The Church and Post-conflict Reconstruction:
Building Peace and Community Empowerment
through Church-based Development Programs in
Solomon Islands

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Abstract: Solomon Islands has been implementing various post-conflict reconstruction programs after the country emerged from an ethnic conflict. Among the programs is a church-based Inclusive Community Program aimed at revitalising the family unit and the community through series of training workshops covering community related skills, knowledge and attitudes. This paper describes the involvement of the Anglican Church of Melanesia in a peacebuilding and community development program in Solomon Islands. The aim of this paper is to report the initiation and the first stages of the implementation of the program, and includes a case study of how a faith-based organisation engaged in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in a conflict society. The church's post-conflict community development program is still being implemented and therefore, this paper is not intended to provide a rigorous evaluation of the program or an assessment of tangible impacts on the community. As a narrative case study, it describes the peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by the State during the conflict and provides insights into why the State's peace activities failed to restore peace. It is the inability of the State to broker peace, which urged the Anglican Church of Melanesia to become involved in the country's efforts to restore peace. After the conflict, the church saw the need to empower the community so that every family would rebuild their lives through an initiative called 'Inclusive Community Program.' Although it is too early to judge the success of the Program, there is evidence in the case study stories that change is taking shape in the community. Thus, the church is envisaging that communities will have families that have improved skills, knowledge and attitudes about healthy lifestyles and sustainable livelihoods.

Keywords: Christian Churches, Post-conflict Reconstruction, Peacebuilding, Inclusive Community Program, Solomon Islands

Introduction

BUILDING PEACE AND community resilience in a post-conflict environment is a challenging task. However, the pathways and processes to undertaking such a task require establishing influence on the community and the larger society as a whole. For Maton (2008) the pathways and process are rooted in the domains of adult well-being, positive youth development, locality development, and social change. Thus implementing community development programs within these domains has the potential to produce community betterment and positive social change.

The purpose of this paper is to report a church-based peacebuilding and community empowerment development programs as witnessed in a particular case study. It describes the initiation and the first stages of the implementation of a church-based community development

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program in post-conflict reconstruction in Solomon Islands. The case study program is still being implemented and therefore, this paper is not intended to provide a rigorous evaluation of the program or to assess its tangible impacts on the community. In the first part of the paper, the pathways and processes are reviewed within the parameters of church-based peacebuilding activities in conflict societies followed by the definitions of 'peacebuilding' and 'empowerment' as critical concepts to the discussion of post-conflict reconstruction. A background to the Solomon Islands conflict is described in the next part. The third part of the paper focuses on the peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by the Government. Understanding the State's initiatives to restore peace provides insights to why these peacebuilding activities failed to restore peace. As a prelude to discussion of the church's engagement in the tasks of building peace and community development during and after the conflict, a profile of the case study is described in the fourth part of this paper. Finally, the activities and programs implemented in the case study during and after the conflict are examined.

Church- b ased Peacebuilding Activities in Conflict Societies

The involvement of faith-based organisations in conflict societies is seen as a valuable means to foster post-conflict reconstruction. Hence, many countries are acknowledging the influences that church-based initiatives can exert in community peacebuilding and development. For instance, Bacon (2002 p. 2) states that the "United Kingdom is currently experiencing a revival of government interest in the role that faith groups may play in policy delivery and community development." Supporting this claim Blunkett (2001) adds that the United States and British policy makers are recognising the significance of the local initiatives in which faith communities can often be engaged and the potential synergy between the aims and practices of faith groups and policy objectives relating to neighbourhood renewal, social inclusion and the revitalisation of civil society is possible concomitant with political support. Bacon (2002) cautioned that the concept of a caring civil society does not join easily into the localised realities of divided communities. This assertion relates to Northern Ireland where two separate communities, Protestant and Catholic compete for space and power (Bacon, 2002). In such a scenario, strengthening community resilience and cohesion, and enhancing civic responsibility through church-based projects would be difficult to implement. Part of the difficulty according to Cochrane (2002) arises from situations in which there is more than one single community each holding different sets of politico-cultural values, therefore, people may be exclusively interested in *their* community, *their* society.

Unlike the case of Northern Ireland, the churches in Solomon Islands remained united with the entire society during the conflict in seeking to restore peace. It is this unity of purpose that this paper is based on a case study of the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM) peacebuilding initiatives during the conflict and its subsequent community development programs in the post-conflict era.

Definitions

Critical to the discussion about post-conflict reconstruction are the concepts *peacebuilding* and *empowerment*. Peacebuilding is difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve in practice (Cousens & Kumar, 2001). Peacebuilding as a post-conflict reconstruction initiative in Solomon Islands for example, refers to programs of action aimed at addressing the underlying issues to the ethnic conflict and dealing with post-conflict development challenges.

This use of the term has significance on negative and positive peace (Galtung, 1969). Taking Solomon Islands beyond the post-conflict era is not only a matter of the absence of physical violence through the auspices of international intervention, but of creating sound standards for harnessing justice, human rights and sustainable development. This paper is further informed by the more comprehensive and cultural definition of peacebuilding:

> *those activities and processes that: focus on the root causes of the conflict, rather than just the effects; support the rebuilding and rehabilitation of all sectors of the war-torn society; encourage and support interaction between all sectors of society in order to repair damaged relations and start the process of restoring dignity and trust; recognise the specifics of each post conflict situation; encourage and support the participation of indigenous resources in the design, implementation and sustainment of activities and processes; and promote processes that will endure after the initial emergency recovery phase has passed (Spence, 2001) .*

One of the inferences of this definition is that peacebuilding initiatives in post-conflict environments that are largely driven by military control merely maintain negative peace and may breed new resentments. On the other hand, peacebuilding activities that are implemented at the community level with the aim of empowering community are likely to contribute to positive peace.

The concept of community empowerment has been conceptualised in various ways (e.g., (Hur, 2006; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1987; Warren, 1997; Watts & Serrano-Garcia, 2003). On the basis of these conceptualizations empowerment is defined by Maton as:

> *A group-based, participatory, developmental process through which marginalised or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization (Maton, 2008 p. 4).*

This definition relates to process and outcome as defined in the works of many authors (Minkler, 1997; Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Swift & Levin, 1987; Zimmerman, 2000). Other writers contend that empowerment is a participatory-developmental process occurring over time, involving active and sustained engagement and resulting in growth in awareness and capacity (Friere, 1993; Hur, 2006; Kieffer, 1984; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Hence, it is this participatory approach that drives the engagement of ACOM in its post-conflict community development programs in Solomon Islands.

Overview of the Solomon Islands Conflict

Solomon Islands is a developing nation comprised of an archipelago of 922 islands (Figure 1) and is about 1,860 kilometres north-east of Australia and located between 5 and 12 degrees south latitude and 155 and 170 degrees east longitude (Stanley, 1993). It has a population of more than 500,000 (Moore, 2004). More than 80 percent of the population live in rural villages with limited access to basic services. The state of the natural and socio-economic environments in Solomon Islands has been the subject of on-going debates among concerned

citizens, for example the perceived inequitable distribution of benefits of the country's natural resources has been blamed for the eruption of the conflict in 1998.
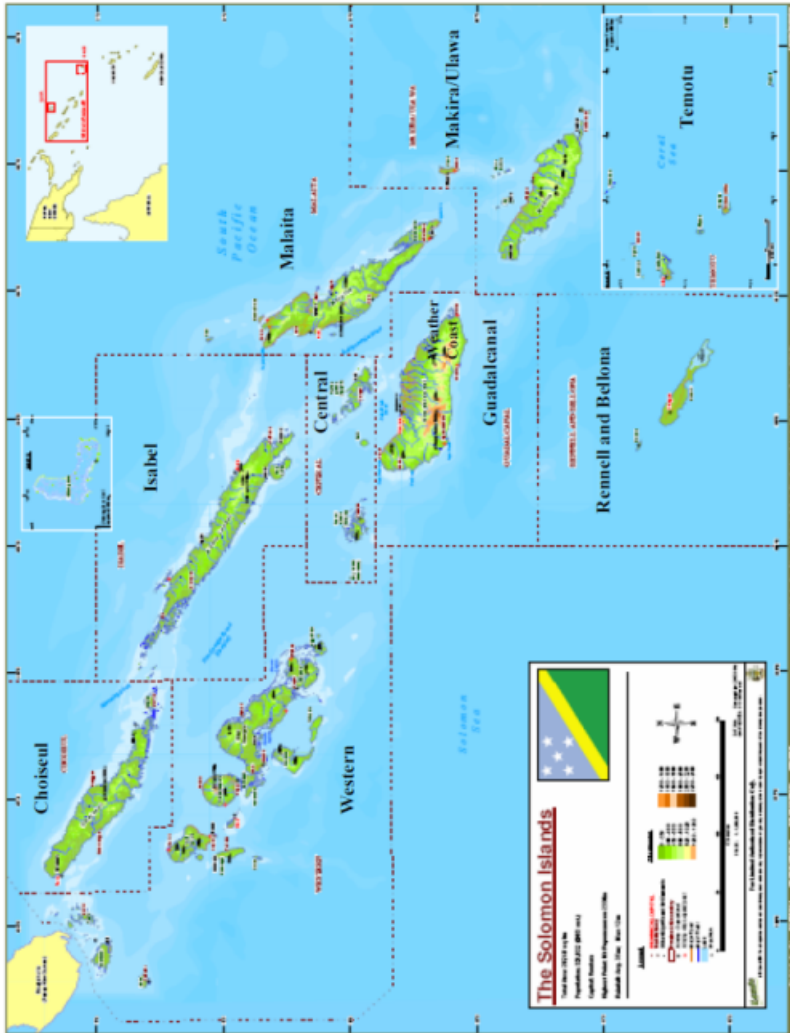

Figure 1: Map of Solomon Islands,
Source: Department of Lands and Survey, Honiara, Solomon Islands

The conflict in the Solomon Islands, commonly known as 'the ethnic tension', began in 1998 when a group of militant youths (Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army-GRA) from the island of Guadalcanal attacked settlements of islanders predominantly from Malaita (a neighbouring island) in Northwest Guadalcanal (Figure 1). Their actions were ignited by the failure of successive national governments to address issues raised by the indigenous people of Guadalcanal. First tabled as bona fide demands in 1988 and again in January 1999, the issues that were listed were rent from the use of Honiara as the capital city; non-payment of compensation for the indigenous people killed by settlers over the years; demands for the review

of the Land and Title Act; the squatter settlements; and restrictions on citizens from other provinces from owning land on Guadalcanal. The increasing aggressive behaviour of these Guadalcanal militants resulted in some 25,000 Malaitans fleeing Guadalcanal and an estimated 11,000 Guadalcanal people fled the capital city to the interior of the island (Pollard, 2005). The violence escalated in 2000 when a resistance group named the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), claiming to represent the interests of the Malaitans who had been displaced, armed themselves by raiding police armouries and subsequently took control of Honiara. Small arms battles took place frequently between MEF and Guadalcanal militants around the city area and other key areas on Guadalcanal and neighbouring islands.

State Peacebuilding Initiatives

Public Reconciliation Feast (May 1999)

In an early effort to broker peace, a government funded public reconciliation feast was held in May 1999 at the Honiara's cultural village. The ceremony began with a church service where reconciliatory prayers were offered. This was followed by commendable traditional gifts being exchanged. Leaders from Malaita and Guadalcanal dressed in their traditional costumes exchanged gifts of shell money and pigs. I attended the ceremony as an onlooker and the ceremony was really moving. However, the reconciliation speeches from the traditional leaders unexpectedly contained retaliatory hostile language. Everyone who witnessed the occasion could sense the unforgiving and irreconcilable spirit on both parties as reflected in the leaders' addresses. As a compensation, a cheque of SI$100,000 (US$16,666)[1] was presented to the Premiers of Malaita and Guadalcanal.

The reconciliation feast was traditionally appropriate. However, in a real traditional context, a reconciliation feast is usually undertaken in the presence of those who are *directly* involved in any conflict. Similarly, traditional gifts were exchanged and compensation paid has to be shared on the spot according to the nature of crime that one has committed in the conflict. This fabric of the *kastom* [2] was violated in this ceremony as only the leaders were present while the militants were engaging in skirmishes around the Guadalcanal plains and only an hour after the conclusion of the reconciliation feast, waves of GRA attacks on Malaitian settlements were reported on the north of Guadalcanal plains.

The ceremony was culturally offensive when presentation of SI$100,000 was made. If the ceremony was aimed at brokering peace talks then the exchange of traditional gifts were more appropriate. Payment of compensation is customarily conducted when issues that gave rise to a conflict were resolved. For the Government to give the compensation payment was seen as a mockery of the Guadalcanal bona fide demands which were not addressed at the time of the ceremony. These grievances of the indigenous people of Guadalcanal are still being not fully resolved.

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[1] At that time, the exchange rate was about SI$6 = US$1.
[2] *Kastom* embrace culture, tradition, norms and modes of behaviour, ways of thinking, doing, and creating; and of course, indigenous epistemology. Anything born of the land and passed from generation to generation is part *kastom* (Gegeo and Watson (2001).

Honiara Peace Accord (June 1999)

The first peace agreement was brokered by Commonwealth Special Envoys, Stiveni Rabuka and Ade Adefuye. At the signing of this agreement the then Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, late Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, for the first time publicly acknowledged that the root causes of the conflict included long-standing compensation demands by indigenous Guadalcanal landowners for the development of the national capital on their island, and for unresolved questions of land ownership and squatting by migrant Malaitans, who form the largest group of workers employed by the Government and private sectors in Honiara.

At that time GRA has been disbanded but militant activities by some Guadalcanal activists continued under the *Isatabu* Freedom Movement (IFM). The Honiara accord committed the Government to address the concerns of the rural Guadalcanal population, restrain police operations against the IFM's predecessors, and also called on all members of armed political groups to disband, hand in their weapons and return to their home villages (Amnesty International, 7 September 2000).

The IFM members and their leader never attended any peace talks under the Honiara Accord nor were they signatories to the Accord. As such they were not party to the terms of settlement as contained in the Accord thus they did not feel bound by them. The Honiara Accord failed to broker peace and violence continued to escalate.

Townsville Peace Agreement (October 2000)

The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) was signed on 15 October 2000. However, it was implemented with only partial success. Under the TPA, an early ceasefire was intended to become permanent. An Australian led and funded International Peace Monitoring Team was tasked to receive and take possession of weapons surrendered under the TPA disarmament program. The agreement set in place a provision for compensation for those affected by the conflict, and an inclusive, indigenous Peace Monitoring Council was established to monitor and enforce the agreement.

However, by the time the TPA expired in October 2002, the ceasefire had been maintained and the weapons surrender was partially successful. Nevertheless, little has been done to repair the damage to the fabric of Solomon Islands society and government. The consequences of the conflict as emanated from the compensation provision of TPA were unexpectedly disastrous. Many people including Ministers in the Government corruptly claimed large sums of money as compensation for their lost properties. Thus Australian Strategic Policy Institute observed that the long-term consequences of the conflict have if anything became more entrenched and corrosive as time passes, and extortion in the guise of compensation claims has become a Solomon Islands growth industry (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2003).

Profile of the Case Study

The Anglican Church in Melanesia was established by the first Bishop of New Zealand, George Augustus Selwyn in 1849 (The Church of Melanesia, Home Page). Initially it was a part of the Church of the Province of New Zealand but it became an ecclesiastical Province of its own in 1975. Today, it operates autonomously as a Province, composed of eight dio-

ceses. The Anglican Church of Melanesia encompasses Solomon Islands, the Republic of Vanuatu and the French Territory of New Caledonia in the South Western Pacific. The current church's statistics indicate:

- Membership: 200,000 (including and)
- Bishops: 9
- Priests: 400
- Dioceses: 8
- Parishes: 197 (The Church of Melanesia, Home Page).

In Solomon Islands, the ACOM accounts for 34 percent of the population (Stanley, 1993). The country has a population of more than 500,000 (Moore, 2004) this means of this total population, 170,000 are belong to the ACOM. Within the dioceses and parishes, the church has 6,000 communities under its jurisdiction (ACOM Informant, 3 November 2009). These communities are scattered across the country (Figure 1). As such, in predominantly ACOM islands and provinces, one would usually find in every village an ACOM church building and a church leader and prayer meetings are conducted twice a day. There is a high level of community commitment to church activities because people hold high regard for their Christian beliefs and values. There is also harmonious cooperation between Christian churches thus strengthening an ecumenical climate in the country. This relationship is instituted in two organisations called 'Solomon Islands Christian Association' which oversee the work of the main traditional churches and the activities of the smaller Pentecostal churches are guided by the 'Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association.'

ACOM Peacebuilding Initiatives during the Conflict

During the height of the conflict the ACOM's Mothers Union and the Melanesian Brothers (*Tasiu*) were the front-liners in the battle field negotiating peace with the militants. Members of Mothers Union were taking basic supplies to children and women living in the battle zones. The mothers were harassed and held at gunpoint by the militants but they persisted in their pursue of peace. This experience gave them strength and they joined forces with women from other churches, as they went out and negotiated peace with the militants. Their negotiation message was simple, "we come to you with our open motherly heart that we want peace because women and children are suffering." The persistence of the mothers has contributed to peace negotiations among the warring parties.

After the TPA expired, the absence of law and order was still haunting the country. There were incidences of violence and intimidation by former militants especially in the weather coast area of Guadalcanal (Figure 1). Most parts of the country were relatively calm but the failure of IFM leader; Harold *Keke ,* to surrender continued his strong territorial hold of the weather coast area. In 2002 to mid 2003 the weather coast was a no-go zone.

In an effort to broker peace with *Keke* and his group, ACOM sent out a team of seven *Tasiu s* to hold peace talks with *Keke*. The mission of the *Tasiu* in the history of Church of Melanesia was commended for converting heathen people and pagans to Christianity. Given such a respectable history, most Solomon Islanders were hopeful that *Keke* and his group would surrender to this team of *Tasiu*. Instead the hitherto untouchable *Tasius* were captured and brutally murdered by *Keke's* group (Carter, 2006). Around the same period, the Member

for Parliament for East Guadalcanal was murdered as well the mysterious disappearance of ten *Kwaio* men of Malaita. It is believed that these men were sent on a secret mission to capture *Keke* however, their mission ended in apparent misery.

The churches have been a pillar of strength for many people who were victims of the conflict. For many followers of the Anglican faith, the sending of the *Tasius* to broker peace with *Keke's* group was not a divine call. It was a rumour at that time that the sending of the *Tasius* was politically motivated and they were promised a substantial amount of money and other material gifts if they were able to broker peace and disarm *Keke's* group. It was this speculation that *Keke's* group retaliated brutally against the *Tasius*.

ACOM Post-C onflict Peacebuilding and Development Program s

Christian Care Centre

The Christian Care Centre was established in 2005 by the ACOM and is run by four religious orders in the Church: Melanesian Brothers, Saint Francis, Sisters of Melanesia and Sisters of the Church. The Centre is providing care, counselling and reconciling conflicting families both for victims of the conflict and recent domestic violence victims. The Centre provides support and accommodation for women and children who are victims of violence. It is open to families of all races and religions. According to the Coordinator, sometimes the Centre is overcrowded with families. The Sisters provide counseling and activities for victims, and provides them with accommodation and sustenance.

The victims who receive rehabilitation through the Centre's programs and activities are usually able to return to their communities and live their life again with renewed hope and purpose because of the church's community development program as discussed in the next section.

Inclusive Community Program

Inclusive Community Development Program (ICP) is a nation-wide Australian Aid (AusAid) funded post-conflict rebuilding program implemented by the ACOM. The Program was initiated in 2004 as a response to the conflict through the partnership of seven Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in Solomon Islands under the umbrella of Solomon Islands Association of NGOs. The Program focuses largely on capacity building in 146 parishes of the church.

The Program was built on empowering the family unit on the understanding that once an individual family in a community is empowered they all could work together to develop their community. In short, empowering the family unit is the nucleus of community empowerment. In implementing the vision, ICP field workers started the process with community consultation. This exercise was carried out during the design phase which has enabled the communities to identify their needs or areas they would like to see improved. At the family level, most families tended to focus more on spiritual values, family unity and the need to engage in income-generating activities to meet basic needs. On the other hand, Community livelihood visions include:

- *Improvements in community infrastructure* – such as water, sanitation, access roads, solar power, adequate housing for all, improved school and health facilities.
- *Improvements in livelihoods* – such as selling petrol, better gardening, savings clubs, life skills such as cooking and sewing and family piggery.
- *Improvements in lifestyle opportunities* - such as opportunities for more healthy youth activities like sport and music, improved communication between sections of the village, places to gather for leisure.
- *Improvements in learning how to work together* – community members learning together, working together for the common good, learning community leadership. One community described the priority as 'training in community development so that we can organise ourselves to achieve all our hopes through our own efforts' (Inclusive Community Program-ICP, October 2009 p.6).

After the situational analysis of family and community needs, the program conducted training workshops to equip the community with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement their families' and community development goals. For instance, three of the key focus areas of such trainings is leadership skills, financial literacy and conflict resolution. The Program recognised that the community needed leaders to oversee its development projects therefore ICP conducted leadership training for youth and women leaders and the village elders. The financial literacy training workshops centred on budgeting and bookkeeping. The thrust of this training is to enable communities to manage their income-generating activities. The conflict resolution training component of ICP is critical, given the increasing community conflicts particularly relating to land disputes. Land in Solomon Islands is customarily owned by tribes and has been the subject of many conflicts in the community as exemplified in the Case Story 1:

Case Story 1: Conflict Resolution

Date: 31st October, 2006 Time: 9.30 am
Background: The ICP program started in the Diocese of Central Solomon's on the island of Gela in January 2005. 21 months later ICP staff returned to do the final evaluation and found the following story in Toga Community in the Longana district of the COM Gela Region.
- This community has a population of 500 people, with 62 households.
- It is a matrilineal society, whereby ownership of land is passed through the female line. But the male members of the clan make the decisions regarding land development, logging and they are also made trustees for the land.
- Seven of the chiefs from the house of chiefs had attended ICP training and had used the seven steps in problem solving to sort out a difficult land case. They had also used this skill in sorting out community social problems.
- Two reps from each of the six tribes in this district are represented in the House of Chiefs
- All the districts have a house of chiefs and there is a higher house of chiefs at the provincial level. DOC's Diocesan bishop is the Paramount chief of this higher house. Each of the districts has representatives in the house of chiefs at the provincial level. Their function is to preside over land cases, serious social problems which affects their communities like logging, environment issues etc.
- This community has a house of all male chiefs. Asked why there were no women or youth in the house of chiefs, they said this will take time. Hearings are processed as follows:
Report case to President and clerk
The court clerk records the cases.
The President then sets the hearing date and calls a meeting of the district house of chiefs.
During the hearing, the seven steps of problem solving learned in ICP training were used

Since the ICP training, the house of chiefs have dealt with one major land case and 7 other social issues to do with marriages, drunk and disorderly etc.
Notes: Asked if the steps were very helpful, the response was it was very useful and helpful, because offenders normally came up with their own solutions. The chiefs only facilitated the proceedings to ensure that the hearings were fair and just. In the land case above both parties were satisfied with the outcome, since they themselves came up with the solutions. The chiefs ensured that agreed solutions were carried out.

Source: (Inclusive Community Program-ICP, March 2007 p.16).

Anticipat e d Success

The Inclusive Community Program is still being implemented and as such, it is too early to evaluate its success against its goal of empowering family unit and the community. However, as indicated in Case Stories 1 and 2 the Program is beginning to positively impact the community. Sites visits by the Program staff confirmed that the reaction of the communities to the objectives and approach used by ICP has been very favourable in general:

Case Story 2: Communities' Approval of the Program

> *As one Provincial Constitutional Member put it, 'this is what we have been waiting for to help us realise how to use our rich resources'. Other community members and leaders are astonished at the realisation that they can agree on a plan of action and that they really do have the resources to do a lot for themselves. 'They are all smiles when they realise that they could do it themselves', reported one ICP team member, 'all their resources are right in front of them and they did not realise it'. Some community members also referred back to their old practices of communal work as a basis for confidence in being able to work together on their new vision.*
> *Source: (Inclusive Community Program-ICP, October 2009 p.7).*

The Program has potential to revitalise community standards of living. Community revitalisation is envisaged through improved knowledge, skills and attitudes, events, processes and organisations that help the families and communities to become stronger and more self-reliant. On the basis of the series of training workshops that have been conducted the Program is anticipating the following tangible outcomes (Case Story 3).

Case Story 3: Anticipated Outcomes

> *Expected changes in knowledge and skills include financial literacy, nutrition, sanitation, how to carry out income generating activities, savings and micro-finance activities and how to use each of these skills to mobilise available resources. Changes in attitude will be opting for health lifestyle choices in leisure and communications, social inclusion of the less advantaged and overlooked, respect for women of all ages, willingness to include young people in community decision making and actions. Changes in behaviour include being engaged in activities that promote family cohesion, being engaged in community life and supporting the meeting of basic family needs, being engaged in livelihood activities that increase engagement in community life and income generation to support health and education. Changes in capacity building include ability to have a vision, to plan and to identify and use locally available skilled people, organisations, equipment, and natural resources to achieve that plan. Improvements in the leadership of the community including organising actions and events that promote family self reliance would also be expected.*
> *Source: (Inclusive Community Program-ICP, October 2009 p.12) .*

These anticipated outcomes could translate into changed family and community lifestyles. For instance, a changed community is likely to demonstrate increased respect for women and girls and community members living with disabilities. Young people would enjoy more socially and culturally acceptable activities. In short, the program envisages:

Such communities will have families that have improved skills and attitudes about healthy lifestyles and sustainable livelihoods; increased numbers of activities that are directly related to promoting family health and economic benefit; increased ability to plan for the future, manage change and use local resources more beneficially and will have opportunities to reflect and learn from each other. As a result of increased financial security, [with] better management of resources as well as increased respect for women, domestic violence will decrease. Women will know how to negotiate the support of their husbands [in order] to contribute to a family vision. The use of illegal drugs will decrease as youth are engaged in activities that help their families and the community, such as improving access to clean water and sanitation and better use of gardens. Young people will also engage in activities that are entertaining and health promoting (Inclusive Community Program-ICP, October 2009 p.12).

As a result of working with the community, ICP is able to identify the felt needs of the community and link the communities' development projects to government and other agencies. Soliciting such connections paved the way for communities to implement their identified projects (Case Story 4).

Case Story 4: ICP as a Linkage between the Communities, the Government and Donor Agencies

The ICP team learned to help communities by making connections with relevant government departments and donor programs in a number of locations. In Savo, for example they approached the local constitutional member who agreed to meet with the community and discuss ways that he could help in developing livelihood options such as finding market outlets and providing free transport to collect raw materials from Honiara. They have also begun selling copra again, set up small canteen stores and contacted the government for support to develop a cooperative society. In Duidui, where floods devastated existing infrastructure, the community reported that their water supply was not working despite a report to the Provincial Government that it was in good order. ICP arranged for representatives of the provincial government, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP) and AusAID to visit the community and discuss [...] options, which the community are now pursuing. In all communities visited community leaders are pursuing their vision and developing their work plans without further ICP support while waiting for ICP to return to continue the process with them.
Source: (Inclusive Community Program-ICP, October 2009 p.5) .

Conclusion

The stories related in the implementation of ICP are a testament that the church participation in post-conflict reconstruction is producing valuable outcomes. These stories pointed to one of the fundamentals of effective development programs and that is to make community development happen, the existing community structures and family unit must be strengthened. Once these structures are strengthened and families are empowered they can better assist their communities achieve peace, cohesion and improved livelihoods. These structures are an integral part of Solomon Islands social fabric and if they are well strengthened the anticipated community development outcomes are likely to be sustained. The ICP experience

suggests that for any introduced concept of community development to work in Solomon Islands, it must embrace the cherished social fabrics. The ACOM is able to rally community support because the church used its existing structures, personnel and external agencies to implement its community development programs. Communities related well to the church structures because their lifestyles revolve around the day-to-day activities of the church. There are pre-existing strong church-based community organisations which the Government and development partners could utilise to effectively implement community-based development projects.

Acknowledgments

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List of Acronyms

ACOM: Anglican Church of Melanesia
GRA: Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army
ICP: Inclusive Community Program
IFM*:* Isatabu Freedom Movement
MEF: Malaita Eagle Force
NGO: Non-Government Organisations
TPA: Townsville Peace Agreement

About the Author

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