

# Bougainville Young Women's Leadership Research

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The Bougainville Young Women's Leadership Research is an initiative of Bougainville Women's Federation in collaboration with its partner, International Women's Development Agency, and with the support of the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program at the Australian National University. Supported by the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women Program of the Netherlands Government.

The current leaders [of BWF] must have the capacity to train young women and support them at the district levels. Education is one barrier that stops young women's participation in the leadership arena. Identifying young women with good capacity and assisting them through the tiers of education qualification is the way forward. We need women leaders who are sufficiently trained and skilled to go back to village assemblies to have influence. [BWF] must take on board young women's development. BWF needs to identify a development partner to concentrate on young women's development programs. In practical terms, BWF must involve or engage young women in the earlier stages and to empower them. BWF needs vibrant leadership. There's so much potential. We just need to tap young women leaders into our programs. The attitude of older women towards younger women must change but my challenge is also to the younger women to take the stage as leaders. Old leaders do not easily let go of their positions, but there are ways to deal with this. There's a time and season for everything. To get women thinking on the same wave length, BWF must make its visions known and reach out to the women.

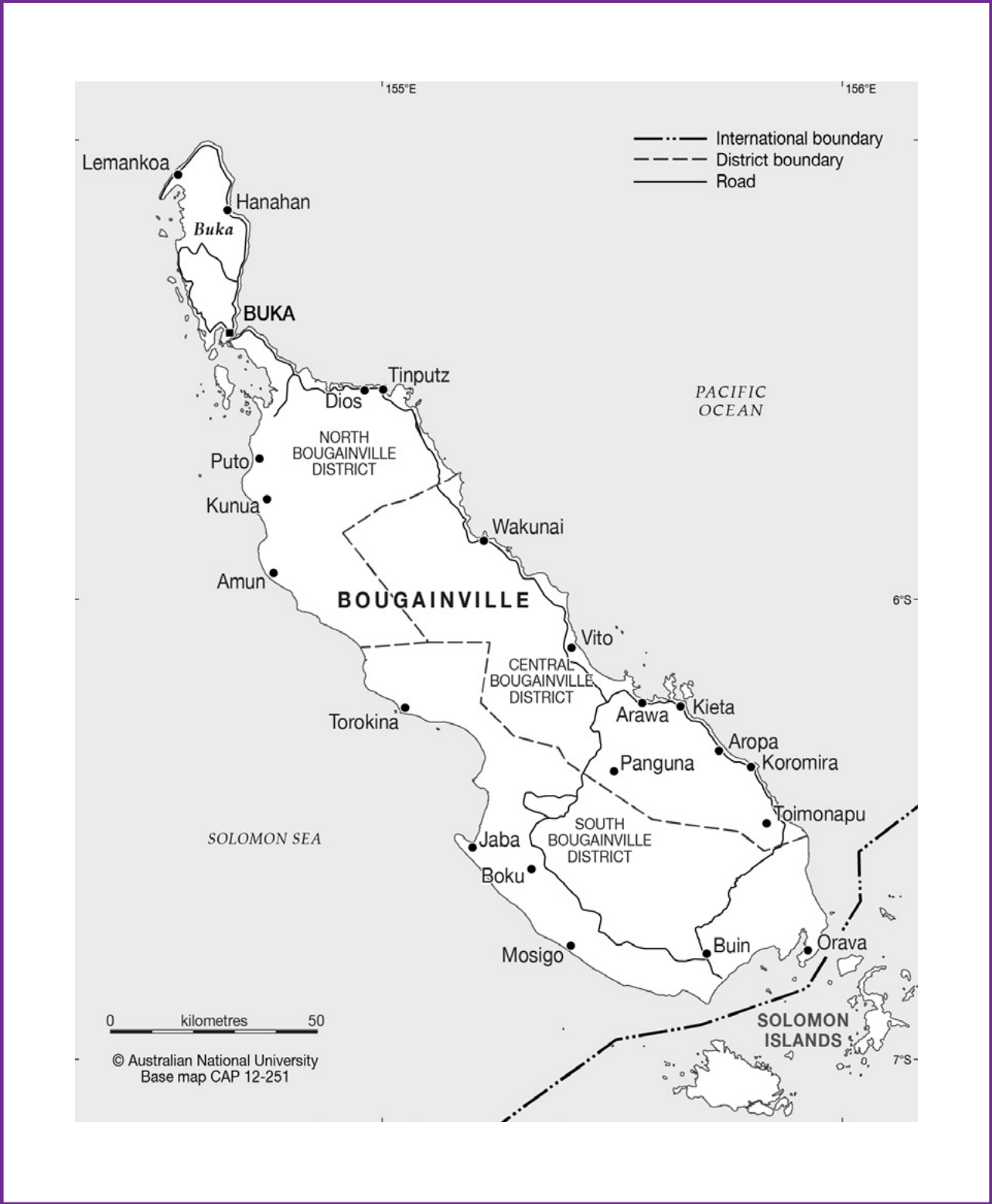
Hon. Rose Pihei  
Member of the Bougainville  
House of Representatives

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## Acronyms

ABG	Autonomous Bougainville Government
AROB	Autonomous Region of Bougainville
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BWF	Bougainville Women's Federation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SSGM	State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program

# The Autonomous Region of Bougainville



# Table of Contents

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Autonomous Region of Bougainville</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
Leadership	10
Women’s Leadership and Participation in the Pacific	10
Young Women’s Leadership	11
Bougainville Context	12
Leadership in Bougainville	12
Gender in Bougainville	13
Women and Peace Building	14
<b>The Research</b>	<b>16</b>
Study Overview	16
Research Methods	17
Fieldwork	19
<b>Findings</b>	<b>20</b>
What are the Important Issues for Young Women?	20
Women’s Views on Leadership	21
Young Women’s Participation & Leadership	21
Pathways to Participation and Leadership	22
Participation in BWF	23
What Prevents Women from Participating in BWF?	24
Overcoming Barriers to Participation in BWF by Young Women	25
Intergenerational Challenges	26
Working Together	27
<b>Next Steps and Future Directions</b>	<b>30</b>
1) Engaging Young Women	30
2) Empowering Young Women	31
3) Reforming BWF to Encourage Greater Participation by Younger Generations	31
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>35</b>
Appendix 1: Research Tools	35
Appendix 2: End Notes	36

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Note: in a number of places in this report, quotes from individuals are included without attribution. This decision was made by the authors to protect anonymity and relationships in the communities where the research was undertaken.

The map on page 4 has been provided by CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

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# Foreword

Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF) is a peak NGO women's organisation and representative body for the women of Bougainville. BWF's objective is to advocate for the priorities and needs of women by influencing the development of legislation, policies and programs across the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Equally important to the organisation is the sustainability of the organisation itself. Taking these issues into consideration, one of the very first things identified by BWF Board was looking at how the organisation will sustain itself in the future. The Board made the decision to come up with an assessment of young women's needs and a capacity building program to respond to these.

To inform this, BWF needed some data to understand the situation surrounding young women and participation in leadership activities, instead of starting from their own assumptions. The idea of doing a baseline study regarding this was developed and thanks to International Women's Development Agency, the idea was supported with financial and technical assistance.

The research was an experience in itself for the 13 young women researchers and also for me. It was encouraging to see women our own age opening up to us and sharing their experiences, which not surprisingly, shared similar concerns to us. It was amazing to see how enthusiastic young women were to be involved in the program in terms of building their leadership skills, to have confidence in themselves and to have a sense of belonging.

Therefore, on behalf of the young women of Bougainville, I want to thank BWF leadership and IWDA for taking

the initiative to give an opportunity to reach out to young women and for creating an avenue for young women to speak out and address their own problems.

This report is a testament to the commitment of the 13 young women who worked tirelessly on the research project. We want to share this experience with other young women who have the potential to be leaders, wherever they are. It is our hope that our involvement in such programs will encourage the younger generation. We hope that it helps young women to realise the importance of BWF and its program of building the capacity of younger women, who will one day take over from very hard working women leaders who continue to fight for equal participation of men and women in all Bougainville affairs.

It is hoped that this report may help BWF and other agencies to develop young women, and identify the gaps and strategic entry points for young women into leadership roles.

To the readers, it is important to note that this is not an exhaustive study of the topic of women's leadership in Bougainville; it is specific and limited in its scope to the aims as determined by its objective as agreed with partner organisations. The research gave specific focus to the roles of women and young girls in less politicised arenas like the private sector and civil society organisations, while also, to some extent, exploring women's existing experiences of leadership in different domains. This was deliberate, to identify new spaces and actions that could increase young women's participation in leadership.

Thank you.

Isabel Koredong

Back Row: Darusilla Gaian, Fridolyn Lesi, Irene Subalik, Grace Priestly, Agnes Takei, Maryanne Tsinuau, Genevieve Kouro, Florence Naina, Dianne Satoriri, Angelyne Marako.  
Front Row: Judith Oliver, Beverley Tamis, Isabel Koredong.



# Executive Summary

Women continue to be excluded from most decision-making and are greatly under-represented in public decision-making and leadership positions throughout the Pacific. The situation is especially bleak for young women who are under-represented in those leadership roles that do exist for women. Very little research or analysis has been done on the nature of young women's leadership in the Pacific. Young women are generally subsumed either under the umbrella of youth or of "women's leadership," as if the issues that all women confront are the same, regardless of age and life stage.

The Bougainville Young Women's Leadership Research is an acknowledgement by the current leadership of BWF that continuity and sustainability of the organisation depends on young women being empowered, trained and nurtured as leaders. The research was undertaken in the three regions of Bougainville by a group of 13 young women trained for the purpose.

The research sought to identify what issues young women considered to be important in their communities, how leadership was defined by young women, what barriers prevented young women from actively participating in organisations and becoming leaders, and what opportunities exist to increase their participation.

To gain a sense of the issues that concerned young women, participants in group discussions and individual interviews were asked what issues were most important to them. The issues raised ranged from education to corruption, with education the most often cited. As one woman said: "Education is a big issue for us. We need to continue our education somehow. There need to be short courses provided so that we can broaden our hopes and our vocations." Young women also considered the problems caused by alcohol and drugs to be an important issue in their communities. Sexual, reproductive and maternal health were also significant for young women. They were especially concerned about the lack of health facilities and personnel, and the lack of maternal care and awareness of maternal health issues.

The research sought to understand how women understood leadership. In summary, the majority of responses identified a leader as someone who knows how to guide, takes responsibility and is a good person or a person of character who leads by example. Others considered that leadership meant looking after others, working with others, having good decision making and planning skills, communicating with the community, representing the community and bringing development to the community. The young women also considered it important for a leader to "kamapim gutpela sindaun" (bring about a harmonious community) by being able to resolve conflicts within the community and individual families.

The research found that many young women feel they do not have the confidence or skills to become leaders in organisations like BWF. It also showed clearly that women's participation in a variety of contexts can lead to "developmental leadership" – leadership that is focussed on development outcomes. Participation in church-based and other organisations can be a pathway for participation and leadership in women's organisations. Women's groups enable women to establish bonds and relationships among themselves, which is important in developing trust and social capital and building individual confidence.

The research found that many opportunities for young women's participation and leadership exist, including sports, church and village-based organisations. These provide a useful grounding for entry into organisations that are more directly focussed on developmental outcomes for women, such as BWF.

However, to participate in an organisation, young women first need to know it exists. While 44.5 percent of the 54 women interviewed for this research were members of BWF, the rate of membership among the young women 18-30 years old was around half this (four of 19 interviewees, or 21 percent were BWF members).

Lack of knowledge about BWF and its work inhibits young women from joining the organisation. If the organisation is to grow and be effective, it needs greater engagement with the community, especially at the village level. Even those aware of the organisation believed that it operated only at the district level and thus was removed from most women in the community.

The research also found that the relationship between the young women and mature women was strained, which made working together difficult. While young women wished to participate, most felt excluded from participation in groups and discussions.

Another significant issue for young women was what they referred to as "underestimation" – meaning that older women lacked confidence in and devalued the abilities of young women. Young women were also held back by a sense of shame or embarrassment, which meant that they avoided contexts that required them to speak and participate. Some of these issues could be overcome by activities to build bonds between older and younger women and support their development as upcoming leaders, such as a mentoring program.

However, despite challenging divisions between young and mature women, the research found good scope for optimism, with many young women expressing a desire and willingness to work with experienced women leaders. The commitment to undertake this research in itself reflects recognition among BWF leaders that the organisation needs to do more to engage and involve young women.



One purpose of the research was to inform the partnership between IWDA and BWF to strengthen BWF's sustainability, including through increasing the participation of young women and support for their leadership development. Recommendations based on research findings are included in this report for consideration by the BWF Board. These recommendations suggest a strategy focussed on three discrete, but inter-related, components:

**Engaging young women**, including through the development of a youth engagement addressing the barriers to young women's involvement. The strategy will identify ways to draw in young women including those who are marginalised. It will also identify possible pathways to leadership and investigate structured support such as setting quotas for young women's representation on committees, in training and in decision-making roles.

**Empowering young women**, including through the development of a program of activities to develop young women's leadership skills. Leadership workshops should be focussed on practical skills development around issues of concern to young women (for example, those identified in this research such as sexual, reproductive and maternal health). A robust training program should balance young women's interests whilst broadening their skills and knowledge. A structured mentoring program and paid internships for young women would provide opportunities for young women to develop their skills, confidence and experience and to learn more about BWF. A longer-term plan could include peer-to-peer mentoring, when sufficient numbers of young women are involved to make this possible.

**Reforming BWF** to encourage greater participation by younger generations. This activity would focus on reforming BWF's structures, operations and processes to be more inclusive to younger women. Initial steps could include: establishing a working group including young women to review the organisation developing a 'Young Women's Caucus' that is represented in BWF Executive; and actively seeking the views of young women on issues and addressing those issues relevant to them.

Promoting young women's leadership does not mean that older women's leadership is not valued. On the contrary, it supports and extends the good work that has been done by BWF to the next generation. Supporting women's organisations to engage and succeed across generations is essential to achieving positive change for women and sustaining this over the long term.



# Introduction

## Leadership

Until recently, the literature on development paid very little attention to leadership, despite widespread recognition that economic and social development is not possible without effective leadership. Adrian Leftwich and Steve Hogg have stated that while the international development community has recognised the importance of effective states, strong institutions and good governance, there is a significant gap in the understanding of the centrality of leadership in the development equation (2007: 6). As they remark, it is “leaders who establish and sustain locally relevant and effective organisations, who negotiate, establish and consolidate over time the fundamental institutions of an effective state, who forge the rules and practices of economic and political governance, and who shape and ensure the implementation of sound and appropriate policies for growth, poverty reduction and social development” (2007: 4). In particular, Heather de Ver and others argue that leaders, elites and coalitions are the key to overcoming the many collective action problems that plague weak states and frustrate development (de Ver 2008: 4). Leaders play a key role in establishing the effective institutions that are necessary for development to take place.

Responding to criticism that analysis of leadership has been absent, academics practitioners now increasingly acknowledge that aid and development programs should take account of, and be informed by, a thorough understanding of the political dynamics at work in the countries receiving aid and development (Laws 2013: 3; de Ver 2009: 3). To be effective and lasting, development practice must incorporate a sensitive engagement with local political processes (Laws 2013: 8). This engagement requires understanding the nature of the leadership, formal and informal, that underlies those political processes. In other words, leadership must be understood both politically and as a political process. Importantly, leadership as a political process must be understood as it is “contextually occurring within a given indigenous configuration of power, authority and legitimacy, shaped by history, institutions, goals and political culture” (de Ver 2009: 4). Developmental leadership, according to de Ver, “is the process of organising or mobilising people and resources in pursuit of particular ends or goals, in given institutional contexts of authority, legitimacy and power” (2009: 9). A few development practitioners influenced by the developmental leadership literature, such as the Pacific Leadership Program, have paid attention to women’s leadership, but overwhelmingly the state of play is gender blind, with very little focus on women’s leadership. Where there is a concern with women’s leadership, it is preoccupied predominantly with elected leadership and the poor level of political representation by women.

Much of the discussion on leadership in the Pacific has focussed on the contrast between “ascribed leadership,” the chiefly systems in Polynesia, and “achieved leadership,” the big man systems in Melanesia. This characterisation is associated with the anthropologist Marshal Sahlins, who cemented the distinction in his essay *Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia* (Sahlins 1963; McLeod 2008: 2). The “achieved leadership” of the big man is based on the personal power and status that he has gained through the demonstration of skills (such as oratory, bravery or magic) or the harnessing of resources (such as pigs and wealth for feasting). The big man maintains his position through strategic generosity and politically astute gift giving. On the other hand, the power of the “ascribed leader” or chief resides in the position, not the individual, and is generally inherited. They have authority over the group without needing to disperse resources to gain loyalty.

However, the demarcation between the Melanesian “achieved leadership” and the Polynesian “ascribed leadership” does not adequately capture the nuances of leadership systems in the region, as a number of commentators have argued (Douglas 1979; Lindstrom 1981). The term “chief” may accurately describe the qualities of leaders in many Melanesian societies, just as many chiefs in Polynesia rely on personal ability and political cunning as much as genealogical status to ensure their positions (Lindstrom and White 1997: 9). Moreover, so-called “traditional” leadership systems, including “inherited political systems are being rethought and reinvented” (Lindstrom & White 1997: 1). This has seen the emergence of new forms of leadership, such as chiefs, where there may not have been any in the past (White 1997: 232). Examples of this in Bougainville are discussed later in this section.

While some attention has been paid to evaluating the utility of the Sahlins model, less has been paid to other forms of leadership. Beyond the specific form that “traditional” leadership takes in the post-colonial context, other forms of leadership – for example in churches, government, or business – have largely been overlooked in the literature. Existing forms of women’s leadership, in particular, have been disregarded and so the Bougainville Young Women’s Leadership research is both timely and necessary.

## Women’s Leadership and Participation in the Pacific

In many parts of the Pacific, the public domain of decision-making is still regarded by many as the realm of men while women are consigned to the domestic space (Wallace

2011: 505; McLeod 2008: 4; Pollard 2003; Newton-Cain 2013), although recent research in Fiji suggests attitudes are changing, particularly among younger urban voters (Dumarau and Pene 2014). These gender constructions were undoubtedly reinforced during the missionary and colonial period, with the end result being that women continue to be excluded from most decision-making and are greatly under-represented in public decision-making and leadership positions. This is most notable in the region's legislatures; according to statistics compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the representation of women in the national parliaments of the Pacific is ranked the lowest of the regions classified (IPU 2014; PWSPD 2014: 3). As of November 1, 2014, the world average for both houses of parliament combined has the percentage of women at 21.9 percent, whereas the average for the Pacific is 15.4 percent (<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>).<sup>1</sup> The statistics for the countries of Melanesia are particularly low with Papua New Guinea ranked 142 of a total of 189 countries (111 seats/3 women or 2.7 percent), Solomon Islands ranked 143 (52 seats/1 women or 2 percent) and Vanuatu 147 (52 seats/0 women or 0 percent). The best rated Melanesian country is Fiji, ranking 98 out of the 189 countries (50 seats/7 women or 14 percent). According to McLeod, women face many challenges to entering the realm of formal politics in Melanesia and these are well documented, "including local perceptions about women's roles, the pervasiveness of masculine political cultures, violence against women, the lesser social mobility of women and the limited economic independence of women" (McLeod 2008: 5; McLeod 2002: 43). In addition to these gender specific impediments, McLeod says women, like male political candidates, face the challenge of mobilising block votes and funding expensive and lengthy campaigns (2008: 5).

The lack of visible women leaders is inextricably linked to gender inequality, as it is difficult for women to take up leadership in their communities when they are in an inherently unequal situation (PWSPD 2014: 1). Women are disadvantaged by their limited access to both formal and informal education and skills training. The difficulties and challenges are magnified for rural women, as opportunities for education and vocational training are even more limited, and they are often unaware of the rights they do possess and of possibilities for change. Opportunities to participate in formal decision-making processes are rare, and support for those women who do is limited (Wallace 2011: 506).

Despite these constraints, there have been some improvements. In the 2015 Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB) General election, Josephine Getsi became the first woman to win an open seat. The AROB has three reserved seats for women, and prior to the 2015 election, these have been the focus of women's electoral activities. In 2015 there was a significant increase

(a doubling) of the number of women contesting open seats. Getsi was supported by candidate training conducted by BWF and had built a solid network and campaign strategy. While recognising the reality of women's limited political representation, some writers have argued for greater attention to local forms of women's leadership, as these are much more relevant to the lives of most women (McLeod 2008: 5).

Asenati Liki remarks in relation to the Solomon Islands case, the absence or low representation of women in national politics has overshadowed their increasing level of participation in other public leadership positions (2010: 1). However she highlights that numbers of women in managerial and mid-level positions in the public sector are increasing.

Nevertheless, the playing field is still very uneven. Despite some gains, women remain under-represented in formal and informal leadership processes and decision-making at all levels of society.

The playing field is uneven for women in another sense, as Nicole Haley and Kerry Zubrinich remind us, since women leaders' work – "whether this is in the public sector, business or government – does not change [their] position at home where besides being wage earners they take the full brunt of house-keeping and child-minding chores" (2009: 4, 23). As the findings of this research study show, some young women see child-care responsibilities as a barrier to participation and leadership roles.

## Young Women's Leadership

Along with all other women, young women are under-represented in leadership roles throughout the Pacific, particularly political leadership (McLeod 2008: 5). As McLeod notes, leaders must display traits and characteristics that many young women have not yet developed and people who are not yet considered mature are less inclined to identify as a leader (2008: 5). Moreover, the idea that a person must respect their elders continues to shape expectations and this has the effect of constraining youth participation in certain leadership positions (McLeod 2008: 5; PLP & World YWCA 2011: 8).

Very little research or analysis has been done on the nature of young women's leadership (but see PLP & World YWCA 2011; YWCA Solomons 2013). Young women are subsumed either under the umbrella of youth or of "women's leadership," as if the issues that all women confront are the same regardless of age. Significant progress in the area of young women's leadership will not be achieved while young women continue to experience discrimination based on age.

The report *Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled: A Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy* states that while young people in the Pacific have inherited a region rich in culture and natural resources, the region also faces multiple and complex challenges, including high population growth, urban drift, inadequate education and employment opportunities, political instability and the adverse effects of climate change. Interwoven with these challenges is the pervasive discrimination and inequality experienced by women and girls (PLP & World YWCA 2011: 1). High rates of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and increasing rates of HIV infection among young women are underpinned by high rates of violence against women. In the report's foreword, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda and Susan Brennan (then General Secretary and President respectively of the World YWCA) note the very significant developmental implications of these issues for young women and highlight the need for coordinated efforts to ensure responsible leadership that advocates a woman's right to dignity, development and safety (PLP & World YWCA 2011:i)1).

To understand the dynamics of young women's leadership fully, it is necessary to understand the historical, cultural and political context in which that leadership is situated. In the case of this research, we need to consider the recent history of Bougainville, the ways specific forms of leadership there have developed, and how gender intersects with leadership, since gender is a major factor contributing to the leadership landscape of Bougainville.

## Bougainville Context

Our study area is the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, an island group in the easternmost part of Papua New Guinea. Current reliable figures are not available, but the population of Bougainville is estimated to be about 200,000, with about three percent living in the urban centres of Buka, Arawa and Buin.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the population live in rural communities, relying on subsistence farming for their livelihoods, with some cash income from the sale of copra and cocoa, and, increasingly, from alluvial and small-scale gold mining. Bougainville is divided into three regions<sup>3</sup> – North, Central and South. There is considerable diversity throughout these regions: different histories of the Bougainville conflict; different histories of colonisation and engagement with the state; significant cultural differences; and different histories regarding people's engagement with the cash economy.

Bougainville is resource rich, with considerable reserves of copper and gold. When the Panguna mine was operating,

Bougainville provided the largest non-aid revenue stream to the Papua New Guinea Government.

The almost ten years of violent conflict that occurred on Bougainville emerged quite unexpectedly in late 1988. The conflict was not initially related to secessionist demands, but to perceived inequality in benefit sharing opportunities for Bougainvilleans arising from the mine (Regan 2010: 17). From the early 1990s, the conflict took on two dimensions – a secessionist struggle between the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the Papua New Guinea government, and an internal conflict between opposing Bougainvillean groups (Regan 2010: 24). The conflict left large numbers of people traumatised. It is estimated that well over 1000 Bougainvilleans died in armed conflict, with many more losing their lives in extrajudicial killings and in the PNG Government blockade of BRA-controlled areas. Countless more were injured. Further trauma came from the deep divisions between Bougainvilleans, destruction of most public infrastructure and private sector productive assets, destruction of the capacity of the local state to govern, and large-scale dislocation of people, with up to 60,000 members of the population, then about 160,000, living in 'care centres' by 1996 (Regan 2010: 26). Further, the economy was left in ruins; from a position of being the best performing province in Papua New Guinea, Bougainville fell to the bottom. The profound social and economic effects of what is often referred to as 'the crisis' continue to shape attitudes and opportunities.

Peace returned to Bougainville after the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in Arawa on 30 August 2001. As part of this agreement, Bougainville was given autonomy from the PNG government and allowed to run all of its affairs, except for Defence and Foreign Affairs.<sup>4</sup>

## Leadership in Bougainville

One aspect of the peace building and reconciliation process was the writing of a constitution which mandated the specific form of the autonomous region's government and legislature. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville now has its own legislature, the House of Representatives of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which comprises a president; 33 directly elected members, each representing a single member constituency; three reserved seats for women members, elected to represent the interests of the women of the three regions, and three former combatant members. The constitution recognises traditional leaders and other forms of customary authority and seeks to strengthen them. For example, section 15 of the constitution, Strengthening Customary Authority,

states that:

(1) The clan structure and customary leadership of Bougainvillean communities shall be recognised and strengthened.

(2) The roles, responsibilities and authority of traditional chiefs and other traditional leaders shall be recognised at all levels of government.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to colonial rule, the basis of leadership differed from what it is today. In the south and far north of the main island of Bougainville, as well as in Buka and the atolls to the east, leadership was mainly hereditary or what Sahlins called “ascribed leadership” (Oliver 1955).<sup>6</sup> For the rest of the main island, leadership was what Sahlins called “achieved leadership” (Regan 2000: 291).<sup>7</sup> The skills necessary to achieve the latter, such as fighting, magic, the accumulation of wealth and the ability to harness and manage resources, tended to be specialised and distributed throughout society, and leadership could involve both men and women.

In some parts of Bougainville, there has been a shift from hereditary forms of leadership to performance-based or achieved forms of leadership.<sup>8</sup> Among the Torau language speakers in central Bougainville, Mel Togolo has also described a move away from hereditary chiefs towards leaders of clans playing a bigger and more important role, which has seen a dilution of the powers of the chief and a devolution of decision-making to clan leaders (Togolo 2005: 281).

Similar new forms of leadership are reported for Haku at the northern end of Buka Island. Bill Sagir, who worked among the Haku, reports that there is competition between traditional chiefs and government-appointed officials for power and authority in the village. Such competition started during the colonial period and continues today with each form of leader claiming legitimacy from a different source, one “traditional” and the other “modern”. The incorporation of new political systems into an existing situation of competition and rivalry has deepened the ambiguity of rank in the traditional system (Sagir 2005: 358).

The crisis allowed men who otherwise would not necessarily have been leaders to obtain leadership roles through their military prowess. In the political vacuum created by the withdrawal of the PNG Defence Force and PNG government, some traditional forms of leadership were given new legitimacy and authority. In many areas, chiefs and local BRA commanders became the main sources of authority and stability (Regan 2000: 294).

With the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001 and the establishment of Bougainville as an Autonomous Region of Papua New Guinea, with its own Constitution, the governance leadership structures throughout Bougainville were reformulated. Currently, each district has a number of Councils of Elders, comprising both elected and appointed members, including a women’s representative, church representative and an elected representative from each Village Assembly in its constituency. The Village Assembly plays a key role, with all eligible members of a village voting for their representative to the Council of Elders (Quay n.d.: 15; Regan 2000).

## Gender in Bougainville

With 20 or so language groups and cultures, beliefs and practices concerning gender are highly diverse in Bougainville. For example, some societies have initiation rituals for boys, whereas others do not; some treat women with considerable respect, and others do not; some have hereditary women leaders at the lineage level, and others do not.

It has been widely assumed that in matrilineal societies women enjoy a “high status” compared to patrilineal societies. It’s also sometimes assumed that women “own” the land and that power and decision-making resides with them in matrilineal societies. However, a matrilineal society is merely one in which descent is traced through females, so that children belong to the same descent group as their mother. Men also belong to matrilineal descent groups and it is far more common that they occupy the position of leader of the group, though in matters of land they should consult the women in the group. Thus, it should never be assumed that because a society is matrilineal, authority within the group lies with the women or, indeed, that such women have more power generally.

The status of women in Bougainville varies considerably, with the Nagovisi in central Bougainville displaying perhaps the greatest diversity. The most detailed literature on the Nagovisi, from anthropologist Jill Nash, who conducted field work there before the crisis (1969-1973), provides a clear insight into the complexity of matriliney and gender there. Nash writes that:

Not only does the average woman have numerous rights and prerogatives, but certain women routinely occupy high-ranking positions as lineage and clan heads. Some of these women – in the present as well as in the past – are described by informants as female equivalents of “big men” (1984: 119).

She adds that:

In Nagovisi, women are the repositories of matrilineal property. Women use and profit from matrilineal resources; their married brothers may not profit from their own matrilineage property, but use instead their wives' property. Married men have rights to matrilineal resources; however, their rights are to advise, to testify about land in court, and to use land (but not to bequeath it) in the event of no surviving females in their lineage (1981: 111).

Nonetheless, while women of the Nagovisi may have substantial and important rights, these do not come at the expense of men's rights. Rather, Nash suggests, there is "an equality between men and women" (1987: 151). The powers and abilities of men and women are ideally seen as complementary, and a person's political destiny is very closely tied to his or her spouse's.<sup>9</sup> The way in which women influence group affairs is different from the way men do, and women are seen as having different capacities and abilities from men.

For the most part, Nagovisi women are not public figures; they rarely express themselves at length in formal public gatherings.<sup>10</sup> Women are absent from the major areas of public exposure – those that require language facility and an emphasis on what might be called public relations: diplomacy, decorum and evasiveness (Nash 1984: 123). They testify and comment at court proceedings in the village setting, but their comments tend to be brief and to the point. They do not adjudicate in quarrels aired in these public forums, nor do they deliver the lengthy speeches of advocacy which are so often a part of conflict resolution. Nevertheless, Nash found that women were considered to be "strong in the mouth," with an inclination to talk and make things happen through talk. This meant that women played an essential role in their own group's discussions and decisions about the distribution of pigs, land use and compensation (Nash 1987: 158). From this we can deduce that there is nothing innate about the way men and women perform when it comes to joining public debate or being a leader. Rather, the situation is structured by cultural conventions and beliefs about what is appropriate behaviour for women.

Gender relations were adversely affected by the Bougainville conflict. Violence of many forms is now far more prevalent than previously (Regan 2000: 290).<sup>11</sup> The crisis allowed youth and young men to rebel against the traditional authority of leaders and to disregard the norms that regulated relations with others, especially women. Some of the authority that women held as a consequence of the matrilineal system of descent was undermined. Violence towards women increased dramatically during the crisis period, when women were subjected to

humiliation, physical and psychological violence, rape and other forms of sexual assault.<sup>12</sup> The recent Bougainville Family, Health and Safety Study, a quantitative study of 1034 households (864 men and 879 women over the age of 18), confirms the magnitude of the problem, in terms of violence against women, sexual violence and violence that targets men (Jewkes, Fulu & Sikweyiya 2013).<sup>13</sup>

The Bougainville Family, Health and Safety Study also found that gender inequitable attitudes are widely held by both men and women, with men generally having more inequitable views than women. For example, 72 percent of women and 85 percent of men agreed that a woman should obey her husband. Forty-five percent of women and 60 percent of men agreed that if a woman does something wrong, her husband has a right to punish her (Jewkes et al 2013). We might conclude that people are under considerable cultural pressure to conform to the culturally defined gender roles, and that they may not often be presented with alternative views.

## Women and Peace Building

Despite its deleterious effect on gender relations, or perhaps in part because of this, the conflict saw the development of a vibrant civil society of women's groups. Throughout Bougainville, women organised peace marches, pursued reconciliation and sought to restore normalcy to the island. Several years before the first round of peace talks, women, together with church leaders and chiefs, began building on the indigenous customs of conflict prevention, management and resolution. The many women leaders contributed a great deal to restoring peace.

One legacy of women's activism during the conflict was the formulation of a Bougainville constitution that enshrines the recognition that: "All Bougainvilleans shall have the opportunity to attain leadership positions at all levels subject to this Constitution and customary practices" (Bougainville Constitution section 14. Democratic Principles) and that there "shall be fair representation of women and marginalised groups on all constitutional and other bodies." The constitution also recognises the role of women in Bougainville society when it states: "The role and welfare of women in traditional and modern Bougainville society shall be recognised and encouraged and shall be developed to take account of changing circumstances" (Bougainville Constitution section 28).

The Bougainville Constitution also mandates that three seats in the House of Representatives be reserved for women, an arrangement that is currently unique in the

Pacific (Baker 2014)<sup>14</sup>. One seat is reserved for women in each of the three regions of Bougainville (North, Central and South) and all eligible voters, male and female, can vote for candidates vying for these reserved seats. The constitution also mandates that one elected woman from either the reserved seats or an open seat be given a Cabinet position (2014). Kerryn Baker argues that the reserved seats were viewed as an acknowledgement of the vital role that women played in ending the conflict in Bougainville, but that women also pushed for them because they were concerned that they would not succeed in electing women candidates to the new Bougainville legislature without them. While the system guarantees a minimum level of representation for women, concerns have been raised that the reserved seats also act as a ceiling, preventing women from successfully contesting other seats (2014).

The profiles of the women elected to date provide some initial information about the extent to which inclusion of reserved seats has helped to address perceived barriers to increasing women's political representation, such as education levels, caring responsibilities and prior leadership experience. The women elected in the reserved seats have tended to have adult children, although some had younger families, and have varied educational backgrounds (from grade eight to tertiary educated). They have also tended to have had careers in the public service, with a significant involvement in church, community and women's organisations (2014).

A further legacy of the women's activism and leadership during the conflict was the formation of BWF, shortly after the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2005. BWF is an umbrella organisation and representative body for the women of Bougainville, comprising 13 District Federations, with representation at the Council of Elders and Village Assembly level. It aims to advocate for the needs and priorities of Bougainvillean women – in particular to influence the development of legislation, policies and programs that will benefit women.

Reflecting this focus on influencing governance and governing to be responsive to women's interests and priorities, BWF has a focus on strengthening the understanding of roles and responsibilities among BWF's district-level executive, developing more robust financial management skills and tools and developing women's leadership skills. A decade on from BWF's establishment, efforts to include young women in the organisation's network in order to strengthen their leadership capacity and ability to take on leadership roles at the district level extends the focus on leadership and representation to the next generation of leaders.

Field researchers Beverley Tamis and Darusilla Gaian with lead researcher Isabel Koredong. Chabai Bougainville, September 2014.



# The Research

## Study Overview

The overall objective of the Bougainville Young Women's Leadership research was to identify key issues concerning young women's leadership, and in particular how these issues pertain to membership of BWF.

### The research had the following aims:

- to identify opportunities and barriers for young women's participation in BWF;
- to provide baseline data to enable BWF and IWDA to monitor and evaluate project impacts;
- to inform the development and implementation of BWF's young women's leadership program; and
- to develop young BWF members' skills and experience in conducting research.

The research design and methodology were developed during a participatory workshop with key stakeholders in Canberra in February 2014. These included Tessa Walsh (IWDA), Richard Eves (SSGM, ANU), Isabel Koredong (BWF), Roselyn Kenneth (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, PNG Branch) and Theresa Meki (SSGM). The research design process included formulation of a number of guiding questions (What do we want to know?) and identification of research participants (Who will we talk to?).

### The workshop agreed on three main questions, each with a number of sub-questions:

- 1) What are the attitudes of young and mature women towards young women's leadership in BWF?
  - a. What do young women know about BWF and what it does?
  - b. What do young women see as the role of BWF?
  - c. Are young women participating in BWF? If yes, how? If no, why not?
  - d. What does participation in BWF mean for young women?
  - e. What are mature women's attitudes towards young women's participation in BWF?
  - f. How can BWF increase the participation of young women in the organisation?
- 2) What issues do young women identify as affecting their participation in civil society organisations?
  - a. What factors support young women's participation in BWF?
  - b. What are the barriers that stop or limit young women's participation in BWF?



Lead researcher Isabel Koredong.



Field researcher Florence Naina.



- c. What issues motivate young women to get involved in community groups?
- d. What issues are youth groups and churches responding to?
- e. What cultural issues affect young women's participation in BWF?

3) What skills do young women need or want to become successful leaders?

- a. How do young women want to participate in BWF?
- b. What skills or training do young women want or need to participate in BWF?
- c. What support do young women want from BWF?

We decided to seek this information from young women involved with BWF, young women in community groups (youth, church, sport), mature women, current (mature) members of BWF and community leaders.

## Research Methods

The primary focus of the research was young women, defined as aged 18-30. To gain an understanding of the attitudes of older women towards young women, we also targeted women in the 31-44 and 45+ age groups. Three methods were used to gather information on factors encouraging women in general to participate as well as factors discouraging young women from participating and becoming leaders:

1. Mapping Community Groups – This method sought to map the types of groups in communities, their membership, young women's involvement in them and whether they were successful.
2. Group Discussions – These sought to identify women's membership of community groups, what issues they consider important and whether this includes "women's issues", what leadership means to them, what kinds of obstacles they believe exist to young women's involvement in women's groups and how they think those obstacles might be overcome.
3. Individual In-depth Interviews/Key Informant Interviews – These sought to identify each woman's membership of community groups, what issues were important to her personally, whether women's issues were important to her, what she believes leadership means, what has prevented her from being involved in women's groups

Darusilla Gaian and Florence Naina. Chabai Bougainville, YWL research data analysis training.



and BWF and how these obstacles might be overcome. Key informant interviews were undertaken with key women in women's organisations in Bougainville, including BWF, to get their views on young women's participation and how this might be increased.<sup>15</sup>

Appendix 1 details the questions used as part of each research method.

As capacity building was a key objective of the Bougainville Young Women's Leadership project, 12 young Bougainvillean women were trained in research methods. In addition to an introduction to gender analysis, the researchers were given a basic introduction to research, the different types of research and research methods. Much of the emphasis of the training was on the qualitative research methods to be used in the research, including interviewing and focus group discussions. Research ethics were also covered, including the issues of informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, managing ethical risks and minimising distress. Particular emphasis was given to the practical skills needed for the fieldwork, including developing confidence in interviewing through role playing.

Lead researcher Isabel Koredong.



## Fieldwork

After the training, six teams of two women undertook research in six districts<sup>16</sup>, covering the three regions of Bougainville (North, Central and South). In selecting the districts, they looked for examples where there was active participation in women’s groups and for contrasting examples where this appeared not to be the case, to assist in identifying what factors lead women to more active participation and leadership, and what factors deter them. The districts were agreed during the research planning, with specific constituencies and villages chosen by the field researchers when they went into the field.

**Table 1: Fieldwork locations and research activities**

District	Constituencies	Villages	# Focus group discussions	# In-depth interviews
<b>North Bougainville</b>				
Buka	Haku	Lemanmanu, Hanpan	6	9
Kunua	Mahari, Teua		11	16
<b>Central Bougainville</b>				
Kieta	North Nasioi		5	8
Panguna	Loro		9	6
<b>South Bougainville</b>				
Buin	Konnou	Uggando, Tantareki, Muguai	9	5
Bana	Bolave	Kuneka, Takemari, Sianeki	9	8



Field researcher Darusilla Gaian.



Field researcher Agnes Takai.

# Findings

## What are the Important Issues for Young Women?

**“There are many young women and youth in the community who dropped out from the formal [education] system. This is a very big issue because our dreams are cut short by the system.”**

Young woman, 18-30 age group discussion, Buka District AROB

To gain a sense of the issues that concerned young women, participants in group discussions and individual interviews were asked what issues were most important to them. The issues raised ranged from education to corruption, with education the most commonly cited.

### Responses from the Lost Generation

Many of the women in the age group 18-30 belong to the “lost generation” – the Bougainvilleans whose education was interrupted or curtailed because of the disruption of the crisis. While the focus on the “lost generation” is often on the young men who are perceived to be at the centre of social problems in Bougainville, young women’s aspirations for a better life have also been thwarted. A recurrent refrain from young women was lamenting their lack of education.

Participants in a Kieta District group discussion said, “Education is an issue for us because it is the only tool that makes life easy, since it determines whether we get employment or not.”

Similarly, participants in a Buka District group discussion said that, “Education is a big issue for us. We need to continue our education somehow. There need to be short courses provided so that we can broaden our dreams and fulfil our vocations.” According to a group discussion in Buin District, many young women only reach grade eight at school, and would like the opportunity to improve their educational levels through further studies. These aspirations are hampered by the lack of distance education centres available to them. The disruption brought by the crisis also had an impact on the social skills that the young acquired including their knowledge of tradition-skills which enable young people to engage more fully with their communities.

### Limited Education

Sometimes the lack of opportunity to pursue education was due to the lack of financial support from their parents for school fees. A 21 year old woman from Buka District said that a big issue for her was limited options due to her parents’ inability to invest in her education.

As she explained: “I dropped out of school when [I was in] grade ten and have been wishing to further my education but my parents didn’t value it, so I couldn’t continue. I just stay in the village.” The women are concerned that the ill effects of inadequate education on young women extend beyond them to the next generation of children who are growing up in communities fractured by social problems. As a 34 year old woman from Buka District expressed, “Children must grow up with the right character. There are lots of social issues, such as drugs, home-brew and fighting and I want children to grow up without these things.”

The lack of adequate education has consequences beyond curtailing the personal ambitions of young women; it also impacts on their wider participation and contribution in communities. As a participant in a group discussion in Bana District commented, “Many women in the community are uneducated and as a consequence they are too embarrassed to participate in groups.” This point was confirmed frequently throughout the research. The barriers to participation in community organisations that young women mentioned included being shy and lacking confidence and self-esteem.

### Alcohol and Drugs

Young women considered the problems caused by alcohol and drugs to be an issue of some importance. However, their level of concern was not nearly as great as among the 31-44 and 45+ age groups, who considered alcohol to be the most important issue of concern. The 45+ age group, in particular considered alcohol and drugs to be the most serious issue facing their community, with family violence following closely after. By alcohol the women generally meant “home-brew,” a highly potent drink distilled from alcohol made from fermented fruit. Home-brew has a much higher alcohol content than the “home-brew” beer common in Australia and other western countries. The method of producing “home-brew” is widely known and its production is a source of income for many who struggle financially.

The consumption of this distilled alcohol causes social problems throughout the coastal areas and islands of Papua New Guinea. During conducting research on men and violence in Bougainville in 2006, Richard Eves was told that “when men are drunk they like to show that they are real men” (“trupela man”) (2006: 47). Inebriated young men with their “boom-boxes” (cassette players) at full blast dance through villages and engage in other disorderly displays in public which disturb the normal peace and quiet of village life, enraging others in the community. Such “bikhed pasin” (arrogance), as it is called, was generally believed to have begun with the crisis, one man describing it in the following way:

“Their arrogance towards others has its basis in the crisis. Before, it wasn’t like this. When the crisis came this kind of way also arrived. The crisis also gave birth to home-brew. The knowledge on how to make home-brew came up during the crisis. The crisis gave rise to all this kind of thinking among men. The arrogance of the youth is because they’ve held guns and they like to be rough. They’ve learnt how to kill and are prepared to kill. They won’t listen to the village chiefs (Eves 2006: 46).”

### Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health

Another issue that loomed large for young women was sexual, reproductive and maternal health. Young women were especially concerned about the unavailability of health facilities and personnel, the lack of maternal care and awareness about maternal health issues. The issues of early pregnancy, early marriage and being abandoned by husbands or boyfriends for other women were considered important across all the age groups. It is common for men to abandon one partner and take on another, with the abbreviation O1, O2, O3 indicating a woman’s location in the relationship series. Concerns about pregnancy were accompanied by worries about young women attempting to abort unwanted pregnancies, with the attendant health risks when safe abortion options are not available. Health risks related to abortion were often not reported by the victims because of fear of parental reactions.

## Women’s Views on Leadership

The research sought to elicit women’s views on leadership in group discussions through the question, “What does leadership mean to you?” The responses to this question were remarkably similar across the three different age groups, though the 31-44 and the 45+ age groups tended to provide a larger number of answers and named more attributes a good leader should possess.

The group discussions with young women produced responses which highlighted some attributes of a good leader. The most common meaningful answers were that a leader knows how to guide, takes responsibility, and is a good person or a person of character who leads by example. Other views, though less commonly expressed, were that leadership meant looking after others, working with others, good decision making and planning, communication with the community, representing the community, and bringing development. For example, a young woman from Kunua district said that a leader is “someone who leads by good example. Our leaders are not rooted in the community and a good leader is someone who works with the people and not someone who sees themselves above others and sees their role as just giving orders.” The young women also believed that it was important for a leader to “kamapim gutpela sindaun”

or bring about a harmonious community by resolving conflicts within the community and family. One response put the cynical view that “leadership is a private business,” meaning that contemporary leadership has become in reality merely a way of making money.

In addition to expressing these perspectives, the 31-44 age group also expressed the view that leadership entails accepting criticism, being a good-decision maker, being transparent and trustworthy, being a good role model, being knowledgeable, being representative and being prepared to listen to people’s views and concerns. Many of these attributes also came up in the 45+ group, who also added having vision, being neutral in conflicts, being respected in the community, being prepared to oppose corruption and to speak out against social problems such as “home-brew,” being respectful of others, and being humble and of good character. Solving community conflicts through peaceful decision-making was also named by this group as a leadership quality.

### Participant Perspectives

Leadership is about taking the responsibilities and being a role model to others. Being a leader is about being a voice that represents others’ interests, to have courage to speak out on behalf of others. Being a leader is about being visionary, vibrant, and being able to deliver services to communities while listening to their grievances. A leader also must display strength and willingness to lead. To summarise all these, true leadership is about living for others.

Josephine Sirivi Kauona

## Young Women’s Participation & Leadership

Leadership opportunities for young women come in many different forms across Bougainville. These include opportunities within community groups, religious groups, social groups, youth groups and other cultural or formal gatherings.

A considerable number of groups exist at community level in the districts where the research was undertaken, including church groups, youth groups and sporting groups. In several places, organisations exist that play a key role in community governance and health, including village courts, healthy community groups and neighbourhood watch. There are also cultural or dance groups that involve both young men and women and can provide leadership opportunities, such as the Kunua Culture Express in Kunua District.

The degree to which the groups are active varies, with very active groups existing in Buka District. Haku constituency, for example, has the very active Haku Women's Collective and numerous other groups. The degree to which groups are resourced also varies, with some having facilities but most having none. The youth group in Lemanmanu in Buka District, for example, has its own youth hall, while other groups tend to meet in the church grounds or the men's houses. Very few of the organisations that the researchers encountered during the fieldwork had access to financial resources and they often complained of the Autonomous Bougainville Government's lack of commitment to community organisations.

As might be expected in a society where Christianity is so entrenched, religious groups are a common forum for young women's participation. These include choir groups, Rosa Mistica, Immaculate Heart, Catholic Youth Groups, Catholic Women's Association and United Four Square Women's Group.

Individual interviews made clear the importance of peer influence as a key route for participation in a group. For example, a 21 year old woman from Buka District remarked that her friends were in the local church group and they encouraged her to join. A similar story was told by a young woman from Buin District, who joined the youth group when she saw lots of young women joining.

For some, membership of a group starts with simple curiosity, and a number of those interviewed individually were attracted to groups by their desire to learn new skills or by the prospect of visiting other places. For others, membership of a group opens a leadership opportunity, leading on to training and employment. A 26 year old single mother from Buka District was a member of the local youth sports group and was appointed treasurer of Haku Youth. She did some training with the Haku Women's Collective on early childhood and has since become an early childhood teacher.

## Pathways to Participation and Leadership

As in Isadora Quay's (n.d.<sup>17</sup>) study *Pacific Women's Leadership: Scoping Study*, our research in Bougainville sought to distinguish the different pathways leading women to leadership, in order to learn what factors enable them to advance from one leadership context to another. This approach reflects the findings from Quay's report and other research that women's participation in a variety of contexts, including participation in women's organisations, is especially important in developing pathways for other women to follow. Some commentators refer to this process as "developmental leadership" (Leftwich & Hogg 2007) whereby women's participation can advance the specific political agenda of promoting gender equality. It is important to learn from the experiences of women

who have been successful in any context, not only in formal political leadership.

The publication *Women's Leadership Stories – Bougainville: Stories of Inspiration from Women in Local Government* shows that women are increasingly occupying leadership roles on Councils of Elders and on the Buka Urban Council (CLGFP 2013). These stories are instructive in highlighting the factors that contribute to women's involvement in advancing women's interests. An example of a pathway to leadership is provided by Mary Ann Tousala, the Women's Representative on the Halia Council of Elders in Buka District. Her leadership journey commenced when she became a pastor in the United Church and was later nominated by the church to represent women at the Buka District Women's Council. The Church eventually considered her too involved in politics around women's issues at the government level, and she was removed from her position as pastor. However, her commitment to women's issues meant that she was eventually elected Vice-President of Bougainville Women's Council, and later, President of Halia Women's Council. In this latter role she automatically became a representative for women on the Halia Council of Elders (CLGFP 2013: 6).

Mary Ann Tousala's pathway to leadership, summarised above, shows that participation in church organisations can be a pathway for participation and leadership in women's organisations. Given the importance of Christianity to most Bougainvilleans, this pathway should not be overlooked. There is a Christian church in every community, often several, and churches have been a significant catalyst for positive change. For many people, Christianity provides a key framework for making sense of the world and is a pervasive influence in their daily lives. Churches often comprise the only major institution in a community and play a powerful role in maintaining social cohesion. Although some churches support traditional notions that exacerbate gender inequality, such as considering men to be the heads of households, some churches have also promoted the growth of women's groups within their organisational structure (Wallace 2011: 507; Douglas 2003; Pollard 2003; McDougall 2003; Scheyvens 2003; Spriggs 2000). Many women's organisations are structured around churches, the Catholic Women's Association in Bougainville being a clear example. Church groups offer women the opportunity to have a say in community-based activities and also provide some forms of support (Wallace 2011: 507).

### The Bougainville Conflict as a Pathway for Women's Leadership

The Bougainville crisis was the context in which many current women leaders began their leadership journey. As noted earlier, one legacy of the Bougainville conflict was an increase in women's activism, which produced several vibrant organisations addressing peace, conflict and gender issues. These include Leitana Nehan Women's

Development Agency, Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum, Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom, the Haku Women's Collective and BWF. The conflict was instrumental in galvanising women in a "developmental leadership" sense, because as peace and stability were restored women turned their attention to issues more directly concerned with gender inequality.

A number of key women leaders in Bougainville today had their formative experience of activism during the conflict, including Sister Lorraine Garasu, Barbara Tanne, Grace Paul and Josephine Sirivi Kauona.

Barbara Tanne, BWF's Executive Officer, who initially worked with the Bank of South Pacific, later moved on to work with women's organisations including Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency and BWF. Barbara's interest in working with women was born during the conflict and the post-conflict period when she saw how women were marginalised by men. This marginalisation was most clearly revealed in negotiations over land and resources, when she saw men pushing aside women of the matrilineal clan and lineage to serve their own interests.

Grace Paul, an executive officer with the Central Bougainville Veteran's Association, was in grade ten when the crisis erupted, and she spent some time in Rabaul during the crisis years. When she returned to Bougainville, Grace was one of the founding members of Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom. She is passionate about elevating women's status through development and empowerment and has recently been involved in mobilising women in her constituency by establishing South Nasioi Women in Business.

Josephine Sirivi Kauona's interest in women's issues was also born of the crisis. She was in Bougainville for the duration of the crisis and became an activist for women during that period. She was a founding member of BWF and is passionate about assisting women with leadership training and education.

Such examples illustrate that the conflict provided an important pathway for women into women's organisation and civil society groups, creating a demand and opportunities for leadership.

### **Barriers to Participation**

While there are many opportunities for women to participate in groups, the research identified a multitude of barriers which prevent women's participation.

While the encouragement of peers was a contributing factor for young women's participation in groups, it also acted to limit the involvement of some young women, especially when they were encouraged to participate in drinking and dances. Peer pressure to socialise with friends also impacted negatively on participation in some sports groups, with some players failing to show up for

games. Criticism by other people also hinders young women from joining such groups.

Some women were limited in their involvement with groups and leadership by their husbands or partners. One woman gave the example of being prevented by her husband from participating in a group because she was using her own money for the work of the group. Another woman was prevented from participation by her husband who beat her. Others also said that they endured domestic violence. Women reported that their husbands wanted them to participate in groups that would benefit the family financially, rather than taking on voluntary work.

Expectations from family members about how young women should behave also created barriers. A young woman said that she was limited in her capacity to participate in the group she belonged to by her grandmother, who sometimes locked her out of the house if she was out late practising. Her uncle was also angry about her involvement, because he believed that she was out with young men. Some mature women still consider that young women's primary responsibilities are in the household.

Some women found that they could not be involved in more than one group because they already had too many other responsibilities, such as gardening, housework, harvesting cocoa, looking after pigs and looking after children.

## **Participation in BWF**

Although BWF was established in 2005 to represent the interests of all women of Bougainville, women's knowledge of the organisation is still building. Over the last few years the organisation's focus has been on strengthening their organisation and base, with support from IWDA. Limits to knowledge about BWF affect participation, particularly by young women. Of the 54 in-depth interviews conducted with women during the fieldwork, almost half (44.5 percent) of respondents were members of BWF. However, among young women, 18-30 years old, around a quarter of respondents (four out of the 19) were members of BWF.

For those that weren't members of BWF, when asked why they were not involved, a number of respondents remarked that they had no knowledge of the organisation or what it did. For example, a 21 year old from Buka District said that she wasn't a member of BWF because she didn't really know what the organisation stood for or did, but she remarked that if the organisation carried out awareness she would join. She was especially keen for BWF to do training at community level so that she and other young women could participate. Her story illustrates the everyday decisions and participation that can open up wider opportunities. She had just completed

grade ten, but was unable to secure a place in secondary school, so was living in the village and active in community groups. She was encouraged by her friends to join a youth choir because she loved gospel music. She enjoys its programs and activities, such as youth conventions and fundraising drives, and the group has strong community support. Encouragement to go out socialising and dancing limits her participation. The important issues for her are education and early age pregnancies. She thinks children have the right to be educated, and it is parents' responsibility to send children to school.

Some women thought that the district level BWF needed to be more proactive at community level if the organisation was to grow with one saying, "I've heard about BWF. I know of the organisation, but I don't often see any work at the community level. Overall, men really don't support the women at the community level, just the occasional few. We are often told that we are under BWF's network, but in reality there is nothing to show for it. BWF must initiate some innovative skills trainings at the village level, so that women can see for themselves that BWF exists. BWF could organise courses on leadership and good governance, as well as other skills."

The view that little is known about BWF was also expressed in other districts. For example a 35 year old woman from Panguna district said, "Many women don't know anything about BWF, because there is no proper awareness about the organisation in the communities." She said that women of her age group don't go to the meetings because they are not invited, despite there being women leaders in the community. She thought that information needed to be shared at the village level and that BWF needed to organise activities, such as sports events or other tangible projects that increased the visibility of the organisation.

To gain an appreciation of factors that inhibit participation in women's organisations, and especially BWF, one question in the group discussions was about "road blocks" to young women's involvement in women's groups and BWF. The range of responses across the different age groups can be categorised as structural/organisational or personal. The structural/organisational responses focussed on issues associated with BWF, such as its limited visibility, whether governance is sufficiently transparent and outreach to the community. The personal responses focussed on individual women's lack of knowledge or skills.

The structural/organisational barriers to participation that inhibit young women's participation also inhibit other women, regardless of age. Some of the suggested roadblocks to women's participation included criticism of BWF leadership, structure and organisation.

## What Prevents Women from Participating in BWF?

A respondent from Kunua District, who was not involved in any group, said she would not join BWF as she did not know anything about the organisation. She completed primary schooling and was selected for high school, but pregnancy curtailed her education. Her husband is currently pursuing his career at teacher's college and she is back in the village looking after the children. For her and other young women, early marriage and lack of formal education are barriers to participation in community groups. This woman thought that awareness, training and workshops should be conducted to build the skills, knowledge and capacity of young women. She also stressed that older women must invite young women to BWF activities so they can learn about the organisation and potentially join as a result.

### Participant Story

J from Kieta District is currently the president of her village women's association. She completed her year ten education in 2006, but did not earn a place in secondary school, although she wished to further her education and enrolled in distance education. J found it hard because sometimes she needed to travel to Buka and the course materials often did not arrive on time. This led to her giving up. With the support of her aunt, she enrolled at the Callan Disabled Centre, did some training and then volunteered there, although she gave up after about a year. She spent the whole of 2008 at Chabai with the Catholic nuns and when she returned to her village J became active in the church, participating in the liturgy, the youth program and other activities. She married in 2010. J joined these groups because their programs were interesting and, because no others were taking the lead in organising activities, she took on more leadership roles, something she is very enthusiastic about because she wants to learn new things. For J, the main factor that limits her participation is having someone to look after her child when she is involved in activities and meetings. She believes leadership is about having the right attitude and character in order to bring about positive change. Until the research team came to her village she had not heard about BWF and is enthusiastic about joining. She saw the need for BWF to do more awareness at the village level.

Demands on women's time are significant, and participants made judgements about how to invest it, drawing on the information available and considering its perceived relevance. Some respondents recognised that young women had their own interests to occupy their time: "I am sometimes limited in my participation because I have other commitments, so I'm careful to prioritise my work schedule. BWF has gradually been



introduced through the local women's groups. This has included the District President carrying out awareness and some trainings, so now the women of this area are becoming aware [of BWF]. I'm interested in and willing to participate in any programs BWF introduces. The men support women in the community, even in sports and church groups."

For some young women there was a misconception about the word "women" in the title of BWF. They considered BWF's constituency to be mature women such as those who occupy the leadership positions in the organisation and not young women like themselves. Because there were very few young women in the organisation, other young women found it hard to identify with the organisation – to see it as one they could join and actively participate in.

A number of other roadblocks to BWF participation for young women related to personal abilities and skills. For example, widespread illiteracy means that many young women are unable to read and write and are not as knowledgeable as they would like to be.

### Participant Perspectives

"Women need a large amount of help. They must learn skills through training and workshops, as this will encourage them to join the organisation. The group I belong to does sewing and cooking which helps the family financially. I'm a very out-spoken mother and I organise the meetings. However, sometimes other commitments, such as looking for food or marketing to earn some money limits my ability to work for the group. I don't know anything about BWF, but am aware of the Panguna District Women's Federation (PDWF). I'm not very clear on the connection between BWF and PDWF. When mature women put young women like me in positions in the organisation, they end up doing our tasks again and so we lose interest. The mature women don't involve us in training and workshops and we also lose interest. Moreover the cultural notion of women's place being in the kitchen prevents us from participation, as our husbands don't always understand us and allow us to participate."

Woman, AROB

Another barrier that loomed particularly large was what young women referred to as "underestimation," meaning a lack of confidence in their abilities and a devaluing of themselves. Young women were also crippled by a sense of shame, embarrassment and shyness, which meant that they avoided contexts that required them to speak and participate.

## Overcoming Barriers to Participation in BWF by Young Women

**"In order for BWF to attract young women, it must do more awareness and run programs in the villages. Young women join groups that interest them."**

Woman, AROB

In addition to asking what the barriers were to participation and leadership, respondents were asked for their suggestions about how to overcome the barriers: Respondents in all age groups said that BWF needed to do more to raise awareness at the village level. Many women said they did not know what the organisation did and needed to know more about it before joining.

Many respondents thought that if the organisation was to grow and be effective, it needed to be more engaged at the village level. Even those aware of the organisation believed that it only operated at the district level and was removed from most women in the community. Participants considered that BWF needed to conduct training and workshops at village level as this would enable them to reach many more women. Respondents in group discussions and individual interviews stressed that young women needed to be specifically invited by those organising the activities. The types of training and workshops suggested included: leadership skills, financial literacy skills such as book keeping, the skills needed to manage small projects and most importantly, adult literacy. Respondents also emphasised the need for tangible projects that they can take ownership of, and skills that can be used for income generation, such as cooking, baking and sewing. Occasionally respondents suggested computer training courses. They also suggested activities such as sports and excursions as a way of involving young women in activities that interest them. Some respondents saw any involvement in voluntary activities as using up time that could otherwise be spent on income generation activities, and so suggested that BWF create small income generating projects for women. Many women suggested that district executives needed to be more active if the organisation was to grow and be effective.

While many suggestions about how to overcome barriers to participation concerned young women's participation in BWF, some responses are relevant to their wider participation in society. This applies particularly to the barriers that are largely personal, such as young women underestimating their capacity, lacking confidence, experiencing shame in front of people and lacking the necessary skills and educational background. Regardless of whether young women are members of BWF, activities that instil a sense of self-worth and confidence, and give them skills, would be a positive way to improve young women's general participation and leadership in their world.

## Intergenerational Challenges

The current leadership of BWF recognises that since most women in leadership positions in the organisation are over 40 years of age, the development of a new generation of young women leaders is essential. Their commitment to undertaking this research clearly acknowledges that the continuity and sustainability of the organisation depends on younger women being empowered, trained and nurtured as leaders.

The research found significant disparities between the views of young women and the older age groups, as is common in many societies. In her research on Bougainville, Quay suggests that the solidarity between groups of women is due in no small part to shared age (n.d.: 21). The current women leaders know each other well and generally work well together. Regardless of culture and country, peer groups are formed on the basis of shared interests and experiences, whether these be school, sports or other collective activities.

The Bougainville example differs from some other generation gap stories in the emphasis given to respect for elders and the way in which shame and respect structure relationships with particular categories of people. Roselyne Kenneth, speaking of the Haku at the northern end of Buka Island, notes that relations between affines or in-laws are surrounded by taboos, including being forbidden to mention each other's names. These taboos have the effect of inhibiting an individual's behaviour in meetings where in-laws are present (Kenneth 2005: 380). Similar taboos structure relations between men and women, so that a sister is less likely to speak in a public context if her brother is present, for example. A similar kind of respect is due to one's elders and the young should ideally act in deference to them. As one young woman from Kieta District commented, she "can't have a say on issues, even though she is tertiary educated." In her view, "culture is a barrier to leadership." The intergenerational divide was made particularly clear during group discussions in response to the question: What do the relationships (sindaun) between younger and mature women (meri lida - women leaders) look like? The significant generational cleavages and tensions affect the capacity and willingness of young women to be involved in all organisations, not only BWF.

### Women Aged 18-30

The research highlighted a clear recognition that there are divisions, of culture, education and expectations between younger women and older women. These contribute to a lack of trust. The range of issues named by different age-based discussion groups was very similar, although there was some variation in emphasis. The perception that young women and older women do not work well together was widespread among the 18-30 age group. Members of the group discussion in Buka said that

"some women leaders are only talk, but they don't do the work" and they are "all talk, with no service delivery." One group of young women said that they do not wish to work with mature women because they felt that the women leaders have done nothing for them, citing the example of their failure to deliver services and their misuse of funds. Although the young women were aware that the Autonomous Bougainville Government has a budget for women, they believe that this does not flow down to the community, and see BWF as responsible for this.<sup>18</sup>

The group in Buka also expressed the view that while young women wished to participate, they were not really given the opportunity. Young women also lack confidence in their own abilities because they lack the knowledge to participate successfully. The young women also felt that older women lack the skills to communicate effectively with young women and do not respond well when young women discuss things with them.

This latter point was also made in a number of the other groups. The young women from Kunua, for example, said that they felt put down by mature women and that they are not given a chance to participate actively in groups. The young women of Bana said that women leaders do not discuss important issues with young women. The young women of Panguna put this in terms of the different age groups having different viewpoints, giving the example of young single mothers not wanting advice from mature women who may hold more traditional ideas of motherhood. The young women from Kieta also felt that they were not given the opportunity to speak or contribute ideas, and that even though many young women wished to be involved they were not encouraged to do so. The young women's group from Bana also felt that the women leaders do not approach them in a sensitive way, and so young women avoid them. They thought this was a matter of style rather than substance, saying for example that if there was a problem the women leaders tended to rebuke them rather than discuss the issue.

While it is a cultural norm to respect mature women, many young women were not inhibited during the group discussions. Some young women were very critical of the current generation of women leaders, saying that they do not have confidence in the mature women leaders because of their poor track record. The young women had heard stories from others about problems in other organisations the women leaders have been involved in, including allegations of corruption. Another group of young women said they were frustrated that women leaders would attend workshops but not implement anything afterwards.

### Women Aged 31-44

A number of the groups in the 31-44 age range also believed that there was effectively no working relationship between young and mature women. The lack of communication between young and mature women was often highlighted. One group believed that young women do not accept decisions made by mature women and thus found it difficult to work with them. The women in this age group also believed that differences in views and opinions between the young and the old impacted their work together.

Another group considered that young women do not participate fully in women's organisations because they are at a time of life when they focus on enjoying themselves. Another group said that young women need more direction, physically, spiritually and socially. While the view that young women were not interested in working with mature women was common, there was also the view that the women leaders exclude the young women by not adequately notifying them about meetings. This group stressed that there was a need for meetings to be transparent and accessible to everyone. They also said that mature women do not consult young women about issues of concern.

### Women Aged 45+

Women in the 45+ age group also recognised a lack of trust and cooperation between young and older women. One group spoke of a barrier between the different age groups. A number of groups considered communication between the different groups of women was unproductive or non-existent. For some it was a lack of understanding between the two groups that made it hard to work together.

One group of women thought that because the women leaders themselves do not work productively together, young women are unwilling to attend meetings and work with them. Another group referred to a lack of meetings and transparency, which undermined their confidence in the women leaders and their own willingness to participate.

Another group considered young women lazy and not interested in participating because they have their own interests. One group of women thought that the lack of interest from young women reflected the changes that have accompanied modernity, and young women were busy with their phones and pursuing their own interests. One group suggested that young women do not listen to the women leaders.

There was some acknowledgement in the 45+ age groups that young women lack confidence and this inhibits their participation.

## Working Together

Despite the extent of divisions between young women and mature women, there remained plenty of scope for optimism because many young women expressed a desire and willingness to work with women leaders. Women across the different age groups made many helpful suggestions about how they can better work together.

### Opportunities to Bridge the Generational Divide Women Aged 18-30

Most of the 18-30 groups expressed the desire for young and mature women to work together. A number of groups said that young women and mature women needed to be brought together so that they could sit down and talk over their differences. The young women stressed the importance of the women leaders listening to the young women. One group said that the women leaders must come down to the young women's level and listen to their thoughts. This is particularly important in the context of young women's comments about the style of women leaders, saying that when they do talk to young women, they chide them. The young women thought that what was needed was an atmosphere where ideas were openly shared in a spirit of cooperation.

Several of the young women's groups also said that there was a need for young and mature women to resolve their differences. The group from Panguna said that if women are united they can work together effectively. They linked this to the need for reconciliation within families and communities, as many unresolved tensions remain. While some of these tensions have their origin in the conflict, others have arisen in the post-conflict period. Some young women's groups suggested that shared activities would be a way to build trust between different age groups. They saw a need for programs that all women, regardless of age, could participate in.

A number of group discussions raised the need for the women leaders to take a more active role in teaching young women about their work. A number referred to the need for training, particularly in organisational skills that would enable young women to take on some of the executive positions in BWF. Many young women expressed a desire for programs that would enable them to gain leadership skills.

### Women Aged 31-44

Women in one 31-44 age group discussion suggested that one way to bridge the intergenerational gap was through some kind of reconciliation, where their relationship would be “straightened”. Women in another group thought mature women leaders need to communicate better with young women and the different groups need to listen to each other. This group also suggested that being involved in activities together is a helpful start. Sharing activities and experiences is an important way that social capital is created within an organisation. Another group suggested that BWF should organise activities that the young are interested in, such as sports. This group also suggested that the current generation of leaders in BWF should provide young women with leadership or other opportunities, which would enable them to work together.

### Women Aged 45+

Women in one of the 45+ age group discussions suggested BWF organise workshops that were relevant to young women, including workshops on leadership and conflict resolution, parenting skills, strategic planning, spiritual rehabilitation and law and order. As with the 31-44 age group, women in this age group also saw the need for BWF to plan and organise activities that involve young people including church, sports, school, and cultural activities. They also thought it important that leadership positions in the organisation be open to young women as a way of developing their skills and experience. Women in this age group also emphasised the need for good communication across generations and for the relationship to be based on respect. They too saw a need for young women to attend workshops, including on leadership and basic management.

### Young Women’s Leadership: The Perspectives of Established Women Leaders

A number of the current generation of women leaders, in BWF and other organisations, were interviewed as part of the research. They acknowledged that there were few young women leaders in BWF and believed strongly that the organisation needed to actively engage with young women and empower a new generation of women leaders.

Sister Lorraine Garasu from Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, a tireless advocate for women and the issues that concern them, said that an important barrier that prevented or limited young women’s participation in civil society organisations was the lack of training programs for young women. She commented, “It is hard for young women to aspire to be like past or current leaders as the young do not have confidence or determination.” The current generation of leaders should

take the initiative to mentor younger women and involve them in the work they do. Increasing young women’s participation requires the development of creative programs such as the “Teen Rights” initiative for youth within the Nazareth Centre’s Human Rights Program. Other relevant programs include a *pikinini lida* personal development program which targets the 6-13 and 14-18 age groups, and a youth leadership program that targets the 19-30 age group and seeks to involve everyone in that target group in the community.

The Executive Director of Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency, Helen Hakena, also sees the need for nurturing young women’s leadership in Bougainville and believes that women should be involving young women in whatever they are doing, always. She sees the barriers to young women’s participation in BWF as largely a consequence of the limited information young women have access to. In her view, there was a need for “consultation or dialogue between the older women leaders and the younger women”. She suggested that BWF should openly recruit people into positions, making way for young women to participate. She stressed the importance of young women having their own programs that are run or coordinated by the young women themselves. Leitana Nehan’s “Generation Next” program specifically targets young women. This initiative brought together 62 young women across six constituencies of Buka District and the young women now meet at the end of each month to discuss issues affecting them. These young women, Helen said, are becoming leaders in their own communities, constituencies, church groups, youth groups and women’s groups. Helen suggested that it is essential to engage young women where they are, giving the example of Leitana Nehan engaging young women through the sports and church groups that young women participate in.

Grace Paul, who works with Central Bougainville Veterans Association as an Executive Officer, said that negative attitudes from older women act as barriers to young women’s participation in BWF and other women’s programs. She said that the current generation of mature and older women leaders do not involve younger women in their programs. She observed that almost all positions are reserved for older women, and young graduates are not given a chance in most women’s activities. Grace suggested that BWF was well placed to take the lead in bringing awareness about the political status of Bougainville to the younger generation, who are often unaware of the current situation regarding the referendum for independence.

Agnes Titus, a key figure in the women's movement in Bougainville, argued that BWF needs to tackle the issue of emerging young women leaders and speak assertively about gender equality. In her view, young women are not standing for leadership positions within organisations like BWF because they did not learn the necessary skills during school to prepare them or give them confidence to hold executive positions in an organisation. She sees young women's inclusion as a key issue for BWF to address.

Hona Holan, the current President of BWF, sees the need to increase the participation of young women in BWF by encouraging and planning programs that will attract them. BWF needs to ensure that specific invitations are extended to young women to participate in the various activities of BWF. The current BWF Executive Officer, Barbara Tanne, said that no young women are participating in BWF because they are not given the space to participate or lack information about the organisation. She suggested that BWF should increase young women's participation by creating programs specifically for young women, and engage with them through a variety of activities. Barbara considers that the lack of young women's participation is a serious issue that BWF needs to address.

Field researchers Agnes Takai and Genevieve Kouro. Chabai Bougainville YWL research data analysis training, September 2014.



# Next Steps and Future Directions

Women's groups matter. They enable women to establish bonds and relationships among themselves, which is important in developing trust and social capital; as Coleman says, "Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons" (1990: 302). The creation of social capital within a community with an emphasis on strong interpersonal ties, such as kinship and intimate friendship (Putnam 1993: 175), is vital for effective sustainable development.

For many organisations working in developing contexts, balancing attention to externally focussed and internally focussed activities, and current and future needs, is a significant ongoing challenge. Everything feels important, and it all needs to happen now. Those outside the organisation, who also see many issues to be addressed, may have expectations that groups in the community will provide leadership in addressing the issues facing communities. Expectations can outstrip capacity – organisations have development needs too. Building organisational capacity and aligning with wider expectations as you go can be tricky and demanding. To those outside, it can look like not enough is changing, even when organisations are working hard.

BWF's leadership in undertaking this research reflects the organisation's commitment to understanding how it is perceived by the next generation of leaders. It reflects BWF's understanding that involving this generation is essential to the organisation's sustainability and effectiveness over time, and its commitment to working more closely with young women towards this end.

The research was undertaken in the context of BWF's ongoing program partnership with IWDA which has organisational development at its core. It will inform efforts to strengthen the organisation and its work to engage with, inform and benefit women in Bougainville. Recommendations have been developed in this context, as practical responses to the research findings that can be addressed in BWF's work going forward. Indeed, some findings have already been incorporated in current work and planning.

On the basis of the research findings, we suggest a strategy that focusses on three discrete but inter-related components: engaging young women, empowering young women, and reforming BWF to encourage young women's participation. The directions outlined in relation to each are intended to support BWF to actively reach out to young women, promote their leadership in Bougainville and address the generational divide between young women and mature leaders. BWF will focus on these areas in forthcoming programs, supported by IWDA.

## 1) Engaging Young Women

The research showed that lack of knowledge about BWF and its work inhibits young women from joining the organisation. A focus on building BWF membership is an opportunity to engage with young women, increase their knowledge of the organisation and encourage them to join. This would ideally be part of a broader engagement strategy, to address gaps in knowledge and awareness about BWF more generally. However, while a strategy to increase women's participation across all age groups would be beneficial, a specific strategy focussing on young women should take priority. The research found that awareness of BWF is lower among this group than other age groups, and the types of activities that appeal to young women are often different from those that appeal to older women.



A first step in developing a comprehensive program for young women's participation and leadership in BWF is to develop a youth engagement strategy that specifically seeks to address the systemic factors that young women involved in this research named as barriers to involvement.

Development of this strategy would involve identifying ways to draw in young women and possible pathways to leadership. The strategy should incorporate a long-term plan, including timeframes for achieving measurable targets for young women's participation at various levels of the organisation. Setting quotas for young women's representation on BWF committees, attendance at trainings and in other decision-making roles within the organisation would underline the commitment to change and make specific opportunities visible. BWF should also be proactive in reaching out to young women who are marginalised.

While this will take time, BWF has already taken significant steps by commissioning this report and establishing a pilot Young Women's Leadership Program, which is currently being expanded. BWF has the opportunity to draw on the experience of Leitana Nehan as it develops its approach to young women's participation.

## 2) Empowering Young Women

The report *Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled: A Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy* suggests that successfully building young women's leadership involves dismantling the barriers young women face and creating and supporting the behaviours and environments that enable and empower them to reach their full potential (PLP & World YWCA 2011: 2).



The research findings indicated that many young women feel they do not have the confidence or skills to become leaders in organisations like BWF. Leadership development workshops are one way to build young women's leadership skills and confidence. Such workshops should be "hands on", incorporating topics such as public speaking and meeting procedures, and should aim to instil confidence. Focussing practical skills development sessions around issues of substantive concern and relevance to young women, such as sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights, would respond to a key issue raised by young women during the research. Unwanted and too frequent pregnancies leave young women with little time and energy to be involved in civil society organisations.

In considering skills training priorities, it will be important to balance responding to young women's interest in sewing and baking skills with providing opportunities for them to broaden their horizons as part of supporting them towards leadership roles in BWF. Young women need to be equipped to take on roles in BWF, and building relevant skills such as computer skills and financial literacy will also improve young women's confidence. As a way to build bridges with young women outside the organisation, BWF should consider inviting young women who are in leadership positions in locally-based organisations to any leadership training workshops they organise.

BWF's pilot young women's leadership program has begun to invest in training young women leaders. This has helped to establish a link between younger women and the organisation. Scaling up these efforts, as BWF intends to do, will build on these initial steps.

The evidence is clear that successful leadership development requires more than training workshops. Structured mentoring and internship programs can help build skills, experience and exposure while also building understanding and relationships between different demographics and groups. Formal mentoring programs

are popular in Australia and New Zealand and research has confirmed that this is a valuable methodology for building young women's leadership capacity in these countries (PLP & World YWCA 2011: 25). A mentoring program would entail pairing a young woman with a BWF leader, so that she can see firsthand what leadership entails, while at the same time gaining hands on experience.

BWF should also consider the potential for an internship program for young women, to enable them to learn new skills and become familiar with the organisation. Consideration should be given to whether some payment is sustainable as this would recognise young women's need to earn income. Payment could be linked to progressive skills development. Internships also provide an opportunity for BWF to identify potential leaders.

Internships and mentoring could potentially be expanded to administrative roles in the organisation, allowing young women to acquire skills (such as the use of computers) that would also be useful for paid employment.

As more young women engage in BWF, peer to peer mentoring also becomes a possibility. The report, *Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled*, notes: "During consultations young women consistently reported that the most valuable and engaging learning experiences were those where young women were able to meet and learn from the experiences of their peers" (PLP & World YWCA 2011: 16).

## 3) Reforming BWF to Encourage Greater Participation by Younger Generations

The research found the relationship between young women and mature women is strained. Young women feel undermined, excluded from active participation in groups, left out of discussions on important issues and alienated by the way they are addressed by the current generation of leaders. Consistent with prevailing cultural norms, older women expect respect and to be listened to, but many do not recognise that expectations are changing and young women want the same from them.



## Conclusion

Providing a safe space for young women<sup>19</sup> where they feel they can contribute and that their contribution is welcomed will require a change of style and approach from mature women. Trying to see the world from the perspective of young women can build empathy. All engagements between women should be respectful and inclusive, and young women need to influence what this looks like in BWF. While this may be different from prevailing cultural norms in Bougainville, young women are saying clearly that they want these norms to change, and such change is essential if they are to engage more actively with BWF. Mature women will need support to navigate the shifts that this requires. The return will be the opportunity to more successfully share their experience and skills with young women and position the next generation of leaders to continue and build on their contributions.

We recommend BWF reform its structure, operations and processes to be more inclusive of younger generations of women. BWF's legitimacy will strengthen as it becomes more representative of the diversity of women in Bougainville. We suggest as a first step establishing a working group to review the organisation that includes young women. A clear focus on making BWF young-woman friendly will support the focus on engaging with and empowering young women. BWF needs to make sure that "young women are represented in decision-making roles ... that their opinions and ideas are considered equally and that organisational policies and processes encourage young women's participation" (PLP & World YWCA 2011: 7).

Creation of young-women specific spaces such as a Young Women's Caucus could help to better integrate young women's perspectives into BWF. This group could have dedicated meetings prior to BWF meetings and be organised to mirror BWF's structure. This would allow young women to meet and discuss issues that are particularly relevant to their age cohort in a context where they can talk freely and confidently. It would also enable them to practice dialogue and presentation skills that may build confidence for engaging with other women. Including a representative of the youth caucus in BWF Executive would ensure young women are represented in overall decision-making.

BWF also needs to endeavour to make discussions accessible to young women. This will require actively seeking the views of young women on issues and addressing issues that are relevant to them. Removing barriers to young women's participation is also important, including organising meetings at times that young women can attend.

Promoting young women's leadership does not mean that older women's leadership is not valued. On the contrary, it supports and extends the good work that has been done by BWF to the next generation.

In all the pathways of women who are current leaders that were shared during the research, their experiences as young women were very important for their development of leadership skills. The women leaders that we met were very conscious that most women in leadership positions are now aged 40 plus. They identified this as a key issue for them and their organisations. On the plus side, this means current women leaders know each other well and generally work well together. On the minus side, there is no group of young women prepared to take over these leadership roles. Change is needed.

Gains in women's and young women's full participation in Bougainville society will be realised over the long term and incrementally. Supporting women's organisations to engage and succeed across generations is essential for sustaining change and a prerequisite for the social capital that underpins successful development outcomes.

BWF's commitment to change and to a vibrant future is evident in the commissioning of this research. We hope the insights it generated and the directions outlined in this report will support this work.



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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Research Tools

### Mapping Community Groups

Field researchers will identify groups in the community. Ask community and church leaders as well as any leaders of women's groups who may be present.

What groups exist in the community (church, youth, sport etc.)

What do the groups do?

Who comprises their membership?

How many members?

Are they successful?

When and how often do they meet?

Where do they meet?

Do they have young women involved in them?

### Group Discussions

What are the most important issues for you and why? Are women's issues important to you? (Wanem ol important issues bilong yu. Na bilong wanem? Ol issues bilong ol meri em bikpela samting long yu?)

What does leadership mean to you? (Lidasip em i minim wanem long yu?)

What do the relationships between young and mature women look like? (Sindaun namel long ol yangpela meri na ol lida meri i olsem wanem?)

How can young and mature women work together? (Ol yangpela na ol lida meri ol ken wok wantaim olsem wanem?)

What are the roadblocks to young women's involvement in women's groups and BWF? (Wanem ol samting ol save pasim/banisim ol yangpela meri long wok insait long ol grup bilong ol meri na BWF?)

How can these roadblocks be overcome? (Olsem wanem bai yumi nap stretim ol dispel hevi?)

How do we get more young women involved in women's groups and BWF? (Olsem wanem bai yumi nap kisim planti yangpela meri kam insait long ol grup bilong ol meri na long BWF?)

### Individual Interviews/Key Informant Interviews

A minimum of six in-depth interviews will be collected in each field work site (three young women aged 18-30 years and three women aged 30-45 years). These women will be self-nominated or invited by the field researchers to participate.

Are you involved in any community groups (church, youth, sports clubs)?

If yes:

What is the group and can you tell me about how you became involved and why?

What does the group do? What do you think your community thinks about the group?

What is your role in the group?

What do you like about participating in the group?

Are there things that stop or limits your involvement? (where do you meet? when does the meeting happen?) If there is, can you tell me about them?

Can you tell what issues are important to you and why?

Are women's issues important to you?

What does leadership mean to you?

[Note: these questions are only for those who are members of BWF.]

Can you tell me about how you became involved and why?

What does BWF do? What do you think your community thinks about BWF?

What is your role in BWF?

What do you like about participating in BWF?

Are there things that stop or limits your involvement in BWF? (where do you meet? when does the meeting happen?) If there is, can you tell me about them?

Do you think men support women being involved in BWF?

Do you think men support women involved in community groups?

What are some of the things and programs that BWF can do to encourage young women's participation in BWF?

[Note: these questions are only for those who are not members of BWF.]

You said at the start of the interview that you were not a member of BWF.

Do you know about BWF? Tell me what you know?

Can you tell me why you are not a member?

Are you interested in participating? If she answers yes, ask: what would help you participate?

Do you think men support women being involved in BWF?

Do you think men support women involved in community groups?

What are some of the things and programs that BWF can do to encourage young women's participation in BWF?

## Appendix 2: End Notes

1. The IPU league tables show that the Pacific has the lowest representation of women in the world. Zetlin notes that as the data includes Australia and New Zealand, though not the French colonies, the Pacific would have significantly lower rates if Australia and New Zealand were excluded (Zetlin 2014:254).

2. Most estimates are based on the 2000 census. Scales and colleagues estimated the 2007 total population of Buka Island and the main island at 198,500. This was based on the 2000 census and an annual growth rate of 2.5%.

3. These regions comprise divisions for the purposes of electoral politics and do not constitute cultural or language regions.

4. The peace agreement also specified the steps needing to be implemented prior to a referendum on Independence.

5. Section 51, Traditional Systems of Government, also states:

Traditional systems of government and the roles and responsibilities of traditional chiefs and other traditional leaders and of the clan system, as custodians of custom and tradition and in matters relating to the governance of their communities generally, shall be recognised, wherever practicable and possible, by all levels of government in Bougainville.

6. Even where the title of chief was hereditary, other factors sometimes were involved in deciding leadership suitability. For example, among the Torau of central Bougainville, hereditary chieftainship did not necessarily go from father to first-born son. Other factors determined which son was chosen, such as whether he was thought to have the potential to be a good leader, understanding of oral history and social and economic achievements (Togolo 2005: 281).

7. For example, among the Nagovisi in central Bougainville, political leadership was achieved through merit, and the men's activities involved feuding, head-hunting and feasting in the club-house (Nash 1987: 151). The Nasioi, also in central Bougainville, also did not have chieftainship, and leadership was similar to the "Big Man" style. Nasioi leadership was achieved, and the emphasis was on generous feast-giving, as well as industriousness and knowledgeability. Such leaders did not wield overt authority. Social control was achieved through public opinion, shaming and the fear of sorcery (Ogan 1971: 83).

8. Douglas Oliver reports that before colonial pacification among the Siwai in the south, there was a type of leader who, because of his personal wealth or managerial

skills, was able to bring together the community's men to wage intermittent feuds with common foes (1993:14). These leaders were not necessarily expert fighters or even tacticians, but possessed the ability to amass or gain access to wealth and social skills to use that wealth to attract and keep followers for purposes of peace and war (Oliver 1993:14). Following pacification, such leaders achieved renown, and as a consequence, authority and extra-local influence, by giving feasts. This developed into a form of competition with the leaders of other communities, and consumed the energies and assets of their supporters (Oliver 1993:14). A similar situation arose among the Haku, on Buka Island, where pacification and the cessation of warfare saw an increase in the intensity of other forms of competition, such as the competitive building of men's club houses and feasting (Sagir 2005:356).

9. Nash suggests that masculine and feminine, like other cultural pairs, are conceived as neither logically nor otherwise opposed, but follow a model of sameness (Nash 1987:150). Max and Eleanor Rimoldi suggest that things are not so different on Buka, saying that the "male and female aspects of power on Buka are complex and mutual, as are the other relationships of power and leadership" (1992:43). Eugene Ogan argues along similar lines for the Nasioi in central Bougainville, when he suggests that society was characterised more by equality than hierarchy. "Women had status complementary, rather than subordinate, to that of men" (Ogan 2005:52). In contrast to other parts of PNG, Nasioi women had status and rights comparable to those of men (Ogan 1999:2).

10. Women are less public than men in another respect, too: they do not move around as widely as men do (Nash 1990:123). In other words, they stay closer to home.

11. Prior to the crisis, Jill Nash reported that for the Nagovisi in the south of Bougainville, physical violence between spouses was infrequent. During the two and a half years (1969-1973) that she lived among them, she recorded only four cases of a husband assaulting his wife (1990:127). Arguments were more likely to descend into verbal abuse than physical abuse, and, if serious, insult could lead to litigation (1990:128). Sexual violence was also rare: "Rape is practically non-existent" and "group rape is unheard of" (Nash 1987:164, 1990:132). However, it cannot be assumed that the equitable relations Nash reported for the Nagovisi in central Bougainville in 1969-1973 were uniform across Bougainville. Historical records for other parts show that brutality and violence towards women existed in other communities. For example, in 1934 Hilde Thurnwald reported that women in Buin were subordinate to men, being held in "poor esteem" and noted that the "superior position of males ... often leads husbands to be overbearing and brutal" (1934:170).

<sup>12</sup>. The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency had files on thousands of cases of sexual assault. Later destroyed by the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, these files recorded more than one thousand victims of rape on Buka Island alone (Saovana-Spriggs 2007:128, Braithwaite et al 2010:89).

<sup>13</sup>. For example:

85% of men had ever perpetrated physical, sexual or frequent emotional or economic violence against a partner, and three quarters of women had experienced this.

The prevalence of on-going violence was also very high with 28% of women having experienced emotional abuse in the previous year, and 32% of men having perpetrated it.

23% of women had experienced economic abuse in the previous year, and 29% of men had perpetrated it.

22% of women had experienced physical violence in the previous year and 19% of men had perpetrated it.

24% of women had experienced sexual violence from their partner in the previous year and 22% of men disclosed having perpetrated it.

Sexual violence:

26.6% (225/846) prevalence of non-partner single perpetrator rape by men, with 15% of women having been a victim of such a rape.

14.1% (119/846) multiple perpetrator rape or gang rape – what is called lainap in Tok Pisin.

7.7% (65/850) rape of a male.

12% (99/849) of men had raped a non-partner woman in the last year.

8% of women had been a victim of rape in past year.

<sup>14</sup>. It also mandates three reserved seats for ex-combatants.

<sup>15</sup>. These included in-depth interviews with: Hona Holan (BWF President); Barbara Tanne (BWF Executive Officer); Agnes Titus (UN Women); Helen Hakena (Leitana Nehan); Sister Lorraine Garasu (Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation); Josephine Sirivi Kauona (Women Peace and Freedom); Madaline Toroansi (former MHR); Rose Pihei (current MHR); Stella Tunim (business woman); Pamela Dasiona (Arawa business woman).

<sup>16</sup>. Resource constraints meant that the research could not be undertaken in all 12 of Bougainville's districts.

<sup>17</sup>. Interviews were conducted in mid-2012.

<sup>18</sup>. This seems to be based on the fact that the ABG had allocated K160,000 for 2013. However, this money was re-appropriated for 2014. There have been three years in which money meant for BWF has not been released.

<sup>19</sup>. The Safe. Respected. Included. Connected. Skilled Report defines a safe space for young women as one "where young women can exist without fear of violence, stigma, shame and discrimination. It is a place where young women feel encouraged, included and supported to contribute to discussions, influence decisions and fulfil their potential" (PLP & World YWCA 2011: 7).



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