



TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN BOUGAINVILLE

This paper is part of AJAR's series on
transitional justice in Australia and the Pacific



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Transitional Justice in Bougainville

This case study is the result of a partnership between Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) and the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA). At the start of June 2021, LNWDA commenced research activities and consultations with youth and women's groups, council of elders and government officials in the target constituencies of North Bougainville, in particular Tsitalato, Hagogohe and Halia.

This was coupled with four workshops between June 2021 - January 2022 on transitional justice using the 'Stone & Flower Manual'¹ with women in the constituencies of Tsitalato, Hagogohe, Haku and Peit. These areas were chosen given the high level of violence that took place during conflict between the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF). A total of 1,003 women were reached through these activities and the majority of participants had experienced human rights violations and discrimination in their lives.

During these workshops and awareness-raising sessions, 16 women and men were selected to participate in interviews. However, 7 withdrew their statements for fear of being intimidated, harassed or threatened. 3 of the female survivors were threatened with guns and told to withdraw their stories. The motivation behind this intimidation was that perpetrators thought the stories gathered would be used as evidence in court. To protect the safety of these survivors, their interviews have been deleted.

Background

Bougainville consists of two main islands in the Pacific region, with a population of about 300,000 and 19 distinct languages. Located in the Solomon Islands archipelago, Bougainville is in many ways closer to the Solomon Islands than it is to the Papuan mainland. From the late 19th century until the 1970s, Bougainville was administered by several colonial powers namely Germany, Australia and Japan. On 16 September 1975, PNG declared independence.

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1. For more on this manual see: Wandita, G. et al. Stone and Flower: A Guide to Understanding and Action for Women Survivors, AJAR, October 2015. <https://www.asia-ajar.org/files/stone%20&%20flower.pdf>
 2. Amnesty International. Papua New Guinea: Human Rights Violations on Bougainville, 1989–1990. London: Amnesty International, 1990.

Two weeks prior however, a group of leaders from Bougainville declared the territory independent but were eventually persuaded to instead form the ‘North Solomons Province’ of PNG.²

In 1963, Conzinc Riotinto of Australia Exploration (CRA Exploration) which is a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, travelled to Central Bougainville and a year later copper prospecting began. In 1969, Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL), a subsidiary of CRA Exploration, began construction of an open-pit copper mine in Panguna, Central Bougainville.³ In 1972, the Panguna copper mine opened and proved extremely important for PNG. Between 1972-1986 it generated roughly 45% of PNG’s annual export earnings yet only 1% of revenues went to the people of Bougainville.⁴ The mine also had widespread and significant environmental, social and cultural ramifications for local communities and landowners.

In November 1988, a group of Bougainvillean men used stolen weapons and explosives to sabotage mine facilities in Panguna. The Defence Force of Papua New Guinea (PNGDF) responded violently and the rebels formed the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). By early 1989, the goals of the BRA shifted from closing down the Panguna mine to independence from PNG. In May 1989, the Panguna mine was forced to close and by this time, the PNGDF was receiving covert support from the Australian government and BCL.⁵

During the civil war an estimated 20,000 people died, almost 10% of the population.⁶ Widespread violations were also perpetrated including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and enforced disappearance. As Wilson explains, “long-term impacts of atrocities on society include high rates of untreated trauma, domestic violence and substance abuse, and damage to cultural values, relationships and wellbeing in the post-war generation.”⁷ The conflict in Bougainville also led to regional instability, as militants and displaced people entered the Solomon Islands. According to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),



In the Western Province the tensions from Guadalcanal spilled over, with many displaced returning to their native province. At the same time refugees from the conflict in nearby Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (PNG) had flooded into Western Province, bringing further pressure. Youths formed the militant groups such as the Black Sharks and the Black Cobras and the police, suffering from low morale due to non-payment of wages, did little to control them. On Sunday 11 June 2000 about

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3. Evenhuis, M. “Developmental Faith, Sacrifice and the Betrayal of Transitional Justice: A Bougainvillean Case Study.” *State Crime Journal* 6, no. 1 (2017).
 4. Amnesty International. *Papua New Guinea: Human Rights Violations on Bougainville, 1989–1990*. London: Amnesty International, 1990, p. 4.
 5. Evenhuis, M. “Developmental Faith, Sacrifice and the Betrayal of Transitional Justice: a Bougainvillean Case Study.” *State Crime Journal* 6, no. 1 (2017).
 6. Wilson, C. “Facing Ghosts of the Past in Bougainville.” The Lowy Institute (Sydney), October 2018. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/facing-ghosts-past-bougainville>
 7. Ibid.

45 heavily armed men from the Bougainville Revolutionary Army landed in Gizo, claiming that they came to help provide security for their neighbours. They mixed with the Black Sharks and began to demand money from people, take over people's property, commit sexual violations against women and even carry out raids on police stations. At the same time another militant group formed in Choiseul which also committed a range of human rights violations. The Bougainville militants that were not married to local people finally returned home after the Townsville Agreement.⁸

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, attempts to establish lasting peace between the BRA and PNG government were largely unsuccessful. This was despite the ongoing efforts of communities, religious leaders, CSOs and women's groups. In mid-1997 however, the Burnham Truce was agreed upon and was followed by the Lincoln Peace Accords signed in Christchurch, New Zealand.

In April 1998, hostilities ceased with the signing of the Arawa peace agreement and in August 2001, the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) came into effect. The offer of amnesty and pardons for crime was enshrined in this agreement but it did not put in place any inquiries or transitional justice mechanisms. The three 'pillars' of the peace agreement were autonomy for Bougainville, weapons disposal and a referendum on independence.⁹

In 2019, a referendum was held in Bougainville with 97.7% voting in favour of independence. However, because the referendum is non-binding, the final decision rests with the PNG national parliament.¹⁰ In November 2020, a motion for an 'Independence-Ready Mission' was passed in the Bougainville House of Representatives before launching in 2021.¹¹ During consultations in July 2021 by Leitana Nehan, participants stated that the unsolved issues that will seriously affect the process of independence for Bougainville include:

- Displaced persons/families
- Land related issues
- Killings
- Sorcery killings related to the conflict
- Homebrewed alcohol
- Missing persons
- Unmarked burials

8. The Solomon Islands Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs (MTGPEA). *Rising from the Ashes: Synopsis of Solomon Islands TRC Final Report*. Honiara: MTGPEA. Forthcoming, p. 7.

9. Bougainville Peace Agreement, signed 30 August 2001. <https://www.abg.gov.pg/peace-agreement>

10. McKenna, K. and E. Ariku. "Bougainville Independence: Recalling Promises of International Help." *The Interpreter* (Sydney), November 2021. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/bougainville-independence-recalling-promises-international-help>

11. "Independence-Ready Mission Program launched in Bougainville," *The Bougainville Bulletin* (Bougainville), May 2021.

12. Wilson, C. "Facing Ghosts of the Past in Bougainville." *The Lowy Institute* (Sydney), October 2018. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/facing-ghosts-past-bougainville>

- Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS)
- Threats and intimidation of survivors
- Tensions between families of victims and former combatants

Transitional Justice Issues: An Overview

In consultations by Leitana Nehan, a prominent leader stated that early during the peace process numerous requests were made to the PNG Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) to establish a transitional justice mechanism that would address war crimes committed during the conflict, but these fell on deaf ears. Seven years after the peace agreement, the government of Bougainville called for a truth commission, but plans were abandoned as too risky in light of hostility from former combatants.¹²

In 2014, the government developed a policy to provide assistance to families searching for those who disappeared during the conflict but did not support justice or compensation measures.¹³ It was clear through interviews that many Bougainville families continue to search for their missing relatives with a view to reclaim their remains and return them to their clans for proper burial.

During the conflict, communities undertook local reconciliation processes using a mix of customary and Christian practices. These efforts were credited with helping communities create “peace zones”, while building pressure on combatants to join the peace process.¹⁴ In more recent years, women and youth activists have called for a truth telling process to help people and communities heal.¹⁵

Most of those interviewed by Leitana Nehan believed in the ability of the Bougainville people in partnership with the ABG to discern and create a home-grown truth and reconciliation process. However, these will need expert assistance from appropriate authorities. Indeed, some women participants explained that they would like the ABG to engage experts who have experience working in similar post conflict situations globally.

In October 2021, Leitana Nehan carried out an interview with James Tanis who is a peace builder and former ABG President of the House of Representatives. He stated that Bougainville has traditional customs that could contribute to a process of transitional justice, in particular strengthening the rule of law and improving human security. Such a process would need to be handled with caring, restorative methods that are culturally sensitive and in line with traditional customs. There would also need to be a trauma counselling

13. Wilson, C. “Facing Ghosts of the Past in Bougainville.” The Lowy Institute (Sydney), October 2018. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/facing-ghosts-past-bougainville>

14. Braithwaite, J. and R. Nickson. “Timing, Truth, Reconciliation, and Justice after War.” Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution 27, no. 3 (2012).

15. Wilson, C. “Facing Ghosts of the Past in Bougainville.” The Lowy Institute (Sydney), October 2018. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/facing-ghosts-past-bougainville>

and rehabilitation component to the process. This is important to help survivors heal, particularly if they are experiencing the pain of reliving past abuses.

Through interviews by Leitana Nehan, it was clear that human security remains a challenge in Bougainville and people are concerned that those involved in organised crime, sexual violence and piracy continue to act with impunity. Participants explained that known perpetrators are seen to be walking around freely without having been held accountable for their role in killings, extra-judicial executions, torture, rape and other forms of abuse during the conflict.

It was also argued that some perpetrators surrendered weapons to reconciliation ceremonies but secretly retained their more highly valued guns which are now being used in armed hold ups and sea piracy, such as the case of a local politician who went missing while travelling to Nissan Island with his wife, son and a Digicel Foundation employee. The lack of justice or accountability has contributed to cycles of violence in post-conflict Bougainville. This is clear as violence is often carried out by perpetrators who were not actually involved in the conflict.

Truth A truth-telling process has been consistently pushed by civil society, however no mechanism has been established by the government.	Reparations In 2014, the Bougainville government established a policy to locate family members who disappeared during the conflict. Despite the policy being developed, no families were assisted by the government. This policy also did not include the provision of compensation.
Justice The 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) included blanket amnesty provisions and perpetrators received pardons for crimes committed during the conflict.	Non-Recurrence The Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) included provisions for weapons disposal and around 2,000 weapons were containerised. While weapons were surrendered during reconciliation ceremonies, some perpetrators secretly retained their firearms. Some containers were also broken into and weapons stolen.

Gender Justice

In post-conflict Bougainville, little progress has been made to specifically address family and sexual violence prevention. As well as this, women are largely unaware of or have limited access to decision making or to justice. The International Instrument on VAW (CEDAW) was explained to the workshop participants and they came to realise that even though PNG is a signatory to these conventions, they are often not enforced in practice. As one of the women explained, “our politicians can legislate good laws for our protection in the paper for the United Nation to see and prove that they have protected us, but in reality, nothing is enforced.”

At the start of the workshops, women were asked to introduce themselves using stones, sticks, flowers, water and sand to describe themselves, their feelings and emotions.



Like a flower, I bloom when I am happy and when I am sad. I wither like the flower in the evening and like this stone I am strong. No one can break me.

I am like this stick, I bend and break easily when burdened with pain but even when the stick breaks the leaves grow again. I am like that after breaking down I deal with my problems and am able to continue my journey in life.

During the workshops, a timeline of the Bougainville conflict was drawn on the floor beginning in 1989. Stories by individuals were told with great pain and emotion. Each reaffirmed the violations, the experiences they went through and the dates and times the incidences occurred. Individuals marked these on the timeline, often stopping or pausing with tears in their eyes. Some individuals did not disclose their experiences as it was too painful but marked only a date on the timeline.

Participants walked through the timeline and told stories about their experiences. For many, it was the first time they were able to share their stories openly in a group and as a result was a chance to heal. Participants stated that it is a burden to not disclose their experiences and by telling their stories, they hoped that history will not be repeated. Others who listened were also surprised at how little they knew about each other's experiences. This was even the case for participants from the same village, as whole populations were forced to flee during the conflict. Going through the timeline together connected their stories. As one of the women explained,



I am like this stone. I shut down completely and don't hear anything. I feel no pain. It will take time for me to open up my heart of stone. For years I shut myself up. Never disclosed my sufferings and pain.

As well as creating a timeline, the women also drew maps of different areas where violations occurred. Using different colours and keys to mark specific areas, the women found the



Photos: Women in Tsitalato and Hagogohe participating in Stone & Flower activities. September 2021.

activity fun and felt a sense of relief. Working together in groups also brought women closer together and there was a shared sense of respect amongst them. According to the women, current violations and abuse occur both in the household and within the community such as in gardens and nightclubs. There were some violations which women were reluctant or uncomfortable to speak about.

There were also clear overlaps during the body mapping exercise as women indicated similar spots where they felt pain, suffering and stress. During the workshops, women

participants acknowledged that they have not come to terms with their experiences. For these women, there has not been any recovery, they have not gone to counseling, their families and communities feel that they are being left behind. To make this pain go away, they suggested having group counseling or informal sessions where they can share their stories and experiences.

Many women feel as though justice has not been experienced in the family, community or at the individual-level and as a result they are still hurting and suffer ongoing trauma. As well as a lack of justice for crimes during the conflict, women in Bougainville continue to face gender-based violence and other issues related to human security. Many women stated they felt as though there was no rule of law and that the police do not work to their full capacity. Due to a culture of impunity and lack of justice or accountability, some participants shared that they see their perpetrators walking freely and they feel hatred. A common theme raised by women was that they had a right to truth and justice. They explained that justice and mutual understanding are essential for healing and reconciliation,



We are not motivated by revenge. We

want to leave the past to move on to the future.

Our leaders must address the past. We demand justice and impunity must end.

When the women were asked to share their hopes and dreams for the future, many were optimistic. Although there were differing views, most shared a desire to be more involved in peacebuilding processes than they are currently, such as through activism or by participating in local politics. However, it was also highlighted that women are often excluded from decision-making or their views are not taken into account. During the workshops, it was openly stated that women should have a greater involvement in issues around development and justice. Among other things, women could work to prioritise community concerns especially in conflict affected communities as well as provide a strong understanding of the needs, wants and concerns of women, children and communities. As one woman explained, “it is I who can create change and justice. Women should stick together for change to happen and to be heard.”

Survivor Case Studies

The following case studies are based on interviews with selected men and women survivors. Each individual interviewed required a safe space and was allowed to respond in their own time. All provided their consent and were willing to share their experiences and sufferings with Leitana Nehan. Leitana Nehan met some resistance from relatives of the survivors when these interviews were being compiled and some interviewees withdrew their stories. The relatives and family members thought that Leitana Nehan was gathering information to take the perpetrators to court. While the following survivors consented to having their stories shared, aliases have been used to ensure their future safety and security.

Case Study

01

Mary from Hagogohe Constituency, Buka Island

Mary is now a young married woman. She was only 15 years old when the Resistance Fighters together with the PNGDF soldiers took her father forcefully from their home. It was in the early hours of the morning in November 1990. Her father was beaten together with other young men and thrown into an army truck. Later, spare wheels of the truck were thrown on the suspects.

“

My father was suspected of liaising and for giving information to the BRA elements. They were taken to an unknown location and killed, or they just disappeared. During this period the Resistance also committed unlawful killings and when they took people for questioning like my father, they just disappeared.

Over the years my family searched everywhere for possible graveyards to no avail. No one knew where my father was killed or buried or whether he

was dumped in the sea. We are still searching. We want to rest our father's soul in peace" said Mary with tears in her eyes.

The resistance fighters were closely linked to the PNGDF. Some of the resistance fighters are our family relatives. We know them and every time we see them, we do not trust them. They have information to tell us but no one is there to facilitate our reconciliation. We also know that the resistance leaders gave orders for the killings. We also are informed that the resistance collaborated with the PNGDF.

When Leitana Nehan interviewed Mary, she requested that her story be written as she told it. Mary and her mother are very close to each other. When we asked to take photos or record the interview both refused and asked to be given time to think about it.

Mary demands to know where her father's body is. She also demands justice for her father's disappearance. Mary also explained that during the period when her father was taken, other family members and relatives were also victims. The resistance fighters and their associates instilled fear in the general community, disrupting the lives of the families of the victims. Mary condemns those who took her father as well as the leaders in Government both past and present, "there has not been any arrest done or offenders have not been taken to court." She believes that nothing will ever be done, "no one wants to remember the past but for the victims' families the past will always be remembered as everyday we are still searching for loved ones."

Case Study

02

David, Ketskets village, Halia Constituency

David was only 12 years old when his father was brutally gunned down on the 28th of November 1990. He recalls earlier that day, he sighted BRA soldiers around their premises which later resulted in his father's life being taken. There was fear throughout the village. That particular time the BRA suspected almost anyone in any senior position in Government or business in informing the PNGDF.



They came in great numbers armed with guns and surrounded my family. I watched and witnessed how they (BRA) shot my father through his eyes and side. Despite our crying, they shouted abusive words at us and threatened to come back for us. They (the BRA) burnt our entire home and our canteen. My father later died in Buka hospital on the 30th of November 1990.

I know the young men who took my father's life. They are in the same village which makes it very painful. I can't forget the ordeal easily as these people's presence is a constant reminder. They have not been arrested nor taken to court by the authorities. The site where our family home was, is still vacant.

The family still has no home of their own. They live in their uncle's house which is overcrowded. David left school at grade 10 level because he found it hard to pay school fees. He decided to stay home so he could save some money to send his elder brother to teacher's college. His brother has graduated as a secondary high school teacher. On the other hand, he wanted to care for his blind mother. David demands justice from perpetrators of violence of the Bougainville conflict. He would like to see children who grew up witnessing the atrocities, killings, disappearance to be given trauma counselling, "these children are adults now with their own children. As I am experiencing in my family, violence is still continuing" stated David.

Case Study

03

**Elizabeth, Ieta Village,
Tsitalato Constituency**

Elizabeth is originally from Koiari in Central District, Port Moresby. She married a man from Ieta village, Buka, Bougainville. In 1990 during the height of the Bougainville conflict, both lived in Port Moresby. Throughout the period when the PNGDF force landed in Buka and began their operations, life in Port Moresby was very difficult for any Bougainvilleans,



It was like we were living in Bougainville itself. Our families lived in fear of being harassed, threatened, intimidated or even abducted on the streets. Everytime a soldier from PNG died in Bougainville we faced insults, threats.

One day, some soldiers from one of the army barracks came to our home and took my husband forcefully. They stabbed, kicked and punched him. We were unable to help. We were paralysed with fear. Even though my skin colour is red, I could not utter a word. We watched when they (the army) took him away. The soldiers dumped his lifeless body in a garden belonging to one of the retired soldiers. The elderly retired soldier heard them (soldiers) shouting, telling each other to finish him off and went to investigate. He rescued my husband.

Later my husband recovered from multiple wounds. This experience made him hate redskins from PNG. He brought me to Buka Bougainville where he left me alone with 3 kids to fend for ourselves. Two of my daughters and youngest son are doing very well in school. Their father does not support us financially but he has allowed me and my children to stay on his clan's land. I would really like to see my ex-husband go through trauma counselling. Since going through the experience he has been sick almost every year and now has diabetes.

Case Study

04

**Teresa, Buka,
Bougainville**

Teresa was 17 years old in 1990. She was an orphan. Her father died in June 1989 when she was in grade 10 of high school. The atmosphere during those years was already scary and being in a girls' secondary added the feeling of insecurity. The Bougainville rebels were already forming and moving everywhere causing panic and fear. Fearing for the safety of the girls, the teachers sent them home. Teresa came home hoping her relatives would keep her safe and provide protection. Her widowed mother immediately sent her to live with her aunt and uncle at Hanahan. When Teresa's father was alive he owned a registered gun for hunting which he sold to someone.

As the recruitment of young men to join the rebels intensified, the need for owning a weapon also grew. An informant from the village told the rebels about the gun. The story of this one gun spread and a car load of rebels came to search for Teresa and her family. Teresa was located at Hanahan. She and her uncle were asked about the gun. When the gun was not produced both Teresa and her uncle were badly beaten and told to run in front of the rebels car. Teresa recognized one of the men from her father's village. Both ran for several kilometres feeling very exhausted, scared and thoughts ran through their minds that they would soon be killed – just for the gun which they didn't have.

A car light coming from the opposite direction saved them. The rebels commanded both of them to go and hide. This was their chance of escaping. Fearing for Teresa's safety and security, her uncle asked her to return to her father's village. She returned unwillingly because she knew her widowed mother could not provide protection. When she arrived at her late father's village, her mother sent her to another uncle for protection. This uncle was the commander of the local resistance force who were working with the PNGDF soldiers. She felt relieved as she thought she would be safe at last. Her uncle then forcefully married her off to a soldier when she was only 17. Teresa explained that, "I was safe and secure in the hands of this soldier." But as soon as she followed him to Port Moresby, her husband's identity surfaced and from 1990 to 2019, she lived a life of violence,



Everytime a soldier would be killed here in Bougainville, he would beat me up. I lost 5 babies during this period as a result of violence. The man I once thought would protect me become my enemy.

When I was pregnant with my first born child, my husband returned to Bougainville to fight, I was alone in the army barracks. The day came when I felt labour pains, I was admitted to the PNGDF Taurama hospital. I was not treated well by the labour ward personnel because the nurses were angry with Bougainvilleans. When I screamed because of labour pain, I would be beaten by the nurses and security and they would say to me, “Your people are killing our men, so you must suffer.” I was given sleeping pills to prolong the baby’s birth. After several days of living in fear of being killed by the nurses and security, I gave birth eventually to a baby girl. My baby was not cleaned by the nurses, her tiny body was all covered with excreta. My mother-in-law came to visit a day later and washed my baby. When she left the ward, my baby and I were put on a bed with wheels and pushed outside to the main maternity ward. The nurses were so rough that my baby fell down onto the floor. She died when she was only 9 months old because of head injuries.

My husband over the years was so aggressive and very, very violent. He would even step on my pregnant stomach to kill my babies. I would be stripped naked and held firmly from behind by him and placed in front of the open windows for neighbours to see, to humiliate and shame me. My second born son who survived often helped me when my husband beat me. I would be hung upside down or told to run early in the mornings to do one hundred laps to the gate together with my son. My son lost his front tooth as he was kicked with a boot. I could not walk for three months as I was kicked, punched, stepped on and fell down the stairs. My son who was seven years old helped me all those months. My son washed me, fed me before he went to school. Violence affected him-knowing that this father would beat me again, all day my son just stayed around me. Both of us never had money or food in the house.

All my husband’s salaries went to his girlfriends. There were so many of them. He would bring them home and told me to cook for them. During this time my son would be locked up in his room. Other times I was also locked up in my room. I was alone with no friends living in the army barracks. I knew all those years that soldiers stand for one another. Thirty full years, my life was a living hell on earth. I knew no happiness. I gave up on life. I was depressed. I walked the streets. I almost went insane but my son was always on my mind.

I suffered beatings, belting, punching, name calling over the years. The other families were so scared to help me- those who tried to help were also targeted.

I even tried to find means and ways to get my husband to divorce me – one night I eloped with a young man, he got me pregnant, I told my husband about the incident hoping that he would send me away, but NO, the nine months which followed were terrible for me. He would jump on my stomach to kill the baby in my womb. When I gave birth the baby’s biological father took my child away. For seven years I didn’t see my son until in 2019, his father took him to see me. This gave me hope. I ran away from the barracks and came home to Buka, Bougainville. Now I am free, free, I do not want to go back to the violent life I experienced for more than 30 years. I want justice for the pain inflicted on me by this soldier...

Conclusion

Bougainville has long been held up as a successful case of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Although some steps have been made towards independence from PNG, the legacies of conflict continue to have impacts on society. While further research is needed, Leitana Nehan uncovered evidence of human rights violations perpetrated by both sides during the conflict. This includes, but is not limited to, torture or inhumane treatment, killings, forced disappearance and gender-based violence.

Through research between June 2021 - January 2022, Leitana Nehan found that a lack of justice and accountability for violations, combined with limited law and order capacity, has created cycles of violence, a culture of impunity and a lack of human security. It was also found that survivors of historical and ongoing violations, in particular women, are in urgent need of reparation through measures such as psychosocial support.

Whatever the future holds for Bougainville, coming to terms with the past will require a balance between culturally appropriate practices and the pillars of transitional justice: truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence. It will also require the active involvement, participation and leadership of women.

Timeline

1972	Panguna copper mine opened.
16 September 1975	PNG established as an independent nation.
November 1988	A group of Bougainvillean men use stolen weapons and explosives to sabotage mine facilities in Panguna. The Defence Force of Papua New Guinea (PNGDF) responds violently. The rebels form the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA).
Early 1989	The goals of the BRA shift from closing down the Panguna mine to independence from PNG.
May 1989	The Panguna mine is forced to close. A military solution through the PNGDF is covertly supported by the Australian government and BCL.
March 1989	PNG agree to a ceasefire, but nonetheless impose a blockade around Bougainville, including for Buka island. Supplies, including medical supplies, are unable to reach the area. Communication and services are also cut off.
April 1989	The PNG government attempts to develop a series of peace proposals.
June 1989	A state of emergency is declared. The PNG military is given freedom to suppress the rebellion.
August 1989	Catholic Church leaders in Bougainville develop a peace plan which includes decentralisation, limited autonomy and increased local revenue from the copper mine. These attempts are unsuccessful.
October 1994	The Arawa Peace Conference takes place. BRA refused to attend but the conference is attended by other Bougainvillean CSOs.
Mid-1997	Burnham Truce agreed upon. It is signed by the PNG government and BRA with involvement of foreign governments including Australia and New Zealand. It includes a 'Truce Monitoring Group' with 250 members including soldiers from Fiji, Australia and New Zealand.
1997	Lincoln Peace Accords signed in Christchurch, New Zealand. As part of the Lincoln Agreement, a general amnesty is granted and a guarantee is given that anybody who committed a crime during the 'crisis' period will be pardoned.
April 1998	Hostilities cease with the signing of the Arawa peace agreement.
August 2001	Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) comes into effect. The offer of amnesty and pardons for crime was enshrined in this agreement.
2005	Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) established.
23 November - 7 December 2019	Bougainvillean independence referendum held. 97.7% of participants voted in favour of independence.
November 2020	The 'Bougainville Independence-Ready Mission' passes as a motion in the Bougainville House of Representatives. It calls on Bougainvillean people and politicians to prepare the region for political sovereignty.
April 2021	The 'Constituency Independence-Ready Mission' is launched in Tanei Village. The aim of the Mission is to ensure each constituency is prepared for independence.

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