The Process of Peace: A Critical Reflection on the Community Peace and Restoration Fund in the Solomon Islands

REBECCA SPENCE AND IRIS WIELDERS

Abstract

The Community Peace and Restoration Fund was established to provide a peace dividend to alienated Solomon Islands communities. This article reflects critically on how the Fund engaged with these communities and its relative success in meeting key peacebuilding indicators. The Fund increased equitable and equal access to resources and contributed to the rebuilding of associational life, utilising peacebuilding methodologies to enhance its community engagement processes. However, the Fund was less successful on a number of fronts, particularly in its interaction with government structures at meso and macro levels. The article analyses why the Fund was so successful at local-level community peacebuilding but failed to capitalise on opportunities at the macro level.*

Introduction

The Solomon Islands, an archipelago in the South Pacific, have experienced waves of lawlessness and conflict since 1998. In 2000, a peace agreement was signed and the Community Peace and Restoration Fund (CPRF), a funding facility amounting to $18 million, was established as part of an Australian-sponsored peace dividend. The goal of the Fund was:

> To contribute to the overall process of restoration of peace and development in Solomon Islands through assisting communities to pursue peaceful resolutions to disputes and to address priority community needs (CPRF 2001:4).

Its main objective was:

> To provide support for small-scale, community-based initiatives which meet reintegration, resettlement and rehabilitation needs of affected populations in a manner that promotes self-reliance and peace (CPRF 2001:4).

CPRF ran for four years. Launched in 2000 for a period of six months, it was repeatedly extended until the end of 2004. CPRF employed 40 local and two expatriate staff. It (re)built infrastructure such as schools and health clinics, funded the establishment of youth groups and women's resource centres, and engaged in major infrastructural projects such as the building of roads. It developed a network of 34 locally based provincial coordinators (PCs) in all nine provinces who worked with communities to identify priority needs, plan and develop project proposals, and assist communities in implementation by procuring and delivering materials, and where necessary by providing technical assistance to assist in implementation.

The Fund adopted the 'Do No Harm' principles and drew from insights in Mary Anderson's 'Local Capacities for Peace' project (DNH/LCP). The 'Do No Harm' principles provided a guide for engagement and have encouraged an active and mindful analysis of the distribution of aid – one which identifies how best to situate projects so that they do not exacerbate existing tensions or create new ones. The principles also recognise that although conflict will have disrupted patterns of interaction, there will still be underlying 'connectors' – those people, systems, institutions and shared values that prevail and that keep people connected (Anderson 1999).

The 'Do No Harm' principles provided a guide for engagement and have encouraged an active and mindful analysis of the distribution of aid – one which identifies how best to situate projects so that they do not exacerbate existing tensions or create new ones.

All PCs were trained in DNH/LCP methods, and were expected to conduct regular 'Do No Harm' analyses to ensure that the proposals received from communities were adhering to the general principles.

This case study critically reflects on the achievements of the Fund by examining the processes used to promote peace at the local and national level. It analyses the extent to which CPRF's process and activities supported and implemented key recovery and peacebuilding strategies and activities by investigating four interlinked questions:

- How did the process by which CPRF delivered its outputs contribute to preventing conflict or building peace?

- How did the outputs of CPRF contribute to preventing conflict or building peace?

- To what extent did CPRF mitigate the consequences of the conflict?

What effect did this, or CPRF directly, have on mitigating the underlying causes?

The article argues that the Fund addressed many of the consequences, and some of the causes, of the conflict by concentrating on engaging communities in locally run processes that contributed to building peace at a micro and meso level. It was able to do so because the processes used to engage communities in the delivery of its outputs were considered important, and were based on DNH/LCP methods. However, the article also argues that the extension of the DNH/LCP methodology to the strategic level of the Fund led to the decision not to support any income-generation activities across the whole of the Solomon Islands for almost four years. This decision meant that CPRF activities maintained a focus on the building of infrastructure during this time span, which led to considerable tensions with government agencies as they began to function again. Finally, although the Fund contributed to peacebuilding at the micro level, it remains difficult to measure how this translated into macro-level peacebuilding processes. This can be partly attributed to the fact that a clearly defined national-level peace process was absent during the time of CPRF engagement.

Conflict Context: The Roots of the 'Tensions'

A number of interrelated problems and developments lie at the roots of the 'tensions', as all Solomon islanders refer to the armed conflict. In Guadalcanal and the capital, Honiara, where the main armed conflict between Guadalcanal and Malaitan militants took place between 1998 and 2000, these tensions had been building over a number of years. Guadalcanal people had become increasingly disgruntled over what they saw as the unfair share they received of the economic development that was centred in Honiara and on the Guadalcanal plains. Coupled with this were anxieties over the increasing numbers

of settlers from the neighbouring island, Malaita, who were squatting on or had purchased customary land (Dinnen 2002).

Although the problems culminated in open violence on Guadalcanal, they were not confined to that province. Concerns on the other islands have grown as Honiara is seen to monopolise revenues for the development of infrastructure and the growth of services. The growing perception among the other islanders that they were being denied an equal share of revenues for development led to repeated calls for greater autonomy. The government has appeared unable to address these grievances. Corruption is widespread and the government is perceived to favour only those in power. For many years, the public service has lacked capacity to deliver services across the archipelago.

Traditional authority structures have changed over time, superseded by other authority structures such as churches, the government and international donors. The role of traditional authority structures is often unclear, particularly in issues relating to land management and justice. The formal justice sector has been weak for many years. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force was implicated in the conflict as some of its officers had close links to militants. Moreover, traditional conflict resolution practices, especially the custom of compensation payments, were abused during the 'tensions' when many of these claims – some made at gunpoint and others by the government – were perceived as extortion (Fraenkel 2004; Bennett 2002). As a result, communities were wary of traditional conflict resolution practices because they were seen to lack integrity.

The role of traditional authority structures is often unclear, particularly in issues relating to land management and justice.

The open violence on Guadalcanal began in 1998 when groups of Guadalcanal men began to drive Malaitan families from rural Guadalcanal. In 2000, a Malaitan militia group began to expel Guadalcanal people from Honiara. Although this conflict between the two militia groups effectively ended with the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) in October 2000, it did not bring an end to the 'tensions'. The TPA was a flawed agreement with no durable disarmament provisions. Although the militias dispersed, many guns remained in circulation and were used by ex-combatants and criminals in criminal acts in a number of the provinces, including Malaita (especially in the north), Guadalcanal and Central Province. In Western Province, another dimension was added by the influx of armed Bougainvilleans with family links to one of the militia leaders on Guadalcanal, who moved in to dispel Malaitan militia forces. (Kabutaulaka 2002; Hegarty 2004). On Guadalcanal, a group of militants led by Harold Keke, who had refused to sign the TPA, were chased out in a 'joint operation' involving police officers joined by the Guadalcanal militia group.

The 'tensions' impacted different parts of the Solomon Islands in different ways. On Guadalcanal and Malaita, ex-combatants needed to be disarmed and reintegrated. Displaced people created pressures on housing, water and sanitation, and educational and health facilities. There was a need for reconciliation between communities and within communities, and for trauma counselling. Throughout the Solomon Islands, the resulting economic decline and depletion of government finances brought the already poor delivery of services to a halt. In many places, a general feeling of insecurity and a lack of freedom to move around added to these problems as nurses and teachers stopped going to work, or those of Malaitan descent returned to Malaita.

Only in mid-2003 did the situation improve, when Australia led the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The main thrust of this intervention, which the
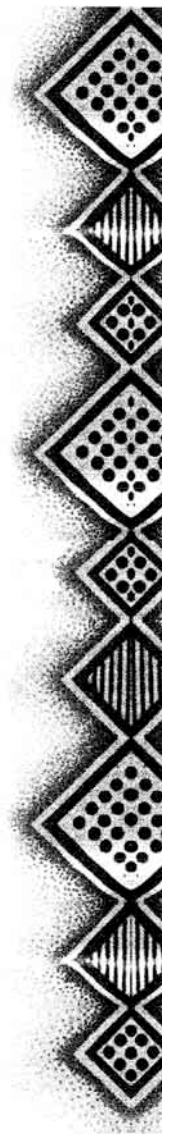
Solomon Islands government requested and endorsed, saw approximately 300 Participating Police Force (PPF) officers from Australia and other Pacific countries deployed across the provinces. The PPF collected most of the weapons in circulation and restored a semblance of law and order by the end of 2003. However, the problems that led to the 'tensions' remain unresolved – 'order' is not the same as 'peace' (UNDP 2004). As a result, the CPRF, which was conceived as a 'post-conflict' peacebuilding and development initiative, instead found itself working for most of the time in a period of continuing tensions, conflict and lawlessness (Pattison & Sullivan 2004).

Assessing the Peacebuilding Contributions of CPRF

The investigation into the peacebuilding contributions of CPRF was based on the evaluation of five indicators chosen in terms of the causes and consequences of the 'tensions'.

Indicator 1: Increased equitable and equal access to resources: Lack of access to resources and unequal distribution of resources were major underlying causes of the 'tensions'. Indeed, the literature on conflict analysis suggests that in many conflicts, lack of access to economic, political and infrastructural resources is both a cause and effect of prolonged conflict. Consequently, it suggests that providing or restoring these resources will address basic survival needs and increase the likelihood of greater participation in social, economic and political activity which will thereby reduce the potential for armed conflict (Leonhardt 2003; Bush 1998). Therefore, the evaluators sought to ascertain the following: Did CPRF facilitate access to water, land, food, political institutions or processes, economic resources? Did CPRF provide the means to meet basic recovery needs? Did the benefits of CPRF get shared equitably and equally?

Indicator 2: Evidence that CPRF used promising peace making and peacebuilding methods and spread knowledge and skills for using them (Lund 2000; Anderson 1999): The stated goal and objectives of the Fund were to promote self-reliance and peace and to encourage communities to find peaceful solutions to disputes. The team evaluated the extent to which CPRF met this indicator by asking: How did CPRF model and promote constructive, non-violent ways of interacting to solve problems and promote activities? How did the Fund utilise peace and conflict analytical frameworks?

Indicator 3: Evidence that CPRF contributed to the rebuilding of associational life through rebuilding trust, relationships, and confidence at an intra- and inter-community level: One of the main consequences of the 'tensions' was a lack of trust at the intra-communal level. CPRF claimed that it was promoting self-reliance and peace and community engagement in recognition that the 'tensions' had ruptured relationship at the inter- and intra-community level, and the team thus devised the following questions to evaluate this: Did CPRF rebuild or revitalise networks within the communities and between communities? Did CPRF recognise and build upon local capacities for peace? Did CPRF rebuild or revitalise networks within the communities and between communities? Did CPRF encourage and support the inclusion of disadvantaged groups within the communities such as youth, ex-combatants and women (Anderson 1999; Anderson *et al* 2003; Bush 1998; Fred-Mensah 2004; Spence 2004)?

Indicator 4: Evidence that CPRF established or strengthened linkages between the Fund itself, communities, government and other development organisations: The team sought to ascertain whether CPRF projects helped or hindered the consolidation of constructive political relationships within and between itself, the state, other development organisations and civil society. Recent literature suggests that a coherent and complementary approach to building peace at all levels and involving a multiplicity of actors is imperative. How these actors themselves model peacebuilding practice is also important (Bush 1998; Spence 1999).

Indicator 5: Flexibility and responsiveness of the Fund: This indicator aims to establish how the Fund adapted to the changing conditions of conflict and changing community needs. Recognising that peace is a dynamic process rather than a static outcome, being able to adapt to emerging opportunities for peace is vital (Anderson 1999; Lederach 1998).

In order to evaluate to what extent CPRF met these five indicators, the team consulted with CPRF staff and a wide variety of stakeholders, including government officials, NGOs, church groups and other donors. These consultations took the form of half-day focus group discussions based on a series of questions devised to assess the impact of the Fund against the five indicators. Participants were also asked for their understanding of the causes and the consequences of the 'tensions'. Participants were asked about the level of involvement they had had with CPRF and their perspectives on how CPRF had impacted the causes and consequences of the 'tensions'.

The review team held informal and formal interviews with the team leader and the provincial coordinators on a number of occasions and in one case ran a day-long structured workshop with the PCs. The purpose of the workshop was to explore in greater detail the significance of the contribution that the PCs made to building peace at the community level, the extent to which the PCs were aware of current norms in peacebuilding practice, and to record stories of projects that were particularly successful or particularly difficult from their perspective. Field visits were made to 15 projects spread over three provinces (Guadalcanal, Malaita and Central), chosen in consultation with the PCs. Visits were made to as many different types of projects as was feasible and the team tried to ensure that it visited projects that had been implemented at different times during the life of the Fund. Projects that demonstrated cross-community integration were chosen, as were projects that had helped to reintegrate internally displaced persons (IDPs) into the areas from which they had fled.

The findings from each interview, visit and focus group were then sorted according to the five indicators. The findings were cross-referenced with other data sources, such as the CPRF annual completion reports, the CPRF sectoral reviews, the independent reviews of 2001 and 2002, and the UNDP peace and conflict development analysis. The findings are presented below against each of the indicators.

CPRF Contributions to Peacebuilding

The Fund contributed to securing and building the peace in the Solomon Islands in the following ways:

Indicator 1: Increased equitable and equal access to resources: The review team's findings suggest that CPRF significantly addressed a structural cause of the conflict – the unequal and inequitable distribution of resources across the Solomon Islands, in which certain provinces were favoured over others and some communities in those provinces fared better than others. The decision to have as wide a geographical focus as possible meant that by the end of CPRF's lifespan, there had been an activity in every ward of every province – over 800 in all (CPRF 2004a). By concentrating on disbursing its funds equitably, and restoring or refurbishing key public resources in every province, CPRF counteracted years of government neglect and inequity in distribution. CPRF projects worked actively to ensure access to facilities, information and public resources for communities by building,

> *By concentrating on disbursing its funds equitably, and restoring or refurbishing key public resources in every province, CPRF counteracted years of government neglect and inequity in distribution.*

39

rebuilding or refurbishing schools, clinics and other community infrastructure such as women's resource centres and training centres. Although a number of projects included IDPs and ex-combatants among the beneficiaries, the bulk of the upgrades of health, educational and water and sanitation infrastructure addressed longer-standing community needs or inequitable distribution of resources (CPRF 2004a).

Every participant interviewed emphasised the benefits of CPRF's wide geographical focus. They suggested that CPRF had contributed to countering perceptions of isolation and neglect by not favouring certain sectors of the population and by ensuring equity in access. The timeliness with which CPRF was able to distribute funds and materials was also evidence to communities that it was committed to addressing needs created or exacerbated by the 'tensions', and in doing so provided communities with hope for the future.

During the first phase of the Fund, CPRF also built a number of houses for IDPs in Guadalcanal and Malaita, but these efforts were abandoned when it became clear that building houses for certain families could potentially cause conflict within communities and thus countered the LCP/DNH principles. Eighteen projects either targeted ex-combatants or included a number of them as beneficiaries. Early in the life of the Fund, CPRF decided to stop the specific targeting of ex-combatants after the PCs had learned that communities did not see this as fair practice or as particularly constructive. Communities saw the process of re-integration of ex-combatants as their responsibility and incorporated their return through traditional reconciliation practices.

Indicator 2: Evidence that CPRF used promising peace making and peacebuilding methods and spread them: In order to facilitate equitable distribution of resources and to ensure that the Fund engaged with the community, it employed two local people from each province to act as PCs. The coordinators were the first point of contact for communities and for many were the face of CPRF. They were chosen less for their prior development expertise than for their networks, their perceived impartiality and the respect they held in their communities.

The evaluation team recognised early on that the PCs were the key to ensuring as broad a geographical distribution of the Fund as possible. Situated as they were in the provinces, with access to communication, transportation and resources, the PCs were able to verify proposals, engage communities in participatory planning processes, and ensure that enough project materials were delivered and used properly. They quickly became a focus for other donors and NGOs which capitalised on their networks and their facilities.

In focus group discussions, the PCs emphasised the mediating and negotiating roles that they had played in order to facilitate agreement about which projects were to be funded in each community, which resources were to be used, and who was to be involved. They discussed the process of gaining community consensus for activities and projects, demonstrating how they had to mediate frequently between competing interests.

PCs were strong advocates of the community-based approach, having witnessed the benefits of community involvement in the implementation of projects. The women coordinators viewed themselves as positive role models in the community, demonstrating how women can and do take leading roles in planning and implementing projects. The PCs viewed community mobilisation as a key determinant of the future sustainability of projects. The experience of working together on the initial project fuelled community capacity to plan and apply for funding for other projects. The provincial coordinator model was a key to the efficiency and effectiveness with which CPRF was able to deliver projects. Their local knowledge, networks, credibility and skills contributed to shaping the success of CPRF.

PCs were enthusiastic about and actively promoted the basic 'Do No Harm/Local Capacities for Peace' principles. The provincial coordinators practised the DNH/LCP principles by ensuring that a broad cross-section in the communities was involved in projects. They did this by negotiating with the traditional landowners about access to building sites, timber and other resources; by building on existing community capacity (the connecting factors in the community); by taking account of the dynamics of conflict that were operating at the community level; and by modelling good practice in being trustworthy and accountable. It became evident during interviews that the PCs had adopted DNH language. They referred to the 'connectors' in villages, to the 'dividers', and to their sensitivity to the micro-conflict conditions that their projects might be creating. A large international NGO was at the same time rolling out DNH training in the provinces and their trainer shared in an interview how the PCs practised the 'Do No Harm' principles when discussing proposals with villagers and when monitoring projects.

The decision to build, rehabilitate and refurbish clinics and schools was an active recognition of the fact that these public amenities are strong and visible connectors in the communities. CPRF abandoned its earlier funding of individuals for projects and activities in which the benefits accrued only to the individuals involved. Its decision not to provide cash to communities is another example of adherence to DNH/LCP principles: injecting large amounts of cash into struggling communities can create or reinforce divisions and privilege.

Indicator 3: Evidence that CPRF contributed to the rebuilding of associational life through rebuilding trust, relationships and confidence at an intra- and inter-community level: By requiring that communities concentrate on projects that were of mutual rather than individual benefit, the Fund recognised and strengthened the connecting factors in village life. The way in which CPRF chose to implement its activities – encouraging and modelling collaborative and consultative approaches, and using local resources, labour and expertise where possible – was profoundly effective in reviving associational life. After the initial meetings with the PCs, in which community inclusiveness was discussed as a prerequisite for funding, communities had to form an activity committee that was broadly representative of all sectors of the community that would be involved in building, using and maintaining the facility that was being built. The fact that community members had to negotiate over materials and transportation and organise working parties to build the community structures brought people out of their houses and kept them working together. Where facilities benefited more than one community, such as the clinic at Pitukoli (Guadalcanal) that benefited the surrounding 10 villages, communities took part in the process of setting up and coordinating building teams from all the involved communities.

> **The way in which CPRF chose to implement its activities – encouraging and modelling collaborative and consultative approaches, and using local resources, labour and expertise where possible – was profoundly effective in reviving associational life.**

CPRF projects also brought different sectors of the community together in working relationships. The elders in the community depended on the youths to participate in the hard labour tasks: cutting and transporting the timber, digging the gravel, and much of the construction. Those communities that the team visited were eager to explain the processes that had been established to ensure community inclusiveness, to activate labour teams to undertake the building, and to see that the various sectors within and across villages were involved. Their stories were evidence of considerable organisational and negotiating skills. Community management of the projects encouraged intra- and inter-community cohesion

through teamwork. In requiring that communities own and manage the implementation process, it allowed communities to re-experience working together, and kept people busy and engaged with community processes.

CPRF projects helped to rebuild trust and confidence that had been eroded during the 'tensions'. Many of the communities which had not experienced open violence nonetheless expressed general feelings of anxiety and fear. People had not been free to move around during the 'tensions'. Old grievances, over land for example, had been rekindled when people took advantage of the lack of law and order, and communities were fearful of the threat of violence. The economy generally and delivery of services had ground to a halt. Over 90% of the communities and people interviewed by the authors expressed how the CPRF project brought a sense of hope, how it meant they were not forgotten. Communities also spoke of how work on the project brought people within the community together and out of their houses during a time when there was a lack of trust and people kept to themselves.

The process of working together on the superordinate goal of the project allowed people to re-engage with each other and re-identify their place in the community networks. The process of rebuilding trust is particularly relevant for the youth who were caught up in the fighting. Being included in the projects and being given responsibilities for ensuring the success of the projects allowed the youths to regain the trust of the community. It kept them busy and out of trouble and it allowed them to experience aspects of leadership in preparation for future roles. At one

The process of working together on the superordinate goal of the project allowed people to re-engage with each other and re-identify their place in community networks.

community outside Honiara, the team tasked with rebuilding a destroyed school was led by a youth group which organised the transportation of materials, oversaw the building process, and kept in close contact with the National Ministry of Education about acquiring teachers and textbooks.

The Fund's approach also had the result of enhancing community confidence. Communities learned that they could successfully complete complex projects provided they worked together. When asked, communities discussed future plans and visions that had arisen out of the positive experiences learnt from working together on CPRF activities. At Titige on Guadalcanal, the school committee planned the construction of three more classrooms, and others in the community sought funding for a clinic. The 'associational space' that the projects had helped revive appeared to be sustainable in all of the projects visited in that the communities had plans and visions for future activities.

The Kaotave Rural Training Centre Rehabilitation Project in North Guadalcanal provides another example of how CPRF-funded projects were able to bring different groups together in constructive working relationships. This vocational training centre was built more than 15 years ago by the South Sea Evangelical Church. It was closed early in 1999 at the time of the 'tensions'. The buildings were severely damaged and equipment and tools were stolen. As one of its very first projects, CPRF funded the rehabilitation of staff houses, dormitories and classrooms, and provided mechanical and carpentry tools for skills training. Participants from surrounding communities, including young people and ex-combatants, helped in the rehabilitation work.

Indicator 4: Evidence that CPRF established or strengthened linkages between the Fund itself, communities, government and other development organisations:

Government structures

CPRF's interaction with national and provincial government structures varied. It initially adopted a position of impartiality to ensure that the Fund was distanced from the corrupt practices that had plagued government ministries (CPRF 2004c). The extent of government dysfunction, particularly at a provincial level, meant that interaction and cooperation would have impeded the Fund's capacity to deliver quickly and efficiently.

CPRF deemed it essential to maintain its distance from the government in the early stages of its programme. The necessity of reaching out to communities directly in order to support peacebuilding at a grassroots level must be weighed against the need to build government capacity in service delivery. A gradated process over the years of operation – with frequent appraisal of the political and conflict situation to identify opportunities for re-engagement without compromising programme objectives

> *The necessity of reaching out to communities directly in order to support peacebuilding at a grassroots level must be weighed against the need to build government capacity in service delivery.*

– would have ensured that the government structures were kept abreast of and/or actively involved in the programme developments. When the evaluation team questioned the PCs about their interactions with provincial governments, there were mixed reactions. Some PCs invited provincial government officials to view projects and activities and in some cases – in Guadalcanal, Isabel, Makira and Temotu, for instance – the provincial government was actively involved from project inception. In other provinces, the PCs cooperated with the provincial technical officers in health, education, and agriculture projects. Other PCs experienced political interference: for instance when politicians drafted proposals on behalf of communities when the communities were capable of doing so themselves, or when projects stalled because of competing political interests.

Despite these instances of coordination and cooperation, a provincial premier and some government officials, along with other donors and NGOs, pointed to instances where CPRF had bypassed government channels. Most respondents acknowledged that the channelling of CPRF funds through the government would not have been constructive and could have severely delayed the projects. Although many understood the need for CPRF to bypass government initially, they expressed concern that the Fund continued to build infrastructure in the health, education and roads sectors for four years without active government involvement in planning.

Development agencies

Cooperation between CPRF and other development organisations took place at a local level and was facilitated by the PCs. However, there was little strategic cooperation or planning at the national level due to the continuing tensions. Transportation to outlying islands was difficult and infrequent and the access roads around Honiara were blockaded by militia groups. This meant that donor coordinating meetings, although planned, were not held on any regular basis.

CPRF and the National Peace Council, a governmental body that coordinated the mediation processes and reconciliation ceremonies that were taking place in conflict-affected communities, both addressed the needs of those communities most affected by the 'tensions', yet there appeared to be little cooperation between the organisations. NPC and CPRF shared transportation, but there was no strategic planning or coordination of

activities. Similarly, there was also no strategic cooperation between CPRF and the International Peace Monitoring Team which was deployed by the Pacific Island Forum to the Solomon Islands between October 2000 and mid-2002.

The mini-case study of Kolina Primary School provides an example of how improved coordination could have strengthened wider peacebuilding objectives. Located on the remote Weather Coast of Guadalcanal, the communities of Kolina and neighbouring Duidui became caught up in the conflict between Harold Keke's militia and the 'joint operation' after the Townsville Peace Agreement. People were forced into flee to the bush and the local primary school was closed down. The conflict created tensions between the two communities. Although CPRF had been involved on the Weather Coast since 2001, it was difficult to make progress during the continuing tensions. After RAMSI arrested Harold Keke and oversaw the collection of guns, CPRF resumed its work on the Weather Coast. It identified six priority projects in the most affected areas. The National Peace Council helped the Kolina and Duidui communities to reconcile and the communities worked together to support the CPRF in building a new classroom. The case study of Kolina is a textbook example of external intervention in support of peacebuilding.

Indicator 5: Flexibility and responsiveness of Fund: CPRF operated within very short time frames, and without a clear corporate strategic design. Its focus was on building peace by concentrating on community-based recovery activities. In order to do this effectively in a situation of continuing unrest and tension, it had to be flexible and responsive, and above all capable of seizing opportunities for peace as they arose (CPRF 2004b). The structuring of CPRF as a fund instead of a pre-designed project meant that it remained flexible and able to act quickly and effectively when key opportunities for peace were presented. This was was demonstrated when RAMSI asked for assistance in peacebuilding on the Weather Coast.

The structuring of CPRF as a fund instead of a pre-designed project meant that it remained flexible and able to act quickly and effectively when key opportunities for peace were presented.

CPRF first concentrated on meeting the most urgent resettlement and rehabilitation needs by providing assistance to those communities that had been most affected by the 'tensions' on Guadalcanal and Malaita. It then broadened its focus to ensure a wide geographical spread of activities. Although CPRF moved into some livelihoods projects in the last year, it invariably kept the focus on quick-impact community level projects.

Income-generation projects formed the bulk of requests to CPRF when it had just been established, but its staff discovered that such projects that were communally owned often failed due to misunderstandings about responsibilities. The DNH/LCP principles note that projects targeted at a family level can cause conflict due to perceptions of favouring one sector of the community over others (Anderson 1999). In accordance with these principles, and after some bad experiences with small-scale income-generation projects, CPRF decided to avoid such projects to make sure its work did not contribute to further conflict and tensions.

The question arises whether CPRF could have shifted its focus to concentrate on longer-term, more sustainable development by devising more durable community capacity-building projects, or by initiating income-generation projects in some parts of the Solomon Islands at an earlier stage, thereby shifting the focus of CPRF away from the building of community infrastructure. Such a shift, however, would have required a significant redesigning of CPRF, and the Fund lacked the resources to undertake the necessary strategic

assessments of the shifting contexts in different parts of Solomon Islands. In addition, CPRF operated under short time frames, which made such strategic adjustments difficult. Its funding was disbursed in 12-month cycles which made longer-term strategic planning difficult; funds were not released until the donor agencies had received the necessary reporting documentation for previous years.

Recognising when to make the shift from recovery-driven, humanitarian-oriented tasks to longer-term 'peace-through-development' tasks is often a dilemma for agencies. An initial focus on humanitarian issues coupled with sensitivity to the changing priorities of communities as their humanitarian needs are met is likely to ensure that opportunities for longer-term peacebuilding are not missed. CPRF began to make this shift by engaging in longer-term infrastructural projects such as building roads and by attempting to address the calls from communities for income-generation projects to be funded. It is important to recognise that a peacebuilding programme requires sufficient flexibility in order to adapt to longer-term development needs when the time is right.

Conclusion

This critical case study has shown that the Community Peace and Restoration Fund played a significant role in addressing one of the main causes of the 'tensions' in the Solomon Islands: perceived inequity in distribution and marginalisation. It also helped to restore relationships between elders as the guardians of traditional authority and younger members of the community – another cause of conflict. In terms of its outputs, it contributed to countering years of government neglect by implementing projects on a wide geographical basis. Beneficiaries of CPRF projects included IDPs and young people, some of whom had been involved in the fighting. The main peacebuilding contribution of the Fund does not lie in *what* it built, but in *how* it engaged communities in implementing its projects. Drawing on the 'Do No Harm/Local Capacities for Peace' principles, the CPRF supported a large number of projects at the community level in a conflict-sensitive manner. Most importantly, the implementation methods built confidence and re-established trust within communities. Much credit for this must go to the team of PCs and the management staff. The procurement and delivery strategies of CPRF were exceptional, even more so since for a significant part of its lifespan, the Fund worked amid continuing law and order problems.

The main peacebuilding contribution of the Fund does not lie in what it built, but in how it engaged communities in implementing its projects.

From a macro-level perspective, questions can be asked regarding CPRF's continuing focus on fast-impact infrastructure rehabilitation for most of the Fund's time span. It remains unclear whether, in some parts of the Solomon Islands at least, a shift to longer-term, more sustainable activities may have been possible. Although the application of DNH/LCP principles to guide community engagement was very successful in that they enabled communities to recognise the 'connectors' in their societies, the use of these principles at the macro level meant that income generation or other more sustainable activities were not eligible for CPRF funding across the Solomon Islands for the better part of four years as it was deemed inappropriate to fund individual-level income generation projects. This misinterpretation of the 'Do No Harm' principles meant that individuals in communities missed out on accessing any funding.

It might also have been possible for the Fund to engage with Solomon Islands government structures more systematically during the later years of its operation. Complaints that

45

CPRF bypassed local government structures point to the importance of considering the variety of possible impacts of aid interventions in conflict-sensitive circumstances. Conflict analyses often result in a list of causes that can be linked to recommended policy interventions. However, ill-considered interventions can result in impacts which create or exacerbate conflict. The CPRF case is an example of how peacebuilding intervention is less about choosing particular outputs in order to address a checklist of conflict causes than about weighing up possible outcomes and making informed decisions as to what processes of engagement may be most suitable (Spence & Wielders 2006).

The lack of cooperation between CPRF and other actors involved in peacebuilding – notably the National Peace Council and the International Peace Monitoring Group – is partly a reflection of the law and order problems in the Solomon Islands during these years and the lack of a macro-level peace process to follow on from the Townsville Peace Agreement. As discussed above, CPRF and the National Peace Council both addressed the needs of communities most affected by the 'tensions', yet there appeared to be little cooperation between the organisations in terms of developing a coordinated strategic peace plan.

Reconciliation and peacebuilding activities are mutually dependent and this emerged strongly in interviews with community members. For some communities, formal reconciliation was a necessary precursor to inter-communal involvement in CPRF activities, while others recognised that CPRF funding allowed them to meet a basic need which predisposed them to be more amenable to the idea of reconciliation. With the arrival of RAMSI, improved coordination between the activities of different peacebuilding actors has taken place on the Weather Coast as illustrated in the Kolina School example.

Linking micro-level peacebuilding impacts to the macro level is an enduring issue in peacebuilding literature (Spence 1999; Anderson *et al* 2003), but without a macro-level peacebuilding process to link to – and in circumstances where there is a continuing lack of law and order – this becomes even more complex. The underlying theme that runs through all these conclusions and lessons is that peacebuilding is about process, as well as output. The DNH/LCP principles proved to be a good guide for the process of community-level engagement, but less suitable for decisions about the macro-level direction of the Fund and the outputs of its projects due to misinterpretation of the framework. The opportunities for CPRF to make a peacebuilding impact at a macro level were limited by the absence of a clear peace-making process at this level.

The DNH/LCP principles proved to be a good guide for the process of community-level engagement, but less suitable for decisions about the macro-level direction of the Fund and the outputs of its projects due to misinterpretation of the framework.

REBECCA SPENCE, PhD, is the Director of the Centre for Peace Studies. She is leading an international research project in Timor entitled 'Governance For Peace: International and Indigenous Approaches to Peacebuilding'. She is also involved in a training consortium, specialising in training in peacebuilding processes for the Asia Pacific region. She has worked as a consultant for government and non-governmental organisations, specialising in peace and conflict-impact assessments. Her most recent publications are to do with engaging the community in peacebuilding activities in Timor.

IRIS WIELDERS holds masters degrees in International Relations and International Humanitarian Assistance from the universities of Groningen and Amsterdam. She is a research

scholar in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University. Her PhD research focuses on the democratic accountability of cooperative state-building intervention in Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea. She works at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as a conflict prevention adviser. She was formerly a visiting lecturer in the Master of Peace and Conflict Studies programme at the University of Sydney, and has worked as a consultant on various peace- and conflict-related analyses in the Solomon Islands.

Endnote

References

Anderson, M. 1999, *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace – or War*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.

Anderson, M., Olsen, L. & Doughty, K. 2003, *Confronting War: Critical lessons for Peace Practitioners*, Washington, DC: CDA Inc.

AusAID 2000, 'Solomon Islands Reintegration Assessment Mission', unpublished report, Canberra.

Bennett, J. 2002, 'Roots of Conflict in Solomon Islands – Though Much Is Taken, Much Abides: Legacies of Tradition and Colonialism' in State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 2002/5, Canberra.

Bush, K. 1998, 'A Measure of Peace: Peace- and Conflict-impact Assessment of Development Projects in Conflict Zones', Working Paper I, International Development Research Centre Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Initiative and The Evaluation Unit, Ottawa.

Carnegie Commission 1997, 'Preventing Deadly Conflict', New York.

CPRF (Community Peace and Restoration Fund) 2001, 'Annual Review', AusAID, Canberra; 2002a, 'Activity Completion Report', AusAID, Canberra; 2004b, 'Policies and Procedures Document', AusAID, Canberra; 2004c, 'Sectoral Reports', AusAID, Canberra.

Dinnen, S. 2002, 'Winners and Losers: Politics and Disorder in the Solomon Islands 2000-2002 – Political Chronicles' in *Journal of Pacific History* 36:3, December.

Fraenkel, J. 2004, *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*, Wellington: Victoria University Press.

Fred-Mensah B. 2004, 'Social Capital Building as Capacity for Post-conflict Development: The UNDP in Mozambique and Rwanda' in *Global Governance* 10:4.

Goodhand, J. 2000, *Conflict Assessment Project: Approach and Methodology*, Oxford: INTRAC.

Goodhand, J., Hulme, D. & Lewer, N. 2000, 'Social Capital and the Political Economy of Violence' in *Disasters* 24:4.

Harris, G. 1999, 'Reconstruction, Recovery and Development: The Main Tasks' in Harris, G. ed., *Recovery from Armed Conflict in Developing Countries*, London: Routledge:39-51.

Hegarty, D. 2004, 'Monitoring Peace in Solomon Islands' in State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Working Paper 01:4, Canberra.

Kabutaulaka, T. 2002, 'A Weak State and the Solomon Islands Peace Process' in *East-West Centre Working Papers: Pacific Islands Development Series* 14, April, Hawaii.

Lederach, J. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press; 1998, 'Remember and Change', in Herr, R. & Zimmerman, J. eds, *Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking*, Pennsylvania: Herald Press.

47

Leonhardt, M. 2003, 'Towards a Unified Methodology: Reframing PCIA' in *Berghof Handbook on Conflict Transformation*, Berlin: Berghof Centre for Constructive Conflict Management.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) 2001, *The DAC Guidelines: Helping Prevent Deadly Conflict*, Paris: OECD.

Pattison, J. & Sullivan, M. 2004, 'Judging Success in a Post-conflict Environment – Whose Criteria? CPRF as a Case Study', unpublished seminar paper.

Spence, R. 1999, 'The Centrality of Community-led Recovery', in Harris, G. ed., *Recovery from Armed Conflict in Developing Countries*, London: Routledge:212-240; 2004, 'Befriending the Neighbours' in Harris, G. ed., *Achieving Security in Sub-Saharan Africa,* Institute of Strategic Studies: Pretoria:59-73.

Spence, R. and Wielders, I. 2006, 'Conflict Prevention in the Pacific', targeted research paper for AusAID commissioned by State, Society and Governance in Melanesia project, Australia National University, Canberra.

.