Political participation in the Pacific: Issues of gender, race and religion

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Correspondence

Development Bulletin
Development Studies Network
Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia
Tel: 61 2 6125 2466, 61 2 6125 8257
Fax: 61 2 6125 9785
E-mail: devnetwork@anu.edu.au
Website: http://devnet.anu.edu.au

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Political participation in the Pacific: Issues of gender, race and religion
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Address to the symposium by the Parliamentary Secretary to the
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms Chris Gallus, MP

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It is with a real sense of loss that the Development Studies Network staff and Board Members mark the death of our friend and colleague, Elspeth, who for many years made an important contribution to development studies in general and to the Network in particular. She was always available to discuss development issues with us, she helped on our Editorial Board and served for three years as an enthusiastic and dedicated member of the Development Studies Network Board of Directors. Although she was unwell, she continued to provide ideas, contacts, and sound and sharp discussion on development issues. In many ways Elspeth was a supporter of the not so fortunate, the underdog and the misunderstood in different cultures. She was a wonderful and dedicated teacher and researcher. Her encouragement has helped the Network—and so many others.

Symposium on Political Participation in the Pacific

This issue of Development Bulletin focuses on a vitally important but often neglected area of politics and governance—race, religion and gender. In collaboration with the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project of the Australian National University the Network ran a one day symposium at Parliament House, Canberra to focus attention on the ways in which race, religion and gender individually and collectively influence politics and political participation in Pacific Island countries. We invited a number of Pacific Island political leaders, planners, representatives of civil society and political commentators to discuss their personal experiences in the political arena. We also asked well known political scientists and lawyers to participate in the discussion or to provide additional papers for the publication. This issue of the journal comprises the papers and discussion from the symposium held on 17 July, discussion and output from a one day workshop held at the Australian National University on 18 July and further supporting papers on state formation, identity, ethnicity and instability and the role of law in civil society.

The output and recommendations from the workshop are included in the introduction.

AusAID support

We are grateful to AusAID for supporting the publication of this issue of Development Bulletin. As Chris Gallus, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, stated in her introduction to the symposium Australia's aid program recognises that good governance and equality in political participation is the foundation for poverty reduction and the key to stability and economic growth… in this financial year AusAID will expend $355 million on governance activities.

Viewpoint

In the Viewpoint section Jane Hearn and Susan Harris debate the relationship between human rights and Australian aid and Ian Patrick looks at the relationship between development research and aid policy formulation.

New books

We include reviews of useful new publications and the latest books available on governance, human rights, gender, democratic processes, politics and political participation available from Last-First Networks as well as other publishers and resource centres.
Next issue of Development Bulletin

Our next issue will focus on recent research from the Pacific and will include the major papers from the recent conference organised by the Foundation for Development Cooperation, Brisbane. We will also include information on accessing development-related courses and workshops.

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Good reading

Pamela Thomas
Managing Editor
Governance in the Pacific—issues of gender, race and religion

Speech by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon. Chris Gallus, MP at the Australian Development Studies Network Symposium Parliament House, Canberra 17 July 2002.

Australia’s aid program recognises that good governance is a foundation for poverty reduction and a key to ensuring stability and economic growth in the region. In Bougainville, the Solomon Islands and Fiji we have seen how underlying problems of poor governance have contributed to the conflict in these countries.

When we say good governance we mean the competent management of a country’s resources in a way that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people’s needs.

Poor governance exacerbates poverty, inequality, and weak state institutions that in turn contribute to instability and conflict.

Funding for good governance

Since 1996, the Australian aid program’s expenditure on governance projects has more than doubled. We estimate that $355 million will be spent on governance activities this financial year.

More than 20 percent of our aid to the Pacific will focus on economic reform and governance activities. In Papua New Guinea, governance projects account for more than 30 percent of Australia’s support.

Last month, a new Peace, Conflict and Development Policy was launched for Australia’s aid program. It aims to identify and address the root causes of instability in the region and work with governments towards the peaceful resolution of disputes. We found in our research that a key to nurturing stability is ongoing consultation with all stakeholders, including women, the church and ethnic groups.

Gender and development: a focus of the aid program

The Australian aid program puts a special emphasis on gender. Our policy is to ‘mainstream’ gender into all aid-related activities. That means the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered at all stages of development activities.

When women’s rights are protected and their access to health services, schooling and other resources is increased, countries tend to have less corruption and achieve faster economic growth.

Conversely, when women’s rights are not protected women are disempowered, unable to contribute to their society and frequently suffer from violence. Violence against women destroys their lives and the future of their children.

Australian aid funding for institutions such as the Women’s Crisis Centre in Fiji plays a major role in preventing violence against women—not only in Fiji, but also across the Pacific networking with 24 agencies in 11 Pacific countries. In countries where civic violence has brought development to a halt, women have played a vital role in peace-building.
Australia is very proud of the fact that we have supported—and continue to support—many initiatives giving Pacific women a voice.

In Bougainville, for example, women have played a critical role in the peace process.

They mediated between all sides of the conflict and helped bring the warring parties together.

In the Solomon Islands, Australia funds a Peace Monitoring Council in which women have played a vital role.

Women encouraged the hand-over of guns by former militants, conducted outreach activities in villages and worked for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of local communities.

With Australian assistance, Alice Pollard, a Solomon Islands woman, has done much to motivate the women of the Solomons to take a direct role in ending violence.

She says this:

As soon as women stand between the two warring factions, men should listen. In many cultures in the Solomon Islands, women play a better role in peace-making. At the height of the tension, we visited the militants, the victims, the government leaders. We were able to play a role as mothers, asking our boys to return arms and come back to normalcy.

Race and reform

Race and religion can play a part in creating conflict but more importantly they can assist in resolving conflict and restarting dialogue. Community based religious and ethnic organisations have a positive role in scrutinising government decisions to ensure they are transparent and assist local communities to avoid conflict.

Where appropriate, Australia's aid has formed partnerships with religious institutions for on-the-ground delivery of aid, particularly in post-conflict situations. An important aspect in the design of Australia's aid projects is consultation with the local community. To reach the local community we talk frequently to the leaders of key community groups.

Religious institutions can also be involved in the implementation of projects, be it schools or training, health care or the distribution of humanitarian aid. But when our aid is delivered by religious or other institutions we insist it must be provided on a non-discriminatory basis.

The Pacific Media Initiative

I would like to mention one other factor that impacts on good governance—the news media.

A free and responsible news media is essential to building and sustaining civil society. When governments are scrutinised by professional and impartial media they become more transparent and accountable.

Since 1999, Australia has spent more than $2.8 million on the Pacific Media Initiative. This program trains journalists and other media professionals to report on governance, public policy and development issues as well as strengthen the technical skills of staff.

So far, the Pacific Media Initiative has trained more than 400 professionals from print, radio and television. We intend to continue this worthwhile project with a second phase.

Conclusion

This symposium provides the opportunity to share and learn from the experiences and perspectives of Pacific island men and women. The papers presented at the symposium are bound to generate lively debate and the fruit of these discussions will help inform, help better policies, better governance and more effective aid programs.
Introduction: Political participation in the Pacific: issues of gender, race and religion

Pamela Thomas, Development Studies Network, Australian National University

Equal access to political participation is considered to be essential to democracy and by extension to political and social stability and economic development. In reality, political participation and access to decision making are strongly influenced by local perceptions of gender, race and religion. Although these issues, individually and collectively, are crucial to understanding politics in the Pacific region, they are often neglected in policy and aid debate as 'social' factors that are at best marginal to politics. The papers in this issue of Development Bulletin suggest that rather than being marginal, these factors are central to understanding the practice of politics in Pacific Island countries. The papers consider political participation from a variety of perspectives including the personal stories of Pacific Island women and men who have been involved in local government, civil society and as political candidates in national elections. It also includes the results of recent academic research undertaken by political scientists in Melanesia. The papers concentrate on how the issues of gender, race and religion impact on access to political participation. Underlying these themes there is consideration for the ways they may be linked to growing political instability and ethnic tension in the region.

Most of the papers in this issue were presented at the symposium Political participation in the Pacific: issues of gender, race and religion, held at Parliament House in Canberra on 17 July 2002, and followed by a one-day workshop at the Australian National University on 18 July. The major issues and recommendations that emerged from the discussion at the symposium and from the workshop are included at the end of this introduction. Major issues to emerge from these papers are:

- the irrelevance of the nation state to most of the population in small, multi-ethnic, clan based societies;
- the difficulties associated with democratic political processes based on liberal values and human rights when they overlay traditional values based on authoritarian forms of male leadership; and
- notions of a 'divine right' to leadership and the political use of religion and the sacred to gain or maintain power.

These papers suggest that politics in many Pacific Island countries, most particularly Melanesia, now share a number of characteristics with cargo cults and millenarian movements.

Together these papers highlight a widespread cultural prejudice against women's political involvement, women's political 'invisibility', the economic difficulties and often physical intimidation or violence women face in wanting to cast their own vote, let alone standing for election. In Melanesia, politics is still considered 'men's business' just as religious leadership is also considered 'men's business'. However, women are recognised across the region as making an important contribution to peacemaking and reconciliation. Religion, most particularly Christianity, is a critical factor in political formation and has been a defining factor in Pacific Island education, health, civil society and values. In all Pacific Island countries Christianity has become enshrined in national constitutions and can to some extent provide one of the very limited national unifying factors that cuts across clans, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. On the other hand, the recent introduction of a large
number of fundamental Christian denominations can now have the opposite effect. It is not coincidental that a large number of Pacific Island politicians are or in the past were Christian pastors or priests. The moral values associated with Christianity are now widely used by aspiring politicians and the power of prayer is seen as an efficacious way of gaining votes. Differences in ethnicity, language and location together remain critical factors in what constitutes political participation in most Pacific Island countries.

In her overview paper Bronwen Douglas discusses growing fundamentalism in Melanesian countries which includes Christian revivalism. Christianity is one of the few widely shared values and is formally enshrined in national constitutions and symbols. She maintains that Christianity is arguably the key national symbol in Pacific states and is often seen as a force for moderation and reconciliation in political crises. She also questions the concept of ethnicity in Pacific Island societies and how Pacific Island people see people of different racial groups and to what extent ethnicity underlies political conflict.

**Religion and political participation**

There is a close link between religion and ethnicity as religion is often an important defining characteristic of ethnicity. Christian values and Biblical stories are so well recognised and so well absorbed and adapted to local culture and belief systems that they are widely appropriated for political purposes. Philip Gibbs discusses the widespread use of religion and religious institutions in electioneering in Papua New Guinea where aspiring politicians use Biblical references, Christian moral values and their adherence to them as effective ways of attracting votes. Both he and Abby McLeod discuss how popular Christian hymns are used in electioneering, with the words slightly changed to include the names of the political candidate. There was widespread belief in the use of magic and it was reported in the media that ‘invisible objects tampered with the ballot papers’. As Gibbs states, people accustomed to the rational empiricism of the West may find this bizarre, but this is not necessarily the case for the Papua New Guinean who has not studied the history of the enlightenment, modernism or postmodernism. Most Papua New Guineans have a holistic world view within which the empirical and non-empirical, the sacred and the secular are distinguished but not separated. Thus dreams and visions, rituals and spells, blessings and misfortunes, and public professions of faith are all considered quite compatible with power and politics.

In Fiji, the political power of the Methodist Church and its very close links with the traditional Fijian power structure have led Fijian nationalists to use the divine right argument to justify their claim over land and state power. Methodism is regarded by some Fijians as the ‘church of our ancestors’ and is strongly connected to indigenous Fijian culture, moral values and political discourse. Steven Ratuva shows how Fijian nationalists and religious fundamentalists have used Christianity to demonise Indo-Fijians, most particularly Hindus, and to provide legitimation for Fijian political paramountcy. He reports a well known church leader preaching to a large crowd at the parliamentary complex saying that the coup leader George Speight was the Fijian biblical Joshua, following the Fijian Moses (Rambuka) who liberated the Fijians (the biblical Israelites) from their oppressors. The use of religion to provide ideological justification for ethnic jingoism is more pronounced when acts of political outrage have to be accounted for. However, as Ratuva shows, while religion can be an agent for ethnonationalist mobilisation and ethnic domination it has the capacity to facilitate interethnic relations, conflict resolution and peace building.

Afu Billy, a candidate for East Malaita in the last elections in the Solomon Islands, found that her marital status - she had been divorced - was an issue frequently raised by the electorate. Her opponent was a religious and dedicated follower of the South Seas Evangelical Church and campaigned as such. In Vanuatu, in the early days of independence many members of parliament were also church pastors and today, women have almost no representation in national, provincial or municipal government because of deeply held traditional and religious beliefs that focus on men as the heads of households and all secular and sacred decision-making.

**Gender and political participation**

In Pacific Island countries women are seldom represented in national politics either as political leaders or decision-makers or as voters who have made independent choices. In the recent national elections in Papua New Guinea, for example, only 41 of 2875 candidates were women. There are numerous cultural, educational, locational and religious reasons for women’s political ‘visibility’. However, as Abby McLeod points out women’s political participation should not be measured solely in terms of their representation in national parliaments as this fails to provide an understanding of their role behind the scenes, in politicking and supporting men’s election campaigns. It also fails to consider how rural women themselves define political activity and participation. She shows how Simbu women in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea consider themselves extremely important actors in local and national politicking.

Generally though, the political culture of Melanesian societies has not absorbed the idea of liberalisation and this continues to create barriers to women’s participation. Orovu Sepoe shows that the system denies the majority of women in Papua New Guinea their economic, social and political rights. Since self government in 1972 only five women have succeeded in becoming members of parliament, however, a growing number are standing for election with support from the organisations Women in Politics and the National Council of Women. In 1977 there were 10 female candidates – in the 2002 elections there were 60.

Other systemic issues that make it more difficult for women than men are the difficulty women have in gaining political party nomination—many women are forced to stand as independents—and the growing financial cost of mounting an election campaign. Afu Billy, who stood in the recent elections in the Solomon Islands
discusses her experiences and the cultural and cost issues involved. As she explains, she faced endless difficulties, not least with peoples' expectations of what they wanted her to provide for them once she was elected. Afu lost the election by one vote. She appealed but lost the court case.

Susan Setae of Papua New Guinea also discusses her experiences in standing for election and facing intimidation and violence throughout her campaign. She believes that the cost of campaigns, a campaign period of eight weeks, the unrealistic demands of voters and ethnicity are enormous hurdles for women politicians to overcome.

Women who were successful in being elected to national parliament were Lady Carol Kidu of Papua New Guinea, who was elected for a second term and is now the Minister for Welfare and Social Development and Isabelle Donald, the MP for Epi in Vanuatu. Both are the only women in their country's parliaments. Isabelle shows the importance of NGOs such as the Vanuatu National Council of Women and Vanuatu Women in Politics in providing the support women need in lieu of party nomination. The NGOs also helped raise women's political profile although they faced hostile opposition from both men and women. According to Isabelle the reluctance of political parties to nominate women is probably the single biggest barrier to women being elected to parliament in Vanuatu — without nomination they do not have the party machinery behind them. Another significant barrier for women is the 'first past the post' electoral system. Isabelle feels her success was due to being well organised, having a well-organised campaign, having had some training in electoral processes, and being well known and respected and trusted by her community on Epi.

Lady Carol Kidu believes her initial success could be attributed to her being the widow of a very well known and highly respected Chief Justice and to his large close knit clan. Her first term in office showed her to be an honest member of parliament who fought tirelessly to improve the situation of the urban poor and to provide greater opportunities for women. Lady Kidu fought to get bills relating to violence against women and rape within marriage through parliament. She was returned with an increased majority. However, she states that the 2002 elections were desperate and dishonest and they disadvantaged women enormously.

Ethnicity and political participation

Ethnicity and traditional clan affiliations underlie politics and political affiliation in Pacific Island countries. The concept of the national state is not well understood except in the homogeneous Polynesian states. People identify with their clan, their culture and traditional means of governance. Small scale traditional systems based on ethnic groupings sit uneasily in democratic parliamentary systems particularly when a country comprises different ethnic groups and these groups are in a minority.

Stewart Fenwick, when considering the issues of law and governance in the Pacific suggests that indigenous identity and ideas of self determination are likely to lead to democratic governance becoming unviable. "The experience in the Pacific of constitutional crises in Fiji, the civil war in Bougainville and the Solomons suggest that there may be far more work to be done to reconcile traditional claims with the prevailing legal and political institutional models ... the promotion of governance is significant for peoples of the Pacific because of the continuing uncertainty arising for the power politics of indigenous cultures, which inherently raises questions about the suitability of constitutional arrangements". The indigenous challenge to the nation state and the resulting political instability in the Asia Pacific context is discussed further by Damien Kingsbury.

The very clear intersection of ethnicity and religion in Fiji and its political consequences is discussed by Steven Ratuva. In Fiji most Indo-Fijians are Hindu or Muslim while Fijians are Christian and while ethnicity alone does not automatically cause conflict, it has been when differences are used as a basis for explain or justify a situation or crisis, or when they are politicalised and used for political mobilisation that conflict occurs. Scott MacWilliam states that there is a major gap in understanding race and racism in Fiji and that race and racist politics currently predominate. He relates the Fijian situation to that of post-apartheid South Africa. In Fiji, justification for the takeover of parliament and the framing of the pre-electoral rhetoric during 2000 and 2001 emphasised racial preservation and development. Problems within Fijian traditional political and economic structures have been constructed and explained in racial terms. One of the principal material conditions which continues to define Fijians as a race is their ownership of land. "The ownership form, masquerading as a precolonial racial tradition, but established and secured in the late nineteenth century, is now a major check on the further advance of indigenous capital".

Agus Sumule outlines recent attempts to ensure that the indigenous people of the Papua Province of Indonesia have political representation. Their political rights are enshrined in the Bill of Special Autonomy for Papua which is now law and implemented in January 2002. For better political representation and to protect the rights of the indigenous people the Papuan People's Assembly was formed thus providing cultural representation of the indigenous people and the authority to protect their rights. Membership is exclusively indigenous Papuans including representatives of customary communities, religious communities and women, each group contributing one-third of the total membership. Among the three groups of the Assembly the women's group is the most proactive. The effectiveness of the Bill and the Papuan People's Assembly has yet to be tested.

Workshop: Major Issues and Recommendations

The following issues and recommendations are based on the ten papers presented at the Symposium held on 17 July at Parliament House in Canberra, discussion on these papers and decisions from a one day workshop held at The Australian National University on 18 July. The workshop participants included the speakers and
key discussants from the Symposium. The process of developing
the recommendations included identification of major issues,
group discussion and group development of recommendations.

Major Issues

The major issues raised were:

• In Pacific island countries, most particularly in
Melanesia, there are very limited opportunities for
women to actively participate in political processes,
even at community level. While in all Pacific countries
women have equal access in law to participate fully in
political processes, there remains discrimination at all
political levels, cultural opposition to their
involvement, and in some instances violence and
physical intimidation. In rural areas in particular
women are unable to make voting decisions and lack
the power to have their voices heard.
• Generally, there is a lack of gender sensitisation
among leaders at all levels, among planners,
politicians and community leaders.
• There are considerable difficulties finding an
appropriate and acceptable balance between
Western style democracy and indigenous political
systems and processes. Democracy needs to be
redefined and an acceptable Pacific/Melanesian
model developed that considers the indigenous
perceptions of rule of law, customary law, communal
and individual rights. There is very limited
knowledge of, or debate on, alternatives to the
western model.
• The concepts of good governance, gender, the state,
and transparency need to be discussed within an
indigenous framework.
• Political and electoral processes and participation,
including the right of the individual to vote, are not
well understood in most rural Pacific communities.
Young people in particular, have little or no
knowledge of political processes.
• The parliamentary system, the role and
responsibilities of members of parliament and the
legal responsibilities of political leaders are not well
understood by either politicians or the public. This
has led to extensive violations of the system,
including abuse of parliamentary privilege and
widespread corruption. The public is largely
unaware that they can hold politicians accountable
for their actions.
• There is a need for organisations or processes, such as
the Ombudsman, where political and electoral
violations, and other human rights violations can be
freely reported and fairly dealt with.

• There are deep seated social and political divisions in
Pacific island societies caused by identity, racism and
religious differences. These divisions and their
political impact need to be acknowledged.
• Intellectual and policy debate are not in tune with
contemporary Pacific issues and their political
implications—most specifically racism and religious
division. This needs to be addressed.

Recommendations

The key recommendations from the workshop are that:

• Greater national and international support be
provided for on-going formal and non formal
education in good governance, political and electoral
processes, and gender equality in electoral rights.
This should be made widely available at community
level through NGOs, church groups and others.
• Greater support be given to non government
organisations like Transparency International to work
together to develop materials and carry out awareness
programs on human rights and voting systems.
• Further research be undertaken into the role that
gender, ethnicity and religion play in political
processes and to find ways to ensure fair and equal
access.
• Donors facilitate the equal participation of women
and other disadvantaged groups in civil society and
local and national government but ensuring political
education for women, and requiring a gender
balance in development-related projects.
• Policy recommendations are developed for national
governments and donors that would support more
equal access to political participation at community,
provincial and national levels.
• Gender sensitisation courses are requirement of all
donor-support programs. In particular these courses
should be made available to leaders at all levels,
provincial planners, religious and community leaders.
• Greater effort be put into the empowerment of rural
people and that empowerment programs include
human rights, gender equality, literacy, knowledge
of the constitution and political rights.
• The non formal education system be strengthened;
governments and non government organisations
provide training programs for women and young
people in leadership and assertiveness, and in the
skills and knowledge required for effective
participation in decision-making and decision-
making bodies.
Why religion, race, and gender matter in Pacific politics

Bronwen Douglas, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University

Introduction
Dominant political assumptions and values look universal to those who believe in them, but politics always has local hues. This article addresses a set of intersecting issues—religion, gender, and ‘race’ or ‘ethnicity’—which loom large in politics and governance throughout the Pacific region. These issues are neglected by exclusively political or economic approaches and are often played down in international policy and aid discourses as merely social factors.

Many Pacific states face problems of relevance and legitimacy, especially in Melanesia where states are recent, artificial colonial legacies that have been imposed on assortments of small, highly diverse societies with no overarching indigenous polities. The great diversity of the Pacific region as a whole makes generalisation problematic. However, there are important commonalities and systematic contrasts to be drawn across the so-called ‘arc of instability’ to Australia’s north, the region from East Timor to Fiji, which is the major focus of this paper.

The themes of religion, gender and race necessitate attention to mundane settings and non-crisis situations, as well as to more dramatic situations when violence and conflict seem like norms. Historical and cultural sensitivity is required to unravel complex, varied processes of local appropriations and practice of foreign ideas in diverse contexts of local modernity. I stress that ordinary Melanesians are not ‘backward’, ‘primitive’ or ‘underdeveloped’, but are our modern, relatively deprived contemporaries. Nor are they simply helpless victims of missionaryisation, colonialism, modernity, globalisation and multinational or elite bastardry, but have actual or potential agency in such situations.

Recognising religion in the Pacific
Why does religion matter in the Pacific region?: because Christianity is neither foreign nor imposed, but an indigenised daily spiritual experience and a powerful ritual practice. Religion and ritual have always been crucial in Pacific societies, and local religious beliefs and practices underpin conversions to Christianity. Pacific Christianities, as everywhere, have a distinctly local cast. Islanders take for granted the efficacy of prayer and mobilise it pragmatically to invoke the power of the Christian god and his earthly agents in support of a wide range of private and public goals, including national ones (Gibbs 1998).

‘So what?’ may be the response of secular, rationalist Westerners, who discount religious explanations as superstition, and are embarrassed by spirituality, especially the born-again, pentecostal or charismatic Christian variety that is increasingly popular in the Pacific. At best, the critical contributions of Pacific missions and national churches to the provision of education, health and welfare services have been ‘the church’ institutionalised in the international good governance agenda as a component of civil society and a reliable conduit for channelling aid.

The academic, policy and aid communities also underrate the ideological importance of Christianity in nation making in Melanesia. Most indigenous candidates for leadership in nascent Melanesian states from the late 1960s were mission-educated, and often ordained, professed Christians. As the four Melanesian states successively attained independence between 1970 and 1980, such leaders helped install Christianity as a traditionalised state or ethnic institution, along with Christianised custom.

In Fiji, Methodism—the denomination of around 80 per cent of indigenous Fijians who comprise just over 50 per cent of the population—is almost completely identified with indigenous tradition, and partly transcends the fault lines of class and region which fracture the ethnic Fijian community. Some Methodist leaders have colluded with ethnic Fijian religious and political fundamentalism by seeking constitutional ratification of Fiji as a Christian state in which taukei (people of the land) exercise paramountcy over non-indigenous communities, especially Indo-Fijians (Balawanilotu 1989, Weir 2000:50–51).

In Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, adherence to Christianity is one of few widely shared values, and Christianity is formally enshrined, together with custom, in national constitutions and symbols where they serve as ambiguous bases for national unity and identity. The adjectives ‘noble’ and ‘worthy’, when applied to traditions and customs in Melanesian constitutions, themselves encode Christian values, since they refer to indigenous practices deemed acceptable by mainline Christian islanders. In all three countries, Christianity is multidenominational but the mainline churches are relatively ecumenical, whereas custom is place-specific and therefore potentially divisive. Even with the recent proliferation of fundamentalist evangelical or pentecostal groups, which are usually sectarian, politically conservative and hostile to custom, there are far fewer Christian denominations than local versions of custom.

This makes indigenised Christianity arguably the key national symbol in these states, though ‘regional cultural institutions such as the Vanuatu Cultural Centre privilege custom. Christianity features largely in nationalist rhetoric but nonetheless resists national appropriation. On the one hand, it is intensely local and parochial; on the other, it has long offered Melanesians membership in global moral communities that transcend the
doubtful legitimacy of colonial and national states.

Though cultural and ideological aspects of the significance of Christianity in Melanesian identities and governance have been largely neglected, the churches have recently been acknowledged as a force for moderation, conflict resolution and reconciliation in political crises (Australian Council for Overseas Aid 2000). While church interventions can often effectively mediate and help reconcile conflicts in Melanesia, recent experience in the Solomons and Papua New Guinea also suggests that goodwill, courage and moral authority can come to grief in the face of undisciplined mobs of violent young men with high-powered weapons.

There are nonetheless signs that Christianity is often seen locally as an antidote to the collapse of internal security that has long plagued parts of Papua New Guinea and, since 1999, has obliterated civic order in the Solomon Islands. The home-grown millenarian God Tri Wan (Holy Trinity) movement in western Enga Province mobilised grassroots Catholic spirituality 'to secure prosperity ... by erasing all tribal fighting and introducing an era of peace' (Bieniek and Trompf 2000:124–26).

Invisible citizens: gender and governance in Melanesia

Throughout the Pacific region, Christianity is grounded in local congregations. From the earliest stages of Protestant missionary endeavour, women participated for their own reasons in regular gatherings of women promoted by female missionaries for moral and instructive purposes (Douglas 1999, 2002). Such meetings were prototypes for the local church women's groups, which missions began to establish from the early twentieth century (Forman 1984). Now indigenised, women's fellowship groups are the norm in rural Pacific communities and are often reported to be growing in structural, economic and moral importance, even in men's eyes (Douglas nd). However, the unfashionable conjunction of women with parochial Christianity means that such groups are seriously under-researched, while professional neglect is exacerbated by widespread local male (and even female) contempt for women's political capacities.

Pragmatically, women's groups are neglected because most are tiny, have mundane agendas, use cautious, low-key methods, and espouse a self-effacing ethos of service, voluntarism and self-expectations. Women's preoccupation with the mundane can frustrate feminists, especially those involved in aid projects seeking to empower indigenous women, rather than reinforce their apparent domestication.

Yet ostensibly conservative, innocuous bodies like YWCAs and church women's organisations can endorse quite radical social agenda and programs (Scheyvens n.d., Dickson-Waiko n.d.). So, indeed, did similar Christian women's organisations during the first-wave of Euro-American feminism from the mid-nineteenth century (Marshall and Marshall 1990:105–20), though it is important not to see such analogies as literal precedents, or modern indigenous people as located in an earlier phase of a universal evolutionary trajectory. In Melanesia, women's involvement in collective action in the protected space of a village women's fellowship—with possible extensions to district, island, provincial, national or regional caucuses—provides their main opportunity to build solidarity, confidence and leadership or managerial skills that can help loosen hegemonic controls over their bodies and thinking.

It is nonetheless important not to romanticise women's groups and their selfless, consensual ideology or to exaggerate their energy and effectiveness. Working with women, says a Solomon Islands woman with long experience as a national women's affairs bureaucrat, can be exhausting and frustrating. Not only do shyness, inexperience and respect for the widespread Melanesian value of seniority make many women unwilling to speak up or take public responsibility, even in a women's group, but those who do so are often condemned for flouting the equally widespread Melanesian value of egalitarianism, or for failing to redistribute generously to followers in accordance with the fundamental value of reciprocity.

Commitment to self-financing on the grounds of group ownership and self-sufficiency limits the resources available for projects, and places a heavy burden on the meagre finances and time of group members, especially leaders, in addition to their onerous gardening, domestic, childcare and marketing responsibilities (Macintyre n.d., Pollard n.d.).

Throughout Melanesia, women are recognised for their critical contributions to local production and for exercising practical and moral authority in the domestic economy, as well as in situations of conflict, fighting, peacemaking and reconciliation, such as in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands (Australian Council for Overseas Aid 2000:28, Douglas 2000, Fugui 2001:554). Yet even the churches are mostly run by men, and across the region women are largely excluded from meaningful participation in political and national arenas and public affairs, except in domains such as women's affairs, health and education. They are excluded by virtue of male prejudice, lack of education and opportunity, and to some extent by choice: notoriously, women rarely vote for female candidates and most women, especially uneducated rural dwellers, agree with men that politics is men's business. Yet if Melanesian women have so far shown a limited disposition to assume wider public responsibilities, that is no justification for the systemic thwarting of those with the desire and the aptitude to do so.

 Everywhere in Melanesia, women are the main objects of domestic and sexual violence, which is a serious and growing problem, although experience in multicultural New Caledonia and Fiji suggests that it is not only an indigenous problem (Dusay 2001, Lateef 1990). Violence against women and children and discrimination against women in the practice of justice and policing are properly important concerns of international donors and agencies. Rather less attention, though, is paid to the intractable and systemic problem of the political invisibility and suppression of women (along with young people) in Melanesian states, and
the national waste and injustice that entails. The virtual irrelevance of national citizenship for most Melanesians—for nearly all women and all but the relatively few men who are actively involved in politics and administration—is a less dramatic problem than the regular explosions of violent conflict that have become a defining feature of this region. However, such irrelevance is both a breeding ground and a symptom of the instability and lack of moral credibility that plague national governments across the region.

Historicising race and ethnicity

At least since 1980, the region from East Timor to Fiji has registered in the Australian media and public imagination largely in terms of political violence or civil war. Across the region, the violent collapse of civic order has frequently been represented by insiders and outsiders alike as ‘ethnic’. Unlike religion and gender, the concepts of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are notably untheorised and under-researched, and their local meanings or appropriateness in Pacific contexts are unclear. Race entered the region as a European scientific category but has also been indigenised, partly in self-defence against colonial racism, but also as it was locally reworked in conjunction with existing indigenous stereotypes about collective bodily and other differences.

There are many so far unanswered questions. What does it mean when a Bougainvillean calls another Papua New Guinean ‘Redskin’ or is called ‘saucepan arse’ (black) in return? What does anti-Sepik prejudice mean in Rabaul, anti-Chimbu in Port Moresby, anti-Indian in Fiji, anti-Malaitan in Solomon Islands, or anti-Wallisian amongst Kanak in New Caledonia? Are all or any of these racisms on a par with long-entrenched white demonisation of Africans, or are they more contextual and contingent? Is ethnic merely a euphemism for racial or does it connote fundamental differences in the nature of prejudice in Oceania compared with the West? How do gender and ethnicity intersect given women’s reported efforts to mediate via exchanges across warring ethnic communities in Solomon Islands (Liloqula and Pollard 2000)?

What is clear is that the concept of ethnicity is usually more distorting than informative when it is applied to recent crises of state across Melanesia. By essentialising the contending parties, it obscures the immediate or ultimate colonial genesis of all such conflicts, together with the significant internal differences within so-called ethnic groups and the cross-cutting relationships of class, religion, region and gender that discredit simplistic dualistic notions of ethnic homogeneity and opposition (Kabutaulaka 2000, Regan 1999:8–12, Teaiwa 2000).

Seemingly racial ideas are entangled with religion in obscure and, for us, confronting ways with potent implications for the legitimacy and viability of modern Melanesian states. Anthropologists frequently report statements by indigenous people, especially from the Papua New Guinea highlands, categorising themselves as ‘black’ and as collectively inferior to ‘whites’ because they lack knowledge or self-control, or because the ancestors and Jesus Christ are held to be white. Local people may attribute the experienced deficiencies of the modern state to such perceived black inadequacies, while Christian millenial expectations often hinge on the promise that Melanesians or their maligned black nation will become equal to whites (for example, Clark 1988:45–47, 1997:73–75, Robbins 1998). It is important, though, not to take such statements literally but to investigate their ambiguities and local resonances, because they are often culturally specific and accompanied by a kind of perverse pride in indigenous masculine wilfulness.

Self-castigation for racial inferiority is a poor basis for nationhood, but such statements, however bizarre to outsiders, also represent a kind of claim to agency, a readiness by people to blame themselves for misfortunes or to take responsibility for failures, regarded as products of their own (reversible) actions and shortcomings (for example, Barker 1996:221–25, Strathern and Stewart 1998, especially 53). This tendency is not just a pathological hangover of guilt for having been colonised, but has widespread indigenous cultural antecedents in the strong, if varied, correlations drawn by Melanesians between religion and morality. Failures were accordingly attributed to spirits offended by improper human behaviour or to incorrect performance of ritual (Douglas 1998:227, Strathern 1979–80:92).

Conclusions

In conclusion, I suggest that a narrow state focus and a universalising, prescriptive political economy are inadequate bases for addressing either the crises of state in Melanesia or the human and social problems and aspirations of Melanesian citizens. Such phenomena as Christian revivalism, male domination and ‘ethnic’ conflict do not happen out of the blue. Rather, they have complex historical and cultural dimensions that must be grasped if we are to understand the phenomena in question and formulate informed prognoses about their likely sociopolitical implications. The framing and delivery of effective foreign policies and aid and development programs in this region demand cultural sensitivity rather than unreflective universalist presumptions and prescriptions. However, a doctrinaire cultural relativism is not the answer. Rather, Melanesian leaders, administrators and citizens should be encouraged to engage creatively and strategically with global discourses such as democracy, law and justice, and human rights, and to do so in humane, principled and culturally inclusive ways, rejecting fundamentalisms of all kinds.

Note

1. The constitution of Papua New Guinea invokes ‘our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now’; that of Solomon Islands brackets ‘the worthy customs of our ancestors’ with ‘the guiding hand of God’; that of Vanuatu refers to a republic ‘founded on traditional Melanesian values, faith in God, and Christian principles’ (Institute of Pacific Studies 1983, II:97, 231, 305).

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Religion and religious institutions as defining factors in Papua New Guinea politics

Philip Gibbs, the Melanesian Institute, Goroka, Papua New Guinea

Introduction

At present, in Australia’s nearest neighbour, Papua New Guinea (PNG), there are more than two million adults looking for ways to express their feelings of anger, disappointment and frustration at the June-July 2002 election for the National Parliament. With 43 political parties and 2,875 candidates vying for 109 seats in parliament, some hitches were predictable. However, nobody predicted the extent of the chaos and intimidation that was experienced in many parts of Papua New Guinea during the election period. Whilst it would be foolhardy to try to generalise about the situation, there seems to be a pervasive sense that something has gone terribly wrong.

On the first day of polling, 17 June, the Prime Minister, Sir Mekere Morauta, having waited nearly five hours to cast his vote, was reported as saying, ‘This is more than a bungle. Someone should be hung for this’ (Post-Courier, 18 June 2002:1). The situation has deteriorated since then. The Prime Minister was fortunate. Bishop Arnold Orowae lined up in Wabag to cast his vote only to find his name did not appear on the electoral roll. He left without voting, and with a feeling of having been disenfranchised.

In Port Moresby, 90 students at the Don Bosco Technical College were registered so their names would be on the common roll, but on voting day only five of their names appeared. The other 85 students went back disappointed and angry. This has been a common experience. In the Highlands, what Standish has called ‘gunpoint democracy’ is rife (Standish 1996), with presiding officers being forced to sign ballot papers with guns to their heads (Post-Courier, 21 June 2002:1). The police are outnumbered and outgunned. Now the army has been called in to try to bring a semblance of order in some provinces.

The defining nature of religion and its institutions in the country’s politics can be stated as follows:

1. The perception of religion is quite different from that in the modern Western countries.

In The National newspaper (July 10:4) there was a large bold headline: ‘Use of magical powers alleged’. The article was about ex-prime minister and re-elected Kokopo member of parliament, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, rejecting calls from nine losing candidates for him to resign because his victory was a result of the use of magic. They alleged that invisible objects tampered with the ballot papers in favour of Sir Rabbie while the votes were being counted.

People accustomed to the rational empiricism of the West may find this illustration rather bizarre, but this is not necessarily the case for the Papua New Guinean who has not studied the history of the enlightenment, modernism or postmodernism. Most Papua New Guineans have a holistic world view within which the empirical and non-empirical, the sacred and the secular are distinguished but not separated. Thus dreams and visions, rituals and spells, blessings and misfortunes, and public professions of faith are all considered quite compatible with power and politics.

In the recent 2000 National Census, 96 per cent of Papua New Guineans declared that they were Christian (Table A6:14). Only 67 per cent claimed to be Christian in Australia in the 2001 census (table B10).

2. In contemporary Papua New Guinea, ‘religious’ language is an accepted and even desired element in political discourse.

The integration of the sacred and secular in the common mind is very often reflected in political discourse faced with biblical references and religious narrative. Politicians and intending candidates go out of their way to create the impression that they are God-fearing, and therefore to be trusted.

Supporters also creatively utilise religious themes. For example, in the Moresby North-East Open electorate, supporters of Casper Wollom went around singing church hymns, but replacing the terms God or Lord in those hymns with the name of their candidate. That such songs might be making a mockery of a Church hymn appears not to be an issue. Indeed, perhaps the song is somehow appropriate if the candidate is seen as a saviour figure.

Many election candidates portrayed themselves as saviour figures. The former Speaker and deputy Prime Minister, John Pundari, was campaigning as ‘Mr Clean’, who attends church on the Sabbath, and who will clean up the mess in government. In the provincial capital, Wabag, he told the people, ‘No-one is going to save us from these things. I assure you that only Pundari will clean and save Enga’ (public speech, Wabag Town, 17 May 2002). Paradoxically, his archrival, Governor Peter Ipatas, claimed that he was governor only because ‘God Almighty who is up above has given this power to me’ (public speech, Yampu, 29 April 2002). Such claims are a not-so-subtle search for legitimacy that appeal to people’s religious sentiments and, at their worst, claim political leadership by divine right.
3. There are radical divisions between the Christian churches.

There are four main church blocks in Papua New Guinea today. The so-called mainline church block comprises mainly Lutheran, Catholic, United and Anglican churches, and some others making up the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches. The Evangelical Alliance comprises churches such as the Apostolic, Baptist, Nazarene and Salvation Army. There are also a growing number of Pentecostal churches such as the Christian Revival Crusade. Finally, the Seventh Day Adventists form a separate block with considerable political influence in Papua New Guinea. It must be frustrating for a national government that has to deal with four church groups that are quite independent of each other.

At a provincial and local level, there is greater pressure for church and government institutions to cooperate because the churches, particularly the mainline churches, still provide 45 per cent of the country's health services and a large proportion of the educational services. Church agencies are responsible for a majority of primary schools, but they also run two of the five universities in the country.

Currently, there is an attempt in some political circles to declare Christianity the state religion of Papua New Guinea. The mainline churches in the PNG Council of Churches generally oppose any move to amend the section on freedom of religion, however, many of the Evangelical Alliance and Pentecostal churches welcome the move. They welcome it because they feel it will help to counter the perceived threat from Islam (according to the recent census there are now 756 Muslims in the country, an increase of 71 per cent over the past ten years), and because supporters believe that, if they declare the nation for God, God will bless the nation and help it prosper.

The perceived threat from Islam was debated in parliament during 2000 and 2001, with some members claiming that section 45 of the constitution, on the freedom of religion, applies only to those religions who worship God, and that those who worship Allah therefore do not come under the freedom of religion clause. The move to declare Christianity as the state religion is therefore a political attempt to set up spiritual parameters for citizens in their choice of religion.

4. The various church factions tend to define and view politics negatively, and in very different terms.

The mainline churches focus on corruption in politics and have concentrated on political education campaigns, appealing to values such as personal freedom, individual choice and the responsibility of every citizen to be politically informed. There was a dramatic episode at Easter 1999, when the Catholic Archbishop of Port Moresby, Brian Barnes, warned that the future of Papua New Guinea as a free democratic country was threatened. In later interviews the archbishop was quoted as saying that the personal conduct of many PNG leaders was shameful, and that there was a need for a change of government (Post Courier, 1 April 1999:3). The archbishop's statement acted as a catalyst for change and, three months later, on 7 July 1999, Prime Minister Bill Skate was forced to resign.

Many of the other churches tend to take an ambivalent stance towards politics. On the one hand, having prayed for God to give them a good government, some claim that God must have heard their prayer and therefore they have the duty to respect and support the government of the day. On the other hand, many see political realities in terms of spiritual warfare against the power of Satan and other evil influences.

5. It is almost impossible to maintain a neutral stance in Papua New Guinea politics.

In the present Papua New Guinean system of electoral politics, papers and polling booths have little to do with freedom and democracy. The trappings of parliament are mostly about surviving by getting a slice of the cake, and part of someone else's slice too, if possible.

A recent edition of the Independent newspaper commented as follows (11 July 2002:5):

When the rule of law is replaced by the law of the jungle, there is no longer present the essential ingredient for a free society. What we now have for democracy in PNG is a farce. The governing principle now is survival of the fittest, hence the rule of engagement commences with threatening behaviour, blackmail, extortion and where that fails to work it moves into the terror mode where assaults, rape, and murder are meted out to those at the receiving end.

Many people in the Highlands decided not to vote because they felt it was too dangerous to do so. There was no secret vote, and to be seen voting for one candidate could risk violent recriminations.

With a priest, Fr Robert Lak, standing again in the Western Highlands, the bishops in the Catholic diocese of Mount Hagen tried every means to show their neutrality. For example, Fr Lak was suspended from the ministry. Churches and church grounds, facilities, musical instruments, and celebrations were not to be used for campaigning. Church workers and Catholic communities were forbidden to accept donations or handouts that had any form of political ties.

However, in the heightened awareness during the contest between Robert Lak and Paiai Wingti, the church's declared neutrality was perceived by each party as support for the other. For example, on one occasion, several priests had lunch with Paiai Wingti and shortly after word went around that Wingti had the support of eight Catholic priests which, of course, was a slap in the face for Robert Lak. In their recent assessment of the elections, the bishops in Mount Hagen have given priority to a restatement of their neutrality, an appeal for calm in a potentially volatile situation, and a commitment to solidarity with the victims of the unjust electoral process.

6. Religious institutions suffer as politics becomes dominated by ethnic rivalries.

According to Bernard Narokobi, a sense of national purpose, national ethnicity or national morality was not present at the time of independence in Papua New Guinea, except among a few
politicists and civil servants (Narokobi 1980:75). Michael Jacobsen has identified resistance to a national culture in PNG, and Jeffrey Clark argues that national consciousness is virtually nonexistent in the Southern Highlands province (Jacobsen 1997, Clark 1997). What national unity does exist is often attributed to the work of the churches (Trompf 1991:234).

In recent times Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern have argued that capitalism, democracy as patronage and a weak state have led to a critical situation for the Hagen people, leading to an upsurge in religious and ritual activity (Stewart and Strathern 1998). That was before 2000. After the dire millenial predictions about that year, many people felt let down by their pastors and now ethnic rivalries are having a negative effect on religious institutions. The Apostolic Nuncio, the late Archbishop Hans Schwemmer, declared last year at the funeral of a murdered priest, that Papua New Guinea's claim to being a Christian country is 'getting weaker every day' (The National, 4 September 2001:14).

7. Electoral politics, particularly in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, is becoming a quasi-religious cult in opposition to the State.

The election campaign this year was noticeably different from that of 1997. There were no large-scale, church-led campaigns such as the Operation Brukim Skru prayer campaign of the last election (Gibbs 1998). The open courting of the church vote was less obvious, possibly because candidates could no longer play on the highly emotional theme of the year 2000 and the end of the millennium. The focus this time was on how to gain five years in power, along with the benefits of access to that power.

This year—particularly in the Highlands—there was evidence of the emergence of an anti-state political cult. This political cult led to the institution of the state becoming redundant, brought government services to a standstill, and made the high ideals of the country irrelevant. The government had to send the army into some provinces to try to subdue the war lords who were holding public servants and election officials to ransom.

I use the term political cult deliberately, as it also has religious connotations. Contemporary PNG politics has all the trappings of a religious movement, with its recruitment campaigns, its members, its creeds and its rituals. The rituals are predictable, with mug shots on posters, and meetings where candidates are presented with signs of honour such as flowers, or are carried on people's shoulders. A pastor is invited to open the meeting with a prayer, there will be songs, sometimes led by the local church youth choir—whose musical instruments have perhaps been provided by the candidate—and there will be a feast for the supporters. Fortune tellers are there watching for the least sign of the outcome of the elections, such as a gust of wind blowing feathers in a particular direction.

While I avoid the term cargo cult, some forms of cargo thinking feature in this political cult—it could be called economic pragmatism. A governor of Enga reputedly said, 'God creates miracles: men create miracles with money.' Everything, including moral principles and personal integrity, has a price tag on it. In the short term, many groups barter their votes to the highest bidder. In the long term, to be the supporter of a winning candidate means 'life': access to jobs and economic development over the next five years. Being the supporter of a losing candidate means economic and social 'death'. In recent times, Electoral Development Funds (commonly known as slush funds) amounting to 1.5 million kina (A$750 000) a year have been given to parliamentarians K1.25 million as project funds, and K250 000 to use at their own discretion. It is no wonder that I heard one candidate telling his supporters that the campaign was a contest to see who would get the key to the safe.

More concerning are the totally unrealistic campaign policies of some political parties. For example, the People's Labour Party, led by Peter Yama, has a tithing policy whereby 10 per cent of the total earnings of the country would go to the Home Affairs Department to be distributed to the churches. Realists such as Lae member of parliament Bart Philemon have pointed out the impossibility of carrying out such promises (Post-Courier, 29 May 2002:8). A national budget of K4 billion means that this policy would see K400 million given to the churches.

Even more unreal are the claims of the National Vision for Humanity Party, which is promising a monthly social security grant of K10 000 (A$4 500) to every family, which means a monthly social security bill of K10 billion! Such policies could be written off as the work of nuts, except that they receive support from such prominent people as Sir Paulias Matane (The National, 4 April 2002:13).

A notable feature of this political cult is its use of dependent clients, notably youths. The majority of the youth in Papua New Guinea are unemployed, so it is not difficult for a candidate offering money and food to recruit young people for their campaigns. As a result, the majority have been lost to the churches. During the voting period, youths with modern firearms took over polling stations in many Highlands areas and forced people to vote for their candidate.

Conclusion

With four Highlands provinces in a state of anarchy at the time of writing, we have a situation of political cult versus the State. These provinces are home to one and a half million people, 30 per cent of the country's population. Moreover, they are the principal sources of foreign trade income: coffee from Simbu and the Western Highlands, gold from Enga, and from gas and oil in the Southern Highlands. During these elections, the value of the kina has fallen steadily. The outcome of the elections in these provinces will be crucial for the economic and social future of the entire country.

Papua New Guinea has perhaps come to the point where, as Livy said of ancient Rome, 'we can neither endure our vices nor face the remedies needed to cure them'. The vices are readily apparent. The remedies are less obvious, but clearly difficult. As is known from the history of Europe and the emergence of religious fanaticism, religion and religious institutions can be used for good
or evil. With politics itself taking on a cultic role in PNG society today, we must seriously question what effect this will have on the society in both the short and long term. Does the political cult have the power to redeem itself, or will it plunge the nation deeper into crisis?

Perhaps a positive aspect of the present situation is that it is so undeniably bad: perhaps this election will shock people into making positive changes. It will take time, and the institutional churches may have an important educational and defining role. The churches will have to put aside some of their differences and form a workable, unified interchurch group to engage with the government. NGOs and churches must form a high-level forum to discuss issues such as how to develop workable democratic processes for Papua New Guinea, and how to transform politics so that it can be seen as an honourable profession informed by Christian and humanitarian values.

The churches will have to put more effort into communicating with civil leadership, and offer alternatives to what has become a power-hungry dysfunctional cult. They must also help bring the disempowered casualties of the present system together for dialogue. The solution to an abused system is not necessarily another system, but rather the transformation of the present system in a way that ensures liberation for a majority of the frustrated and disenfranchised people. If the churches can work with the state in these ways, then they will fulfil an important role in defining the future of Papua New Guinean politics.

Notes
1. The preamble to the Papua New Guinea constitution contains the pledge to 'guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now'.
2. See, for example, the PNG Parliamentary Hansard for the debate on 8 August 2000.

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God's will in paradise: the politics of ethnicity and religion in Fiji

Steven Ratuva, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Australian National University

Introduction

Ethnicity and religion intersect in Fiji frequently, and this convergence may express itself in complex ways. For instance, religion can be used as a means of political and ethnic mobilisation, and also to de-ethnicise issues and bring about interethnic reconciliation and dialogue. Likewise, politics can be used as a means of articulating religious ideologies, and as a way of regulating and ameliorating religious tension. The term 'ethnicity' is broad and encompassing, and refers to identifying and categorising groups according to certain sociocultural characteristics, including inheritance. Religion itself, amongst other sociocultural factors, is used widely by many communities worldwide as a mode of ethnic identification.

However, in Fiji there are many crosscutting and intervening factors, such as economic relations, political ideology and education, which may also influence the relationship between religion and ethnic politics. For instance, while some Fijian-Christian politicians use the Bible to justify their political ideology, others may be influenced by the neoliberal principles of the World Bank or genuine feelings for the poor, whatever their ethnic or religious background may be. Nevertheless, religion can still be a potent tool for mobilisation and legitimation in ethnic politics. In Fiji, it has been used to spawn political agitation and extra-legal political activities, as we saw during the coups of 1987 and 2000.

The ethnicity-religion intersection

The parallel relationship between ethnicity and religion is reflected in Table 1 in which it can be seen that, with some exceptions, indigenous Fijians are mostly Christians, while Indo-Fijians are largely Hindus and Muslims. Of the 449,482 people (58 per cent of the total population) who consider themselves as Christians, 390,380 (87 per cent of all Christians) are indigenous Fijians; 38,383 (8.5 per cent of all Christians) are others; and 20,713 (4.6 per cent of all Christians) are Indo-Fijians. Of the total of 264,173 who regard themselves as Hindus, 262,851 are Indo-Fijians, 864 are indigenous Fijians, and 458 are others. For those who consider themselves as Muslims, 53,753 are Indo-Fijians, 324 are indigenous Fijians, and 246 are others.

However, these broad ethnoreligious categories are not monolithic in themselves, but consist of multiple subcategories. Table 2 (overleaf), for instance, shows this heterogeneous pattern indicating 14 different Christian subgroups, five Hindu subgroups and three Muslim subgroups.

Among the Christians, the Methodists constitute the largest group 36.2 per cent of the total national population and 66.5 per cent of the total Fijian population. The fact that the Methodists are numerically superior within the Fijian community also accounts for their political power and influence. Because it was the first Christian church to be established in Fiji (in the middle 1830s), Methodism has been regarded as the ‘lotu ni noda qase’ (church of our ancestors). This gives it a strong sense of historical connection with indigenous culture, moral values and political discourse. The Catholic church, the second largest of the Christian denominations, does not have the same degree of connection with Fijian culture. Nevertheless, it deploys Fijian traditional symbolism and values in its worship practices and doctrines extensively.

The other smaller Fijian churches do not have the same degree of 'indigenisation' as the Methodists. In fact many of them, usually the fundamentalist and evangelical variants, tend to be Americanised, and some even have disdain for certain Fijian cultural practices. Increasingly, many Fijians are joining these churches because of their pop-concert approach—which attracts young people—and their emphasis on spirituality as a form of escapism from earthly drudgery.

The social and psychological discomfort created by the unsettling political situation in Fiji after the coups of 1987 and 2000 drove many to find spiritual solace in evangelical spiritualism. Many also join these churches to escape the heavy ceremonial, social and economic obligations of Methodism. Because many of the small churches have direct links with their parent churches overseas, they tend to have an international outlook compared to the Methodist church, which tends to be inward looking and locally focused.

Table 1 Religious affiliation by ethnicity, Fiji population, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fijians</th>
<th>Indo-Fijians</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>261,972</td>
<td>5,432</td>
<td>13,224</td>
<td>280,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>52,163</td>
<td>3,520</td>
<td>13,637</td>
<td>69,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christians</td>
<td>76,245</td>
<td>11,757</td>
<td>11,522</td>
<td>99,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>262,851</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>264,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>53,753</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>54,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religions/no religion</td>
<td>2,007</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>3,597</td>
<td>7,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>393,575</td>
<td>338,818</td>
<td>42,684</td>
<td>775,077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amongst the Indo-Fijians, the religious distinction between Hindus and Muslims has, in some cases, expressed itself in politically divisive ways. Many Muslims define themselves as ethically Muslim and not Indian, and reject being lumped together with Hindus as part of an assumed homogenous Indian category. They feel strongly that the Fijian-Indian political tension is really a matter between indigenous Fijians and Hindus. Over the years, there have been demands by some Muslims for separate representation in parliament. Division sometimes surfaces between the various Muslim groups, but this is usually about legitimacy and who best represents the interests of the Muslim community. The various Hindu groups are by and large educationally oriented, with well-established educational societies, but during national elections intergroup rivalry can be invoked for political party mobilisation. The same is true for various other ‘cast’ and ethnoregional identities, where a sociocultural background as a southern Indian may be used as a basis for political party loyalty and links to party candidates.

In the broader national discourse, the significance of religion as a means of political identification and mobilisation is easily subsumed by ethnic politics. The use of religious discourse to articulate ethnic and political ideology is prevalent amongst indigenous Fijian extreme nationalists, most of whom are Methodists. Fundamentalist Methodist ideas have been readily and strongly deployed to express sentiments that allegedly represent Fijian interests.
Political ideology, conflict and religion

Differences in religion or ethnicity on their own do not automatically cause conflict, as is generally assumed. It is when differences are used as a basis for a relationship or to explain or justify a situation or crisis, or when they are politicised and used for political mobilisation, that 'religious conflict' occurs (see Ratuva 2000). Often, so-called religious conflicts are underpinned by various factors such as socioeconomic conflict, political power struggles and land disputes. Conflict can become even more intense if religion is the dominant factor in ethnic identity, as it can be a powerful means of ethnic identification and a force for nationalism. Political conflict can be fuelled by the use of religion, especially when the notion of divine right is invoked. Fijian nationalists have continually used the divine right argument to articulate their claim over land and state power.

In Fiji, serious religious conflict in the form of civil war, as in the Middle East or Northern Ireland, has not taken place. One of the major reasons is that ethnic tension in Fiji, rooted in the British colonial practice of divide and rule, revolves largely around the question of legitimacy of state control. While religion has been an important factor in political discourse at various levels, it has not been the dominant factor in defining the structure of political institutions, constitutions (there have been three since 1970), political relations, political loyalty and mobilisation. Ethnicity and socioeconomic relations (development, land and utilisation of resources) have been more fundamental determining factors.

Religion has an informal role in Fiji politics, and operates largely within the realm of ideology and cultural expression. For Hindus and Muslims, by and large, religion provides an important basis for consolidating their diaspora identity and for moral reassurance in a situation of ethnic tension and political insecurity. Often this political insecurity shapes political culture, and is translated into ethnised bloc voting during the national elections.

'Hinduism' or 'Muslimness' do not define 'Indianness' as an overriding cultural system. On the contrary, the Indian identity is more of a political identity than a cultural one. The term Indian is an officially designated category, which becomes the overriding political identity in an atmosphere of ethnised politics.

Christian denominations such as Methodism participate at various levels in discourses. At one level, such denominations could be used as cultural prisms for defining 'Fijianness'. At another level, they could represent moral systems that shape social and spiritual norms, individual behaviour and broader social relationships. At another level, they could be mechanisms for articulating political and ideological discourses.

Nationalists and religious fundamentalists have often used Christianity to demonise Indo-Fijians (especially Hindus) and provide divine legitimation for Fijian political paramountcy. Moreover, Muslims are regarded as comparatively spiritually friendly and politically trustworthy because they worship the same god as Christians, in contrast to Hindus who are regarded as outright heathens. During a public gathering in 1999 against the coalition government led by Mahendra Chaudhry (Fiji's first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister), a well-known Methodist lay preacher and nationalist, now a senator, told a cheering Fijian crowd in the capital, Suva, that the country would soon experience the 'wrath of god' because it was being run by 'Hindu heathens' (Thomas 2001).

Another well-known evangelical church leader, preaching to a politically hyped up crowd at the parliamentary complex where the government ministers were being held hostage after the May 2000 coup, said that the coup leader, George Speight, was the Fijian biblical Joshua, following in the wake of the Fijian Moses (General Sitiveni Rabuka), who staged the 1987 military coup to 'liberate' the Fijians (biblical Israelites) from their 'oppressors' (Ratuva 2001:15).

Fijians often use biblical analogies to refer to themselves. For instance, a mythology that has origins in the early twentieth century talks of Fijians as descendants of the lost tribe of Israel mentioned in the Old Testament. This mythological invention helps to bolster the cosmological convergence between the divine and earthly realms, philosophically expressed in the Fijian maxim 'noqu kalou, noqu vanua' (my god, my land). This maxim represents the ideological core around which Fijian ethnopolitan pride revolves.

The Fijian state has always maintained a secular character, and a proposal by Fijian nationalists and Methodist fundamentalists to impose a state religion was rejected even by many Christians, including many Methodists. The attempt to make Christianity the state religion started in earnest after the 1987 military coup. To reinforce its demands, the Methodist church organised a roadblock around Suva city on a Sunday to show its anger at what it saw as the abuse of their Sabbath by 'heathen races', with reference to Indo-Fijians. Following the two coups in 1987, a number of Hindu temples were desecrated or burnt. In a highly publicised case, a group of young Methodists in Lautoka city burned a Hindu temple after a prayer service in their church on the opposite side of the same road. Many of those who were subsequently arrested and charged with arson testified in court that what they did was in fulfilment of 'god's will' (Ratuva 2001).

The use of religion to provide ideological justification for ethnic jingoism is often more pronounced when acts of political outrage have to be accounted for. For instance, a few days after the coup in May 1987, the then Colonel Rabuka, addressing a crowd of Fijian supporters, said, 'The sooner we accept the new constitution the better, for we will be preserving what is dear to our hearts—the chiefly system, our land, and Christianity' (Nai Lalakai, 23 May 1987:5). A month later, on 25 June, a military advertisement in the Fijian newspaper, Nai Lalakai, screamed, 'The Call to War is Sounded. Fight On! Fight On! In the Spirit of God!' The rest of the advertisement captured the ideological core of Fijian ethnopolitanism, declaring (Nai Lalakai, 25 June 1987:5):

Are we Fijians prepared to be ruled by an unchiefly and unChristian system? The Army is trying to protect the chiefs and their people ... We are relying on God to be Lord of this land. We should not worship other gods. Nor should we worship wealth, moon and sun, or the intellectuals. Only Jehovah should be Fiji's God ... If leaders of the land are non-Christian, the Fijian race will be wiped out.

October 2002
This pronouncement not only acted as a religious tool for political mobilisation, it also encapsulated the ideological argument for Christianity as the state religion.

The paradox of the 'multiracial' experiment

The sudden outburst of Fijian ethnonationalism in 1987 resulted from the defeat of the Alliance Party, which had been in power since independence in 1970. The Alliance Party had a complex structure and operated on several levels of political discourse. Various ethnic groups (Fijians, Indo-Fijians and 'others') formed sub-political groupings that were affiliated to the main party. While this pluralistic organisation constituted the multiracial orientation of the party, there was also an underlying consensus regarding the paramountcy of Fijian interests.

The Alliance Party's policies were encapsulated in the multiracial ideology, which amongst other things advocated freedom of worship and public religious expression. One of the ways in which this was done was through national observance of religious holy days as public holidays, such as Easter for Christians, Diwali for Hindus and Mohammed's birthday for Muslims.

Intercultural intercourse was encouraged at the social level but, beneath the veneer of public multiracialism, ethnic grievances lurked unchecked. The policy of multiracialism consisted of two contradictory tendencies: the philosophy of coexistence and the maintenance of distinct cultural identities (see Ratuva 2002a).

After the Alliance lost the election in April 1987, the ethnonationalist forces it had been nurturing under the philosophy of Fijian paramountcy coupled with political expressions of distinctiveness, which had been submerged under the multiracial discourse, came to the surface in an agitated and violent way. This was partly fuelled by the Fijian fear and distrust of Indo-Fijians who, by 1946, were numerically superior. By 1987, Indo-Fijians made up over 50 per cent of the population.

The collapse of Fiji's multicultural experiment, previously considered a unique model for the rest of the world, gave way to further ethnic fragmentation and tension. Attempts to re-engineer multiculturalism and political moderation through the 1997 constitution also failed. Rabuka and Jai Ram Reddy (an Indo-Fijian leader) attempted to bring about an interethnic political partnership in the spirit of the constitution, but were rejected by their respective communities during the 1999 election for selling out. This paved the way for Chaudhry, who was initially opposed to the 1997 constitution and the Reddy–Rabuka reconciliation deal, to become prime minister, until he was overthrown in a coup in May 2000.

Religion and reconciliation: the continuing dilemma

Religion can be an agent for ethnonationalist mobilisation and ethnic domination, yet it has the capacity to facilitate interethnic relations, conflict resolution and peace building. Since May 1987, and indeed after May 2000, religion has played an important role in national reconciliation. For instance, the group Interfaith Search, Fiji, has been at the forefront of interreligious worship and reconciliation between Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Baha'is and Sikhs.

However, certain members of the fundamentalist Christian churches refused to participate in the interfaith process on the grounds that they found it revolting to worship alongside 'heathens'. Nevertheless, since the coup in May 2000, the Christian churches have embarked on a national reconciliation drive to unite the Fijians and Christians. On the other hand, the government's reconciliation project, under the Ministry of National Reconciliation, was geared towards improving interethnic relations. However, there is scepticism within the Indo-Fijian community about the viability of the government's national reconciliation program. Despite this, civil society, churches and community organisations have been enthusiastically involved in reconciliation and conflict resolution programs nationwide.

The continued interethnic suspicion may help to widen the ethnic gap. In many ways, this is worsened by the continuing power struggle over leadership. On one hand there is the claim to political leadership by the current Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, who won the largest number of seats in the 2001 general election, and on the other hand is the demand by Chaudhry to be part of the government under the multiparty cabinet provisions of the 1997 constitution. This dispute is going through the courts at the time of writing. Meanwhile, the legal wrangling and political tension continues to create an atmosphere of uncertainty.

Conclusion

Religion is an important defining characteristic of ethnicity, even more so when it intersects with religion. In Fiji, this relationship is a complex one: religion is deliberately deployed as a tool of political and ideological mobilisation and articulation, and it also facilitates interethnic reconciliation. Although Fiji has a small population, the extent of religious and ethnic diversity partly accounts for the continuing tension and contradictions. However, Fiji's society has shown remarkable resilience in the face of ethnonationalism and religious intolerance, much more than many societies in the world now consumed by religious violence. It has not descended into mindless ethnic and religious violence as in Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Rwanda or even Solomon Islands.

Every time there is conflict, there is an even greater desire among the people of Fiji to consolidate their moral resources to combat potential political anarchy, economic collapse and social decay. Resilience and optimism continue to be the forces that maintain social cohesion and act as beacons of hope in these difficult times (see Ratuva 2002b). Despite the challenges, there is no doubt a huge reservoir of hope amongst the people of Fiji as they engage in rebuilding a scarred society. Conflict has made their determination to achieve peace ever stronger.
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The changing face of racism and racial development in Fiji

Scott MacWilliam, National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University

Introduction

There is a major gap in the understanding of race and racism in Fiji: there is no history of either. By most existing accounts, the people of Fiji were, from the beginning, and still are formed into races 'naturally'. As Deryck Scarr has claimed, at the outset of colonial rule in 1875, Fiji was already 'a multi-racial community' (1984: chapter 3).

Even those who try to explain contemporary racism in Fiji commence from the position that races are given, not historically formed. For those who find the eternal character of race produces undesired effects, including racism and racist politics, one solution is to counter, displace or deflect the view that this is permanent. This is done not by showing that, like all social categories, race has a material and therefore a temporary basis, but by seeking to find political solutions which accept its 'naturality'.

The 1996 Constitution Review Commission’s recommendations were based on the proposition that, to counter the natural and permanent divisiveness of race, a multiethnic community should be created in the interests of 'a united future' characterised by 'racial harmony and national unity'. According to the commissioners, because race is a premodern expression and, as such, unscientific (Reeves, Vakatora and Lal 1996:32), it can be tamed through a modernist instrument such as a constitution. No obvious thought was given to the possibility, even certainty, that race and its expressions are all too modern, formed and reformed anew under existing conditions.

Unfortunately for the commissioners, and for others who seek to counter ideas of race and racism in Fiji, race and racial development retains primacy. During the 2001 election campaign, the leader of the party that gained the most seats, the United Fiji Party/Fijian Unity Party (SDL), and now Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, repeatedly pronounced his mission as saving the Fijian race from extinction. In June 2002, when a seminar jointly held by the University of the South Pacific and the Australian National University provided a forum for debate called Fiji Update, speakers critical of official projections for economic growth were subsequently attacked by an anonymous spokesman from the Prime Minister’s Department as being 'blindly ethnically biased'. This attack was in turn constructed as a racial matter by a correspondent (Daily Post, 19 June 2002). In Fiji, a racial lens focuses almost all discourse.

The principal problem for those of an historical, as distinct from an ahistorical or even antihistorical, bent is therefore how to explain 'the invention of race' in Fiji, as well as its continued reproduction (compare Theodore W Allen’s two-volume work on the formation of the white race in the United States, 1994 and 1997).

South Africa as a template for Fiji

The question considered here is why race and racist politics currently predominate in the country. An appropriate starting point is a recent argument that the situation in Fiji can be directly compared with postapartheid South Africa (Ratuva 2002:130–31). The basis of the alleged similarity is that, in both countries, governments came to power proclaiming the need to address inequality with affirmative action programs. Government interventions addressing the supposed need have been in place in Fiji since 1987, but in an even more pronounced manner after May 2000. In South Africa, by Ratuva’s reckoning, since 1994 the main beneficiaries have been the black middle class, and this is the direct point of comparison with Fiji, where subsequent to 1987 much the same thing has happened, expressed as 'communal capitalism' (Ratuva 2000; MacWilliam 1999, 2002b, MacWilliam with Daveta 2000).

Whatever the merits of describing the advance of indigenous capital in Fiji as a case of communal capitalism similar to what is occurring in South Africa, to make it stick the matters of race, racism and racial development are made to disappear into the seeming respectability of ethnic groups and economic nationalism (Ratuva 2002). Leaving aside the question of why economic nationalism should be associated solely with indigenous—or one ethnic group—concerns, the more interesting matter is how and whether race can be written so easily out of post-1994 South Africa and post-1987 Fiji.

Over the course of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, a critical strategic development for the African National Congress-led opposition was the formulation of the objective of a 'non-racial South Africa'. As a result, since 1994, black capital has been able to advance rapidly without entirely frightening off international and local investors, because the advance was initially couched as non-racial, 'only' concerned with equality—providing Ratuva’s ‘place in the mainstream economy’ (2002: 130). Whether race will continue to be written out of calculations once black capital’s advance comes up against major barriers in the form of other international and local capitals, and the continued impoverishment of much of the population, is now being determined in South Africa.

No such non or antiracial politics has even begun in the South Pacific. Indeed, critics of the current trajectory of Fijian politics,
including some from the Fiji Labour Party, the trade unions and the academic left, still espouse a multiracial/multicultural objective that will pit local development against the supposed dominance of international capital and so resolve the 'indigenous question' (Robertson and Sutherland 2001).

If post-apartheid South Africa has some parallels with Fiji after the May 2000 takeover of parliament and the overthrow of the elected government, the more important point of departure for understanding postcolonial Fiji is South Africa under apartheid, where separate racial development was the organising principle of Afrikaner nationalist politics. In South Africa, it was impossible to separate the contestants along the lines of whether they were indigenous or not, in part because the 'myth of indigenousness' (Horowitz 1991:107–10) made it possible for Afrikaners also to claim that their ancestors had rights of first settlement to parts of the country.

Especially after the Second World War, racial development in South Africa was expressed as protection of the white race from extinction, or at least from being out-voted by the more numerous blacks in electorally representative politics, and the demand of Afrikaner capital for a place in the sun or the 'mainstream economy'. The challenge to the Afrikaner advance posed by black politics had surfaced initially in the 1920s, when organisations that were forerunners of the African National Congress were formed to lobby for small, black, predominantly urban businesses. After the Second World War in South Africa, racial development or apartheid secured an larger economic space so that Afrikaner capital could move from agriculture into finance and large-scale manufacturing (see Cowen and MacWilliam 1996; chapter 3).

Racial development and indigenous capital in Fiji

In Fiji, the idea of the indigenous or native population was first constructed as a race at the intersection of 'poor white' settlement, the imposition of colonial rule, and the demands of the indigenous ruling class for preservation of their privileges and forms of acquisition (Scarr 1984: chapter 1, Lal 1992: introduction). Subsequently, migrants from India were seen as another race, through the joining of local conditions with British imperial authority and a fledgling Indian anticolonial nationalism. Race was coupled with the modern idea of development (Cowen and Shenton 1996), especially for the indigenous population that was believed to be threatened with extinction (MacWilliam forthcoming a).

However, contemporary conceptions of race and racism in Fiji are another matter altogether, and are not, as is so often claimed, simply or even largely a colonial residue. Racial development now covers the movement of indigenous businessmen and women into one field after another in the domestic economy. This movement, which has largely bypassed agriculture, has also not entered trade, large or small, to any great extent. (The minimal importance of ethnic Fijian capital in large and small trading, as well as the presence of Indo-Fijian wage workers and the self-employed in prominent activities including taxi-driving, largely fuels the mistaken impression that Indo-Fijians dominate the economy. Indo-Fijian traders instituting price increases for consumption goods also provide a substantial material basis for objections to the preponderance of this group in commerce, as well as for an ideology of Indo-Fijian economic dominance.)

The ascendancy of indigenous capital has involved the displacement or incorporation of international and other local manufacturing, as well as property capital in arena after arena, a fact often skillfully disguised and therefore not always obvious to the casual observer. How many such observers are aware, for instance, that since 1995 most of the commercial operations of trading firms Carpenters and Morris Hedstrom have been carried out in premises that are majority owned by Fijian Holdings Limited (FHL)? Currently, FHL is the sole owner of the large construction materials enterprise, Basic Industries, and has begun a major drive into the food production and tourist industry. The firm also has an 80 per cent holding in its subsidiary, the Merchant Bank of Fiji, one of the country's largest lending institutions, including for Indo-Fijian taxi and shop owners (Fijian Holdings Annual Reports, 1992–2001; MacWilliam 1999, 2001). In 2001, FHL established a finance arm, Fijian Holdings Trust Management, which will make it possible to bring together ethnic and Indo-Fijian capital in a form unencumbered by the restrictions on non-indigenous Fijian share ownership that apply to the parent company. The forthcoming privatisation of substantial state-owned enterprises is a likely target for this finance enterprise. While FHL is the country's most important indigenous enterprise, the directions it has taken are being replicated by other smaller wholly owned indigenous firms and joint ventures across the economy.

Racial development, equality and racial reaction

Justifications for the takeover of parliament, and the framing of the pre-electoral rhetoric during the second half of 2000 and then 2001, principally emphasised racial preservation and development. After the election, and for the purposes of international as much as domestic consumption, the Qarase government shifted the emphasis to affirmative action and equality. Ratuva rightly notes—and this is the basis for his parallel with the post-apartheid South African government—affirmative action measures join two separate and opposed directions. One is the provision through the state of consumption goods as the basis of welfare. The second is state-directed efforts to extend the right to accumulate the means of production for ethnic Fijians and Rotumans, Ratuva's middle class engaged in communal capitalism. In contemporary Fiji, racial development is primarily about the second form of measure, which enlarges the space for the indigenous Fijian capital that has now become the hegemonic layer (for the idea of layers of capital, see Cowen and MacWilliam 1996).

This hegemony, the latest in a continuing series of forms of racial development in Fiji, is secured because economic and political power are joined together at the apex of state power. The current
Qarase government represents a more substantial joining of both forms of power than has been achieved since independence, including by either international or Indo-Fijian capital (see also Robertson and Sutherland 2001: xvi).

The coupling is so substantial that the government has been able, after the hiatus during the term of the People’s Coalition government, to restart the advance of indigenous capital through the state, as occurred after the 1987 coups. Now a government comprised of the ‘poor wealthy’, indigenous capital, is struggling to portray itself as standing for two forms of equality, the right to accumulate and the right to receive welfare support, especially of the indigenous ‘poor poor’ (MacWilliam 2000a).

This portrayal requires a continuous separation of the bulk of the population into indigenous people and others, whether or not such a separation is expressed in distinct levels of consumption. In Fiji, poverty studies, including those carried out at the request of the Great Council of Chiefs, suggest that although the manner in which poverty is expressed differs—as, for instance, between rural and urban households—there is no basis for concluding that indigenous Fijians are disproportionately represented among the country’s poorest households. However, indigenous Fijian voters occupying rural smallholdings form the central core of the government’s electoral base, as well as living where the advance of indigenous capital into agriculture directly collides with the demands of households for improved living conditions through increased smallholding production.

Thus the government’s drive to sustain the advance of indigenous capital, as well as check household impoverishment, utilises the same slogans of equality and affirmative action. These slogans, however, are not modern liberal signs of the end of race and racism in Fiji, but contemporary formulations of racial development.

Conclusion

The current significance of the ideologies of racial solidarity and development arises from the fact that, no matter how successful are the measures to improve the welfare of indigenous Fijians on rural smallholdings, the continued presence of smallholders forms a persistent barrier to the most pressing needs of indigenous capital. These needs include room to expand in the countryside and an enlarged agricultural labour force.

The difficulties raised by this barrier suggest why race and racism must remain central to Fiji. One of the principal material conditions which continues to define Fijians as a race is their ownership and occupation of an ever-increasing proportion of the land. The ownership form, masquerading as a precolonial racial tradition, but established and secured in the late nineteenth century through ‘a charter of the land’ (France 1969), is now a major check on the further advance of indigenous capital.

As the displacement of Indo-Fijian cane farmers accelerates and one historical period involving tenancy nears an end, a more substantial battle for land and its produce has begun. Although this cannot be constructed as easily in the racial terms of the past—landowners versus Indo-Fijian tenants and others—the battle to grab forests, including mahogany forests, to centralise and concentrate agricultural land for the production of sugar and other crops necessitates racial definition in a new form. Converting former rural smallholding indigenous households into landless proletarians requires not simply measures to displace Indo-Fijians from all positions of power and support. It also requires a means of constructing solidarities suggesting equality among racial lines, disguising and thus damping down the opposition to indigenous accumulation of former smallholdings and their produce.

That is, affirmative action is not, as the current Fiji government likes to suggest (Ratuva 2002), a means of overcoming prior Indo-Fijian racial development. Instead it is critical for preventing the most recent phase of ethnic Fijian development turning into its opposite: destruction, decay and prolonged warfare among Fijians—underdevelopment instead of development. The very prospect of such a dangerous struggle, and the need to dampen the hostilities that result, ensure that race and racial development will continue to be the most substantial expressions of daily life in the country.

Note

1. The ownership and management of Fijian Holdings Ltd has now largely been privatised, since the firm was first established in the early 1980s, ostensibly as the commercial arm of provincial governments. For an examination of the internal arrangements of the firm, see MacWilliam, forthcoming b.

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Gender and race in post coup d'etat Fiji: snapshots from the Fiji Islands

P Imrana Jalal, Pacific Regional Human Rights Education Resource Team, Fiji

Introduction

This paper considers some aspects of the subtle intersections between race and democracy and their effects on the pursuit of gender equality for women in Fiji. As in most countries, women in Fiji are not defined only by their sex but by many forces and the interplay between them. In Fiji these forces include the consequences of colonisation and the British divide-and-rule policy, the loss of democracy and the vulnerability to coups, social and economic class, ethnicity, poverty, religious fundamentalism and race.

The women's NGO (non-government organisation) movement views political stability based on democracy as a precondition for the attainment of women's rights. Two massive political upheavals, seemingly racially motivated coups and the loss of democracy, in 1987 and 2000 have derailed feminist progress and given rise to questions of campaigning priorities in times of instability: gender versus the political.

Racial repercussions

The political crisis that occurred in May 2000 demonstrated the tenuous nature of multiracialism in Fiji and curtailed real progress for women.

For many months following 19 May 2000, many non-indigenous Fijians and some indigenous Fijians lived in fear of violence. Non-indigenous Fijians, especially rural Indo-Fijians, were the victims of targeted and orchestrated violence. There were allegations of rape and other forms of sexual violence by civilian groups against non-indigenous women.

Since the coup, racial inequality has been entrenched by both the interim government and the new elected government. A blueprint for affirmative action for indigenous Fijians was imposed by the interim regime without consultation and with no monitoring safeguards. The result has been widespread abuse and corruption.

Currently, there is relative stability and the rule of law is generally complied with. However, a new Social Justice Act, intended to legitimise affirmative action for mainly indigenous Fijians, passed into law on 24 December 2001. The state has attempted to prevent any challenge that would nullify this social justice legislation by stating that the legislation effectively overrides the 1997 constitution (section 8), a clear violation of constitutional principles and the rule of law.

The government has set up a Ministry of Reconciliation. With the exception of two Indo-Fijians, the staff is all indigenous Fijians.

The national advisory committee that advises the ministry has representation from the Great Council of Chiefs, government, the Fiji Council of Churches, the powerful Methodist Church, the Anglican Church and a few other individuals. Races that are either Hindu or Muslim are effectively excluded. The main focus of the committee and ministry is reconciling indigenous Fijian groups, rather than addressing the real problems between the major ethnic groups.

Repercussions for women's rights activists

Demonstrations and even peace or anti-war marches are not allowed by the state. As recently as December 2001, the state denied the right to assembly to a group of peaceful protesters, the Coalition on Human Rights, who wished to protest against the war in Afghanistan.

In late 2001, the state deregistered vocal human rights NGO, the Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF) for challenging the legality of the government, and it has threatened to deregister NGOs that do not toe its political line. Activist women's NGOs are vulnerable to similar deregistration. As NGOs are the driving force behind improvements to the status of women, such restrictions, combined with the absence of a legal framework under which NGOs may register, have severely obstructed further work towards equality.

Economic repercussions

After the crisis, the tourism industry fell apart, 7,000 people lost their jobs and more than 20 people died. In a population of 850,000, such events have catastrophic consequences on the economy and on the people.

Poverty is a significant problem in Fiji. The 1997 Fiji Poverty Report (UNDP/Fiji Government), based on statistics from 1990–91, has stated that 25 per cent of the population lives in poverty and another 25 per cent are living very close to the poverty line, such that any personal or national crisis would send them into poverty. Since that time, a value added tax (VAT) has been imposed, the currency has been devalued, and there has been a large increase in the cost of utilities. The recent Save the Children Fund report, Study of the Impacts of the Political Crisis on Children and Families in Fiji (2001), notes that poverty and other problems existing before May 2000 are now considerably worse, seriously affecting women and children.
The role of women in democracy

Women and women's groups have been instrumental in defending the 1997 constitution and democracy in the Fiji Islands, and in bringing about a peaceful solution to the political problems. It is important to note that most women's organisations in Fiji are neither multiracial in composition nor feminist in outlook, but race based and traditional. They mobilise around traditional activities such as handicraft, or for religious or welfare service reasons. Some examples are the indigenous Fijian Soqosoqo Vakamarama (which is also class based and chiefly controlled by women) and the Indo-Fijian Sri Sewa Sabha (comprising middle-class Indo-Fijian women).

The number of organisations that are openly and challengingly multiracial and feminist can be counted on one hand. They include the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, Femink Pacific and, to a limited extent, the Young Women's Christian Association.

An example of women's role in peace building during the hostage crisis in 2000 was the work done by the National Council of Women, which sponsored a daily multiracial peace and prayer vigil. This fairly innocent peace initiative grew into the Fiji Blue Ribbon Campaign, which grew into the Fiji Blue Democracy Campaign. The brains behind the democracy campaign were the Coalition on Human Rights and Democracy, an NGO made up of mostly women's NGOs and the CCF. This coalition of NGOs harnessed its enormous unpaid intellectual resources to fight an appeal challenging the abrogation of the 1997 constitution.

Race, gender, democracy and the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

The way Fijian women mobilised across race and class lines demonstrates the political maturity of the women's movement as a whole. An example of this is the work of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM). This feminist NGO has a commitment to feminism, human rights and democracy. The FWRM used to be a small but feisty player in the gender scene and the women's rights arena in Fiji. The two coups d'état of 1987 and the 2000 coup have contributed to its growth from a feminist NGO dedicated mainly to women's issues to an organisation which is regarded as a legitimate social and political commentator and a participant in debate on a variety of legal, political, social, cultural and economic issues.

FWRM was the first women's NGO in Fiji to become openly feminist. Ensuring that feminist issues have top priority has always been important for FWRM, but the issue of race, not always well understood by its members, has threatened to cause divisions within the organisation. During the 1987 coup, the FWRM membership polarised along racial lines. However, FWRM was committed to women's rights within the framework of democracy, so restoration of democracy was promoted. It refused to work with the illegal regimes that were installed in 1987 and again in 2000. This made its work extremely difficult, especially during the illegal regime of Sitiveni Rabuka, which gave Fiji its first Ministry of Women.

Indigenous Fijian women thought FWRM should focus on gender issues and leave democracy to other civil society organisations. Indigenous women members were seen to be 'disloyal' to the Fijians and Fijian traditions and, although many hours were spent discussing the issue and encouraging them to remain members, many resigned. To their credit most returned within two years. A coalition to fight for equal rights in the constitution was partly responsible for their crossing that racial divide again, so that FWRM could again focus on gender issues within the constitutional review process. Learning that gender issues unite women was a critical step in FWRM's development. Coalitions work when specific critical issues are identified and women can find the commonalities that unite.

However, despite the maturation of the women's movement as a whole between 1987 and 2000, FWRM had difficulties for the second time when the 2000 crisis happened. It worked with the Coalition on Human Rights and Democracy, and with the Fiji Blue Democracy Campaign to return Fiji to constitutional democracy. It also worked with other participants in the various legal challenges, while at the same time trying to hold its membership, staff and organisation together despite racial divisions.

In 2000–2001, most of FWRM's work focused on the restoration of democracy and constitutional rule. However, some of its members and staff failed to understand that democracy is a precondition for the attainment of women's rights, and that the organisation had little choice but to engage in the political arena to push for the return to constitutional rule. Partly because of this lack of understanding of the inextricable links between gender and democracy, FWRM lost one staff member and two long-standing key members who were both former directors of the organisation, an Indo-Fijian and an indigenous Fijian. The last two both emigrated in despair. They felt that they lacked the energy to struggle yet again for democracy, preferring to join other organisations dedicated to women's issues outside Fiji.

FWRM and the progressive NGO movement as a whole have learnt to focus on the common goals of democracy and human rights, and to be wary about the politics of race. As a nation Fiji has also become politicised, recognising that sanctioning illegal regimes of any sort inevitably brings with it lack of good governance, corruption, state sponsorship of racism, cronyism, nepotism and a bigger and bigger divide between the rich and the poor. FWRM members have also matured politically, learning from the coups of 1987 that our salvation lies in staying united, showing that women of all races can work together despite the odds stacked against them.

FWRM overcame its racial differences by focusing on campaigns that all its members could all agree on. They could not all agree on racial issues, but they could agree that certain human rights were fundamental and that women must combine resources to ensure the continuity of these rights.

This does not mean that FWRM did not have its trials or that it will not continue to have them. At various times members and...
staff have questioned its commitment to democracy and some have been made to feel that, if they were supporters of democracy, they were therefore anti-indigenous Fijian or pro-Indo-Fijian. FWRM has learnt to celebrate its racial diversity and to rejoice that, despite the differences, members have more to unite them than to divide them. It is a pity the state does not learn from the women's movement.

The long-term implications of the conflicts in Fiji for women's rights

There are very compelling reasons to say that, whatever the backlash has been to the improvement in the situation of women, it has been heightened by the political crisis. It has happened in Fiji and in the Solomon Islands. These challenges demonstrate the very close connections between conflict, gender, race and democracy. If there was an opportunity before 2000 for women to mobilise across the racial divide, the coup did enormous damage to that possibility.

Every time we move forward and try to build a multiracial democracy, in which women can mobilise in an environment that is conducive to improving their status, a coup happens. The coup cycle reduces opportunities for action on gender issues because people become so racially polarised. These intersections, and the subtle and not so subtle interplays between them, affect women in every way. They go to the essence of what Fiji women are, and that is why gender issues cannot be analysed in isolation from democracy and race issues. They are all fundamental to the feminist analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is relatively easy for anti-feminist forces to derail a feminist campaign in Fiji by saying 'it is anti-Fijian' (that is, anti-indigenous Fijian). Immediately, it puts indigenous Fijian women on their guard, and prevents women of all races working together for women's rights.

Despite the huge forces working against it, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement has proven that women can cross the huge racial chasms to work together for democracy and for women's rights. I am attempting to persuade my own Indo-Fijian community that to embrace another's culture in the interests of genuine multiracialism is not to deny your own culture. In compromise lies our salvation, not our demise.

References

Political participation in a fragmented democracy: ethnic and religious appeal in Papua New Guinea

Dr. Henry Okole, Lecturer in Political Science, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Papua New Guinea

Introduction

While predominantly a Christian country, Papua New Guinea's population is highly fragmented along ethnic and tribal lines. In spite of deep divisions, it boasts an impressive record as one of a handful of developing world countries that has had an uninterrupted democratic history (see Lijphart 1999).

Table 1 Total Population and Languages Per Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of Languages</th>
<th>Land Area (sq. km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bougainville*</td>
<td>141,161</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>183,153</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimbu</td>
<td>258,776</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East New Britain</td>
<td>220,035</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sepik</td>
<td>341,583</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>42,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>429,480</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enga</td>
<td>289,299</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf</td>
<td>105,050</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madang</td>
<td>362,805</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manus</td>
<td>43,589</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milne Bay</td>
<td>209,054</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morobe</td>
<td>536,917</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Ireland</td>
<td>118,148</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>132,714</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>548,352</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West New Britain</td>
<td>184,838</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sepik</td>
<td>185,790</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>36,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>152,067</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>99,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>349,085</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>836</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 5,130,365  836  462,600

Source: Provincial population figures are taken from the NSO (2000:6), while the provincial land areas are taken from the NSO (1994:44). The language totals are taken from Waters et al. (1995:68).

Notes:
The 2000 census in the North Solomons did not cover all areas of the province.
Table 1 excludes Port Moresby, which does not have any traditional languages.

Ethnicity and religion are two primary sources of affiliation for many societies. As people involve themselves in the political life of their communities, it is 'identification sensors' such as ethnicity and religion that often determine how they conduct themselves and make choices. The impact of ethnicity and religion on politics have also been encapsulated in contemporary times by controversial theories such as the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996), and actual religious feuds in Northern Ireland and India/Pakistan, and ethnic tensions in countries as far apart as Sudan, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Ethnicity is socially constructed. This point underscores Michael Ignatieff's conception of ethnic wars in recent decades; 'it's not some primordial essence, formed by history and tradition, latent within, waiting to carry [a person] off to war. For him, identity is primarily a relational term' (Ignatieff 1997:34-39). One then should not expect the composition of ethnic cleavages to be identical in all societies as some groups are pragmatically created. Likewise, the consequences that ethnicity espouses need not be universal too.

Ethnicity and political participation in PNG

The ethnic composition of Papua New Guinea can be conceptualized in more than one way. Language and race form a basic means of ethnic categorisation. For a nation of just over five million people to speak over 800 distinctive languages is dramatic evidence of high fragmentation and its political impact on national politics (Table 1).

The relationship between politics and ethnicity is not wholly predicated on identities—participation is also induced through rational behavior whenever situations or circumstances present themselves.

Ethnicity and PNG's compressed state formation

The modern state was instituted over hundreds of sovereign traditional communities. The political evolution that took hundreds of years to achieve in other parts of the world was acquired in a single lifetime in PNG.

Genuine political participation by indigenous people is a fairly recent phenomenon. The paternalistic Australian colonial administration ensured that political education of the indigenous people was gradual (Mair 1970:87; Woolford 1976). Fearing
political turmoil that had marked the decolonisation processes of other developing countries, Australia insisted that the PNG populace needed to be educated to gain a level of tolerance to its colonial presence. To run parallel to this controlled process of politicisation was economic growth. This dual-strategy was a quixotic endeavor for a country that also posed other non political obstacles.

It became apparent that the push for economic growth took precedence over a proper political development, and particularly the need to strengthen state institutions (see Huntington 1968). Political events in the early 1960s were to cause Australia to immediately start preparing its territory for independence. The first nation-wide election took place in 1964. Though billed a success, given the seemingly insurmountable problems that had to be overcome, national politics flowed with the tempo set by the colonial administration. National politicians became more assertive vis-à-vis the Australian government after the 1968 national elections.

Indigenous leaders were now slowly assuming the colonial politico-administrative structure without undergoing any actual ‘induction’ in governance and administration. A few years later, PNG gained its independence. It took a mere 22 years from the time that nationals were allowed to participate in the Legislative Assembly (1951) until self-government was acquired (1973), followed by independence two years later (1975). The national political culture formed over this time was greatly influenced by traditional and customary ways. Also, it was one characterised by heavy dependence on the government.

Anti-organizational political culture

Perhaps one of the enduring legacies of PNG’s compressed state formation is an inability for people to organise themselves into formal groupings. Two reasons explain this situation. First, groups are often unwilling to leave the comfort zones of traditional networks and practices. Even where formal organisations are established, members very often have a foot in both the traditional and formal organisations. Second, there are people who are able to draw from both formal and traditional organisational practices to suit their preferences. Both reasons amount to what can be called an ‘anti-organisational political culture’ (Mainwaring 1999:233-234). This culture operates on the premise of both traditional cultural and rational choice where individuals are likely to work against the need for organisations.

To illustrate the point, the wantok system is founded mainly on the principle of reciprocity (see de Renzio and Kavanamur 1999) that can be undertaken as both a social obligation in a traditional social setting and a rationally calculated endeavor. Reciprocity allows for very flexible social interactions, thus undercutting the need for permanent organisations since individuals can elicit benefits through ad hoc and convenient relationships. Networks such as the wantok system can be very useful and effective in the short term. By contrast, rewards can be drastically reduced in larger and more formal organisations since distribution of the booty will be done in a mechanised way. Thus, we should be the least surprised that PNG has a history of ephemeral organisations.

Nationalism and democratic resilience

Historically, there were micronationalist and separatist movements that threatened the fragile unity of PNG at the dawn of independence (see May 1982). When the first ‘nationalised’ government under Michael Somare got into power in 1972, the pioneering leaders of the country had to build a sense of oneness among the populace. It is still difficult to clearly ascertain the degree of nationalism today, 27 years after independence. Generally, the conventional understanding is that nationalism is weak in Melanesian countries (Larmour 1998:89).

What then is responsible for the impressive democratic resilience in PNG? There are two compelling theories that can be considered. First, Dinnen (1998) suggests that PNG has endured waves of change from pre-independence days to the present that depict continuities and discontinuities. Second, Papua New Guinea’s unbroken democratic history, according to Reilly (2000:265), is explained by a state of ‘inertia’ or lack of action.

Ethnicity comes into consideration because it shows the identity and motive of political actors who capitalise on their connections with the state machinery. Since the pillage of public institutions is an evolving phenomenon, it qualifies Dinnen’s position. Also, the apparent tolerance of these devious practices endorses Reilly’s point about a case of inertia. The responsibility falls with members of society who have failed to protect democracy itself. Thus, while PNG masquerades as a successful democratic country, it is suffering from severe political and institutional decay (Okole 2002).

Accessibility to state provisions

Provision of goods and services by the state often create competition by sections of society. Under the rubric of the concept access, or ‘the relations between the administrative allocation of goods and services and the people who need them or for whom they were intended,’ Ballard (2002) makes the point that groups of people often resort to drawing ethnic differences among themselves with regard to how they are served by the state. Moreover, the ethnic identities are consolidated with time whenever people see the opportunity to do so and as long as state provisions continue. Unlike market situations where the allocation of goods and services is dictated by supply and demand principles, the allocation of state provisions comes down to deliberate distribution by the state (Ballard 2002).

Ballard elucidates his argument by invoking historical circumstances in pre-independence PNG. As coastal areas of the country underwent further progress, and particularly enjoyed the benefits of commercial activity, much of the hinterland could only lament what they were missing. The highlands region thus bitterly opposed the move to immediate self-government in the late 1960s to early 1970s (Woolford 1976). Their leaders argued
that independence should be delayed until development in the region was achieved to comparable level with coastal areas. Ethnicity in this respect was displayed along regional lines.

The relationship between ethnicity and accessibility sits precariously between two points of contention, each related to the distribution of limited resources. First, some people feel that they are not getting adequate returns from what they contribute to the state’s coffers. For example, an underlying resentment against the mining operations in Bougainville was that the landowners supposedly were not benefiting from the project (Okole 1990). Second, other people feel that they are not getting adequate government resources given their poor state of development, for example rural populations who may not be necessarily clustered into ethnic groups. The reality, however, is that ethnic politics is very fluid and could fall anywhere between or even outside these identified points.

**Religion and political participation in PNG**

The Church has largely remained apolitical throughout the history of the country. A recent comparative study has acknowledged the somewhat low role of religion in the politics of PNG (Liphart 1999:80-83). Table 2 shows the dominance of Christianity in PNG.

It is difficult to clearly determine any religious impact on political participation in PNG. Churches in the country are not, however, insignificant in relation to national politics. The Christian faith arguably has served as an ‘unwritten constitution’ that people use to measure the intention and justification of political actions. Political actors are aware of this and see religion as a credible opportunity to appeal to the populace, with varying degrees of success. Generally, voters in PNG cast ballots based on the content of candidates’ characters rather than other forms of qualification (Saffu 1989). As elsewhere, politicians use church activities and expressed reverence for the Christian faith to induce support and legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In recent years—with a surge of headlines highlighting maladministration, corruption, and a spate of criminal activities by elected representatives—playing the ‘church card’ has been a frequent public exercise.

Political parties exist in PNG because they are indispensable for coalition formation in the House of Parliament. However, the country has seen the creation of political parties with names and/or professed platforms that allude to Christian standing (Okole 2001).

Some of the electoral case studies done in the past have noted a sense of reverence for the Christian faith. Piety has been used to assess the character of candidates and sometimes parties. For example, Filer (1996) discusses how good leadership, character, and religion allowed Christopher Sambre to serve as the representative for the Nuku electorate in the West Sepik province from 1977 to 1992. Sambre’s greatest asset was his moral standing:

Filer also added that Sambre’s example created a kind of competition based on moral character, as voters expected other candidates to conform to the same standard. In another example of moral appeal, Sir John Kaputin—the one-time serving member for Rabaul Open—narrowly retained his seat in 1997 after a strong showing by Albert Burua. The challenger was a former Methodist minister who was widely known in the country and even in the Solomon Islands. What is intriguing is that Burua never campaigned, nor was he affiliated with a party (Okole 2001).

**Voices in the wilderness**

Recently there has been a plethora of issues that have enticed church officials to publicly make their stands on behalf of the flock. Issues range from social to economic and government administrative problems. Perhaps the foremost issue in recent times has been corruption in public offices. It has been so flagrant and unabated that church representatives saw the need to make strong criticisms of the national leadership. For instance, during his Easter message in 1999, the Catholic Bishop of Port Moresby, Brian Barnes, unequivocally called for a change of government to help stymie corruption and poor governance (Standish 1999:13).

What is encouraging from the present role of church organisations in PNG, as well as the case of other groups of the society, is the strengthening of a civic community where citizens are caused to act concertedly to enhance public goods over private interests. Such efforts can then lead to the ideal philosophy of civic virtue, which is characterized by *inter alia* trust and honesty among the citizenry (Putnam 1993:87,111). Perhaps more political participation through religion would be seen in the near future.

**Conclusion**

Political participation in a democracy is all about citizens’ involvement in the governance of the country. Papua New Guinea is a country where alliances that are built are still very shallowly

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**Table 2 Major Christian Denominations in PNG (the 1990 Census)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Christian Churches</th>
<th>Population (1990)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>141,082</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Alliances</td>
<td>314,023</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran</td>
<td>831,598</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostals</td>
<td>253,086</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholics</td>
<td>1,012,091</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>7,441</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
<td>289,446</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Churches</td>
<td>455,689</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Churches</td>
<td>154,121</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>10,319</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>91,771</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>21,666</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,582,333</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note: North Solomons Province (Bougainville) not included because of the civil war on the island at the time the census was conducted.*
grounded and have the propensity to shift when situations warrant them. It is a society that is undergoing profound and dynamic changes all the time.

Unlike many countries where religion has a direct bearing on the tempo of national politics, it is yet to make a distinctive mark in PNG. But most important of all, the churches need to demonstrate that the voices they echo carry the weight of followers in a comprehensive and inclusive way. As of now, the voices in the wilderness are still individualistic, sporadic, and emanate mainly from the high echelons of church hierarchies. The church needs to collude with society in order to make a lasting impression.

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Introduction

This article is based on my involvement in the work of two women’s groups operating at grassroots level to create common pathways towards peace and reconciliation. The article first examines the emerging conceptual frameworks that formed the basis for work with an indigenous rural women’s empowerment project based in Tailevu province, Fiji. It then considers work with an urban-based multicultural women’s group that grew out of the Blue Ribbon peace vigils in Suva. The final section considers the implications of this field experience for enhanced political participation, nation building and continued peace and stability in Fiji.

Emerging conceptual frameworks for gender and development

The rural women’s initiative began 12 months before the coup and the ensuing political crisis in 2000. It took a strong proactive approach to gender and development, and later adopted a reactive position in the aftermath of the coup in March of the same year. The urban group emerged as a result of, and in response to, the coup. Since then, the urban group has become more proactive as it settled into a routine of ongoing reconciliation and peace-building.

Before the coup: March 1999 to the present

My involvement in rural women’s empowerment began on my return to Fiji after completing doctoral study at the Australian National University in Canberra. Because I had a willing audience, a creditable background of prior experience with women and youth training in the communities, and easy access to seats of influence and leadership in the province, the task before me was not as daunting as I had initially expected.1

To ensure that the project was successful it was crucial that certain assumptions about Fijian society formed the ground rules and, in turn, guided the process of rural women’s empowerment on the ground. The social and political undercurrents following the election of the Fiji Labour Party suggested it was the right time to embark on a proactive approach that would focus on developing skills and building capacities in rural communities.

A five-year project called the Tailevu Soqosoqo Vakamarama (TSSV) provincial women’s project began in mid-1999. It had three broad aims:

1. to develop a methodology of capacity building at grassroots level that incorporated issues of gender and governance aimed at empowering rural women;
2. to document a rural model that would lay the basis for similar projects in the other 13 provinces of Fiji; and
3. to develop the project’s potential for transferability and adaptability among other small island states around the Pacific region.

After the first 18 months of this project a methodology had emerged (Nabalarua 2001). The move to the second phase of capacity building on a nationwide basis, using the Tailevu model, has been delayed because of funding restrictions.

The vision, conceptual framework, design and implementation of this project was initiated and coordinated by the author. The criteria that have guided intervention in both projects provide insights into the parameters of facilitating change at community level, and are discussed below.

Social impact

Using a multidisciplinary approach, this project aims to fulfill a range of learning objectives at different levels. At the level of applied research, it attempts to provide viable options for addressing rural women’s drudgery and poverty through increased access to development opportunities. This has meant looking at development applications that integrate indigenous knowledge systems with conventional organisational practices adapted to suit the particularities of a changing rural subsistence economy.

At the level of the community, and among the women themselves, learning by doing and using empowerment approaches that facilitate and expand upon knowledge produced a greater commitment to the aims of the project. From the position of policymakers, development specialists, researchers, trainers and adult learners involved in community development, the documentation process would in turn form the basis of a case study rich in ethnographic data. This case study can provide significant information for policy-making and development intervention on the ground.

October 2002
Target outreach

This project has been implemented within the framework of the largest indigenous women's group in the province, namely, the TSSV. All Fijian women may either choose to be members or, if they are registered as indigenous Fijians, they become members automatically. They may assume either active or latent membership status. Since the TSSV directs its services to women classified as household or group producers between the ages of 15 and 59 years, there are approximately 7,000 women whose lives are actively or latently influenced by the project.

Monitoring activities continue throughout the project cycle, and the year 2005 has been put aside for project evaluation. The impact of this project on the women of Tailevu province and their families will be measured by the number of new opportunities for income generation, the extent of poverty reduction, the extent to which income bases have been expanded, and the increased participation and representation of women at all levels of decision making at provincial level.

Creativity and innovation

I was able to create a provincial model for rural women's empowerment because I could see the existing capacity gaps at provincial level. Money, or the lack of it, was not a determining factor in the evolution of the project, because the guiding principle was to first develop a creditable strategy that would warrant future funding support. With minor restructuring in the first six months, the TSSV has to date a little fewer than 200 TSSV officials on the ground servicing around 145 villages and settlements spread over the 22 districts that comprise Tailevu province. The project has put in place an organised network of women who have been trained in data collection, data processing and information dissemination throughout communities.

This project is an innovative landmark in many ways. In a project designed so that it can be replicated at local, regional and national levels within its life cycle, each phase feeds off, and relates to, the other. Such local, regional and national integration is seldom seen in many Pacific island development projects.

This is the first comprehensive project on rural women's empowerment in Fiji. In particular, it is the first of its kind to emerge from the grassroots at provincial level. It is also the first to develop a model for rural women's empowerment that will be replicable in the other 13 provinces of the country.

This is also the first indigenous women's project in which the documentation of a process of self-development has been managed and controlled by provincial women themselves. The project design incorporates new ways of organising and participating to separate traditional leadership from member-driven leadership. A strategic plan specifically compiled for the project is a key document for the women in the province, because it locates the current provincial demographic profile for health, education, housing and economic activity in a national context. It therefore provides significant indicators about priorities for development of which the women should be aware and that they should address.

The use of the Fijian language as the medium of communication and dissemination of information in all documents, with the exception of the strategic plan, is an important factor in obtaining local ownership of and commitment to the project.

Vision, goal setting and problem solving

The vision for the project was the empowerment of rural women, to make them effective in taking control of their lives and making a difference in their own communities. Training developed skills and involved widespread consultation. Group dynamics and teamwork were reflected in the processes of goal setting and problem solving. While it was the author's vision that originally initiated and activated the project, it later became the collective vision of the TSSV, once the project was endorsed by the organisation's leaders and members.

Replicability

With the project now going into its third year and the documentation continuing, it is ready to be replicated in Fiji's other 13 provinces.

Capacity building

Capacity building is the core of this project because empowering rural women, especially Fijian women, requires increased capacity as a springboard for raising awareness and exercising timely and informed choices. Newly acquired skills, self-esteem and confidence levels are reflected in the effective articulation and increased participation and representation of women at village and district meetings. This indicates an increasing recognition among women of the importance of exercising basic rights. The high attendance of the 44 women leaders at most of the meetings and the workshops in the province in the past 12 months indicates a willingness to take on new options accruing from learning opportunities and a commitment to a common vision.

Local ownership

The project was structured so its ownership has always been in the hands of the women themselves. This has proved valuable because, while the project architect has been living in New Zealand, the project is being sustained and monitored by the women leaders and the TSSV officials. Regarding the ownership of the intellectual property of the project, it has been my wish that, while this project has been turned into a TSSV project, the women of Tailevu should take pride in sharing knowledge and information and establishing networks with women in the other provinces.

It was suggested that a model that works is the most practical and valuable contribution to rural women's empowerment around the country that women in Tailevu could ever make. It would be a modest gesture on our part to provide this information to other provinces and one that would not be easily forgotten by women from those other provinces. A lack of funding is the only reason why the TSSV has not been able to replicate this project in the other provinces, despite repeated requests from provincial women and other leaders.
Development ethics in the field

I was constantly reminded by village elders of the need to ensure that dignity and integrity were acknowledged and respected throughout the development process. This was built into the methodologies and processes used. It meant walking with the people and creating self-determined spaces along the way where they could stand and belong.

The TSSV project continues, and has maintained a high profile in the province. Because the project was established before the coup in March 2000, it has been an important stabilising factor in the face of pockets of civil ‘disobedience’ into which many of the villages and communities were unwittingly drawn during the period of anxiety and social upheaval immediately after the coup.

After the coup: March 2000 to the present

This examination of the urban-based women’s project that emerged after the coup, which used the same criteria as those above, attempts to show the extent to which the common parameters of the project can be replicated in different contexts.

fem’LINKpacific: Media Initiatives for Women is a Suva-based women’s NGO committed to linking women with the media, bringing stories of women and their communities to the forefront, and sharing these stories with the rest of society. This initiative was born out of the Blue Ribbon peace vigils that occurred during the period of the coup, and has since been committed to increasing awareness of critical social, political and economic issues.

The movement provides a public means for promoting peace and reconciliation in Fiji, and it has continued to grow in terms of outcomes and outreach. Much of its work is funded by aid agencies. With the exception of project-funded staff, the five professional women who make up the collective, including the trustees, provide a voluntary service specifically for women. This organisation emerged at just the right time to maximise its ability to operate without burdensome bureaucratic restrictions.

During the 56 days in the immediate aftermath of the coup, when the predominantly Labour parliamentarians were being kept as hostages in Parliament House, the vigils assumed greater meaning day by day, and mobilised increasing numbers of people. The local and international press spread our faces across newspaper and television screens as a reminder to the rest of the world that a peaceful resolution was what many people hoped for. The Anglican Church, which hosted the peace vigils, became the focal refuge point, the safety house, a place for peace and a haven of hope.

Social impact

This project's multicultural focus and its outreach to the wider community meant that a vibrant and fresh social consciousness emerged. This had wide appeal because the members of the group were articulate communicators whose interpersonal dynamics made their alliances cohesive and clear. Raising awareness through the appropriate media, and being media friendly, they developed a good social rapport with the public at large.

Creativity and innovation

The level of creativity and innovation lies in the group’s professional expertise and the way it has been able to develop projects and obtain funding as a collective. Since fem’LINKpacific’s inception, the group has produced videos for peace, reconciliation and nation building, and organised local, regional and national workshops on peace-related themes with other NGOs. They have worked with other women’s groups in compiling the NGO report on the status of women in Fiji, and have maintained a regular electronic link with partners across the globe.

Target outreach

Because this organisation is media focused, its work has been screened in the large theatres in town, with smaller groups and communities having access to videotapes for group viewing, discussion and feedback. The work touches on the daily common struggles of women to meet basic needs and to achieve common goals, such as good education for their children, decent housing and good health care. The group’s output emphasises the collective right of women to have a quality family life, and to strive towards peaceful coexistence and harmony. The project was also part of a national children’s art and literary workshop for peace, run in conjunction with Fiji TV and primary schools.

Vision, goal setting and problem solving

The vision of bringing the stories of women and their communities to the forefront of media exposure in order to raise social awareness is the main reason for fem’LINK’s existence. The use of multilingual media programs to empower women by raising awareness has meant that the project’s multicultural focus is being addressed and sustained.

Replicability

The fem’LINK project has been arranged so that it is replicable throughout island nations in the region in terms of its social appropriateness, cultural sensitivity and cost effectiveness. The use of some of its programs in other Pacific Island countries has been anticipated, and where requests have come through, such initiatives have been endorsed by the Management Collective of fem’LINK in collaboration with the requesting agencies from around the Pacific.

Capacity building

Raising capacities by using the media means that the pace of learning is faster than it would otherwise be. Focusing on human rights, communication for peace and making informed choices allows fem’LINK to reach different communities at different levels, because each community responds to common gaps in knowledge that need to be consistently filled.

Local ownership

The collective takes ownership of all the planning, implementation and evaluation of project activities. Decisions are collectively based and there is a sense of equality in the work ethos of fem’LINK.
Development ethics in the field

The professional calibre of the collective and the trustees demands a high level of accountability and transparency in all activities. Because fem’LINKpacific works largely with women in communities, there is an expectation that its team will show and earn respect while working in the field.

The implications of these experiences for political participation in Fiji

Overall, the impact of the rural women’s project on development is reflected in the high profile that this project has among indigenous Fijian institutions, among other women’s groups outside the province, and among indigenous Fijian women themselves. The women of Tailevu province see that they own something special in the form of this project. In a strategic context, their willingness to offer their services as facilitators in the replication of this project is an indication of its value and importance as cultural and intellectual property.

Current social and political instability in Fiji has shown that there is a glaring gap between the levels of fundamental skills and knowledge at national and community levels in areas such as basic human rights, indigenous rights and women’s rights. Women often don’t understand electoral systems and the functions of a constitution, and often don’t understand that they can exercise political choice. Aspects of governance and its application at provincial level, coupled with gender concerns and leadership for social change, are new development ideas that are known only to those who have had tertiary education. This is being addressed by fem’LINKpacific.

While the central focus for both projects has been on capacity building through awareness raising, advocacy and application, the main issues that have been integrated and addressed in this process include:

- empowering women by skilling them and enhancing their existing knowledge base;
- increasing women’s participation and representation;
- gender and development issues;
- strengthening structures of microgovernance at community level;
- developing leadership dynamics for social change;
- resolving conflict and building peace;
- human rights, women’s rights, indigenous rights and the exercise of choice;
- environmental concerns and sustainability;
- addressing basic needs;
- alleviating poverty and providing equity of access;
- improving income-generating options in a household economy; and
- maximising human resource development for increased quality of life options.

These issues are common concerns nationwide. The rural women’s project in Tailevu province shows that, in enhancing political participation on the ground, this multidisciplinary emphasis has paved the way for the emergence of a group of more informed and increasingly articulate individuals in the 145 villages of the province (Nabalarua 2001).

Both women’s organisations have a strong Christian base and, while they served two totally different groups, issues such as service, survival and solidarity soon became the common ground for all women during the post-coup period. The experiences discussed here show us that the pathways to political participation can take many different forms. The differences between a largely conservative indigenous women’s group and a modern, progressive multicultural urban women’s group reflect important gaps in capacities that each has now filled. Both groups have achieved successful outcomes given their size and mandate and, I believe, they complement each other’s development aspirations well.

Equally important is the fact that they have the potential to continue contributing towards peace, stability and reconciliation at the community level. In turn, this has the potential to continue to enhance political participation and nation building in the country as a whole (Nabalarua 2000).

Conclusion

These two women’s groups, although different in their make-up, have shown that there is an urgent need to work at community level in promoting systems of good governance. There is no place for a process that is self-serving and self-perpetuating. If we continue operating with colonial constructs and processes that stereotype development experiences then our efforts will be futile and redundant because they will not respond to the changing aspirations and expectations of the new Pacific generation.

Note

1. From 1999-2000, the author was a women’s representative on the Tailevu Provincial Council and deputy provincial leader of the Tailevu Suosa Vakamarama (TSSV), a predominantly rural Fijian women’s group operating in the province. Although she has relocated for work purposes to New Zealand in 2001, she continues to maintain her links with both women’s groups.

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To make a difference: realities of women’s participation in Papua New Guinea politics

Orovu Sepoe, Department of Political Sciences, University of Papua New Guinea

Introduction

Why is women’s participation so important? . . . There can be no true democracy, no true people’s participation in governance and development without the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life and at all levels of decision-making (Karl 1999:1). 

Women’s involvement in a sphere of life can bring new perspectives and priorities into decision-making processes and make a difference. Persistent gender inequality in the national political arena does not reflect well on a state that claims to be democratic. As long as women are denied access to the corridors of power, the quality of leadership that is essential for effective and meaningful democracy, as well as for national welfare, is being stifled.

The two crucial components of a democratic system are a democratic state and a democratic civil society. The prevailing conditions in Papua New Guinea (PNG) do not allow such a system. Within this context, women are bargaining and negotiating access to decision-making structures. The impact of women’s struggle to gain access to the corridors of power, the quality of leadership that is essential for effective and meaningful democracy, as well as for national welfare, is being stifled.

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The two crucial components of a democratic system are a democratic state and a democratic civil society. The prevailing conditions in Papua New Guinea (PNG) do not allow such a system. Without economic and social rights, political rights continue to be denied to a great majority in civil society. Women are by far the majority of those denied their political rights. This presents a fundamental challenge for PNG in the next decade or more.

Within this context, women are bargaining and negotiating access to power at the centre, with the hope of bringing about improvements in the lives of their families and society as a whole. In PNG, this is happening on two frontiers, both within the state and outside it.

This article looks at women’s attempts to enter national decision-making forums mainly through electoral contest, legislative reforms to increase women’s participation in decision-making, and collective action by women. Despite women’s persistent losses in successive PNG national elections since 1977, their struggle is relentless and their spirit has not been stifled. Ever-increasing numbers continue to negotiate access to decision-making structures. The impact of women’s struggle to gain access to the corridors of power is also evident in the recent legislative reforms.

Women’s participation in electoral politics


Table 1 Women in national elections, 1964–1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of women candidates</th>
<th>Number of women elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Sepoe 1996

The first PNG national woman ever to contest an election was Ana Frank from Pari village, while the other two were expatriates: Mrs McKeller, who was married to a district officer in Madang and who contested the Madang Open seat, and Mrs Ascroft-Smith, who was married to a public servant in Port Moresby and who stood for the central special electorate. The second House of Assembly election in 1968 drew only one woman candidate, Mrs Wilkinson, married to an Australian planter-trader, who contested the Esa’ala Open seat in Milne Bay. All women were unsuccessful.

At self-government in 1972, four women candidates, all nationals, stood. Only one, Josephine Abaijah (now Dame), succeeded at the polls.

The national election of 1977 was the first for a newly independent nation and, in the euphoria, women who contested that election saw their challenge as paving the way for others. A total of ten women contested the 1977 election, which was, and remains, the most successful attempt at winning seats by women in PNG. Three women candidates, Nahau Rooney, Waliyato Clowes and Josephine Abaijah, triumphed in this election. Their victory, however, did not ensure the success of those who were to follow.

In the 1982 national election, 14 women, plus Clowes, Rooney and Abaijah, contested. Only one, Rooney, was elected, but only after a successful Court of Disputed Returns hearing. In the 1987 and 1992 national elections, 18 and 16 women respectively contested, however, none were elected to parliament.

Throughout 1996 and 1997, ‘getting women into parliament’ became the main theme in the activities undertaken by women activists. In workshops attended by provincial and community leaders of women’s organisations throughout PNG, Women in Politics (WIP) and the National Council of Women (NCW) took up the challenge of training potential candidates about aspects of
the political system, and in capacity building for leadership at the national level and in local-level governments (LLGs). A total of 55 women contested the 1997 election and only two, Lady Carol Kidu and Dame Josephine Abaijah, were elected.

The political culture of PNG has not readily absorbed the notion of liberalisation (Anere 2000) and it does not understand that women continue to be casualties of this system (Sepoe 1996 and 2000). In contemporary PNG, women's status has diminished. Yet, in the past, PNG culture had a different attitude towards women. They were recognised as playing a crucial and complementary role in economic production and resource management (Brouwer et al 1998, Sepoe 2000). However, because women played a less public persona it was concluded that women had relatively little influence in family or community decision-making (Brouwer et al 1998:3).

Gender issues in electoral politics

There are many hindrances to women's effective participation in electoral politics. Some of these problems have persisted since the first parliamentary election. Others have emerged under the changing economic and political circumstances of the late 1990s and the new millennium. Any meaningful attempt to understand gender issues must be cognizant of regional variations or differences, as well as account for common experiences. For instance, women in the Highlands of PNG encounter more violence during elections than women in coastal areas, the islands and the New Guinea mainland. In terms of commonalities, nationwide women experience immense constraints on the resources they need to run election campaigns.

Changes are required in several areas so that women can be actively and meaningfully involved in the electoral process. A survey (AusAID and Government of PNG 2000) conducted in 1999 identified these priorities for change:

- review current legislation, especially regarding the Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government (OLPLLG) nominated members;
- change the voting system to preferential;
- improve common roll and polling practices;
- make Electoral Commission staff more gender inclusive;
- provide support for women candidates; and
- provide voter education.

In addition, the most fundamental issue is that of culture and perceptions about women's access to power. Women's struggle for power is often perceived to be on equal terms to that of men. However, women's struggle for power is not geared towards obtaining possessive or extractive power, but rather 'power to empower'. This type of power is inextricably linked to female gender roles in society. Therefore, the decisions that they would make in the public sphere will very much reflect the type and quality of decisions that are made within the context of families and households. This is the difference that women in PNG are striving to make in the formal and institutional spheres of politics.

With the poor conduct of the elections, the increasing incidence of electoral violence and general insecurity; the prevalence of corruption; the loss of confidence in elected members of parliament; the continuing deterioration of basic infrastructure; the continuing economic crisis and increasing poverty, the role of women in PNG has largely been to 'subsidise' a weak state unable to provide for its citizens. This vital role remains invisible to those in control of resources.

The behaviour of PNG voters resembles that of marketplace activity: selling votes and buying favours from intending candidates or political parties. As long as this behaviour continues, the state will operate as the marketplace. Vested interests will conspire to get the best deal out of this political market activity. Consequently women's vital role and their voices continue to be submerged in the competition for power.

Legislative reforms

Two crucial laws, the Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government (OLPLLG) and the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC or Integrity Law), are intended to include women in decision making, however, there is a problem with implementation. Poor implementation is partly rooted in the varied cultures of PNG (Okole and Kavanamur 2002) and the pre-eminence of communal–primordial sentiments over legal–liberal requirements.

**Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government**: The OLPLLG is an initiative of the government, under pressure from women's organisations, that will encourage more women to participate in decision making in provincial and local-level governments. By law, there should be 566 nominated women in all 296 LLGs nationwide, two in each rural LLG and one in each urban LLG. In all 19 provincial assemblies (Bougainville and the national capital district are exempted), there should be one appointed woman. It is not known how many women are in LLGs at present, but it is a well-established fact that LLGs have failed to implement the provision on nominated women.

**Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates**: The enactment of the OLIPPAC in 2002 was a direct response to the problems of political instability, frequent votes of no confidence, party fragility and party hopping in PNG politics. Having a weak party system that consists of loose alliances of individuals has had a tremendous impact on the life of parliament and the life span of successive governments.

The prime objective of this legislation was to bring about political stability and discipline within parties, to build a strong party system with clear and coherent political manifestos on which voters can base their decisions. Continuity in governance of the party in power would also ensure continuity in policy making and implementation. The OLIPPAC is a major legislative instrument with which the government of PNG has demonstrated affirmative action in relation to increasing women's participation in national level decision-making forums.
This law requires a member appointed by the NCW to serve on the central fund board of management, and this provision has been fulfilled. A more substantive provision encourages parties to endorse more women by giving a 75 per cent refund of electoral expenses to any party that endorses a woman candidate in a national election if the candidate receives at least 10 per cent of the votes in her electorate.

Women in Politics has called for a quota system in OLIPPAC: it wants 30 per cent of candidates endorsed by political parties in national elections to be women (WIP 2000). This amendment met with stiff opposition and the minister responsible at the time did not appear to be aware of women’s concerns.  

Impact of OLIPPAC, preliminary observations: To appreciate the impact of OLIPPAC, it is worth looking at the party allegiances of women candidates in the past national elections in PNG.

Most political analysts agree that parties have existed as nothing more than parliamentary factions, primarily operating as vehicles for formation of government in parliament and professing no commitment to gender equality. Yet the 2002 election has seen more women candidates endorsed by parties. In that election, political parties responded quite positively by endorsing far more women candidates than ever before. Out of the total of 60 women candidates, 40 were endorsed by political parties (see Table 2).

It could be argued that female candidates were endorsed by political parties as a source of funding from the public purse. However, this argument falls short of findings from past elections that political parties endorse the candidates that are most likely to win (King 1989). Accordingly, women who have been endorsed in this election are probably the most promising candidates from the perspective of political parties. It can be deduced from this reasoning that political parties have responded to the call of women for increased participation through OLIPPAC.

In previous elections, most women contested as independent candidates, but this election was different. There is some indication of a slow and gradual shifting of boundaries in PNG politics that allows for women’s participation in the formal decision-making forums. However, party structures are still male dominated. Only a handful of executive officers of registered parties are women. However, the importance of the positions they hold indicates the significance of their role, as can be seen from Table 3.

### Table 2 Party allegiances of women candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General elections</th>
<th>Number of women candidates</th>
<th>Party affiliation</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Sepoe 1996 and Anere 2000

### Table 3 Women executives in political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Political party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan Haro</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>PNG Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Karo</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>People’s National Congress Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nerri Sumati</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kila Rumery</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>People’s Action Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nolin Pivini</td>
<td>President and Public Officer</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea First Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette Kuman</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>People’s Welfare Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny Artango</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Pan Melanesian Congress Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Tekwei</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Melanesian Alliance Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Gazette 2002

**Women’s organisations and civil society**

Women worldwide participate in politics mostly in the context of collective action (Karl 1995). This is very much the case in PNG (Sepoe 2000). The nature of women’s political activities can be either ‘oppositional’ (against the system) or ‘supportive’ (for the system) (Waylen 1996). Women in PNG engage in both, but much more in political activities that support the system, such as:

- the voter education undertaken by the NCW and affiliated groups in 2002,
- the WIP regional workshops for potential candidates in national and LLG elections in 2002, and
- an alliance between Transparency International and the community coalition against corruption in 2002.

Various activities of key women’s organisations have attempted to build and strengthen the capacity of women and empower them, to increase their participation in the formal political arena and to provide effective leadership. These include:

- a consultative workshop, PNG Women in Decision Making in 2001;
- Good Governance and Effective Leadership, a training workshop for women members of LLGs in 1999; and
- a workshop on political awareness of the OLPLLG in 1999.

In the 2002 election, WIP and the NCW emphasised LLG leadership by encouraging more women to contest local elections.

The underlying premise of women’s participation in politics is making a difference. The quality of their leadership, in contrast to the predominant male style of leadership in PNG, reflects respect for state authority and a commitment to non-violence, holding community and family welfare above personal interests, efficient management and use of scarce resources, recognition of the democratic principles of people’s participation and empowerment, and equitable and sustainable development.

### Conclusion: to make a difference

Increasing numbers of women candidates have pursued their collective desire to make a difference in PNG politics, and women are slowly entering the mainstream political arena. In essence,
women's participation has attempted to connect their private sphere of decision making with the public sphere.

Patterns of political behaviour displayed by women are a reflection of their role in society as carers and nurturers of human lives, more than anything else. These are qualities that women feel are needed in the public decision-making arena. Women's desire is to make a difference on the basis of their gender roles; it is their concern for human lives, more than power for its own sake, that increasingly brings women into the institutional sphere of politics.

A concerted effort from women, the government and donor agencies is required to sustain and expand the level of political consciousness among grassroots women. To help curb the increasing abuse of public power and resources for personal gain and to satisfy the parochial interests of wantoks (relatives) or friends, and to ensure responsible leadership for the common good, more effort is needed to reach out to the vast majority of women and the general populace to facilitate a certain level of mass political consciousness.

It is clear that women's participation is essential for building a sustainable and democratic society and government. Women are half of every community, therefore they are half of the solution to problems encountered in society and in governance. Women believe they can make a difference to their lives, the lives of their families and the nation if they are supported in their efforts.

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Where are the women in Simbu politics?

Abby McLeod, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University

Throughout the world, women are perceived to participate in politics less than men. While attention is paid to their involvement in women's organisations and local level government, in aid rhetoric (UNIFEM 1999, World Bank 2001, UNDP 1999a) women's political participation is framed largely in terms of representation in parliament, a key indicator of the United Nation's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (UNDP 1999b). In developing countries such as Papua New Guinea, the disparity between male and female representation in parliament is particularly marked, with only one of one hundred and nine parliamentary seats being currently held by a female. This disparity is greatest in the Highlands region, where women are yet to gain representation in Papua New Guinea’s parliament.

If women's political participation is measured in terms of their representation in national parliaments, Pacific women indeed exhibit extremely low levels of political participation. Such an indicator however, fails to provide a complete understanding of women's political participation and influence. For example, in the Highlands province of Simbu, despite the fact that only eight women contested the Papua New Guinea 2002 National Election, Simbu women were active participants in the national electoral process. Like Simbu men, Simbu women participated in decision-making at the local level, contributing to their residential group's choice of National Election candidate. In addition, throughout the immediate pre-polling period, Simbu women avidly discussed their political views and played a fundamental role in sustaining electoral campaigns. Significantly, on polling day, Simbu women lined up to vote.

While no women contested the Kerowagi District open seat in Simbu Province, Kerowagi women played a fundamental role in local electoral politicking during the Papua New Guinea 2002 National Election. Further, given the blatant disjuncture between external representations of women's political participation (based upon figures of their election to parliament) and the way in which local women characterise themselves as politically active, it is suggested that a broader approach to gauging women's political participation would more accurately reflect the ways in which local peoples experience the political.

Women and politics

Increasing women's participation in politics occupies a prominent position on the agendas of international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, being touted as an issue of human rights, and also of development. Primarily, they argue that in the absence of women's participation in political decision-making, national legislatures fail to account for the specific needs and aspirations of women, consequently further entrenching the feminisation of poverty and continuing male dominance in nominal positions of authority (UNIFEM 1999). Central to this argument is the notion that the state (or state institutions such as national legislatures) has the capacity to effect social change, and moreover, that political participation be framed in reference to the state. A necessary corollary of this argument is the demarcation of politics as a domain of state action, as distinct from local politics and the purportedly distinct 'private' domain.

Despite the attempts of organisations such as UNIFEM (1999) to facilitate Pacific women's involvement in politics, formal politics remains predominantly the preserve of men. Papua New Guinea fares particularly poorly relative to its smaller Pacific island neighbours, whereby a population of some 4.5 million has seen only four women in parliament since 1975. In comparison, the small island state of Fiji currently boasts eight female members of parliament (UNIFEM 1999).

The impediments to women's participation in the formal political arena are many and varied, being personal, social and economic in nature. At the personal level, women's lack of confidence in the public realm has been offered as an explanation for their under-representation in national politics (UNIFEM 1999). In addition, social factors such as gender roles, the pervasiveness of masculine political cultures, violence against women, the lesser social mobility of women and the fewer educational opportunities available to women impinge upon their political participation (UNIFEM 1999, Sepoe 1996). These overarching impediments are further entrenched by economic considerations, primarily women's inadequate access to the financial resources imperative for political campaigning.

Such impediments inevitably contributed to the gross gender imbalance of candidates in Papua New Guinea's 2002 National Election, with only 41 of 2875 candidates being female, a mere 1.4 per cent. In Simbu Province, of 494 candidates contesting six Open seats, only six were female, one from Chuave, two from Kundiawa, and three from Sinasina-Yonggamugl. In three electorates—Gumine, Karimui and Kerowagi—all candidates were male, and of 41 candidates contesting the Chimbu Regional seat, only two were female. No female candidates were successful in obtaining either an Open or Regional seat in Simbu Province (Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission 2002).

In attempts to understand this disparity, prior to polling I asked approximately fifty adult Simbu to discuss the likelihood of...
Simbu women candidates being elected. Both male and female Simbu claimed that while some female candidates possessed exemplary educational qualifications, financial resources and requisite oratorical prowess, Simbu women were less highly respected as public speakers than men. Discussants however, optimistically noted changing attitudes towards women’s participation in the formal political arena, with one man’s observation that ‘women know how to run families well thus they are capable of looking after electorates too’, gaining broad support. Furthermore, while ongoing notions of sexual antagonism contribute to perceptions of women as weak and polluting, there was no question of women’s actual ability to undertake the tasks for which politicians are responsible.

Unfortunately, such rhetoric lent little favour to female candidates such as Sarah Garap, who featured prominently in a media program on the 2002 National Elections (ABC Television 2002). In that program, Sarah, who was contesting the Sinasina—Yonggamulg Open seat, said that she was prevented from voting and threatened with violence. It is worth noting however, that while media coverage focused upon the difficulties experienced by women during the actual polling process, such difficulties were by no means gender specific, with male candidates being similarly threatened with violence and prevented from voting. This does not deny the existence of the extra barriers faced by women attempting to enter formal politics. However, my own observations suggest that such representations do not accurately convey the nature of the gender specific impediments faced by women, as previously discussed.

In light of these aforementioned difficulties and constraints against women candidates, it is hardly surprising that few Simbu women mobilised the support and resources necessary to win a seat in parliament, or even nominate for the 2002 National Elections. Significantly however, while women’s representation in national parliament is a key measure of women’s political participation, the under-representation of women in parliament does not negate women’s participation in other forms of political action. Nor does it follow that grassroots women define political activity and participation in relation to direct parliamentary representation. Let us then examine the ways in which Kerowagi women discussed and enacted their notions of politics during the Papua New Guinea 2002 National Election.

Simbu women and politics

Simbu Province lies in the heart of the Papua New Guinea highlands and has a population of approximately 184,000 people (National Statistical Office 1993). While distinct linguistic groups exhibit varying cultural identities, cultural practices and beliefs are relatively consistent throughout Simbu (Brown 1995:13). The people amongst whom I have lived and worked are known as the Bari, a tribe of some 3,000 people, belonging to Kerowagi District, Kup Subdistrict. Throughout 1999 and much of 2000, I came to know the Bari while undertaking doctoral research. I returned to Simbu in June this year, with the aim of documenting the participation of three Bari candidates in the 2002 National Election. More specifically, I paid particular attention to the role of women in the campaigns of male Bari candidates.

While no females nominated as candidates for the Kerowagi Open seat, discussions with women suggested that they viewed themselves as important actors in both local and national politicking. For example, Bari women actively participate in community dispute resolution forums, women’s groups and church groups. In addition, they play a public, if not oratorical role in exchange ceremonies. In this context, the adage ‘behind every good man is a woman’ rings particularly true, for while men announce pigs to be given in exchange and subsequently accrue status, it is publicly known that it is women who raise them. Moreover, women have strategic interests in advancing the status of their men, and exert considerable influence over the ways in which family resources are deployed. On occasion I have witnessed women strike (protest) against their husbands by refusing to support their attempts to gain status via the distribution of pigs.

While the outside observer may see women’s role in supporting men’s political interests as perpetuating male dominance and entrenching women’s domestic role, Bari women do not equate pig production and distribution solely with the domestic realm, but rather, they characterise it as an integral aspect of local politics, negating the existence of clearly defined domestic and public or political realms. Furthermore, women exercise agency by offering and withdrawing support in accordance with their own priorities and needs. Like ‘traditional’ or local Highlands politics, national politicking in the Highlands involves the exchange of wealth, thus Bari women played a fundamental role in the 2002 National Election by supporting their chosen candidate’s campaign via the provision of prestige food items and pigs.

In Kerowagi District, campaigning primarily involved hosting campaign nights in ‘campaign houses’ within each candidate’s home territory, and also travelling to other regions in order to network and deliver campaign speeches. Irrespective of the location in which campaigning occurred, candidates were at all times required to provide food to members of their audience. On only one occasion did I witness a woman complaining about the extra demands placed upon her by the campaign process, with many women exhibiting pride in their ability to contribute to the provision of food items and pigs. In this respect, it is worth noting that like men, Bari women may achieve varying degrees of public status, and indeed there are local language terms specifically pertaining to women’s status. Interestingly, the primary patron of one Bari candidate was a woman who exerted considerable influence over the way in which that candidate campaigned, and ultimately controlled the way in which he deployed resources.

In addition to playing a central role in the provision of resources to chosen candidates, Bari women actively participated in discussions pertaining to campaign strategies and avidly discussed their political views. Significantly, while ‘campaign houses’ were interchangeably referred to as ‘men’s houses’, both men and women spent their nights in such houses discussing political strategies and hosting visitors. Primary contributors to these discussions were
men, however many women also offered suggestions relating to campaign strategies. When speaking of elections, women expressed the same aspirations and priorities as men, claiming that their primary expectation of candidates was the provision of services, particularly infrastructure improvement, health care and free education.

While women expressed a desire to see Simbu women elected, localism reigned supreme, with women's primary commitment being to electing a member from their own tribe, thus facilitating their access to Electoral Development Funds (EDF). Women did not explicitly associate the election of a woman candidate with improved attention to women's specific needs, and when I suggested that I would vote for a female regional candidate because I wanted to support a woman, I was told that it was more important to vote for someone from the Kup Subdistrict than to vote for someone on the basis of gender. Furthermore, while some male candidates paid explicit homage to women's issues, as per established voting norms, women were more interested in electing a representative from their own region than in electing a representative on the basis of issues raised by that candidate.

In attempts to assist candidates from their own region in gaining widespread support, women consciously facilitated their husbands' and brothers' networking by activating affinal links. In this sense, women were key resources for politically ambitious men, however they also characterized their role in exploiting affinal links as a conscious participatory act. The fact that one Bari candidate gained more than 70 per cent of his votes from outside of his base area illustrates the importance of such links. Other studies have similarly noted that 'Most of the candidates believed that they would receive votes from their wives' clan or village' (Yasi 1996: 267). In many ways, the role of women in assisting men in obtaining electoral support is therefore continuous with the role of women in assisting men to obtain status as 'traditional' big men, primarily by way of helping them in amassing the material wealth necessary to succeed in exchange and also by emphasizing affinal associations.

Another important and publicly visible role played by women was the composition and leading of election campaign songs. Throughout the pre-electoral period, campaign songs were plentiful, being sung from the back of utility trucks by supporters sporting megaphones, by those travelling by foot on the campaign trail and by supporters gathered in campaign houses throughout the night. While men partook in the singing, the songs of men predominantly comprised political narrative texts in a choral style emulating modern church compositions. Women, however, composed a plethora of songs with extensive narrative texts in a choral style emulating modern church compositions.

According to women, the express purpose of these songs was to elevate the name of the candidate, to signal to others that the candidate was approaching and to put down the claims of opposing political candidates. Song texts included references to the credentials of the candidate (e.g. educational achievements, appealing physical characteristics), elements of the candidate's campaign (e.g. party affiliation, electoral promises, campaign strategies) and place names with which the candidate was associated. In addition, songs targeted specifically at competing candidates rebuffed those candidates' claims to suavity and made comparisons between the relative merits of candidates. These songs played a significant role in the maintenance of group sentiment, assisted people in remaining awake throughout the night while campaign planning was occurring, and basically served as a unifying force amongst the supporters of each candidate. Moreover, campaign songs constituted deliberate threats against opposing candidates by damaging their reputation in attempts to force them to resign their candidacy. Women appeared to relish their role in antagonising opposing candidates and were not deterred by the occasional rock thrown in their direction. In this sense, women saw themselves as central to the maintenance of group support and in the deterrence of opposition.

Perhaps the most salient indicator of women's interest and participation in the 2002 National Election is the fact that like men, women voted. While voter statistics are as yet unavailable, previous studies in other regions indicate that women comprise 50 per cent of voters (Pokawin and Rooney 1996: 138). In Simbu, like men, many women voters were threatened with violence but persisted in voting. All discussions in which I participated suggested that women were just as interested as men in voting and they similarly schemed about ways in which to interfere with the polling process so as to gain greater support for their chosen candidate. At one point, a woman jokingly spoke of the way in which she would 'grisim ol poling ofisa' (use her sexuality to persuade the polling officer) to assist in the rigging of votes. Thus women, like men, showed great interest in the polling process and were similarly eager to advance the interests of their chosen candidate by casting their vote.

Conclusion

The above discussion provides a snapshot of Kerowagi women's participation in the 2002 National Elections, suggesting that while Simbu women have not yet achieved the desired 'ends' of the electoral process, they are actively implicated in the 'means' through which parliamentary participation is achieved. Certainly, such participation differs markedly from participating in politics at the senior decision-making level. However, women's discussion of candidate choices, their contributions to community candidate selection, their promotion and support of selected candidates and ultimately, their participation in voting also constitute political participation.

As noted by Sepoe (1996: 120), this suggests that 'It is necessary to recognise the fact that not all women in Papua New Guinea share the view that women must gain political power at the national level, or at the lower levels of government.' Indeed, given the weakness of the Papua New Guinean state, it is reasonable to question whether parliamentary participation is the primary means through which the specific needs and aspirations of Papua New Guinean women will be advanced, for '[a]fter all, decision-making does not just take
Thus, while it remains important that more Papua New Guinean women enter the formal political realm, it is similarly important that the political actions of grassroots women are recognised and promoted.

The fact that Kerowagi women categorise themselves as political participants poses a challenge to commonly held assumptions about political participation, as embodied in aid rhetoric. In arguing that Kerowagi women actively participate in both the national electoral process and politicking at the local level, I have offered a small example that mitigates external conceptions of Melanesian women as apolitical and dominated by masculine political cultures. This does not justify the continual exclusion of women from national parliament or other high offices. It does, however, suggest the existence of broader conceptions of political participation.

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Gender and perceptions of political power in Papua New Guinea

Dianne Korare, Victoria University

Introduction

It is extremely difficult to generalise about any group of people in a country as socially and geographically diverse as Papua New Guinea (PNG). As have women everywhere, the women in PNG have had different life experiences, but they do have one thing in common: they are one of the most disadvantaged groups in their society.

In October 2001, the Women in Politics symposium was held in Madang. The main focus of the seminar was to encourage women to stand for the local-level government elections, as well as the national elections that were being held simultaneously; there was a determination among the women who attended — the 2002 election was going to be the turning point for them. Women seemed more united and focused than ever.

However, as the 2002 election results unfolded, it became clear that women's representation in national politics had not improved. As a facilitator at the symposium in Madang, I had the opportunity to meet women who had contested previous elections and those who were intending to be candidates in 2002. It is through their voices that I was able to obtain a picture of women's growing interest in being involved in politics prior to the 2002 election, despite the almost insurmountable problems they faced (several of their comments are cited in this article).

Culture, custom and power relationships

The most common explanation given for why women in Papua New Guinea are not recognised as equals in the society is cultural factors, or the term more commonly used in the Pacific, ‘customary’ or ‘pasin bilong mipela’. Custom is a very important part of PNG society and even for those who have received a Western education or who live mainly in the urban areas, there is little escape from what is considered customary ways. They take on an almost sacrosanct significance and anyone who dares to ignore them is soon ostracised.

Women spoke to me of the importance of culture in their lives, and the need to feel a sense of belonging, yet they were critical of the way in which men are using culture as an excuse to do what they consider is good for themselves. Custom has been deployed by political elites for their own particular purposes. ‘Anything that appears to be of great antiquity can be portrayed as carrying greater authority in the present’ (Lawson 1997:2). This criticism is not of tradition as such, but rather of the way in which the idea of tradition is sometimes used in the South Pacific. Because something is considered of traditional significance, its preservation is automatically perceived as essential. In this way, democracy is often viewed as being embedded in the West, when in fact it is a relatively new concept.

Many women in PNG view tradition or culture to be unchangeable, and therefore accept the subordinate role as inevitable. Kanjaljit Soin argues that ‘when women believe that differences in status are part of the “natural order of things”, they are less likely to challenge how society is organised to benefit men more than women’ (Soin 1998:10). In the 1980s, PNG’s parliament hotly debated whether to make wife-beating a crime under the Criminal Code. A number of members denounced the bill, arguing they had paid bride price and therefore had the right. Lady Kidu, member for Port Moresby South, encountered a similar reaction in the October 2001 sitting of parliament when she tried to have a private member’s bill on rape in marriage accepted in parliament. The reaction of many members was that what occurred in the home was not the concern of anyone else.

Yet there are many women in PNG, who are not prepared to accept this attitude any more, and groups such as the National Council of Women and Women in Politics are encouraging women to vote for a candidate of their own choice, who will be sympathetic to women’s issues (Hopkos 2000). Through the determination of politicians such as Lady Kidu, the whole package of legislation on rape, sexual assault, child sexual protection, and new rules of evidence — particularly for women and children — was passed in the last sitting of the national parliament prior to the 2002 election. One woman spoke of how much her culture meant to her:

Culture has played an important part in my life as I feel I have to have my roots; otherwise, I would be someone without a tribe... I value the customs and even though I am exposed to the gender concept at the same time, as a traditional woman, I also embrace my culture, because it maintains peace and harmony in our society.

Yet, the culture being referred to here is very different today from what it was 50 or even 25 years ago. Traditional cultures are being abused and the essence of culture is being changed. This view is supported by Sarah Garap, when she writes of the plight of women and girls in the Simbu province: ‘There can be little doubt that women in Papua New Guinea society today are viewed and treated differently than their female ancestors were. However, it is hard to unravel genuine tradition from myth’ (Garap 2000:162).
Women are becoming more and more aware that the custom that they value and respect is not the same today as it was when they were young. Women were respected in the society as wives and mothers and this gave them a certain amount of 'power', maybe not as a spokesperson but as a decision maker and a force behind the men in her household. Anthropological research (Barlow 1995, Fergie 1995, Maschio 1995) on the traditional role of women supports the view that women in many parts of the country used to have more power in their society than they have today.

It is important to note here that the traditional concept of power has a very different meaning to that of the modern sense of the word, which denotes political or economic control. The whole concept of politics, as it is practised in PNG today, is a foreign import. That is probably why policies have become so dysfunctional, and why the western concept of majority rule has taken on a completely different meaning there.

**Colonisation, development and women's power**

Colonisation and development have been major contributors to the decline in the status of women. The missionaries, with their Christian family models, where a woman's primary role is that of a wife and mother, may have added to this (Drage 1994, Wormald 1994). Certain aspects of modernisation, such as education and health services, liberated women, but issues of development altered their power. Women were excluded from taking a role in public affairs.

Post-independence governments, despite paying lip service to gender and development policies and being signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have also pursued development strategies that do not have a great deal to do with gender equity (Connell 1997). Instead, they have promoted male dominance in politics and used culture and tradition to legitimise their actions. As a consequence, women have been excluded from major decision making, and issues of importance to women have been ignored.

**Religion and women's power**

Despite the role that religion has played in the demise of women's power, many consider the women's fellowships that they belong to as a central factor in their advancement as leaders within their communities. They are grateful for the educational opportunities that the mission has given them, the encouragement they received to pursue higher education, and the many employment opportunities in mission schools or health centres. Many women believe the roles they have played on church committees have given them valuable leadership experience and confidence. Their faith in God also has given them the strength to put themselves forward in politics despite the odds against them. Some women consider strong a Christian commitment to be a prerequisite for any aspiring politician.

One woman from the ethnic group Motu-Koita (centred in the heart of Port Moresby, the national capital) believes that the women in her area are more interested in church activities and they try 'to push politics away'. However, she thinks they do believe in using their influence with the men, while letting the men be the leaders. One woman said:

We do not have the desire or challenge to enter politics, unlike the sisters I have seen at this symposium. It has really taken my attention to see how involved the women here are in local-level government and community affairs and their aspirations of going into the political arena. On my side they are more involved in church-oriented activities. I have learnt a lot from this symposium with these women attending.

**Women and political power**

Yet women are becoming more and more convinced of the necessity to be represented in the national government. A man I interviewed in Port Moresby summed up the feeling:

I think there is just the need for a woman's point of view; a man can never do that no matter how much he tries. I think it is more of a gender balance, not so much for numbers' sake but I think there just needs to be a stronger voice and more women can do that.

American surveys suggest that:

- even a few women in the Legislature have a good influence on the male politicians — women aspire to build consensus and create a harmonious workplace — and there has been a discernible shift in the men towards a more participatory, less autocratic style (Dysart et al 1996).

One aspiring female politician concluded:

- that women will bring the balance that is so urgently needed. Men for too long have dominated the country and the country is in real trouble. It is important for men to realise that we want to work with them to improve the country.

Is it merely a matter of convincing the voters that women are needed in the political process or are the issues more insidious than that? The political system in PNG is inherently discriminatory and this greatly affects women's chances of being elected. The voting system is first past the post, and in the 1997 election there was an average of 21.8 candidates per electorate (Kauilo 1997:9). There is a tendency for people to vote along tribal lines, the winner representing the most populous tribe in the region. Wealth is another factor: 'People look upon successful wealthy people for help, guidance and leadership without giving any consideration to other qualifications and qualities a leader should have' (Kaumba 1989:50)

**Culture and political power**

In many Papua New Guinean homes, women do have a strong influence, they make the important decisions about bride price and ceremonial activities. Their opinions are sought by their husbands or male relatives, especially during important occasions when decisions have to be made about which pigs to kill, or how
would not be hindered by culture, even though she came from an area where the man is the head of the family and owns the land. She believed that people are aware that they have been suffering for too long, there is a need for a change, and ‘A woman is needed to make that change.’ The men were also saying that a man had been doing the job for the last 26 years and there had been no development, so it was time to see if the women could do it.

Another woman, contesting a seat in Popondetta in the Northern province agreed that her chances of getting into politics is your opponents that use that culture trick and say that women are not voting for women. An explanation for this is, ‘They have not been supporting women in the elections because of their husbands or relatives and cultural opinions. Tribal loyalty is a big issue. Women want to vote for a woman but if she is not from that tribe, then that makes a difference. These are the things we need to understand and change.

Conclusion
The majority view is changing, and men are no longer viewed as having the natural right to leadership in PNG. There is definitely a changing atmosphere and a shift in gender relations, particularly among the educated elite. Entrenched attitudes are changing as the role of women as partners in development is slowly being understood. Fewer women are accepting the situation as the ‘natural order of things’, and more are aware that it is essential for their growth and survival that they understand the changes that the country is going through.

People are hurting because of a lack of development and not enough people-centred government. They are demanding to be better represented, and women have demonstrated in local-level government that they are more than capable of taking on difficult issues. Many believe that women will bring to government the honest leadership and managerial skills that they have demonstrated in many community development programs. All they need is the opportunity to show what they can do.

Note
Comments cited in this article are from interviews in Papua New Guinea over two weeks during Sept/October 2001. They are included in the unpublished Master’s thesis ‘Women struggling for a voice in contemporary politics in Papua New Guinea’, Victoria University 2002.

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Winning and losing in politics: key issues in Papua New Guinea

Carol Kidu, Member for Moresby South electorate, Minister for Welfare and Social Development, and
Susan Setae, electoral candidate, Moresby North-East electorate

Winning in politics in Papua New Guinea: Carol Kidu

I entered politics by default after my husband’s death, but have now won two successive elections in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Lots of congratulations have come my way, but mine is not the typical female experience. The reality in PNG is that the playing field is not level, and it is an uphill battle for women to win elections at both national and local level. What has made my situation different?

In the 1997 election, I campaigned hard and developed a specific and different style and strategy from the usual male approach. However, so have many other women, including Susan. There is no doubt in my mind that the deciding factor for my win in 1997 was the fact that I was the widow of Sir Buri Kidu, the highly respected Chief Justice of PNG. In addition to that, Buri’s birthplace and home is an urban village in my electorate, so I had a family and clan base vote as a foundation for the numbers necessary to win.

Although I am sad to say that my skin colour was used against me by some candidates, it was also an advantage in some ways. On several occasions, both in 1997 and 2002, some men (and perhaps women) rationalised their decision to vote for me in spite of my sex by saying that, ‘She understands these things because she is a “nao haline”(expatriate) but we would not vote for our own women.’

I won in 1997 because of these special circumstances. I worked very hard in parliament, hoping that it would make the way easier for other women in 2002, but sadly it has not done so. The 2002 election was chaotic and desperately fought and it disadvantaged women enormously.

The majority of people in my electorate are of coastal origin, and the election was relatively smooth and peaceful other than in two areas where tribal politics of ‘block voting’ and intimidation were used. Susan’s electorate, on the other hand, has a different ethnic composition and the election there was marked by violence and blatant abuse of the electoral process. My success, with an increased total and margin, was assisted by the ethnic composition of my electorate.

My chance of success was also helped by the fact that I was a sitting member of parliament, and had the benefit of having had electorate funds to leave my ‘handmark’ on the electorate. I used those funds honestly, but very strategically, to capitalise on my chances of re-election so that I could continue working on integrated community development to ensure its sustainability in the next five years.

It is very important that, during the next five years, we introduce strategies to ensure that other women gain access to the political process in 2007. They will then have the chance to leave their handmark and to demonstrate their capabilities as parliamentarians in our young and very fragile democracy.

Special circumstances have made it possible for me to have the privilege of entering the so-called ‘men’s house’, so my experience is the exception not the rule. Susan will now expand on the realities facing not only female candidates—and also many male candidates—who did not win seats in the election. It is a reality that must be changed so that entering parliament becomes a right for women, not a privilege.

It must be stated very clearly that Susan’s loss will become a victory for the many youth who supported her as an ‘honest mum’ who gave them some hope, an ‘honest mum’ who has not deserted them or threatened them because of the loss, an ‘honest mum’ who is continuing to work with them and will most likely win the 2007 election if she chooses to stand again. However, being a mum is often a disadvantage because mums are always taken for granted. They are the backbone of PNG society—indispensable but too often invisible.

Losing in politics in Papua New Guinea: Susan Setae

I contested the recently conducted PNG national election with the endorsement of the same political party as Carol. I will try to cover my experiences as a losing candidate in one of the few political parties that actively sought female candidates. Although I had been considering it for some time, I actually only nominated on the very last day, and took people and the media by surprise.

Moresby North-East electorate in the National Capital District

As my electorate is in the nation’s capital district, its people are from all the ethnic groups in PNG, but are predominantly people from the highlands region. The electorate is surrounded by a number of big settlements, most of which are unplanned and on traditional land, where basic government services are unlikely to reach the majority of the people. Many are unemployed, poor and...
illiterate. They are disadvantaged by poor housing and lack of basic services and infrastructure.

Likewise, the people living in the suburban areas cannot be disassociated from the problems faced by those living in the settlements. They also face unemployment and many are either retired or retrenched public servants living with their extended families in crowded state houses that are poorly maintained and lack basic service delivery. The extended family system plays a significant role in getting people who are unemployed to stretch their scarce resources to accommodate the needs of their less fortunate relatives in both the urban area and their home village.

Many people are disadvantaged and marginalised as a result of poor and unfair political and economic decisions, and they are vulnerable to political manipulation and bribery during national elections. Lack of political education also contributes to a low level of political participation that is often biased and economically excessive for both the candidate and the voter during the campaign period. Ethnic loyalty often takes precedence over the selection of leadership and good governance.

Key reasons for candidates losing elections in Papua New Guinea

The issues were identified during my experience of running a campaign with a dedicated team of volunteers who demanded nothing from me.

- Thousands of eligible voters were turned away at polling booths because their names were not on the roll. Unlike Carol, I did not have a base vote area that I could focus on to ensure that voters were registered. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) assistance in introducing a new system of registration and updating the common roll became a major problem at the polling booths.
- Bribery and vote buying is the biggest threat to an honest candidate. The failure to enforce the law on bribery and vote buying allows many candidates to abuse the law and walk away freely. Many voters have also developed a culture of bribing the candidates: 'If you pay me, I will vote for you or I will bring you this many votes.'
- Campaign period is a time of feasting, drinking and dancing. It is a financial burden to the candidate, and it creates an environment in which supporters move from camp to camp to get what they can. Just providing refreshments, without any feasts, is a huge financial burden.
- Eight weeks of campaigning is far too long and increases costs enormously. In addition, for many the focus of the campaign becomes a culture of feasting and negative oratory, rather than realistic platforms and policies.
- Many candidates capitalise on people's poverty and lack of education and make outrageous promises to their supporters. The promise of simple honesty and hard work cannot compete with the promise of sudden wealth and instant delivery of basic services.
- Ethnicity is a threat to democracy and the unity of a sovereign state. Increasingly aggressive groups are enforcing a tribal style of democracy that denies the right of individual freedom of choice. The custom of 'block voting' and controlling ballot boxes must be stopped.
- One-day polling, without proper management, proved to be chaos. Electoral officials and security (police) were unable to cope with the logistics. It has been possible in the past, but this election was chaotic with poor forward planning and dissatisfied polling officials who refused to work and insisted on being paid allowances before they finishing the counting.
- Election related violence: threats, intimidation and weapons were used to scare people into voting for particular candidates.
- The voting rates of people working in the formal sector are not high because they are apathetic. Thus election turnout in urban areas is often dominated by the unemployed and poor, who are more susceptible to corrupt practices.

The way ahead: some thoughts and suggestions

The electoral process

- Upgrading of the common roll must be a continuing process and should not rely on computerisation alone. Perhaps the village and community census books should be reintroduced to clean up the roll, because the complexities of naming systems in PNG can lead to inaccuracies and double entries on the roll.
- Procedures should be improved to ensure greater honesty at the polls (for example, finger marking with indelible ink, not just on the nail, to control multiple voting; and polling officials calling the names of voters so that scrutineers can hear and prevent voting on the names of the dead and wrong names.)
- One-day polling nationwide is possible, but needs more forward planning and would probably work out less expensive than this long chaos. (I observed one-day polling in Guyana, which faces similar problems of ethnic tension, a difficult physical environment and so on.)
- Initial counting should be done at subdistrict or district level (in safe areas it could even be done at the polling station in front of the scrutineers), then
the ballots should be returned to the boxes sorted into their bundles, the boxes could be sealed and then sent to the central tally centre.

- Security procedures must be improved, particularly with regard to the safety of supporters, especially women (separate polling booths for women should be considered).
- Specific legislation should deal with the practice of ‘block voting’, which denies the individual right of democratic choice. The legislation should be enforced by closing down polling stations and not counting ballot boxes from booths where the custom is practised. In addition, candidates who encourage ‘block voting’ should be charged with a criminal offence.

Affirmative action

- Seats should be reserved for women, for example, the 20 regional seats option at national level.
- Elected seats should be reserved for women in local-level government areas (LLGs), aiming to fill one-third of seats with women, rather than the present one seat nominated under the Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government.
- Political parties should play a major role by mainstreaming women in party machinery, as well as genuinely endorsing women and giving special attention to their needs (the efforts so far have not been genuine and the ‘inducement’ introduced under the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates—a rebate on electoral expenses for those parties preselecting women candidates who get more than 10 per cent of the vote in their electorates—has no impact).
- Intensive and comprehensive mass education is required on good governance, development processes, democratic processes and so on by using ‘picture talk’ materials, drama and role playing to overcome the problem of low literacy levels.

Attitudinal issues

- Education for unity and nationhood must be given a high priority. We hope that it is not too late to reverse the movement to tribalism and parochial attitudes to politics and development.
- Gender education, especially on women’s rights and attitudes to dominance and ownership, must also be given a high priority.
- Christian teaching should be more liberal in its interpretation of biblical texts. Denominational teachings about women’s roles and status vary considerably. Some churches and church leaders have been very proactive in this regard and have become forceful agents for positive change.
- The rule of law must be emphasised and reinforced to counteract the increasing application of traditional practices in ethnically mixed communities.
- Strategies to balance individual rights and communal interests must be developed not only as a political issue, but also as a developmental issue.

Issues of definition and clarification

- We must define a Melanesian democracy. How can the noble principles of democracy be best implemented in the diversity of Melanesian cultures? What noble traditions can be incorporated successfully into democracy in the contemporary society? An enormous amount of self-reflection is required in PNG to define an appropriate and workable way ahead, and a model for democracy in Melanesia.
- We have to clarify and redefine our parliamentary processes to reverse the movement towards an executive dictatorship—legislative and constitutional changes are needed as well as procedural change.
- We have to be more analytical with regard to the use of concepts in mass education, and address issues of semantics (for example, most people do not understand English concepts such as corruption, democracy and economy, and interpret such concepts very narrowly).
- We have to clearly define the development process in the Melanesian cultural context and adapt it accordingly to avoid enormous financial and resource wastage, and minimise the social breakdown that is occurring at a frightening rate. We must be proactive in ridding the nation of the ‘dependency syndrome’ and the cargo cult mentality, so that people participate meaningfully in our developing democracy.
- Education and genuine equality of opportunity is required for women and youth so that they can participate in the political and developmental processes of PNG.
Slo slo: increasing women's representation in parliament in Vanuatu

Isabelle Donald, Member of Parliament for Epi; Jane Strachan, Adviser, Department of Women's Affairs; and Hilda Taleo, Director, Department of Women's Affairs, Vanuatu

Introduction

In the recent general election (May 2002) Vanuatu elected its third ever woman (Isabelle Donald) to parliament. In 1987, Hilda Lini and Maria Crowby were the first women elected to parliament of Vanuatu. Hilda Lini served three terms and Maria Crowby one. During her term, Hilda Lini was also Minister for Health. From 1998 to 2002, Vanuatu had no women's representation in parliament, although equity is enshrined in Vanuatu's constitution, the Comprehensive Reform Program and Vanuatu's ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1995.

The reasons women in Vanuatu are so under-represented in national, provincial and municipal governments are complex and include the reluctance, and in some cases direct opposition, of some (both men and women) to acknowledge women's rightful place in the decision-making processes of the country. These attitudes are deeply embedded in traditional custom and Christianity. Particularly in the early days of independence, many members of parliament were also church pastors and today many are chiefs.

Conservative attitudes, such as believing that the man is the head of the household, are difficult to change. For example, recently the president of the Council of Chiefs, Tom Numake, publicly stated that women of the island of Tanna had no place in either politics or the judiciary. Tanna women protested strongly, publicly berated Tom Numake for his statements and demanded he apologise (Trading Post 2002).

Attempts to change this situation in the past have been ad hoc and lacked a clearly planned and coordinated approach, as well as political will. However, this does not mean that nothing has been done to try to change this situation. In particular, NGOs such as the Vanuatu National Council of Women and Vanuatu Women in Politics (VANWIP) were active in the 1995 and 1998 elections, particularly when none of the political parties fielded women candidates. In 1998, as a political protest VANWIP put forward a number of women candidates. All stood as independent candidates, including Hilda Lini. VANWIP gave cross-party support and training.

VANWIP realised that its protest probably would not be successful in getting a woman elected to parliament. However, it was successful in raising women's political profile. The VANWIP women candidates experienced hostile opposition from both men and women (Molisa 2001).

The reluctance of political parties to nominate women is probably the single biggest barrier to women being elected to parliament in Vanuatu. If people stand as independent candidates, they do not have party machinery behind them. Candidacy is costly in terms of support, advertising and registration fees. Independent candidates have to raise funds to cover the costs. If they stood as party candidates, women would recover these costs, in theory anyway.

Another significant barrier to women's representation is the 'first past the post' electoral system used in Vanuatu for national elections. The ten countries in the world with the highest women's representation in parliament all have proportional representation elections. Such systems provide an incentive for political parties to broaden their appeal to voters by adding women to their party lists. The results are significant, especially when the 'zebra' rule is applied, that is, every second seat goes to a woman (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

The plan of action

The plan of action undertaken by the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) in 2001 and 2002 to get a number of women elected to parliament in the 2002 general election was based on strategies found to be successful elsewhere in the world. For example, the strategies suggested by the Asia/Pacific 50/50 by 2005 Women in Government: Get The Balance Right campaign (Centre for Legislative Development 2001), and the lessons learned by VANWIP in their 1995 and 1998 election campaigns, informed the plan of action adopted by the department.

In 2001, in response to the mounting criticism about the government's lack of political will, the DWA completely overhauled its operations. Given its limited resources, the department acknowledged that alone it would be unable to make much difference. It also acknowledged that it was important to utilise the considerable commitment and expertise available in NGOs. In the past, it had been criticised for not working with NGOs, so it adopted a philosophy of working in partnership for equality (Department of Women's Affairs 2001a). This philosophy was to underpin all the work of the DWA, including all aspects of policy development and implementation. It did not include just NGOs, but other government departments, men, chiefs, pastors and other critical stakeholders.

The next stage was to prioritise areas for policy development. Because of the impending national elections in May 2002 top priority was given to the area of women in government. The first
stage in the policy development process was preparing a discussion paper to be sent out to stakeholders for comment. When the feedback was received, the policy was finalised, translated into Bislama and submitted in November 2001 to government for endorsement. To date that endorsement has not been received. Slow government processes are a major factor in the lack of progress in improving the status of women.

The policy included both long and short-term strategies, some of which could go ahead without government endorsement. The long-term strategies included a quota system that required eight seats in parliament to be reserved for women, and political parties being required to nominate women as candidates for a minimum of 30 per cent of seats. A proportional representation electoral system was also recommended (Department of Women’s Affairs 2001b). The short-term strategies are discussed in detail below.

All these strategies involved working in partnership with key stakeholders. Projects were submitted to donors, who implemented these strategies on a small scale (Port Vila and Luganville only) and they were all successful. Only small-scale interventions were possible given the short lead time to the national elections. The DWA also wanted to test the effectiveness of the strategies so that the lessons learned could be considered when planning the long-term strategies for the 2006 general elections.

A task force was convened which included representatives of key stakeholder organisations. The task force met over a number of months to plan the implementation of the strategies. Representatives of the churches and the chiefs, although invited, did not attend the meetings. One chief who was keen to be involved was directed by an official of the Council of Chiefs (Malvatumauri) not to be part of the task force.

Lobbying the political parties to nominate women candidates

In 2001, all political party presidents were approached to attend a meeting to discuss a 30 per cent quota system for women candidates. They were sent a copy of the DWA’s Women in Government policy and asked to read it and discuss it within their parties, and particularly with their women members. They were also asked to bring a woman representative with them to the meeting. Out of nine parties invited, four attended the meeting and none brought a woman representative with them. The meeting proceeded and the quota of 30 per cent men, 30 per cent women and the balance of 40 per cent of candidates being of either sex did not receive support. It was also apparent that women had not been involved in a discussion of the policy paper and had not been invited to the meeting with their presidents. At the May 2002 general election, only two women were nominated by their parties; five women stood as independent candidates. Our lobbying of the parties was spectacularly unsuccessful.

Voter education for women

The Voter Education for Women workshops followed a ‘training the trainers’ model. The DWA worked with community theatre groups Wan Smolbag to train key women leaders, representing a wide variety of church organisations, in voter education. These women underwent two days of training about, for instance, how to register and vote, the importance of women’s representation in government, and their rights as voters and as female voters.

The women then returned to their own communities in Port Vila and Luganville to run similar workshops. In all, over 2,000 men, women and children attended the resulting workshops in the two municipalities. At the same time, Wan Smolbag was also running voter education workshops in some rural island communities.

Many women who attended the workshops did not realise they could vote independently of their husband’s and chief’s direction, or that their vote was secret. Many were also unaware of the importance of having women’s representation in parliament and the power their vote carried to influence who was elected. This highlighted the importance of the workshops and the need to run them over a much wider area of the country.

Training workshops for potential women candidates

Two three-day workshops were run for potential women candidates, one in Port Vila and one in Luganville. Isabelle Donald was flown from the island of Epi to attend the Port Vila workshop. The workshops run for potential women candidates included such topics as what it is like to be a female MP, the electoral process, issues affecting Vanuatu and women, running a campaign and using the media.

Facilitators and presenters in the three-day workshops were both men and women from the business sector, the government sector and NGOs. They also included Hilda Lini and Maria Crowby, and current male MPs. The materials developed by UNIFEM (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) were extensively used in the workshop and all participants received copies. Almost 80 women attended the workshops.

Research

The final strategy was research. There are two ongoing projects:

- tracking the progress of women’s access to senior government positions (including parliament), and their experiences in that process. This will provide important indicator information and data that will have to be collected annually;
- tracking the progress of women in the national, municipal and provincial elections in Efate and Santo, including candidate nomination rates, votes won, seats gained and the experiences of the women in that process.

In particular, the information gained from the latter will be used when devising the plan of action to attain the goal of 30 per cent female members in national, provincial and municipal governments by 2006.

For the 2002 general election, seven women candidates stood for election out of a total of 257 (Electoral Commission 2002), so
2.7 per cent of the total number of candidates were women. Political parties nominated two women (the Vanuaaku Party and the Vanuatu Republican Party) and five were independent candidates. Some of the independent candidates chose to run under an independent coalition called the Vanuatu Independent Movement.

Isabelle's story

Isabelle was born on the island of Epi and has lived and worked there for most of her life. She is married with three children. Her husband is very supportive of her political aspirations. For the past 18 years she has worked in both the government and non-government sectors on Epi. Most recently she worked as the local coordinator of the Rural Skills Training program, work that brought her into extensive contact with women's and youth groups throughout Epi. She organised many training programs on Epi and ensured that all had an equal representation of men and women.

Why was Isabelle successful when the other candidates were not? What contributed to her success? In a comparison of how the seven female 2002 candidates polled, Isabelle was far ahead of the others. She captured 19.5 per cent of the valid votes cast in her electorate. The other six women obtained from 24 per cent to 4 per cent of the valid votes cast in their respective electorates (Electoral Commission 2002). Her story reveals that belonging to a political party, being well known and respected in the community, receiving training and being well organised made significant contributions to her success.

Belonging to a political party

Isabelle was supported in her nomination as a candidate for the Vanuaaku Party (VP) by the youth of her community, the women and a number of local chiefs, but her official nomination came from the Epi VP regional committee. Previous to her successful nomination, Isabelle had been a VP supporter. She said:

There is one big reason why I wanted to go into parliament—because I want to try and educate the male MPs about the needs of women. They think about big things and sometimes overlook the small issues. When we are planning a development we need to start small.3

She found the support of the party machinery invaluable in her campaign and recommends that women affiliate with a party so they gain a profile inside the party and understand how the selection process works.

Being well known and respected in her community

There is no doubt in Isabelle's mind that, because she was born on Epi and had lived and worked for most of her life there, she already had the trust of the voters, particularly young voters and women. In some ways, her unofficial campaign had started well before she actually stood as a candidate. Much of the hard campaigning work had already been done. Her advice to women who are thinking of standing for election in the future is to start now:

The next election is not long away—it is very close so they should start preparing now. They must build up trust in the community, but first your family. If you build up that trust in the community it will be easy when you come to campaign. Then you will feel surer of your success. If you don't build up that trust you won't make it. You must gain your community's trust before 2006.

Receiving training and being well organised

Isabelle found the training she received at the workshop invaluable. She shared the information and ideas she obtained with her campaign team and they used this in planning her campaign. In fact, while she was campaigning, she got feedback from the audiences she spoke to about how well her campaign was organised and how disorganised the other candidates were.

In Vanuatu, it is the custom for candidates to let other people, usually their campaign team, speak for them so they are seen not to praise themselves too much:

Talking politics was new [for me]. Before my campaign we organised that one person would talk about the qualities of an MP, another about the popularity of one candidate, also about the personality of the candidate you want, is she/he good or do you not like her/him. I answered questions that were hard for the other members of the team to answer. The first time I watched how it was done, what the format was but I answered questions. There weren't too many questions.

Isabelle also commented on how it was important for women in the outer islands to also receive support and training. As a rural woman she was keenly aware of the difficulties faced by other rural women:

Women in town have got greater access to workshops, but women in rural areas need workshops so they can develop too. I gained experience from the workshop I attended but many women can't attend workshops. So we need to provide them in rural areas too.

Another important difference between Isabelle's campaign and the campaign of the other candidates was that her campaign team consisted of both men and women. It was the first time that women were part of a campaign team.

Some of the difficulties

Isabelle faced a number of difficulties during her selection process and the campaign itself. Transport was a problem: rain made the roads very difficult to navigate. They needed two trucks and it was expensive to travel to remote rural locations on Epi. They were unable to let many villages know they were coming as the island has few telephones, so they just turned up and spoke to those who were available and willing to listen.

Financing the campaign was difficult as the Epi regional VP committee was not prepared for the campaign. Both local and national fundraising helped, but Isabelle also had to use her savings to fund her campaign.

Another major difficulty was dealing with the attitudes of the men in the other campaign teams. Five men who had not been selected as VP candidates chose to stand as independents. These men spoke out about how women had no place in politics and actively discouraged people from voting for Isabelle. Some men
were abusive. One of these men openly challenged Isabelle’s right to stand as a candidate. This was particularly ironic as he had previously been an MP and the minister responsible for the Comprehensive Reform Program, which has equity at its core. Isabelle and her team ignored them.

So what has been learnt?

Before the scheduled general election in 2006, there will be provincial and municipal elections. Vanuatu has a history of early elections so it could well be that another general election takes place before 2006. The women candidates must be prepared so that, once an election is called, they can quickly swing into their official campaigns. Training must start early and women should be encouraged to build up their profile in their communities and earn the respect of the voters. It could be that rural women have an advantage over their municipal sisters with their community profiles. We should consider a shift in focus to include more rural women in the training program, and to build those costs in when asking donors for funding.

Parties need to know that women with party support, and the right training and community background are very strong candidates who can help a party’s prospects of governing. Well-trained women with a high positive community profile are assets, not liabilities, to parties. We must focus on persuading political parties to nominate women, and on encouraging women to work inside party machinery. We must continue with the Voter Education for Women program and expand it to rural areas.

Finally, we must encourage women to work within their political parties to achieve change, so they have an equal chance of selection. Selection criteria should be examined and women should build their credibility in and their knowledge of the party system. Selection processes must also be more transparent than previously. For years men have used the biased selection system to their advantage. Those systems should be changed to prevent discrimination against women.

Conclusion

Progress might be slow, but the experience of the last election has shown us that people are increasingly willing to work together to achieve increased female participation in parliament. There is a mood of optimism and a genuine delight among many, both men and women, that isabelle has been successful. Donors have also indicated that they are willing to support a long-term action plan. We must keep the pressure up; persistence and patience will be needed.

It is appropriate to conclude this paper with a poem by the late Grace Mera Molisa who worked tirelessly for and with the women of Vanuatu.

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Fighting for a fair deal in national politics

Afu Billy, Consultant, Solomon Islands

Introduction

When two of my male cousins asked me if I would consider contesting the East Malaita constituency parliamentary seat in the next national general elections, I gave a big laugh, looked at them and told them they were crazy.

‘Why not?’, they asked, not amused.

‘Because’, I replied, ‘it is such an absurd idea.’

First, I am a woman and the idea of a woman contesting the East Malaita constituency parliamentary seat was unheard of, and would probably be irritating to a lot of the people. Second, the constituency was dominated by two of the most conservative churches, the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) and the Seventh Day Adventists and both were very clear about where a woman’s place was!

Third, I come from a very influential religious family in the area. My uncles and dad were the pioneers of the SSEC in East Malaita and other parts of Malaita and Solomon Islands. My sisters and many of our family members held responsible and respected church positions, and some were local and overseas missionaries. I was the opposite. I did not live according to the church rules and never attended church. Labelled the ‘black sheep’ of the family, I was the only one who had attended a government primary and high school.

Fourth, I had never lived in my island village long enough for people to consider me for anything as serious as representing them in parliament, and the majority of the constituents were bush people from the mainland who did not even know of my existence.

Last but not least, I was divorced, an unforgivable sin according to the beliefs of the SSEC. Furthermore, I was living in a de facto relationship with a partner from another province, of a different religion and race, whose customs were frowned upon by my kin. My infamous status was no secret. Those who did not know me personally had heard about the ‘wayward’ daughter of the Reverend Ariel Billy.

That conversation with my cousins happened in 1998. In 2001, it was announced in the local media that I was standing as a candidate for the East Malaita constituency parliamentary seat.

Why did I change my mind? There were several influential factors.

Influential factors

In 1999, two months of extended leave with my retired parents on the island made me realise that I was accepted and even respected by many relatives and the saltwater people. It was as if everyone was relieved to see the return of their prodigal daughter to her roots.

The national and local environment seemed right. The major political, economic and social crisis being experienced by the country was blamed on the unwise decisions and corrupt practices of a male-dominated national and provincial leadership base. The ‘staleness’ of the one-man reign that had existed in the East Malaita constituency for five consecutive parliamentary terms, with no visible and tangible developmental benefits, relaxed people’s biases to the extent that they were prepared to take a gamble and support a woman.

The position in question was neither a church nor a customary one, supporters argued, and even the prime minister of Solomon Islands and some parliamentarians were divorced. I had to convince potential supporters that I had sufficient knowledge of government and parliamentary affairs. My educational background and my experience working for non government organisations had enabled me to serve at the local as well as the grassroots levels. My association with aid donors and my personal and professional networks, both local and external, were also persuasive. Supporters saw an approachable woman who seemed to be fair, honest and simple, factors that were now overcoming the traditional and religious biases.

People’s attitudes were changing: the idea of a woman representing their needs, and those of their families, at the national level became appealing. Despite this, I was still uncertain about entering politics. I had the welfare of my family to consider. A parliamentarian’s salary is low. I thought about the loss of privacy and the constant hassles that a member of parliament usually has with voters and wantoks who expect monetary gains in return for their votes. It was a period of uncertainty.

My turning point

In early November 2000, my dad died. The turnout of mourners for his funeral from all over East Malaita and many other parts of Malaita and Guadalcanal was overwhelming. People showed the respect and love they had for my dad by attending the funeral, and by contributing food, money and labour to help my family ensure that the continuous stream of mourners was fed and accommodated for nearly a month. That was when I decided that my family owed these people something more than the customary exchange of gifts. I knew also that it was my turn to pay this debt. It would be impossible for me to carry on from dad as one of the great spiritual leaders of the area. However, it was not impossible for me to represent the needs of these people in parliament. I knew I could do it, and that I could do it well if I was given the opportunity, their confidence and their trust.

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A visit to my island by a state delegation comprising the governor-general, his wife and several government officials, not long after my dad's death, helped to put my doubts aside. Our member of parliament was abroad and the provincial members weren't around, so, after the member of parliament for the neighbouring East Kwaio constituency asked me to organise the delegation's visit, I did so with assistance from the church leaders and chiefs of my island and the neighbouring sister island.

I was given the honour of making a speech on behalf of my island community. The ceremony was held in the island church. In a borrowed dress (my clothes were never appropriate church wear, according to my mum) and from the church pulpit—the 'holy men only' territory—I let this important person and his delegation know about what mattered to the people of my island, and what they wanted the government to hear.

Both the official delegation and the islanders were impressed. People were now openly approaching me to stand for the elections, and the governor-general's delegation was not secretive in telling the islanders that I would be a good choice for the East Malaita constituency parliamentary seat. I decided to take the risk. I resigned from my very good job and commuted between Honiara and my island home on a regular basis to touch base with the locals.

**Opposition**

Things were progressing well until a very close in-law, married to my niece, decided he too wanted to contest the East Malaita constituency parliamentary seat. The leaders of the island communities had approached him to be their chosen candidate for the national elections several times in the past. He had declined each time, saying he was going to undertake further studies overseas. His course ended and, by June 2001, he had confirmed his participation in the coming elections.

My traditional obligation as a woman in a situation where a very strong in-law, and an older man, also wants what I want is to surrender it to him, as a sign of respect. In practice, it was not easy to conform. I had resigned from a very good job and a replacement had been recruited from Australia. Had this dear in-law of mine accepted the island leaders' initial proposals, I would never have decided to run in the elections, because I would not have expected to have a good chance against him. From a cultural and religious perspective, he was the perfect candidate. He was all that I was looking for the national elections, several times in the past. He had declined each time, saying he was going to undertake further studies overseas. His course ended and, by June 2001, he had confirmed his participation in the coming elections.

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The situation placed me in a rather awkward position but I decided that, as much as I would like to fulfill my cultural obligations, there was no way that I could now give up. Personally, I felt that culture was being used to promote the male ego and as an excuse for a lack of consideration, bad planning and last minute preparations, at great inconvenience to me.

This new development placed a permanent black cloud on my efforts. The two island communities' support was halved. My opponent easily obtained the support of those from the other island, because he was from that island. Close relatives of his on my island turned their support to him. My family was in a dilemma, because of my in-law's strong connection to us. For many of my family members, custom already had the answer. My niece was already married out of the family, so voting for her husband would mean voting outside of the family. With other members of my family there was a sharing of votes, so that some would vote for him and others would vote for me.

In addition, there had always been a mild competitiveness between the two islands and this was an important chance to prove which island had the better candidate. There was no turning back for me, and I still retained strong support from my island and from the bush folk. The religious biases against me resurfaced as the opposing supporters began their attempts to prove these points and to gain numbers, and didn't they try!

**Preparations**

It was hard work, but the support of the islanders and also of a growing group of bush people, made things bearable. A network was formed throughout the constituency that had been initiated by writing personal letters to influential community women and men, informing them of my decision to run in the elections and asking for their support and assistance during the official campaigning period.

A base committee was also formed with fair representation of men and women.

Introductory visits to the bush communities were made to enable people to meet this crazy woman who was going to contest the East Malaita elections.

Money had to be raised in preparation for campaign expenses. A successful 'dine and dance' at the Honiara Hotel raised about $8,000. A week later the money was stolen, and the invitation cards were photocopied and circulated in East Malaita communities, with an interpretation of the function as immoral, and as having involved dirty dancing and naked girls. As if that was not enough, this material finally asked, 'Is this the kind of person the people of East Malaita want to represent them in parliament?'

**Starting to campaign**

During the first week of the campaign period, a major gathering of approximately 100 bush and saltwater people was held on my island. For many it was the first time they had seen me or heard me speak, so I was strongly advised by my campaign managers to give it my best shot. I gave a speech emphasising why I wanted to represent the people of East Malaita constituency in parliament.

I spoke about how I thought development in East Malaita should address the real needs of the rural people, which should be communicated to me and a committee that would be representative of the people of the constituency. I told them that I would also be making personal needs identification visits to their villages. I was preaching about development resulting from the increased participation of rural people, during initial consultations and...
throughout the developmental process. Such development was to be fairly distributed, and its allocation and administration transparent and accountable.

I was affiliated to the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change (SIAC) Coalition, led by former Prime Minister, Bartholomew Ulufa’alu. I spoke on the SIAC platform, mainly addressing the deteriorating economic, political and social situation in Solomon Islands. The credibility of the previous SIAC government was emphasised, as was its excellent performance during its short period in power. The coalition had a good record of positive urban and rural developments, and it had produced honest leaders, and sound policies and practices based on good governance principles.

It was the kind of government I wanted to be a part of, and which I believed would do a lot for the people of Solomon Islands, including the people of East Malaita. The locals identified well with the platform because copra prices rose when SIAC was in power, and some of the prominent SIAC members were from the SSEC.

The campaign trail

Our campaign began in mid-November 2001 with a team comprising an island chief and a mainland chief, two elders, several young men, two young women and a dear old grandmother from the bush, who could walk better along the mountain tracks than any of us islanders.

The campaigning trail was tough, both physically and mentally. For two whole weeks, my team and I travelled to all the major villages in the East Malaita constituency. We climbed steep mountains, crawled down valleys and crossed rivers on precarious tree trunk bridges. Slipping and sliding in the mud, we trudged on.

Our meetings had to be held early in the mornings after church services, or late in the afternoon when the women and men returned from their day’s field work. I was careful about what I wore, how I positioned myself when speaking, and how I addressed chiefs, elders and church leaders. Speaking in my mother tongue, I used simple examples to ensure their understanding of words such as ‘supporters, but about bringing constituents’ concerns and needs to the government to be addressed.

I also had to tell them that it was their democratic right to vote for the person of their choice and that I, as well as the other candidates, would be presenting my ideas to them during meetings so that they could make informed decisions about who to vote for. No promises were made to the people. It was made clear right at the beginning that the government of Solomon Islands was facing major economic and financial problems, and that there would be very little money around when the next government came into power.

Constant hurdles

The opposition was also working hard. Misinterpretations and distortions of my comments and ideas lost me many votes, and stopped my team speaking in one village. On another occasion, a letter was written by major landowners to those living on and off their land instructing them to vote according to the landowner’s wishes or else. Dirty campaigning and defamation was rife, and it was quite hard to repair any damage because it was difficult to go back to villages already visited.

I would be told in the meetings that never in East Malaita traditions had a woman sacrificed pigs to the ancestral spirits. My answer was already prepared, as I had been coached by a supportive male elder. Standing tall, I would say that, although the women did not do the actual sacrificing, there would not be any pigs to sacrifice if there were no women to raise and feed the pigs.

Another favourite statement was, ‘You are married to a man from another province.’ Custom requires that you follow him to his province, so it would be of no use for you to stand for East Malaita, when you will be living somewhere else.’ I replied, ‘I agree, but that is the Malaitan custom. My partner is not from Malaita and has different customs, and in any case such determinations are influenced more by other factors such as employment opportunities and good schools for the children, and not necessarily by custom.’

They said, ‘Your father was a great man. You could never replace him.’ I would agree, but say that his was a religious calling while mine was not, although both reap benefits for the people of East Malaita in different ways.

Yet others asked how many times I had been married. The men in my team would answer on my behalf, saying it was more important to have honest leaders who are hard working and willing to represent the people well. My marital status was a personal issue between me and God, they said, and only God is allowed to judge people.

In other villages I would still be speaking when a verbal fight would erupt because another candidate’s supporters did not want the village to attend my meeting. The support from ordinary village women in such situations was great. They would stand up and say, ‘She is only a woman. Why are you men so frightened of her?’ Such shows of bravery landed them in trouble sometimes. I learned from some of these women that they hadn’t voted for me or had not bothered to vote at all, because landowners had threatened that they would lose their gardening land if they did vote for me.

Election eve

The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission had announced earlier in 2001 that people living in Honiara were allowed to return and vote in their home villages. This meant that people were arriving from Honiara on the day before the elections to vote.

On the eve of election day, a very big meeting was organised on my island to confirm people’s support and for last-minute
questions. That night I lost a good number of my voters, as their Honiara relatives visited them later and said they would be forgoing the bags of rice and flour they received regularly from Honiara if they voted for me and not for the candidate of their relative's choice.

**Election day**

The Solomon Islands national general elections took place on 5 December 2001. A day later, the counting of the ballot papers began at the police station on the mainland. The results were announced at 9.00 pm. The winner was my in-law: he beat me by two votes. I did pretty well, everyone consoled me, considering the fact that I contested the seat against nine men. My island mourned the loss. The village women did not go to their gardens. The men did not put their canoes to sea. A year after the death of my dad, our home was again filled with mourners.

**The petition**

I learned later about alleged irregularities and corrupt practices happening during the elections, and I was urged to challenge the election results. The mother in me told me to forget it, but I was told that such practices were common in many past national and provincial elections. However, no one had been game enough to challenge the results or, if they were, they had been offered substantial amounts of money to shut up.

I returned to Honiara, taking the allegations with me. I spoke to people in high and low places, to friends, relatives, my children and professional acquaintances. The majority backed the idea of challenging the election results, because the allegations looked solid enough for a petition. However, I could not afford a lawyer; the affordable ones were not interested. Help came through: a lawyer friend soon drew up the petition which alleged that under-aged voters had participated, that someone voted in another person's name, and that a ballot paper stuck in the keyhole of one of my in-law's ballot boxes was validated and counted. I was asking for a recount.

Somehow the $3,000 petition fee was paid and soon the news was announced in the local media. The people on the two islands organised a reconciliation service, but it was a flop when the other side learned that I was not going to drop the petition. The national head of the SSEC was called to the island to sort out election-related problems. However, his supporters would not allow my supporters to join in the major Easter church convention on the mainland, because mine had not yet been cleansed after voting for a sinful woman.

**Conclusion**

The petition was heard from 4 June 2002 to 9 June 2002 in my provincial town of Auki, Malaita province. My nephew, fresh from law school, sat next to me in court as a 'learned friend', to take notes on my behalf.

The High Court has not yet announced its decision. Maybe it was not for me to pay the family's debt to the people of East Malaita. Who knows, it may even be my in-law who is to carry out this obligation on behalf of his wife's family. Whichever way it is to be, my involvement in the elections had a huge impact on my people and I can no longer say that I am not known in the East Malaita constituency. I may even be remembered as that crazy woman always fighting for what she thought was right, and the one who tried to put a stop to all the dishonest practices that occurred in elections.
Custom, chicanery and the myth of decolonisation in New Caledonia

Susanna Ounei, Kanak political activist, Fayawe, Ouvéa and Wellington, New Zealand

Introduction

This article uses my personal story to expose the sham of so-called decolonisation and provincial autonomy in Kanaky New Caledonia. The frustration and despair I and other Kanak have experienced in trying to obtain justice or legal protection from the customary institutions set up by the French government show that, 14 years after the Matignon Accords of 1988, Kanak remain colonised people. The Matignon Accords were signed between the French Government, the leader of the Kanak independence movement, and the leader of the main right-wing settler party. They were meant to put an end to the political violence over the question of independence that had caused so many deaths—mainly Kanak—during the 1980s. The Accords were supposed to fast-track the economic development of the Kanak people and increase local autonomy but they have done neither effectively.

Like all Melanesians, Kanak were colonised by a European country, in this case France. Other parts of the region were colonised by Great Britain, the Netherlands or Germany. Britain adopted a different approach to colonisation from the other powers, starting in Fiji where Sir Arthur Gordon developed a system to protect indigenous Fijians against exploitation by British nationals. That system was later extended to Britain’s other Pacific possessions. It is not my intention to praise Gordon, but at least British colonial subjects had some form of official protection until the onset of decolonisation in the 1970s.

I also do not mean to dissociate the Kanak people from other Melanesians, because ethnically, culturally and geographically we are very close to them. However, politically our situation is different from that of the citizens of the independent nations of the region. New Caledonia is still under the French yoke and Kanak daily face one of the most powerful and sophisticated armed nations in the world.

This colonial political context does not allow us to take responsibility for maintaining good governance in our own country because, while most Kanak are struggling to restore our national freedom, there are always some ambitious people who prefer to lie to serve their own interests and end up serving those of France. Such behaviour suits the French, who are happy to use divisive tactics against Kanak political activists and feminists like myself to try to isolate us.

Although the struggle for independence from French rule is widely supported by Kanak people, these few individuals use trickery and dishonest methods to gain an advantage in the conflicts over land that are a feature of Kanak society today. Such people pervert la coutume, or custom, with arrogant French bourgeois values. As one of the main witnesses of and participants in the Kanak struggle since September 1969 (Ounei-Small and Gauthier 1995:41–42), it is my impression that conflicts over land are provoked more often than not by people who have stayed aloof from this struggle.

After the Matignon Accords were signed, such people tried to take advantage of the billions of francs thrown by the French government at New Caledonia in the aftermath of the tragic events at Gossanah, in Ouvéa, when 19 Kanak men were massacred by French military forces. Such people are all too ready to tell lies about who is whom in la coutume, and to claim land rights that they know little about in order to access government funding to set up their businesses.

Leadership, land and women in la coutume

Many factors have contributed to the destruction of the real freedom that many Kanak have been dreaming about and working towards for more than 50 years. Before and after France annexed New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands in 1853, the indigenous people had their own indigenous political structures, with chiefs exercising authority over different areas. Though district chiefs rule over the people, they do so in conjunction with the various clans, each of which represents a related group of people. Each clan has its head and its elders, who perform traditional roles long associated with particular branches of the clan. Chiefs and clan heads are mainly men and, in principle, are the first born, designated by their ancestors to take their place in the local hierarchy.

In Kanak society, nobody is worthless and everyone has an honourable role with a reciprocal duty towards every other person, even if it is to open the bougna (the traditional meal cooked in an earth oven) for the chiefs, or to chase away flies while the chiefs are eating. In war, the person whose role it was to defend the chief would be honoured to give his own life to save the chief’s. Yet the district chief is entirely dependent on the person called at hnyei, the 'master of the land or real person of the country', who is well respected and taboo, and whose ancestors are reputed to have been in the land since time immemorial.

All the clans had their own land that was taboo and sacred to them and, until recently, people were frightened to violate another
clan’s land. If someone violated the land or usurped the rights to land that had belonged to another clan for generations, the people would say, ‘The land will eat them. They think they are eating from the land but it is the land that is eating them’. Before the French colonisation of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, there were many wars, but no conquerors of actual territory because the land belongs not to individuals but to the ancestors. During life, we merely look after the land and it is only ours after death when we have joined the ancestors.

A woman has rank according to that of her father, her brothers and her husband. During meetings, women are part of the decision-making process, but indirectly. They do not have the right to stand up and speak publicly in front of everybody. This is the male role. However, in Fajawe (a French mispronunciation of Fajawe in Iaai, the main language spoken in Ouvéa, the northernmost Loyalty Island), I saw a woman whose husband had died some time previously and whose responsibility it was to speak during customary meetings, even when men were present, since there was no one else to replace him.

In the past and still today in Ouvéa, although a woman does not speak publicly, she represents the land. Her blood is very powerful and taboo through her children. The children’s blood must not be seen by their maternal uncles, whether it appears as the result of a serious injury or a small cut. If the maternal uncles do see the blood of their nephews or nieces, a large amount of compensation will have to be given to them, such as cars or boats, together with cloth, money and traditional foods such as yams, taro, pigs, fish, cows and so on. Much land changed hands in the past because a woman’s blood was seen by her brothers through her children. A person’s maternal uncles include not only the biological brothers of his or her mother, but the mother’s whole clan, which is paired with the person’s own clan in a relationship of reciprocal respect and duty.

**Manipulating *la coutume* in the post-Matinon colonial state**

When a woman married, two of her children, a boy and a girl, would be given to the maternal uncles to replace her in her original clan. This was the case with my older brother and me. Not only were we given to my grandfather at his request to replace my mother in her clan but, because he had only three daughters and no sons, we were also given to him to inherit his land as his direct descendants—and therefore his sons in *la coutume*, even though I am a woman. My adoptive mother, also Susanna, the second daughter of my grandfather, married my adoptive father in Poindimié, on the east coast of the mainland, the Grande Terre in French. My grandfather called her back with his husband and gave them his land to look after because my brother and I were too young. They built their home in the tribe of Ouassadieu (Wasaujeu) in the district of Fayoue (Fajawe).

In 1995, my adoptive mother died and before her funeral I was telephoned to ask me why I was wasting my time in Fiji or New Zealand, and insist that I come back as soon as possible. He had already informed all the clans and families of his decision.

On 23 December 1995, I landed in Ouvéa with my two children, a boy of eight years and a girl of 21 months. On 5 February 1996, a *palabre*, or customary meeting, was held at the residence of the chief of the tribe of Wasaujeu. In the presence of the syndics, or agents of customary affairs, an official document was signed designating me as the inheritor of all my mother’s belongings, including the *gifte* situated on my grandfather’s land.

However, on 10 February 1996 a man came from Nouméa, where he had spent most of his life, to make a claim on the land I had inherited. He was supported by his cousin, who had recently settled in Ouvéa for business purposes. They claimed that my grandfather’s land belonged to the man from Nouméa on the grounds that his father was the customary brother of my adoptive mother, and that their father had given him the land before he died. Yet there was no blood link between us and neither my brother nor other members of the family had ever heard the story.

We found it strange that the father of this new claimant had never claimed the land when my grandfather and adoptive mother were alive. In fact, the motives of the two men were purely commercial, as they wanted to set up a tourist business and a petrol station on the land using a large grant of money received from France through the Matignon Accords. They saw owning the land as financially advantageous, because it is beautifully situated on a white-sand lagoon beach and is ideal for a tourist development.

For four years and four months after that day, the claimant and his nephews terrorised me and my children, stealing our property, destroying buildings, cutting down trees, using sorcery against us, and setting fires so that we regularly suffocated from the smoke. We were completely failed by the colonial legal system, both French and customary. On several occasions I complained to the gendarmes, but was told they could do nothing as they had to wait for a customary judgment by the chief of the district.

My older brother went to see the district chief who is directly related in custom to my biological father: Ounei is said to be the first occupant of the land and the one who nominated the chief of Fajawe. However, I could get no help from the customary authorities, neither those based in Ouvéa nor the Customary Senate (*Senat coutumier*) in Nouméa, which the French originally set up as the Customary Council (*Conseil coutumier*) following the Matignon Accords, and which was reinforced by the Nouméa Accord of 1998.

The Customary Senate consists of chiefs from different areas of the country, but many Kanak are critical of it and argue that some of its members are not true traditional chiefs and have no
right to make decisions, especially with respect to land. The customary senators are nominated and well paid by the French government. My brother went to see the Senate, but was told that they were very busy dealing with land problems. I personally telephoned the President of the Senate in March 2000, and was asked to be patient as they were aware of the issue and were thinking about addressing it. He asked me if the representative on the Senate from Ouvéa had been to see me, but he had not, though he often drove past my place in his fancy car.

By April 2000, I had had enough and the children were very depressed. I gave the keys to the property to my cousin and his wife and asked them to look after my place and our traditional lands, and to put his own cattle on the land. My cousin was so angry that I had been unjustly forced to leave that he called in other men from the tribe and they surrounded the property with barbed wire to stop the false claimant from moving in. Thus he was 'eaten' by the land he had tried to usurp.

**Conclusion: the paralysis of custom and the illusion of autonomy**

The lesson of my story is that Kanak have to try to solve their problems in *la coutume* without appealing to the Customary Senate set up by the French, or to other institutions that have supposedly ensured Kanak autonomy following the Nouméa Accord. Other Kanak with whom I shared my experience say that such problems are very common in Kanaky today (see Guiart 2001, Gorodey and Ounei-Small 1995).

This experience has made me think hard about how Kanak are to know who is whom and which land belongs to which person. Following the extension of French control over all land in New Caledonia after 1853, there was drastic expropriation of the land of indigenous people throughout the Grande Terre. Even in the Loyalty Islands, where most land remained in Kanak hands, there was severe interference with customary tenure and institutions. It is important to remember that the repression of Kanak in New Caledonia began only 60 years or so after the establishment of the modern bourgeois French state dedicated to the principles of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. However, the Kanak people were long denied even the limited rights and legal protections available to working-class French citizens.

I don't want to idealise traditional Kanak society, but the French created many divisions amongst Kanak and made existing ones worse. When I complained about my treatment to French officials, they asked me arrogantly if this is what independence would be like. Yet neither the man who wanted to steal my land nor his family was ever involved in the independence movement. At the moment in New Caledonia, it seems that neither *la coutume* itself, nor the institutions introduced by the French state, are acting to protect ordinary people against the manipulation of traditional history by the greedy to suit their individual ambitions. In fact, it looks rather as if such behaviour is surreptitiously supported by the French in order to persecute and isolate political activists of whom they disapprove.

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Law, governance and civil society: revolution or evolution in the modernising Pacific?

Stewart Fenwick, Asian Law Group

Introduction

The twin offspring of liberalism, democratic governance and market economics, have come to prominence in international development policy. While both have far reaching implications for countries in the Asia-Pacific, governance reform raises a number of particularly acute issues that influence effective political participation, which is something that lies at the heart of democratic values. This article looks at how the three key intersecting fields of law, governance and civil society are underpinned by liberal philosophy, and how liberalism delivers a set of formal power relationships in an established state structure.

The law in question is Western European. Although law reform is familiar in the Pacific because of the influence of colonialism, it is an imperfect art. Civil society is a relatively new phenomenon; it is interposed by development policy in the traditional political dynamic, and given a preferential mandate to operate in the interests of the people. Democratic governance is an acknowledged human right; but its viability as a model, particularly in the Pacific, can be queried because of questions over indigenous identity and self-determination.

Indeed, such questions may be major threshold issues for governance in the Pacific, where in several countries serious challenges have been made to democratic processes and the legitimacy of the state. By promoting democratic governance, development policy is effectively entrenching liberal thought, which is resulting in a 'globalisation of values'. The viability and effectiveness of state structures is of particular relevance at the moment to the Pacific, and the implications of, and lessons to be learned from, governance reform must be clearly understood if good governance is to be achieved.

Political traditions and political rights

The almost universal acceptance of democratic governance as the only viable state model has resulted essentially from the triumph of liberal values at the end of the twentieth century. The idea that the spread of liberalism is somehow inevitable can be found in Francis Fukuyama's proposition concerning the 'end of history'. Following the events of September 11, 2001, Fukuyama restated his view that democracy and markets will continue to be the dominant organising principles for much of the world, and that there is nothing else toward which we could be expected to evolve (Fukuyama 2001). Indeed, he uses the loaded expression 'modernity' interchangeably with liberal democracy. The widespread embrace of liberalism is relatively modern, as the fall of communism provided the opportunity for it to flourish in international policy. However, this shorthand term refers to Western legal and political developments spanning several centuries. These developments, particularly liberal constitutionalism, define modern political authority and relationships.

These relationships originate in the rather confined concept of the imaginary social contract that has been used for centuries to explain, or justify, the relationship between the individual and the state (Simpson 1994:103). The individual is taken to consent to the authority of representative institutions that mediate competing demands in society. Liberal theory therefore suggests a fictitious social contract between citizen and state to underpin constitutional theory (Simpson 1994:113–14). This scheme describes a fairly coarse formula for political participation, and the basic assumption of individual consent has been invigorated by the theory of democratic liberalism.

Thomas Franck, in particular, identifies the emergence of a 'right to democratic governance' (Franck 1992). In short, he reaffirms the need for individual consent to legitimise state authority, but argues that this is enforced through a community expectation that states should be democratic (Simpson 1994:104). The theory has resonances for both domestic and international order in that it supposes that observance of democratic norms within states adds to their international legitimacy, giving rise to an 'international standard of internal governance' (Simpson 1994:118–19).

Roland Rich has recently documented the rise of democracy as a human right (Rich 2001). He notes that cold war politics precluded the inclusion of the term democracy in the United Nations Charter, but the concept found a home in international human rights with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declaring that the 'will of the people' should be the foundation for government authority (Rich 2001:22, 23).

More recently the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action asserted the interdependence of democracy, development and respect for human rights, and in 1999 the Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution titled 'Promotion of the Right to Democracy' (Rich 2001:20, 24). The resolution affirms that democracy fosters the realisation of human rights and vice versa, and also speaks of the right to democratic governance. The fact that the resolution was adopted by 51 affirmative votes, with only China and Cuba abstaining (Rich 2001:24) is a clear indication of the almost overwhelming...
acceptance—if not insistence—that the sovereignty of the people is a prerequisite for political legitimacy.

The arrival of civil society

Broadly speaking, the liberal tradition and the human rights framework prescribe a narrow range of participants in policy and decision making. Development policy, however, assumes the existence of civil society as a key ingredient for political legitimacy and effectiveness. Despite its prominence as a concept, the notion of civil society has been described as ‘hazy’ (Gai 1994:32), and commentators have found that there is a lack of clear agreement as to what it means (Lindsey 2002b:29). One indication as to its origins can be found in ‘neo-liberal’ development theory, which included attempts at imposing positivist, or rule making, systems on developing countries (Gillespie 1999:120–22).

John Gillespie suggests that a core assumption of neo-liberal theory was that society is comprised of three components: individuals, voluntary associations and the state (Gillespie 1999:121). The governance policy of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) suggests the existence of four components: individuals, civil society, the private sector and the state (UNDP 1998: section 2.5). Here the UNDP effectively inserts laissez-faire capitalism into liberalism and democratic theory by adding ‘private sector’ to the list of components of society. These approaches reflect the political and economic developments in the 1970s and 1980s, and the rethinking of the role of the state (UNDP 1998: section 1.1, see also Yergin and Stanislaw 1998). Not only has the state’s role in the economy and production been reduced, but development policy now also proposes a modification of the relationship between the state and society.

The important point is not the statement that civil society exists; this ‘political face of society’ including trade unions, professional groups, academic and research organisations and voluntary or non-government organisations did not just appear in the late twentieth century (UNDP 1998: section 6.1, Lindsey 2002b:29–30). What is significant is that its emergence in developing societies is being actively fostered, and that it has been designated a formal role in ensuring effective political participation in developing and transitional countries. Although the changing role of the state has had an influence on public policy and economic planning in both developed and developing countries, civil society is seen as having a role in developing countries because of a decline, or failure, of state power (UNDP 1998: chapter 6). The UNDP takes this further by suggesting a partnership between civil society and government, which necessarily implies a reduction in government control over policy and decision making (UNDP 1998: chapter 6), or at least over policy formulation and thus, implicitly, over decision making.

These policy prescriptions are made with sound intent: the creation of equitable outcomes for the people, the development of consensus, and building state legitimacy in the eyes of the people (and so reinforcing state authority) (UNDP 1998: preface). Interposing civil society in the classic governance equation is also only a part of a broader approach to good governance that includes numerous interrelated efforts across the public and private sector, including the enhancement of the capacity of governing institutions.

However, some words of caution have been sounded. Yash Gai describes civil society’s role as ‘problematic’ and sees it as having become a deus ex machina (or invisible hand) in the prescriptions for rights and democracy (Gai 1994:32). He also expresses concern at the proliferation of NGOs receiving foreign donor encouragement. Not only should such organisations be able to access governments and international organisations, they really should be able to demonstrate the ability to substantively influence decision making (Lindsey 2002b:34). This may not be an easy task. Tim Lindsey looks at NGO involvement in the difficult area of anti-corruption efforts in Indonesia. He reflects upon the difficulties of effecting lasting change to political and legal patterns of behaviour, and the danger that reformers are open to criticism for being allied to the West (Lindsey 2002b:59–63).

Civil society in developed countries contributes to a vigorous and transparent policy debate, and this should be the aim of governance developments in other nations. However, the stimulus for civil society’s role is the feeling that people in countries that have emerged from socialist, repressive or dysfunctional political systems must have a voice. This is reasonable inasmuch as democratic processes take time to develop, and transparency in decision making may take even longer. Nonetheless, civil society has emerged almost simultaneously with liberal ‘small government’ politics, and so the state sector in developing countries faces a double governance burden: doing more with less, and doing it with greater transparency and coordination than ever before.

The limitations of liberalism

Ultimately, the effect of the advancement of democratic governance is to entrench the globalisation of a common domestic architecture through the ‘convergence of domestic structures of governance’ (Jayasuriya 2002:28). This convergence ‘is taking place in no small measure as a result of the aid programs of multilateral and bilateral donors. Rich points out that there has been a shift in aid practice through the growing use of “democratic conditionality”, particularly by the European Union (Rich 2001:29). Governance reforms have also been motivated by the awareness that improvements were needed in accountability and transparency (particularly following the Asian economic crisis), and also the need to respond to reform movements active in recipient countries (Lindsey 2002a:8).

Legal reform is frequently in the vanguard of this convergence process because of the need to establish new institutions, laws and processes. Yet here again the shadow of Western tradition falls over the discussion. Western-style liberal constitutions have been adopted in many countries over the past ten years bringing parliamentary and judicial reform, and multilateral agencies have been strong promoters of market-oriented law reform. Contemporary law reformers have even been described as the
'juridic midwives of capitalism' (Lindsey 2002a:8), which only
serves to reinforce the sense that Fukuyama has outlined an
inevitable development equation: 'modernity' = markets +
democracy.

Is there a downside to the worldwide adoption of a single
political and legal framework? One of the principle concerns is the
difficulty of effectively transplanting the legal and institutional
building blocks from Western tradition. Just as assumed cultural
superiority has been a theme in international relations, so
'legocentrism', or in the case of Asian law reform, 'legal Orientalism',
has been identified more recently as a problem in legal development
policy and practice (Lindsey 2002a:2). While there would appear to be
little chance of a reversal in the promotion of Western legal
models, this analysis of law reform underlines the need for a more
thorough understanding of what it takes for new laws and
institutions to take root in host countries. Legal interventions in
pursuit of governance reform are inherently political, and so local
political support is crucial.

More importantly, however, the ultimate aim is to deliver
cultural change—both legal and political—and legal reform is
only a tool in this process, not the entire task (Lindsey 2002a:8).
The process of introducing democratic governance is also a complex
proposition. According to Gai, the issues that form part of
governance are diverse, and not as monolithic as they may seem at
first (Gai 1994:30). Civil rights, the rule of law and a liberal
culture, democratic reforms and transparent governance do not
bundle up into a discrete package: they have different dynamics and
certainly did not all emerge simultaneously in the West. The
fact that this is being attempted in the developing world only
makes a difficult task even more so (Gai 1994:30), although this
is not to re-open the 'Asian values' debate, nor to devalue governance
reform.

While reforms are taking place in developing countries, it is
also interesting to question what is taking place in the West: is
congruence as comprehensive among the countries that are
donating their legacies? The answer would seem to be 'yes', although
the major European traditions in fact developed similar institutions
quite independently. For example, the 'rule of law' in England,
the concept of Rechtsstaat in Germany and Etat de droit in France
carry a common moral theme about the exercise of state power,
but bear distinct characteristics reflecting political and legal
conditions in their home countries (Grote 1999:1).

Further, these concepts are relatively recent and are subject to
permanent debate and have to be constantly redefined to meet
the needs of an ever changing political and legal environment
(Grote 1999:1). While the overall liberal framework may not be a
contexted concept, implementation or maintenance of the system
therefore can be. Australia's experience also throws up examples of
issues or disputes that demonstrate the sometimes fragile nature of
democratic governance: is it appropriate for the Executive to criticise
the High Court? does government abuse parliamentary procedure
by delaying the tabling of responses to committee reports? should
judges be appointed by a discretionary 'behind-closed-doors' process?

In addition, law reform is a continuing exercise that requires
the vigilance of all participants. A high degree of tolerance and a
relatively sophisticated understanding of the core concepts, such
as the rule of law, are required to ensure that democratic governance
operates fairly and effectively, and time and patience are key
ingredients in reaching this end.

Another significant legal issue that is particularly important
for the theme of political participation is self-determination. The
right of people within a state to exercise their sovereignty is one
thing, and the right of 'peoples' quite another. Self-determination is
so significant a concept that it has a place at the commencement
of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 1
proclaiming the rights of peoples to freely determine their
political status.

Gerry Simpson concludes—having examined liberal traditions
and Franck's proposition about the right to democratic
governance—that the consent of the governed in the liberal
democratic model remains 'imaginary' rather than genuinely
realised. This is partly because significant limitations exist to the
sees the concept as having been interpreted conservatively rather
than creatively, which only serves to support existing state
structures, and also at times as being misused, for example in the
pursuit of independence by the Bosnian Serbs (Simpson

These concerns are reinforced by recent work in comparative
law in which H Patrick Glenn identifies a 'chthonic' (living on
or close to the earth) legal tradition. This is found in diverse
indigenous oral legal traditions that were dominated by Western
development (Glenn 2000:56–58). Peoples with a chthonic
tradition can be found among the indigenous populations of
Asia, Africa and the Pacific, among whom claims are being made
for alternative constitutional frameworks that recognise a
form of self-government. The strength of this movement has
led to the questioning of 'eighteenth- and nineteenth-century
notions of an indivisible sovereignty' in the hope that more
ancient forms of constitutionalism may receive recognition
(Glenn 2000:80–81).

Glenn points out that the constitutional debate on the legal
position of chthonic peoples is intense, since it is in the nature of
western constitutionalism to formally define all relations of power
and authority within the state' (Glenn 2000:80). The result not
only raises questions about the relationship between these
indigenous traditions and the state, but 'inevitably puts into
question the state structures themselves' (Glenn 2000:80). It is
just such structures that are being reinforced by democratic
governance. It would seem that governance policies have little to
say directly about such potentially significant challenges, although
respect for human rights, internationally and domestically, may
be a partial answer. The experience of the Pacific region of
constitutional crises in Fiji, and civil war in Bougainville and the
Solomons, certainly suggests that there may be far more work to
be done to reconcile traditional claims with the prevailing legal
and political institutional models.
Conclusion

The active promotion of democratic governance by multilateral agencies and in bilateral funding by Western governments has significant implications for the pursuit of effective political participation. While the spread of democratic governance has occurred with support from 'civil society' in recipient countries and the international human rights framework, the triumph of the liberal philosophy carries some important consequences. It tends to reinforce a particular model of society and analysis of behaviour between components of society, including the newly discovered civil society. The somewhat artificial model of society's core components reflects liberalism, capitalism and Western European traditions, and appears to leave little scope for alternative or less formal notions of society.

Furthermore, it is essential that civil society's mandate to act in the interest of the people is exercised faithfully, and actually enhances popular sovereignty as expressed in democratic elections. The promotion of governance is also significant for peoples of the Pacific because of the continuing uncertainty arising from the power politics of indigenous cultures, which inherently raises questions about the suitability of constitutional arrangements.

Unrest in the Pacific carries particular challenges for reformers, but modern participatory politics is built on notions of state legitimacy and popular sovereignty. The aim of modern democratic governance theory and practice is therefore to ensure that the consent of individuals is real, not imagined, and that political participation is thereby empowering. However, there should be no illusion that what is being achieved is the globalisation of political values and of domestic legal and political institutions. The foundations for current developments evolved over time in the West, and were not prescribed by international policy. Governance programs are attempting social change on a large scale and must overcome entrenched coalitions who are unwilling to surrender the benefits of previously dysfunctional systems (Jayasuriya 2002:35). It is difficult to deny the attractiveness of an effective model of government, but donors must maintain patience and be prepared, if necessary, to explain the failure of such a compelling social revolution.

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The Southeast Asian archipelago has become marked by divisions within existing states, placing significant local constraints upon the process of ‘development’. These divisions include ‘vertical’ challenges to the state, i.e. they have the capacity to split the state into geographic divisions based on proto-nationalist identity, and ‘horizontal’ challenges to the state, defined by ethnic and communal rivalry and conflict. This brief paper will canvas some issues in such divisions.

In Indonesia, vertical challenges exist in Aceh and West Papua, and arguably Maluku, (Moluccas) while horizontal challenges exist between Dayak and Madurese transmigrants in West and Central Kalimantan, and between religious groups (Christians and Muslims) in Maluku and in Central Sulawesi. Beyond this, there has also been racial violence against ethnic Chinese, notably in 1998, and between other religious, regional and political groups. All of this is set against a backdrop of continuing economic chaos, a weak state and an often brutal, coercive and politically engaged armed forces (Kingsbury 2003b). Malaysia’s racial violence has been relatively quiet since the late 1960s, although there have been recent clashes between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese. Recent trends towards peninsula Malays by the inhabitants of northern Borneo (Sarawak and Sabah) have also been noted, in particular by the indigenous ‘Dayak’ groups toward exploitation of natural resources. Further to the east, the Philippines continues to be wracked by a corrupt and self-serving elite, a weak state, a geographically resurgent New People’s Army (see Collier 2002) and, posing a vertical challenge, an active Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Moro National Liberation Front, and Abu Sayyef, all operating under an Islamic umbrella.

Interest

Within state formation, the idea of the state, interest is the defining characteristic of political identity. Interest can be manifested as ‘self-interest’ (of oneself and one’s immediate family or group); ‘shared interest’ (concurrent with the wider group); ‘enlightened self-interest’ (of oneself through helping secure the fortunes of others); and ‘altruism’ (primarily to benefit others). Of these types of interest, self-interest and shared interest tend to dominate most societies, although aspects of the latter two types of interest are often held up as the public ideal. Shared or aggregate interest is the basis of joint claims and as such is the foundation of political groupings and equally has the capacity to define political groups not just in their own terms but in opposition to each other (competing interest).

These types of interest fall into further sets of categories within the context of the Southeast Asian archipelago. Modernist political conceptions locate aggregate interest as most common in industrially developed, literate and contiguous political communities, identifying interest across communities similarly located within an economic framework (e.g. factory workers, ‘middle class’, etc.) but who are unlikely to personally know each other (see Anderson 1991). Such communities that express their aggregate interest as policy preference, are the basis of modern political parties. They are identified with more ‘advanced’ or modernist conceptions of political development and are usually regarded as necessary for the functioning of a modernist national polity (Kingsbury 2003a).

In Indonesia, aggregate interest is limited as a consequence of the relatively recent trend toward industrialisation and because of the logistical difficulties in establishing communication and common interest across the archipelago. It is also limited because of the success of the New Order in severely restricting the development of aggregate interest groups and genuine political parties (see Parati Komunis Indonesia or PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, see McVey 1997:96-117, 1990:5-27), and its reification of local identity.

In times of such tension, communally based political societies tend to retreat to ethnic or community group loyalty despite what might otherwise be an underlying material commonality of interest between groups, or division of interest within a particular group. Distinctions between communal groups tend to be made on grounds of social or cultural identification and indeed their primary focus may well not be political, hence they are sometimes not well equipped to address complex policy issues. This is because the inherent tension between aggregate communal interest and sub-aggregate interest does not allow the development of coherent or internally consistent policy positions. Political parties often retain aspects of communalism, but in theory at least they aim to address issues that extend beyond the immediate tribal or communal group and may distinguish fundamental differences of interest within such a group.

Malaysia has most successfully combined communal and modernist political considerations, in part by adopting economically discriminatory ‘repressive-responsive’ policies (Crouch 1996). In the Philippines the tensions are between the self-interested elite and appeals to populism within a nominally democratic framework. This under-developed aggregation produces a lack of internal coherence in policy making, which has
been reflected in the Philippines political history. Indonesian politics is characterised by political parties based on communal interest (notably the Islamic parties) or loyalty based on cascading systems of patronage (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia - Perjuangan, Golkar). Within such elite-driven systems, the (usually) charismatic party leaders derive loyalty primarily to themselves as individuals and not to the party institution.

Vertical or proto-nationalist interest tends to have pre-colonial foundations (e.g. Acehnese sultanate, Sulu sultanate), some of which were enhanced or exacerbated by colonial and post-colonial processes. These could be said to include the encouragement of regional identity for the purposes of divide and rule, the use of soldiers from one area against the peoples of another, and through the relocation of 'loyalists' to areas where loyalty is suspect (e.g. East Timor, Maluku, Aceh, West Papua, Mindanao, Sarawak), often under the guise of relieving population pressure in loyalist heartlands.

**Regional state formation**

States and nationalist groups define their appeal to solidarity in modernist terms, appeals to 'post-modernism' being reflected in claims to both global and local challenges to existing states. However, globalism regards the state as the basic unit of international relations and with the capacity to make law, wage war and so on, while localism is expressed either as claims to a new statehood or for greater recognition within existing states. The territory of states may not necessarily be contiguous, although if it is not there usually needs to be some national or historical precedent for the existence of the state. States also do not have to be based on a single national group, although without a core national group, or the identification of a set of nationalist values around which a core can cohere, a state would be subject to significant and possibly destructive internal tensions.

Globally, earlier models of the state were significantly different to the modern state form, notably in the ambiguity of earlier state boundaries and the extent of their authority. The model of the Hindu-Buddhist *mandala* has been used to describe pre-colonial Southeast Asian states, with the state in this case focusing on the centre and receding in the assertion of its authority towards the periphery (see Kingsbury 2001:14-18). In archipelagic Southeast Asia island states claims to sovereignty were rarely unchallenged and often fanciful. We read some of the claims of the Majapahit and Sri Vijaya empires, but little of the thoughts of their more distant subjects.

Colonialism in the archipelago initially operated similarly to existing states, establishing bases of authority from which they initially asserted a claim to economic advantage. It was only when there was a shift from trade with existing states to controlling those states and then developing economic endeavour (e.g. plantations, mineral extraction) that colonialism began to replicate a European/modernist understanding of state authority, complete with territorial boundaries, assertions of legal sovereignty, and institutional structures.

**Legitimacy of the state**

The legitimacy of the state rests on whether or not it has the capacity or desire to represent political agreement with its constituent groups. The legitimacy of a state is also derived from its appeal to a right to exist, e.g. Indonesia is the successor state to the Netherlands East Indies (NEI), claiming external recognition of that claim. That is, the state can claim legitimacy as a successor to a pre-existing state or states, and as the (romanticised) embodiment of the aspirations of its citizens. However, where the claim of a successor state does not represent agreement (East Timor, West Papua, Aceh) or where the precursor/successor state was itself understood as illegitimate (e.g. NEI), this claim to legitimacy is difficult to sustain with particular intra-state nationalist groups.

If the legitimacy of the state is in question, the territorial integrity, or ideology, of the state is usually maintained through force. Military force to guarantee territorial integrity has been applied in the southern Philippines, across Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. However, this use of force does not imply stability, but usually the freezing of hostility. In such a context, it is possible for a state to re-legitimize itself, e.g. through economic growth, the proper functioning of the institutions of state, and political participation. However, the experience of the archipelago has commonly been that the freezing of hostility has been used to advantage by more favourably placed individuals and groups at the expense of indigenous inhabitants. Thus regional tensions remain and indeed build.

This situation of continuing unmet political claims is not able to be contained forever in a strong (assertive) state, but faces real problems in a weak (disorganised) state, in which central authority has reduced coherence. Indeed, the necessity for the imposition of state power rather than the voluntary acceptance of state authority implies an inherent weakness in state structure, for which it only requires changed circumstances to reveal.

**‘National’ and communal legitimacy**

In terms of the legitimacy of the proto-nationalist or communal aspiration, legitimacy is both easier and more difficult to substantiate. In a qualitative sense, the legitimacy of a local claim can be relatively easy to gauge. No one who had spent any time in East Timor prior to its 1999 ballot and had even a passingly frank conversation with its inhabitants could have been left in any doubt as to the outcome of the ballot. While this was hardly a quantitative ('scientific') assessment, it proved to be remarkably accurate. Similarly in Aceh, the extent of popular support for the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka – GAM), at least among ethnic Acehnese, is very high. It is a similar situation in West Papua where the ratio of support for independence is perhaps not quite as high as Aceh, but significant and undoubtedly in the majority with ethnic Melanesians ('Papuans'). More strongly again, however, popular support for a separate 'national' identity could be said to be high among the Islamic population of the southern Philippines. But in a positivist sense, without referenda on self-determination, such claims remain formally unproven.
As discussed elsewhere (Kingsbury 2001:ch2), the idea of 'nation' is understood here as distinct from the state, the nation being a bonded cultural group that identifies itself through the expression of a common political aspiration or manifestation. Frequent although not limiting characteristics of such a nation include the use of a common language (cultural signification and mutual intelligibility), values, history or shared set of myths, other cultural markers such as a common religion, often a common territory or identified 'homeland' and sometimes a common enemy.

Some scholars have used the term ethnie to describe the 'pre-national' community (Smith 1986, 1991), in which the defining characteristic is cultural commonality but not yet defined in terms of territory. This idea of ethnie resonates throughout the Southeast Asian archipelago, being dominated as it is by scores of such ethnie, only some of which have more recently begun to define themselves in terms of nation. The Philippines, for instance, could be said to comprise of more than 70 such ethnie and arguably it has also come to comprise two nations, although in formal terms, only one state. The Philippines barangay accord to this model of ethnie, as could the greater long-house communities of Borneo/Kalimantan, and a number of smaller communities in eastern Indonesia. 'Nation', however, has a territorial identification wider than just the immediately local, implying a more developed set of social and political arrangements.

East Timor illustrates both ethnie and state, and the problems of becoming a nation. Since 1999, without a common enemy and with many internal pressures, East Timor has experienced a partial devolution to local identification, indicating that the process of nation-creation is not (yet) complete. In the Philippines, the multiple ethnie accepting Christianity comprise a nation. The other Filipino 'nation' could be said to be the Bangsamoro, which developed its post-barangay nationalism in response to Spanish/American/Christian Filipino incursions.

Combined with the Philippines' Islamic challenge is that of 'communism'. As a consequence of lack of ideological clarity, internal purges (see Weekly 1996:35-7) and the collapse of international communism, the New People's Army (NPA) in the 1990s developed to comprise a number of groups, notably on the islands of Luzon, Negros, Cebu and Mindanao. The primary characteristic of these groups is their geographic locations and ethnic identity. In this, class conflict was divided vertically by ethnicity and geography. However, the NPA has regrown to double its size to 12,000 (Collier 2002:1), and has rebuilt its conventional aggregate base.

In northern Borneo, no such violent assertion of local identity exists, although in the 1950s until the early 1960s there were divisions that combined both aggregate and ethnic foundations. The predominantly ethnic-Chinese Malayan Communist Party was active in both Sarawak and the Malay Peninsula throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, and until the 1970s on the peninsula. The Sarawak branch, the Sarawak People's Guerrilla Force (SPGF) was distinct from the peninsula branch, having different origins. Similarly in Brunei in 1962, the Tentara Nasional Kalimantan Utara (TNKU - North Borneo National Army), an expression of the Partai Ra'kyat (Peoples' Party) in favour of democratising the sultanate and uniting Sarawak, Brunei and Sabah.

In the period since the 1960s, and notably since the 1970s, in North Borneo there has been a different type of political distinction based on both ethnic identity and upon economic exploitation and political representation. Ethnic distinctions existed between the five major ethno-linguistic groups on Sarawak and Sabah, and along lines of kinship and class (Harris 1956:37), but more importantly continue between them and the coastal Malays, and Chinese with whom they are somewhat closer. Since the 1980s, a high level of rainforest logging in Sarawak has displaced numerous Dayak communities and engendered a high level of local resentment and, in some cases, physical opposition (Rengah Sarawak 2002, Jalong 2002).

**Cohesion and the state**

Economic underperformance in both Indonesia and the Philippines has probably been the primary contributing factor in regional instability. In simple terms, the elites of both countries have been corrupt and self-serving, and there has been a marked lack of cohesion around notions such as a social contract. This has created tensions amongst under-classes whose desperation has driven them into identifying a range of culprits for their problems, even though in many cases the alleged culprits are themselves hapless victims.

In this, economic exploitation of particular regions has perhaps demonstrated the greatest capacity for regional instability, accounting for chronic violence in the Philippines, social unrest in northern Borneo and violence throughout Indonesia. In this there is a sense that the high level of artificiality in archipelatic state creation has created opportunities for metropolitan elites to exploit the resources traditionally belonging to the inhabitants of the region from which they are derived. It could be argued that there are no states that in some senses are not artificial (see Aspinall 2002), and indeed as all political communities beyond the local require some degree of imaginative understanding they are all 'constructed' to some degree. However, the combination of peoples who do not share contiguity of territory, an original common language, a common culture, or common histories and myths does detract from the capacity for a 'natural' self-selection of political communities.

Conversely, colonial empires were constructed and maintained through violence, or the threat of violence, were necessarily coercive and did not, according to the claims of independence, enjoy local legitimacy. The successor states to such colonial empires inherited the same coercively defined boundaries and faced, as a first challenge, the issue of their own legitimacy. Liberation may have been an initial legitimising factor, but subsequent internal 'colonialism' acted to delegitimise many of the gains of liberation. Assuming no other change, such consequent dissent requires coercion to ensure the continuing viability of the state. This then creates a cycle of repression and further dissent, the only outcome

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of which can be instability and, inevitably, weakness. This weakness plays upon and exacerbates already significant institutional weakness of a coercive state. A state that holds itself together through repression may have little internal movement, at least if the repression is successful, as it has been from time to time in Indonesia and the Philippines, but it will not be stable and it will remain riven by internal flaws and weaknesses.

The questions remain, then, to what extent is the archipelago governable in a conventional, modernist sense, and how the geography and ethnicity of the region challenges notions of cohesion and security. It was probably possible to develop 'national' identities from ethnie based on colonial constructions if there had been a genuine commitment to sharing the benefits of the state under regularised institutional arrangements. However, the failure to do this and the repression used to control subsequent dissent has meant, in some cases, that what were once dissident voices that could be satisfied are now beyond the point of being brought back into the 'national' fold. This could be said to be the case in Aceh, West Papua and in and around Mindanao. This does not mean these areas will necessarily be able to break away from the state. But it does imply that there will be a high level of dissent in these areas, that they will remain unstable and insecure, and that will continue to act as an impediment to what is broadly conceived of as 'development'.

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Majelis Rakyat Papua—the Papuan People’s Assembly—and its significance in protecting the rights of the indigenous people of Papua

Agus Sumule, Faculty of Agriculture, State University of Papua, Manokwari, Indonesia

Introduction

Lack of political representation of the indigenous people of the Papua Province of Indonesia (formerly known as Dutch New Guinea, Irian Barat and Irian Jaya) in decision making that significantly affects their lives has been an ongoing problem since they were exposed to and became part of a modern world. Perhaps the only democratic exercise that ever took place in Papua was the establishment of the Nieuw Guinea Raad (NGR), or New Guinea Council, in 1961, through a mix of election and appointment methods. At that time, Papua was a colony of the Netherlands.¹

However, the Dutch government later agreed with Indonesia, under the auspices of the United Nations, to transfer the administration of Papua to Indonesia on 1 May 1963, after a year of UN interim government. This agreement was signed in the UN headquarters, New York (and was therefore called the New York Agreement), on 15 August 1962 by Dr Soebandrio, the then Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and J Herman van Royen and CWA Schurmans, representing the Netherlands government. There is no evidence to indicate that the NGR was involved parties (Dutch, Indonesian and Papuan administrative bodies, or the UN) for such a crucial decision.

It was not therefore a surprise that the Commission of the Historical Rectifying of the 2nd Congress of Papua (29 May to 3 June 2000 in Jayapura) made the following claim with regard to the violation of the political rights of the indigenous people of Papua:

[Even though] Article 1 of Chapter XXII of the New York Agreement clearly stipulates the rights of the Papua nation of free speech, freedom of movement, and of assembly, these rights were denied, hence could not be exercised by the Papuan people. All social and political organisations which were established before 1963 were dissolved and banned from conducting their activities by the government of Indonesia through the Presidential Decree No 11/1963, dated May 15, 1963. New Guinea Raad, which was the representative body of the Papuan people, was dissolved and replaced by the DPRGR [provincial parliament] membership of which was not elected through a democratic election process.

Six years later, in 1969, the Act of Free Choice (Penentuan Pendapatan Rakyat) was passed. The purpose was to allow the people of Papua to determine their political future. However, contrary to article (d) of chapter XVIII of the New York Agreement, which stipulated 'The eligibility of all adults, male and female, not foreign nationals, to participate in the act of self-determination to be carried out in accordance with international practice', only 1,026 people were hand-picked by the Indonesian authority to represent the Papuans. It was not a surprise that the Act, which was then ratified by the United Nations General Assembly, had been the source of political problems between a significant number of the indigenous people of Papua and Jakarta. This has been translated into a peaceful, open and widespread demand for independence since the fall of Suharto in 1998 (see also Saltford 2000, Human Rights Watch 2000, van den Broek and Szalay 2001, and King 2002).

The indigenous people of Papua and the Indonesian general elections

The answer to the question of whether the indigenous people of Papua have benefited sociopolitically and economically from the general election can be seen in the following episode.² In the fourth week of May 1997, Fritz Rumayomi, Camat or head of sub-district of Sugapa in the Central Highlands of Papua, was busy preparing the stage for the final Golkar campaign in the Paniai district. Dauw, the regent of Paniai, had decided that the final campaign for Golkar—the Suharto political machine—would be held in Sugapa, the land of the Moni people. As the rule at that time, all government officers—civilian and military alike—were supporters of Golkar, and those in Sugapa, therefore, were expected to participate.

Suddenly, hundreds of the Moni natives ran up the hill, approaching the government officers. As they were shouting and screaming, which is the custom of the highlanders of Papua when expressing dissatisfaction, the officers left their work and started to run for their lives. However, the Moni chief called out to Fritz and said 'Look Camat, we don't have anything against you personally. We are just tired of pemilu (elections).' Raising his arm and counting on his fingers, he continued, 'We have participated in pemilu for five times: 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, and 1992. Now, we will have another pemilu. But we are still wearing penis gourds!' The Camat was speechless.

The statement of the Moni chief perfectly illustrates the irrelevance of general elections to the lives of ordinary Papuans under Suharto's regime. Even though each district in Papua had parliaments, all of them were basically dominated by Golkar...
representatives, almost all of whom were civilian government and military officers.

In 1999, the first democratic election after the fall of Suharto's regime took place. More than 40 political parties participated. The majority of them had branches in Papua. Active civilian and military officers were banned from running as candidates. In spite of a relatively short preparation, the 1999 Indonesian Pemilu could be regarded as a success as new parliaments were established, including in Papua, both at provincial and district/municipality levels.

However, as is widely known, a democratic election is not a panacea for all political headaches, and Papua is no exception. First, even though the indigenous people are the majority population in Papua (65 to 70 per cent), this was not reflected in the membership of parliaments, except in the isolated highland districts. In the provincial parliament, only 49 per cent of the members are indigenous people.

Second, although the total population of women in Papua is slightly greater than that of men, their representation in all Papuan parliaments is very poor. Out of 54 members of provincial parliament, only two are women. In the district parliaments the situation is even worse, as they may only have one female member of parliament, or none at all, as in Paniai and Puncak Jaya districts.

Third, the current members of parliament in Papua are not as technically capable as were the members under Suharto's regime. This is a problem not only in Papua, but in all parliaments in Indonesia (Saad 2001). The main factor in Papua is that those who are educated are mostly working as government officers. Unless they resign from their government posts, they cannot enter politics. There are few incentives to attract people to political life, and there were few in 1999, and very few Papuan civil servants have joined political parties. Perhaps most important is the way the political parties in Jakarta influence the decisions made by each party at the provincial and district level.

Majelis Rakyat Papua and the protection of indigenous people's rights

Special autonomy as the middle way

The demand for independence by the indigenous people of Papua was met by granting the province special autonomy status as per decree no 4 of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat or MPR) of 1999. Approximately half a year later, Jaap Solossa, the Governor of Papua, and some other prominent Papuan leaders seized the momentum, and asked the Rector of Universitas Cenderawasih to form a team of Papuan intellectuals to draft the Bill of Special Autonomy for the Province of Papua. This was a strategic move by the governor because having the Papuans themselves draft the Bill ensured that it accommodated many aspirations contained in the demand for independence.

It was decided from the beginning that the Bill of Special Autonomy for Papua should comprehensively address and accommodate the rights of the indigenous people. The main issues were the rectification of Papua's political history with the Republic of Indonesia, the rights of the customary community to resources, the recognition of the customary judiciary system by the Indonesian judiciary, and the right to proper political representation.

On 22 October 2001, the Bill of Special Autonomy for the Province of Papua was passed by the central parliament. On 21 November 2001, it was enacted as the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No 21 of the year 2001 by President Megawati. On 1 January 2002 it was officially implemented in the Province of Papua (Sumule 2001).

The rights and duties of Majelis Rakyat Papua

For better political representation and to create a political mechanism to achieve the true protection and empowerment of the rights of the indigenous people, the Special Autonomy for the Province of Papua necessitates the formation of the Majelis Rakyat Papua, or the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP). As per the law of special autonomy, from now on the governance system in Papua province shall consist of the provincial parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Provinsi or DPRP), the governor, and the MRP.

The MRP is the cultural representation of the indigenous Papuan people, which has the authority to protect the rights of indigenous Papuans, based on respect for custom and culture, the empowerment of women, and the strengthening of a harmonious religious life. The membership of the MRP is exclusively indigenous Papuans: representatives of customary communities, religious communities and women, each group contributing one-third of the total membership. This made Papua the first region in Indonesia—as well as among the first in the world—to guarantee the proper political representation of indigenous people, and to ensure that one-third of representatives are women.

Some of the key rights and duties of the MRP are:

- to approve, suggest, modify or deny any Bill of special provincial regulation which affects the livelihood of indigenous people;
- to approve, suggest, modify or deny any agreement drawn up by the government (central and provincial) with third parties, applicable in Papua, which is related to the protection of the rights of Papuan indigenous people;
- to observe and convey the aspirations and complaints of the customary community, religious community and women, as well as the general public, and to facilitate follow-up settlements; and
- to ask for information on matters related to the protection of the rights of the indigenous people of Papua, and to ask for a review of any ordinary provincial regulation which is considered contrary to the protection of the rights of the indigenous people of Papua.

With regard to the provincial budget, the MRP has the right to approve, suggest, modify or deny the structure of the budget,
which utilises the resources granted to Papua during the implementation of special autonomy. Those resources are special revenue, which is equal to 2 per cent of the national special allocation fund; and 70 per cent of the revenue from the extraction of oil and gas projects in Papua.

With regard to the selection of political institutions/figures in Papua, the MRP has these rights and duties:

- to consider, as well as to approve of or deny, the candidates for the positions of governor and vice-governor, as well as to consider the candidates for head/vice-head of the districts/municipalities for the district parliaments in Papua;
- to consider, as well as to approve of or deny, the selection of candidates to become members of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (MRP) proposed by the provincial parliament; and
- to provide counsel to the political parties in Papua with regard to the selection and recruitment of the parties' leadership and/or management, as well as with regard to nominating candidates for parliamentary membership.

Besides the above-mentioned issues, the MRP also has a significant role in investigating past human rights violations, as well as promoting human rights in Papua in the future. According to article 45 of the special autonomy law for Papua, three significant human rights institutions shall be established in Papua: a representative of the National Human Rights Commission; the Human Rights Court; and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC).

One of the main tasks of the TRC is to clarify the history of Papua's integration into the Republic of Indonesia and to develop appropriate steps for reconciliation. As all of the above human rights issues are very relevant to the protection of the rights of the indigenous people of Papua, the MRP is expected to play a significant role in the establishment and operation of these institutions.

**Conclusion: obtaining a non-partisan and effective MRP**

The establishment of the MRP is undoubtedly a significant step towards the political empowerment of the indigenous people in Papua, if it can carry out its tasks properly. The effective functioning of the MRP will depend on three factors:

- the ability of the MRP to be a non-partisan body, but a body which represents all indigenous people of Papua, regardless of their political affiliations, tribal groups and other social orientations;
- the ability of the MRP members to seize the momentum and to utilise the legal-political opportunities as stipulated in Law No 21/2001 for the maximum benefit of the indigenous people of Papua; and
- the ability of the MRP to ensure that outside players respect Law No 21/2001 by providing every opportunity for the MRP to function properly.

In the next one and a half years, the MRP — together with the provincial parliament (DPRP) and the governor — will have to establish all the implementation regulations of the special autonomy law. There are at least 13 special Bills of special provincial regulation quoted in the law: among them is the Bill for the flag and anthem as the symbols for the Province of Papua. The MRP will have to reconcile the central government and the people of Papua so that those symbols can be established as representing the grandeur and culture of Papua, and are not positioned as symbols of sovereignty. The MRP will also have to ensure that the provincial budget is allocated properly to answer the fundamental needs of the indigenous people of Papua, and at the same time to ensure that all types of corruption and inefficiencies will be minimised as soon as possible.

Currently many circles in Papua province are busy with preparations for the establishment of the MRP. The main issues to be dealt with are establishing the procedures and mechanisms for selecting the members of the MRP as well as for deciding who will be the most appropriate members of the MRP. Among the three groups of the MRP membership, the women's group seems to be the most proactive one. It even suggested that all populations in Papua—indigenous and non-indigenous—should participate in a general election to select the indigenous female candidates to sit in the MRP.

The customary community will probably limit the selection internally, and base its process on a consensus of its leaders, rather than elect members. This is the most challenging task, as there are more than 250 tribal groups in Papua, each with different populations. However, I am optimistic that, as long as there is no intervention from outside, the customary communities in Papua will be able to work out their differences and invent methods that are broadly acceptable.

The religious community is still working on its differences, especially those existing among Protestants. This will not be easy, of course, as there are many Protestant denominations in Papua. Selecting and electing representatives of Catholic and Muslim Papuans will prove easier than Protestant ones.

It is expected that the government regulation on the establishment of the MRP will be signed by the President of Indonesia by 17 August 2002. This regulation is to be based on the proposals submitted by the Governor. As was the case for the Bill of Special Autonomy, the governor has asked Universitas Cenderawasih in Jayapura to assist. If everything works according to the plan, the process of MRP membership recruitment will take place by early September 2002. By the end of September of this year, the MRP should be established and ready to work. At least there will be two provincial bills awaiting the new members: the Protection of the Rights of the Indigenous People of Papua over Natural Resources, and the 2003 Provincial Budget.
Notes

1. The establishment of the NGR was not without some criticisms. Hastings (1973: 206), for instance, found the speedy political development in the early 1960s in Papua as 'surprising'. Mahdi (2000) disregards the democratic election process for the majority of the members of NGR, and called the body 'reminiscent of the similarly handpicked Peoples Council (Volksraad) established in Netherland East Indies in 1918'.

2. Personal communication with Mathius Awaitouw, a rural development specialist stationed in Sugapa by a mining company, March 1997.


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Debating the relationship between human rights and aid in Australia

Jane Hearn, Cambodia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Susan Harris, Human Rights Policy Officer, Australian Council for Overseas Aid

Introduction

Today we have a global population of six billion of which 6 per cent possess 59 per cent of the world's wealth, 80 per cent live in sub-standard housing, 70 per cent are unable to read and 50 per cent suffer malnutrition (Howie 2000). Poverty is a reality for one fifth of the world's population and not only increases the vulnerability, isolation, and marginalisation of individuals it also leads to social disintegration and threatens both human and global security.

Poverty eradication is not only a development goal, it has become 'a central challenge for human rights in the 21st century' (UNDP 2000:8).

The convergence of human rights and sustainable development

The relationship between human rights and human development provided the conceptual framework for UNDP's 2000 Human Development Report which presents a strong argument for an integrated approach to development. The theme of the Report represented a significant shift in thinking in overseas development circles about the importance of the relationship between human rights and sustainable development and the role of overseas aid.

Human rights and international development have evolved along separate but parallel paths and share common values and a common vision. That common vision is of a social order in which all peoples can live in dignity on a basis of equality, free from want or fear.

In 1948 the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the UDHR). The UDHR sets out a comprehensive list of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights which as a whole reflect an integrated vision of human development and a common standard of achievement for all peoples. The principles of the UDHR reflect the philosophy that human rights are derived from the inherent dignity of the human person and recognise that human rights are inalienable, universal, interdependent and indivisible.

Efforts to translate the UDHR into legally binding obligations were subsequently undermined by the ideological divisions between western liberal democracies and the former socialist states. Two separate covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights were established in response. These instruments elaborate the general principles of the Declaration into more specific rights and together with the UDHR, comprise the International Bill of Rights.

A series of binding treaties elaborate the rights set out in the International Bill of Rights. These deal with particular harms such as slavery, genocide, torture and racial discrimination and the rights of vulnerable groups—women, children and refugees. In addition, there is a plethora of international guidelines and standards, declarations and resolutions that, while not binding, reflect an international consensus on human rights.
The post Cold War environment

The UN formally recognised the relationship between human rights and development in 1986 when the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development. The Declaration recognises development as a human centred, participatory process and links human development to the realisation of international human rights obligations.

During the 1990s this conception of development was reaffirmed in the proceedings of several international conferences (such as the the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna 1993, The International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 1994, The World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, and The World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 1995).

The UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM and a number of national governments, notably the United Kingdom and Sweden have since adopted an explicitly human rights approach to their development program. These examples could be used by the Australian Government as models of how a human rights approach to development cooperation might be implemented.

A rights based approach to development

In 1998 the UN Secretary-General launched the new rights based approach to development that was intended to help States and development agencies to redirect their development thinking:

A rights based approach to development describes situations not simply in terms of human needs, or of developmental requirements, but in terms of society's obligations to respond to the inalienable rights of individuals, empowers people to demand justice as a right, not as charity, and gives communities a moral basis from which to claim international assistance when needed (UN 1998: paras 173-4).

UNDP along with other UN agencies and major donors have explicitly adopted a rights based approach to development programming and the mainstreaming of human rights is being actively pursued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR 2001).

The framework and the principles

The human rights approach to development sees poverty as a violation of human rights and places elimination of poverty as the primary goal of development assistance.

The concept of poverty is a broad one that encompasses not merely a lack of income but also a lack of opportunity and access to the benefits of development such as clean water, sanitation, health care and basic education and productive employment. It is the poorest communities, the marginalised and vulnerable groups in developing (and developed) countries who are most at risk of violation of their civil, political, economic and cultural rights. The human rights approach to development draws upon the body of international human rights law as a framework to identify development objectives and focuses its activities on people living in poverty.

This body of principles enshrines the promotion and protection of human rights as a primary responsibility of States and the international community. The Australian Aid Program arises from the duties that flow from our obligation under international law to take part in international cooperation to achieve the realisation of human rights.

An analysis of international human rights standards reveal certain guiding principles that affect not just the scope of the aid program but the process by which development strategies are formulated and implemented. The human rights based approach is based on the recognition of:

- the inherent dignity of the human person;
- the principle of equality and non-discrimination;
- the indivisibility and interdependence of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights;
- the accountability of the state and non-state actors to rights holders; and
- the right to participate in public affairs.

These principles have direct implications for the way in which strategies to achieve sustainable development are developed.

The Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) proposed the following guidelines in its submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Links between Aid and Human Rights (2001) as the basis of a more comprehensive human rights based approach to development:

- A focus on people living in poverty, the marginalised and vulnerable groups such as women, children, minorities and indigenous peoples;
- the adoption of a participatory and inclusive approach to developing country strategies, program design, monitoring and evaluation which includes all stakeholders including civil society organisations and affected communities;
- the translation of human rights into development objectives;
- the analysis of development issues from a human rights perspective and identification of systemic barriers to human development and the realisation of all human rights;
- the recognition of the interdependence of human rights and the broadening of the range of activities to address civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; and
- the promotion of transparency and accountability and the rule of law to strengthen the capacity of people living in poverty to claim and enforce their rights.
Focus on people living in poverty

The eradication of poverty is now being articulated as the central aim of the development strategies of the major aid donors including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. So too has Australia moved in that direction. Health, education, infrastructure, rural development and governance are the five priority sectoral programs of the Australian Aid Program.

Identifying poverty reduction as the primary objective does not automatically translate into a focus on people living in poverty. A rights based approach focuses on people living in poverty, vulnerable communities and the marginalised by placing their rights at the centre of political, economic and social policy. The Australian aid program still emphasises macro-economic growth without necessarily increasing the opportunities for poor communities to develop self-sustaining economic activities and access to social services. Markets alone cannot achieve the equitable distribution of the benefits of development nor do they necessarily provide the levers for establishing the rule of law that is consistent with international standards.

At the Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000, 147 heads of State and Government, 189 Member States in total, adopted the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration mainstreams a set of inter-connected human rights standards in the form of development goals and targets on the global agenda.

The explicit adoption by Australia of these internationally agreed targets as part of the framework for poverty reduction, would ensure that we are pulling in the same direction and would contribute both consistency and coherence to the Australian Aid Program. By translating these norms, goals and targets into a concrete form, this approach would also provide measurable benchmarks against which the public could evaluate progress and the effectiveness of Australia's development assistance.

Indivisibility and interdependence

Article 6 of the Declaration on the Right to Development calls upon States to give equal attention to the implementation, promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The indivisibility of human rights means that civil and political rights (including for example, freedom of speech and association, due process of law, independent judiciary, genuine periodic elections, etc.) are inseparable elements of development and development assistance and on a equal footing with economic, social and cultural rights which tend to be the traditional domain of development work.

People-centred development that is equitable and sustainable depends upon governments and donors respecting the human rights of the national population. Ensuring that government provides the political space for an active domestic civil society is an important part of development assistance and ultimately contributes to good governance at the macro level. Indeed one might argue that it should be a precondition to aid.

Economic and social rights are often seen in terms of basic needs—the need for clean water to drink, uncontaminated and nutritional food, sanitation, shelter and livelihoods. Economic, social and cultural rights have tended to be marginalised in human rights discourse because in international law these rights are programmatic in nature and thus seen as dependent upon the country's level of development. States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are under an immediate obligation to discharge their duties to the maximum extent possible and in a non-discriminatory manner.

Together with the declarations and platforms of action from the global conferences and the Millennium Declaration Goals there is no shortage of sources of concrete and measurable standards upon which to draw.

Participation rights

Respect for human rights, democratisation and successful implementation of the rule of law can only be achieved and sustained through the building of an informed and active civil society. A fundamental political right is the right to participate in public affairs. The rights based approach to development prioritises or at least places equal weight on the bottom up processes as it does to improving institutional mechanisms. For aid donors such as the Australian Government, the participation of vulnerable communities and civil society organisations should be a priority in the formulation of coherent poverty reduction strategies and in the design, implementation and evaluation of specific programs and projects.

AusAID Human Rights Guidelines

In his 1998 annual report to the Parliament on Australia's aid program, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade outlined six guiding principles designed to support human rights in the aid program. The current AusAID Human Rights Guidelines were developed to provide practical guidance to desk officers in addressing human rights issues and were a step forward in implementing the guiding principles.

In the current form however, the Guidelines are not an adequate framework for advancing the integration of human rights and development in the Australian Aid Program. There is little explanation of the nature, scope or content of human rights obligations or participatory process of implementing a rights approach. Nor is there any discussion of the application of human rights principles to the regional or multilateral programs that support the major financial institutions. The question of transparency, accountability and methodologies to avoid negative human rights impacts is not addressed.

The Guidelines reflect the current approach that treats human rights as an optional add on that is entirely at the discretion of country program directors. The tendency is to see human rights in terms of specific projects that support the rule of law, the administration of justice, national human rights institutions or human rights NGOs. While the value of these initiatives are acknowledged, it is not the same as a rights based approach which requires a more explicit and comprehensive linkage between aid and human rights principles.
The current Guidelines should be reviewed as part of the process of developing a comprehensive human rights framework. Just as Australia promotes transparency and accountability through its good governance program, so too should Australia's aid program be guided by these principles. A revised set of human rights guidelines has the potential to apply these principles in a practical way to the Aid Program and enable the Parliament, the Government and the public to evaluate AusAID's progress in meeting Australia's human rights goals.

NGO developments

The international NGO community is also in the process of addressing how a rights based approach to development is more explicitly and meaningfully made operational in the design, appraisal and management of aid and development programs.

For example, a recent development by international non-government organisations (NGOs) working in disaster response is the Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Relief. The Sphere Project was established following the Rwanda 1994 multi donor study which found that 'the lack of coherence in policy and strategy formulation, principally within the political/diplomatic/military domains' was a major contributing factor in the large numbers of unnecessary deaths following the influx of refugees into Goma.

The Charter and Minimum Standards are explicitly based on human rights instruments and international law. Clear standards are provided on how needs are assessed and programs are designed, implemented and monitored with respect to the human rights of people affected by disasters and emergencies.

The stated purpose of the Humanitarian Charter and the Minimum Standards is to 'increase the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, and to make humanitarian agencies more accountable. It is based on two core beliefs: first that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering that arises out of conflict and calamity, and second, that those affected by a disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance' (The Sphere Project 2000).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is still a long way to go in Australia's aid program before a comprehensive rights perspective can be said to have been integrated into Australia's donor policy and programming. This does not mean that Australia's aid program is not contributing positively to improvements in well-being but this is not the same as a rights based approach. The current approach leaves the linkage between human rights and aid weak and obscure and this results in a lack of accountability from a human rights perspective.

The quality and effectiveness of the Australian Aid Program will be greatly enhanced if a fully developed human rights framework is adopted for the formulation of poverty reduction strategies. These strategies should identify clear objectives linked to key targets based on international human rights norms and international targets. Evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of the aid program's contribution to the realisation of human rights can then be undertaken in a more systematic way.

A more explicit rights based approach would help to ensure that the aid program is:

- targeted at people living in poverty;
- promotes partnerships with recipient governments and communities;
- responsive to and respect the priorities of the stakeholders in the recipient country; and
- accountable to recipients and according to international human rights principles.

This approach is consistent with all the principles that underpin current Government policy and would ensure that Australia's aid program delivers an effective contribution to building sustainable development. With a rights based approach negative human rights impacts will be identified not overlooked.

It is important therefore that human rights be understood as integral to Australia's poverty reduction strategies and not simply a separate component of Australia's development program. It should not be just a part of a good governance agenda but taken into every aspect of Australia overseas development activity.

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Development research and policy formulation

Ian Patrick, Independent Consultant

Rationale for development research

Internationally, increased attention is being given to the role of research in development assistance. This is reflected in the policy statements and strategy plans of a range of donors (SDC and SAS, 1996; EC/DG, 1999; World Bank, 1999a; DFID, 2000; DANIDA, 2001). A number of common themes can be identified, such as:

- knowledge and its application has an important, current and future role to play in addressing development challenges;
- research and its products should provide vital inputs into the process of policy development, and that coherent policy is essential both for donors and for partner countries in order for aid to be effective; and
- there is a need to build capacity, particularly in developing countries to research both current and future development problems. Partnerships are viewed as significant means to build such capacity.

These themes reflect broader and related currents in development thinking that have had a major impact on shifting development strategies in recent years.

Knowledge and its application to development challenges

Creating, disseminating and using knowledge is an important key to overcoming development challenges. The ability to fill knowledge gaps and overcome related information problems is viewed as both an attribute of and means for development. Such a view is reflected in the influential ‘Knowledge for Development’ report (World Bank, 1999a) where lack of knowledge is strongly identified as an attribute of poverty and poor countries.

The Green Revolution is often cited as an example of where new knowledge derived from research, and associated information provision to farmers, led to tangible improvements for developing countries (op.cit.). While this example is derived from physical science, and reflects an emphasis in the literature on science-led research in areas such as agriculture, health and information technology, it may equally be argued that knowledge derived from advances in social science is critical to development. New insights into, for example, conflict resolution or governance provide answers to critical contemporary development challenges (UNRISD, 2001:2; ZEF, 2000:5-8).

Knowledge and knowledge management skills will remain important, or will become increasingly so in addressing pressing new development challenges such as urbanisation, migration and population increase. Unfortunately, knowledge is often expensive to create, while applying knowledge requires expertise and training. Not surprisingly, knowledge and the wealth that derives from it, is currently concentrated in industrialised countries.

Although knowledge is expanding exponentially, there is a risk, given trends towards privatisation and commoditisation of research and research products that knowledge will not be available to those who cannot afford it. In this context, new knowledge may be associated with an increase in world inequality or even a deepening of poverty (DANIDA, 2001:2). There is considerable critique, for example of scientific research focusing on developing countries that is predominantly geared at identifying new, commercially exploitable resources (KFPE, 2001).

It is widely acknowledged that the market, if left to itself, will underinvest in research that is related to public welfare. The public sector has a responsibility to guide, direct, inform and fund the production and use of new knowledge, and in some cases create new knowledge itself (World Bank, 1999a:6; DANIDA, 2001:3). There is also a compelling case for support to address development problems that cross national borders such as issues of peace and conflict, and the environment.

Research and policy development

Interest in the relationship between research and policy formation reflects both a view that research can have a beneficial influence on policy, and a recognition that coherent and well coordinated policy frameworks are vital to development. The latter point applies both to donors and developing countries where, ideally, appropriate and effective policies on development assistance overlap and reinforce the policy settings of the target country (Bijker, 2001).

Reflecting this perspective, the World Bank in its major review of what makes successful aid (World Bank, 1998) identifies the overall quality of policies in developing countries as being critical to poverty reduction efforts. Appropriate policies are a key to securing an appropriate return on development assistance. A good policy environment is seen to facilitate faster growth, poverty reduction and improvements in social indicators (World Bank, 1998:2). The ‘knowledge dimension’ of aid involving ideas and training has a critical effect on the quality of policies, institutions and service delivery. This contrasts with the simple expansion of services brought about by application of finance alone.

Unfortunately, the relationship between research and policy is currently tenuous and often troubled. While most reviews of this relationship identify cases where research has contributed...
effectively to the policy process, they also identify a range of constraints in this context.

Firstly, not all research is designed to influence policy. Even where research is focused on policy, the results may not be delivered in a format that is accessible to policy makers. Such concerns underline how research is disseminated and thus touch on communication between the research and policy making communities, and the expectations that each group has of each other.

Research, and especially external research, is typically only one form of information that policy makers use in decision making. Many forms of 'ordinary knowledge', often sourced from within organisations, are applied in the process (Lindblom and Cohen, 1979).

Part of the difficulty in understanding the nexus between research and policy is conceptualising the process of policy making itself. Traditionally, research was considered to be an early input into a rational and linear process of policy making which involves 'a logical sequence from problem definition, through analysis of alternatives, to decision, implementation and review' (Stone, et al., 2001:2). Contemporary views of policy making consider it to be a more fluid and iterative process. From this perspective, problems, solutions and political influence move independently through the policy system and at times coincide. A major influence on how and when policy solutions are determined is the political dimension, where actors in and dose to government act as advocates for particular policy positions.

A further complication arises at the policy implementation phase. Policy implementers typically interact with policy makers and may adapt new policies, co-opt specific ideas, or even possibly ignore new policies altogether (Juma and Clarke, 1995).

Despite the complex and sometimes fraught nature of the relationship between research and policy, many analysts continue to identify research as a major influence on policy debates and policy formation. Research knowledge may influence policy decisions in the long run through the uptake and transfer of ideas that frame overall debates about policy alternatives.

**Research and capacity building**

While the literature reflects an overall increased priority to development research both in industrialised and developing countries, the need is viewed to be most acute in the latter context. A two-fold thrust is evident involving a shift in research attention to the needs of the developing world, and increased attention on building up local capacities to identify and solve local problems. Such a change is underlined by broader shifts in the global economy which is becoming both increasingly knowledge-based and competitive.

The focus on local capacity reflects a view that solutions to local problems may be informed by knowledge derived from elsewhere, but can not rely on that knowledge alone. Knowledge from other contexts may need to be adapted to the developing country context; in other situations new knowledge and research may be required. The most effective solution involves building and sustaining long term research capacity including the capacity to research problems not yet on the immediate agenda. Investment in human resources in the research area is likely to be most effective and applicable to development problems where training in traditional research skills extends to policy analysis and advisory roles (World Bank, 1999b).

**Partnerships and research networks**

Research partnerships are considered to be an important priority and means of capacity building in the pursuit of knowledge based development. Typical forms of partnership involve:

- bilateral partnerships between a university or research institute, often based in an industrial country and one or more local university or research organisation;
- regional research networks, bringing together researchers (often from within a particular discipline) from countries sharing similar development challenges (World Bank, 1999b); and
- global research networks such as the prominent World Bank sponsored Global Development Network, which is designed to meet the needs of developing country research institutes through networking, training, research funding, joint research activities, and access to data and other electronic resources (GDN, 2001).

Currently, the main institutional types involved in research partnerships are universities and specialist research institutes, and research networks themselves which may have a devolved form of management. Logically, there is a good case for the strong participation of universities. At least in principle, these institutions are well placed in terms of the necessary qualities for knowledge generation. Such qualities include ideological neutrality, peer review and scholarly publication, and synergies derived from housing a variety of disciplines in one institution.

The increasing number of regional, and even global research networks, and a more decentralised form of research management have coincided with broader trends to globalisation. They have also, in part, attempted to transcend some of the historical difficulties of bilateral research partnerships. These have been characterised by the predominance of the interests of researchers from industrialised countries, and the relative marginalisation of local interests from research priority setting and control over research implementation (Ilsoe, 2000).

The above material highlights both possibilities and constraints on the contribution made to development through undertaking research and research capacity building aimed at contributing to knowledge upon which to inform policy development. Development research is ideally an adjunct to policy formation and not an isolated activity undertaken for academic purposes alone. In order to further enhance the contribution of research in this manner, fostering of more collaborative research arrangements with local researchers in developing countries will be paramount.
Making development research more effective

What then are the measures that can be taken, particularly by donors to improve research efforts in order to enhance aid effectiveness? Although the following points are not intended to be exhaustive, they do provide a profile of some of the critical strategic and practical challenges facing donors in their efforts to link research to development.

More pronounced research focus by donors

Donors have demonstrated heightened priority to the role of knowledge and research in development in their policies, operations and corporate identities. Typically reviews by donors of their research performance identify the necessity of harnessing research efforts more directly to development needs and objectives, while exploring areas of distinct comparative advantage, and ensuring that research efforts build in-country research capacity (EC/DG, 1999; DANIDA, 2001).

Donors have also worked to integrate research into their mainstream operations. The World Bank has promoted the following functions as integral to the operations of an international organisation aiming to advance knowledge based development:

• the production of knowledge;
• acting as an intermediary in the transfer of knowledge; and
• managing the rapidly growing body of knowledge about development (World Bank, 1999a:6).

This type of integrated approach aims to enhance aid effectiveness by emphasising dissemination and utilisation in addition to knowledge production. The intermediary role involves drawing together knowledge from different contexts, particularly about development solutions from a range of developing countries, while an emphasis on knowledge management involves developing and supporting systems and procedures in both industrialised and developing countries to make knowledge more accessible.

Making research more applicable

The perception that research products are often too ‘academic’ has led to increased calls for ‘practical relevance’ in supporting research and associated tightening of research guidelines (European Commission, 1997). DFID’s Economic and Social Research Strategy (2000-2003), for example, emphasises support for research that can guide future policy formulation, evaluation of a particular practice or operation, developing new research methods particularly where they can illuminate policy issues, and testing and developing new theories where those theories are considered to be of value in underpinning aid and development practice (DFID, 2000:7).

Refining research partnerships

In attempts to address the asymmetry that has characterised research partnerships, donors have explored the means by which to promote the role of research partners, and research users in policy and strategy settings, as well as the operational level (DANIDA, 2001). This involves developing policy and guidelines covering factors such as the nature of institutional linkages, research management, requirements for consultation and involvement of research users, and the nature of capacity building activities. Such requirements aim to move the involvement of local researchers well beyond historical roles as in-country data gatherers for powerful institutions in industrialised countries, while promoting accountability to a broad range of stakeholders.

Promoting the participation of local research users (policy makers, private sector and civil society) has been strongly encouraged by advocates of ‘demand led’ research.

Advocates suggest that the case for participation of NGOs and other civil society organisations is compelling given their role in working with the poor as implementers of new knowledge and techniques; as well as being advocates on behalf of intended beneficiaries (European Commission, 1997; Bijker, 2001).

Improving dissemination of research findings

The means to promote stronger links between researchers and policy makers has been the subject of considerable reflection, with a wide consensus that both sides share a responsibility for remedial action (Stone et al., 2001). For researchers, there is a responsibility to develop new and active forms of dissemination.

Firstly, researchers are encouraged to be more active with policy makers as advocates of their research and research product. Moreover, the nature of this interaction is ideally two-way in which communication involves feedback and an understanding of the research needs of research users (Stone et al., 2001:17). Exclusive use of one way dissemination methods such as publishing, advertising and media coverage may reinforce a gap between research and research-user groups. Two-way dissemination methods are interactive and promote understanding of the other party’s issues and perspective.

An equal onus lies on policy makers to interact with researchers, effectively communicate their research needs and absorb appropriate research products. Promoting this end may require attention to incentive structures and work practices of policy makers.

Conclusion

Research activities have made a strong contribution to understanding of development issues. There are, however, inherent challenges in the application of research to real development problems. These include the following:

1. There is a need to increase the utilisation of research findings for use in policy development contexts, by ensuring that research is pertinent, accessible and comprehensible.
2. There is a need to ensure the dissemination and application of research findings so that they can be conveyed to policy makers and other stakeholders in
ways that increase their utilisation. Researchers need to share their findings and also interact with policy makers to apprehend their expectations and responses. Policy makers have a reciprocal obligation to seek out, respond to and apply quality research products. Two way interchange between both parties is intended to enhance mutual understanding and more broadly improve research quality, particularly its saliency and credibility.

3. A final, but by no means unimportant challenge is to forge new kinds of partnerships with researchers and other stakeholders in developing countries in order to build local research capacity and enhance accountability. Enhancing local research skills and increasing levels of local input and control over the process is aimed at ultimately improving local capacities to identify and resolve local problems. Maximising the involvement of local stakeholders including research users will promote research endeavours for which there is a real demand. Certainly an overall trend in the delivery of development assistance is towards devolved, participatory forms of management. At a minimum, it is important that research agendas are developed through consultative processes where key stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute.

Note
This paper was developed as part of AusAID's 'Review of Long Term Research Models: Best Practice Options'. The review occurred in the context of the finalisation of AusAID's Strategic Plan (AusAID) 2001 that identified the need for an increased emphasis on research within the agency in support of strategic aid delivery.

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New directions in Pacific social sciences research, 18-19 July, 2002

Brij V Lal, Convenor, Centre for the Contemporary Pacific

The Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at The Australian National University hosted a two day workshop on 18-19 July, 2002 on 'New Directions in Pacific Social Sciences Research' sponsored by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia under the auspices of the UNESCO Social Sciences Network. The aim was to bring together a number of younger Pacific Islands researchers to identify, from their perspectives, the current and future needs in Pacific Islands research and suggest new directions.

This was not the first time the Academy had organised such a workshop. The first one was in 1986 when it convened a gathering of scholars and government representatives from the Pacific Islands and Australia to ‘consider basic questions which underlay current social, economic and political issues in the Pacific Islands,’ and to assess ‘how these questions affect relations between the Pacific Forum Island Countries and Australia.’ Most of the participants were established scholars working in Australia, with the Pacific represented by a few academics and senior public servants.

This workshop, by contrast, was dominated by younger Pacific Island scholars, giving us an opportunity to listen to the voices and concerns of a group who will define and lead research in the future. This was a most welcome development, and the participants expressed their appreciation to the Academy for its foresight.

The discussions were wide ranging. A number of participants felt that the lack of numbers of Pacific researchers, including younger scholars, and especially in the social sciences, does not help the desire to promote stronger academic networks. More often than not, the same people are stretched thin in terms of organising, networking and conferencing. Promotion of cross-cultural and trans-disciplinary research in the Pacific would attract a wider variety of students, enabling the formation of larger network that is more diverse in terms of age, background, and professional interest. The aim should not just be to have a strong network, but to have one that facilitates communication and support, and opens doors for more scholars from within and outside the Pacific. Adding more Pacific islanders to the academy was important, but not enough. Scholarship should not only contribute to the ongoing project of decolonisation but also address the increasingly problematic tendency to ignore the very real differences between Pacific scholars and scholarship.

Another general concern expressed by the participants was the divide between funding for ‘applied’ research and ‘basic’ or ‘fundamental’ research. Applied research, tied to aid and development agendas, often gets funded by national governments and aid agencies. This is understandable in the context of the development needs of the region, but it does not have to take place at the expense of research in literature, art, film, cultural studies, anthropology and history. In many parts of the Pacific, creativity is synonymous with survival. Ignoring these aspects of Pacific life, and the local and diasporic sites that produce cultural innovation, harms Pacific social science research and the region as a whole. Learned societies, such as the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, need to bear in mind the needs of fundamental, creative research in the islands.

Concern was also expressed at the ownership and dissemination of research. The participants expressed disquiet at the manner in which research agendas were set and executed. One example cited was the current push for ‘good governance.’ The good governance agenda promises streamlined bureaucracy, more effective government, reduced corruption, etc. But some
wondered whether this was not also about rendering the Pacific Islands more readily accessible to foreign trade interests. Who was pushing for good governance and why? Is the thrust for reform and the strategies for reform, coming from island populations themselves or from other interests? In a related vein – and to some participants a deeply troubling one – was the need to interrogate the ways in which even the most laudable advancements in the region (in terms of indigenous education, or development, or research funding) are closely tied with the very economic processes that are responsible for increasing economic disparity and environmental degradation elsewhere in the world as well as the Pacific. What are the long term effects of the very processes we might utilize to fund immediate successes? The general point is that researchers must be encouraged to be critical of research agendas that might sound credible, to question the values, assumptions and understandings which underpin them.

Regarding dissemination of research, two related points were raised. Increasing access to knowledge is recognised by the United Nations as an integral part of sustainable development, yet the fruits of scholarly research often do not reach people who might have facilitated that research or be affected by the policies that follow from it. There are deep ethical issues involved here which researchers and research institutions cannot easily evade. There was another issue. Even when research results are made available, they are often not in a form accessible to the people. In the Pacific islands there is a problem in privileging the written word. The participants agreed that alternative means of disseminating information and research – through video, films and tape recordings – should be actively explored.

The participants discussed at length the role of culture in development, and felt that this area was neither properly understood nor investigated. There is a tendency to assume that traditional culture and cultural institutions impede development. In the clash of cultures, the traditional culture has to give way to forces of modernity. It was felt that a great deal of development and good governance discourse is based on this kind of assumption. Two examples were given to highlight the issue. One was land. In most Pacific island societies, land is more than a tradeable commodity: it goes to the heart of how people see their identity and assess their place in the world. Yet, neoclassical economists argue that unless there is security of individual land tenure, long term investment and economic development will not take place. But the reality is that communal tenurial arrangements will remain, and development strategies will have to take account of them. Perhaps one way out of the difficulty, one participant pointed out, was to focus not on ‘individual’ rights but to insist on the execution of rules and regulations that govern communal and common property resources.

Another example where the role of culture and traditional institutions was not well understood was the performance (or non-performance) of the Westminster system of democracy in the Pacific islands. In the Solomon Islands, the populace does not often recognise the people they elect to parliament as their ‘legitimate’ leaders, and that is one of the major causes of the current problems there. Should constituency boundaries take account of traditional boundaries for election purposes? The idea would seem anathema to electoral experts, but not when viewed from the perspective of the voters. Cultural constraints and processes cannot be ignored in social science research.

It was felt, equally, that social science research should be multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary to provide really useful insights into a range of problems facing the islands. Single, discipline-based methodology is often inadequate and leads to misleading conclusions when researchers adopt a problem-centred approach. This is so especially when the subject of investigation is the environment or the ecosystem, which transcends boundaries. Participants endorsed the importance of critiquing existing, often western-derived, paradigms. They also reiterated the importance of encouraging collaborative research involving Pacific Island researchers. This could be achieved through outside research institutions working closely with regional educational institutions such as the universities of the South Pacific and Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, the Atinesi University in Tonga and the National University of Samoa. Some of this could be facilitated by such institutions as the newly formed International Council for the Study of the Pacific Islands based in Apia. Some participants identified particular areas needing more research. Among these were the role religion plays in Pacific Island life; indigenous intellectual property rights; globalisation and the ways in which Pacific Islands are coming to terms with it; language and identity; and how Pacific Islanders share knowledge at every level from inter-personal and local/community level to national and regional levels.

There was consensus that the Workshop had achieved its goal of starting a conversation among Pacific Island researchers about things they see as important in social science research in the islands. They felt that the momentum should be maintained through further collaboration and workshops.

Poverty Reduction: What role for the State in Today's Globalised Economy?


The range of case studies presented in this interesting collection of papers illustrate that there are no simple answers to the question posed in the title: What role for the State in Today's Globalised Economy? The book focuses on Southern Africa, a diverse region which has experienced profound changes in the last 20 years. It explores the extent to which international and national policies have contributed to or undermined the reduction of poverty as a policy goal.

While some chapters focus on the relationship between the State, the citizens, and international forces, for example the impact of trade policy on Namibia, others focus more on the approaches adopted by post-colonial states to the development challenge. Two chapters I found particularly interesting were Braathen and Palmero's study of pro-poor governance in Mozambique and Budlender's study of the South African Women's Budget Initiative. Though very different, both illustrated the ways in which the interaction of civil society with the State can contribute to poverty reduction.

However, other chapters illustrate that the State in certain nations of Southern Africa may equally interact with international forces to exacerbate inequality. Mafuje, for example asserts that most African countries failed to develop even minimal poverty alleviation programs because over the past 30 years national elites were too busy fighting for control over the reducing resources of the State to concern themselves with the poor. Mafuje argues that the commonest form of state in Southern Africa is a 'predatory' state struggling to survive. The way civil society may intervene to support 'pro-poor governance' in such a context should be of considerable interest to scholars and policy-makers alike, although as Raftopoulos' chapter on Zimbabwe illustrates, this is a state which has failed to deliver poverty reduction since the 80s, but which has maintained its legitimacy through close collaboration with traditional rural structures. More modern civil society forms, including trade unions, have not been able to impact on the ruling elite, remaining marginalised in critical debates.

The more recently released study 'The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis and Poverty', a multi-country research project undertaken jointly by the World Bank and two civil society organisations at global level, illustrates well how internationally-imposed structural adjustment programs have reduced the role of the state in essential services which could contribute to poverty reduction, reinforcing the findings of a number of chapters in this book, that the interactions between the international institutions, particularly those associated with trade, financial policy and structural adjustment, and national elites which have been unable or unwilling to deliver many of the dreams of independence, have left the poor more vulnerable.

The challenge for now is how to change policies at many levels, from local to international, to achieve greater security and well-being for the very poor. Unless the voices of those most affected are engaged by States in addressing their own problems I fail to see how they can be solved. This book shows how difficult and how rare it is to get this combination of policy approaches aligned, but how significant the outcomes are when it happens.

Janet Hunt, Adjunct Professor International and Community Development, Deakin University

New Books

Has the empowerment movement increased women's control of resources? Has it had the desired effect on gender relations traditionally defined by patriarchal ideology and institutions? Addressing these questions, this study explores international, national, and local empowerment efforts in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Engendering Development: Through gender equality in rights, resources and voice

**Oxford University Press and World Bank**, ISBN 0 19521 596 6, 2001 Price: $70.86 ex GST $77.95 incl GST, 288pp

Engendering Development is a Policy Research Report by the World Bank focusing on gender issues and their broad economic and social implications in developing and transitional countries. The report examines the conceptual and empirical links between gender, public policy, and development outcomes and demonstrates the value of applying a gender perspective to the design of development policies. The evidence presented shows that societies that discriminate by gender pay a high price in terms of their ability to develop and to reduce poverty. To promote gender equality, the report proposes a three-part strategy, emphasising institutional reforms, based on a foundation of equal rights for women and men, policies for sustainable economic development, and active measures to redress persistent gender disparities. Engendering Development which presents new data and analyses and reviews an extensive development literature, is intended as a tool for policy makers, development specialists, and members of civil society who are promoting, designing, and implementing effective and sustainable development strategies. A co-publication of the World Bank and Oxford University Press.

In Papua New Guinea, the status of women is a matter of serious concern to development planners and practitioners. Although the Constitution ensures equality for both men and women, it also places priority on maintenance of cultural traditions and customary mores. This aim of this analysis is to create a better cultural and historical understanding of the issues to help planners and administrators address the inequality and disadvantages faced by women in Papua New Guinea—and incorporate that knowledge into policy and program decisions. The report provides an outline of the key historical, economic, demographic, political, geographic, socio-cultural, legal and institutional issues that are relevant to understanding the status of women in Papua New Guinea today.

Gender Politics in the Asia-Pacific Region: Agencies and activisms

**Brenda S. A. Yeoh, Peggy Teo and Shirlena Huang (eds)**, Routledge, 2002 Price: $180 ex GST $198 incl GST, 256pp

Drawing on the current dialogue between feminism, cultural politics and geography, this book positions women as active players mediating the depth and crisis of change in the Asia-Pacific region. Through an in-depth analysis of everyday life as well as the way women mobilise around collective projects, it provides a fresh, often neglected perspective of the politics of change in the region.

Governance and reform in the South Pacific


Aid donors increasingly believe that development depends on 'good governance'. Recipients of grants and loans are scrutinised for their adherence to democracy, the absence of corruption, and their willingness to carry out public sector reform. This book is about issues of 'governance' and 'good government'.

Women in Developing Countries: assessing strategies for empowerment


In many developing countries, the implementation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and projects has been affected by a lack of adequate information on women's situations. This book brings together the writings of several women from the South Pacific. Contributors are Maori, Samoan, Samoan/Tuvaluan, Palagi and Tongan. Women in the Pacific have always struggled with the contradictory effects of colonisation, and the ways they have been understood as part of the Pacific landscape. The issues they address in this book are wide-ranging, and include work, sexuality, sovereignty politics, the portrayal of Pacific women in film, poetry and tourism, and the ongoing, problematic contradictions that have always plagued the identity of the Pacific.

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The following books are available from Last-First Networks:

Last-First Networks, PO Box 1104, Armidale, NSW 2350, Australia, Tel: +61 (0)2 6772 0333, Fax: +61 (0)2 6771 4560, Email: RolandLubet@lastfirst.net. Website: http://www.lastfirst.net
in the South Pacific, where small mostly
democratic, developing countries are relatively
dependent on foreign aid. Issues of good
governance are prominent in the recent unrest
over the Sandline mercenaries' contract in
Papua New Guinea, and in the review of Fiji's
Constitution that led to its readmission to the
Commonwealth. They are also expressed in
the increasing international pressure for public
sector reform. The chapters report on recent
research by scholars from the South Pacific,
and from outside. Consideration is given to:
whether the World Bank's 'good governance'
criteria are applicable to the region; the
Structural Adjustment Programs; the causes of
forestry mismanagement; the results of
destabilisation, and the Sandline affair. Gang
surrenders as non-state solutions to crime, the
role of elite women working with NGOs, and
election campaign financing are described.
Issues of how good governments and activists
are making use of the media, and how good
governance is a global issue (comparing Papua
New Guinea with Africa) are also discussed.

Human Rights and Gender Politics:
Asia-Pacific Perspectives
Anne-Marie Hildon, Martha Macintyre,
Vera Mackie and Maila Stivens (eds),
Routledge, 256pp, 2000 Price: $180
ex GST $198 incl GST

In recent years, the slogan 'women's rights
are human rights' has become a central claim
of the of the global women's movement.
Human Rights and Gender Politics in the
Asia-Pacific examines the critical issues raised
by this embracing and expansion of the
human rights discourse by feminists
worldwide. This volume challenges the
human rights discourse by feminists
colonising regimes. The contributors to
Leadership in the Pacific islands provide a
wide range academic and pragmatic
viewpoints for considering both the
history and the future of Pacific island
leadership. Particularly significant, is the
perspective of Palauan Paramount Chief,
Roman Tmetuchl, who continues to
struggle to find a place for Palau, and
Palauan traditional leadership, in the
contemporary geopolitical context. Leadership in the Pacific islands grew out of
the 1996 meeting of the Pacific Islands
Political Studies Association, and received
support from Chief Tmetuchl and the
Micronesian Area Research Center at the
University of Guam.

Pacific Economic Outlook 2002-03
PECC, Asia Pacific Press, 2002 Price:
$36.32 ex GST $39.95 incl GST

How have the Asia Pacific economies
performed in the last year? How will they
perform in the next few years, and why?
The Asia Pacific economies are among the
most vigorous and dynamic economies in
the world today, but it is difficult to find
coherent reliable information on the
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business, economic and political
conditions in each of the countries in the
Pacific Basin. Easy to read, and
complemented by a highly detailed
statistical appendix, the Pacific Economic
Outlook is an indispensable up-to-date
resource for anyone interested in the Asia
Pacific.

The South Pacific
Ron Crocombe, University of the South
Pacific, 2001 Price: $40.91 ex GST $45
incl GST, 790pp

The South Pacific is about the 28 island
nations and territories of Polynesia,
Melanesia and Micronesia. Indigenous and
external influences are creating new and
unique arts, cultures, identities, societies,
economies and politics of extreme diversity.
Future trends are explored, but the main
focus is on the present. After 100 years or
more of control by mainly European
nations, but also Japan and Indonesia,
Pacific peoples are working out their
destinies in a complex environment in
which East Asia plays an escalating role.
The book is an important contribution to
understanding the Pacific, the Third World
and the development debate. Because of
the wealth of issues covered, the fascinating
truths revealed and the simplicity of style,
it will be welcomed by general readers as
well as by serious scholars of the Pacific.

The following titles are available
from Zed publications:

Breaking Spears and Mending
Hearts: Peacemakers and
Restorative Justice in
Bougainville
Br Pat Howley, 2003, ISBN 1 84277 246
5, hb £45.00/US$65.00, ISBN 1 84277
247 3, pb £14.95/US$25.00, 224pp

The civil war in Bougainville in the Pacific
lasted from 1990-2001. This is the story of
its aftermath told through the eyes of the
people—the victims, the freedom fighters,
the women who took a leading part in the
peace process.

October 2002
During the civil war when the western court system could not operate, the people of Bougainville returned to custom law to resolve their problems. After the crisis they continued to draw on their ancient traditions of peace making, reconciliation and forgiveness to which they added aspects of mediation and restorative justice. Bougainville community justice, in which the people themselves claim ownership, is probably unique in the world.

The war threatened loss of culture and identity and terrible human rights atrocities left society traumatized. This book allows the reader to appreciate the indigenous process used by the Bougainvillians to rescue their society, make peace and deal with crime.

**Best Practices in Poverty Reduction: An Analytical Framework**


Poverty reduction has come to be proclaimed as the core function of international development agencies, including the World Bank. This book focuses on a notion, borrowed from the public sector management generally, of best practice and the key role which it can potentially play in strengthening anti-poverty strategies.

This book seeks a more systematic approach to understanding how to identify a particular practice or experience as constituting best practice. It explores the social and organisational factors influencing the transition of an ordinary particular anti-poverty project or strategy into becoming established best practice. It examines the critical policy-relevant aspect of the conditions under which a best practice, once identified, and embedded as it is in a social setting, can be successfully transferred to other situations and countries. This volume is the first attempt to take the concept of best practice out of its highly politicised and applied context, and to treat it as a scientific tool that can seriously add to the toolbox needed for improved comprehension of the many failures in poverty reduction.

**Denial and Distress: Gender, Poverty and Human Rights in Asia**


This book provides an analysis of the gender-differentiated impact of globalisation on women and men in the various parts of Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The authors provide evidence that not only is the incidence of poverty increasingly more severe among women than men but that the dimensions of women's poverty and the causes or process of their poverty are different from those of poor men.

The authors conclude that the challenge for development agencies in Asia is to address the deep-rooted gender-specific causes of poverty, rather than the symptoms. They argue that strengthening women's land rights and endowments, challenging inequitable kinship systems, enhancing women's democratic participation and engendering policy and legislation are all central to the dual goal of reducing the poverty of women while at the same time promoting and protecting their human rights.

**Moving Mountains: Communities Confront Mining & Globalisation**

Geoff Evans, James Goodman and Nina Lansbury (eds), 2002, ISBN 1 84277 198 1 hb, GBS50.00/US$85.00; ISBN 1 84277 199 X pb, GBP15.95/US$25.00, 320 pp

This book is about campaigns which challenge the power, priorities and practices of global mining corporations. Transnational mining companies are often larger than national economies, dominating governments, local peoples and their environments. In response, those affected are creating new agendas for change and for social and environmental justice. The experiences, strategies and key issues discussed include: the potential for opposing mining and globalisation; the predatory nature of the transnationals; how the weak links in the corporate chain can be broken; and using financial power for environmental and social protection. The contributors examine corporate public relations and 'green wash', and how campaigns by labour, national liberation, indigenous, human rights and environmental organizations can force corporations to become more accountable.

The following titles are available from Oxfam Publishing:

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**Ending Violence Against Women: A Challenge for Development and Humanitarian Work**


Violence and women's fear of it, limits their choices in almost all spheres of life. It detrimentally affects women's ability to gain an education, earn a livelihood, develop human relationships and participate in public activities, including development programs. The first section of this book examines the many different definitions of violence against women and presents theories on why it happens in all societies across the world. It considers why development organisations have been slow to target violence against women. The second section focuses on strategies to counter violence and support the survivors. Case studies are included as well as strategies for transforming attitudes and beliefs in different societies that condone such violence, and for ensuring that governments and NGOs fulfil their duty of protection.

**A Remarkable Journey**

Carol Kidu, 2002, ISBN 07339 3227 4, AS21.95 incl GST, available from Pearson Education Australia Pty Ltd, 95 Coventry Street, South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 3205, Tel: +61 (0)3 96970666,
The story of Lady (Carol) Kidu’s journey from a childhood in Brisbane to falling in love with a student from Papua New Guinea when they were both in Grade 11 at different schools. It is a story of their life together in Papua New Guinea, her husband’s progression to become the first Chief Justice, his death and her subsequent entry into politics. It is a cross-cultural love story written as a tribute to her late husband who was a wonderful role model for the new generation.

It includes reference to political, economic and social issues relating to the elections, the electoral framework for Vanuatu elections, issues relating to campaigning, polling and counting, the results of a voters survey on electoral fraud and an electoral awareness campaign.

**Handbook on Development Policy and Management**

Colin Kirkpatrick (ed), 2002, ISBN: 1 84064 142 8, hb £125.00, 480pp, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, Glen sanda House, Montpellier Parade, Cheltenham, Glos. GL50 1UJ, UK; Tel: +44 (0) 1242 226934, Fax: +44 (0) 1242 262111, Website: www.e-elgar.co.uk.

This major new handbook on international development policy and management covers a broad spectrum of contemporary topics across all the major areas of interest. With over 40 chapters, the book comprehensively explores the many themes and issues of significance for both policy and implementation, and provides easily accessible reference material on current practice and research. The 42 contributors come from a diverse range of backgrounds and enjoy international reputations in their chosen fields. The handbook is organised in two parts, one dealing with policy issues and the other with implementation and management issues. The first part, on policy covers a wide range of economic, social and environmental topics. The second part explores the political context of implementation and development practice and goes on to cover a range of issues relating to management in the public and non-state sectors and the management of development projects. Each individual chapter provides background information on theory and practice, describes the current state of play, examines prospects for the future and includes an annotated guide to further reading.

**Papua New Guinea Rural Development Handbook—Compact Disc version**

A$20, Coombs Academic Publishing, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200; Tel: (612) 6125 3422, Fax: (612) 6125 9975, Email Ann.Andrews@anu.edu.au, Website http:// rspas-bookshop.anu.edu.au/

The Papua New Guinea Rural Development Handbook is published by the Land Management Group, Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, now available on compact disc. The Handbook presents comprehensive information and analysis for each of 85 rural districts with the 19 provinces of PNG and includes text, maps, tables, graphs and photographs. Information is provided on land potential, agricultural pressure on land, population change, access to services, cash incomes and disadvantaged people.
Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World

Politics matter for human development. Reducing poverty depends as much on whether poor people have political power as on their opportunities for economic progress. Democracy has proven to be the system of governance most capable of mediating and preventing conflict and of securing and sustaining well being. By expanding people's choices about how and by whom they are governed, democracy brings principles of participation and accountability to the process of human development.

This report outlines the role of democracy in a fragmented world, linking it to a host of political, economic and social factors that have the potential to stand in the way of achieving the democratic ideal. It contracts the range of opportunities arising from the technological advancements and economic integration on the one hand, and escalating degrees of poverty on the other, and ways in which public institutions and market governance factors have a key role to play for human development. It argues for democracy, participation and accountability as human rights.

The report's five chapters cover: the state and progress of human development; democratic governance for human development; deepening democracy by tackling democratic deficits; democratizing security to prevent conflict and build peace; deepening democracy at the global level. Available online at http://www.undp.org/hdr2002/

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2002

The first chapter of the survey covers the global and regional economic developments and their implications and prospects for the UN ESCAP region. The second chapter emphasises macroeconomic performance, issues and policies of developing and developed countries of the region. The third chapter examines the feasibility of achieving the Millennium Development Goals aiming at reducing extreme poverty, hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing infant mortality, and improving maternal health. Finally the last chapter discusses regional development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

Asia Pacific Development Journal, Vol. 9 No. 1, June 2002

A semi-annual publication that focuses on development issues in the ESCAP region and provides a pragmatic view to guide policy makers.

Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making


Based on comparative information from OECD member countries, this book shows that what every country needs is more transparency, more consultation and more participation. It examines a wide range of country experiences, offers examples of good practice, highlights innovative approaches and identifies promising tools (including new information technologies). A set of ten guiding principles for engaging citizens in policy making is proposed.

Citizens as partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making


This handbook offers government officials practical assistance in strengthening relations between government and citizens. It combines a brief review of basic concepts, principles, concrete examples of good practice, tools (including new information and communication technologies) as well as tips from practice.

Public Sector Transparency and Accountability: Making it happen


High standards of public governance are the essential foundation for achieving economic growth and social cohesion. Without standards there can be no confidence in the integrity of public institutions or indeed in the value of
democratic processes in promoting and protecting the interests and well being of citizens. Good governance and the fight against corruption are the keys for successful reform and for equitable and sustainable development. This publication presents papers discussed at the Latin American Forum on Ensuring Transparency and Accountability in the Public Sector, 5-6 December 2001. The Forum agreed on key principles in the following three areas of good governance:

- ensuring impartiality in the decision making process by a credible conflict of interest policy;
- increasing transparency in the preparation and execution of the budget;
- promoting freedom of information, consultation and participation of citizens in the formulation and implementation of public policies.


This remarkable report describes the setting up of an Electoral Observer Group three weeks before the Vanuatu 2002 National Elections as a result of pressure from citizens and organisations concerned with electoral fraud and with the support of the Prime Minister, the Electoral Commission and Transparency International Vanuatu. The Electoral Observer Group was composed of nine distinguished ni-Vanuatu citizens representing chiefs, women, youth, churches, NGOs, police, watchdog agencies, education and business and three representatives from neighbouring Pacific countries, Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. The project was funded by grants from the Australian, British and New Zealand governments and the European Union and assisted by Transparency International Australia. Terms of reference included making an informed judgment about citizen awareness of their electoral rights and capacity to participate in a free and fair election, and producing a report to the Chairman of the Electoral Commission for presentation to the new Government on completion of the mission that would comment on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist in the conduct of future elections. The Report contains 60 recommendations for legislative and administrative electoral reform.

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Postal address: School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University, PO Box 2476V, Melbourne Australia 3001.

Applications are invited from people with a recognised university qualification and/or appropriate professional experience.

More information is available at the School of Social Science and Planning, Postgraduate Information Evening, Thursday 10 October 6pm, Storey Hall Auditorium, RMIT University, City Campus.

Visit www.rmit.edu.au/tce/ssp
Organisations and Programs

Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations (PIANGO)

PIANGO Secretariat, PO Box 164, Port Vila, Vanuatu; Tel: (678) 25607; Fax: (678) 25609; Email: piango@vanuatu.com.vu, Website: www.piango.org

Founded in 1991, PIANGO is a regional network of community based associations and organisations, committed to giving voice to the aspirations of Pacific peoples. The PIANGO Mission Statement notes that the network 'exists to enable the extended family of Pacific NGOs to more effectively promote and advance the interests and well-being of their people. It aims to facilitate communication, provide a common voice at regional and international forums, assist NGOs to strengthen and develop Pacific identities, unity, cultures and forms of social action, as well as to improve the well-being of the communities they serve.'

Publications include PIANGO Monthly (a newsletter with stories on PIANGO’s work with Pacific NGOs) and PIANGO’s Pacific News (a monthly digest of major news stories and NGO issues from the Pacific Islands).

United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

UNDP Fiji Office, Tower Level 6, Reserve Bank Building, Pratt Street, Suva Fiji; Tel: (679) 331 2500, Fax: (679) 330 1718, Website: www.undp.org.fj

The UNDP office located in Fiji collaborates with the ten country governments, the donor community, NGOs and all spheres of society in promoting people-centred development and building partnerships with civil society to fight poverty. As the United Nations global development network, UNDP strives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life in the Pacific. This is encouraged through sharing solutions to the challenges of:

- Democratic Governance
- Poverty reduction
- Information and communications
- Technology
- Energy and environment
- HIV/AIDS
- Crisis prevention and recovery

Falling directly under the General Assembly of the United Nations System, the structure of UNDP allows for support to projects and programmes that promote poverty eradication and sustainable development.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

304 E 45th Street, 15th floor, New York, NY 10017; Tel: +1 (212) 906 6400, Fax: +1 (212) 906 6705, Email: unifem@undp.org, Website: www.unifem.undp.org

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programs and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. Within the UN system, UNIFEM promotes gender equality and links women’s issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment strategies.

See also:

UNIFEM Pacific Regional Office

www.unifempacific.com

In 1997 UNIFEM Pacific became UNIFEM’s newest Regional Office. This move followed six years of work in the Pacific region as the UNIFEM Pacific Mainstreaming Project under the Bangkok-based Regional Office for Asia and Pacific.

Initially UNIFEM worked with four Pacific Island countries, the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu. The Pacific Mainstreaming Project initiated a gender-sensitive approach in national policies, programmes and projects
in these countries. In 1995 other countries were given similar technical assistance, including Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tonga. The UNIFEM Pacific website has been developed as a resource for information sharing between all those interested in the future of Pacific women.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Sanittham YMCA Building 3rd floor, Room 305-308, 11 Sermuk Road, Soi Mengraisami, Chiangmai 50300, Thailand. Tel: (66 53) 404 613. Fax: (66 53) 404 615. Email: apwld@apwld.org, Website: www.apwld.org

APWLD is an independent, non government, non profit organisation committed to enabling women to use law as an instrument of social change for equality, justice and development. It has consultative status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

APWLD's programs and activities include policy advocacy, education, training and other activities to address issues and concerns of poor and marginalised women in the region. It has lobbied at regional and international levels for the implementation of government commitments in international conventions and the integration of gender issues at regional and international fora.

Women, Law and Development International (WILDI)

1350 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 1100 Washington DC 20036, Tel: (1 202) 463 7477, Fax: (1 202) 463 7480

WILDI is a women's human rights organisation. First established in 1979 as a program of OEF International, WILDI is a non profit NGO with consultative status with ECOSOC.

In many nations, laws and customs openly discriminate against women—and women frequently lack the knowledge or the skills to advocate for themselves. Through the conduct of useful and applicable research, training and advocacy to women's rights groups in developing countries, WILDI empowers women to

Asian and Pacific Studies and Community Development Courses

Victoria University offers:

* Asia Pacific Community Development courses for people interested in working (or already working) in community development in Asia and the Pacific or in development organisations with programs in the region.

* General Stream Asian and Pacific Studies courses for people interested in careers in administration, business, education or research who need a comprehensive overview of the critical issues shaping Asian and Pacific culture and society.

Undergraduate BA programs are available in Community Development (Asia Pacific Stream), Asian Studies, Asian Studies/International Trade, and Asian Studies/Tourism Management. Basic requirement: Australian year 12 equivalent or demonstrated community work experience (paid or voluntary).

Postgraduate Grad-Dip and Masters programs are available in Asian and Pacific Studies (General stream) and Asian and Pacific Studies (Community Development stream). Basic requirement: a tertiary degree level qualification in any discipline. Mature age entry encouraged.

For enquiries and application forms, contact Teah Farrugia phone: 61+3+9365 2240 email: teah.farrugia@vu.edu.au Victoria University - Arts Faculty St Albans Campus PO Box 14428 MC 8001.
fight for their rights, to promote favourable UN and governmental policies and to develop and articulate international strategies in defence of women's rights.

Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP)

4227-4229 Tomas Claudio Street, Baclaran, Paranaque City 1700, Philippines. Tel: (63 2) 8322112, Fax: (63 2) 8322263, Email: capwip@info.com.ph, website: www.capwip.org

See also

Women in Politics Pacific Center (WIPPaC)

2nd floor, House of Lords Building, 19-23 Cumming Street, Suva, Fiji. Tel: (679) 301 178, Fax: (679) 301 654, Email: unifem@iips.org. CAPWIP is a non partisan, non profit and non government organisation dedicated to promoting equal participation of women in politics and decision making. Established in 1992, CAPWIP operates through a network of national affiliates clustered in to five sub-regional groupings: Central Asia, East Asia, Pacific, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. The network is supported through technical assistance in organisational and program planning, training, research and information sharing.

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

96 Spadina Av, Suite 401, Toronto, Ontario, Canada MSV 2J6. Tel: +1 416 594 3773; Fax: +1 416 594 0330; Email: awid@awid.org. Website: www.awid.org

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international membership organization connecting, informing and mobilizing people and organizations committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. AWID's goal is to cause policy, institutional and individual change that will improve the lives of women and girls everywhere. This is achieved by facilitating ongoing debates on fundamental and provocative issues as well as by building the individual and organizational capacities of those working for women's empowerment and social justice. AWID is a dynamic network of women and men around the world; its members are researchers, academics, students, educators, activists, business people, policymakers, development practitioners, funders, and more. AWID recognizes that its members are its most valuable resource. We have a broad network of expert, committed members interested in sharing their ideas towards viable solutions for gender equality.

Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)

4 Thurston Street, PO Box 208, Suva, Fiji. Tel: (679) 311277, Fax: (679) 303205, Email pcc@pactok.peg.apc.org

PCC is the ecumenical movement of the mainline Christian churches in the Pacific. Growing from the Malua Conference of Churches and Missions in Samoa in 1961, the Pacific churches worked together to found the PCC with their assembly in Lifou, New Caledonia in 1966. Today the PCC has its headquarters in Suva, Fiji and functions as the Regional Ecumenical Organisation of the World Council of Churches, co-ordinating National Councils of Churches and member churches on programs of theology, reflection, social justice and advocacy.

Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW)

6 MacGregor Road, PO Box 3940, Samabula, Suva, Fiji. Tel: 679 3304961; Fax: 679 3301222; Email: pacfaw@connect.com.jj. Website: www.pacfaw.org;j

Established in July 2001, PACFAW is a new regional focal point for national women's organisations. It supports a new program of gender advocacy with a strong focus on strengthening institutional capacity at national and regional levels. PACFAW has two programs aiming to:

- Strengthen national institutions for gender advocacy—assisting national women's NGOs to be more effective in gender and policy advocacy; and
- Build solidarity and provide strategic leadership on gender advocacy at the regional level—to further strengthen national focal points and to co-ordinate and consolidate regional NGO positions at regional and global negotiations.

Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS)

5 Mori Building, 5F, Toranomon 1-17-1 Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0001, Japan. Tel: (812) 5253 2511; Fax: (813) 5253 2510; Email: info@iips.org. Website: www.iips.org

IIPS is a non profit and independent research institute based in Tokyo. It examines security, economic, political, environmental and other concerns in the world with an emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region.

IIPS published the Asia-Pacific Review, a bi-annual journal that analyses global, political, economic, security, energy and environmental issues with a specific emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region.
Web Resources

Transparency International (TI)
http://www.transparency.org

Transparency International is the only NGO devoted to combating corruption, bringing civil society, business and governments together in a powerful global coalition. Through its international secretariat and more than 80 independent national chapters around the world, TI works at both the national and international level in both the supply and demand of corruption. In the international arena, IT raises awareness about the damaging effects of corruption, advocates policy reform and works towards the implementation of multilateral conventions and subsequently monitors compliance levels in governments, corporations and banks. At the national level, chapters work to increase levels of accountability and transparency, monitoring the performance of key institutions and pressing for necessary reforms in a non party political manner.

A principal tool in the fight against corruption is access to information. It is in this spirit that this website is offered to everybody with an interest in the fight against corruption. See also http://www.transparencypng.org.pg

With its vision to protect the integrity of the people and the nation, the Papua New Guinea chapter of Transparency International has put together a community coalition to undertake advocacy and raise public awareness of the adverse effects on society of dishonesty and mismanagement. With the support of its community coalition partners, TI PNG aims to curtail corruption and build a just society in Papua New Guinea.

WomenWatch
http://www.un.org/womenwatch

This site provides a gateway to the information and resources on the promotion of gender equality throughout the United Nations system, including the United Nations Secretariat, regional commissions, funds, programs and specialised agencies. It is a joint United Nations project that was created in March 1997 to provide internet space for global gender equality issues and to support implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Founded by the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW, WomenWatch is currently managed by the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

Radio Australia ‘Time to Talk’ (To Tok Pisin)
http://abc.net.au/timetotalk/english/default.htm

‘Time to Talk’ is a 13-part series about politics, society and governance in today’s Pacific which was broadcast on Radio Australia and Radio National. The transcript and audio of each program is available online on this website. The series covered issues of community governance, colonial legacies, independence and nation building, roles and structures of government, corruption and the rule of law, human rights and gender equity. The reference section http://abc.net.au/timetotalk/english/reference/default.htm provides a wealth of information on politics, society and governance in the Pacific. Links to other websites on the Pacific and issues raised in the program series are also provided.

UNDP
http://www.undp.org

The UNDP Fiji website includes information on projects funded for the Pacific region. See also UNDP’s Governance on Livelihoods for Development (GOLD) website: www.undp.org/fg/gold
And UNDP’s Global Governance website: www.undp.org/governance.htm

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
http://www.ausaid.gov.au

AusAID is responsible for the management of the official Australian Government overseas aid program. It provides policy advice and support to the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary on development issues. AusAID develops and manages effective and innovative poverty reduction programs in partnership with developing countries, Australian businesses, non-government organisations and international agencies.

Included in the AusAID South Pacific program are activities in support of strengthening democratic systems, governance and economic reform as well as support for regional organisations.

Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNet)
http://www.sidsnet.org

SIDSNet is an initiative of the United Nations to use the Internet to facilitate stakeholders in 42 countries on development issues unique to the island community. The network is co-ordinated by the United Nations Development Programme in New York.

Pacific Island Forum
http://www.sidsnet.org/pacificforum.htm

Information on many Pacific Islands government policies can be found through the main regional intergovernmental organisation, the Pacific Islands Forum. The Forum represents Heads of Government of all the independent and self-governing Pacific Island countries, Australia and New Zealand. Since 1971 it has provided member nations with the opportunity to express their joint political views and to cooperate in areas of political and economic concern.

October 2002
The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
http://www.spc.org

The SPC has detailed news, information and statistics on development in the Pacific. This includes updates on land and marine resources, agriculture, population, health, women, youth, communication and information.

Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
The United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand Tel: (662) 288 1234, Fax: (662) 288 1000, Website: http://www.unescap.org

ESCAP is the regional arm of the United Nations Secretariat for Asia and the Pacific. Its primary functions are to promote economic and social development through regional and subregional cooperation and integration, to provide a forum within the UN system for this region, to promote development assistance and technical cooperation and to carry out research and other relevant activities.

Development Alternatives for Women in the New Era (DAWN)
http://www.dawn.org.fj

DAWN is a Fiji based NGO which provides analyses of the impact of WTO, ADB and World Bank programs on women in the region. It is a network of women scholars and activists from the economic south who are working for development alternatives that are gender equitable and sustainable.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)
http://www.int-ideas.se

Created in 1995 by 14 countries, International IDEA promotes and advances sustainable democracy and improves and consolidates electoral processes worldwide. It provides a forum for discussion and action amongst individuals and organisations involved in the promotion of democracy. International IDEA's work focus includes the following:
• Regions—assisting countries to build democracy;
• Sustainable election processes to enhance skills, efficiency and cost effectiveness of the electoral process;
• Political participation to enhance citizen participation in democratic processes;
• Democracy and conflict management to use the institutions of democracy as conflict management tools and to use conflict management within civil society as support for sustainable democracy.

Twice yearly Work in Progress reports may be downloaded from the website.

Civicus
http://www.civicus.org

CIVICUS is an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world. Its special purpose is to help nurture the foundation, growth, protection and resourcing of citizen action, especially in areas where participatory democracy, freedom of association of citizens and their funds for public benefit are threatened.

World Development Index Online

Price US$ 100.00. For further information contact data@worldbank.org

The premier data source on the global economy, this contains statistical data for over 550 development indicators and time series data from 1960-2000 for over 200 countries and 18 country groups. Data includes social, economic, financial, natural resources and environmental indicators. WDI Online is a most useful tool for researching developmental data.
Author Guidelines

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The Network cannot assume responsibility for any loss of or damage to manuscripts. Contributors are therefore encouraged to retain a complete copy of their work.

Word length
Submitted papers are to be short and concise, with a minimum of 1000–1500 words and a maximum of 2,500–3,000 words. The word limit includes subheadings and footnotes and excludes references. Conference reports: 800–1000 words.

Presentation and Style
Manuscripts should be double spaced with at least 2.5cm (1") margins. Subheadings, footnotes and references need to be clearly indicated in the text. Quotation marks should be single, double within single. Spelling is English (OED with ‘-ise’ endings).

Documents can be sent as email attachments, on disk or in hard copy. Documents sent electronically should be saved as Microsoft Word files, or in .rtf format. Email attachments are preferred in Word or .rtf format. A virus check is requested prior to any material being electronically sent. No .pdf files please as these cannot be edited or corrected prior to printing.

Referencing
A minimum of references and/or footnotes is requested due to space constraints. All references referred to or cited in the text are to be included in the reference list. Book titles and journal names should be italicised or underlined; titles of journal articles and book chapters are in single inverted commas.

The Harvard style of referencing is preferred: author’s surname, forename and/or initials, date of publication, title of publication, publisher and place of publication. Journal references should include volume and issue number, date and page numbers. Detailed guidelines on the Harvard style of referencing are available online at: http://www.uwe.ac.uk/library/resources/general/info_study_skills/harvard2.htm#book

Examples:

Development Studies Network
Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Australia
Phone: +61 2 6125 2466 Facsimile: +61 2 6125 9785
E-mail: devnetwork@anu.edu.au
Website: http://devnet.anu.edu.au