

Restoring livelihoods for peace in PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Lis Horta Moriconi

INTERVIEW / Rachael Hinton

Rocked by violence in the 90's, Papua New Guinea is today the setting of a number of significant peace building initiatives. Comunidad Segura interviewed Oxfam New Zealand researcher Rachael Hinton, who lives and works in the Highlands, home to 40% of the population of PNG.



**The Southern Highlands:
Highest levels of violence in
Papua New Guinea.**

rights, the democratic process, voting practices), a Violence-free Election Campaign advocacy project, and improving livelihoods.

The Livelihoods Programme specifically targeted young men, providing them with an alternative to violent election-related activities. Fifty-four youth groups received project materials including goats, rabbits, chicken, pigs, cement bags, and pipes for fish ponds, and the project was expected to directly benefit 3,000 to 4,000 people.

How do you pin point local security needs ?

Our community initiatives research involves men, women and youths to gain a broad perspective on security needs and on gender differences in how violence is experienced. We engage people affected by violence and insecurity, ask them to explore their own situation, develop their own criteria of risks and propose their own ideas of appropriate interventions.

What about gun violence?

Guns are increasingly being used in tribal warfare, criminal and domestic violence and political conflict. Some evidence suggests that firearms are mostly supplied by soldiers and police, financed, facilitated and deployed by politicians and senior public servants, although there is anecdotal evidence of exchanging drugs for small arms across PNG borders. Home-made guns abound, becoming more sophisticated, and firearms for rent and skilled marksman are associated to a new tier of criminal leadership. There are many accounts in PNG of human rights abuses being committed by armed criminals and police. However, it is important to note, that guns are one of a multiple of weapons used in assaults.

And other forms of violence ?

A survey Oxfam is conducting in collaboration with a hospital in the Southern Highlands shows that 80% of assaults involve the use of a weapon. Over 45% of the time the weapon used is a bush knife (machete). It has been suggested that the risk of death by any method in Southern Highlands is 100 times higher than in Australia. This is obviously not a good statistic and the strategy is to work to reduce armed violence and other types of violence by targeting the key triggers and underlying structural determinants.

Oxfam's work involves a number of programs, could you tell us more?

Our work consists of three integrated components, partner support, security and community initiatives research (SACIR) and livelihoods. We work with three local NGOs at two graphically distinct areas

of the Highlands. Kup Women for Peace (KWP), Community Development Agency (CDA) and Community Based Health Care (CBHC).

Country:
Papua
New Guinea

Actors:
Civil Society

Target:
Security and
Livelihoods

How did the women's group foster peaceful elections in 2007?

They used a three-pronged strategy: voter education, (focusing on voter

Women peace

MAKERS TELL THE STORY

INTERVIEW / Kup Women for Peace

"It has been a long, hard process, eight years of mindset and behaviour change," say members of the Kup Women for Peace, from the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Having grown up through three decades of tribal conflict, KWP leaders chose violence prevention, by their own account "targeting high risk youths and the high risk communities where tribal fights can flare up."

Comunidad Segura contacted Mary Kini KWP executive member, who took our questions home with her, to an area with no electricity, no phone lines and where water is mostly collected from rivers and streams for daily use. Her answers were written in collaboration with fellow KWP executive members Angela Apa (Chairperson), Jerry Kai and Agnes Sil, and this is what they told us about building peace in this remote and castigated region:

How do you see violence prevention?

One of our main aims is to reduce the outbreak and escalation of tribal violence through conflict mediation strategies and mindset and behavioural change. We want men in particular to understand the alternatives to violence, in their homes

and in their communities, and to realise the value of cooperation and coexistence. Our agenda is much broader than preventing or ending conflict. We are trying to address the structural causes of conflict, and the relationships to other types of violence, such as violence against women, interpersonal violence, and alcohol abuse.

Women are key to KWP, how do you work with gender?

We have big problems with gender inequality and human rights abuses. We take an integrated approach to our peacebuilding work so that everything we do focuses on challenging the gender imbalance in our society. Women face early marriage, are restricted in their movement, are excluded from formal decision-making, are burdened with a heavy workload and face violence in their homes. The law and justice systems, the police and the courts exacerbate these inequalities. Traditional leadership structures have also eroded and new types of leaders are emerging, through the use of violence, intimidation and fear.

Country:
Papua New Guinea

Actors:
Civil Society

Target:
Security and Gender

Agnes Sil, Angela Apa, Mary Kini, female leaders interviewed by Comunidad Segura.



Photo: Daniell Cowley



Female participants of a mobility mapping exercise.

How has this change entered tribes and households in KUP?

There are now 60 Violence Against Women committees within their own tribal groups. We conduct training with men and women on human rights and mentor young women so they can take decision-making and leadership roles, in collaboration with male leaders. All activities involve women, from community policing, community justice and health committees etc. In the past men have been hesitant for women to be involved in activities that will take them outside of their household responsibilities.

The livelihoods program with young men also raised a lot of interest.

The livelihoods programme is part of KWP's peacebuilding approach. We are doing it so that people look at development rather than concentrating on tribal fights.

How important was engaging young men for peaceful elections in 2007?

In the past, young men have been involved in corrupt and violent election-related practices which lead to tribal violence on a large scale. Because of this, we wanted to really motivate and engage the youth, to keep the youth busy during the election period. The livelihoods aspect combined with other activities during the election, led to a peaceful election period.

Aside from the initial outlay to purchase the different resources for the livelihoods activities all groups now take responsibility for their own activities. In some cases a group will pass their surplus on to other communities and tribal groups in order to help other youths who are starting off to keep them busy.

And the results?

We have seen real change in behaviour and attitude in many youths. They are able to concentrate on a project, their diet has improved and we see physical changes. There has been a real improvement in their overall well-being and living standard. Benefits of the programme are also reaching other communities who are able to purchase the surplus (such as fish, rabbits etc) and improve their own diet. Because we target high risk groups many are now busy with different livelihoods activities and they are no longer involved in criminal activities. In fact, some have been nominated as leaders in their communities, they are members of community justice committees. We have seen some young men really settle down, commit themselves to their family and develop their land for their own sustainability.