nurses who remained at their medical posts during the blockade continued to nurse patients in gleaming white uniforms!

Medicines

When there were no hospitals and medicines, we had no choice but to use our own herbs and vines, tree bark, roots and leaves. It was difficult for me at first because I did not know the names of the trees and plants very well. So I used to follow Sam's father into the bush to see which plants he used for particular ailments or sores. He would show me how to get the medicine, which part of the plant to use and how much. He might diagnose that one patient had two different sicknesses and knowing this was an important part of making medicine.

It took a few hours to collect the various plants for one mixture. I found it a tiring job climbing up and down the hills and valleys, especially when some plants were not found in the lowlands, but grew only on the ranges. It was a big sacrifice to be a medicine maker.

Some of my friends discovered plants growing alongside streams in the jungle that could be used as a shower gel. Since there was no soap they used this plant and it gave them a refreshing and relaxing feeling.

Another jungle plant found at the head of the streams in the jungle was used for salt in vegetable soup. Mountain people did not have access to salt like those on the coast, who boiled sea water to extract salt crystals.

Food

The main root crops were sweet potatoes, taro, yams, cassava and banana and they became important staples during the war and blockade. We discovered sago and cassava had yeast-like properties, so when we wanted to make something sweet to satisfy the yearning for cakes and biscuits, we used one of these two to make the food rise. We made juice drinks from limes, mandarins and boiled pineapples. We made jam from pawpaws boiled with sugar, which we extracted from boiled sugar cane.

Education

We started giving the children informal lessons in the camp. We taught them about our traditions and sang traditional and Christian songs. Legends were also told as part of story-time. We used charcoal as our chalk to write on a piece of plywood used as a blackboard.

Someone was clever enough to find a solution to the problem of not being able to buy new typewriter ribbons. Sap from the wild banana becomes inky after being distilled. We were able to use the same ribbon over and over again by dipping it in this 'ink' and leaving it to dry.

Sam and I had a small portable typewriter, which was invaluable to us to produce documents for correspondence purposes.

The blockade

The blockade was meant to cause our capitulation to the enemy. We were supposed to give up and beg the PNG Government to restore services at the cost of our political freedom.

I see those hard days as our victorious days. We learned to be courageous and inventive. We discovered what our island had to offer us as substitutes for imported goods. We explored ways to develop self-sufficiency and the successes we had helped us to fight against the blockade.

When Sam and I heard that many people had surrendered to the care centres — some for medical reasons, education and others out of fear — we realised we needed to fight the war not just with BRA weapons but with knowledge. Often people were not as afraid of the situation if they knew how to overcome it.

Our initiatives became important to our struggle because we used them as tools to boost our people's morale and to keep them focused on supporting the struggle with courage and hope. Some people had already succumbed in some areas, and we did not want that to happen in our area. We wanted to keep our people intact. So this was the imperative for being in the position of leadership.

CHILD SOLDIERS

Lucy Madoi

THE SUFFERING BOUGAINVILLE HAS undergone has been enough to convince our people that we must find a way to protect our land and our people other than through war. As women, we are landowners in a matrilineal society and our men have stood for us and supported us. We have had five women in the Bougainville People's Congress since the peace process stopped the war and our views on all matters, including the issue of 'child soldiers', will be respected.

I am only one woman, yet as the elected president of our BWPF organisation, I have been privileged to travel and meet with many of our people. I have walked the mountains of Bougainville as well as attending conferences overseas, including the Australian Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Conference in Melbourne, Australia, in September 1999. At this conference I spoke on the topic of Bougainville mothers, child soldiers and the peace process. World Vision, AusAID and the Australian High Commission were all intrigued as to why we mothers of the blockaded regions of Bougainville allowed our children to fight. I am thankful for the opportunity the conference gave me to re-evaluate those years of the struggle where our only protection was from our menfolk — our fathers, husbands and sons.

Many men remained civilians throughout the struggle and refused to fight but that did not stop them being accused of being 'rebels' and, therefore, considered legitimate targets of the military forces. The rules that could be imposed on indigenous peoples regarding the recruitment policies of soldiers must not be used to condemn a suffering people whose children have had to defend them. We have been under attack from fully equipped armies that have invaded our country and come to kill us, including civilians.

Before the crisis, Bougainville enjoyed one of the most advanced education systems for a developing country. Children could attend Viles Tok Ples Skul (a two-year preschool experience where they became literate in their own indigenous language); then a six-year primary school education in English was followed by a four-year secondary school education. At this point a selection process separated school leavers from those who progressed to two years of senior high school and all the potential tertiary opportunities of university, technical colleges and other vocational colleges in PNG and overseas.

With the war, all this was gone. The schools closed in 1990 and our children found themselves unoccupied in the villages, living in fear of being caught in the fighting as it came ever closer.

The mass evacuation of Bougainvillean students from secondary and tertiary institutions all over PNG back to their home villages, led to a sudden swelling of youth numbers in villages that was unprecedented in modern Bougainville. Our young people returned home for fear of the PNG custom of 'pay-back', in which relatives of soldiers killed in action decide to kill any person related to the 'enemy' as a means of coping with grief and loss.

These mature and knowledgeable students (many within months of graduating from four-year courses) returned home to find their families in a state of panic. They were preparing to run away from their comfortable permanent homes to live high up in the cold mountain mists, exposed to the weather and without shelter or gardens to feed them.

For survival and to protect our families, it is true that many of our children took up arms and fought in the war. This did not happen under forced conscription or even parental pressure. Our youth population became adults very quickly in this desperate situation and many of the returned students had skills and knowledge to adapt to the emergency. They developed water-retention systems and even mini hydro-electricity plants for us to run lighting, communication and washing machines.

Young men, civilians and BRA included, manufactured saucepans and knives for our Paruparu Health Centre kitchens, devised methods for soap making, oil lamps, salt production, herbal remedies, coconut fuel for cars, generators and many other clever inventions.

Like any mother, I would not want any of my children to go to war or be caught in a fight. Our children remained by our sides throughout the war until such time as they were considered adults.

Not all boys became BRA soldiers. Only if they had a gun would some feel that they should go with the men. Some boys were keener than others to be men and fight; if, in such cases, they could not be convinced to stay at home, they were allowed to serve the BRA by carrying food to the soldiers.

They would remain with the BRA as cooks and carriers until the BRA felt they were mature enough to take part in operations. Even then, the younger boys were kept in the background and were employed as messengers and look-outs for the coordination of BRA movements.

In the 10 years of struggle, the BRA remained a volunteer army. There were no wages and every volunteer joined for the purpose of defending family, home and country. The defence of land is a cultural and traditional obligation for our people.

It is against Bougainvillean custom to use children in any adult occupation. War is definitely seen in our custom as a role for adult men only. No women or girls ever took part in the war except to cook and care for their men.

Children are the future of our society and every child born into a clan is welcomed with special ceremonies to ensure their survival. At each stage of a child's growth, there are more ceremonies to acknowledge the child's role and value in the clan. No child was sent to war in Bougainville.

This brings us to the problem of how to distinguish between a child and an adult in Melanesian society. There is no 'in between' stage as in Western society, in which teenagers form a distinct band between children and adults. In Bougainville, when a boy reaches puberty, he is watched carefully and his development is assessed. The elders of the clan begin discussing his rite of passage and planning the ceremonial events that will qualify the boy to become a man.

The timing of this significant event is applied individually in each case. In Bougainvillean society, a person's age in years does not determine when they become an adult. Children with a disability, or those who remain childlike in their 20s, for instance, would still be referred to as a 'piccaninny' or a 'child'. Many Melanesian people do not know their real age anyway. During the blockade there were few watches or calendars and very few people kept track of the time.

Many 'youths' have shown an amazing ability to build a new way of life in the war environment and under the blockade, proving themselves as men when they were still quite young.

Older boys and girls have been mentors to the young. Even students who completed only grade-four primary schooling are now working as teacher aides beside high-school graduates in the bush schools. Young girls have started up preschools for their own village communities. In this environment, it is very difficult to determine that an equivalent youth is too young to be a soldier.

With the peace process now in place for Bougainville, women are campaigning on human rights issues, desperate to rebuild a moral and just society that will ensure the safety of our children. We are willing to learn all the UN protocols and discover how to secure our peace and build a future.

Bougainville mothers want our sons to grow up and become the next generation of leaders. We do not want them to hold guns and we do not want the fighting to continue.

Bougainville must take its place back in the Pacific community and the region as a whole. Whatever is decided at world conferences or implemented on the issue of 'child soldiers' will directly affect our situation. I hope we can find answers to the question of what a 'child soldier' is and how we can avoid conflict in the future. Our BRA soldiers helped us to overcome the blockade, but will the world allow us to overcome future wars by addressing the needs of all the people?

HUMANITARIAN AID FOR BOUGAINVILLE

Scholastica Raren Miriori

Arawa Red Cross

I BEGAN WORKING AS a volunteer with the Arawa Red Cross when the blockade was imposed on Bougainville in 1990. The Red Cross was, of course, a non-political organisation, although our local branch was officially a member of the PNG National Red Cross as distinct from the International Red Cross. Those of us who volunteered to help the people by working with this PNG branch of the Red Cross organisation were so concerned for the welfare of the people that we were as yet unaware of the politics of aid. The International Red Cross and Medicines Sans Frontiers would encounter years of frustration as well as success in their efforts to assist people behind the blockade.

We faced great difficulties and medical supplies were running out fast. All other goods and services disappeared very quickly. Many people attempted to maintain their services but they eventually had to 'shut up shop' to begin their own fight for survival.

As the PNGDF bombardment of the coastal areas continued, more and more people moved into Arawa for safety reasons. The United Church property was set up as a care centre. The difficulties faced by the Red Cross included not only a lack of medicines but trying to feed and clothe those who arrived with little or nothing in our care centre. The pressure was almost impossible.

Our activities involved going out to villages as far away as Atamo, Manatai, Koromira, Sipatako and Nagovisi to collect baskets of food and vegetables for the centre. Sometimes we had to barter, such as exchanging a bolt of cloth as payment for food.

We tried our best to share relief supplies with areas beyond Central Bougainville. Medicines in particular were sought far and wide. Sometimes supplies never reached their destinations and several bitter accusations were made about our workers. It was very frustrating indeed, but there was little we could do to control the situation.

People were naturally very worried about possible outbreaks of childhood diseases as there was no longer any immunisation program or medication for maternity and children's clinics. Whooping cough, tuberculosis, cholera, meningitis, leprosy, measles and chicken pox were all common ailments, as well as the ever-present and deadly malaria. Many children and adults began to die from normally preventable diseases.

Many women and young girls died in childbirth and women began to seek ways across the sea blockade if they suspected there would be difficulties in delivering their babies. We also had to watch over our scant supplies and protect them from those who panicked and demanded more than we could dispense. Attempts to break into the Red Cross centre continued throughout the war.

As well as working with the Red Cross between 1990 and 1991, I did some teaching at Arawa High School and Bovo Primary School. We had hardly any school materials left to use and this was another challenge for us volunteers. Bovo Primary School was the former International School for the International Education Agency and had served mainly expatriate children before the war. As the facilities were much better than those at the Arawa Tupukas Community School, we moved to the better premises. Although the IEA staff had tried to pack away their resources for safe keeping, we still found much value in the furniture, equipment and the comfortable buildings. Students had to cut grass before school and maintain the premises as we had no cleaners, but we successfully kept the education of children in town available until the PNG army bombarded the town and invaded in 1993.

While engaged in these activities, I had also to play an important role in supporting my husband at the political leadership level. We had to host a lot of dignitaries, including our Bougainville government leaders, as well as diplomats, media organisations, NGOs and church leaders. Many of these people stayed with us while they were visiting the island in an effort to address the situation in one way or another.

The Bougainville leadership sent my husband, Martin, across the blockade to the Solomon Islands capital of Honiara during one of our negotiation attempts in September 1992. I wished to visit my husband and then return to Bougainville to continue the teaching work and Red Cross assistance. On my arrival in Honiara I immediately felt a brief sense of relief to be away from all kinds of pressures back in Bougainville, yet I could hardly forget the sufferings of our people back home and the fear of the unknown and a sense of hopelessness in the air.

A week after I arrived in Honiara in 1993, we heard on the radio that the PNGDF had invaded Loloho and Arawa. The people in Arawa had moved further into the jungle, hiding in caves, while others fled to live with relatives in mountain villages further inland. Pauline Onsa, a fearless Bougainville woman, continued to serve the Arawa Red Cross throughout the war. She would defy the army in walking past the battlefields and the 'no go' zones in efforts to take gardening kits and tools to assist people in their subsistence farming. Pauline operated a VHF radio from a house in Arawa and she valiantly maintained this link to the outside world — even while sprawled on the floor caught in crossfire from running battles in the street below. Bullet holes still show the evidence of these narrow escapes. At times Pauline would be held up at gunpoint and forced to unlock the aid stored in containers adjacent to the house. Pauline would continually travel across the blockade with her Red Cross 'tag of immunity' to Port Moresby to demand yet more aid from a constantly depleted 'national disaster fund'.

Family Assistance to Bougainville

A few weeks' break in Honiara gave me time to think about what I could do to continue to help my people in Bougainville. This is how we came to develop our working group Family Assistance to Bougainville — Solomon Islands Christian Association (FABSICA). The women involved in this group were all Solomon Islands women and a mission priest, Fr Norman Arkwright, was the coordinator. Fr Arkwright had opened up the mission where he was posted to accommodate a refugee camp for Bougainvilleans who had to travel to the Solomons for medical aid. He had already been coordinating by mission radio with his counterparts at mission stations in Bougainville and, with his parishioners, sending boats through the blockade to bring out patients who the Marist sisters and priests in Bougainville arranged passage for. The Solomon Islanders had already formed their own group of humanitarian aid workers and they called themselves Humanitarian Aid for Bougainville, Solomon Islands Christian Association (HABSICA). Churches in Australia and supporters of the Bougainville Freedom Movement (BFM) were collecting donated aid and shipping this by the month to HABSICA to send on to Bougainville on the return trips made by the BRA and mission boats after delivering patients.

All FABSICA members had horrific and inspiring survival stories and they felt as I did: grateful to be safe in Honiara, yet so aware of our dear ones back in Bougainville. Often we would cry as we ate our meals in safety — thinking of our loved ones who were going without.

I was asked to be the leader of FABSICA and we arranged for monthly meetings where we would assess the situation in Bougainville and the situation with hospital patients and refugee needs in the Solomons.

We would make plans for when and what routes to use to get the medicines across to Bougainville. We kept reliable look-outs watching for enemy movements and assisted refugees in finding temporary homes and we made visits to the hospital a priority in the follow-up care of patients.

Our weekends were spent packing and labelling supplies, which came to us in containers or in loose packets from ships on which they had been sent for free as padding for mission goods. The containers from the Australian trade unions and BFM were used as work sheds and storage for mixed bundles we prepared for onward shipment. HABSICA and our overseas donors were our lifeline in obtaining the supplies, but FABSICA knew the people and routes to take for dispersing the aid in Bougainville. Our careful evaluations were able to accommodate updated reports on areas of need, of conflict, of people movements and reliable carriers who would see the aid — in small, manageable parcels — through to appropriate destinations.

As the war escalated on the island, we had a great influx of refugees from the usual 500–600 up to an estimated 2,000 and many patients feared returning to Bougainville. As the number of patients increased in Gizo, Taro, Munda, Honiara and Atoifi,

FABSICA consulted with the Red Cross to establish a number of care centres to accommodate the refugees. We often visited these care centres as well as the many individual refugees who were privately accommodated by Solomon Islands families. We provided counselling, news updates and assisted them in arranging safe passage when they wished to return to Bougainville.

I nursed some of the patients at home because they had nowhere else to go and I had to help the Red Cross arrange funerals for those who died at the hospital.

As a fully qualified nurse, I also sometimes ended up helping out by treating patients at the hospital in Honiara. We were all very grateful that the Solomons — technically a foreign country — recognised Bougainville's blood ties and accommodated and treated patients not only at the Central Hospital in Honiara but, over the years, in hospitals on other islands in the Solomons such as at Nila, Choisel and Gizo.

Once again, as was the case in Arawa, I helped my husband at the political and diplomatic level in representing our people to the outside world. We had the only direct radio link with the Bougainville leadership behind the blockade and Martin's role as the coordinator of humanitarian aid made him the senior man for our people in the Solomons. He was the spokesman for the BIG. Our home was an aid centre, outpatient nursing centre and diplomatic office, and also a guest house for visiting dignitaries. We hosted our BIG and BRA leaders and other representatives as they transited to attend the UN sessions in Geneva, peace negotiations or human rights conferences or even to campaign in the Solomon Islands for its intervention with PNG.

BOUGAINVILLE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Vikki John

AT EASTER IN 1993 I ventured into the Australian desert for a peaceful protest against the American spy base at Nurrungar (near Woomera) in South Australia and to support the land rights of the Kokatha people. Nurrungar was built on land taken from the Kokatha, its Aboriginal owners. There were hundreds of peace activists from all over Australia camped at Nurrungar by invitation of the Kokatha people.

It was during this time that I met Moses Havini. I asked Moses where he was from and he replied 'Bougainville'. I told Moses about a film I had viewed called, *My Valley is Changing*, which was sponsored by the mining company which, as it turned out, had created havoc on Bougainville. I told Moses how disturbing I found the film and how I wondered about how the people would cope with the environmental devastation the copper mine was causing and the theft of their land.

Moses then told me about the war on Bougainville. At that point, I had no idea that there was a war. He explained that, after 17 years of tolerating the mining company and lobbying the PNG Government for better terms and more efficient environmental control, the people of Bougainville saw no other avenue but to mobilise against the mining venture. In November 1988, explosives were stolen from the mining company and were used to blow up vital communications and electricity installations. Anti-mining activities escalated, which lead to the closure of the Panguna copper mine in May 1989.

Moses explained to me about the blockade imposed by PNG, which was preventing medicines, food, fuel, humanitarian assistance and journalists from going to Bougainville. I was horrified to learn that Australia and PNG were waging a brutal war against the people of Bougainville with the purpose of re-opening the Panguna copper mine and avoiding secession.

It was on that day in 1993 that I became involved in Bougainville's struggle for independence.

(More than 270 people, including me, were arrested and charged with trespass while protesting against the US base.)

Returning to Sydney after the protest, I attended a meeting in a Newtown cafe of other activists who were keen to get the Bougainville story on the agenda nationally and internationally. It was decided that we would become the Bougainville Freedom Movement (BFM). We had regular meetings and monthly public meetings at the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. I soon became the minute-taker, writer of *Garamut*, the Bougainville newsletter, treasurer, then the national coordinator for the BFM.

Other Bougainville interest groups began in Brisbane, Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Thanks to Dee Margetts of the Australian Greens, we were able to hold regular phone link-ups with these groups. We would always begin the phone conference with Moses giving an update of the situation in Bougainville. We would then hear reports of the action the various groups were planning, the humanitarian aid and medicines they had collected, the funds they had raised, the letters they had written to newspapers, the parliamentarians they had lobbied and the great many contacts they had made along the way.

We staged many, many protests; some extremely memorable. With loud hailer in hand, we targeted all the players in the strife: the Australian Government, the Australian Defence Forces, the PNG consulate and the mining giant, Rio Tinto. As the news spread about Bougainville, more and more people began to join the BFM and get involved. We connected with agencies such as Amnesty International, Community Aid Abroad, Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA), trade unions, churches and students, who all gave assistance to the Bougainville people.

We would hold banner-making days in preparation for approaching protests. We were always prepared at protests with thousands of leaflets to hand out to the public, buckets to collect money and Bougainville stickers, T-shirts and badges to sell. The fundraising paid the costs of transporting humanitarian aid to Bougainville via the Solomon Islands.

In January 1994, a mining conference was to be held at the Regent Hotel in Sydney, attended by the then PNG Prime Minister, Paias Wingti. We decided to protest outside and also arranged for three male friends to attend the conference's business dinner inside the Regent Hotel. When the PNG Prime Minister arrived at the dinner he mingled with the rich, shaking their hands and introducing himself to all in attendance. When Mr Wingti shook my friend's hand, my friend crunched on a blood capsule he had held in his mouth. As blood poured from my friend's mouth, down his chin and on to his pressed white shirt, he said to Mr Wingti, 'When are you going to stop killing the people on Bougainville?' Mr Wingti was quite shocked and soon after security guards escorted my friends out of the dinner. They had enjoyed the moment of their symbolic protest and even managed to have a beer or two on the house.

Also in 1994, I heard that the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Gareth Evans, was to be a special guest at a book launch. We organised some T-shirts with Gareth Evans' photo on the front and a caption that read,

'Wanted for Murder ... The Butcher of Bougainville ... Gareth Evans ...
Australian Government policy has resulted in the death of over 5,000 people.'

We decided to print up some Gareth Evans posters, too. We mustered up supporters and went to the book launch to nibble on cheese and biscuits and sip wine before Mr Evans arrived. When he walked into the room and spotted his photo everywhere, he thought we were his fan club. His ego soon subsided when he read the writing on the posters and T-shirts. His complexion turned a whiter shade of pale. As you can imagine, we had a wonderful time raising the Bougainville issue.

Just before Christmas in 1996, three dignitaries from PNG were invited to speak at a forum in Sydney. They were the PNG Police Commissioner, Bob Nenta, the PNG Army Major-General, Jerry Singirok, and Defence Minister Mathias Ijape. BFM decided to blockade the entrance to the forum just as PNG had blockaded Bougainville. Many protesters were up bright and early that morning. So were the media and police. It always amazed me how the police knew what we were up to. We managed to padlock one gate so the only way into the forum was up the driveway where we stood holding our banners, arms linked. We allowed participants through, including MP Ian Sinclair, who had been to Bougainville in 1994 with a parliamentary delegation. We anxiously awaited the arrival of the three PNG dignitaries who were the target of our blockade.

One police officer told me we would be arrested for obstructing the driveway. I turned to my friendly protesters and asked them if they would like to be arrested for standing on the footpath. They eagerly answered in unison 'Yes'. The white minibus carrying the three PNG dignitaries finally arrived and tried to get up the blockaded driveway. We stood our ground and let them know we meant business. The police intervened and many of us were sent flying. The TV cameras were rolling and eventually the van got through. When the three dignitaries alighted we screamed and yelled at them, 'Murderers!'.

Later that day, I watched SBS-TV news and a report of our protest. In his speech at the forum, Mr Sinclair said he agreed with the protesters outside and that the war on Bougainville must stop and the inhumane blockade be lifted. There was a tear rolling down his cheek as he spoke.

I travelled to the Solomon Islands in July 1995, where I met with refugees from Bougainville. I interviewed many Bougainville refugees to get first hand accounts of atrocities. I also brought back drawings which were exhibited publicly and are now on the BFM web site. It was a very emotional trip and I cried many times. I also had the honour of meeting Bougainville humanitarian aid workers in Honiara and Gizo, who I deeply respected for their wonderful work.

I was extremely upset in February 1996 to hear that the support base in Honiara, where much of the donated humanitarian aid was stored and sorted for shipment across the blockade, had been fire-bombed. The Miriori family and their Solomon Islands base for Bougainville had been attacked by suspected PNG operatives and the family lost everything in the fire. All the goods that were donated by good-hearted people in Australia and overseas were destroyed. It was heart-breaking to hear the news and to receive

photos of the damage done. We were relieved to know that the family and their friends were alive and that measures were taken to ensure their safe passage out of the country. Although the attackers failed in their assassination mission, the house was burnt to the ground and we lost a vital contact for Bougainville. Other refugees were raised to take their place and the Miriori family were now in a position to continue their work from their new European base in The Netherlands.

In July 1996, I ventured to England to meet environmental activists who opposed mining company Rio Tinto. What a wonderful, dedicated crew they were. We organised a demonstration at the Rio Tinto headquarters in London. We had take-away milkshake containers filled with red paint to symbolise the blood of Bougainville. Once we gained entry to the posh foyer of the Rio Tinto office, we shouted, 'You have Bougainville blood on your hands Rio Tinto', and proceeded to throw our containers of red paint all over the place. It looked like a war scene by the time we had finished and then the police showed up. Two girls were arrested but eventually the charges were dropped. Special thanks must go to the Maritime Union of Australia. The mass media publicity that followed this event continued to put the Bougainville issue at the forefront of world news events.

Our BFM friends in England set up our current web site and continue to update it on a voluntary basis spreading the news all over the world. They have also raised funds for Bougainville by showing documentaries educating people about Bougainville and its right to self-determination.

In Australia, female supporters of Bougainville formed a group called Women for Bougainville and began preparations to get women from Bougainville to speak in Australia. A very successful forum called Women Speak Out on Bougainville was held at the University of Technology, Sydney, on 12 October, 1996. The forum papers were published and many copies were sold.

The day after the forum we were shocked to hear that the PNG-appointed Premier of the Bougainville Transitional Government, Theodore Miriung, had been assassinated at his home in South Bougainville. On the very night we were exposing human rights abuses to an international audience, Mr Miriung was shot dead while eating dinner with his wife and family. The news report on the radio implied that the BRA was responsible. I knew in my heart it would not have been them; the BRA always seemed to get the blame for everything. An inquiry by a Sri Lankan judge soon proved that the PNG army and its paid Resistance supporters had murdered Mr Miriung. To this day, Bougainvilleans have been demanding that PNG arrest those 'protected' individuals responsible for this horrendous crime.

By early 1997, the BFM and Moses Havini at his BIG Sydney post had been alerted that the PNG Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan, had hired mercenaries from Sandline International, a London-based company headed by Tim Spicer. Prime Minister Chan signed a contract worth \$36 million with the mercenaries, \$18 million of which was paid in advance. The mercenaries were hired to kill, maim and murder the people of Bougainville and we were most adamant that they

would not succeed. It was full steam ahead for what became Operation Rausim Quick (get them out!).

We faxed and phoned through an alert to every organisation we could think of — nationally and internationally — and I sent the alert by e-mail far and wide. We were in constant contact with activist friends in Port Moresby, who were doing everything they could to stop the mercenaries going to Bougainville. Our activist friends in London were researching the Sandline company and advising us of their disgusting history in Sierra Leone and other parts of the world. We were being told that the bombs they possessed would, when exploded, zap the oxygen from the air, killing people instantly within a huge radius. This was scary stuff.

Meanwhile, opposition to the Sandline deal was growing in PNG itself. Indeed, the PNG Army under Major-General Singirok hated the idea of the mercenaries being hired. The people of PNG and the army (strange allies for our BFM) wanted the mercenaries out and also demanded that Chan and his cronies step down for the sake of democracy. Thousands of people surrounded Parliament House in Port Moresby and demonstrated in the streets. Finally, on March 26, Chan was forced to resign.

The PNG Army had rounded up the mercenaries and kicked them out of PNG. Their leader, Tim Spicer, was captured by the PNG Army, arrested and ordered to remain in the country to face further court proceedings. He eventually managed to slip out of the country.

Unfortunately, four peace activists from PNG who helped to stop the mercenaries going to Bougainville were arrested and charged with 'unlawful assembly'. The BFM campaigned world-wide to have the charges dropped. The activists received hundreds of supporting letters and, by the end of August, all charges had been struck out.

July 1997 also saw the start of peace talks at Burnham in New Zealand, where Bougainville representatives gathered and resolved to work closely together for a unified Bougainville.

Bougainville is a beautiful island with beautiful people. I feel very honoured to have been connected with the Bougainville struggle. I have learnt and gained much.

To this day, I continue to distribute news about Bougainville by e-mail all over the world. Communication is limited on Bougainville but we have managed to create links via the Internet.

May peace, justice and independence reign on Bougainville.



*BFM supporters marching on International Women's Day, Sydney, March 1994.
Vikki John is on the right-hand side.*

Chapter Two WOMEN MOBILISE

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Daphne Zale

AS ONE OF THOSE mothers who had to cross the PNG blockade to go to the Solomon Islands for medical treatment and humanitarian assistance in 1992, I could not be silent about what was happening back in Bougainville. Although I was the wife of a United Church minister, who was the Bishop Elect for Bougainville at the time war broke out, I understood the necessity for the BRA to take up arms in self-defence when confronted by the PNGDF.

An example is an incident that happened on 25 May, 1992. I was walking along the shore of Kieta Harbour in Bougainville, quite close to our home, when PNG Patrol Boat 03 entered the harbour with a Red Cross flag flying from its mast. This was not the first time that PNGDF Patrol Boats 01 and 03 had flown the Red Cross flag to catch out unwary people who were fishing or who were in need of medical assistance and who were therefore lured by the sight of the Red Cross flag. Patrol Boat 03 was fitted out with an M60 machine-gun and a big mortar gun. When it drew within 150–200m of the beach, it began harassing the residents of Happy Valley. We had shots go between our legs but were amazingly unscathed. The patrol boat stopped right in front of Kieta town when the BRA fired a warning shot from a captured PNGDF mortar. At this point the patrol boat opened up in continuous fire — indiscriminately strafing the town for one and a half hours.

Due to such incidents, my husband and I felt compelled to minister to the so-called ‘rebel’ population who found themselves victims of injustice. Initially, people came to us with their experiences seeking pastoral help but there was an immense need for physical humanitarian work as well.

When the suspended Provincial Government re-formed behind the blockade as the BIG, my husband, Bishop John Zale, accepted an appointment as Health Minister. He took this duty very seriously and would work long hours attempting to alleviate suffering with what few resources could be found. We faithfully noted every incident that was brought to us and so began a long record of human rights abuses. We were able to start sending this information across the blockade to humanitarian offices in the Solomons by mission radio. Several churches and human rights groups helped us get the message out to the international media, but the PNG Government claimed we

were lying. We had no photographic services and foreign newspapers began to shy away from printing the press statements that Moses Havini was making in Sydney, which were based on the evidence we were collecting. Certain reporters operating from PNG claimed that Moses was inventing the stories — or exaggerating them — as they could not believe he would have any idea of the truth from his office in Sydney, Australia.

It was during this period that Moses was able to get assistance from the new band of supporters in Australia, via the BFM, to smuggle in parts for a VHF radio, which was set up in the mountains. Sam Voron ran the blockade to help train a band of operators and link up with already experienced Bougainville communicators, such as Morris Siriape. Morris was a top ex-PNGDF, a highly qualified communications officer who had been trained in Australia. Morris could crack every message in radio or Morse code that the PNGDF sent. He was an invaluable asset and saved many, many lives by providing us with advance warning of enemy movements.

Every evening that he could, my husband broadcast health and human rights news. He went to air with the reported atrocities in the hope that some warning for safety would reach people in time, and that people would reach out to assist the victims.

It was in this way that I learned from first hand experience that civilians, including women and children were the real victims of this war. They were, and still are, subjected to all manner of hardships. The effects reach through to our men and our entire communities. In one such example the wife of a friend (an evacuee to the Solomon Islands in 1993 interviewed by the World Council of Churches) was taken by the PNGDF at gunpoint and was forced to reveal where her husband was hiding. From his hiding place he had to watch her being abused by the soldiers. He didn't come out despite her screams. He escaped by swimming the channel.

The same report is filled with horrific stories of rape and torture, of young girls dying in childbirth and mothers with several children in tow having to flee after their husbands. Many women walked the length of Bougainville for months (one mother walked with seven children from April to November in 1992 to break the blockade and travel across the water to Choisel in the Solomons).

As the war intensified and the Interim Government found it more difficult to remain 'on duty', the work my husband was doing as health minister became even more difficult and he was concerned that I should cross the border safely when I needed medical help.

Once we were safely in the Solomons, our next initiative was to see what we could do for the homeless thousands who, like us, found that there was no way back into the war zone. The Red Cross came to the border, to a refugee camp at tiny Taro Island, and set up a processing centre. They needed help securing the confidence and trust of the wary civilians who all had to report on arrival to be granted refugee status. Once Bougainvilleans had official permission, they could receive medical attention and be cared for in refugee camps.

Because my husband's father is a Choisel man from the Solomons, he was able to claim citizenship in the Solomons. This enabled him to be officially appointed to church work again and we could minister in a legal capacity. Gizo, a town in the Western Solomons, became our next area of ministry and it consumed all our time and effort. We would do what we could for the many refugees passing through the Western Solomons and use our communication network to assist those who needed to go further south to the hospital in Honiara.

On my way through Sydney after attending a conference in China, Moses Havini gave me his fax machine to take back to Gizo. From this time on, in 1995, we had an excellent set-up whereby Morris would make regular radio contact with us from Bougainville by mission radio skeds and we would then type up the information in Gizo and fax it directly to Moses in Sydney. We also kept Martin Miriori informed in the Honiara Humanitarian Office, which he and Scholley maintained for the BIG. Martin and Scholley were working very hard but they could not make any press statements from the Solomons because of the delicate political relationships that existed between the Solomons Government and PNG. Therefore all media statements had to come from Moses in the Sydney office in Australia or from the BFM.

Some NGO groups from Australia, such as APHEDA, which had been sending aid to us for the border runs, sent out program officers to see what they could do to help. They were not able to cross the blockade but they were determined to help prepare our people for when we were able to return. When APACE (a technology section of the University of Technology in Sydney) heard about our hydro-power projects in Bougainville, they were concerned about voltage safety issues and also came to run courses for any young men who could cross over. The Havini family and the BFM helped keep all these NGO organisations (and many others too numerous to mention) updated from their Australian office. In this way we reached out to the world and we could coordinate with those who came to us in the Solomons to work with our people. Besides those trained in hydro-power, a very capable nurse was trained to be a dentist, others were trained to run libraries for self-education on soap production and other small initiatives that would be useful behind the blockade.

We, the mothers of Bougainville, want nothing but lasting peace. We want our children to go to school and be educated, receive good health services and travel freely in a peaceful atmosphere. We have experienced the brunt of this war through the loss of a normal life in which we have not been able to nurture our families. Women refugees have shown enormous courage in facing all the hazards of war and have overcome immeasurable obstacles to survive individually and collectively with their families. We will continue to do all we can to achieve what we want and to have this message heard out there in the world.



Sr Lorraine Garasu

Chapter Three WOMEN LEAD

WOMEN, WAR AND THE BICWF

Sr Lorraine Garasu

ALTHOUGH WOMEN PLAY A low-key role in public activities in modern Bougainville culture, we are still very much respected and have continued to run community activities and work hard. Prior to the war, the two main women's organisations were the church women's groups of various denominations and the North Solomons Provincial Council of Women. The church groups were established in the 1960s and had developed many successful programs for women to be self-reliant at the village level. Although the Women's Council of the 1970s had begun to network with the village church groups before the war, the population shifts, battle lines and the blockade seriously interrupted these communication links.

Women's groups and individual women leaders emerged as an important influence in their local political arenas, but the wider population was still suffering extreme human rights abuses, massacres and the denial of all access to basic services, health and education. Women were resourceful and did what they could to maintain or initiate activities such as prayer meetings, reconciliation ceremonies, peace marches and petitions.

By 1995, everyone was tired of living in care centres or in the bush. Women wanted to return to their own land with their families and replant their village gardens. They wanted to have access to medical services and open up the village schools for their children to attend. I realised that there would be widespread support from women for any fellowship-based initiative to rebuild village communities. Bougainvillean people trust their church more than they trust any government-sponsored initiative and that is why our churches had already been actively helping people through the crisis, maintaining limited access into almost all the war zones.

In March 1995, an opportunity came to meet up with Joy Balazo, who was working for the Australian United Church as human rights secretary. Joy came to Bougainville as part of a United Church team to assess the situation. In their introduction to Bougainville, they were able to visit Buka, Wakunai, Kekesu, Teop Island and Kunua United Church areas as well as seeing our Catholic Missions at Tarlena, Chabai and Hahela. Joy was a good listener who sat with women and responded to their requests for help in more self-empowering ways than mere hand-outs of aid.

What emerged from our talks in the many villages we visited was an idea to hold a forum where women could discuss their feelings, anguish, suffering and pain. We wanted to destroy the tyranny of fear and suspicion that had built up through forced separation and rumours. If we could come together and hear the truth from each other we might find a way to begin the healing process.

The opportunity I had been waiting for, to build a partnership between women from parts of Bougainville, regardless of church affiliation, gained momentum. The process took two years but we were ready when Joy returned to Bougainville in July 1995. We planned two workshops that would be preparatory meetings towards a major forum scheduled to take place in 1996. The 1995 workshops were held first in Buka and then in Arawa with women from Central Bougainville.

We discussed the visions we shared for Bougainville's future and brainstormed ways to reach across the gulf that separated us from this united vision. The workshops focused on identifying the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats of the present situation.

The Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum (BICWF) was formally established after the success of these workshops in 1995. It included a wide range of women, many of whom were not politically active.

On August 24 and 25, 1996, BICWF followed up the planning forums with the much larger Prayer Retreat cum Inter-Church Women's Peace Forum in Arawa.

The objectives we set ourselves at this forum were:

- To establish better cooperation and a working relationship between churches (the main denominations in Bougainville being Catholic, United Church, Seventh-day Adventist and Pentecostal Churches);
- To develop a unified stance on human rights and justice issues;
- To encourage women to take a leading role in the search for a genuine and peaceful solution to the conflict; and
- To develop plans and a program for a peaceful Bougainville.

We set out to develop strategies that would address these issues and make a way forward to the desires we agreed upon. Education and health for our families and children were the overwhelming priorities. BICWF determined to focus on the greatest needs.

We formed strong working groups from all the districts of the island and put in place some concrete plans as to how we could work towards a lasting solution to the conflict. Another positive meeting took place on the outskirts of town that opened up dialogue with our sisters separated from us by the blockade, who were unable to attend the peace forum. A few of us had made secret contact with some local BRA who were in Arawa and they set up a meeting for us to explain about the BICWF and the peace forum to women and the BRA. Women chaired the clandestine meeting and the BRA assured us warmly that they approved of our initiatives.

By late 1996, despite all our women's efforts to bring a message of peace through all media avenues possible, the PNG Government was becoming more and more militant. There were several massacres of family groups behind the blockade in December 1996 and the PNGDF was increasingly frustrated at losing military campaigns. Life became very tense in Bougainville and rumours of PNG hiring mercenaries began to unsettle the troops even further. Several months later, during the Sandline affair in April 1997, a delegation of three women travelled to Port Moresby, where we met up with other Bougainvillean women. Together we produced a written petition that was presented to the Prime Minister's First Secretary, urging the Government not to involve Sandline and to instead seek a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

Meanwhile, women continued to plan and lead community development schemes that sought to work outside the political arena. The BICWF became established with an office at Kokopau on the Bougainville side of Buka Passage. We rostered office staff to maintain the office on weekdays and used it as a distribution point for aid and supplies. We organised proper administration of programs for all the districts of Bougainville and linked up with NGO partners from overseas. This is how the initiative came about for our BICWF to develop a literacy project for the most remote area of Bougainville, the west coast region.

Subsistence village living remains one of the largest hurdles for women to overcome in becoming leaders within their communities in Bougainville. The daily burden of gardening, the collection of fire wood, cooking for very large family groups and extended family obligations takes away three-quarters of every day. When one factors in the nurturing duties of child-rearing and associated tasks of sewing, weaving and feeding livestock, is it any wonder that women have tended to leave the politics as well as the defence activities to men? Unless one is a nun, like myself, or unmarried, it requires a very special relationship or an enlightened husband to release the wife from home duties to plan and lead in Bougainville society. The fact that so many of our women have worked for peace and for the physical, social and spiritual needs in their communities is an amazing tribute to one and all.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS AND BOCBIHP

Sr Ruby Miringka

I CAME TO AUSTRALIA with the help of NGOs such as Community Aid Abroad and Caritas in March 1994 to seek medical support for Bougainville.

We had no medicine, no transport and many people lacked even clothes. Many children and even the elderly were naked. Many lived in hiding and away from their family out of shame for their nakedness. People moved into the jungle and were still living in caves when I travelled to Australia to seek medical support. I've worked in the jungle, delivered babies in caves, under trees and by the riverside. I would find mothers walking along jungle paths looking for a health worker, and I would deliver their babies on the road.

I had set up a hut with a simple bed as an antenatal clinic and I asked mothers who lived high up in the mountains if they would walk down closer to my village base. In one case, a woman who lived four hours' walk away set off with her mother to reach me when her labour began. But her contractions were too strong and she delivered on the road. Her mother had never seen anybody delivering and she panicked. She picked up the baby, still attached to the umbilical cord (the placenta was still in the uterus), held it up and said 'help, help' — in the middle of the night, in the bush. Fortunately, someone came by and helped this poor mother, but they didn't know about sepsis. She cut the cord with a piece of bamboo — two weeks later, the baby died.

In the area where I was working, there were about six nursing officers and four nurses. We were always finding parents wandering around searching for us with their very sick babies. I heard about a family with a very sick one-month-old child, who was running a high temperature. The family walked to a particular village because they had heard that a nursing aide was there. On their arrival, they were told that the nurse had moved to another village. While they were still walking, that infant died.

All of these incidents sadden me because I know that these children could have been helped.

One morning I was called about 5.30 to visit an 18-year-old mother. The way it was told to me, I did not expect the girl to be in a very serious condition. When I arrived after a two-hour walk, I saw her sitting on a steep slope, villagers were pouring cold

water on her and she was gasping for air. She was dying of malaria, but people did not understand so they were pouring water on to her feverish body, thinking they would save her. We laid her down and I told the men to make a stretcher so that we could carry her to the nearest clinic. They did that and they would have walked five hours for us to reach the nearest health officer who had some medicine to save the woman, but she died after two hours.

Malnutrition was a major problem because some people were constantly on the move to escape the conflict. People who moved higher up into the mountains needed five to eight gardens each because of the slower growth rate in those areas. It would take eight months or so for the yield to ripen and, during that time, there would be inadequate food supplies and the children's growth and health would be affected. The health of mothers was also affected. Families most affected by malnutrition were those with many children — often nine to 10 siblings.

On 7 January, 1994, two men were returning from their gardens after harvesting food to bring home to their families. It was raining and the rivers were flooded. As they stood waiting for the flood to subside so they could attempt a crossing, a huge landslide came down from the left bank and buried them alive. In a normal situation, it would have been a big operation by villagers to run to the rescue and dig them out. But because the blockade had scattered communities, only one family was present to attempt a rescue. Both men died, but only one body was recovered because of the enormous task of digging into the hillside.

Another area of health that we needed to address was the common problem of urinary-tract infections. Most at risk were teenage girls and women of childbearing age, who tended to suffer after menstruation. Because there was a shortage of clothes, girls were using whatever rags they could find as sanitary napkins. We faced huge problems with no antibiotics to treat these cases and many people died unnecessarily from urinary-tract infections — a treatable ailment!

Interestingly, men were also affected by urinary-tract infections. There was evidence that the smoke from PNG mortar bombs caused some of these cases. My eight-year-old son was suffering from a chronic urinary-tract infection and that is why my husband and I had to run the blockade to the Solomons for medical treatment. As we would discuss this problem with people, everyone would answer, 'Yeah, I'm having that problem, too.'

When women came to me with abdominal pains, I would know what the problem was, but I couldn't treat them. Pelvic inflammatory diseases were very common among childbearing women after abortions, after miscarriages (which were common among women who contracted malaria during pregnancy) and even after a normal delivery, if the waters were retained. All of these required hospital treatment where the uterus could be flushed out, but, of course, we had no such facilities.

Most of the patients with high blood pressure who I had to treat with inadequate drug supplies have since died. This condition was made worse by the level of fear among people: fear of being bombed, fear of the PNG military. For example, a female patient

had hypertension and, on hearing news of the landing of the PNG military in Arawa, her blood pressure shot up. She fell unconscious and, in a few hours, she was dead. Just from fear!

Another patient, who I struggled to save, had asthma which I could see was related to fear, stress and anxiety. Her asthma became very severe in a short period of time. She could have died but I managed to save her and send her across to the Solomons for treatment in Honiara.

Babies were dying from pneumonia, as were the elderly, who were suffering from the extreme cold at altitudes of more than 1,500m in the mountains — with no clothing for warmth. They had only leaves to cover themselves. This was most unsatisfactory because, when strong winds blew, there was simply no adequate protection from the rain and severe tropical storms.

In rainy conditions, the water would pour into our makeshift huts and everything would be flooded. Camps would become muddy, especially the villages up in the hills which faced daily precipitation. The faeces from the village pigs was mixed with the mud, causing worm infestations; anemia would result from the worms and *pig bel* illnesses. I saw many children suffering from these conditions but was unable to treat them.

Another common ailment among children was an enlarged spleen from continual attacks of malaria with no access to anti-malaria drugs. If we had access to prophylactic treatment, a three-month course of such drugs could have helped these children.

Apart from the medical situations I faced every day behind the blockade, there was suffering and illness in the PNG-controlled care centres. In one centre that I visited I saw the filthy and unhygienic conditions people were living in. I saw the mess created by the lack of will to maintain a clean environment. In one particular care centre there was a serious gastro-enteritis problem affecting the babies and children — and I saw why. The main table was covered with scraps covered in flies and even a pussycat was on the table. A lack of soap also contributed to some very unpleasant skin diseases.

I really couldn't stand to see the suffering of my people any longer so I travelled to Australia to challenge its citizens to pressure their government into allowing negotiations to take place between the PNG Government and our Bougainville leaders. I returned to the Solomons in November 1994 with medical supplies provided by the South Coast (NSW) Labour Council and other Australian groups.

Our health workers gathered statistics during the 10 years of war. Among these was the record from one of our nurse's villages. In this village of 2,000 people, there were 80 maternal deaths between 1990 and 1994, 140 deaths of children under five years of age, and 130 stillbirths. The worst part was that nearly all were unnecessary if simple medicines had been allowed into the area.

Before the war I was the principal of the nursing school attached to the Arawa Hospital. This became the reference I used to command attention wherever I travelled in Bougainville as a community health educator. To combat the suffering and disease

I saw all around me, I began a travelling 'village health show'. The missionaries had long ago taught us to always wash our hands, but they had never explained why. I taught people about the causes of illness and when people saw that there were no medicines to cure their infections and diseases, they understood that they had to take care of their own health.

We set up health committees and enthusiasm spread. People began to look for ways of disposing of garbage properly and identifying sites where mosquitoes bred. We would inspect homes — even temporary shelters — to check for health and accident hazards, such as broken step rungs or unclean paths that could trip people and cause nasty accidents. Neighbours were encouraged by these activities to help each other to make their shelters safe from the elements and thus prevent illness.

With no other medical option, we re-evaluated people's knowledge of traditional herbal medicine, bone-setting practices and the traditional ability to rotate foetuses in utero to assist in safer births. Natural remedies such as guava-leaf tea for diarrhoea and pawpaw or coconut oil for treating various sores proved life-savers. Brews made from barks and leaves made infusions to drink or apply as ointments. Certain leaves could be heated and applied to stinging-nettle wounds. Many of our elderly people were given health education classes and were invited back into community service after many years of being rejected as 'witchdoctors' or 'quacks' by Western medical opinion.

We tried to keep our people healthy and, in many cases, there was a dramatic turnaround in regard to our general well-being. But, sadly, we still needed anti-malarials and antibiotics to save lives.

During the months of May to July 1995, there was an outbreak of whooping cough and, although I am not able to give actual figures, many children died.

We also needed to assist war victims. The cause of death in such cases was usually from gunshot wounds. The single massacre of 10 civilians at Simbo Village in Buin, South Bougainville, in February 1996 is one example. At 5am the villagers heard gunfire and tried to run away but they were shot at random by the PNGDF using high-powered automatic rifles and grenades.

One of the victims was a 24-year-old pregnant woman. Shot dead by the PNG soldiers, her abdomen was then cut open to remove the foetus. The dead foetus was then placed on the chest of the dead mother for all to see — as a warning. The bodies were later discovered by nearby villagers, who gave the dead proper burials.

Rape was common in the PNG care centres. Since rape in our culture is a shameful act, the rape victims don't talk about it openly. Because rape was usually committed at the point of a gun, it was too dangerous for the victims to report the matter. Unless the rapes were committed in public — and many horrific cases were — only a few people knew about them at all. I must mention here that although rape was predominantly committed by the PNGDF, certain BRA soldiers were also guilty of the crime.

Despite the traumas of war and the deprivation of people's basic rights to life, health care, education, shelter, security and self-determination, civilians in the non-PNG controlled areas were determined to not sit idly by and wait for a rescue mission from somewhere. We determined to use our community resources and our own capacities to bring about community development. Although we had no commercial means or infrastructure from the pre-war society, we were determined to alleviate our suffering and to protect our people from common, preventable diseases.

Our aim was to bring about social change and to promote self-reliance and survival within the war environment. We called one program, which was designed to promote development, not dependency, the Bougainville Community-Based Integrated Humanitarian Program (BOCBIHP). Through its training programs, Bougainvilleans have gained skills in sustaining and utilising all the resources of the island to bring about community development. Our guiding principle of '*mekim na save*' came from the experience of 'learning by doing'.

Our program was initially formed with the Village Health Committees in selected villages of Central Bougainville. After five years of implementing primary health care, in 1994 we further developed our program to what became known as BOCBIHP. The most recent evolution of this self-reliance is now known as the Bougainville Community Integrated and Development Agency (BOCIDA).

Besides courses in health, sanitation and nutrition, we designed basic training modules on the causes of illness, signs and symptoms, home management and prevention of illness and disease. This was followed by environmental hygiene and sanitation inspections on a monthly basis by the Village Health Committees. As the communities and villagers were given responsibility for their own health, there was a remarkable reduction in the number of common illnesses such as diarrhoea, dysentery, malaria, malnutrition, pneumonia and skin diseases. Exceptions were tuberculosis and leprosy because we had no doctors and no drugs. These require specialised management and they are still a major health problem today.

By 1996, BOCBIHP delivered services and aid to the non-PNG controlled areas of Central, North and South Bougainville. We were assisted by overseas groups such as Community Aid Abroad, trade unions, churches, including the World Council of Churches, BFM, APHEDA and the citizens and government health centres of the Solomon Islands.

Our program supplied medicines to 28 health clinics, 38 aid posts and a 120-bed health sub-centre in Paruparu. We were also responsible for supplying education materials to 22 schools in the non-PNG controlled areas and to the 47 subsidiary or feeder literacy schools. We also supported and supplied three bible schools and one education development centre.

The teachers of these schools and clinics were people who had been educated before the war but who were living in the bush. We also organised six women's groups to provide for the community by organising relief supplies and distributing clothing.

We organised for sewing materials to reach these women's groups, which did the sewing according to the needs of the community.

None of the workers under the BOCBIHP were paid wages; instead, they received support from their communities. The communities would make gardens not just for the health workers, but for the sick and for teachers. They would even cook and provide food from their own gardens for some of the workers who did not have any gardens or for those who had gardens that were not yet mature for harvesting. The community also provided coconut oil for the few vehicles we had and to run Radio Free Bougainville.

Our community health courses also trained village midwives. Our first intake was of 36 women for a six-month course, but we later developed courses into 12-month blocks. By October 1996, we had graduated nine village medical aides and another 30 were enrolled. We recruited from as far away as North-East Wakunai and North-West Torokina to Central Bougainville and later extended our recruitment from outer sub-health districts.

A short program was developed to teach people how to nurse those disabled by war and the elderly, who were often left behind when a community was in fear and had to flee suddenly.

Under BOCBIHP, we registered 41 traditional doctors after they were fully trained in the assessment and examination of patients and given basic counselling skills. We trained our traditional doctors to look at the patient holistically and we also identified and made a register of the special skills each traditional doctor possessed. Those who could manipulate and fix bones were listed under that category, those who could do external rotation of a breached baby were categorised accordingly.

It took us five years to set up the primary health care programs and once these were functional we were able to look at the education needs of the children who were healthy enough to go to school. In 1994 we developed a program that extended our roles into education. We began with 30 students in teacher training preparation for the literacy (preschools) and community (primary) schools.

We needed administration officers to run all these programs so we trained 27 accounting and secretarial students. About five students were training as radio technicians to improve our communication network. We had a radio network of about 23 VHF stations covering three-quarters of Bougainville, including two in the Solomon Islands at Gizo and Honiara.

The agriculture school we set up to improve the diets of the people had graduated 21 officers by 1996. Technical colleges were set up where students were taught how to make basic tools such as bush knives, shovels, spades and special parts for our hydro-electricity plants, which were established in 1996. The electricity strength was 240–300 volts. The voltage could be adjusted, but most homes used 240 volts. Some villagers were even able to run old fridges. Before the war, the only places that had electricity

were urban areas and towns. Today, if you travel at night by boat or plane, you will see the villages of Central Bougainville looking like a city as most villages are now lit with hydro-electricity.

Specialised training of selected individuals to meet specific needs was arranged quietly with the help of donor organisations and the support of humanitarian professionals. In this way we were able to send a nurse across to Honiara for dental training and others managed to reach the Solomons and Australia for training in various fields. As a result, several improvements were made to our hydro-electricity plants in Bougainville.

Other courses helped rehabilitate people and equip them for community living and leadership roles. These have been very successful in rescuing our youth from depression and trauma. Most schools now have their own small fund-raising activities, including cash cropping and the small-scale trading of cocoa and copra.

We received much moral support as well as physical aid from our overseas donors and friends. Although Bougainville was aiming to be as self-reliant as possible, we still required certain expertise and resources to kick-start our recovery from the total devastation of our infrastructure and alienation from our own homes and clan lands.

Through the support given to BOCBIHP by the community at large, Bougainvilleans were becoming self-reliant and inventive in rebuilding their communities. We still have a long way to go, however, to achieve sustainable development. I believe the people are capable of achieving it within a few years, given freedom and the right political climate in which to pursue their own socio-economic goals.



*Victims laid out for burial a massacre by PNGDF
soldiers at the Malabita Catholic Church*

HUMAN RIGHTS PORTFOLIO

Marilyn Taleo Havini

IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, ON December 10 1948, the 58 member nations of the UN launched the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, among other things, protected the dignity and value of individual human beings and the economic and social rights of all people. In 1993, when the war on Bougainville was entering its fifth year, the UN Commission on Human Rights was planning to meet again in Vienna. The World Conference on Human Rights, set for 14–25 June, would mark the 45th anniversary of the original declaration.

I applied for leave from the NSW Education Department so I could join my husband Moses and the Bougainville delegation in Vienna. As well as lobbying UN representatives and world governments, our team would be facing one particular, formidable opponent: the PNG Government delegation, led by one of Bougainville's own sons, Michael Ogio, the Minister for Bougainville Affairs. He would be accompanied by the Minister for Justice, Philemon Embel, PNG's Ambassador to the European Union, Charles Lepani, and their official entourage.

The Bougainville delegation was led by Pastor Jeffrey Paul, president of the Bougainville Seventh-day Adventist Church. I was one of 10 Pacific women participants and Moses was the coordinator of the Pacific NGOs, as part of the Asia–Pacific NGO Community. He had attended preparatory committee meetings in Bangkok and Geneva to lobby for urgent intervention in Bougainville and the protection of human rights. In Bangkok, he was the only Pacific delegate among 240 participants representing 110 NGOs. He was elected to the nine-member Asia–Pacific Coordinating Committee and charged with the responsibility of facilitating about 30 delegates from the entire Pacific region to the Vienna conference.

Moses was already overworked, dedicating himself full-time to his role as Australian representative of the BIG. But, even though he had his hands more than full, he was unwilling to face the prospect of the entire Pacific region going unrepresented in Bangkok and Vienna, so he accepted this extra burden.

The BIG representative in the Solomon Islands, Martin Miriori, sent me the airfare to attend the Vienna conference and I was surprised to discover that our government had realised how much after-hours work I was doing to help Moses. With this acknowledgement

of my participation and knowing my passionate concern for the victims of abuse, Moses asked me to take on the human rights work as a designated 'portfolio'.

When we reached Vienna, I was shocked by the enormous number of explicit photos of all manner of abuses from other countries on display. Out of respect, we had so far been very tasteful as to how we exposed the horrors going on in our homeland. When we saw photos of torture, mutilation and worse in all manner of graphics from NGO groups from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa, etc, we realised we were facing stiff competition for world attention. We had brought posters and banners but no photographic evidence of the blood being spilt on Bougainville.

The 10 days of walking and talking in the halls of the UN conference were the biggest learning experience for me in coming to terms with the enormous task that lay ahead. Attending seminars and workshops, running information stalls and interacting with passionate and dedicated NGO workers from around the world led me to understand the issues and complexities of working for human rights and how critical it is to defend them. Our team from Bougainville and the Pacific — and even the wider Asia-Pacific team — made an enormous impact at the conference. We also managed to penetrate the insulated government level of the meeting, to their chagrin!

Moses, with Lopeti Senitule (a Tongan based in Suva, Fiji), brought our Pacific team together each morning at seven o'clock, when the building was still empty and the mayhem of each day was yet to begin. We would pray together and then strategise for the day's program and work out how to support each other's specific concerns. These ranged from political rights to self-determination (such as those sought by Bougainville, West Papua, East Timor, Te Ao Maohi, French Polynesia [Tahiti], Kanaky [New Caledonia], Kanaka Maoli and Ka Pae'aina [Hawaii]), environmental issues (nuclear testing in the Pacific, global warming and sea-level rising, logging, sustainability), human rights issues (demilitarisation, torture and extra judicial executions, freedom, justice, children's and women's rights, to name a few), and broader, all-encompassing issues such as the problems associated with decolonisation and multinational corporations.

We invited Pacific government delegations to meet individually with us for an hour from 8am until the day's program brought everyone into the building at 9am. We would invite each delegation to address our Pacific group on what their position was on certain issues and what their delegation would be contributing to the conference. We would then express our solidarity with the NGO delegation from each country, as debate about specific issues would follow the presentations. Word soon got around the delegations that these semi-formal meetings were very productive and engaging. Our Pacific neighbours were always very gracious, even when they were confronted about human rights concerns. By the time the PNG Government delegation was invited, we were well practised in our solidarity and the lines were very clearly drawn for the meeting.

The PNG delegation was definitely on notice that popular Pacific support lay with the suffering citizens of Bougainville and the PNG Government had a lot of explaining to do.

Not only was the Bougainville conference team the biggest from the Pacific region, we had developed a very effective lobbying strategy. We had the full and unqualified support of the international NGO community, a clear result of Moses and his colleagues lobbying the UN in Geneva and the international NGO community since 1991. Certain European countries were also concerned about the Bougainville struggle and Bougainville's right to self-determination. They often told Moses that it was not the European countries that needed to be convinced but rather our own Pacific regional bodies and governments.

Bougainville's high profile at the conference worried the PNG delegation enough for them to announce that they would hold a reception at which Michael Ogio would allay the fears of the international community and tell the 'real truth' about Bougainville. With the full support of the Pacific NGOs, the Bougainville team distributed leaflets to all NGOs warning them that they needed to be alert at this reception about the 'facts' of the case. Certain NGO members were assigned specific questions to ask the minister about PNG's conduct on Bougainville and especially the conduct of its security forces and their human rights record. In the end, the reception was over within five minutes because of a lack of attendance by the NGO community and government officials. They knew enough about the situation on Bougainville.

Towards the end of the Vienna conference, the Pacific NGO community was given its turn of five short minutes in which to address the assembled nations at the conference proper. The entire Pacific team worked solidly on the compacted wording of our presentation. After several drafts, we elected a capable indigenous Hawaiian attorney, Amalani Trask, to deliver the speech.

One of the many human rights issues that the international NGO community had consistently lobbied to have included on the conference agenda was the recognition of indigenous peoples as 'distinct sovereign nations'. The ILO Convention 169 and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention adopted in 1989, article 1 paragraph 1(b), clearly defined indigenous peoples as 'peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of the present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions'. Bougainville had consistently used this as one of its lobbying strategies in its sovereignty quest since 1991.

While the ILO Convention 169 looked quite convincing on paper, there was still a way Western nations could shoot it down. While the definition of who 'indigenous people' were was quite loaded, the international NGO community wanted the letter 's' to be added to the word 'people'. 'Indigenous peoples' indicated a distinct people or tribes that have always existed as sovereign nations in their own right, long before intruders arrived in their country and usurped their land. Western countries who were and are still affected in this manner, such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia, have always

argued that these 'indigenous groups' were just one of the many ethnic groupings that existed within their political boundaries and therefore did not deserve any higher status than the State.

These Western nations were afraid any recognition of indigenous peoples as 'distinct nations' would immediately allow indigenous peoples the right to self-determination as prescribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In preparation for the delivery of our speech, we arranged access to an observation gallery above the main floor of the assembly. Hidden under our coats were A4 sheets of luminous orange paper with the letter 'S' written on each page. One of our most treasured concepts was about to be voted out of the UN Charter. The opening words of the 1948 charter are 'We the peoples ...'. The international NGO community and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations were submitting to the Vienna conference a motion that an 's' should be added to 'people' in the definition preceding the opening statement of the charter. If nation states should claim the power of interpretation on the very charter that was designed to protect 'all peoples', what might PNG do to deny Bougainvilleans the right to self-determination as enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights?

As Amalani delivered the speech, we listened attentively for every time the word 'peoples' was mentioned. Whenever she emphasised the extra 'S', we stamped our feet and waved our orange signs in the air! The whole assembly would turn their heads and we certainly made our point.

We agreed that human rights are universal in value. No matter what the outcome of the UN vote was to be, our challenge was that the advocacy of human rights couldn't be considered an encroachment on national sovereignty. As it turned out, the majority of governments voted that the letter 's' should not be added at the end of 'people', and the motion was defeated. There were, however, other gains. The international NGO community had vigorously lobbied over the years for the establishment of a Commission for Indigenous People within the UN mechanism. This was successfully endorsed towards the end of the conference.

I returned to Australia determined to make a compilation of human rights abuses as recorded in the gathering piles of faxes I had kept since 1990. I was dismayed to find that many of the faxes were already fading and were difficult to read. They had been quoted in press statements that had been largely ignored by the media and then stored for future reference. The first task I had was to make hard copies to preserve the facts and to cross-reference the faxes with the press statements. This proved an enormous sorting and photocopying task and I was very grateful to trade union and BFM supporters for the tedious hours they spent with me in this initial stage.

My next task was even more difficult. I tried to find a definitive list of abuses in UN terms. After an exhausting search, I managed to combine short lists from various country-specific compilations and I drew up a list of 27 terms applicable to Bougainville. These included abduction, ambush, assault and bombardment — whether by mortar

or grenade — extra judicial killing, frustrated murder, harassment, massacre, murder, rape, strafing, torture and violent dispersal. Then there was the denial of freedom of movement and freedom of speech, destruction of property, dispossession of property, divestment of property and strategic hamletting. Blockade is recognised as an abuse for its impact on economic, medical, food and education services and the resulting abuses of evacuees.

With very few computer skills, I designed a reporting format that took into account the date and source of the abuse report, the nature of the violation, location and date of violation, number of people, description of the incident and alleged perpetrators. Then came the difficult decision of how to enter the data. I was struggling with separate lists of abuses and how to sort them either by the date of the incident or the date of the report. Eventually, I decided to enter all the data according to the date of the report as it was often very difficult to find out the exact date of the incident. Many of the reports were made by runners who travelled on foot over the mountains or by VHF radio operators, and some people had no access to Western dates or calendars after years behind the blockade.

Several reports also came to me from Bougainville refugees in the Solomon Islands. These were often very sketchy as the victim of the abuse was barely well enough to tell a coherent tale. Sometimes months later, the same incident would reappear in fresh accounts from recovering patients who, on discharge from hospital, could report their own case. They would then pour out tales of many other abuses and it was difficult to separate the litany of abuses spoken of. For these reasons, I listed every report by the date it was made and the details presented. I made no attempt to combine different versions other than to place them beside each other, clearly separated, for future assessment. In this way, varying accounts could be compared and could often help fill in missing details.

In 1994, I hoped that the cease-fire signed by the PNG Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, and BRA Commander General Sam Kauona would allow human rights and justice issues to be addressed at planned forums in Arawa. I prepared material from my compilations and sent it to Bishop John Zale in Gizo, asking him to address these topics with the people.

I will never forget how devastating it was to have our hopes for peace dashed when the PNGDF refused to leave the zone designated for the peace talks. The material was never presented to a forum and I had to press on with the collation of atrocities in the hope of shaming nations or leaders somewhere to intervene. I realised that the document I was working on would be only the first stage in collating primary material. It was not possible for me to authenticate or verify the allegations. A UN rapporteur would do this at a later date.

By 1995, I had created *A Compilation of Human Rights Abuses Against the People of Bougainville 1989–95*. Dedicated to the people of Bougainville, and with a foreword written by Moses, it was a 46-page volume of fine-printed lists. The BFM Sydney group had raised money for the printing of the book and, as *Schindler's List* (a book and film

about Jews who were rescued from genocide in World War II) was the current best-seller, my book was dubbed 'Marilyn's List'. The launch took place at NSW Parliament House on 1 May, 1995, sponsored by Meredith Burgmann and with several celebrities and NGO organisations taking part. We had popular actors read excerpts of cases from the lists and it was a profoundly moving event.

Our eldest son (going in place of his father) took a copy of the compilation with him to Europe when he attended an indigenous youth conference in Zurich, Switzerland, on 15–18 May, 1995. It was an international conference on Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development. When organisers of the conference saw the book, they referred our son directly to the UN Human Rights Commissioner in Geneva. Even Moses had not managed to have a private meeting with the commissioner himself. I was asked to send more copies of the book to Geneva and the UN arranged for Amnesty International and other NGOs to confirm the seriousness of the situation in Bougainville. They then arranged for the Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial summary and arbitrary executions to visit PNG and Bougainville to investigate cases in the compilation. Bacre Waly N'daiye's subsequent visit, from 21–28 October 1995, led to a 22-page second addendum to the report he tabled on his return to the Human Rights Commission.

Despite his regret at the 'unforeseen technical difficulties that prevented [him] from visiting the central area of Bougainville', the Special Rapporteur transmitted to the Government of PNG a list of 75 cases of alleged extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions that included six women and six children. These were cases that he specifically drew to the attention of the PNG Government in the hope that they would investigate the alleged killings perpetrated by the PNGDF with the resulting apprehension and trial of the relevant suspects.

Unfortunately, to my knowledge, no reply has ever been received from the State of PNG as to the allegations transmitted, nor has any investigation led to any apprehension or trial of the perpetrators. Even the later case of the assassination of Theodore Miriung, Premier of the BTG, has never led to the conviction of the known perpetrators.

Word reached me from Bougainville that the people were depending on me, and those others of us who were outside the blockade and PNG occupation, to act for them in exposing their suffering. A second volume of abuses was printed in 1996 after I had further opportunity to include personal accounts from taped interviews with survivors. When news spread of my work, eyewitnesses came forward to show me their own diary entries and other documents, including individual accounts that they carried with them as they fled the troubled island.

Copies of both books sold out so quickly we had to keep reprinting until the funds dried up. We have had to run back to the Waterside Workers Union for more and more photocopies in the intervening years. No sooner had I finished the task than the necessity to continue the compilation was made plain by continued abuses and even more political posturing for war with successive PNG military operations, such as 'High Speed II' in 1996.

After local and overseas requests for copies of 'Marilyn's List' from Amnesty International, Pax Christi, the World Council of Churches, Medecines Sans Frontieres, the International Red Cross, the International Commission of Jurists and many other organisations, Volume 1 was presented to the Australian Senate in Parliament House, Canberra, on 26 September by Senator Christobel Chamarette. Leave was granted for 'Marilyn's List' to be tabled in the Adjournment Session of the Senate and the Compilation has been incorporated into the Parliament's Senate Hansard, Page 1472, accompanied by a Pax Christi statement that the Senator quoted before reading a personal letter I had received from a dear friend, Marcelline Tunim, from behind the blockade in Bougainville.

Despite all our human rights work and exposure of abuses, PNG continued to prosecute the war with the financial backing of the untied aid money given to PNG as part of the bilateral agreement between it and Australia. One of our 'champion' Australian Senators, Dee Margetts, had tabled a question in Parliament in 1996 as to how much money had been given to the Defence Cooperation to PNG Program, which was used largely to quell the conflict on Bougainville.

Senator Margetts then attended our Women for Bougainville Forum on 12 October, 1996, and provided a copy of the reply she received from the Australian Senate. The source document is labelled: 'Portfolio Budget Statements 1996-7, Defence Portfolio, Budget Initiatives and Explanations of Appropriations 1996-7, Budget Related Paper No.1.3A.

Three tables were provided in this document. The first was staggering enough. It showed that \$A250.5 million was spent on defence equipment, arms and training from 1988 to 1996. A second table showed \$A662,000 was given for the maintenance of the patrol boats that attacked our patients and medical supplies when running the blockade to the Solomon Islands. The third table listed \$A1.892 million as 'Financial assistance for Contract Maintenance of four UH IH Iroquois Helicopters for the PNGDF'. These are the very helicopters that had dumped our people over the sea and that were fitted out as gun-ships to fire directly into villages and at people in the bush.

The Women for Bougainville (WFB) group had been formed in 1995 for the specific purpose of providing a forum for Bougainvillean women to speak for themselves about the conflict on Bougainville. The Australian media either ignored the conflict or presented a highly biased view from the perspective of the PNG Government.

Several wonderful Australian women came together from the BFM and from other organisations of very different political and social backgrounds. We met regularly and planned to raise funds to buy airfares and cover all the costs of bringing Bougainvillean women to Sydney for our 1996 forum. It took us more than a year to overcome all the obstacles. We were assisted by many NGO groups.

We were aware that many people were ignorant of Bougainville, or were confused as to the issues and the underlying causes of the war. Even the Australian women's movement in general decried militaristic violence in simplified terms that portrayed women as uninvolved victims in a civil war.

The forum was a watershed event and gave Bougainvillean women a unique opportunity to share experiences and to expose the reality of events from multiple perspectives. Other Bougainvilleans who were in Australia took part and gave moving accounts.

We held press conferences and made press statements and gave radio interviews to the ABC, commercial and community programs and radio stations. The women spoke at university forums and lectures and at union meetings and, together, made a trip to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs in Canberra to call for intervention and positive planning for peace. We had started out as virtual strangers, but in the process of hearing each other's presentations, we became quite excited and decided to put our ideas together as a summary position paper, which we called 'Bougainville Women's Proposed Strategy for Peace, Reconciliation, Unity and Normalcy on Bougainville'.

Our stated goals were:

- To bring about peace, stability and justice in Bougainville under the supervision of a UN peace-keeping force.
- To negotiate a normalcy plan with the parties in the conflict; to get support for the warring parties to come to the negotiating table to discuss the Bougainville women's proposed normalcy plan.

The Australian Government must have been listening to the women as they accepted our paper and spent quite some time talking with our leaders. The Foreign Affairs Ministers of Australia and New Zealand at the time, Alexander Downer and Don McKinnon, frequently paid tribute to the role of women in the peace process and their cooperation in the arrangement of the Burnham I Peace Talks, which were organised for July 1997.

When photographic evidence of massacres of helpless civilians surfaced on the front pages of major Australian newspapers two months later, in December 1996, the Australian Government was forced to accept that their aid to the defence budget of PNG was being abused. PNG's subsequent dilemma of a lack of funding and the scramble they went through in the hiring of the Sandline mercenaries was a short-lived, but effective, reality check for all of PNG.

In July 1997, peace talks were eventually initiated and funded by the New Zealand Government with the full support of the Australian Government. The PNG Government also cooperated and allowed Bougainvillean leaders to come together at the secure venue of the Burnham Army Camp near Christchurch, New Zealand. Here I met many of the BIG, BRA and Bougainvillean leaders who had been responsible for passing on most of the accounts of abuse for my compilations.

I took with me to Burnham as many copies of 'Marilyn's List' as I could spare, plus photographs and other human rights material to distribute to the men and women from both sides of the conflict. I displayed several of the posters and visual material for the negotiators to see in the hope that issues of human rights would inform the considerations of the talks.

There was a tremendous response from the heart of everyone from all parts of Bougainville and all sides of the conflict. Absolutely everyone in Bougainville had suffered during the long years of war. The Vice-President of the BIG, Joseph Kabui, asked me if I would continue to manage the Human Rights Portfolio for Bougainville. He believed it was less threatening to the peace process if I, as a non-combatant, was entrusted with the job. He then handed me a letter dated 25 July, 1996, which he had carried on behalf of an elderly chief of Pipipaia village, inland of Wakunai District, Central Bougainville.

Chief Arivuiria had written this letter, addressed to the Australian Government, asking why Australians were killing his people when they had defended the Australians with their lives during the Japanese invasion of World War II. It was a very poignant letter and came with a document written by evacuating Australian Army personnel on the eve of their escape by American submarine in 1943 after 17 months cut off by the Japanese occupation of Bougainville.

This document, undersigned by A.R. Long, H.E. Babbage, S.W.G. Edmonds and R. Stuart, reads:

‘[We] beg to place on record our great appreciation of the kindly treatment and courtesy extended to us here at Pipipaia by the Kukurai, in particular, and the natives of this village, during the occupation by the Japanese since we were forced to retire here on Easter Sunday, 5th April last.

‘Any assistance that you may be able to render to this village, or kindness shown to them, will be deeply appreciated by us all.’

Chief Arivuiria was one of the young carriers who had assisted his *Kukurai* (chief) and 10 members of the Australian 1st Independent Company along with a government administration officer and other civilian expatriates including a priest, European plantation managers and Asian businesswomen. They had survived three enemy encounters and had to live in hiding until their dangerous trek to the coast for a night departure off Teoposina Beach by moonlight.

The protest letter, besides providing a detailed account of the historical case, also said the Australian Government was ‘the very same government that Pipipaia helped and protected in your time of need, have come against us to fight us [the SDA people who were loyal to you], despite all our good actions of the past ... You, the Government, have brought in guns and all kinds of war machinery to the Aita and Rotokas areas to kill our people, on the very land where we once helped you in time of war ... you have now killed many of our people of Pipipaia. You have killed 17 of my men, including my very own son, during this current Bougainville crisis’.

Perplexed about how to present this letter to the Australian Government on my return from Burnham, I began to research the Australian records of the incident having recalled mention of it in a book by Eric Feldt, *The Coast Watchers*, published in 1946.

I discovered that R. Stuart was a Sub-Lieutenant with the Navy and Alf Long was a planter. Another signature at the bottom of the letter belonged to Captain J.H. Mackie, who was awarded a Silver Star, having served in Bougainville from January 1942–April 1943 and October 1943–February 1944. His endorsement claimed that these people were to be trusted and their word was reliable.

At the next round of peace talks at Lincoln University, New Zealand, in January 1998 I sat with elders from the Central Bougainville region who were able to tell me the names of Pipipaia victims from the recent war. They gave me photo identity badges from some who had worked for a catering company at the mine before the war. I realised from their accounts that they were referring to the 1992 massacre by the PNGDF of villagers in the Wakunai/Aita area who had been celebrating Bougainville independence on 17 May. The massacres occurred at two places: Burisotoro, where 17 people were killed, and Okugupara, where another 12 were killed. Survivor accounts of these deaths were reported on Radio Free Bougainville on 1 June, 1991, by Bishop John Zale.

After the massacre and the violent dispersal of hundreds of village people from the area, the entire region was subject to continual bombardment and denial of basic human rights at the hands of the PNGDF.

An opportunity for me to present all this documentation to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs arose when delegates from Bougainville, PNG and Australia were negotiating the cease-fire arrangements to be held in Bougainville in April 1998. I met David Hallett, director of the PNG section of DFAT, in Canberra and he requested that I send him the correspondence. I was quite surprised, and also relieved, that someone in the halls of government cared enough to take the matter seriously. Mr Hallett phoned me with the question, ‘What do the people want from us?’

My reply was that we needed to ask them directly rather than assume anything.

Once the peace process had started and I was included in the negotiation teams that were flown in to Bougainville for the Peace Process Consultative Committee meetings, we could begin to discover the people’s needs in coming to terms with human rights abuses.

On visiting Chief Arivuiria and his people at the village they had built high up on a peak inland from the original Pipipaia site, I was to discover a tragic story of the chief’s son’s death. I already knew of the massacre that had taken place in 1991, but this second story was equally galling.

In 1994, Arivuiria’s son, Edward, married with one son, went to Siol village in the Aita area with a man named Laukos. He was a PNG Highlander but he lived with the people as he had married a local Aita woman.

The two men had heard radio reports about a cease-fire. PNG Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan had announced that services to Bougainville were restored and that the Copra Marketing Board had reopened at Buka Passage. Edward and Laukos decided that they should attempt to harvest their cocoa crop, which grew adjacent to Siol village. They

had filled 50 bags with beans ready to transport to Buka and were camping in the deserted village on their own while everyone else remained in hiding higher up in the mountains. The men were sitting by their fire close to sunset when a patrol of Resistance soldiers turned up. The large group was armed with SLRs, M16s and shotguns.

First they tortured the two unarmed men by pouring boiling water from the fire over them. They then forced the men to remove their lap-laps (to undress) and sit naked on the fire. Edward tried to offer the Resistance a \$K50 note to leave them alone, but he was forced instead to eat the money.

Edward and Laukos were then whipped, cut with bush knives and forced to eat uncooked Singapore taro (which is very painful on the throat). The men were finally shot dead, their bodies were left lying in the village and about 10 houses were torched.

The witness, whose name I withhold for his safety, watched the incident from the edge of the village clearing, as he was helpless to intervene. He then saw the Resistance Forces carry all 50 bags of beans away; their market value at the time was estimated to be \$K6,000 (\$K120 per bag). The people of Siol later came down to the village to bury both men.

I met not only Arivuira, the paramount chief, who shared the story of his son's death, but Chief Petro, Chief Jack, Chief Kori and Chief Rerevara, who had been the army scout for the World War II army intelligence. Rerevara had been with the Australians at the 1943 evacuation by submarine. These men wanted some form of acknowledgement from Australia of the historical ties that had existed from their efforts in the war and they wanted an apology from Australia for neglecting the friendship and trust that they believed should exist between Australia and Bougainville. The apology could take some practical form of reparation after all the destruction of life and property that had been caused by the PNGDF's use of Australian weaponry.

Meetings with the peace monitors in Bougainville were very cordial. They listened to what the people wanted and the idea formed that the least Australia could do to make some attempt to rehabilitate these people would be to accept a proposal from them for aid to rebuild their village. The people requested nails and roofing iron, a chainsaw to cut their wood and the basic tools to enable them to rebuild a community hall and some family homes. The reality of what people had undergone was having a profound impact on the first monitors who went in with the regional teams of DFAT and military personnel. I met officers who told me that they could hardly bear to hear any more stories from the people.

On later trips to Bougainville the monitors I saw were not as understanding. I think everyone needed to pour out their experiences as part of the healing process for the first few years, and some serious reconciliation ceremonies have taken place. But many people have still not resolved their loss or found closure on certain events. The necessity of getting on with the reconstruction process meant a lot of the trauma was suppressed. People need to know the truth of all that happened before they can move on in life.

In order for the people to show forgiveness and mercy to the PNG perpetrators, however, they expressed the opinion that full political independence was the only suitable reparation to atone for the abuses of more than a decade of war. I heard this expressed by many chiefs throughout Bougainville. The common expression is that the land is awash with blood — '*Blut I kapsait na wasim giraun*' — and our people have died in vain if they do not gain their freedom.

PART THREE

BOUGAINVILLE WOMEN IN POLITICS

PROLOGUE

UNITY AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Ruth Saovana Spriggs

UNITY IS A HUMAN virtue. It is fundamental to all forms of relationships: between individuals, families, communities and nations. Its maintenance and the disruption of it can be affected by various social, economic, political and religious factors. In the course of conflicts, unity might face a period of disruption. This disruption, however, does not automatically imply that unity is destroyed or lost.

In the context of the Bougainville conflict, I do not believe for a moment that unity was eliminated. At the regional level, it remained suspended during the time of heavy fighting between the PNG security forces and the BRA. During this time, however, the opposite was happening at the village community level. Families, sub-clans and major clan groups, churches and women's groups were all actively involved in finding ways to strengthen and maintain unity in their homes and communities.

Women stood ready and worked tirelessly to create processes that led to the reunification of families and the Bougainville community at large. These efforts span more than a decade (1990–2003). Part two of this book contains a discussion of many of the women's peace activities carried out amid continued violence and threats to their lives.

Part three explores women's participation and contributions within the larger political arena at the regional and international level. From 1990 onwards, women vigorously sought political status in their peacemaking efforts. Our aim here is to provide a general overview that does not cover all peace efforts, but highlights the significant efforts women pursued as represented by the experiences of the few women authors of this book. This is important, because it shows a number of issues and problems women had to overcome for them to be accepted as legitimate and equal partners in regional politics. The popular political world-view informs us that the world of politics is the male's domain. This is the view that Bougainville women have had to correct and replace with the idea that, according to traditional Bougainville political culture, men and women share political responsibilities.

In August 1994, the Catholic Women's Association in Siwai, South Bougainville, under the leadership of president Lucy Tsivara, organised the Siwai women to stage a protest at the Tonu PNGDF base; the women had to walk twenty kilometres to the protest. Prior to the October 1994 peace talks held in Arawa, the women in the area led a peace march to

try to encourage the peace talks to continue. Their efforts were vigorously disrupted by the PNGDF soldiers based at the Forward Base in Loloho and at Arawa. Some of the women were man-handled as well as being beaten. When the local leaders were jailed and tortured, women stood by their men and expressed their pain and grievances through songs they composed. Some of the crisis songs included the now well-known *Who is responsible* by Elizabeth Burain and *Bougainville, me Bougainville* by Josie Sirivi. These have been sung at protests and to many audiences to powerful effect in the years since.

Attempts by Bougainville women to access the international political arena in 1995 resulted in women from BRA and PNG controlled areas of Bougainville attending the Fourth Global Conference on Women in Beijing. They represented views from opposite sides, but at heart acknowledged the need to work together. Daphne Zale from Petats Island, West Buka, received world-wide coverage with her press statement from Beijing, calling for peaceful intervention in Bougainville. Whether this gave courage to our sisters in the north or not, on their return, the women of North Bougainville conducted a silent protest march against the war, defying the declared State of Emergency. By this time, it was becoming obvious to men that they would ignore women at their peril. In September 1995, when the Australian Government hosted a Bougainville leader's meeting in Cairns, one woman delegate was allowed to officially represent the women of Bougainville, the men of both sides wrongly supposing that women were apolitical. After this, other women leaders demanded greater input by women in future proceedings and meetings.

In the meantime, their message had been noted and strength in unity had been gathering momentum throughout the region. Women felt even more determined to further their work, to continue to speak with one voice in the peace activities at village, regional and international levels.

A 'prayer retreat' in Arawa in 1996 was seen by the PNGDF to be in direct defiance of their authority. More than 700 women openly travelled to Arawa despite PNGDF attempts to stop a unification of United Church, Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist and Pentecostal delegates. Although none of the women from the mountains of Central Bougainville — who later became part of the BWPF — were able to attend this prayer retreat and forum, a few women bravely slipped out of town to meet women from across the blockade. Male combatants from opposite sides risked discovery in aiding these women in their clandestine rendezvous, thereby breaking invisible yet tangible barriers, despite their differing political views and feelings about the civil war.

After the Arawa forum in 1996, a delegation of women from North Bougainville opened unofficial negotiations with PNG's Chan government. Their next political move, as representatives of the newly formed BICWF, was to accompany politician John Momis in negotiations for the release of the five PNGDF 'hostages' held by the BRA in Kongara. Although these negotiations were labelled a failure, they clearly raised a keen awareness of the spirit of unity. By October 1996, Bougainvillean women were ready to support delegates who had the courage to begin travelling beyond occupation and blockade restrictions. In the same month, the Sydney-based BFM, with the help of other Australian

sympathisers, sponsored Sr Lorraine Garasu (BICWF), Ruby Miringka (BOCBIHP) and Daphne Zale (United Church and Red Cross) to speak about life behind the blockade during the war. Although woman held a different political persuasion, the forum once again presented them with the opportunity to put aside their differences and instead strengthen and promote a united Bougainville women's voice.

The New Zealand Government responded to the Bougainville people's request to provide a neutral and safe place for Bougainville meetings in Burnham and Lincoln (in Christchurch) in 1997 and 1998. The timing was just right. The opportunity to attend the meetings via secure air force transportation was excellent. The supportive, non-threatening atmosphere provided by the New Zealand Government made a huge difference. It warmed and lifted Bougainville men's and women's spirits. Such an atmosphere accelerated the unity of all Bougainvilleans attending the peace talks, with subsequent effects on all village communities in Bougainville. These meetings resounded with significant breakthroughs and provided further opportunities for women to continue in their objectives to unite all Bougainville people and further their place in regional politics. During these periods of negotiation, women put out their historic statement, read by Agnes Titus, who was then the only female elected member with a ministerial portfolio in the BTG.

Ever since, women have made it our mission to speak with one voice, a far stronger voice than individual women's groups previously achieved, on separate issues of unity, reconciliation, an end to war, and rebuilding lives and homes.

Although part three of our story centres on the exciting days of negotiations and our journey as women in search of peace and freedom, several remarkable incidents and meetings have occurred that combined with our efforts in the peace process to further inspire our endeavours. Our battles for gender equality required vigilance at every one of the myriad agreements that have taken place in the years since the 1998 political and cease-fire agreements.

In early 1999, I was selected by the BWPF and the BIG to be a member of the Bougainville Negotiation Team. The two years I spent on the team were in many ways a learning curve for me. At the same time, I made it my personal mission to vigorously pursue the path towards unity as strengthened and promoted by the previous New Zealand-sponsored negotiations. With the support of several members of the Negotiation Team (all male), we revised and made improvements to the draft submission initiated by the BWPF Executive members in 1998 and 1999, of which I was a significant contributor, which proposed women's participation in regional government politics. The proposed submission got the support of other regional women's organisations and of women we spoke with in market-places and village communities. In May 1999, the general election was conducted in democratic fashion to form a single government body, identified as the Bougainville Reconciliation Government, but later re-named the Bougainville People's Congress. Four seats were allocated for women representatives, representing the north, east, south and west regions, as well as maintaining two additional seats for current female members in the BTG and BIG.

This level of political representation, however, did not guarantee an end to the war and a political settlement satisfactory to all Bougainville people. This situation yet again spurred women to continue their peacemaking efforts. The women increased their peacemaking efforts through combined peace marches and meetings. In 2000, the Catholic Women's Federation in Buka sent a delegation of 150 women to Port Moresby to appeal to the PNG Government to put an end to the war by ceasing to maintain its support systems to its defence forces in Bougainville and to instead initiate a process of negotiation with the BRA. In early 2000, I spoke to Marilyn about the idea of holding a women's forum on an annual basis and we invited Sr Lorraine Garasu to consider the idea. Planning and programming began and the first Women's Forum, supported financially by the New Zealand Government, was held in Arawa in July 2001. An estimated 200–300 women were present. They agreed to hold the forum annually until such time as they felt it was no longer required. The forum coincided with the signing of the Bougainville Agreement concerning the power sharing arrangement between Bougainville and PNG (the Autonomous Bougainville Government) in the first week of August 2001.

One of the most important issues discussed during the forum was the need to raise women's political profile with the Bougainville Autonomous Government, and to increase levels of participation in regional politics as well as initiate a process that would enable women to become established in modern-day politics. The follow-up forum was held in October 2003 at the Tsiabai Catholic Centre, on the west coast of Bougainville. The forum consisted mostly of training and workshops. Reconciliation, politics and leadership were major topics of the activities. The New Zealand Government yet again sponsored the forum, and we sincerely thank them for their support and for sharing the vision with us in this way.

We realised that before anyone could negotiate with PNG, Bougainville must find a way to reunify as a people. The following stories and accounts tell the tale.

Chapter One NEGOTIATIONS AND THE BWPF

WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TO THE PEACE PROCESS

Scholastica Raren Miriori

THE BURNHAM PEACE TALKS in June and July 1997 were facilitated by the New Zealand Government after several failed attempts between 1990 and 1995 by other regional governments, including the Solomon Islands and Australia. The first meetings were attended only by Bougainvillean parties, representing the various factions on the island. Our aim was to reunite our people first, then invite PNG to join the talks.

Some 75 delegates, who were leaders of major interest groups representing traditional chiefs, youth, women, church representatives and political leaders from all sides of the conflict, met for two weeks. We knew that if this new peace initiative was to be successful, it must have broad-based support from all our people.

Bougainville women were, for the first time, represented by 13 women leaders and I was fortunate to be one of them. The talks resulted in the signing of the Burnham Declaration on 18 July, 1997. After agreeing to the principles laid out in this agreement, we were able to map the future of the peace process. It required:

- Unity and reconciliation between the divided Bougainvillean people.
- The establishment of a process for negotiation between the Bougainville leaders and the PNG Government to bring about an end to the war.
- A neutral UN peace-keeping force to be invited to Bougainville at the beginning of the peace process, with the agreement of the BIG and the BTG, for a period of no more than three years.
- A declaration of cease-fire to take effect with the arrival of the first contingent of peace-keeping forces.
- The demilitarisation of Bougainville, including the complete withdrawal of the PNGDF and the laying down of arms by Bougainvilleans.
- The removal of all restrictions to allow access throughout Bougainville to humanitarian and other agencies.
- An undertaking to ensure the people of Bougainville democratically exercise their right to determine their political future.

- A move to have the first meeting of Bougainville leaders with the PNG Government no later than September.
- The meeting to be held in neutral territory outside PNG and Bougainville.

The next important step was to invite the PNG Government to join the talks. This happened in October, when the technical advisers and combatants representing the major players — namely PNG, the BIG and the BTG — met at Burnham. Some 120 delegates attended these talks, which led to the signing of yet another important agreement by the PNG security forces, the BRA and Resistance Forces. The main thrust of this agreement was for these forces to declare the immediate cessation of hostilities, and to invite a neutral peace-keeping force to monitor and enforce the cease-fire.

Senior technical officers and military representatives of all parties met in Cairns, Australia, in November and agreed to ask the PNG Government to invite the Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) from the Pacific region to monitor the temporary cease-fire for three months.

The next major step was to convene the leaders' summit, which was held at the Lincoln University, Christchurch, New Zealand. This led to the signing of the Lincoln Agreement on 23 January, 1998. Three hundred delegates attended the meeting, as well as members of the international community and a special representative of the Secretary General of the UN. More than 30 women attended the summit, and I was again fortunate to be one of them.

The Leaders, Meeting agreed to ratify the deployment of the regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) to replace the TMG. PMG members were drawn from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu. Under the Lincoln Agreement, PNG was also required to invite the involvement of the UN to monitor and oversee the process. Other key areas agreed on at the summit included reconstruction, security and development issues, and the establishment of a Bougainville Reconciliation Government.

Another important milestone was the signing of the permanent Cease-Fire Agreement in Arawa on 30 April, 1998, which was negotiated in Bougainville on board the Australian naval supply ship, *HMAS Tobruk*.

The next major conference was the Pan Bougainville Leaders' Conference, which was held in Buin, South Bougainville, in August 1998. Some 5,000 leaders attended, representing the broad sections of our Bougainvillean community, including traditional chiefs, church leaders, women, intellectuals, youth, combatants and political leaders.

The conference further endorsed the principles outlined in the Burnham Declaration and, in doing so, consolidated Bougainville's common position on the political question, and the strong desire to promote reconciliation and unity among our people.

By 2003, more than 20 rounds of negotiations had been held. One important element that has ensured confidence in and the success of the process is the mediation role provided by the international community in facilitating and observing the talks. Their

physical presence on the ground also helps to boost confidence among the Bougainvillean population.

The following personal accounts of women formally entering the peace process explain a new phenomenon in Bougainville: the emergence of a political voice for women. Women from diverse backgrounds and all ends of the island, together with those in exile, have found a place at the national and international negotiating table. Their initiatives equipped them for the political struggle that lay ahead.

FORMAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN NEGOTIATIONS

Burnham I Leaders' Meeting, July 1997

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

ONLY BOUGAINVILLEAN MEN AND women attended the Burnham I talks. Not even an international chairperson or any foreign observers were allowed inside the negotiation room. We set in place a new approach for the entire process, instead of allowing all negotiations to be run by overseas brokers and UN officials with one or two of our own leaders. Our own leaders selected representatives of all community groups within Bougainville: there were 26 BIG/BRA delegates (including six women) and 27 BTG/Resistance Forces delegates (including three women). In addition, the three Bougainville Members of Parliament came and, after the first week, four more women for the BTG team were flown in after the value of our presence was acknowledged.

Out of this a recipe for peace was born with the Burnham Declaration. This would become our blueprint for the future. At the next round of talks, held at the same venue in Burnham, from October 1–10, 1997, Bougainville and the PNGDF signed the Burnham Truce.

Our overseas officers, Martin Miriori in Holland and Moses Havini in Sydney, agreed it was now imperative for women to be brought into the negotiation process. In our matrilineal society, it is traditionally correct for women to be heard on leadership and peacemaking issues and ceremonial acts such as the breaking of spears or bows and arrows.

In earlier negotiations and international forums and conferences, Moses and Martin had always made arrangements and taken full responsibility for the movement our women representatives through the blockaded border to speak to international communities about our experiences. This time Moses and Martin asked our leaders to decide which women should attend the negotiations.

Since I was already safely across the border, it made sense for me to be part of the delegation. I heard later that Martin wanted me to go with the leaders as the women's representative. Although I really wanted to accept the invitation, some of our leaders did not approve. They said I couldn't go because I was the general's wife and I might jeopardise his position. They feared that some people would not agree to us going as husband and wife. I was not convinced and insisted that I had every right to stand up as

a mother to represent the mothers and children who suffered during the war. I was willing to take responsibility and I felt in my heart that it was the chance for me to speak about our women's experiences of war. Eventually, the leaders allowed me to be included.

I knew it was going to be difficult for me to speak about the tough experiences of war, but it was an exciting moment for our women, especially when we landed in Christchurch, New Zealand. As we were led from the plane across a dark, ice-covered tarmac into the airport lounge, the first person I met was Scholley Miriori. We held each other and cried with joy. It was an emotional time for us all.

PNG's divide and conquer tactics had divided many Bougainvilleans, forcing us to align ourselves either with the BIG or the PNG-backed BTG. The significance of the Burnham I talks was the coming together of women and men from both sides for the first time. A feeling of unity immediately started to emerge among the women and we were able to talk freely of our feelings about the war. Our example of human warmth, compassion and excitement melted the reserve of our menfolk much more rapidly than would otherwise have been possible.

I was so excited to meet the other women and to hear of the good things they were doing for us. They helped me discover more about my natural ability to lead, especially Marilyn Havini, who briefed me on what she and others had been doing in terms of aid delivery, public speaking and political activism, lobbying politicians and decision-makers, media statements and liaison work, and their continued support and love for us when we were hiding in the jungle. That made me understand that there were people on the other side of the blockade working tirelessly to tell the international community about our suffering.

Certainly, the peace talks at Burnham were very expensive exercises and we later heard that the New Zealand Government's budget for the talks 'blew out'. The New Zealand Government, however, promised all the delegates from Bougainville that it would not leave us half-way. Their promise to stick with us no matter how long, or what the cost, was truly appreciated. I will never forget the hope that rose within us as we came to understand that every step forward could be built upon and we were there to initiate a real process rather than a 'quick fix'.

Waging a war on Bougainville was a very expensive business indeed. It was expensive for those who prosecuted and colluded in this horrible, mindless exercise. And this cost translated directly into the terrible losses our people faced in human lives and suffering and the destruction of our environment.

We estimate, for instance, that the PNG Government spent more than \$800 million in the 10 years of fighting its war on Bougainville. This is money that could have been spent building more hospitals, schools, bridges, buying much-needed medicines, fighting corruption and improving law and order in that country.

New Zealand extended its hand to us — not only in peace and friendship, but through

initial leadership of the TMG and later participation in the peace monitoring teams, and assistance with the rebuilding and the redevelopment of Bougainville.

Other parties aided and abetted the war and they must be held accountable for their actions. We seek full justice for the wrongs unfairly done to us. Bougainville was the reluctant 'host' to a war that was planned externally.

The BIG, the women of our land and even the BRA have always been willing partners to resolving the conflict through peaceful means. The gun was brought on to our land; we did not bring the gun to Bougainville. The gun did nothing to improve the fighting ability and spirits of the demoralised PNG military, who the BRA defeated in every battle fought on Bougainville in the past 10 years. In the end this wasteful exercise had no winners.

Although the five Peace Accords from 1990 to 1995 suffered from a lack of longevity, the use of the gun was never BIG/BRA's preferred alternative. From 1990 onwards, the most significant success was achieved by the talks at Burnham.

One of the first fruits of this peace process was the Burnham Declaration. In the document we addressed all the issues that had caused previous agreements to fail and we determined to take back to Bougainville a process that would be trusted by the people. The women delegates also were determined to take part in spreading its contents far and wide so that it would become a safe vessel for all of Bougainville to travel in.

The Burnham Declaration

The following is a brief summary of the principles contained in the Burnham Declaration, the vision of which has survived through 28 separate rounds of talks between 1997 and 2003.

1. Unity and reconciliation: we recognised that war divided our people and that we must reconcile with ourselves as leaders to ensure unity and reconciliation among our people at all levels of the community.
2. Process for negotiations: we agreed to work together with the Government of PNG to set up a process of negotiations.
3. Ending the war: we agreed to work to end the war as soon as the peace process could be established between Bougainville leaders and the Government of PNG.
4. Declaration of a cease-fire: we called for a neutral peace-keeping force to come to Bougainville at which time the Bougainville leaders would urge all parties under force of arms to declare a cease-fire. This cease-fire would take effect simultaneously with the arrival of the first contingent of the peace-keeping force on Bougainville.
- 5.1 A neutral peace-keeping force: we requested that such a force be invited to Bougainville under the auspices of the UN for a period of not more than three years.

- 5.2 We desired that, before PNG and countries contributing to the peace-keeping force agreed to a 'Status of Forces' Agreement, the BIG and the BTG be fully consulted.
- 6.1 Demilitarisation: as an essential step for successful demilitarisation, we called for the complete withdrawal of the PNGDF within a time frame to be agreed between PNG and Bougainville.
- 6.2 As part of the demilitarisation process, the BRA would also lay down its arms. This would be supervised by the peace-keeping force in conjunction with the BIG and BTG.
7. Lifting of the blockade: we agreed that there was an urgent need for access throughout Bougainville for relevant donor organisations and humanitarian agencies, including the International Red Cross and UNICEF, for the implementation of health and education programs and for the restoration of basic services. We undertook to pursue discussions with the PNG Government to this end.
8. Political process: we undertook to ensure that the people of Bougainville freely and democratically exercised their right to determine their political future.
9. Commencement of process: we moved to have the first meeting of Bougainville leaders and the PNG Government no later than September 1997 to set up the process and begin implementation. We further agreed that this meeting be held in a neutral place outside PNG and Bougainville.

The Burnham Declaration was a Bougainvillean initiative heralding a new and different approach to peace. The test was whether PNG would be prepared to honour and adopt the declaration and become a party to the peace process.

THE WOMEN'S VOICES AT BURNHAM

Burnham I Negotiations, 5–18 July, 1997

Marilyn Taleo Havini

THE BURNHAM ARMY CAMP was extremely well appointed for the arrival of our people even though it was the middle of winter.

Moses and I were flown from Sydney a few days before the teams arrived from Bougainville. We were initially housed in an officer's barracks and we were consulted by the New Zealand facilitators on final details that would make the Bougainville delegates feel more at ease in this foreign environment.

The New Zealand Government had the foresight to fly in a senior government official who was also a Maori elder. A former High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands, Tia Barrett was now the 'Protocol Chief' for the New Zealand Government. Moses and I spent hours with this gentleman planning an indigenous welcome that would incorporate elements of Maori and Bougainvillean ceremony. There were many other notable New Zealanders who assisted the Burnham negotiations and befriended our people. Incredibly tight security was maintained throughout our stay yet the personable manner of the soldiers was very reassuring. They were all committed to making Burnham a success.

The final arrangements were put in place when our advance party was completed by the arrival of Martin Miriori and his wife Scholastica from The Netherlands. It was a wonderful reunion for Moses and the Mirioris and an extra special occasion for me as through all the years of the struggle I had never met Scholley, although we had talked on the telephone.

That first day we talked and shared much of what we had been through into the small hours of the night. We waited anxiously through the night for the plane that would take us through sleet and ice in the dark to welcome the rest of the delegates from Bougainville.

The secured army terminal had been screened off and barriers were everywhere in evidence. It was bitterly cold and slippery and the first people to come off the plane were the BTG and Resistance leaders, who had set off from Buka. The BIG and BRA delegates had already been ensconced at the rear of the plane before it had set off from Honiara in the Solomon Islands.

Neither side had been in touch with the other on the plane and there was a definite sense of unease among the New Zealand personnel, who feared sudden outbursts of violence when the opposing 'war parties' landed and confronted each other.

The conflict had divided Bougainville, broadly speaking, along north-south lines, but the BTG 'northerners' who were first off the plane were relatives of Moses, Scholley and I, who all hail from Buka Island. Our political differences melted away as we embraced them coming through the gates. We could not let them walk past us and so we were drawn into the terminal clutching our loved ones. We still hadn't even seen our own team members! They were all buried under army coats, chilled to the bone and we were all rubbing each other to keep warm — literally a good ice-breaker!

By the time the BRA and BIG delegates found their way into the terminal, we were moving across the 'divide' to embrace or shake hands with anyone we knew. It was a very tense but emotional time. Then the New Zealand hospitality took over with welcome speeches and an amazing hot breakfast. The chefs catered to the hungry travellers with island-style cooked taro and sweet potato.

As dawn was breaking, we loaded into separate buses according to BTG/Resistance or BIG/BRA representation and set off for Burnham, where we were directed into a large hall and asked to sit on opposite sides of the aisle. The New Zealanders, for all their hospitality, feared private vendettas and were intent on keeping the two sides apart. I had a camera and went to take photos of our leaders who, I noticed, were anxious to greet each other and sit together. It was a very special moment when they encouraged me to take their photo. There in front of me, before even one word of negotiations had taken place, was Joe Kabui (Vice-President of the BIG) ensconced between his opposition, Sam Tulo (formerly the PNG-appointed Bougainville Administrator and a PNG Member of Parliament) and Gerard Sinato (Premier of the BTG). After taking the photo I found myself pushed out of the way by others with cameras wanting to capture the same moment! I suddenly had a very good feeling about these talks.

After another welcome, we were asked to line up for the allocation of winter clothing. Scholley and I hung back from this as we had each come with our own winter clothing, plus suitcases full of extra clothes to give away. We had not anticipated that New Zealand would clothe all the delegates. When the line was dwindling and everyone had armfuls of warm outfits, we were told by army personnel to get in line for our supply. Feeling a bit embarrassed, we accepted the offer of a warm tracksuit each. We needed to check the size of the garments and were invited into a room at the rear of the hall that doubled as a change room.

We were suddenly approached by one of the female New Zealand officers, who wanted to know how to separate the women. She said the officers could easily work out which side each of the male delegates was from but they were confused about the women, so she wanted to confirm that all the women came from the same team. Scholley and I looked at each other in surprise and, jaws agape, blurted, 'No, not at all! There are women from each side present; it's just that we are all so happy to see each other.' We

were happy indeed also to see a major step forward had been made from all previous peace talks.

Our leaders had listened to our pleas at last and had picked a few women to come as an experiment.

Scholley and I were elated to see the effect the women's presence was already having in establishing a positive atmosphere for the talks.

One fear the men had expressed to us about having women present was that our politics might be uninformed or 'wishy-washy' and therefore counter-productive. On this count they were very surprised to find that women were as passionate as men about redressing the horrors of war. In fact, the men who had not heard women speak politically before were amazed to find them as vehement as the men on issues of politics and human rights. On our return to barracks each evening, men would come to congratulate the women for their contributions during the sessions and express surprise at their politics.

I had brought along a lot of visual material that we had used over the years when representing Bougainville around the world. We put up a display in the BIG office area and it wasn't long before people were streaming through and asking for copies of everything. I heard confirmation of some material from eye-witness accounts and people realised that we had been doing our best to tell the world about their suffering, the fighting and the blockade with the meagre details we could gather. We found ourselves in deep conversation and drawing close to apparent strangers. So many of these BRA commanders looked tough or scary, but they were deeply touched by the suffering and their concern for human rights issues was very visible.

At key times during the Burnham talks, women spoke up with a clarity and forcefulness that overcame the fear felt by many of the men. Sheer desperation for a way through the impasse caused women to plead with the men on more than one occasion.

The New Zealand Government was concerned about the delicate task of convincing PNG that the Burnham talks were in the interests of all parties — including PNG. One way of expressing our goodwill, we were told, was for the BRA to release its six prisoners of war, who were being held in a village in Buin. Apparently irrelevant were the countless BRA and innocent suspected-BRA soldiers incarcerated in jails throughout PNG. The media had labelled the PNG POWs 'hostages' and the BRA was being asked at Burnham to release them as a sign of good faith to PNG. Our leaders had already been subjected to intense negotiations about releasing these PNG soldiers back in Bougainville and this time we were considerably swayed by the need to produce some evidence of New Zealand's success in facilitating the talks. After so much thoughtful effort by New Zealand to cater to the well-being and safety of our leaders, our BRA commanders agreed to release the prisoners of war and return them to PNG upon their arrival home. This worked out extremely well for all parties, as the POWs praised our people for their kind treatment and their families later sent gifts to thank the elders and captors in the village that had held them.

Although I was able to stay only for the first week of the talks, I experienced the most exciting period and was able to participate in the formative period of what became the master plan for all that was to follow the Burnham Declaration in the form of a truce at Burnham II, political negotiations with PNG at the Lincoln Peace Talks (again in New Zealand) and an irrevocable cease-fire back in Bougainville in April 1998.

By coming together we discovered that the means to peace could be fully realised by understanding the problems that led to the conflict and by working out what skills we needed to constructively resolve it. We listened to the suffering from all sides of the conflict and realised that no one was exempt from pain and loss. We agreed that having a UN Charter on Human Rights was a valuable safety net that we desperately want to understand and respect. Bougainville needs to apply international standards of human rights to its indigenous cultural practices and modern societal development for future healing and survival.

As part of the natural progression of the peace process, the opposing forces discovered the need to meet once more to discuss issues of internal conflict. This occurred in Burnham in October 1997, and became known as the Burnham II talks. Burnham II became a stepping stone to a third attempt at a cease-fire with a new concept (for Bougainville) of a truce between all parties.

The Burnham Truce was necessary as a prerequisite to creating a peaceful environment in Bougainville and PNG. This was developed by closely following examples of various 'mini peace treaties', individual initiatives signed between various groups on the ground in Bougainville to cease conflict among their communities.

The Burnham Truce, signed by representatives of the Government of PNG, the BTG and the BRA, immediately sought to:

1. Cease armed conflict;
2. Establish peace and reconciliation;
3. Facilitate the return of normalcy and restoration of services by all parties.

The leaders also agreed, as immediate interim measures, to:

- Respect and promote basic human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Refrain from all acts of intimidation and armed confrontation;
- Promote peace and reconciliation in the community;
- Lift all restrictions, restore freedom of movement and delivery of services to the people of Bougainville, subject to appropriate clearances;
- Field commanders of the PNG security forces, the Resistance and BRA, and village chiefs, to meet on a regular basis to consult, review and monitor the implementation of this commitment as well as to resolve any incidents which may threaten or breach these understandings as well as to promote the aspirations expressed herein;

- Recommend that the national government and leaders on Bougainville immediately invite a neutral regional monitoring group to monitor the terms of this agreement.

The current peace process on Bougainville has been embraced by our region and physically supported on the ground by the PMG members from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu, and the UN Observer Mission from New York.

It is worth emphasising that there were other important provisions contained within the agreements between Bougainville and PNG.

One of these was the process of reconciliation. Indeed, this was one of the very first issues in the Burnham Declaration. The process of reconciliation among former combatants is a long-term undertaking. It goes beyond the economic and political recovery — and is the foundation of any successful peace process.

If post-conflict reconstruction is carried out without looking for the root causes of conflict recovery will be only superficial. Reconciliation is important to heal spiritual and psychological wounds, prevent hatred, distrust and warmongering, and to encourage forgiveness and unity.

THE BIRTH OF THE BOUGAINVILLE WOMEN FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

THE BOUGAINVILLE WOMEN FOR Peace and Freedom (BWPF) was born in Roreinang, Central Bougainville, a picturesque village and United Church Mission Station poised on a inland hilltop. It holds a commanding view of the sea and the route our people took to the south when travelling to the Solomon Islands. With its strategic location, Roreinang became a central meeting place not just for women, but for the BRA, and it was a safe place for sick people waiting for transport across the blockade. The BIG chose to meet here as the church buildings provided meeting areas, classrooms and dormitories.

Roreinang was well defended by nature and the BRA. Although the PNGDF must have guessed its significance, Roreinang was never attacked.

Roreinang held a special place in the hearts of the people because of the hospitality that was extended to all who came there. The United Church had allowed a Summer Institute of Linguistics team to live and work on the mission many years before the war and the people of the surrounding area had taken an active interest in the Bible and the Nasioi language translation project. Interest in the scriptures worked a deep spiritual revival in the hearts of the people and direct application of its precepts stripped away denominational prejudices.

These factors made Roreinang the natural place for women to gather on their return from the Burnham peace talks in July 1997.

About 30 women came together to hear what had transpired at the negotiations. They were especially keen to hear our women's accounts, because the leaders at all previous talks had always overlooked us. The level of interest led to several informal meetings in the next few months with briefing sessions for women wherever we happened to meet. It was of concern to us that the second round of talks at Burnham excluded women. Although we were very pleased with the outcome of those talks, which had to do exclusively with combatant forces and the declaration of a truce, we were committed to the proper representation of women for the next round where the agenda would include tackling the causes of the war and other political issues.

Women had already recognised the need for a strong women's voice in negotiations and we were so hungry for peace that the idea of a women's political organisation was well received on the ground in Bougainville.

The founding members were myself, Eunice Miringtoro, Lucy Madoi and Amalani Kanare. The first meeting for what was to become the BWPF was convened at Roreinang on 4 December, 1997, to prepare for the inclusion of women in the next round of negotiations to be held in New Zealand in the New Year. It was at this meeting that we confirmed the need to become an organisation whose main role was to speak on the issues that affect women.

Eunice Miringtoro inspired everyone by telling us about the hardships women were experiencing in the PNG-controlled care centres. With tears in her eyes, she expressed support for the formation of the organisation and that we had to challenge the PNG Government to come to the negotiating table with Bougainvilleans to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. The rest of the women present at the meeting supported the idea and that is how we came to write our position paper. Additions were made during our second meeting on 6 January, 1998.

I became the first president and Lucy Madoi became vice-president of the BWPF. Amalani became secretary and Kathy Amos our treasurer. We promised that we would work together and stand united as women to face the challenges that lay ahead of us.

It was important that our organisation was run democratically and that all women felt involved in all the decision-making processes. This meant we could say we were truly representing these women. After the election of officers, we had time to review our position paper.

We wanted women to take this document with them to the negotiations. We wanted its contents to be considered by our male leaders and their opponents.

We considered our position paper to be our voice to our leaders to hear and consider how we felt. We demanded a response from the PNG Government and their soldiers in respect to each issue raised. In the position paper there were five main issues we considered needed to be resolved in order for us to freely exercise our right to discuss the root cause of the war — the need for self-determination as a people on the issue of independence.

The five prerequisites were: withdrawal of the PNG security forces from all the islands of Bougainville; a cease-fire between all warring parties in Bougainville; international peace-keeping forces to intervene in Bougainville and provide a safe environment; demilitarisation, and a genuine negotiation process for the question of independence for Bougainville.

When we produced our position paper it was agreed that the purpose of BWPF was to enable women's perspectives on the impacts of the war to be known nation-wide and internationally. BWPF was a vehicle for women to reclaim and maintain their traditional roles in decision-making and peacemaking. There were difficulties in running

this organisation as the war was still going on. Movement was difficult around the country. Communications were extremely limited within and outside of Bougainville. There were no funds available for anything and meeting minutes were handwritten and typed up later on an old typewriter in my village.

Leaving our children while having to walk to meetings was very stressful. Sometimes I would arrive home at midnight, tired after a long day of meetings and walking and I would feel like giving up. But I continued because of the fact that there were women suffering and they needed someone to witness their stories and tell the outside world.

Because of the hardships we had to overcome, just being together at a meeting made us feel very strong and powerful. The women were always positive about the organisation and what it was doing for them as a political vehicle for peace and freedom. Some of our men were also very supportive of the organisation.

The BWPF expanded quickly throughout Bougainville. From the experiences and community initiatives women implemented in our new jungle society, it was obvious that some women had regained their pre-colonial status. Women were given positions of responsibility and leadership in the new structure. They reclaimed their rights as women of the land.



Bougainville women at Lincoln. L–R Front row: Lucy Morris, Rita Pearson, Monica Siriori, Martha Toaratsi, Agnes Titus, Ruth Spriggs, Lydia Pupin, Daphne Zale, Pauline Vine, Sr Ruby Mirinka, Scholastica Miriori. L–R Back row: Sr Lorraine Garasu, Kuntamari Crofts, Hilda Wilson, Genevieve Pisi, Christine Mugosi, Marilyn Havini, Balbina Kari, Jocelyn Tunsio.

WOMEN'S VOICES FOR PEACE AT THE LINCOLN NEGOTIATIONS

Marilyn Taleo Havini

LINCOLN WAS A VERY different experience to Burnham. For starters, we arrived in summer. New Zealand had taken note of the fact that Bougainvilleans had united across the PNG-imposed 'civil war' divide and so we were deliberately intermixed in our accommodation. This acknowledgement of Bougainvillean efforts for peace was a surprise after the tight security of Burnham.

It was time now, too, to meet with PNG and especially the Prime Minister, Bill Skate, who had not been at Burnham. We all hoped the PNG negotiators would recognise the incredible amount of time, money and effort New Zealand was investing in these negotiations.

Notwithstanding the goodwill shown by all parties, these talks were very tough. Contentious political questions would be dealt with across the table for the first time.

Bougainville delegates had their own meetings before the main negotiations took place. We needed to come together to establish a plan of action and everyone was keen to know how he or she could play a part. We asked our leaders to address us and we invited the Bougainvillean members of the PNG Parliament to speak. We wanted to know where they stood on the question of independence, which was obviously going to be the centre of debate after issues such as the cease-fire, demilitarisation and peace-keeping.

It was agreed that only nominated speakers would be allowed to address the chair in the formal negotiations, but anyone in the room who had input for the discussion in progress could write down their points and pass them forward to our speakers. The system worked very well for the BIG/BRA delegates because we had predetermined the agreed points of negotiation, and our leaders did an excellent job in presenting and debating these. On several occasions, however, items came up that we were not prepared for and several people were seen writing furiously to get their contributions passed forward in time for our leaders to counter or present a reply.

One such example I remember very clearly. Bill Skate stood up and said that, as prime minister of his country, he was ultimately responsible for all the actions of his government. He said he was aware that gross wrongs had been committed by the

Government and that, although he had not been prime minister at the time, we needed to look to him for redress. He said Bougainville should not blame past leaders (including those who sat at the table — such as former Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu) but rather allow him to take the blame (or words to that effect). He then ‘confessed’ to the sins of the Government with some real awareness of human rights abuses. This was a revelation to many of us until he also stated that, as was the Christian way, once the sinner has confessed, it was our correct response, on behalf of Bougainville, to ‘forgive’ the sin and the sinner. The term he used to accompany this plea was one we had heard before and it had already caused some consternation. It was an appeal for us to forgive and forget.

Our Bougainville team was in a quandary! Some Christians with very deep convictions felt obliged to automatically forgive with a pronouncement in grand fashion from our president, Joe Kabui. While they were passing forward notes to that effect, others were writing just as furiously that it was a trap or that such forgiveness was insufficient for our people back home. Others, in distress from having lost loved ones or having been victims themselves, were ready to walk out in protest. I was sitting near the back of the hall and I could feel the tension mounting when our president stood up and shocked us all with his gracious words. He spoke from the heart. He thanked Prime Minister Skate for his confession and assured him that, in time, forgiveness would come — but that it was not for any of us at the meeting to assume the right to pronounce forgiveness outright. Our team survived that episode intact and all agreed that our leader had shown great wisdom.

Josephine Sirivi, as the newly elected president of the BWPF, had been selected to sit at the centre table on behalf of our women delegates. She had an opportunity to speak about the suffering and hardships of women and their families and it was such an emotionally hard thing to do that Josie had several of us weeping with her by the time she sat down.

At one stage I managed to write down Josie’s words as she spoke:

‘I came here with the cry from all the mums. We carry the burden while you men play politics. Will you continue to kill our children or save them? They suffer as they grow. We have lost many children. I am sorry if the [PNG] Constitution is the way it is. God didn’t give us this Constitution. It can be changed. We fight for our rights. True, BRA has also fought — *mekim plenti wrong*. We want to commit you to continue from Burnham I and ... continue talking to bring lasting peace and freedom.’

One morning we were asked to attend a meeting to be chaired by Sir Alexis Sarei (first Premier of Bougainville). While waiting, the women began to introduce themselves to each other and explain where they have been during the crisis and what had happened to their families, etc. Some of us began to swap photos of our children and barriers about which side we were on crumbled. We all became engrossed in this exchange and it was not until we noticed all the men filing out that we realised the meeting had been cancelled. One of us declared that now would be as good a time as any to have a women’s meeting.

What followed was a very special time of discussion and sharing of all the ideas and beliefs that we had as women. Our group of 15 who stayed for this meeting (of the 22 women delegates) came from all parts of Bougainville. Our discussions about the role of women in Bougainville society, the impact of colonisation, PNG rule and the effects of war were very insightful. We were impressed by our shared vision and we decided this exchange was significant and should be recorded.

In drafting a statement, we came together for several more meetings in a more formal arrangement that included all the women delegates at Lincoln. At that stage we did not know how this statement might be made. We considered a media statement, or a request for it to be included with the official documentation of any agreement. One woman dissented and tried her best to block the statement going anywhere at all. We took the statement to our Bougainville leaders from each camp. Gerard Sinato of the BTG/Resistance and Joseph Kabui of the BIG/BRA fully endorsed the statement along with their secretariats. We held a final planning meeting and agreed carefully on the document word by word, then waited for some direction as to how we would present it.

Meanwhile, the main negotiations were continuing and we were all involved in those meetings as the final days approached, still without any solid agreement. Drafts prepared by each side were being exchanged and, despite some clear agreement on broad directions for a cease-fire and the peace process, there were rejections on political sticking points.

The final draft of the women's statement had been typed by Ruth Spriggs from the BIG secretariat, who was also busy coaching Agnes Titus from the BTG on how to deliver it. Our one dissident worried that there would be no agreement in the deadlocked negotiations so she refused to put her name to the women's statement. The consensus of all the women was then to have no signatures, so that there would be no fear of PNG reprisal if everything failed.

I was asked by the women to approach the New Zealand Government personnel about how we could deliver our statement. I was referred all the way up the line to John Hayes, who worked directly under the Foreign Affairs Minister, Don McKinnon. John was very pleased that we had written such a statement and agreed that our voice should be heard. He decided that the statement should be read after the signing, as part of the official program.

The Lincoln Agreement on Peace and Security, January 1998

Eventually, the first Leaders' Political Meeting agreed to the 'The Lincoln Agreement on Peace and Security', which stated that 'the parties will cooperate to achieve and maintain peace by peaceful means'.

The main points were:

- An extension of the Truce Monitoring Group to 30 April, 1998, to allow for consultation in establishing the cease-fire;

- A permanent and irrevocable cease-fire agreement to come into effect at midnight on 30 April, 1998;
- Withdrawal of the PNGDF from Bougainville subject to restoration of civil authority;
- Peace-keeping force and mandate for a Peace Monitoring Group to be a neutral regional group and;
- PNG Government to seek endorsement from the UN Security Council for a UN Observer Mission to monitor arrangements;
- Transition to civilian peace-time policing with Bougainville Police Force and re-establishment of the Village Court System;
- Removal of bounties on leaders' heads and freedom of movement for all Bougainville people;
- Amnesty and pardon;
- Restoration and development of public and private sectors, including health and education, communications and access to villages — including the return of Bougainvilleans in care centres;
- Consultation and liaison at the political level among Bougainvilleans and with the PNG Government;
- Issue of independence to be addressed before the end of June 1998.

The finale to the Lincoln meetings truly was a special occasion. We had an impressive line-up of dignitaries and a packed hall of Bougainvilleans and observers. Everything proceeded without a hitch except for the last pages of President Joseph Kabui's speech going astray, but he rose to the occasion and delivered a fine ending. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer spoke extremely well about Bougainville women and a remarkable incident that had happened to him when a helicopter he was travelling in had been forced down at Wakunai, Central Bougainville. He had unwittingly dropped in on a women's group at the very time they were holding one of their peace campaign awareness meetings. We were really interested to hear his story of how he found out for himself about the contribution women had made to the peace process.

We waited patiently through the rest of the speeches, while every one of the Foreign Affairs Ministers had their turn, until the very end, when the chair of the proceedings, Solomon Islands Prime Minister Hon Ulufa'alu, declared the meeting over.

Agnes and Ruth were poised ready in the front row and, instead of being crushed at being forgotten, they made some signal to the chairman and he suddenly recalled the inclusion of our women's statement. We were very relieved when the meeting was again called to order and the invitation to read the statement was announced. Agnes stood and faced the crowd and made a brilliant presentation by reading in a loud, clear and steady voice. Mr Ulufa'alu was so stirred he suggested the women might like to close the meeting with a song. At this invitation Scholley looked back at me and

mouthed the words of 'My Lord knows the way through the wilderness', a song Bishop Zale had taught us at Burnham I. I turned to Sr Ruby Mirinka, a choir leader in the Solomons, and asked her to lead the song. Without hesitation, Sr Ruby stepped into the centre aisle, lifted her arms up like a true conductor and sang out four notes — one for each part in harmony. All the women from the mainland plus the BIG/BRA and, I suspect, many more from the BTG/Resistance, lifted their voices in a rousing chorus.

We were all weeping by the time we had finished and even the one woman dissenter from our group, who had been sitting behind me, threw her arms around my neck and we wept with joy together.

LINCOLN PEACE TALKS

WOMEN'S STATEMENT

Bougainville Peace Talks Women's Statement: Bougainville Leaders' Meeting

Friday, 23 January, 1998

We, the women of the Delegation of Bougainville (BIG/BTG) ... renew our commitment to reconciliation and peace within Bougainville.

We, as Bougainvilleans, appreciate all assistance extended to us that has enabled us to come together for this significant point of the peace process as established 5–18 July, 1997, with the Burnham I Declaration.

We wish to thank each of the governments that have brought us here today: namely, our own Bougainville Government (BIG/BTG), the New Zealand Government, who, with Lincoln University and the Maori community, have hosted our presence, the Australian Government for our journey here, and the Papua New Guinea Government for acknowledging us and meeting with us. We would also like to thank the United Nations, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, who have participated in various functions.

In our quest for peace, several women among us were delegates to the Burnham I talks in Burnham, Christchurch, on 18 July, 1997. There, at key points of the debate, we spoke with power and clarity and the men openly acknowledged that our women of vision helped to steer the process. We have travelled a significant distance in time, place and development since this peace journey began. This has been possible because of the honesty and integrity exercised by all parties that forged the Burnham Declaration.

We support and endorse all that our people have achieved so far in this journey together. We thank the Honourable Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jenny Shipley, for her special welcome extended to us, the women, in her opening speech to the delegation on Monday, for recognising all the women of Bougainville who have played a pivotal role in the process of reconciliation. The war that we have experienced has devastated our community to such an extent that it stripped bare our island.

To survive, we looked within our culture, our traditional society and ourselves. In almost all areas of Bougainville, women traditionally own the land. The land is sacred and protected by men on behalf of the women. The men as guardians share leadership

with women, taking the responsibility in open debate to protect women from potential conflict; however, women have the power to veto decisions, and therefore are involved in the final consultative process.

The destruction of this balance of power as held in Bougainville in traditional times occurred through Westernisation in the colonial period. It is a tragic fact that the ignorance of external powers exercised in Bougainville by default weakened the traditional balance that kept a peaceful and harmonious society. In the recent absence of formal Western political structures, our people in social crisis have turned to traditional decision-making methods in which women have been restored to their rightful place in leadership.

Women have built bridges between their own families, clans and displaced fellow Bougainvilleans by working for mutual survival, whether it be in the bush, in care centres or wherever they have hosted strangers in their own communities. Without remuneration they have laboured beside their men to create basic services using whatever talent or means they had to hand.

Today, we would like to pay tribute to all the brave women who are waiting in our homeland for news of peace and a return to a just, civil society, where the rule of the gun will be replaced through a secure process for a permanent cease-fire and demilitarisation as agreed on in the Lincoln Agreement.

Our menfolk have rediscovered the value of women sharing in the decision-making process and we attest here today to the liberating effect this has had upon our fellow women delegates. As mothers of the land, we take seriously our responsibility to rebuild peace in our hearts and create a peaceful environment that will improve the quality of all our lives. There is so much to be done, whether it be developing ways to relieve or improve the back-breaking menial tasks, or restoring our lives so that we can freely move around, return to our homes and enjoy the ability to speak freely of our human rights and needs; or our goals for a political future where women must take their rightful place as leaders beside their men. We look forward to being included in the new Bougainville government structure so that our rediscovery of women's participation will continue to shape and build Bougainville's development and government.

We have begun here at Lincoln to break down the mental blockade that prevails in our homeland, where women still live in fear and are not yet able to discuss and debate openly our democratic form of government.

[In] our society, although men and women have distinctive roles, they are complementary. We women are co-partners with our men and as such we are not daunted by the enormous task that lies before us to bring about a new Bougainville. In holding to the peace message that has spread in Bougainville from Burnham, we, the Women's Delegation at Lincoln University Leaders' Meeting, affirm with all our sisters and fellow Bougainvilleans our determination to make this peace process work until we reach our common goal of freedom.

Thank you,
Bougainville Women Delegates

NOTE: This list of all women delegates who attended the Lincoln Peace Talks was not included with the Women's Statement when it was presented to the public and the media at Lincoln in New Zealand. I have recorded here for the sake of historical record the names of all those women who worked so hard for peace at the Leaders' Meeting.

Agnes Titus (BTG Minister of Local Government)

Josephine Sirivi (Leader, BIG Women's Delegation, Central Bougainville), BWPF President

Therese Jaintong (President, Bougainville Council of Women)

Ruth Saovana-Spriggs (Postgraduate student, ANU, Canberra), BWPF o/s officer

Sr Lorraine Garasu (Bougainville Inter Church Women's Forum)

Sr Ruby Mirinka (Coordinator, BOCBIHP, Honiara, Solomon Islands)

Balbina Kari (Health Officer, Arawa, BOCBIHP staff, Honiara)

Bernadette Ropa (Tarlana High School Principal, Inter Church NGO, Bougainville)

Rita Pearson (AusAID consultant)

Marilyn Havini (BFM, Sydney BIG office and high school teacher, Sydney, Australia), BWPF o/s coordinator

Daphne Zale (Bougainville humanitarian official, Gizo, Solomon Islands), BWPF

Scholastica Miriori (BIG Overseas Women's Liaison Officer), BWPF o/s officer

Joycelyn Tunsio (Buka Trap Group and women's representative, Kieta)

Lydia Pupui (Tinputz women's representative, Tinputz)

Kuntamari Crofts (Student, BFM, Melbourne), BWPF

Patricia Tapakau (Arawa District Women's Group)

Lucy Madoi (Women's representative, Kieta-Arawa), BWPF Vice-President

Rosemary Dikaung (Literacy teacher, VTPS), BWPF Secretary

Genevieve Pisi (Human Rights Office, NGO, Kokopau), BWPF

Margaret Barako (Women's representative, Kieta-Arawa)

Lucy Morris (BFM, Brisbane), BWPF

Chapter Two THE PEACE PROCESS AND THE BWPF ARRIVAL OF THE PEACE MONITORS

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

BOUGAINVILLEANS RECEIVED NEWS OF the Burnham Truce Agreement with mixed feelings. They had seen previous cease-fires dishonoured by the PNGDF and were distrustful of any new agreement. Even the BRA had not trusted a 'cease-fire' and had accepted the idea of a 'truce' at Burnham to give them time to run an awareness campaign to ensure combatants from all sides would work towards a permanent cease-fire. In many of the places I visited during this awareness campaign, I was asked, 'How can we be sure that this cease-fire will last?' My answer was always, 'It is up to us. We have to work together. It is our peace process; we must own the peace to keep it.'

After Burnham we were able to engage our neighbours in the region as truce monitors. The unarmed civilian and army monitors were drawn from New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu. (After the cease-fire was signed in April 1998, they became known as peace monitors.) The BRA had insisted the monitors be unarmed as a precondition to signing the Burnham Agreement and we believe this historic step was the key to the success of this third and final attempt to stop the war. A sense of trust was generated by the agreement for all sides to put away their weapons.

Initially, the presence of Australians in the TMG raised some issues among Bougainvilleans, given the Australian Government's role in supporting PNG during the war. People questioned us many times about whether they could be sure the Australians were there to monitor peace and not continue the war.

The first TMG members arrived in Buka in North Bougainville and their presence brought new hope for our people. It was a sign of our commitment to the peace process and the hard work we had put into negotiations since Burnham. PNG's previous claims that the Bougainville conflict was an 'internal crisis' had largely kept the international community out, so it was a major breakthrough to be able to bring in neutral parties to observe the peace process.

With the arrival of the TMG, people began to return to their home villages and set about restoring their normal lives. We had spent 10 years living in bush camps and had settled in to that new life so well that it was difficult to live in a village again. At first, I felt that living up in the ranges, away from the heat and the mosquitoes, was better than the village, but the need for awareness campaign meetings made it difficult to stay

in the mountains. So, eventually, we returned to our old village where it was easier for the TMG members to deliver messages to or visit my husband.

The truce monitors spread throughout the island and, everywhere they went, villagers would share their experiences of the war and how much they had lost during the struggle and would voice their support for the right to self-determination for Bougainville.

The TMG was entirely independent from the Bougainville people and the PNGDF and their mission was neither to provide aid nor to take sides. They could provide little assistance apart from the practical facilitation of the peace process itself.

For the first few years of the peace process, I was nervous about moving around the island because of the continued presence of the PNG security forces. The formal Cease-fire Agreement (between PNG and Bougainville) had called for the phased withdrawal of the PNGDF as the TMG could replace them in each area of the island. The PNG forces, however, refused to accept the fact that the Bougainville people wanted them to leave so it took some time for them to be confined to their own camps.

Despite this, most people became quite positive about the peace process and they began to rebuild their homes and schools. Hospitals were another priority, and some people began establishing small businesses. Former combatants were also engaged in skills training to help rebuild infrastructure. The New Zealand Government took a number of 'hard core' BRA and Resistance fighters to Burnham where they were taught construction skills, giving them a reason to pursue peace and participate in the rebuilding of Bougainville. This initiative was well received and has borne good results.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AND THE BWPF EXPANSION

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

THE BWPF EXPANDED RAPIDLY throughout mainland Bougainville. As I contacted women's groups in many areas to brief them about our organisation, I realised there was already a network of women's community organisations waiting to be included in the main body of BWPF. I decided to organise a meeting to elect a national executive of women's representatives from all the different areas.

The two-day meeting began on 24 February, 1998, and was made possible by transport assistance from the TMG. There were women among the truce monitors who supported our efforts to establish a women's network and recognised the interest shown by women to become formally involved in the peace process through our organisation. The two monitors who helped us the most and who deserve special mention were Major Fiona Cassidy and Colonel Janet Castello from the New Zealand Defence Force.

We started a process to unify the women in Central Bougainville. I did not see the different women's organisations in the northern areas of the island, such as the Leitana Nihan and Bougainville Women's Council, as a threat to the BWPF. I wanted to unite our women and not fight against other organisations. My aim was to represent women who I thought were not being represented by anyone.

At our February meeting we briefed all the women present on the details of the Burnham and Lincoln peace talks and appointed extra representatives for the areas of South and West Bougainville. The women voted for me, as their president, to be the women's representative in the BIG.

We formed an awareness team, which would continue to travel to villages to brief people about the peace process and encourage them to welcome the truce monitors.

As well as transport assistance from the TMG, the BRA communication system played an important role in helping me get messages to women and to broadcast information about meetings.

The next significant meeting was held in my own village, Damakoo, and it was the biggest conference I had organised. More than 50 women from throughout Central, South and West Bougainville were present. There were also a few women from the north-east mainland.

During this meeting I received a fax from the BFM in Australia expressing solidarity with our organisation. I read the letter to the meeting and the women were very excited and encouraged by it. Some women were surprised to find that there were women overseas committed to Bougainville; others were amazed to hear that the peace process had even begun.

This conference was one of our most significant meetings because we reorganised the BWPF into an inclusive, island-wide organisation and were able to identify our needs and priorities. Women were given a voice and were able to individually and collectively express their support for the peace process. They felt accepted and included and, in turn, were motivated to take an active role and work with village chiefs to ensure the peace process was successful.

A four-point resolution was made at this meeting, dated 27 May, 1998. The first point called for the PNG Government to withdraw all PNG security forces from the island, beginning in Arawa, to create a neutral zone in which to conduct a pan-Bougainville conference on our political future the next month. The second point was addressed to our own leaders of the BIG and the BRA, calling for the male representatives of both bodies to recognise the BWPF and our work.

The third resolution, also addressed to the BIG, requested food aid for those in urgent need of assistance. Further to this resolution, two letters were written to the Premier of the BTG, Gerald Sinato, requesting food aid. The BTG operated in PNG-occupied North Bougainville and was supported by PNG funding, whereas our BIG operated behind the blockade and had no funds. So far international relief for drought-stricken PNG had been denied to the blockaded areas of Bougainville.

The fourth resolution was a general request for all parties involved in the peace process to rebuild schools and hospitals as a first priority in the reconstruction process.

As well as the four main resolutions, we made requests from women for help with projects that they could participate in, namely the production of much-needed clothing. We determined to seek out bolts of cloth and sewing machines.

I found many of these BWPF conferences very emotional. Women would share stories of their suffering during the war and I would feel guilty because I had no cure to heal their wounds. It was, however, a healthy way for us to express our grief and appreciate each other's unique experiences. There was a great sense of unity among the women and we also shared much happiness.

During our awareness campaign trips we attracted large crowds, who were eager to hear all the news and were happy to hear the outcome of our campaigns. We realised we were the only ones among the leaders who had been to the peace negotiations who were briefing ordinary people about the peace process. The men did attend organised meetings and spoke with village chiefs, but we sought out people who had no 'official' responsibilities and who heard only scraps of information. It was very satisfying to see people being made aware of what was going on in the political arena.

What was most interesting for me was to hear people at every meeting I attended express a desire for the political future of Bougainville to be addressed. Without exception, people believed Bougainville should be given full independence.



Team photo, Cease-fire Negotiations on HMAS Tobruk, Loloho wharf, Bougainville.

CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

APRIL 1998 SAW NEGOTIATIONS to turn the truce in Bougainville into a permanent cease-fire. I was the only woman asked to represent the BWPF at the negotiations. I joined the more than 100 BIG and BRA delegation members from across the island who gathered in Damakoo village for preparatory meetings. On the day of the negotiations we travelled to Loloho, a PNGDF stronghold. We were able to travel into such dangerous territory only because of the presence of the TMG.

Compared with all the other peace talks I had attended, including those in New Zealand, these negotiations were the toughest. In nearby Arawa, expectant crowds had gathered ready to celebrate the signing of the cease-fire agreement. The crowds were organised by the BTG and its supporters, adding to the pressure on our BRA and BIG representatives. If we were unable to come to an agreement, we would be seen as spoiling the progress already made. It was a challenge for all the factions involved because we were supposed to agree to the principles of the agreement ready for the official signing the next day.

The meeting of the warring parties for the negotiations of the cease-fire agreement was to take place in neutral territory on board the Australian Navy supply ship, the *HMAS Tobruk*, on 30 April. Negotiations lasted throughout the night as we debated the principles of the agreement, particularly the withdrawal of the PNG security forces, the most contentious point between the parties. The withdrawal clause was finally accepted by all parties and the cease-fire agreement was signed the next day in Arawa, effective immediately.

I was appointed to speak on behalf of the BWPF at the official ceremony in Arawa. It was one of the greatest challenges of my life, to convey the right message while standing in front of hundreds of people and speaking in English, which was a foreign language for me. It was a daunting task, but I also felt fortunate and thankful to be given such an opportunity. I spoke from my heart and, after the speeches, the celebrations went ahead and I felt good about my role in the process.

The general public expressed great appreciation to the BRA for having achieved so much in negotiating the cease-fire agreement. Everyone could feel the change in the atmosphere.

Freedom of movement for ordinary Bougainvilleans proved to be the most visible evidence of the restoration of peace and it meant many families could at last be reunited after 10 years of separation because of the war. This new-found freedom inspired confidence that this cease-fire was going to hold.



The rivers flow cleanly as well as freely in Arawa now that the Environmental Watch has cleaned up the town with community support as a BWPF project.

Chapter Three POLITICS AND THE BWPF

BWPF HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

Rosemarie Dikaung

AT THE FIRST BWPF meeting in Damakoo in 1997 women raised the issue of human rights abuses committed by both sides during the war and how these should be addressed. A need for the collection of data for future reference was discussed and a suggestion was put forward for some kind of training.

The meeting also saw the election of Marilyn Havini as the overseas coordinator for BWPF. The overseas office in Sydney played a major role in disseminating information from Bougainville to the international community.

Marilyn had sent word to the Damakoo meeting that the University of New South Wales Library and Archives School was offering two placements in a training course for database creation and computer-based cataloguing for stand-alone and network systems. I was selected, with Genevieve Pisi, to attend the six-week training program beginning in January 1999.

The invitation and opportunity for me to attend this training came after two years of hard work not only by Marilyn and her faithful supporters in the BFM, but by an Australian library student who was looking for a body of work with which to create a database as part of her thesis. A chance encounter with this student's professor led to the creation of the database of human rights abuses in Bougainville.

When I came to Australia to begin my training, the database was completed with every entry from volumes one and two of 'Marilyn's List'. Marilyn gave me a folder of further cases to add. Genevieve arrived soon after and together we learnt basic computer skills, e-mail networking, how to operate the database as well as how to enter new material.

I had left school at the start of the war and was stuck at home with a one-year-old child. My thoughts of going back to school after the delivery of my child were shattered because of the fighting.

I took part in community activities but, initially, I was not interested in politics or stories of the conflict nor did I attend any gatherings to discuss the future of our land. I thought this was only for those who carried guns, because they looked big intellectually, and I thought my thoughts or advice would not be appreciated.

As years passed, I began to realise how important it was for me to be in the village.

I was learning things I wouldn't have learnt if I was in school or working and living in other parts of the country. The importance of nature and traditional customs began to mean so much more to me than they had when I was growing up and seeking an education for my own future. What I must do and must not do in my cultural traditions, the history of my clan and what was expected of a Nasioi woman became my new schooling.

The PNG blockade resulted in the deaths of so many innocent people that I began to develop a great concern for issues of human rights by the very experience of being denied things we had taken for granted before the war.

Now I was in the position to accept assistance from overseas people, I worked in Sydney with Marilyn to explain how total the destruction of all infrastructure was at home and how we needed even the most basic things such as pens and pencils. The University of New England Centre for Peace Studies donated a new computer for me to take home to continue with the work I had started at the UNSW.

CORSO, a New Zealand NGO which had been a great support to Moses Havini, wrote and asked us what we would need to set up the human rights office we had envisaged. Marilyn replied with a list of furniture and electronic goods, such as a printer and photocopier, stationery and operating costs. This amazing NGO then applied to the New Zealand Government to match the CORSO funds and for assistance in sending the donated equipment to Bougainville.

On my return to Bougainville, the women were overjoyed at these developments. We had to find a way to make sure that people in other parts of the world would know what the Government of PNG had done and still had the potential to do to our people. The women organised and mobilised themselves and we set up the human rights office in the centre of Arawa town. The BWPF now had attained an official and physical presence in the community.

Bougainvilleans associate themselves with different inter-marrying tribes, where much of the land is owned by women and inherited through the female line. We began organising ourselves to deal with serious problems caused by war and previous mining damage to the natural environment. Our forests were destroyed and poisonous copper tailings were dumped into rivers that later overflowed on to fertile land. Landowners were left landless. Burial grounds were bulldozed. Wildlife disappeared and the ecosystem was disturbed. Our whole way of life was destroyed and we needed to make sure that, with the peace process, these evils were not repeated by powerful outsiders who claimed we needed a mine to be economically viable.

Through the BWPF we established the Bougainville Indigenous Environmental Watch. We organised a large clean-up campaign in Arawa town and the peace monitors were supportive and helped with equipment. Men worked with women to start clearing away the refuse of war that littered the riverbanks and open areas in and around Arawa.

Many of the problems now occurring are the result of a lack of education and awareness caused by the war. These include the dynamiting of reefs for fish using hand grenades and explosives, which is devastating the reefs. Also the availability of weapons results in the over-hunting of some species of birds and animals. People are used to using natural materials that decompose, but now plastic bags and rubbish are being thrown into the rivers and bush and are becoming a problem.

The Panguna mine had been closed for 13 years and, during this period, there was some recovery in the ecology. The rivers now had more fish, eels and prawns, the gardens were more productive and the forests had more animals. Now that we were moving out of our period of crisis, we were rebuilding economic activity. We learnt from the past mistakes of large-scale resource extraction and wanted to pursue sustainable agriculture and renewable resources as the basis of our economy. This is a critical period in which we will shape our future path.

Our programs and projects in the BWPF are doing work with human rights and the environment, as community movements, with the objective to of setting up non-government organisations that will educate and protect our community and our natural environment.

The BWPF sees the question of human rights protection in political terms. We need to be trained to lobby and to represent our women's voice in the political arena. It is for this reason that, in January 2000, I was selected to attend the Diplomacy Training Program for human rights defenders in the Asia-Pacific at the Northern Territory University in Darwin, Australia.

After my return I was able to work with other women's organisations in the Kieta District. In September 2000, the women's organisations formed the United Kieta District Women's Co-Group. This was a first step towards uniting the different women's organisations in the district. The main purpose of this group was to act as a venue for women's organisations to discuss issues of concern and find avenues to assist women in the district.

A major project set up after the formation of this group was the Kieta District Women's Training Centre, funded by the UN Development Program. The centre houses a guest house and restaurant and training facilities for women who left school due to the conflict. The centre offers sewing courses, basic management and hospitality training to women. There is a conference area and a new thatched addition in the grounds built for the purpose of caring for women who are the victims of violence.

Much understanding of what women can do in the community has come from our BWPF officers attending human rights conferences, tribunals and women's conventions overseas. We have been assisted in travelling to overseas venues by our BWPF overseas officers. We gain much insight from interaction with other indigenous people who have faced similar struggles adapting to the modern world after long periods of colonialism and exploitation.

In August 2001, I was awarded a scholarship from the UN to be a participant at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

I prepared a paper in Sydney with Marilyn that would correlate with the agenda items for discussion and presentation. Under the heading of 'Women's human rights', we summarised the issues as perceived by our women. This list clearly indicated the major areas of human rights that we must continue to address in Bougainville.

We can use the presence of Bougainville women at conferences such as this to brief our leaders upon our return and to educate them about women's rights as enshrined by the UN (of which PNG is a member).

We need to lobby PNG and our own congress with regard to the need to address justice issues and reconciliation with the resolutions for the establishment of a PNG Human Rights Commission. The UN has repeatedly called on PNG to form such a commission. This has been agreed to by PNG but nothing has eventuated to date. How can anyone find justice in our land when there is no recourse for any citizen to appeal for help?

Our other concern was for human rights abuses to be addressed in Bougainville with the special formation of a Bougainville Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We produced a media statement that explained our rationale for this — including an urgency to maintain the reconciliation process before the peace monitors withdrew, to affirm the reconciliations that had already taken place and to formalise their historical record as binding at all levels.

We called for PNG to become a signatory to the UN proposal for an International Criminal Court.

To date, the PNG Government does not recognise our women's leadership and many of the urgent needs of our women are not being addressed. There is no form of social services, which places an enormous burden on churches to carry out social programs to rescue needy people who 'fall between the cracks' of traditional village and family support systems.

On my return from Durban, I thought it necessary to write a report to deliver to the BWPF and to the Bougainville Reconciliation Government. Our President, Joseph Kabui, knew and approved of my representation of Bougainville at the conference.

In my report I made the following recommendations to the Bougainville People's Congress, the Interim Bougainville Provincial Government and our various women's organisations:

1. To continue participating in conferences throughout the Asia-Pacific region;
2. To observe that gender equity is important and, that for Bougainville to raise women's profiles within the local and international community, continued overseas and UN participation and training is essential;

3. That BWPF continue to promote a 'women's voice' in negotiations and forge the way for issues of gender equity to be addressed. We support an all-Bougainville 'Women's Summit' to create an umbrella organisation for all women's organisations on Bougainville to join in our international work. We recommend that our government continues to endorse Bougainville women's participation at international conferences and that they endorse our applications for funding for this purpose;
4. Recommend that the Government initiates and endorses future male and female participation at non-government and government conferences in regional and international forums so that we can contribute equally towards building our nation together.



Scholastica Miriori, Marcelline Tunim and Josephine Sirivi forming a peace circle with delegates outside the front gates of Den Hague, The Netherlands, during the Hague Appeal for Peace world conference, May 1999.

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

Scholastica Raren Miriori

AFTER THE UPHEAVAL OF my relocated to the other side of the world, I had to adapt to a new language, culture and environment which was so alien to my native Bougainville. I became, with my three daughters, son and husband, Martin, a strange black addition to our Dutch neighbourhood.

Being in Europe opened up new opportunities to serve Bougainville and to reach those in the UN and other human rights organisations with whom we developed firm relationships to support Bougainville and the peace process. Martin's role as an ambassador for Bougainville and my appointment by the BWPF as an overseas representative led us to many international forums. Europe has used the Pacific for centuries as a playground, and as a scientific and nuclear testing ground. To assist the education of Europeans as to the realities of Pacific issues and build links that inform citizens and governments all helps make us accountable for policies and actions.

In October 2000, I was invited to the 11th Europe Pacific Solidarity Seminar in Bergen, The Netherlands, to speak about the role women were playing in the Bougainville peace process.

I assured the conference that Bougainville women were committed to promoting and protecting the peace process. We wanted to have our voices heard and to help shape the future of Bougainville as equal partners with our male counterparts.

I also briefed the conference on some of the activities our women were involved in as part of the reconciliation and rehabilitation programs.

Many of those attending the seminar were already familiar with the situation in Bougainville, however, it was a shock to many of them — as it often is to our international audiences — to discover the extent of the human rights violations committed against the general population throughout the island. Between 1988 and 1997, 15,000–20,000 people, representing about 10 per cent of the total population of Bougainville, died. The dead were mainly civilians, many of them women and children.

I explained the importance of the presence of the UN monitoring team and the regional PMG. When we speak to international bodies, we always address the ways in which our people seek advice, help and outside assistance and how these can be

delivered without creating a culture of dependency among our people. The desire for autonomy is very strong among Bougainvilleans and we do not want to interfere with that energy, or the will to overcome using ingenuity and self-help programs.

In December 1999, I had the opportunity to travel home and visit some of our women's groups in their areas, and I saw the projects they were running to support the peace process. I have every confidence that this time our efforts to secure lasting peace, security and justice for our beautiful homeland will not be in vain.

BOUGAINVILLE WOMEN'S SUMMIT 2001

Scholastica Raren Miriori

TEN YEARS OF WAR had been cruel, devastating and divisive for the women of Bougainville but 2001 presented women from all parts of the island and from all organisations with an opportunity to visualise a new beginning for our land. Underpinning this vision was a desire to build a strong networking mechanism to link all women's groups at every level of our society.

The BWPF and the BICWF decided to plan a summit that would be open to all women, from any organisation. All women had suffered during the war and we were now ready to forgive one another and move forward. We had learned from our brutal experiences and were resolved to engage in advocacy, networking, rehabilitation, reconciliation and conflict resolution in our work.

In the three years prior to the peace settlement we had become aware of the existence of various women's organisations and of their different aims. We now needed to take into account the uniqueness of each group and rationalise our objectives and approaches so that we would not be in competition with one another. We needed to come together to develop our separate visions into one that encompassed the needs of all women so we could develop links between women and the new government of Bougainville.

Our summit would mark the beginning of the process to amalgamate all the different Bougainville women's organisations under one roof. Our vision was to create a mechanism so that women and their organisations would be invited into the new government and its planning committees to develop policies on areas such as the environment, the economy and education.

The summit advocated education as the key to women's development. Society must respect women's rights, dignity and cultural diversity. It must allow equal access for women in decision-making. Improving the role of women will further enhance the economic development of families and the community as a whole.

Day one of the summit saw 150 women leaders gather from throughout Bougainville, including the outlying atolls. By the end of the week, that number had grown to about 200. The women present included the leaders of community organisations, politicians,

international members of the PMG and NGOs, educators and peace promoters, women representing churches, community-based representatives and those who work with the PNG media. The political representatives came from the Provincial Government and the People's Congress. Unfortunately, although invited, the PNG Government did not send any personnel.

Each day we heard accounts of what the various groups had been doing. We sat spell-bound as we listened to what each woman had attempted to do to enhance the personal and communal development of women. Such stories revealed yet again that Bougainvillean women were moving forward. Issues discussed included the peace process, law and order, health, social welfare, disarmament, education and training.

The women were extremely grateful to President Joseph Kabui and other Bougainville leaders who came to brief us on issues such as the new Bougainville Constitution, the progress of the peace process and disarmament. We were encouraged that we must stand together to continue to promote peace and President Kabui urged the women to lead the way.

Question-time sessions during the week allowed women to highlight issues of particular concern. The need for such a forum became more obvious as women told of how they continued to feel ill-informed about developments and initiatives taken by organisations that were supposed to be representing them. They expressed concern about a lack of feedback and it became obvious that there was a huge gap between the main organisations and smaller groups of women at the village level.

Women leaders were encouraged to target reconciliation among the leaders of rival women's groups. Many village women did not understand the roles of various women's organisations and they would be able to benefit from them if they better understood the complementary activities of each organisation. The religious organisations present believed the formation of an umbrella body for women would increase the capacity for networking and the promotion of partnerships between all women.

The church women also expressed concern about the disparity of funding between various women's organisations. Some groups were self-funding, while others were supported entirely by foreign aid. Their proposed umbrella organisation would prevent divisions and competition between the different groups.

They believed such an organisation would also act as a resource centre for all groups, providing awareness and development programs, and as a training centre for women to combine skills and materials.

The challenge for the churches was to facilitate the reconciliation process and provide cultural mediation and healing within the community. Church representatives present at the summit spoke of the need to support improvements in education, advocating and addressing community concerns through civic education programs.

During the course of the summit, it became obvious that we needed to analyse

our expectations regarding the roles of women's organisations. We needed to ask ourselves what women wanted and needed. We identified seven key roles for women's organisations:

1. Advocate the development of women and men to enhance family and community provision and economic management.
2. Provide education and training.
3. Develop projects such as small business education, rehabilitation and literacy programs, including teaching women to train others.
4. Develop programs to raise awareness of human rights, women's rights, children's rights, HIV/AIDS and peace education.
5. Promote greater access to economic opportunities for women as well as developing strategies to reduce poverty, focusing particularly on the family and village level.
6. Promote a gender perspective on peace-building and political decision-making processes.
7. Promote the sustainable use of natural resources and environmentally sound development programs.

Once we had agreed on the roles of women's groups, we decided to work as a team to complement the roles of each group. We wanted to support each other and provide a network of linked organisations. We spent time developing a proposal for a national women's organisation, which would complement but not replace any existing organisation. Its aims and objectives would be:

1. To bring women and all women's organisations together.
2. To establish a constitution and principles for Bougainville women, as the organisation would become the official political advisory body.
3. To work closely with the new Bougainville Government and with all women's organisations (government and non-government), community and church groups.
4. To monitor government policy, development programs and UN conventions on issues that may affect women.
5. To promote equal distribution of funds to all organisations for women's development projects.
6. To promote and provide strategies for women's participation in politics and social affairs.
7. For the executive body to represent women in the Bougainville Parliament and to attend conferences and meetings at national and international levels.

As part of the summit, a workshop was held to work out how we could amalgamate all our different organisations under this one umbrella and how we could go about restructuring the existing women's organisations. It was suggested that a president be appointed with executive members elected from the existing groups.

The new organisation needed a name and one suggestion was the Bougainville National Council of Women. Officers should be elected through a forum such as the one we were attending and the voting would be inclusive of all representatives of all the women's groups. We agreed that those elected should hold office for a maximum period of three years.

It would be the responsibility of all women leaders and representatives involved in the summit to brief their members about this amalgamation idea. It was imperative that as many Bougainville women as possible were informed. It was proposed that the next forum should be used to implement the wishes of all women on this issue.

Other areas of concern in our discussions centred on women's consultation with other village groups, such as village elders and district leaders. All speakers highlighted the need to increase women's participation in decision-making in Bougainville.

Divisions did surface, however, between the women's groups present at the conference. The perceived funding disparity between various groups and their utilisation for women's projects had caused deep feelings of marginalisation. The need for transparency by all groups in their aims, motives and actions was reiterated throughout the summit and concern about access to information was a recurring theme. We hoped a new unified structure would minimise future competition between groups, but an impartial monitoring body may be required.

I would like to note here that, although the majority of women present at this summit supported the idea of amalgamation, we thought a second forum should be used to open doors to further discussion on the matter. I believe all women have the right to voice their wishes and others may have better ideas than those expressed at this initial meeting.

The summit also discussed the criteria for selecting and electing leaders and a consensus was reached that all organisations should be allowed to appoint a representative to the executive of the new amalgamated group. The national head of this executive could then be appointed either by the elected women representatives or elected at a summit such as the current one.

The list for leadership criteria was a long one. We considered that potential candidates should display leadership qualities, be women with political vision and have some qualifications or education that would prepare them for the task. They would need to have had experience in formulating ideas and addressing issues facing women on a local, national and international level. Such women must be willing to volunteer their services and work under extreme pressure, and accept the responsibilities associated with the task. The women at the summit wanted such leaders to be those who upheld

Christian values so they could be assured their leaders would be women of honour who could be trusted to represent them.

Good communication skills were, of course, another requirement, as was the ability to identify and communicate with village women and the community at a grassroots level. Women spoke of the need to select leaders who believed in the importance of the family unit and who had no marriage problems that would interfere with or threaten their work.

The women executives and the national leader would also need to demonstrate that they could work with other organisations and with the male-dominated government. We were looking for a woman to lead us who could work with and for us to build mechanisms into the new systems of government to promote the advancement of women and shared decision-making among all women.

On day two of the summit we concentrated on the idea of building a harmonious society. We drew courage from hearing one another's stories of survival during the conflict and honoured the unique perspective of women contributing to conflict resolution, their courage in opposing the use of force, preventing violence, promoting healing and reconciliation in a war environment, as well as women's potential for leadership.

Social injustice and intolerance awareness programs were meeting with varying success and the underlying causes of social problems within the community needed to be addressed. The trauma of war was a significant factor in alcohol-related problems, which were causing disharmony and an increase in marriage breakdowns in all communities. Women expressed feelings of helplessness in the face of some of these seemingly overwhelming problems.

Other speakers talked about the reconciliation programs in their areas and there was much hope that such ceremonies could promote peace and harmony among former combatants and the rest of the community. Women leaders at the summit were also encouraged to reconcile with one another, to sort out our differences and find a shared vision for how best to deal with these social issues.

Women were seen encouraging one another to be genuinely open and transparent in admitting their needs and fears, to be open to suggestions and to accept constructive criticism from other women and even from those beyond the summit.

Another important issue discussed at the summit was that of enhancing women's economic status through job creation and income generation. An important step in this process is promoting equal access to education at all levels.

Women also spoke about the many health problems they faced. Medical and surgical expenses were beyond the means of most women and access to health-care facilities was severely limited.

Other speakers highlighted the struggle faced by women trying to establish businesses, who had difficulty approaching banks and requesting loans. The women felt strongly that we should raise awareness among women through NGOs and other agencies and provide access to courses on bookkeeping, business activities and literacy training.

The following concerns and challenges were expressed explicitly in most of the presentations of the summit, so I want to summarise them here to do justice to those women who attended. The observation was made that wars and armed conflict continued in other parts of the world, even as Bougainville was beginning to enjoy peace, so the onus was on Bougainville women to strengthen and protect that peace.

Education was identified as the key to human development and peace, as well as respect for human rights, dignity and cultural diversity. A reorientation of our society needs to take place to allow equal and democratic participation between all Bougainvilleans. Reconstruction programs must provide for the protection and strengthening of social infrastructure, particularly in relation to health and education. Youth must be included in the planning and implementation of long-term solutions and their needs could be addressed particularly through training and education programs.

The community as a whole must take positive steps to break the cycle of violence and encourage disarmament. Women were influential in promoting peace, reconciliation and in disarming former combatants and this was seen as the only way forward for community healing.

Access to information must be improved for all women, particularly those in remote villages with little or no available transport or communication. Drama and role-play have been used to good effect in other peace campaigns and in explaining the dangers of HIV/AIDS, alcohol abuse and other social problems. Children, too, must be taught early skills in negotiation, problem solving and good citizenship, as well as learning to communicate in ways that will help them not resort to violence.

The forum highlighted the many achievements of women, especially in relation to training, mediation, reconciliation and healing within communities. I encouraged the participants that their creativity — individually and collectively — proved that we could all participate and work harmoniously together. We can no longer be spectators, but must join in and build good governance — together with men. By empowering women and allowing their voices to be heard, women are able to do better things and do things better.

RECONCILIATION AND RENEWING THE VISION

Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

The role of reconciliation in Bougainville society

RECONCILIATION HAS BEEN THE mainstay of the success and the strength of the Bougainville peace process. Ten years of war, suffering, numerous failed negotiations and peace agreements from 1989 to 1997 were more than we, the mothers of Bougainville, could bear.

Our tears flowed freely as news of the first deaths came in from all over Bougainville during the first years of the war. Mourning our sons and husbands killed during the fighting, we were further grief-stricken while burying our dear ones who died from preventable diseases as a result of the dreaded and illegal blockade. We had no more tears as the war dragged on to mourn and to give our dead decent burials. They were hurriedly buried in jungle camps or laid to rest wherever they met their death. We became dislocated from our society and the parting of our dear ones began to lose its meaning and respect in our tradition and in our lives. We were heading in the direction of chaos and annihilation.

Our mothering instinct, to nurture and protect human life, saw us calling for no more deaths. While we were one with our leaders in the struggle for our destiny, we also cajoled them not to lead Bougainville in the way of destruction. We said, 'We do not carry guns like you men in the jungle, but we are the ones who cry over our dead. The pain we feel for our land is like the pain we feel when we give birth. But we have no more tears left! Please find another way to restore our dignity and to save our society.'

Our leaders, in their own wisdom, soon heeded our cries. They began to look for other ways to resolve the conflict, instead of 'by the barrel of the gun'. The BIG and the BRA made the first move by creating a 'Peace and Reconciliation' portfolio. They then worked tirelessly to unite disgruntled groups within the BIG/BRA-controlled areas.

Then unarmed Peace Committee members from BIG/BRA, with much risk to their lives, trekked down from their mountain posts into the Resistance force heartlands of Wakunai and invited the Resistance to make peace with them. The Peace Committee members were prepared to die for peace, but, thanks be to God, the Resistance Forces did not shoot them. This was the foundation for the historic Burnham I Declaration of July 1997. My husband, commander of the BRA forces turned peacemaker, challenged

the parties at Burnham with a bundle of coconut broom sticks he had brought from Bougainville as an example of unity. He said strength was like a complete bundle that could not be broken by the hand, and weakness was like a single strand of the coconut broom, easily snapped by the fingers.

Peacemaking has always been a part of our culture, even before the white man arrived on our shores. Throughout our history, Bougainville tribes and clans had elaborate ways of making reparations with one another and we had a well-established, peaceful society with inherited leadership rather than the foreign PNG systems of power and leadership by challenge and acquisition. These ancient ways have been seen in practice today in the many reconciliation ceremonies that have taken place throughout Bougainville since the Burnham I Declaration. Many former enemies have been coming together and 'breaking bows and arrows', then chewing betel-nut to symbolise peace, as well as 'planting' rocks in the ground as a symbol of their promise never to fight again.

In Bougainville, reconciliation is not just some formula to fit into the peace process. It is not an invented way to excuse the abuse of human rights. It is the weaving together of opposing parties, be they family, clan or villages, after a dispute. Because the reconciliation process is a tried and true part of Bougainvillean culture and is integral to who we are as a people, it has come to form part of our political process. This process mends and heals, restores peace and harmony and puts relationships back in their rightful place. It restores balance to the community. It is a method that has been developed over centuries of experience and it allows for all those feelings of hurt and pain to be worked through and ensures that no injured parties are neglected.

Reconciliation in traditional practice is a deliberately slow process. It takes into account the need for time to cool hot tempers and allows time for reflection. It is also group work. Each party to be reconciled must be supported by those within the clan who can, in turn, support each other in this process. In like manner, each of the negotiation teams has supported our leaders through the peace process. We have been inclusive in negotiations, rather than exclusive.

These traditional processes represent a holistic approach for conflict resolution, restorative justice and reconciliation. The clan looks after its own. No matter how gross the offence, the clan will represent the offender — but the clan will also make them address their behaviour. The individual is always accountable to their family and clan. Very often, the clan will ask for some act of good faith from their erring member before they will agree to stand for the guilty and act for them in the reconciliation.

All members carry the responsibility of being part of a clan. Individuals know that the clan will be held accountable for their actions. Bougainvillean society has a strong concept of collective responsibility, which is extremely different from Western individualism. Many of our ex-combatants have fought from within the clan structure and have the support of their loved ones to pursue reconciliation wherever required. Others of our sons were cut off from their families and need to repair family ties by such means first.

Humility is an essential part of the process. Forgiveness must be accompanied by an acceptance of truth by all parties to create a meeting point where an agreement on compensation or atonement can be negotiated. In traditional culture, as in Christian teachings, for forgiveness to be genuine, the feelings need to be real and deeply felt from the heart. There would be no point proceeding with a ceremony if there was any doubt that one party was genuine.

Reconciliation and the peace process

We need a map or a path to follow on the road to peace. Our story of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom would not be complete without clear goals for what our new-found peace and freedom is to achieve.

Despite our longing for unity, all of Bougainville was divided into different factions by the war. The power of reconciliation is the only genuine way to unify the people once more.

An important step in this reconciliation process was the amalgamation of the BIG/BRA and BTG/Resistance in 1998 to form the Bougainville Reconciliation Government as the body working towards an autonomous government for Bougainville, with the promise of a referendum on full independence in 10 to 15 years.

Some people who study the Bougainville peace process comment on the number of agreements that have been made for us to achieve peace (a recent tally stands at about 35 official agreements). But look at the fruits of our labours: we have returned to civilian government, the PNGDF has withdrawn from Bougainville, former combatants have disarmed and are conducting a Bougainville-wide weapons disposal program, and we are in the act of forming an autonomous government that will meet the aspirations of our people.

Reconciliation is essential for a healthy, unified and independent Bougainville but it is not the end of the road. There is still much to be done once we are fully reconciled as a people to build this nation. I expect there will be strong opposition to Bougainville achieving the promised referendum on self-determination from many in PNG and its 'friends'. We may have to reconcile more fully with PNG to achieve our goals by peaceful means.

These visions begin to reflect what BWPF dreams for the future of Bougainville.

The BWPF vision

The national executive body of the BWPF came together at Easter 2003 to hold a workshop on how we could renew our vision and develop our organisation's structure for the future of Bougainville. We had formed under the intense pressure of negotiations in 1997 and have remained relevant to the peace process, but we have had to run before we could walk in terms of our structure as an NGO.

We had a very meaningful week of meetings where we analysed our hopes for a free and independent Bougainville. Reviewing our present structure, we recognised the many roles women already carry in life and we made an honest appraisal of what an NGO is capable of achieving. Beginning with the land, as the basis of our subsistence culture, we considered the quality of life required for our community.

Looking beyond the local community, we identified the vision we share with all of Bougainville and the reasons for our struggle. We acknowledged the amount of hard work and personal commitment it will require for us to remain passionate as individuals for the cause and the solidarity we need to remain strong as an NGO.

We made a list of what we envision for Bougainville. The BWPF women used an expression in Melanesian Pidgin — ‘*Ol strongim pasin usim woksak*’ (‘we are proud to carry our own work sack’) — meaning we are ready and willing to do all we can to make this vision come true.

Summary of BWPF vision

Identity and culture

- We need to know ourselves and be secure in our identity, not just as a nation but at regional and community levels.
- Promote and respect our culture as a strong base for a healthy community.
- Build a strong family, clan and community foundation for the next generation.

Independence

- Work for an independent Bougainville.
- Recognise the vision that the BRA fought for: independence.
- No mining.
- We own the peace.

Self-Reliance

- Build on our principle of self-reliance: *mekim na save*, or learning by doing.
- Not become dependent on multinational corporations.
- Build on and develop initiatives for living that were created during the blockade years.
- Develop alternative power sources, such as hydro and coconut oil, for light industry for Bougainville.
- Develop our own economic resources, e.g., a banking system, micro finance and our own currency.

- Bartering system and shell money to be reintroduced.
- Support and strengthen self-determining local economies.

Land

- Land is life and the source of our custom, culture, wealth, power, medicine and health.
- Care for our land and our water.
- Respect our sacred places and ceremonies.

Women

- We believe in women (and men) and our relationship with God.
- We believe in our roles as mothers, landowners, supporters and pillars of families, communities and government.
- It is our vision to see women participate fully in clan, community and government work.
- As landowners, women are the backbone of our society.
- Women, land and culture are inseparable.
- Women must be recognised by the Constitution and be able to participate in all spheres of an independent Bougainville.
- Women are the peacemakers and reconciliators (and this should be recognised).
- Women's positions and roles are inherited and therefore should be respected.
- The Constitution must recognise women's customary positions.

Leadership

- Develop cooperative communities.
- Select, elect and support honest, educated, committed leaders, who listen, communicate and understand hospitality.

Unity

- Support well-established structures of traditional and local authority, providing a strong base for networking among communities.
- Fellowship between different organisations (women, youth, chiefs, schools, cultural groups, sporting groups) and between church denominations.

In honour of the next generation

We are reminded of why we want to get things right this time: we need to guarantee that our children never have to experience what we have suffered.



Rosemarie Dikaung reports back from a workshop to the BWPF Conference, Tavatava, April 2003.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Editor / Author: Josephine Tankunani Sirivi

Josephine, wife of the BRA General, Sam Kauona, was an innovative young wife and mother who supported her family with good nutrition under wartime conditions, producing her own rice and learning traditional bush craft from elders behind the medical and economic blockade. Josephine organised the Navuia Women's Group in her local area of Central Bougainville to help underprivileged families. She is the founding president of the BWPF and was a representative at the Burnham I Peace Talks in July 1997 in New Zealand and subsequently led the BIG/BRA women's delegation to the Lincoln Leaders Negotiations in January 1998. She went on to represent Bougainville women and the BWPF at the cease-fire negotiations in Bougainville on board the *HMAS Tobruk* in April 1998. She was then appointed a member of the Bougainville Peace Process Consultative Committee.

In May 1999, Josie was one of five women in a Bougainville delegation to The Hague Appeal for Peace World Peace Conference in The Netherlands. While studying in New Zealand from 1999 to 2000, she represented Bougainville and BWPF at Pacific, UN and international conferences relating to indigenous issues, politics and the peace process on Bougainville.

Josephine completed her studies in Business Computing at the Universal College of Learning in Palmerston, New Zealand, and has returned to Bougainville with a vision to build an Open Learning Centre for capacity training in the reconstruction of Bougainville.

Editor / Author: Marilyn Taleo Havini

Australian-born Marilyn married Bougainvillean Moses Havini in Bougainville in 1971 after being formally adopted in a traditional assembly by Buka chiefs in 1970 and given the name Taleo. After 32 years as a member of the Nakas Clan of Tanreki, Marilyn has come to regard the village as her true home. She is widely recognised in Bougainville as the artist who designed the flag that won a Bougainville-wide competition and was raised on 1 September, 1975, by the Republic of the North Solomons in the first struggle for independence. Her exhibitions, murals and public commissions in oils and

pastels portray a unique insight into Bougainville culture. Many community governments, as well as the former Bougainville Cultural Centre, North Solomons Provincial Government, Bougainville Development Corporation and Viles Tok Ples Skuls have sought Marilyn's illustrations for their official flags, designs and booklets.

An artist and schoolteacher, Marilyn has taught visual arts to many Bougainvilleans in the past 30 years at the Port Moresby Teachers College and in Bougainville at Hutjena, Arawa and North Solomons National High Schools. Marilyn was principal of the Arawa National Preschools for seven years after developing several church playgroups in Arawa.

Marilyn was a founding member of the Bougainville Women's Association in 1972 and a treasurer in the reconstituted North Solomons Women's Council.

In Australia, Marilyn and her family have become activists as members of the BFM, participating in many conferences and human rights forums for Bougainville. With the BFM, she has published a two-volume compilation of human-rights abuses known as 'Marilyn's List'. Marilyn has represented Bougainville at many international conferences and forums; notable among these are the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria, in June 1993, and various preparatory meetings for Bougainville peace negotiations including the Cairns Peace Talks in December 1995 and the Burnham I and Lincoln Peace Talks in New Zealand. Marilyn was appointed to the BIG Secretariat Technical Team for these peace talks and the Peace Process Consultative Committee 1997–99. BWPF appointed her as its overseas coordinator at the time of the group's formation in 1998 and in this capacity she has worked to assist Bougainville women to train, lead, travel and represent their people in Bougainville and internationally.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Rosemarie Dikaung

Rosemarie has served the BWPF since its foundation. She is from Central Bougainville and survived life behind the blockade throughout the war years from 1988 to the cease-fire in 1998. Rosemarie was elected secretary to the BWPF and was selected on several occasions to represent Bougainville women overseas at international forums, including the Beijing +5 Pacific Forum at Sydney University in 2000 and the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. Rosemarie has worked hard to establish the BWPF office in Arawa and has taken particular interest in issues of human rights and the environment. She trained at a summer school at the University of New South Wales School of Librarianship to enable her to manage the office and the database of human rights abuses that Marilyn had collated for the BIG. Rosemarie trained in the Diplomacy Training Program for NGOs in Darwin in 2001. In 2002, Rosemarie began employment with Barclay QCCP (Queensland Consultative Project Partners) working for the Bougainville Trunk Road Maintenance Project. She continues to serve the BWPF by coordinating the Bougainville Indigenous Environmental Watch program.

Sr Lorraine Garasu

Sister Lorraine is from the congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth of the Diocese of Bougainville. She lives at Chabai in North Bougainville but her office with the BICWF is near Buka at Ieta village, Buka Passage. Sr Lorraine was a co-founder and planning committee member of the BICWF in Arawa, in August 1996, with the theme 'In search of Genuine Peace and Reconciliation'.

Sr Lorraine completed her training and religious studies at Xavier Institute in Port Moresby, PNG, in spiritual and social development programs and self-reliance projects. From 1988 to 1992, she also helped train young women entering the religious life. When the blockade began, Sr Lorraine became a facilitator for the women who were negotiating peace and services for the people with the BRA. She has a special concern for justice and human rights issues. Sr Lorraine bravely negotiated with the security forces and all government authorities on issues such as safety, medical emergencies and women's livelihoods throughout the duration of the conflict.

She represented religious women of PNG and the Solomon Islands at a conference in the Philippines in 1992 on the self-environment of women. She also represented the Catholic women of the Diocese of Bougainville at the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations conference in 1996 in Canberra. Since her participation at the Burnham I and Lincoln Peace Talks for Bougainville in New Zealand, Sr Lorraine has travelled internationally to gain support to implement literacy programs in West Bougainville and maintain a women's office at Buka Passage, which services women throughout Bougainville under the auspices of the BICWF.

Vikki John

Vikki is an Australian-born member of the BFM. Born and raised in the industrial city of Wollongong, Vikki became aware of the Bougainville copper mine and the struggle of indigenous people against multinational corporations in the early 1980s but was not part of the Bougainville struggle until 1993. While supporting Aboriginal land rights at a protest against the American spy base at Nurrungar in the South Australian desert, Vikki met Marilyn and Moses Havini. She has been an active member of the BFM. Vikki has managed to work full-time as well as coordinating the BFM Australia-wide and internationally and providing daily Bougainville news updates. She is a part-time student in Humanities at the University of Technology, Sydney, and tends to spend her holidays travelling to Bougainville, the Solomons or attending forums and conferences in Australia and meeting peace activists overseas.

Lucy Madoi

Lucy is from the inland area of Kongara No.2 in Central Bougainville, where she lived in the mountain ranges during the war. She is a resourceful mother of four children and became a stalwart supporter of BWPF and Josie's efforts to build a women's political independence movement. Lucy attended the Bougainville Peace Talks at Lincoln in

New Zealand as a nominated representative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and subsequently became a founding member of the BWPF. During the peace process, Lucy and her family relocated from the mountains to Porobere in the lowlands near Koromira. She was elected Vice-President then President of the BWPF when Josie had to travel abroad. Lucy led a team of women to The Netherlands in 2000 for The Hague Appeal for Peace and later represented Bougainville women at a World Vision Conference on Child Soldiers in Melbourne in 2001. Lucy was appointed by Central Bougainville leaders to be a member of the Bougainville Provincial Interim Government, which has guided Bougainville towards a politically autonomous government.

Sr Ruby Mirinka

Sister Ruby is the former principal of Arawa Nursing School, attached to the Arawa General Hospital. She is currently managing projects for the Bougainville Community Integrated Development Agency (BOCIDA), and was the former director of the BOCBIHP, which served an estimated 70,000 people under the PNG blockade of mainland Bougainville. Bougainvilleans developed the program as a self-help integrated community-based program to combat continued deprivation caused by lack of essential medicines, clothing, safe water supply, food and security. Under the able leadership of Sr Ruby and her colleagues, BOCBIHP became a community development agency that provided training opportunities, the empowerment of women and protection of the environment, and became the primary health care provider and education system. Sr Ruby has overseen the inclusion of maternal and child-care programs and HIV/Aids education. Sr Ruby has relocated her Honiara base in the Solomon Islands to Buka, Bougainville, from where she can facilitate the humanitarian programs and work with international donor organisations that partner the BOCIDA work in Bougainville. Sr Ruby attended negotiations at Lincoln in New Zealand and represented all Bougainville women when she read the Women's Statement at the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in April 2001. Ruby is a stalwart Seventh-day Adventist whose philosophy of 'learning by doing' has inspired Bougainvilleans to self-reliance rather than dependency. She is married with children and comes from Kieta, Central Bougainville.

Scholastica Raren Miriori

Scholastica, a registered nurse, began her nursing career at Arawa General Hospital in 1974. In 1976, she was appointed to Angau Memorial Hospital in Lae before becoming sister in charge of the University of Technology Clinic (1978–82). Later, as a tutor at the Port Moresby School of Nursing, Scholley became a nurse educator, having obtained her Diploma in Nursing in 1982. Her years as a Lifeline counsellor would prove invaluable several years later when Scholley began caring for Bougainville's refugees in the Solomon Islands, where she established a women's group to care for Bougainvillean victims who had run the blockade to seek medical help in Honiara. She also assisted her husband, Martin, in maintaining the Humanitarian Office for

Bougainville from a rudimentary set-up under their house. Together, Scholley and Martin provided a tenuous link to the BFM and to Moses Havini at the Australian Office of the BIG. Through this network, Bougainville had a lifeline of communication to the outside world.

Scholastica was evacuated from Honiara with Martin and their four children in 1995 when their home was fire-bombed.

Since settling in The Netherlands as a refugee, Scholley has worked with Red Cross projects nursing terminally ill children and is now engaged in general nursing as well as continuing to represent the BWPF in her appointed overseas role. She attended the Burnham and Lincoln peace talks and participated in other Bougainville peace negotiations. Scholley has represented Bougainvillean women at overseas forums and conferences such as The Hague Appeal for Peace (1999) and the UN Status of Women conference in New York (2001).

Ruth Saovana Spriggs

Ruth is an educator who, with the former Bougainville Government Education Department of the North Solomons Provincial Government, established the vernacular school system in Bougainville in the 1980s. Ruth is a former student of Marilyn's at the Hutjena High School in Buka, Bougainville. After completing a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Papua New Guinea, Ruth studied for her MA in Languages at the University of Hawaii. On her return to Bougainville, Ruth used her training to combat illiteracy by combining vernacular literacy with a two-year village preschool system. This pioneering work was so successful in Bougainville for a decade before the war that it was adopted throughout PNG. Ruth has also assisted Marilyn and Sr Ruby Mirinka in designing a proposal for working with the present home-grown infrastructure of volunteer personnel. Ruth is an appointed technical and overseas officer of the BWPF and entered the peace process with the Lincoln Negotiations in New Zealand in January 1998. She is currently studying for her PhD at The Australian National University in Canberra, Australia.

Marcelline Tunim

Marcelline comes from Vito village, on the eastern coast of Central Bougainville. She worked at Arawa Pharmacy before marrying Bernard Tunim, who was to become the Clerk of the Bougainville Provincial Assembly. They raised their nine children in Arawa until the crisis forced Marcelline back home to Vito. Events overtook the family in Vito as well and, with their children, they were forced to flee to the mountains to live in bush camps. In 1994, Marcelline became a medical evacuee to the Solomon Islands, having to run the blockade in a small outboard motorboat. Ill and pregnant, she became a refugee with several of her small children in tow and survived in nightmare conditions on the edge of the swamp at Gizo. In 1996, Frontyard Films found and filmed Marcelline in a small bamboo hut on the fringe of the industrial

wharves near the refugee camp. Her story is told in their short documentary film *Refugee Story*.

Marcelline's smuggled letters tell of life on the run as a displaced mother, giving birth to babies and struggling for survival in the jungle. These accounts are among the only firsthand materials presented to the Australian Senate and tabled in Hansard records.

Elected Vice-President of BWPF in April 1999, Marcelline was sponsored by WILPF (International) to The Hague Appeal for Peace world conference in The Netherlands and she represented Bougainville women at the Human Rights Tribunal in Sydney, November 2001.

Daphne Zale

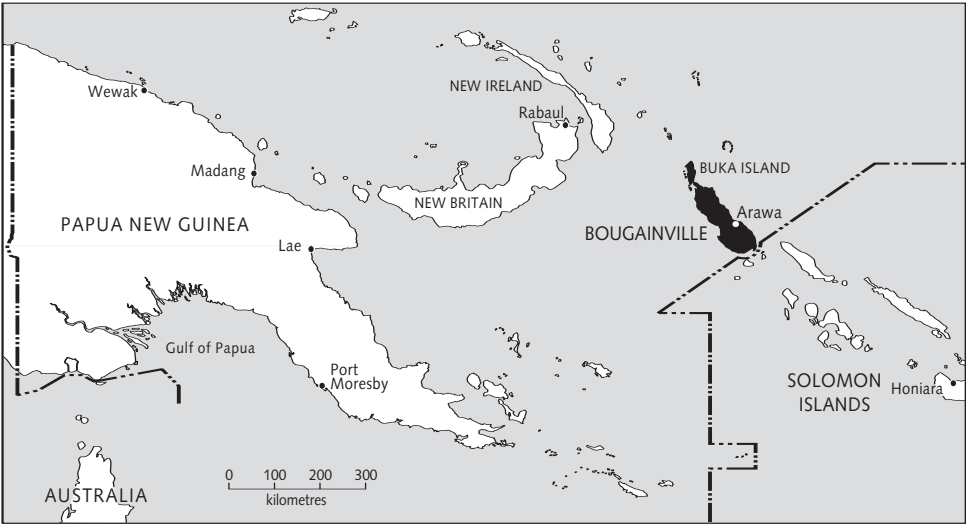
Daphne works in full-time ministry beside her husband, a Bougainville United Church Minister and, before the crisis, the United Church Bishop Elect, continues in full-time ministry beside her husband. Whether in Bougainville, where her husband was the BIG Minister for Health, or in Gizo, when a medical emergency forced them to the Solomons, they found new roles in assisting the hundreds of refugees who passed through their care.

Daphne assisted her husband in keeping news flowing to the outside world from behind the blockade by mission radio contact. Skeds from Bougainville to Gizo in the Solomons went to the overseas officer, Moses Havini, in Australia. Daphne's passion for the protection of human rights and the exposure of violations has been inspirational throughout the war. Daphne has travelled overseas to many international forums, including the NGO 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, and she has represented Bougainville women in Sydney, New Caledonia, Thailand and Tonga, as well as participating in the Burnham and Lincoln negotiations in New Zealand.

GLOSSARY

BCL	Bougainville Copper Limited
BICWF	Bougainville Inter Church Women's Forum
BIG	Bougainville Interim Government
BOCBIHP	Bougainville Community Based Integrated Humanitarian Program
BOCIDA	Bougainville Community Integrated Development Agency
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BRG	Bougainville Reconciliation Government
BTG	Bougainville Transitional Government
CRA	Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia, Australian-based mining company, major shareholder in Bougainville Copper Ltd
HABSICA	Humanitarian Aid for Bougainville, Solomon Islands Christian Association
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force (also PNG security forces)
RTZ	Rio Tinto Zinc
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
Pidgin	Often called 'Pidgin English'. A trade language developed during the colonial period principally by the Germans in Melanesia. It is a conglomeration of many languages including German, English, Malay and some local dialects of PNG.
Taro	Root vegetable that is the staple crop and holds ceremonial status for food in Bougainvillean culture.

BOUGAINVILLE AND ITS REGION



BOUGAINVILLE



ONLINE MATERIAL

In the course of preparing this manuscript for print, the authors collected a variety of documents that serve as a map of their journey.

The usual constraints that publishers face — financial, space and others — prevented us from reproducing the documents within the body of the text. The documents range from matter-of-fact accounts of meetings, to heart-breaking public appeals for food.

Facsimiles of these documents can be found on the Pandanus web site at www.pandanusbooks.com.au.