

Campaign Blong Meri

An Enews Special bulletin from femLINKpacific: Media Initiatives for Women, Suva, Fiji Islands in partnership with the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Buka, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

May/June 2005

♀ It's Bougainville Revisited in this femTALK Enews special as we celebrate the participation of women in the recent elections for the new Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

"Tenk Yu Tru", UNIFEM Pacific for responding to the call from Helen Hakena for women's media coverage of women's participation in this historical event in our region. It was also the powerhouse coordination of Helen and her team at Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency in Buka which gave me the opportunity to interview so many women. I would be remiss if I did not mention Monica Samu, who is a tru'friend.

I was humbled by all the women who came to us. It was certainly an honour to have met you all and a privilege to bring you their stories.... *Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Coordinator, femLINKpacific*

♀ Women Make History Again in Bougainville

The women's lobby had been successful in attaining three reserved seats in the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) - less than the women reps in Bougainville's Constitutional Committee had initially lobbied for. But as Helen Hakena of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency pointed out, the very fact that there were 3 reserved seats for women encouraged women to contest the elections. This does mean, however, that out of a total of 40 seats in the ABG, including the President, women make up less than 10% of decision making positions. Three seats were also reserved for ex combatants. There were no women candidates for the position of President.

Nonetheless as Provincial Peace Coordinator, Peter Sohia highlighted to femLINKpacific many of the women candidates also have the education as well as community leadership and skills that will be of great benefit to the province, whether they are elected or not: "We now have a high level of autonomy, this (new government) is not a local government council or a provincial government, and it will also have a very specific role of preparing the way for independence," he said from the elections tally room in Buka.

Sohia noted that there was a diverse range of experiences from the new members that were being elected to the local constituency seats, many are new to politics and many are also inexperienced in leadership, however he showed great confidence in the Central Regional women's seat winner Magdalene Toroansi saying her wide experience at national and international policy level would be very beneficial for the ABG: "Agnes Titus has experience in politics as a former member of the Bougainville Transitional Government, Francesca Semoso is articulate and vocal and Elizabeth Burain was a member of the Bougainville Provincial Council."

Laura Ampa has made history be the first woman from Papua New Guinea to be elected in the new parliament for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville: "I feel proud of being a Papua New Guinea woman, married to a Bougainville (man) and became a citizen of Bougainville, I am very proud of that." Ampa, today a mother of 3 grown up children, adopted Bougainville as her home in 1981 when she got married.

When Agnes Titus was approached to stand for the women's seat in the Northern Region, she knew that her knowledge of government administration issues, her active role as a strong advocate of peace and women's human rights, together with her experiences and contributions during the crisis would be put to good use if she got elected.

Titus' journey towards Bougainville's campaign for independence extends well beyond the crisis, as well as during the crisis, as she explains: "Bougainville is quite unique in a sense that we have been politically motivated from a long way back, not just during the crisis. I just happened to grow up in that era of Bougainville when we were quite conscious of who we are. Even as students in the sixties and seventies we were very strong in the Bougainville Movement. We used to call ourselves "Mungkas" it happens to mean black in the Buin dialect. It gave us a feeling of unity, of identity, of going somewhere, being different from the rest of Papua New Guinea, of being politically different."

In 1974 Agnes Titus began work in the welfare development section of the Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL), there too she found her sense of identity strengthened with the political awakening that was being experienced across Bougainville: "People were becoming motivated to find where Bougainville wanted to go and so in our history we became the first Provincial Government in Papua New Guinea on the 1st of September in 1975." That was the day that the Bougainville flag designed by Marilyn Taheo Havini flew for the first time in Bougainville. Bougainville also has its own provincial anthem, and all these experiences continued to strengthen the search for autonomy, for a political identity of their own. Having attained autonomy now, she notes is not the end of this journey.

But why did the 25 candidates only contest the 3 reserved seats for women? Were they not worried about splitting the votes in their region? Or perpetuating the notion that if you reserve seats for women that is where they should remain? Not necessarily.

Certainly there was some initial disappointment, according to Hakena, that women who did show interest in running for a local constituency seat were pressured to back down "for the sake of their brothers", but Northern Regional candidate Elizabeth Burain highlighted that this has been one way for women candidates to "test the water" either as an independent candidate, like herself, or with the endorsement of a political party. Burain adds that maybe in the next elections in 2010, women will be ready to contest as many seats as they can, even run for the Presidency, "Maybe then there will be a need for a women's party". Hakena adds that having the reserved seats was an important motivating factor for the women to set into the formal political arena.

Greater constitutional and pre elections awareness could have meant women may have also contested the local constituency seats, said Elizabeth Ora who stood for the women's seat in the Southern Region together with 10 other candidates. She pointed out that she stood for the women's seats because she actually did not realise that she qualified to stand for her local constituency seat: "(we thought) the three seats set aside for the women were the 3 regional seats. We thought most of these constituency seats were for the men."

In the report of the Commonwealth International Observers for the ABG elections (led by Fiji's Ratu Epeli Nailatikau) the team recommends the need to investigate the reasons for the low numbers of women candidates contesting the local constituency seats (source: Post Courier newspaper (07 June)

"Women flow with the tide. It takes time for women to come into politics," says Marcelline Tunim, "As more women are aware I am sure more women will come in to contest the seats in the constituencies. I really believe that if more space (more seats) were put up for women that would give them more confidence. Having only three women in the parliament, I don't really think that is a good idea. It is not enough." Women also need time from their work, they daily responsibilities to even consider venturing into politics, she adds.

Agnes Titus' experience during the campaign has made her realise of the need for greater political education to ensure more women in parliament: "I wish that women had understood that they could have contested the constituency seats because I feel that is where more women could have entered politics. But

maybe they did not understand that fully. While I am happy that we have 3 guaranteed seats for women at regional level I realise now that those (of us) organisations who advocate for the advancement of women, we still have a lot more work to do now to get the information out, get the women to understand that 'yes' you can contest the local constituency seat. They are not made for men only."

Titus also feels that it would be easier for a woman to manage her role as a parliamentarian if elected from her local constituency or district level, as that is where a woman can find her strongest support base. This was one the key issues she advocated for during her term as a member of the Bougainville Transitional Government: "I called for 12 constituency seats for women because I recognised that even when a woman gets into parliament she is still a mother, and it is hard for her. It would also be easier for her to visit her constituency."

Campaigning was not easy. Unlike the local constituency candidates, regional candidates tried to cover their entire region in order to meet with local communities. If you have ever been to Bougainville you will appreciate the difficulties. For the Northern candidates their constituency includes the outlying islands. Very few can afford the airline service or long trips via outboard motor. For the Central and South regions travelling obstacles include large rivers and terrible road conditions and that's just on the main route!

Ruby Mirinka's campaign was conducted over two weeks, and when she evaluates her success at the polls (she came second to the Central Regional candidate Magdalene Toroansi) she found that she gained the most votes from the areas she had visited personally: "So there I learnt a lesson that in the future that I must have good plans, for networking and committees, coordination, assessing and reporting. Not having that made it hard to reach out." Transport and money to mobilise is also important says Mirinka who had a hard time with her transport, which kept on breaking down: "At this time in Bougainville all our transport is old; they have to be pushed to start and that was another problem." In fact poor transport meant that on several occasions Mirinka was unable to reach the public forums for candidates that she had planned to attend! At times Mirinka did not have enough money to pay for the petrol for the hire of the transport. Three small fundraising events helped her raise the 300 kina she used to finance her campaign. With additional family support she was able to reach areas that she would not have been able to get to otherwise.

As Hakena observed, women candidates drew large numbers whenever and wherever they staged rallies or meetings: "People made time for the women; it was the first time for them to be campaigning like the men, to prove themselves; the "X" (on the ballot sheet) will determine who will get into the ABG."

So there continues to be recognition that women have something to offer, not just to be elected but to also take on new leadership and decision making positions for the new Bougainville: "We are doing it for Bougainville" said Francesca Semoso another candidate in the Northern Region.

The 25 women who have participated in these elections have led the way for more women to participate in politics in the future – who knows there may even be a women's candidate in the upcoming by-elections for the now vacant provincial seat in the National PNG Parliament.

♀We salute the following women of Bougainville who participated in the first elections for the Autonomous Bougainville Government:

North Regional candidates: Agnes Titus, Francesca Semoso (elected), Elizabeth Burain, Gladys Sam, Theresa Gani, Rhonda Siro

Central Regional candidates: Marcelline Tunim, Magdalene Toroansi (elected), Therese Jaintong, Genevieve Pisi, Aileen Bairesia, Magdalene Pookey, Ruby Mirinka, Joan Jerome

South Regional candidates: Benedine Kiraa, Monica Sioma, Agnes Nara, Margaret Himata, Dorcas Kamou, Apolonia Cletus, Kampo Lutua, Anne Rangaai, Helen Waikame, Elizabeth Ora and Laura Ampa (elected)

♀ Copies of our women's media coverage of the elections which are full feature interviews with Francesca Semoso, Rhonda Siro, Marcelline Tunim, Magdalene Toroansi, Therese Jaintong, Ruby Mirinka, Joan Jerome and Elizabeth Ora, as well as an interview with Rose Kabui wife of President Joseph Kabui together with their pictures are available from femLINKPACIFIC. Please email us your request and we will be happy to send these to you.

♀ What motivated these women...here is what several candidates said:

- ✓ At age 50 Ruby Mirinka took up a new challenge. On April 14 2005 when the writ of elections for the new Autonomous Bougainville Government was announced she resigned from the AUSAID funded Women and Children's Health project (she was working on the Health Service Support Programme) to join the brave 25 women who would end up contesting the elections: "For me personally this election was an enjoyable experience. Because I had vision, purpose. The purpose was really to address the needs of women and children."
- ✓ Magdalene Toroansi is from Taku Village in the Kieta District of the Central Region of Bougainville. She is fifty years old and retired from the (Papua New Guinea) public service two years ago returning to Bougainville to stay with her parents as she said, " to help them during the time they have left". But she was called out of retirement to take up a new role in the new Bougainville even though this was not the intention: "My motivation to come back to Bougainville was not to go into politics or government I came to retire from the public service." Since returning to her village in Bougainville in 2002 she joined the women in the North Naisoi Council of Elders to help implement the work programmes they had put in place at the Naisoi Council of Elders level and it was through her work at this level that the community of elders put her name forward as their nominee for the women's seat in the Central Region.
- ✓ "For the cord to be cut we had to die for it and I was one woman who (also) stayed right throughout the crisis. I was running around in the jungle with my family right up until the peace process took place." Being part of the peace process was the key motivation for Marcelline Tunim to stand for the women's seat in the Central Region of Bougainville. Tunim is also the former Coordinator of the Bougainville Inter Church Women's Forum (BICWF) and has close ties with the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom: "Before the Bougainville Crisis, Bougainville looked different. So I had a vision, a vision of a good society that is of a good Bougainville. I had a vision of Bougainville reshaping after the elections." Tunim shared a concern for the environmental degradation caused by the Panguna Mine. She is also concerned about the welfare of widows and displaced families and the need to address compensation issues relating to the destruction of property caused by the war: "The Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) needs to look into the issues affecting women. Many of these women suffered during the war and continue to suffer everyday. They are marginalised. I would like my government to look into this matter seriously because in our culture, if a woman dies then the clan dies."
- ✓ "I stood purposefully because I believe in developing the women in society especially in the economic side, in business" says Elizabeth Ora who comes from Paghui Village in the Southern region of Bougainville. "I have seen the women in the villages, they need to survive. Most of them are single mothers, the widows, most of them are poor and they earn their living through

subsistence farming, selling in the market. I felt (for them to have a happy life) they need to know how to earn money for their living."

The adoption of the new constitution in December 2004 signified a new lease of life. The time had come to bring about positive changes and development as well as a good future for their children: "I was overjoyed because I knew something good would turn out. People had been waiting for this chance. They want peace. They want law. Seeing all the rascals with their guns and knives, sometimes it brings fear in the women's heart."

And so without any prior training a week before the writ for elections was filed (April 14) she answered the call by three women leaders in her village to contest the elections. Ora felt the time was right: "I had given all that I had to my children. Now I could contest for the women who had experienced the life like me, but who suffered more."

Ora chose to stand as an independent candidate although initially she had considered joining the New Bougainville Party but felt daunted by the experience of the party members: "I did not understand them. So I felt standing alone meant I could express myself personally, as an independent person. And I can say what I want. Do what I want. Without the party stopping me."

♀ **Time to strengthen the Provincial Women's Council and her networks:**

In 1978 Agnes Titus assisted in the foundation of the Bougainville Provincial Women's Council, and today she agrees with Rose Kabui, that the women's council needs to be more inclusive of women across Bougainville. Kabui, who is presently Vice President of the Council would like to see more involvement of women aside from those already in the district councils in key decision making positions.

Titus says the revival of the council must begin with a comprehensive review so that the organisation could better carry out its key role of the political empowerment of women: "The Bougainville Provincial Women's Council is the organisation that could really be doing a lot more for women. It could be strengthened. It must be seen to be speaking out on the issues affecting women, as well as addressing the political empowerment of women."

She adds that the Bougainville Provincial Women's Council could also be working with a lot more organisations which exist in Bougainville today: "There is room for everybody, especially women's organisations, to contribute towards women's political involvement in Bougainville."

The Provincial Women's Council, she says, could be the important base for a women's caucus and lobby group: "Definitely. The way things are at the moment. The ABG is new and has such a mammoth task ahead, a women's caucus could set in motion mechanisms that can enable the three women's representatives to have a solid voice. We need one group, the women's caucus to ensure the women's voice is heard together, speak as one and present the issues to the 3 women who are going to represent us in the government."

She adds that the women's caucus could utilise the women's council networks to keep women informed of developments in their communities, so that they can take part in all levels of decision making, including at their local constituency level as well.

♀ Women's peace-building role remains vital in Bougainville

Women across Bougainville have initiated and conducted a range of peace and reconciliation initiatives and unfortunately in a number of the formal processes that followed, such as the Weapons Disposal Programme, women were not included in the decision making process, even if it was just in recognition of their traditional role as peacemakers.

Rhonda Siro who was an independent candidate for the women's seat in the Northern Bougainville Region reaffirms the important role of women in reconciliation: "We have those (traditional) lines, the clans behind us and when we talk, we've got power to talk and whatever we say, the boys, the husbands they do whatever we say. So to bring peace and reconciliation back the woman has to stand and talk. And that's when those big reconciliations have taken place, because of us the women."

Consider also the efforts of the women who organised an Air Niugini plane in September 1994 to fly into Buka in order to take a group of women to attend the Catholic Women's Federation Conference in Port Moresby. This, at a time when the entire province was totally isolated, planes were not flying in at all. And as Hakena recounted the story to me, I could imagine it as a story that films are made of, something that equates to the scene from the "Wild Geese" a film I saw back in the 1980s. But it happened. Here in our Pacific Island region. It happened without the gun fire and bloodshed in the "Wild Geese".

This was another initiative by Helen Hakena who was then the Coordinator of the Catholic Women in Buka. She was determined to ensure that not only was there a delegation of women present at the conference but to also seek an audience with the Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, to petition him on the need to maintain a presence of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force on the island because even though it was a form of occupation, at the same time it was also ensuring protection for many of the citizens.

Hakena had contacted her aunt who was working for Air Niugini and she convinced the airline management that the women would be responsible for the safety and security of the airline staff. As these negotiations took place in Port Moresby, women cleaned up Buka Airport and waited for the plane.

The first plane arrived on a reconnaissance mission. It circled Buka Airport and then returned to Port Moresby. And on September 8, 1994, Hakena and 105 women boarded the plane including Monica Samu, Sister Lorraine Garasu, Celine Kiroha and other executive members from the Catholic women's network.

In Port Moresby on the 9th September they presented their petition to the Deputy Prime Minister, Sir Albert Kipalan, and then were able to join other participants at the conference, giving them an opportunity to explain the situation on Bougainville.

So how can the incoming Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) build on women's peace initiatives? According to Therese Jaintong a candidate for the women's seat in the Central Region, and who is also a traditional leader, in order to sustain peace on Bougainville the displacement of women needs to be addressed: "They are all over the place and some are single mothers. Some are crisis widows."

Jaintong also believes that crisis related claims also are a very important outstanding issue: "Musket is not an issue. The issue is the person who (still) feels very upset over what they lost during the crisis. And for me, personally, I see that to sustain peace, to rebuild, we must (therefore) address the widows, orphans, single mothers, and to their related claims."

Ignoring crisis related claims could cost the peace process dearly says Jaintong who suggests that the claims could be compiled and categorised by a Judiciary Committee to systematically oversee the process which could document each claim from each district and put a cost to these claims: "So that people who lost

so much and are still upset, (to strengthen the peace process) they must be able to speak out and they must be told whether their claims can be accommodated by the Autonomous Government."

Without these outstanding issues being addressed, peace in Bougainville will remain a fragile peace says Jaintong: "We are dealing with the heart of the people," she said and there is a need to provide some assistance to the claimants in order for them to be able to return to their villages. People (still) living the care centres must also be taken back to their homes."

Rhonda Siro believes that rebuilding has to start at the village level and could be undertaken by the provision of appropriate powers and funding to local chiefs and the magistrates so that the outstanding issues and claims could be adequately addressed: "Firstly the policy making, the laws, regulation to the village level, to the Chief and the Magistrate. Because all the trouble and the disturbance we get can be uprooted from the village."

Reconciliation is still needed at the village level says Siro: "Though we went through reconciliations there is still some tension at home, it has to be sorted out (right back at home)." Addressing the causes of such problems at the village level, Siro believes could also prevent "pay back" crimes which occur after a perpetrator returns from jail: "So what I am thinking is I want that power to go down to the village level so that the women will feel that they are safe because the laws, the orders, the policies, are at the village level."

Francesca Semoso a women's candidate for the North Region believes that setting up the new and legitimate government is the first step in strengthening reconciliation efforts as she related a comment from a campaign rally where a member of the audience called for a reconciliation ceremony that would involve leaders such as Joseph Kabui, John Momis and Francis Ona: "The time is right now," she said, "Let this (new) government work with the women again, and say there still needs to be reconciliation carried out again amongst factions, families, and amongst the top leaders in Bougainville, give it back to the women again to spearhead."

Laura Ampa agrees that it is unified leadership which will help sustain peace in Bougainville and also ensure a full realisation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement says Ampa: "The leaders must stand together. Development must be built on peace and unity," she says. Ampa is concerned at community level of the need to continue with the weapons disposal programme. Law and order must also remain a top priority of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG): "The leaders must talk about the weapons (that have not been handed in)," she said

Agnes Titus is hopeful that the ABG will continue to consult and involve women in decision making and the implementation of peace initiatives: "I think if the ABG is really interested in maintaining peace they should recognise women and their participation in the peace process, they must also acknowledge that women are co-peacemakers. Our people know it because being a Bougainvillean person today means you talk about the land, kinship, the matrilineal system. (So) the government must recognise and continue to consult the women, continue to use the women in all the peace initiatives, Because here in Bougainville, you tie the land to the woman and many times conflicts arise over land, but who is the land, it is the woman who is part of the land."

After all, as Semoso, Titus, Siro and Jaintong, as well as Ampa believe, they are all Bougainvilleans working together, for Bougainville, women continue to have a vital role in sustaining peace in the new Autonomous Region of Bougainville

Understanding Reconciliation in Bougainville

Source: ...as Mothers of the Land: The birth of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom, editors Josephine Taheo Sirivi and Marilyn Taheo Sirivi, published by Pandanus Books 2004

Peacemaking has always been a part of a 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 beetle 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 families, clan or villages, after a dispute. Because the reconciliation process is a tried and true part of Bougainville 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 balances to the community. It is a method that has been developed over centuries of experience and allows for all those feelings of hurt and pain to be worked through and ensure 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 the 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 in 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.

About the writer: Josephine, wife of the BRA General, Sam Kauona, was an innovative wife and mother who supported her family with good nutrition under wartime conditions, producing her own rice and learning 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 the under privileged families. She is the founding president of the Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom (BWPF) and was a representative at the Burnham I Peace Talks in July 1997 in New Zealand and subsequently led the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG)/Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) women's delegation to the Lincoln Leaders Negotiations in January 1998. She went on to represent Bougainvillean 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.

♀ Think Macro and Micro say women

The key issue for the ABG according to Magdalene Toroansi is self-reliance, not just economic self reliance but developing human resources to assist in the province's economic growth: "Bougainville is a richly resourced island. However, I do also think that we do need to have an economic system that will kick start the Bougainville economy because unless we have income the government system cannot work and we need an efficient government system."

The all important human resources skills bank could assist in the initial development of small to medium scale industries with existing natural resources, which could then be expanded and up-scaled: "Areas that I feel the economy could start with include small and medium scale as well as eco-based tourism."

This would be great news for regional candidate for the South, Elizabeth Ora, who believes small business enterprise is important for women's and community based economic empowerment: "I stood purposefully because I believe in developing the women in society especially in the economic side, in business" says Elizabeth Ora who comes from Paghui Village in the Southern region of Bougainville. "I have seen the women in the villages, they need to survive. Most of them are single mothers, the widows, most of them are poor and they earn their living through subsistence farming, selling in the market. I felt (for them to have a happy life) they need to know how to earn money for their living."

Following the crisis, Ora says, people are desperate for money and so she recognises the need to assist women in their local communities to become self sufficient, to be able to pay for school fees and other needs, rather than asking for handouts and financial assistance from their local MPs.

Elizabeth Ora is hoping that the new Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) will put policies in place to assist micro enterprise and small business development. The ABG, she says, must ensure also that policies are communicated to the village level, in a way that it is understood by the women and young women who have not had the advantage of formal education. The policy must be transformed into practical assistance at the village level through the delivery of appropriate training, she says.

According to Agnes Titus, the ABG also has to put legislation and policies in place not just for the next five years, but ensure that the legislative framework and arms of government will provide the right political environment in the lead up to the referendum on independence, and this cannot happen, she insists, without taking into account women's human rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, titled Women, Peace and Security, and so during her campaign she ensured that she educated people in the Northern region of the immediate role of the ABG: " (I told them) any government in the world has three main functions. The first is to legislate. The second one is to out in place a mechanism for the economy and the third is set in place a judicial system. The ABG has not got any of these yet and that is what it is going to do." As legislation is put in place, Titus says the ABG must ensure compliance with international law, especially to ensure the protection of women and children's human rights. Bougainville, she says, must incorporate international conventions and commitments not just for the immediate future, but also to earn a respected place in the international community, when the time is right. This means ensuring the protection as well as the promotion of women's human rights: "Because in Bougainville today, there is still so much (all forms of) violence against women and for Bougainville in 15 years time when we know we are going to have the referendum for independence, we should have in place laws that comply with international standards, and that is where CEDAW comes in."

During her term in parliament, Laura Ampa would also like to see policies that will protect mothers and their children from all forms of violence and also teach them how to sustain their livelihood: "Educate women through literacy programmes. Most women, most crisis mothers (those who got married during the crisis) are illiterate, they cannot read and write, and that is a reason why they cannot cope with their roles and responsibilities. We must educate them, they cannot read the newspapers so they are unable to inform themselves and that brings about problems," she says.

According to Ampa, in order for women to exercise their rights, they first need to improve their living conditions so that they are able to concentrate on learning new skills. She says that livelihood skills training will help bring about prosperity through self-reliance, as a way to improve women's status in their local communities.

And that is what Ora says would assist women to start small business projects. But they need to be trained first: "They need skills training, business training. Right now the women don't have any business skills." Most of the women in her region are earning money from very small scale production using local crops which are sold at the market.

Business development, product development, financial management skills need to be brought to women in their communities, through vocational training programmes. After the training, small loans could be offered to the successful trainees, said Ora: "Small scale business training can assist women identify what business interests they have," and this could be the initial start of developing local entrepreneurship.

Other women candidates in the recent elections for the new Autonomous Bougainville Government all agree that the revival of the once giant cocoa industry is the way to go if the new government wants to ensure that it will have the funds to proceed with the necessary social and economic recovery of this province. According to Francesca Semoso, Teresa Jaintong and Rhonda Siro, cocoa is the way to go:

"The biggest cocoa plantation in the whole of the southern hemisphere is found in Bougainville," says Semoso and there is a critical need to rehabilitate the plantations across the province: "The cocoa plantations, the copra plantations are in a very sorry state."

"Cocoa is the main economy that people are already working on the recovery of," says Jaintong, "about ten million seedlings from a European Union funded project are beginning to bear, so people are going for cocoa and vanilla."

Jaintong believes that the plantations that are currently sitting idle really need to be rehabilitated: "We must look at what resources are available and that's why I am saying the plantations are sitting idle and so the government will need to come up with a policy to address the issues of alienated plantations with the landowners so that people can work on the plantations." She feels that by assigning nuclear family plots of land this could also be a way to motivate youth into becoming part of a productive team of people working for the restoration of the Bougainville economy:

And what are alienated plantations? These are deserted plantations or estates that we left behind by Burns Philp and other business holdings when the crisis broke out, and Jaintong says the land needs to be returned to the traditional owners.

In Tinuput District which has a number of these deserted plantations, that is exactly what has happened according to Siro: "The landowners have taken control of the land down and divided it up for the family clans and they are working on the land."

However she also believes that without improved roads and bridges it will be difficult for women and those reliant on the agro-based economy to market their produce: "The roads need to be linking up to the where the people live so they can be selling the cocoa, copra and vanilla; because at the moment all these products are at home but because of the road situation we cannot transport it down to our towns."

And while she also agrees that infrastructure development is going to be as important as the rebuilding of the agricultural sector Jaintong is also mindful that the autonomy of Bougainville should also mean that the province should be able to trade directly with other countries and that this is one outstanding issue that the incoming government will need to address with the National Government of Papua New Guinea. Import and export licenses and regulations she says should be top of the agenda for the first sitting of the new government: "We should be able to raise our own internal revenue. Direct trade is the only way we can recover our entire economy," she says

Toroansi clarified how Bougainville would be able to establish an independent export system: "Under the Bougainville Peace Agreement, Bougainville has a window of opportunity to deal directly with outside bodies especially in areas like trade, development assistance, but all of this will be done in consultation with the Papua New Guinea government. I think developing direct export will not be a problem if there is volume for export, for ships to come here, it is only the paper work, the procedures that will need to be dealt with," she adds.

Reviving the cocoa plantations and developing a manufacturing industry based on cocoa, she believes could be an important way to provide employment for many of the existing unskilled work force: "Cocoa could be developed through local based processing into powder, cocoa butter and cocoa biscuits."

The copra industry and the manufacture of by-products such as oil and soap, together with butter fly farming, furniture manufacture as well as floriculture to the list of viable economic growth areas, according to Toroansi who also added that she hoped that the ABG could also harness regional assistance and cooperation especially from Fiji, for the development of tourism and floriculture.

The other side of the economic issue that will also need to be clearly understood are issues relating to the role of the private sector as well as taxation, which Toroansi also addressed through her campaign platform in order to educate the voters in her community: "There needs to be awareness by people of the role of the private sector that it provides taxes for the government to run the services. This is important for people to understand because the economy will be fragile initially and there will be a need to rely on funds (for investment)." She noted that at the moment the income generation capacity remains in the hands of a few individuals on Bougainville, "That is why we need to develop industries across the board, develop (new) entrepreneurs in different fields so that we have a stronger tax base and a bigger spread of small to medium scale businesses that will provide the required tax base for the government."

And is the mining sector still too sensitive to consider? While Semoso and Toroansi believe so, but Jaintong who is a landowner from the Kieta District is optimistic: "Even though it is very sensitive that is where the money is so somehow people will have to negotiate and the way forward is to talk with the landowners and maybe Francis Ona should come to the round table, and revisit the landowners agreement which is still valid," that is one way she believes that this outstanding issue could finally be resolved.

Meanwhile Toroansi also stresses the need for law and order, to enable economic growth and investment: "Sensitivity from outside will affect a lot of these economic developments. It will affect the perception of investors and buyers, of tourists, and I hope that over time it will diminish, and the ABG needs to be conscious of that and make effort to overcome the threats to law and order through good management of all the social, economic and political issues I have raised."

And so whatever the industry, whether at the macro or micro level, the women of Bougainville have something to contribute to all forms of economic reconstruction in the new Bougainville, as Semoso says, "we all need to work as a team because we need the money."

♀ If a woman is healthy...her family is healthy

Health care in South Bougainville needs immediate attention says the new women's regional candidate for the South Laura Ampa. According to Ampa, Buin District Hospital does not have a single doctor, the hospital does not have its own transport and health care is severely affected by the lack of proper medical equipment and drug shortage. She is especially concerned about the lack of services of maternal health care, especially when complications arise during pregnancies: "That is the main problem. In the last two months pregnant mothers had problems in delivery. First we needed to find transport to send them to Arawa, it was very hard to find a vehicle to transport them out. (Arawa would be at least four hours by car). When they got to Arawa maybe they then had to go on to Buka Hospital (another four hours by car and a boat trip across to Buka Island). So you can see there is not enough equipment, to help in deliveries, no proper facilities for them to use, so it is very hard (in the South)."

Ampa is bound to support moves by the Central Regional representative Magdalene Toroansi, who acknowledges the work of Ruby Mirinka, another candidate for the central region's women's seat who was instrumental in establishing the village health volunteers system during the crisis.

And it was this work which was Mirinka's motivation to contest the elections: "I have actually worked during the crisis, coordinating aid into Bougainville when there were no government services, total blockade." She was one of the few females regularly crossing the border between Solomon Islands and Bougainville: "The purpose for that was to keep people alive for this day that has come about, to happen! To ensure that people will be alive to be able to set up a government."

From 1997 onwards she ferried 100 crates of medicine, through the blockade at great personal risk, to keep people alive in Bougainville, because she knew they could not survive just with traditional medicines. Often she had to contend with the Papua New Guinea Defence Forces who were assigned to the border control area. The PNGDF knew about her ventures and she was on their blacklist yet she never feared the consequences of getting caught: "I never had fear, to me it was always an adventurous trip and because for me being a Christian I put all my trust in God and said 'If you want to kill me you kill my God in heaven before you kill me'"

She also set up primary health care training schools and literacy programmes, "Because I was concerned about the young people, the future leaders of Bougainville. After having brought in medicine, and organising the local clinics that were receiving the medicines, across the main island (she could not reach Buka Island because of the military blockade)." The education initiative grew from the initial health care work.

Mirinka's Village Health Volunteer programme continues today and has become a model for the delivery of health services to women and their families in their communities, something which the elected representative of the Central Region, Magdalene Toroansi would like to see strengthened through a more efficient health administration and an injection of much needed funds to support the network: "Doing (all) that I could see the needs of the women, and that love that I have for the people I could see I must be in the government to influence the policy," explained Mirinka.

She may not have been elected but her work has convinced Toroansi that a more efficient health administration system would result in providing the necessary resources for health delivery at community level, especially through the existing teams of village health volunteers who despite their numerous contributions remain at a lowly position rather than being given the resources and respect that is due to

them: 'They are not paid, they are called upon at any time of the day – midnight, early morning, rain or shine, they walk through mud or across rocky hills. These women are dedicated, but they do not get paid.' Toroansi is also aware that the village health volunteers have also undergone skills training to ensure a more hygienic delivery of their services and to also address new areas: "Having witnessed their working environment I have seen that these women need help. (also) as the people have expressed, the current health system does not reach the village level as efficiently as it should and my assessment of the current health system is that the bulk of the health budget tends to stop at the middle level and it does not reach the village level." Toroansi suggests that the bulk of the health budget should be channelled to the village level, to fund further training for village health volunteers, and to also provide the women, who are mostly mothers with responsibilities in their homes and food gardens, with a working allowance. This could be managed she said through the existing village health extension programme.

♀ Community Radio an important Key to Keeping Communities Informed

Every Thursday evening, people across Bougainville (well those who have access to radios) tune in to Helen Hakena 20 minute programme on Radio Bougainville, which is the regional service of National Broadcasting Corporation of Papua New Guinea. Helen who is the Executive Director of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency is ably assisted by her very dedicated husband Chris, who transcribes interviews and also prepares the weekly radio programme outline.

"I use this programme to inform the people about CEDAW, 1325 and other women's and children's human rights issues, " says Helen, and because she knows everyone tunes in to one of the few locally produced programmes, she takes this opportunity to also reach out to men and youth, not just women.

And during the election period, voter education was added to the content: "I became aware that some of the women candidates were facing problems because of personalised attacks on their character, so I used my radio programme to remind the listeners that this is not the way to campaign and that they must think carefully about voting for leaders who were campaigning in this way." Leadership information is very important right now, adds Chris.

All the programme outlines are typed out carefully because the Hakenas have found that they get many requests for the transcripts from people who have listened to the show asking for the information to be sent to them, as much of this is unavailable in any other form.

And these transcripts also need to be carefully filed away as records of each broadcast as unfortunately Radio Buka does not have sufficient resources to archive the taped programmes, and so the tapes are often recycled: "It would be wonderful if we had our own small production unit so we could pre produce the radio segment and then supply it to Radio Buka as well as the community radio in Tinputz and also send the information out further for people from Bougainville living in Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul who are also starved for information from home. The radio segments could also be sent to Radio Australia for their Tok Pidgin programme," says Helen.

Radio Bougainville has only 4 hours a day to broadcast regional information and news and the Hakena would dearly love to be able to strengthen their current radio efforts. Ideally they would like to increase their on air time to an additional two slots, but this would cost them 140 kina. Additional airtime would mean that they would be able to share more news and information available through the networks of field workers and counsellors in other parts of Bougainville drawn together through the existing coalition of NGOs known as BACDA. The Bougainville Alliance of Community Development Agencies, is made up of the Bougainville Provincial Women's Council, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Bougainville Inter Church Women's Forum, Bougainville Trauma Institute, Bougainville Provincial AIDS Council, ADRA – the

development agency of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, CALLATN – the network for persons with disabilities, Peace Melanesia, Catholic Family Life, DORCAS Association and United Church Fellowship. BACDA's Coordinator is based at the Leitana office. Tsurumi Tatesin previously worked for AUSAID in Port Moresby.

An existing coalition programme is the Women and Children referral desk also located inside the Leitana office. A weekly roster sees partners of BACDA working on issues relating to violence, trauma and social welfare being available to address any cases affecting women and children. In this way, the women and children do not have to go to the Police Station on their own. As a case comes in, the counsellor on duty gets in touch with the relevant officials – police, social welfare or the hospital. The Women and Children's referral desk is a joint initiative of the Bougainville Provincial Welfare Office, Catholic Family Life, Leitana Nehan, Bougainville Trauma Institute, Bougainville Peace Melanesia, Bougainville Police Station, BICWF, the Department of Health and Bougainville Provincial AIDS Council.

The Hakenas believe that BACDA has the network that could facilitate a community radio initiative of their own. The ideal situation would be for them to acquire a license to use a radio in a suitcase, which either could be based in Buka or also serve as a mobile broadcast unit, depending of course on the logistics (while the roads and telecommunication services outside of Buka remain in a poor condition this would not be feasible at this time."

However, listening groups could be set up in local communities. They could come together to listen to stories about other communities and also hear information on a range of issues that the BACDA network specialises in – from HIV-AIDS awareness to the rights of disabled persons, as well as information on peace-building and guidance to assist in trauma healing.

This would be important during this new transition period for Bougainville. As the new Autonomous Bougainville Governments starts its work, it would be critical for the people to be kept informed but how? Radio Bougainville only broadcasts from 6pm to 10pm, access to the daily newspapers from Port Moresby is also limited and there is also a high illiteracy rate (including among young adults) and television is totally out of the question.

So what is on their wish list?

- a) Apply for a licence to be able to establish a community radio project
- b) Stage a community radio consultation involving BACDA members so that everyone is aware about the principles of community radio, the management systems and come to an agreement as to how the radio would function
- c) Strengthen their current radio production with a radio production unit (lap top and audio production software) and a good supply of CDs and audio tapes for distribution
- d) Equip teams of community workers with audio recordings kits to be able to document stories in the communities and at the same time playback pre recorded programmes to the listening groups
- e) Acquire a suitcase radio to set up initially at Leitana's office
- f) Train young people in Buka to be the producers and broadcasters of the radio initiative using the suitcase radio
- g) Broadcast a regular programme initially in Buka (as the suitcase radio is limited to a 100 watt transmitter) and ensure there is a regular exchange of information to and from the local listening groups

This they feel would be on way to contribute to sustaining the peace in Bougainville by keeping communities informed while also educating them on a range of important issues.

♀ What do they say about regional solidarity:

- Rose Kabui: "The women of Bougainville have had a very difficult life and we have missed out on a lot of the developments and progress that women of other Pacific Islands enjoy today. So I invite the women of the Pacific to assist the women of the new Bougainville. This is all new for us. We are facing new challenges and we have new lessons to learn, so I invite you to come and teach us, to help us, we can learn from you. We need training, we need funding and we need moral support as well."
- Francesca Semoso feels that there is an important need for the strengthening of regional solidarity, especially amongst women from the Melanesian sub region, in working together for peace and security and women's human rights issues in what has been labelled the arc of instability in our region: "I think it is important that women in the Pacific work together and Bougainville women going into parliament for the first time it is history in the making and we want the support of all the women out there; we've come out of one of the hardest things any woman would have experienced, any child, any man would have experienced, so we are looking out towards other women in the Pacific, Bougainville women need your help; whichever issues we push and it falls on deaf ears in Parliament, we need your support, you (can) lobby the support; I want all the women in the Pacific countries to be there to help us if there is a need ...emails, messages, to help us here in Bougainville."
- Magdalene Toroansi (on women in politics) "I think the Pacific women already have it. We just need to take that extra risk. And unlike me who was tentative, when I was first asked, having come this far, I have seen that there is a very strong need for Pacific women to get involved in politics. I think in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, a lot of women have already taken that step, we need to encourage it further. Bougainville is already following but maybe we need more women in the Solomons, Vanuatu, and the other Pacific Islands. Yes we need to be more involved in politics."
- Elizabeth Ora hopes that women from other Pacific Island countries would also be willing to support the improvement of the economic status of women in Bougainville especially in the development of micro-level and small business enterprises: "We should ask them to come over here to help us, see how we are going and contribute what is good for the development here especially for the women."

Production and Distribution of this Enews Bulletin is made possible with funding assistance through UNIFEM Pacific's Women, Peace and Security Project for Melanesia and is compiled by femLINKpacific: MEDIA INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN, a Media-based NGO committed to the research, development, production and distribution of community media initiatives:

femLINKpacific Community Media Initiatives also include:



femTALK 89.2FM a mobile women's community radio project;
fem'TALK 1325 A quarterly Women and Peace community magazine which aims to provide media space for women and peace initiatives in our Pacific region as well as increase awareness of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, titled Women, Peace and Security;
fem'TALK Community videos which are produced to highlight and support the important role of women's civil society groups and NGOs who work tirelessly to advance the status of women and girls

In 2003 femLINKpacific received the Fiji Human Rights Commission "TV award" for our community video fem'TALK Balancing the Scales.

femLINKpacific wishes to acknowledge the support of AUSAID, Canada Fund, DFID, ECREA, Global Ministries (USA), International Women's Development Agency, NZAID, UNDP, UNIFEM Pacific, UNESCO & WACC London, as well as the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights who have supported our projects to enhance the development of women's community media.

For more information about our work write to:

The Coordinator, P O Box 2439, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji Islands

Phone 679 3316290 Mobile: 9244871 Fax (c/- Caines Jannif Limited Head Office) 679 3301925