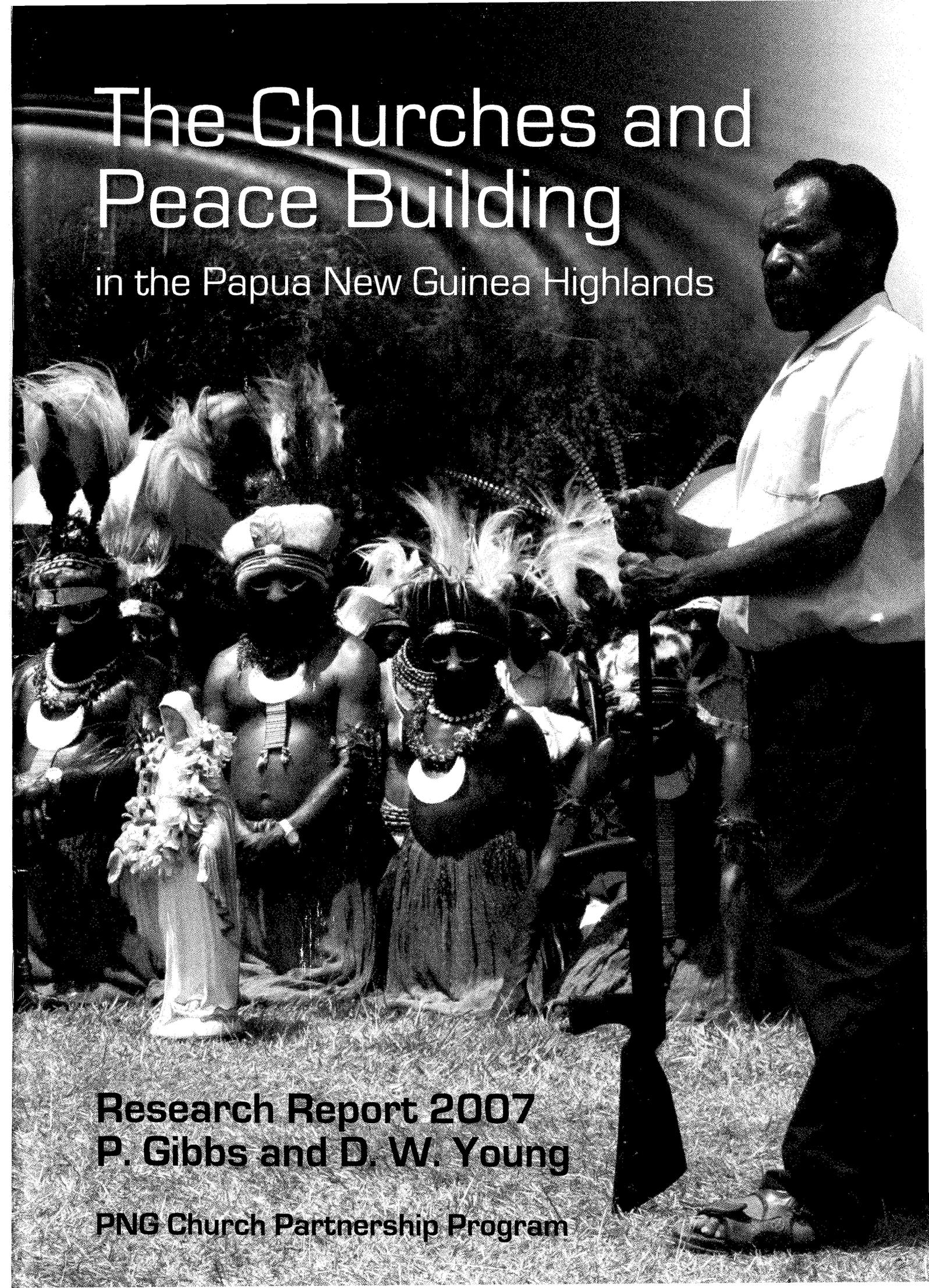


# The Churches and Peace Building

in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

**Research Report 2007**  
**P. Gibbs and D. W. Young**

**PNG Church Partnership Program**



# The Churches and Peace Building in the Papua New Guinea Highlands



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Clan representative giving speech at reconciliation ceremony, Par, Enga.

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# The Churches and Peace Building in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

## List of Abbreviations

AIDS – Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome  
AOG – Assemblies of God  
BUPNG – Baptist Union of Papua New Guinea  
CPP – Church Partnership Program  
EBC – Evangelical Brotherhood Church  
EHP – Eastern Highlands Province  
FBO – Faith Based Organisation

HIV – Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus  
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding  
NGO – Non Government Organisation  
PNG – Papua New Guinea  
SDA – Seventh Day Adventist  
SHP – Southern Highlands Province  
YAP – Young Ambassadors for Peace

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank a number of people and organisations for their help, support and participation during this project. They include Mr Bryan Cussen of the Church Partnership Program Secretariat who first proposed the project, the various Church representatives who responded to our request for people to participate as researchers, and the researchers themselves who persevered in the research despite the sensitivity of the topic and the problems associated with the elections in the Highlands. We also wish to thank AusAID for its funding support and encouragement, NGOs such as Peace Foundation Melanesia and Young Ambassadors for Peace, Caritas Australia, and the various Church bodies that provided facilities, particularly the Catholic Archdiocese of Mount Hagen. We want to acknowledge Mr Nelson Kasa (SDA), Mr Moses Komengi (YAP), and the Par Parish in Enga for photos. A special word of thanks goes to the people of the Highlands, for their hospitality and willingness to share about their experience of warfare and peace building.

## About the Writers

Philip Gibbs is a Divine Word Missionary from New Zealand who first came to PNG in 1973 and except for time studying elsewhere, has been involved in pastoral work, teaching and research in PNG since that time. At present he is research advisor for Caritas Australia, based at the Melanesian Institute, Goroka. He holds a post-graduate Diploma in Anthropology from the University of Sydney and a Doctorate in Theology from the Gregorian University, Rome.

Douglas W. Young is a Divine Word Missionary from Australia who first came to Papua New Guinea in 1973. Apart from the time he spent in studies overseas, he has been in PNG ever since: working as a priest; as director of pastoral planning for the Diocese of Wabag, Enga Province; as head of the Arts (PNG Studies) Department of Divine Word University, Madang Province. He is Archbishop of Mount Hagen, Western Highland Province. His Doctorate from Macquarie University, Sydney is on conflict resolution.

## Summary

The Highlands provinces of Papua New Guinea have a long history of tribal fighting. During election periods there is commonly an escalation of conflict. Many conflicts at other times can be traced back to election related disputes. The 2007 elections, though not as bad, still involved unacceptable levels of violence, and the repercussions continue to be felt. This research is intended to bring together and summarize the experiences of the Churches in peace building, analyze factors in what has worked well and also what has not worked well, and to identify opportunities for collaboration between the Churches. The study, though not exhaustive, covers all five Highlands Provinces.

Church responses have a spiritual foundation. Despite considerable theological differences, most Churches see their mission as including intervention in tribal conflicts as mediators, peace brokers and peace builders. Through teaching, prayer and fasting, the use of ritual and symbols, and various forms of negotiation, Churches work for the reconciliation of warring groups and for a change of heart for those bent on violence. Effective leaders have authority when they lead by example and when they live with the people and understand their situation.

Reports from the researchers have indicated that helpful factors in the Churches' response include perseverance and follow-up even in the face of hostility, respecting both sides in a conflict, constructive speechmaking, public demonstrations for peace, training, and the development of agreements that respect traditional conflict resolving methods. Humanitarian concern coupled with transparency in dealing with offenders leads to a just peace.

There are problems that are not resolved easily such as those associated with financial expectations, limitations on the freedom to vote, competing ideologies – particularly those associated with compensation issues, attitudinal problems and the place of guns. These and similar issues require cooperation between all interested parties, whether they be Churches, Government bodies or Community Groups. The study notes instances of very fruitful cooperation between such groups, yet there is ample room for further cooperative ventures.

The study uses a participatory action approach and concludes with recommendations for study and reflection, so that future research will be based on responses to this current round of research. Churches need to work more closely together, not only at the National, but also at the Provincial level. They should endeavour to participate with other interested parties beyond ecclesial circles. Serious intent will be reflected in programs, especially for youth, and in Church budgets – with due regard to protecting the spirit of volunteerism and self reliance of local communities. Churches should develop common standards that will guide them in working together with Government bodies, and in responding with prudence to financial inducements. Monitoring and evaluation should continue and be expanded as Churches increase their efforts in peace building, and study related issues such as the conditions of refugees who have had to flee from their homes because of violence, and the place of jealousy and revenge as causal factors in tribal conflict. The report concludes that despite laudable efforts to date there needs to be more communication and partnering between the Churches if they are to be more effective in peace building.

# The Churches and Peace Building in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

## The Churches and Peace Building in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

### 1 Genesis of the project

The Highlands provinces of Papua New Guinea have a long history of tribal fighting. During election periods there is commonly an escalation of conflict. Many conflicts at other times can be traced back to election related disputes. The 2007 elections, though not as bad, still involved unacceptable levels of violence, and the repercussions continue to be felt. The last national elections in 2002 saw high levels of conflict and destruction. How will the Churches work to ensure that this does not happen again?

Most Churches see their mission and ministry as including intervention in tribal conflicts as mediators, peace brokers and peace builders. Many would see forgiveness, peace and reconciliation and other developmental aspects of *promotio humana* as a natural outcome of effective evangelization. We have Church leaders acting as mediators in conflicts and the establishing of conflict resolution and peace building programs such as *Gutpela Sindaun* of the Catholic Church and *Young Ambassadors for Peace* of the United Church. Apart from this, most pastors would regularly condemn violence and promote peaceful behaviour in their teaching and preaching.



Reconciliation at Mendi.

Part of the purpose of the CPP is to help the Churches promote good governance by strengthening their proper role in peace and reconciliation activities. Accordingly, the CPP is undertaking a number of peace building projects, for example, peace building workshops with Caritas PNG, and conflict resolution skills training with the BUPNG and the Salvation Army.

This research is intended to enable further development of that work by:

- bringing together and summarizing the experiences of the Churches
- analyzing factors in what has worked well and also what has not worked well
- identifying opportunities for collaboration between the Churches.

The national elections of mid-2007 provided a unique opportunity for such a study.

The research forms part of the ongoing cycle of participatory action research in the CPP which aims to provide findings which will assist the strengthening of PNG Church capacity in relation to development activity and to provide a cumulative set of data on the impact of the Program across its three major development areas (governance, service delivery and institutional capacity.) In this type of research those who are expected to implement the findings are invited to participate in the research itself.

## 2 Stages of the project

The basic plan for stages of the project was as follows:

- Invitation to all CPP Churches to participate (CPP Forum, March 2007 in Alotau).
- All Churches agreed to join the project and agreed to the proposed self-reliant participatory approach.
- Series of 3 workshops (from 10-13 April, 1-2 August and 28 August). Workshops for information, training, monitoring, supervision, and feedback.
- Researchers were identified during the first workshop.
- Research supervision provided in the period between the first and third workshops.
- Anticipated outcome – a report to the CPP – verbally at the CPP forum in Lae (September 2007), and shortly after that in writing to the CPP Secretariat.

## 3 Methods

We aimed to follow a Participatory Action research method for this study whereby the people being studied participate in the research process. The research was not detached or overly academic, but sought to highlight elements of social conflict so as to improve the situation. The approach meant that local researchers were invited to take an active role in designing and carrying out the research. It was a collaborative process incorporating the diverse experiences of various groups. Through the three workshops and supervisory visits, the writers assisted in providing guidance and in so doing promoted a cycle of data gathering and reflection.

Local researchers were assisted to construct case studies with timelines that chart the incidence and intensity of tribal conflict over several election periods. They mapped social networks and alliances among clans before and after Church reconciliation activity. Formal questionnaires were hardly used. Rather, each researcher was provided with a tape recorder and this helped in gathering data from focus group discussions

and reflective conversations with individuals. They conducted interviews with Church leaders and pastors about theological issues associated with reconciliation, peace building and interdenominational concerns. Many of the researchers, being members of the communities they studied, were able to observe first-hand Church efforts in conflict resolution and peace building during the election period.

## 4 Researcher Participants

Rev. Harry Beregi  
*(United Church) Western Highlands Province, Researcher*

Mr Daniel Besi  
*(Catholic) Southern Highlands Province, Researcher*

Mr Nelson Kasa  
*(Seventh Day Adventist Church) Eastern Highlands Province, Researcher*

Mr. Canissius Cassy  
*(Catholic Church) Mt Hagen, Researcher*

Fr: Philip Gibbs  
*(Catholic Church – Caritas). Training, monitoring and supervision.*

Mr Labo Kamitu  
*(Catholic and Lutheran Churches) Simbu Province – Researcher*

Ms Lydia Kino  
*(Peace Foundation Melanesia). Southern Highlands Province, Researcher*

Mr Maku Lungu  
*(Baptist Church) Western Highlands Province, Researcher*

Mr. Philip Maso  
*(Catholic Church) Enga Province, Researcher*

Rev. Sere Muhuyu  
*(Lutheran Church) Support and identification of researchers*

Mr. Paul Petrus  
*(Catholic Church) Western Highlands Province, Researcher*

Bishop Denys Ririka  
*(Anglican Church) Eastern Highlands, Researcher.*

Mr Stephen Umba  
*(Catholic Church) Simbu Province, Researcher*

Archbishop Douglas Young  
*(Catholic Church, Mt Hagen) Training monitoring and supervision.*

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## 5 Outcomes

- Three workshops held successfully according to timetable
- 16 participants attended the first workshop (from 5/7 Churches). 11 people were chosen as researchers
- Later an SDA researcher joined – so all Churches participated except Salvation Army
- Investigatory visit to Tari (Young Ambassadors for Peace - YAP) but then no further communication.
- Research and supervision went as planned (with some difficulties – e.g. Sensitive issues, travel security, remoteness, secrecy, and people wanting researchers to pay for information)
- Nine (9) written reports received from the researchers
- Illness of Archbishop Young meant he could not be present for the third workshop
- Philip Gibbs presented a verbal report with PowerPoint at the CPP Forum in Lae, 11 September, 2007.
- Report jointly prepared by Archbishop Young and Fr. Gibbs for presentation to the CPP Charter Group.

## 6 Relevant Literature

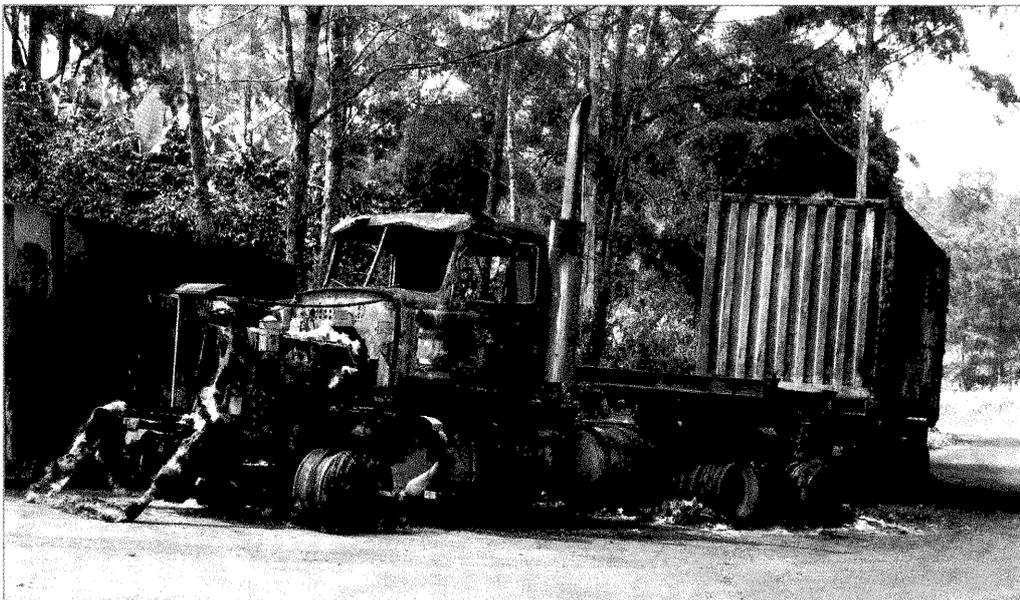
Our research builds on a great deal of earlier research on the anthropology of the Highlands and on Highlands' warfare and peacemaking. Here we can only highlight some of the more relevant findings of this earlier published research.

- The State (kiaps) and the Church (missionaries) have always had a role in attempting to stop warfare. Although many social researchers of the region blame the State and the Church for the loss of culture, they generally recognize the importance of these actors in bringing about peace, security, and well being. It must also be recognized that their interest in tribal fighting is part of the colonial and post colonial pacification processes (Meggitt 1977).
- Anthropologists are nearly always interested in inter-group conflict, warfare, or "tribal fighting", partly because they want to understand how a society functions. The ability to wage war was considered a characteristic of a "state" or a political unit. Thus anthropologists and other

social scientists who have studied PNG Highland societies have usually devoted some time to studying and understanding inter-group conflict (Knauff 1990, Ferguson and Whitehead 1992, Sponsell 1994).

- Reciprocity is the key to understanding Melanesian society. It is also the key to understanding Highland societies of the past and the present. Reciprocity can be either "positive" or "negative". "Positive reciprocity" refers to the types of give and take exchange that add value and enrich relationships. "Negative reciprocity" refers to the "destructive" responses, usually referred to as "payback". Often, these positive and negative aspects seem to follow a cycle (Trompf 1994).
- All Melanesian societies practiced warfare. Highland societies are said to have "persisted", or even "resurged", when others discontinued (Strathern 1977). Various reasons are given for this: the climate; population density; a pragmatic streak in Highland societies that encourages a spirit of "self-help" rather than using sorcery, courts, or other indirect means of payback; the decline of reciprocal exchange systems with their crosscutting ties that can reduce enmity (Knauff 1990).
- There are degrees of warfare and not all Highland societies practiced it to the same degree. In some cases war is "restricted" by rules and restraint; in other cases it is "unrestricted" resulting in genocide and occupation (Feil 1987).
- Sorcery and warfare are usually in indirect proportion as conflict resolving methods. Societies that use a lot of sorcery tend to use less warfare. Societies with more sorcery tend to use less warfare for payback or problem solving (Feil 1987). This is changing as Highlands societies rediscover, develop, and adapt their own sorcery practices, borrow practices from other places, and hire sorcerers from outside.
- Guns have changed everything. The conduct of contemporary warfare is not the same as traditional. Similarly contemporary systems of compensation are no longer the same as traditional means. However, there are continuities in background, causes, pretexts, "preludes", alliances, and processes of resolution (Dinnen 1993, Trompf 1994, Ketan 2004).

- Tribal fighting is not a game or a sport. Although there are dimensions of nobility, heroism, sacrifice, adventure, skill, group solidarity, etc., it is a bloody and deadly, tragic and wasteful activity that causes immense suffering and no longer achieves its goal of maintaining balance and order in relations. Most people don't like fighting, avoid it, and end it where possible, but they will not compromise issues of identity, land and spilling of blood (Clifford 1984).
- People will say that fights are caused by "pigs, women, and land". These phrases cover a large range of different types of conflict that might still be summarized in terms of identity and security. They are taken up by those social researchers who adopt an ecological theory of warfare, that conflict may be reduced to competition for scarce resources (Knauff 1990). Fear of shortages leads to competition for scarce resources (Sillitoe 1977, Meggitt 1977). However, there are other explanations, and one still has to account for serious warfare in areas with much less competition for scarce resources. In fact most fights today are revenge related, due to unresolved issues that then enter the political realm for a new reworking (Strathern 1993, Ketan, 2004). The incident that triggers a fight might actually be a "pretext" or a "prelude" rather than a "cause" which lies much deeper. One thing we can be sure of: there is no single cause (Trompf 1994).
- Warfare is associated with individual and collective rage against an enemy, especially by men. Are men naturally violent and therefore inclined to warfare? Or, since warfare is regarded as essential for survival, does this necessarily lead men to behave in this way? (Eves 2006)
- Leadership is one of the key variables that determine whether an incident will be dealt with by payback or by negotiation. Many feel that an effective system of village courts is the best means of ensuring that non-violent means are adopted (Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1992). In any case, indigenous systems that recognize traditional non-violent means of conflict resolution will be more effective than imported ones (Podolefsky 1990, Lederach 1995).
- In more recent times researchers contrast the "weak state" of Papua New Guinea and the "strong societies" of the Highlands (Ketan 2004). The State is seen as powerless to exercise the normal functions of a state while Big Man leaders use state processes, particularly elections, for their own quasi traditional patron-client processes.



Highway truck hijacked and burned to block the road during elections 2007

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As may be seen from the brief review of relevant literature, we are dealing with a very complex issue. There is no one view on the causes of tribal conflict, or the most appropriate ways of dealing with it. With these previous studies as a background, we will consider the experience of some of the Churches and their response to tribal conflict – which generally involves forms of peace making. Through peace making the Churches are contributing to the capacity of local communities to realize more effective forms of governance at the local level, while at the same time helping to strengthen the state for greater well being at the national level.

How do we understand “peace”? Paul Petrus, one of our researchers says: “Peace means having a good social relationship with community members. There is no stealing of people’s property, no domestic violence, no land disputes, etc.” The statement typifies how peace is seen from the “grassroots” level in the Highlands. In people’s life experience it means that they have freedom of movement and time and energy to focus on achieving “gutpela sindaun” From a Church perspective, “gutpela sindaun” or well-being also reflects “God’s peace.”

## 7 CPP Churches in Peace Building

The data we have received comes from various parts of the PNG Highlands.

### From Enga Province:

- a) Election related disputes 2007
  - i) Shooting of Bokan (Tinalapini)
  - ii) Killing of two Titi tribesmen
  - iii) Kompiam-Ambum disputes
  - iv) Sambeoko – Depao at Par
- b) Yakani Tambukini Gutpela Sindaun Movement



Map of Papua New Guinea, showing Highlands Provinces

## From Southern Highlands Province:

- a) Young ambassadors for Peace (Tari)
- b) Unjamap and Tunjup (Mendi town)

## From Western Highlands Province

- a) Mano/Maranyi (Lumusa)
- b) Kaiyema/Makuyane (Lumusa)
- c) Cross of Peace Movement (Ulga Ukupa/Kulka)
- d) Moge Nambka (Gumas) election related disputes
- e) Wara Wau regarding a plantation and factory

## From Simbu Province:

- a) Bomaikane (x2)
- b) Nauro
- c) Kulkane and Grai Tamagle
- d) Komkane
- e) Malauku and Dokindekane
- f) Fr Michael Illi's accident
- g) Komkane and Wandike
- h) Urrmanglekan with Ommauelkane

## From Eastern Highlands Province:

- a) Kamano 2 (Kainantu district)
- b) Ungai Bena conflicts
  - i) Napamogana
  - ii) Sekagu
  - iii) Kafetegu
  - iv) Kopafo
  - v) Bagahi
  - vi) Hofaga

Our report is limited by time, the number and placement of our researchers, the degree of commitment by the CPP Churches, and the extent to which our researchers felt safe in entering into conflict zones. It is not exhaustive and does not cover even a majority of cases of tribal conflict in the Highlands. Despite these limitations, we are confident that the study is timely and in studying examples of peace building throughout the five provinces at this time provides good quality information expanding our knowledge in this area. The importance of such a study may be gauged from a report which appeared in The National, Wednesday 20 June, 2007, as follows.

## Forty-four tribal fights taking place in EHP: Barekas

There are currently about 44 tribal fights taking place in Eastern Highlands province (EHP).

And this, according to EHP Law and Justice Sector manager Charles Barekas, is a result of attitude problem amongst the people.

Mr Barekas said attitude problem was the number one instigator of continued tribal fighting in the province and if this problem was not addressed, it would become worse.

"We have to make an activity plan to figure out how best to solve this problem," he suggested.

He said corruption, tribal fights, domestic violence and other social issues were taking place because of people's attitude.

He said in order for people to change, relevant bodies should go into villages and do impact projects to change such lifestyles and perspective of life.

He said people could not go on living like primitive people.

Meanwhile, Mr Barekas pointed out that of the 44 tribal fights in the eight districts of the province, Henganofi district alone had 23 tribal fights followed by Bena and Kainantu districts with eight respectively.

He added Asaro had three, Okapa (two) and Oburra/Wanenara (two) tribal fights.

The only areas with no reported tribal fights are Unggai, Goroka (harekano speaking people) and Watabung.

## 8 Church

In referring to "Churches" and Peace Building, what do we mean by "Church"? Are we referring to institutions or to people? In fact it is both. If one considers Church as a community, or "communion", the emphasis is not on office or authority or hierarchical structure, but on the community of disciples, each of whom as faith-filled individuals are the members of the Body of Christ (Rom 12:4-5). The Church is a community whose basis is Christ's personal relationship with each individual member, through the gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 12). At the same time, the Church has a universal dimension, not in spite of, but precisely in the variety of the local churches.

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Hence when referring to the "Church" being involved in Peace Building we can think of the Church as an institution independent of the government or other interest groups. The ecclesia, or community of God, tries to do for men and women here and now, what Jesus did in his time: reconciling people with God and one another and providing them with new hope for the future (2 Cor 5:18).

As a community of people we may see fighting groups as members of the Body of Christ also. Former friends, neighbours, and members of the same Church may end up on different sides of tribal conflict. Thus the "Church" may not be independent in a situation of conflict, and at times, unfortunately, warring tribes identify with different Churches and Church property is destroyed.

In the community called Church there are a variety of vocations and initiatives (Rom 12:6-8). We cannot forget the prophetic role of the Church. One of the oldest Church traditions is found in Ephesians 2:20, where prophets are ranked next to the apostles. These two roles: enlightened leadership and prophetic witness are the essential elements that Churches can bring to the peace building process.



*Children carry decorated cross to peace ceremony at Par, Enga*

## 9 A Case from the Southern Highlands

After the 1997 National Election a tribal fight broke out because of the death of an Unjamap man blamed on men of Tunjup from Wogia. The warring parties believed that the police did not investigate the circumstances of the death in a proper way leaving doubts about the cause of death. Rumours circulated that the death was election related. The fight was short, but then violence was rekindled in 2001, sparked by another incident. People suspected that this was revenge for the earlier death of the Unjamap man. The 2001 fighting was close to Mendi town, high powered guns were used and there were many casualties. It is said that people living beside the Mendi River feared to wash or collect water after seeing bodies floating down river "as if they were logs".

The Catholic parish priest of Tente in Mendi, along with the United Church Bishop also from Tente, tried ways to intervene. Both religious men did not go straight-away into the middle of the battle field. They started at the side, away from the fighting scene, tending to the wounded and the deceased of both sides. The frequent presence of the two religious men gradually won approval of both sides and they were seen as neutral God's Men. As trust built up both were able to penetrate deeper into the battle field. In the meantime the Legion of Mary, composed mostly of women from the Catholic Kumin Cathedral community visited the scene of the conflict praying and reciting the rosary. Few people joined them at first, but they persisted and the number grew, eventually including some of the fighting men. After many months of fighting the men were becoming hungry and weary. Then the Church responded in public protest as Catholics and United Church leaders, accompanied by other Christians, led a peace march with a statue of Mary carried in turns by those wanting peace. They processed up to Unjamap and continued over to the Tunjup's side at Wogia.

Exhausted by two months of violence, the warring tribes approached Francis Awesa a businessman and now MP for Imbongu. He in turn asked the

Catholic Bishop of Mendi and the United Church Bishop to join them in the peace effort. The group flew to Port Moresby for a peace conference. They met with representatives of both sides separately and then with them together in the same conference room. Members of the Peace Foundation Melanesia (PFM), an NGO open to all but with close ties with the Catholic Church offered assistance. The PFM were invited to join the peace process and to provide training in peace making skills and restorative justice.

Meanwhile the National Government through the Provincial Administration of the Southern Highlands decided to pay compensation for lost lives and property, and arranged for inter-compensation payments to the close relatives of those the 20 people (2 women and 18 men) who had died in the fight. This possibly reinforced a hand-out mentality that may be counter productive in the long-term.

The ensuing 2002 election failed in a majority of the electorates of the SHP due to violence in many parts of the province. Church property was not spared and whole mission stations were destroyed. There followed a supplementary election in 2003, and the declaration of a state of emergency, which meant placement of security force personnel in the province.

Before the 2007 National General Elections there was little action from the government and the electoral commission, however, Catholic women, Caritas, and a women's group called 'Meri Kirap Sapotim' voluntarily worked together to conduct awareness on Good Governance and the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system. They cooperated with different Churches, the security forces and the PNGDF chaplain. The 2007 election was accomplished relatively peacefully.

The strict boundaries between the two warring groups near Mendi have now been lifted and people have begun gardening and rebuilding villages. People are free to attend funerary feasts and young people of Unjamap have been seen socializing with the young of Tunjup in village during the 2007 election campaign. These communal events are a sign of the fruit of the mutual agreement for peace between the two warring tribes.

The above account of the involvement of Churches in Peace Building in a conflict situation involving electoral politics provides an example of many of the issues relevant to this report. Of particular note are the following.

- The conflict appears to have been provoked by the frustration and anger of having invested in elections but not winning.
- It involved a process that took many years
- Church personnel could intervene because of their close contacts with both sides in the conflict
- The intervention of women was significant in helping to bring men to seek to end the conflict
- The significance of neutral Church leaders in public demonstrations for peace
- The intervention of an NGO with experience in peace building
- The co-operation between Churches, some government agencies and security forces
- War weariness and the readiness of both sides to look for a face-saving way out.

## 10 "Causes" of fighting

Election related conflicts are a major proximate or immediate cause of tribal fighting. The Mendi fight (see the case study in 9) was rumoured to be based on anger at an election loss, and fighting in 2002 led to a failed election in the SHP. The fight between two sub-clans of Bomaikane in Simbu resulted from frustration at an election loss. The fight between two clans in Enga resulting in the closure of Amapyaka international school and the destruction of the Pina Catholic Mission was triggered by a murder at an election rally in 2002. The Sabeoko/Depao fight at Par in Enga Province erupted on polling day in 2002 in the struggle to claim a polling box. We should note that "causes" and incidents that "trigger" tribal fighting are not necessarily the same. A drunken brawl or a conflict during an election rally may only trigger a conflict which has its origins in less obvious factors such as jealousy or struggle for power, which may have been operating for decades. In these case studies we are not told about the long-term nature of the relationships and why the dispute could not be solved by other means. The fact that two neighbouring groups supported different candidates is already an indication of an existing division. The root "cause" can only be found by long term diachronic studies.

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10.2 Other "causes" include sorcery, insults, drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, adultery, rape, and gambling. Maku Lunga, writing from the Baiyer, describes a case where a fight began because of the actions of young men high on marijuana. (We note also a report in the Post Courier 14 September 2007, claiming that marijuana is the main cause of mental illness in PNG). Drug abuse was also identified as an exacerbating factor in the internal Bomaikane conflict. An SDA researcher with experience in several EHP conflicts puts it down to a struggle for spiritual power.

A stood as a candidate for Ungai Bena at the National Election; he did all he could to win support with money, cattle, food and other inducements. He lost in the election and attributed this to a neighbouring family not supporting him. He suspected that they had used spells and sorcery to cause him to lose. He blocked off tracks to that family and brutally killed a young man who started making a garden on what he considered his land. When three young men from the neighbouring family questioned him, he shot them and in chasing the onlookers away he shot a woman also. In the ensuing fight A's parents were killed in retaliation. The conflict spread as far as the Goroka market where there were a number of violent incidents during January 2007. A went into hiding but the week before the 2007 national election his three sons were captured by the Special Operation Squad members on the old Highlands Highway when the sons held-up the S. O. S members' vehicle thinking it was a PMV and an easy prey to get money. A then sent a message to the police that he would surrender if his boys were set free from prison.

The trigger to the above conflict might have been a land issue, but the underlying cause is no doubt A's shattered dreams over the election and belief that someone was exercising spells and sorcery against him.

## 11 Church Responses

### Spiritual foundations

Most researchers commented on the **spiritual foundations** for the Churches' peacemaking work. Tribal warfare may appear to be a problem of bad relationships, gossip, or sorcery and the like. However at the deeper level, it may also be seen as an expression of the struggle for spiritual power. Land and sorcery have theological connections. People see success in life in relation to blessings or curses from God or spiritual powers. Fighters will often pray before they go out to fight, believing that success or disaster in the battle field depends on spiritual forces. It is said that people may not fear authorities trying to bring law and order, but they do "fear" God.

There is a sense of assurance in the *divine endorsement* of peace work, providing a sense of mission and confidence that God/Holy Spirit is with them. This was very evident in movements such as the Mount Hagen Cross of Peace. Since it started ten years ago, the Cross of Peace has been carried into four major tribal fighting areas including the Ulga Ukupa and Kulka tribes in the Nebilyer Valley of WHP. Before venturing into fighting areas, members of the movement retreat in prayer to a solitary place high in the mountains to pray for the courage and confidence they need.



Defence force maintaining control during 2007 elections.



Fomu & Ifo Clan Commanders in peace ceremony of 'brukim suga'.

*Prayer and fasting* of interveners and continuous intercessory prayer are often an integral part of the Churches' intervention. Catholics, Lutherans, Christian Life Centre, and Jesus Life Centre members all fasted and prayed for a resolution of the Bomaikane conflict in Simbu. They did this separately until there was a move for combined ministry in 2007. A number of the researchers tell of the mission of "prayer warriors." Maku Lunga says that prayer warriors in Lumusa have been meeting on the first Tuesday of the month for the past nine years to pray for peace. Prayer warriors also played a significant part in the resolution of the Unjamap/Tunjup conflict in Mendi.

*Ritual and symbols* have also played a part. The cross is obviously an important symbol used by the Cross of Peace movement. They also worked for signed peace agreements offered to God during celebrations of the Eucharist. In Simbu, Catholics sprinkled Holy Water on a battlefield. A reconciliation ceremony at Par in Enga included a cross and a statue of Mary. In Lumusa, the fight between Kaiyema and Makuyane clans

was resolved ritually by the confession of sin, public reconciliation ceremonies and signed village /court agreements. In the EHP the SDA Church used flags on territorial borders and in battle fields as a symbol of peace to deter warriors going through these areas with guns. Later, flags were returned, not in secret, but in a public ceremony. In a special ceremony two warring groups from Kamano 2 area near Kainantu exchanged Bibles and carried out the tradition ritual of *brukim suga* (literally – to break sugarcane – and drink the sweet juice together). As in this case modern rituals and symbols were joined with traditional practices and symbols. Those involved in the Bomaikane dispute in Simbu, however, felt that a peace agreement without *brukim suga* was not an acceptable alternative. Two candidates signed a treaty at the Lutheran Church headquarters in Kundiawa, but only a few clan leaders were present, having sent word that signing a treaty without the traditional ceremony of *brukim suga* was not proper. Although the fighting has ceased there is still tension in the area.

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In many cases there were occasions providing an opportunity for the *conversion of warriors/gunmen*. Examples were given from Mendi in the SHP, Kamano 2 in EHP, and with the Cross of Peace movement in the WHP. The faith of the Church workers has been strengthened by some dramatic changes of heart. John Nepal, one of the organisers of the Cross of Peace movement tells how when they carried the cross into one community, the young men threw their guns to the old men and leaders telling them to go to war. One "gun man" or leading warrior in the Kimka tribe knelt in front of the cross crying. He threw away his gun saying he was tired of killing. He would rather be a warrior for Christ. John adds that the mothers in the village were filled with joy sensing that their time of pain and sorrow would be over. This is not an isolated case.

## Good Leadership

Researchers also stressed the importance of "good" (i.e. peace-making rather than war-making) leadership.

This is especially true for *Church authority*. Those occasions where Church leaders were involved were especially powerful, e.g. Archbishop Meier's role in the Cross of Peace brokered Ulga Ukupa/Kulka peace ceremony; and the role of Bishop Reichert (Catholic) and Kabali (United) in the Unjamap/Tunjup reconciliation, and the role of Goglime Catholic Church Parish Priest Fr. Peter Nulai and peace mediation team member Mr. Kolkia Bonney played in peace making between the Kulkane and Grai Tamagle clans in North Simbu. Several researchers commented that Church leaders must remain apolitical. They should not stand for election or support candidates because they "represent the Lord". Obviously there are others who do not see any problem with this.

Several researchers pointed out that Churches and Church leaders have authority because they *live with the people* and understand them. Police and government appointed peace mediators come to do their job, but then leave and return to live elsewhere. Church leaders on the other hand are often part of the community where the trouble lies. They usually know the history of the conflict, have a sense of the issues involved, and will be around for follow-up. They also have a capacity to motivate people to work together towards a goal without financial reward. Researcher Maku Lunga refers to "key" people, known in Kyaka Enga as *akali kuli trange* (literally "strong bone man"). One of these key people was Pastor Poka of the Baptist Church who helped broker a peace agreement in the lower Baiyer District that has lasted fourteen years.

*Poor traditional leaders* can be a source of conflict. Researcher Labo Kamitu relates how traditionally in Simbu when two clans or tribes were preparing to fight the leaders and elders from the neighbouring clans would meet and quickly try to stop the fight. They would cut tree branches and place the branches across the area where the fight was going to happen. Then they would gather there and wait for the opponents to arrive. When the opponents came to fight, the neutral parties negotiated with the opponents to find a resolution to the conflict. Now, few leaders are prepared to take such a stand. This is due partly to the changed nature of conflict with the introduction of guns. Conflict between the leaders themselves was identified as an important factor in the Bomaikane and Nauro conflicts in Simbu. In Gumas village near Mount Hagen, leaders disagreed among themselves and supported different candidates, thus leading people in different directions. Aspiring leaders made use of clients, "their boys" to intimidate others.

*Church leaders can also be poor leaders*, leading people into fighting rather than out of it. In some cases pastors have "released" fighters from their baptismal or "covenant" promise in order to go to fight.

*Wanpela samting mipela i save laikim [sic, lukim?] olsem taim ol laik i go pait, ol pait lain i save kam long pasta bilong ol bai pasta i ken beten long ol. Ol sios pipel beten na relisim ol long promis bilong ol, ol mekim long God pastaim. Bihain long en, ol i go pait. Wanpela samting mipela save lukim long hia long Lumusa na Baiyer tu olsem ol pait lain save respektem God. Ol i save pret long God. Ol i save respektem ol pasta bikos ol save olsem ol pasta i wokman bilong God. Ol i no save kukim ol haus lotu. Ol pait lain i save prèt na i save givim bikpela respect long Papa God. Em wanpela bikpela samting.*

[One thing that we appreciate is when people want to go to fight, they come to the pastor so he can pray with them. The Church representatives release them from the promise they have made to God (not to fight). Then they go to fight. We notice here in Lumusa and Baiyer that the fighters fear God. They respect the pastors because they know the pastors work for God. They don't burn down Churches. They would be afraid to do that because they respect God. This is really important.]

The fact that fighters “respect” Church leaders and Church buildings, but not the lives of other human beings, schools and health centres, must be seen as problematic.

The Christian faithful (lay people) can be as effective as Christian leaders. This is evident in the Cross of Peace movement, action taken by faithful Christians in Gumas, lay leaders action in election related violence in the Kompam-Ambum electorate, and Lumusa where Maku Lunga points out that Christians are part of the community that is fighting, they know local custom, and what biblical arguments will work. If local leaders, both traditional and government (such as councillors and Village Court Magistrates) can intervene and “*autim Tok bilong God wantaim*” [also witness to God's message] they can be especially effective. The Peace Monitoring Committee of Ungai Bena also includes Christian faithful (and no Church “leaders”).



*Approaching reconciliation ceremony Mendi.*

Like their leaders the Christian faithful can also be troublemakers and part of the problem, as in the dispute over the ownership of the Wara Wau Tea plantation and factory in the WHP. In March and April 2001 students from the University of Papua New Guinea demonstrated against the privatisation of state owned entities. The unrest led to the killing of several students, two of them from the Western Highlands. (A leader in the student's unrest was the newly elected governor of the Western Highlands – Tom Olga – who was the student SRC President in 2001.) The governor at the time, Pius Wingti seems to have indirectly compensated the clan of one of the deceased by arranging for the transfer of ownership of the Tea Company to one of their clan members. This was done without the consent of the local land owners who were also after the company's spin off benefits. The locals then rioted and took over the tea business. Those participating were all professed Christians and most of the plantation labourers, many of whom came from Enga and the Southern Highlands, were also active members of Churches located in the vicinity of the plantation. Eventually the Churches were able to help bring peace to the situation. They might well have been facing an unjust situation. However, it was the members of these Christian Churches who initiated the violent takeover in the first place.

The special role of women should not be overlooked, as they exercise their own special form of leadership, as in the Unjamap/Tunjup dispute in Mendi. We notice that this is the only dispute in our case studies where the role of women is highlighted. It is also the only case study where the primary researcher was a woman.

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Gun surrender at peace ceremony, Komo, SHP.

## Other significant factors

Other significant factors and **practical methods of peace making** were mentioned in the case studies.

An important quality is *perseverance in the face of initial hostility*. In a number of cases first approaches by Church members appeared to be a failure. They would face open hostility, or no one would show up to an event. When the Cross of Peace was brought to the Ulka and Kulkas, some poured scorn on them saying that they were from near to town and what would they know about tribal fighting! The first fellowship that night was nearly empty, attended by the local catechist and some mothers. At Kamano 2 in the Eastern Highlands, when fighting continued despite efforts to stop them, the provincial government told the people of Kamano 2 that they were finished with them: "You started the fight, now you finish it yourselves." The area was declared a war zone and even police did not go there. Nevertheless, the Church continued to work for peace behind the scenes.

Perseverance is required to enable peace-makers to make *follow-up visits and to have ongoing fellowship*. Fighting broke out among the Bomaikane in Simbu during the 2002 elections. Christians tried various ways to keep contact and follow-up on their peace efforts. After three weeks of prayer and fasting they accompanied their parish priest, Fr Otto, with clothes and food for those who had lost everything. The Lutherans joined them. When Fr Richard became parish priest in 2004 he visited fighting areas bringing vegetable seeds to encourage them to replant their gardens. Once he realised that drugs were involved, he conducted a drug rehabilitation in-service and the parish peace and justice co-ordinator would visit those recovering from drug use and lead them in peace mediation talks. This is just one example of the long-term integral nature of the follow-up required.

*Approaching both sides of a conflict simultaneously* is also important. Members of the Cross of Peace movement arrived at the Ulga parish at the beginning of Holy Week. From there one cross led by the Wurup parish Church leaders was carried to the Kulka tribe and the other led by the Rebiamul parish was taken to the Ulga Ukupa tribe. After four days, on Holy Thursday people with the two crosses led the two tribes to a neutral zone for Mass and the signing of a peace agreement. Researchers mentioned a similar practice of approaching both sides simultaneously during the conflict in Mendi and in the Kamano 2 dispute near Kainantu.

*Constructive speechmaking* is also a very important dimension of peace building found in many of the cases related to us. At Gumas near Mt Hagen in the WHP, people were reminded that elections are seasonal and shouldn't affect long term relationships. There was also reference in speeches to a Peace Covenant (see first paragraph on page 21) made with the first missionaries and that it would be shameful not to adhere to this covenant. In the election related dispute in Kompiam-

Ambum, speech makers, including Church leaders, reminded people that it was not an issue for their tribe to get into. It was something for the adjacent tribe and to enter into it would be just "like dogs fighting over a pig bone." Other leaders supported these sentiments and the Yakani tribe as a whole stayed out of the conflict.

*Public Peace Marches* are sometimes effective, as employed by the Cross of Peace movement in the Ulga Ukupa/Kulka (WHP) and also by Church leaders in the Unjamap/Tunjup (SHP) disputes. A community leader from Mendi relates, "Catholics in and around Mendi Township, Bishop Kabali of the United Church Tente and his Christians of Tente, and other Christians of Mendi joined in a long prayerful procession with the statue of Mary at the lead and with all reciting the rosary. The statue of Mary was carried in turns by those in the peace process march which inspired and gave us new strength and we spoke to our people to end the fight. Gradually there was less fighting and signs of war weariness and tiredness as the peace march by the Bishop Steve and the others began to take effect."



Former enemies hold religious symbols and approach Bishop at Peace ceremony, Catholic Church Par.

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Inter tribal conflict develops following certain patterns (Young, 2004). Trained peace makers can be *ready to intervene* when the war weariness sets in. This was recorded for the Mendi case and also in the Kamano 2 dispute in the EHP. After a round table discussion arranged by the SDA Church people expressed sentiments such as, "We have been fugitives in our own lands", "We want to live normal lives", and "We want services to come back and schools, hospitals, markets to reopen." What they felt after the cease-fire was something they had been missing for the last ten years. Peace makers can benefit from training because groups may use a cease fire for replenishment of supplies and ammunition as happened in some of the conflicts in Simbu.

*Skills training* is seen as important, as employed by Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) in Tari (SHP) and by the Peace Foundation Melanesian in the Unjamap/Tunjup dispute. Moses Komengi, who leads the Young Ambassadors for Peace in Tari attended a training course in Australia in 2003. After training in Australia, he started peace building training courses in Tari. YAP has close links with the United Church, but is interdenominational and inter-faith, including both Christians and Muslims. As Moses Komengi says, "Peace is for everybody." In preparation for the elections, at the beginning of 2007, the Justice and Peace agency of the Catholic Diocese of Kundiawa conducted a two week long Peace Building and Integral Human Development training for parish coordinators at the Mingende Pastoral Centre. Training may come through organisations, but local leaders can also provide training based on their own wisdom and skills learned through experience. This was the case with the Bomaikane clan in Simbu. The leaders realised that in order to deal with the conflict they also had to address other related social problems such as AIDS and drugs.

The Yakani tribe's stand, referred to in the second paragraph on page 19, is supported by *laws and standards developed by the tribal leaders*. They have formed the "Yakani Tambukini Gutpela Sindaun Movement" which includes all clans of the Yakani phratry (comprising some 6,000 people). The nine laws of the movement include "no inter clan fighting," "No murder or assault of any person by an outsider or by

a member of the community," and "No harbouring of wanted criminals." Programs planned for the Movement include an HIV and AIDS awareness campaign, promoting Christian values and reviving certain traditional values. A leader of the Movement explained, "When everyone or most people are Christianized and follow Christian principles, there will be less or no more rascal activities that lead to tribal fights which cause destruction and death. This is a work of evangelization. We want leaders to evangelize and show good example to the people living within the Yakani Tambukini area." We have heard of other Highlands communities in various parts of the Highlands taking a similar stand with community laws and standards for peace, self governance and self reliance.

Most cases seemed to support *traditional conflict resolving methods* such as compensation. In the Nauro case in Simbu there was intervention from traditional mediators. In the Unjamap/Tunjup conflict there was even compensation from the government. At times the Church has paid compensation to maintain a sense of fairness with the people and to maintain peace. A Simbu priest Fr: Michael Olimi suffered a car accident in February in 2007. Unfortunately his passenger was killed. The dead man's family demanded compensation of K150,000 from the Kundiawa Diocese. All the parishes in the diocese agreed to share the burden and just before the elections in 2007 parish representatives handed in contributions to the compensation. The compensation money, including some pigs, was given by the bishop elect, Bp Anton Bal, in the presence of the Provincial Peace Mediation team. In this way peace and good will was maintained. However, compensation may be used also as a manipulative measure. It is rumoured that in another case in Simbu people shot one of their own men in the crossfire and then used the death to demand all the ballot papers from their opposing clan as compensation for the death of their own man.

Another traditional means of peace making in the Highlands involves *inter-marriage*. Marriage payments (bride price) may serve also as a form of compensation payment. In Enga this practice is known as *kii pingi* (sewing up/mending) – the image is of mending a torn garment. Some women go willingly in marriage to "enemy" clans, seeing it as their Christian vocation to raise children in place of the men their brothers killed in tribal fighting.

*True peace involves transparency and dealing with offenders. It takes good leadership and courage to apprehend an offender within one's own clan. The case studies presented to us provided several examples of individuals being pressured to cease war-making for the good of the wider community. The Yakani Tambukini Gutpela Sindaun Movement has agreed not to harbour wanted criminals. In the Kamano 2 case after round table discussions facilitated by the SDA Church many villages withdrew their support from the initial "trouble makers", with the result that the trouble makers realising that they no longer had the same support gave in and voted for peace.*

*Peace agreements and covenants (or "MOU") were part of a resolution process for the Unjamap/Tunjup and the Maranyi/Mano (Lumusa, WHP) disputes. Fear of the consequences of breaking the MOU should deter warriors. Breaking a covenant made before God would provoke the divine wrath. One of our researchers from the WHP comments on attitudes within his own clan as follows: "They accepted the Good News to live in peace and harmony with their enemies. They made a peace agreement with their neighbouring tribes witnessed by the missionaries. Therefore, their children today still respect and uphold this peace covenant. Leaders always emphasise this when dealing with conflicts today. We should be a model tribe for peace and unity for the betterment of our society. Other tribes are following our footsteps and praise us for that. If we break this traditional peace covenant we will regret losing the good life that we are living now. Other tribes will mock us and say we are not fit to be a 'father like son'. Therefore, since the peace covenant chronic inter clan and inter tribal fights is rare. Peace talks are quickly made and steps are taken to restore peace and unity by means of compensation."*

*The Churches' good reputation through humanitarian assistance adds to its authority, as indicated by the SDA experience of donning their uniforms and going into the battlefield to retrieve bodies. Both the Catholic priest and the United Bishop gained the respect of both sides when they tended to the wounded and helped recover the deceased in Mendi (See the case study in section 9). The parish priest in Simbu demonstrated humanitarian concern by distributing seeds and conducting a special programme of community rehabilitation with the "drug bodies" and "steam bodies" in the community.*

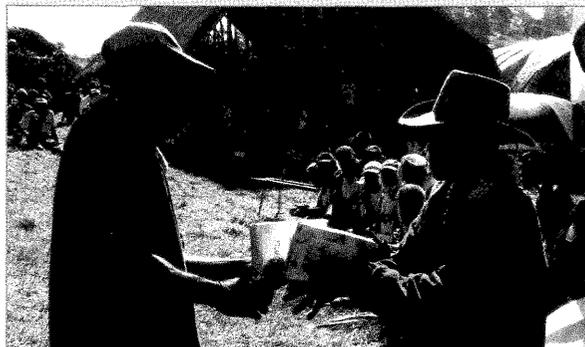
Television is a rarity in Highland villages, but many people listen to radio programs. With state radio stations frequently off the air because of shortage of funds or technical problems, often *Christian radio stations* are the only ones for people to tune in to. Radio was used during the Mendi conflict to keep people informed about the developments in the reconciliation and peace-making process.

Taking appropriate opportunities to *share the Word of God* and encouraging a Christian attitude of forgiveness without retaliation was also important. This is illustrated well in the account from the Kamano 2 reconciliation ceremony (Section 12 below).

## 12 Reconciliation Ceremony – Kamano 2

Thursday May 24th 2007, marks a historical event in the lives of the people of Kamano 2. Young children present will tell future generations what happened that day. Two warring factions made up of villages marched towards each other and met in front of the gates of the Kamano 2 SDA Mission station. They held each others hand and walked to the grandstand, where dignitaries from the Churches in the district, the SDA Church head office in Lae and Goroka came to witness the ceremony.

The two once warring clans stood in front of the crowd and were given 2 Bibles each. They took their Bibles and exchanged them with their former enemies. One of the leading marksmen from one of the camps asked, "Why did you give me the Bible?" He was told by the Pastors that he should leave fighting and go to Church because reading the Bible will bring peace to his life. This he said he will do when he gets back home.



*Ifo & Fomu exchanging Bibles to show accepting each other.*

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Then they brought in sugarcane and broke it and shared it with their former enemies – signifying peace. They were brothers now; they will share food, and live together in peace and harmony. The past has now gone.

Children and their teachers from the local community school at Onamuga came and spoke of the effects of fighting in their lives and how it has affected their education. Many of the students were in their teens, who should be in high schools now, but are just beginning their schooling.

Since May 2007, after the peace agreement, two people were killed. The village of the killers split into two groups. They suspected the two men of supplying ammunition to the other group. The relatives of the two deceased, who had been involved in the decade long conflict and who had just joined the peace agreement, told the village that killed their clansman. "We have all the ammunitions and guns, but we will not come and fight with you. We have experienced and seen enough of fear and trouble in our lives and now we want to live free lives. We have accepted the Bible and we have promised God to live and extend peace to others." They took the bodies and buried them. This is their resolve. This is the demonstration of what God through His book can do to those who accept His leadership in their lives.

There is one final step to the peace process in Kamano 2. Pastor David Arumbil, the district pastor said, "The flags are still there. The people want to take out the flags and give them back to the Church", but the Pastors in the district did not agree. "You will not give us flags in secret, but a public ceremony will be organized so that the former warring clan can publicly return them to us."

### 13 Problem Areas

Despite the important work being done by the Churches, as illustrated above, there are still many problems and concerns.

**Finance** is a concern for some. There seems to be ambivalence. Peace workers have a desire for self reliance; they have a sense of volunteerism and self sacrifice; and enjoy the independence of Church peacemaking. At the same time, they would like to receive more financial support, even from government. In some cases they appear to aspire to the perceived coercive power of the state. The Cross of Peace movement would like to receive financial support from the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen or the government. Young Ambassadors for Peace would also like to receive more financial help. Others point out that mediation requires personal commitment and a willingness to listen, not looking for money. There was one suggestion that CPP itself fund a Church sponsored gun buyback.

Researchers noted a conflict between **tribal identity/ commitments**, and the freedom to support or vote for someone from another clan. This was a factor in disputes in Gumas, and for Bomaikane. A high level of local competition reduces the chances of the clan being victorious in elections.

There are often **competing ideologies**: modern vs. traditional; Christian peace vs. traditional violence, "murder in self defence", rape cases solved by Village Court (as a property issue), extortion using unintentional behaviour as a pretext, both compensation and jail seen as double punishment, (as in Mano/Maranyi case in Lumusa, WHP), and the introduction of new "customs" such as *bel kol* (to cool down) payments in the Kompam-Ambum electoral dispute.

The whole culture of **violence** of which tribal conflict is only a part still needs to be addressed. In such a culture people turn quickly to violence to try to solve problems. Road blocks are used as an extortion tactic. The Bokan and Titi cases from the Ambum Valley in Enga seem to support the idea that those who live by the sword, will die by the sword. How helpful is this?

A fatalistic “**don’t care**” attitude seems to be present in many cases. Groups like the Young Ambassadors for Peace are trying to confront this, but there is still much to be learned as to how best to deal with this attitudinal problem.

The **role of guns** is very important. They were present in the conflicts in all provinces. They played a role in Gumas in the WHP, the Kompiam-Ambum electoral disputes and the death of Bokan and the Titi warriors in Enga. They were used for massacres in the SHP Unjamap/Tunjup dispute, and the various conflicts in Simbu. In Kamano 2 in the EHP, disarmament is seen still as the next step.

When a **pastor of a Church becomes a candidate** for the national elections it becomes difficult for the Church people to mount an awareness campaign. This is because people might think the Church is supporting and campaigning for the pastor.

In our experience with some CPP Churches it was difficult to rouse much (or any) **enthusiasm for participation** in our peace building study. One Church did not participate at all. We are still unclear about the reasons behind this. Could it be that in some cases the Churches are quiet because they are so caught up in the conflict that they are unable to step back from it to objectively look for long term responses?

## 14 Theological issues and peace work

Most Churches see their mission and ministry as including intervention in tribal conflicts as mediators, peace brokers and peace builders.

However the motivation and the theological rationale differ: A major difference between mainline and some other (mainly Pentecostal) Churches is the way they see traditional methods of peace building and reconciliation. Since the latter group tend to view traditional culture as sinful and even satanic, they have difficulty in accepting traditional means such as compensation, and prefer to stress individual conversion and repentance (manifested in supposedly “biblical” ways that might actually be “western”), rather than dealing with social factors and group reconciliation. Researchers in Simbu observed how some Churches take what they call a “spiritual” approach to conflict and warfare (principally prayer and rallies or crusades), while others include more practical measures to stop armed conflict and to bring warring sides together leading to reconciliation .



*Welcome for Peace ceremony EHP*

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One sees the difference reflected in attitudes to sorcery related accusations. Some Churches consider sorcery a form of demon possession and will proceed to a form of exorcism. Others take social factors into account, and while not neglecting prayer, train leaders to direct conversation away from sorcery towards more scientific ways of understanding death or misfortune.

We see hints of the difference of approach not only with Pentecostal Churches, but also with some Churches that have strong links with the holiness tradition. A member of the United Church observed how "We are part of the community, so have to share the burdens of the community" but at the same time there is a tendency to keep a distance from "sinners."

In contrast, the Catholic Church draws on centuries of social teaching on peace and justice affirming that there can be no true peace without justice. This teaching, while referring to scripture, relies more on natural law, the sacramental principle that "grace builds on nature," and a theology of the kingdom of God which sees the Church working for the values of love, joy and justice in the here and now (See Rom 14:17). Sin, whether personal or structural disturbs the peace that God intends for us. Traditional means of reconciliation and compensation are supported to the extent that they contribute to the overall long-term well-being of the community.

All Churches support their peace work by reference to scripture. Biblical references seem to be limited only by the imagination of the preacher/teacher. Some start with Genesis and the words, "Increase and multiply and subdue the earth." Humankind was instructed to "subdue" the earth – not to destroy it. Other Biblical themes mentioned in the research reports include the following:

*"Love one another."* (Mt 22:37).

*"God is our source of peace"* (Rom 15:33).

*The Corinthians are told to agree with one another and to live in peace* (2 Cor 13:11).

*Jesus said: "Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you"* (Jn 14:27)

*"Blessed are the peace makers. They will be called children of God"* (Mt 5:9)

*We are to love our neighbours as we love ourselves* (Mt 22:39)

*"I have come that you might have life in its fullness* (Jn 10:10)

*There are also the many references to forgiveness, such as "Forgive us our trespasses..."* (Mt 6:12).

Such biblical references are used to legitimate calls for people to cease armed conflict and to look for alternative ways to resolve differences. However, ideas about God (of peace?), the role of the Church (here and now?) and of salvation (from sin or inhuman thinking and behaviour) vary and tend to support discourse rather than forming an integrated theology in itself.

## 15 Church election awareness campaigns

The main emphasis in Church sponsored election awareness campaigns is on encouraging people to realize their democratic rights and to discourage bribery. This time, in 2007, there was added emphasis on awareness about the new limited preferential voting system (LPV), and on HIV/AIDS, and gender issues. (Elections are often seen as a time of "no law", especially a suspension of the moral law governing sexual behaviour.)

In theory Churches usually claim to be "neutral" when it comes to supporting a particular party or candidate. However, in Highlands politics it is generally felt that "who is not for us is against us" and there is little if any middle ground. Thus, claiming not to support any one candidate attracts the ire of others. Church members who are supporters of other candidates sometimes create problems for the Church people involved in awareness campaigns because they are seen as not supporting (and therefore "against") the candidate of the Church member.

Some Pastors seeking to benefit from campaign handouts will list the names of their members and send the list to candidates saying we need x and y (roofing materials, musical instruments...). Then, having received support from the candidate, they are no longer free to support contrary views or to take a prophetic stance. (Councillors and other leaders also use this system of trading "lists" for money or benefits.)

In previous elections Caritas has mounted a comprehensive awareness campaign prior to elections. This time the Caritas campaigns were lower profile because, despite the opposition of the Bishops, Catholic priests were standing for election in all Highlands electorates except EHP. These priests received varying degrees of support from Christian groups and Churches and there was fear that the Caritas campaigns might be seen as supporting those clerical candidates. In Enga, Simbu, and WHP there was a priest standing against the incumbent governor. In the SHP those conducting awareness had to contend with point-scoring on the free education issue.

Simbu appears to have had a relatively effective awareness campaign. However, this was not accomplished solely through the Churches, but also through the police department and the NGO group *Meri i Kirap Saptim*.

Where awareness was done, it concentrated on opposing corruption and promoting justice and a trouble-free election. One might well question the effectiveness of the Church sponsored campaigns. That the election in the Highlands was not as violent as 2002, is probably due more to the presence of 2,000 security forces than to Church campaigns. In Enga and some other parts of the Highlands, the majority of people followed common but illegal practices such as block voting, which ignores individual choice and discriminates against women.

One would hope that there could be more cooperation between Churches in election awareness, including the sharing of materials and inter-Church awareness committees.

## 16 Peace building cooperation

### Cooperation between Churches.

We encountered many examples of Churches working together in peace-making. The example from Mendi (SHP) has been noted above in section 9. In the Kainantu area (EHP) when a person was killed or gravely wounded, SDA Church members would run onto the battle field with their flag and carry the body out to the road from where the Salvation Army would provide an ambulance to take the body to the hospital. In Baiyer and Lumusa (WHP), the Baptist Church, the SDA Church and the Lutheran Church are CPP member Churches working together for peace in the area, particularly under the leadership of Mr. Kokowa Trokwasi who is SDA. There are also other denominations in the Baiyer/Lumusa area that are cooperating. These are not members of CPP – such as the AOG, Apostolic Church, EBC, and others.

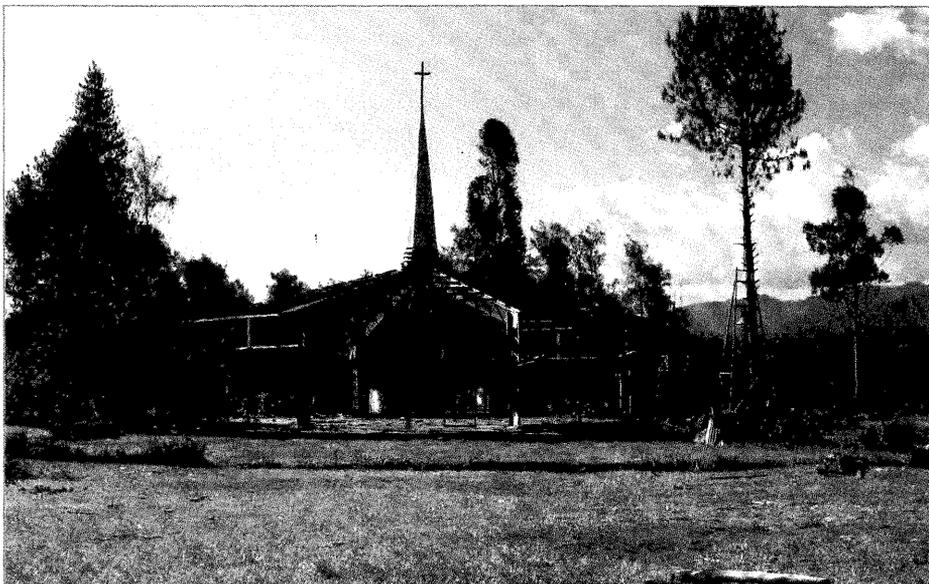
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However, there are also tragic examples of where church grounds have become battle fields and examples of enmity between tribal groups split along denominational lines. There was fighting on the grounds of Denglagu Catholic church during the conflict between the Komkane people and Wandike people in Holy Week of 1998, and the Moroma Seventh Day Adventist base camp was used as a battle field in the

Malauku/Dokindekane conflict (Simbu) in 2005. In more recent times the Pina Catholic church (Enga) along with a primary school, vocational school and associated facilities was reduced to ashes in a conflict between two groups identifying with the Catholic and Gutnius Lutheran Churches. The conflict was triggered by an untimely death at an election rally for the 2002 elections.



*Catholic Church Pina alive in 2006.*



*Catholic Church Pina - deathly quiet after fighting in 2007.*

## Cooperation between the Churches and the Government and other parties.

The presence of Church representatives on the Provincial Electoral Steering Committee, such as Pastor Harry of United Church Mt Hagen has been noted as a positive move. One of the researchers, Bishop Ririka, was also able to liaise with the Peace Monitoring Committee in the Eastern Highlands. Such contacts appear to be of mutual benefit.

The Security forces played an important role in maintaining control in the Highlands during the 2007 elections. However, their time is limited, and often tribal conflicts erupt in the post-election period after the security forces have left. The relative ineffectiveness of government and police, particularly outside of the election period was noted in several cases. Members of the Cross of Peace movement (WHP) complained that government authorities seldom attend peace agreements. Similar sentiments were voiced by mediators in Lumusa, and by Church leaders in Kamano 2 (where the government even gave up on the people there). Church people tend to be working for peace whether there are funds available or not and they get frustrated by the absence of police or government representatives when funds are unavailable or dry up.

There are other examples of constructive cooperation with government and police. In Gumus (WHP) the presence of police prevented escalation of the conflict, and in Lumusa the Baptist Union of PNG facilitated bringing in police to help control the situation there. Both Churches and local government leaders are working together in the Yakani Tambukini Gutpela Sindaun Movement in Enga. Some people said they felt that the government would do well to provide material and financial aid to assist the Churches' peace building work. This is an issue where a common position and criteria for the use of government resources would help.

There are also examples of Churches working together with NGOs such as the Peace Foundation Melanesia. In the Nauro conflict in Simbu there was assistance from auxiliary police and local businesses. The Churches must always be aware that there are many committed Christians working in the government, NGO's and other sectors of society, all of whom are potential collaborators in peace building.



*Clansmen from former enemy clans carrying broken guns approach the Bishop at Catholic Church Par.*

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## 17 CPP opportunities in Reconciliation and Peace Building

One of our researchers concluded: "Mining bilong (CPP) em olsem yumi ol sios i mas wok wantaim long bringim 'peace.'" [CPP means Churches working together for peace]. In order to accomplish that vision the Churches will need to develop capacity in a number of areas.

- Churches must learn to work more together and to be involved in more common projects. It is hypocrisy to be involved in peace building if at the same time there are accusations and recriminations around old doctrinal battles with little relevance to our common work for peace and to the PNG situation or competition for funds and resources.
- Any amount of good-will does not take the place of adequate training in practical peace building. One may see from this report how Churches are involved, but appropriate training courses are sadly lacking.
- External funding provides both an opportunity and a temptation. This project started with an emphasis on self-reliance. All participants had to make their own way to the first meeting and to find accommodation, depending on their own resources or the resources of their Churches. The provision of funds should be done in a way that does not destroy the spirit of volunteerism which is a strength of the Churches.
- Churches need to gain respect within the communities and civil society during the period between elections. It is useless looking for respect in the heat of an election if it has not been developed before that time.
- Having Church representatives on Provincial Electoral Steering Committees or Provincial Peace Monitoring Committees would be of mutual benefit to both the committees and the Churches.

## 18 Recommendations. Where to go from here?

- i Arrange for monitoring and evaluation of any future Church-sponsored electoral awareness campaigns. If this is to begin now, it could be understood as a new cycle of research building on what we have already.
- ii Learn from the success stories and the not so successful stories in the examples given in this report. We recommend that those involved in leadership of conflict resolution in each Church study this report and make use of its findings in their planning. Although not wanting to institutionalise or perpetuate ourselves, the principle of action research that has guided us requires that feedback from this round of research should be taken into account and used in a future cycle of research on this theme.
- iii Establish a CPP (ecumenical) peace building team in each province. This should strengthen and support the Churches at the provincial level.
- iv Promote and participate in Peace and Good Order committees or Provincial Peace Monitoring Committees, possibly also any disaster management committee. A CPP Peace building team in each Province should nominate a member of this or these committees.
- v Arrange for more training in conflict resolution and peace building. There are many FBOs and NGOs available to provide this. The Churches could utilise them or even develop their own training teams. Ideally this training should be conducted on an ecumenical basis and at grassroots level.
- vi It is important to work side by side with government but without being co-opted, and without the Churches losing their independence and prophetic stance. The Churches need a common standard as to how best to cooperate with government lest they be used for other purposes, especially now when many politicians promise 10% of expenditure to the Churches. What are the implications? A common stand from heads of Churches is urgently needed. A CPP Heads of Churches conference, or support for a PNG Council of Churches Conference on the issue would be a way forward.

- vii Address the issue of payment of school subsidies and other forms of “pork barrelling” etc. right at election time. Churches can get sucked into this because they do not want to miss out on what is rightfully theirs as citizens. Can they adopt a common approach so that they will not be used once again by politicians? Here also a common stand is urgently needed, and the approach of recommendation viii (below) might be the way forward.
- viii Include peace building in Church youth programs and prepare youth now for 2012 (with good governance and electoral awareness programs). Ideally this should be done on an ecumenical basis in each Province, once again at grassroots level.
- ix If CPP wants to contribute to peace building as a group, then there needs to be more communication and partnering between the Churches – not just individual Churches responding in particular situations. Hence the importance of a Provincial body as indicated above.
- x If Churches are serious about peace building, then this should be reflected in the Church budgets, with due regard to protecting the spirit of volunteerism and self reliance of local communities.
- xi Further document Church peace building work both for monitoring and evaluation purposes, and in order that others might learn from the experience of previous efforts.
- xii Any future research on this theme should study further the place of jealousy and revenge as causal factors in tribal conflicts and how processes of traditional and Christian reconciliation and healing can better take these into account
- xiii Similarly future research should examine the extent and the conditions of domestic refugees – people who have fled from tribal conflicts and who are now living elsewhere – particularly in settlements around urban areas.
- xiv Our common work for peace takes place within an overall context of improvement in ecumenical relationships through dialogue on doctrinal and pastoral matters. To work together for peace in society requires that we work together for peace among ourselves, through an ongoing ecumenical dialogue that promotes mutual understanding. Existing bilateral ecumenical dialogue such as Catholic/Anglican, Catholic/Lutheran should be extended and expanded.



*Reconciliation at peace ceremony Par, Enga.*

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## 19 Conclusion

This brief report hardly reflects the rich diversity of experiences revealed in the accounts documented by our researchers in the five provinces. Much has been accomplished, yet so many opportunities remain as a challenge for all concerned for well-being and peace in the Highlands. Election years are characterised by heightened competition and an escalation of tension and conflict, yet the years between elections cannot be ignored. As some cases in this study have shown, election related conflict can continue for long periods and resentment may continue to fester beneath the surface.

Participatory action research does not end with recommendations. Further cycles of reflection and research are concerned with strategies by which research and action are closely linked. Now it is up to the Churches in the CPP to be involved in studying this report to assess its accuracy and to make decisions about how to proceed. In doing so, hopefully the Churches will experience cooperating and working more closely together.

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