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# Peace Education and Peace-building in the Solomon Islands: Disconnected Layers

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The notion of conflict, peace, education and development that characterise discussions about the Solomon Islands immediate past, present and future prospects are complex and interrelated. These terms are interrelated as conflict, peace and education affect development. Likewise, poor development can be one of the causes of conflict. Development as a multi-dimensional reality consists of interrelated issues such as the economy, health, education, social relations and governance. To this end, a macro-perspective of the relationship between conflict, peace, education and development is important, particularly in post-conflict reconstruction. In the Solomon Islands, conflict has not occurred in a vacuum. It has been strongly influenced by the turbulent socio-cultural variables of the country. Long-term peace-building efforts in the Solomon Islands ultimately depend on effectively reconnecting thinking and practice to conflict, peace, education and development.

In order to understand how peace can be achieved in conflict and post-conflict contexts, it is first necessary to understand the theoretical landscape within which peace education sits. The concept of peace education is defined within divergent contexts. However, by considering a number of theoretical parameters and approaches within the literature, it is possible to identify a consensus that peace education is primarily a matter of changing mindsets with the purpose of promoting understanding, respect and tolerance toward one's enemies.<sup>1</sup> The lack of an integrated approach to peace education has necessitated the theorisation of the Integrated Theory of Peace (ITP) and the dissemination of the Integrated Theory of Peace Education (ITPE).<sup>2</sup> The ITP and ITPE are critical to understanding the disconnected layers between peace education and peace-building. While peace-building is difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve in practice,<sup>3</sup> in the context of post-conflict reconstruction initiatives in the Solomon Islands, it is taken to refer to programs of action that aim to address the underlying issues in ethnic conflict and deal with post-conflict development challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Deutsch, 'Constructive Conflict Resolution: Principles, Training and Research', *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 50 (1994), pp. 13-32; L. Oppenheimer, D. Bar-Tal and A. Raviv (eds), *The Elusive Nature of Peace* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> H. B. Danesh, 'Towards an Integrative Theory of Peace Education', *Journal of Peace Education*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2006), pp. 55-78.

<sup>3</sup> E.M. Cousens and C. Kumar (eds), *Peacebuilding as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

Despite these divergent meanings and approaches, the common core to peace education and peace-building<sup>4</sup> includes violence prevention, multicultural understanding, tolerance towards enemies and promotion of dignity and equality. These key elements add clarity to what constitutes peace education and peace-building in any context but, as Gavriel Salomon has stressed, not all programs are equal and able to be transferred from one country to another.<sup>5</sup>

One of the key arguments in this article is that RAMSI in its transition phase needs to move beyond an emphasis on law and order to engage in culturally-appropriate deep intervention to deal with the underlying issues that caused the conflict, and that peace education is one tool that could help to achieve this.

## **Background to the Ethnic Conflict**

The ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands, locally referred to as ‘the ethnic tension’, began in 1998 when a group of militant youths—Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA), later renamed the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM)—from the island of Guadalcanal attacked settlements of islanders predominantly from Malaita (a neighbouring island) in northwest Guadalcanal. There are several historical factors that gave rise to the conflict. To begin with, there was an inequitable distribution of national wealth and financial resources during the colonial era. Most of the economic activities were on the island of Guadalcanal. As a result of illegal squatting on Guadalcanal local people felt that they were being culturally and economically marginalised in their own land. The non-Guadalcanal people were seen to have exploited economic opportunities such as jobs and services created by major investments on Guadalcanal. Resentment arising from these issues escalated over time, and in 1988 formed the basis of bona fide demands made by Guadalcanal Province to the government. However, the failure of the government to address these demands further aggravated their grievances, which resulted in violent conflict at the end of 1998.

## **Peace-building Initiatives**

Between June 1999 and July 2003 a number of peace initiatives were undertaken to resolve the conflict. These included: a government-funded public reconciliation feast; a Commonwealth-initiated Honiara peace accord; the Buala peace accord; the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA); the Anglican Church of Melanesia’s peace negotiation; and the Australian Government-led multilateral Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

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<sup>4</sup> G. Salomon (ed.), *The Nature of Peace Education: Not All Programs are Equal* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002), pp. 3-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

In 2000, the Australian and New Zealand governments assisted in negotiating ceasefire meetings between two militant groups (Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) and IFM) and the Provincial Governments of Guadalcanal and Malaita. Following a series of peace talks in Townsville, Australia, the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) was signed. This Agreement established the framework for working towards peace by establishing the Solomon Islands' Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) and an International Peace Monitoring Team (IPMT) of unarmed police and civilians from Australia, New Zealand and Pacific island countries. Progress, however, was limited since the militants held on to many of their weapons, lawlessness continued around Honiara, and the formal economy was at a standstill. The success of these initiatives was limited because the adversaries in the conflict, particularly the militant leaders, were not involved with them. While Harold Keke and groups from Marau Sound were not part of the TPA process, one of the main problems with the TPA was that it was dominated by the two main militant groups and deliberately excluded civil society representatives. The latter, through the Solomon Islands Christian Association and Civil Society Peace Conference Communiqué, produced after a peace conference aboard a New Zealand frigate, had sought to be included in the Townsville negotiations but were excluded by the militant leaders.

In 2003 the Australian Government was invited by the newly-elected Solomon Islands' Government to lead RAMSI. A consequence of this initiative was that more than 2000 police and soldiers from many member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum landed in the country and set about restoring law and order. Of all the peace initiatives undertaken, this was the one that hastened the return of the rule of law. Investor confidence was then restored and donor activity recommenced.

### **The Place of Peace Education in Post-conflict Peace-building**

The inequitable distribution of development benefits, the harsh economic situation and recurring political crises have weakened the sovereignty of the state, resulting in the social disharmony experienced over the last thirty years. Successive governments have been unable to implement long-term solutions. The local culture (*kastom*), which is a social and traditional foundation of the Solomon Islands, was deliberately manipulated during the conflict to advance the personal and political interests of particular individuals and thus offers little hope for social reconstruction because its legitimacy suffered. If this misuse of *kastom* is not addressed now, these respected social and traditional values will not be available for future generations. This issue has given critical edge to the peace education; particularly its potential to reconcile breaches of *kastom*.

The context within which RAMSI is operating is dramatically changing, particularly as the mission is drawing down resources as part of its transition and eventual exit. Therefore, widening its scope of operation in order to be responsive to local realities is likely to be undermined. To this end, this article argues that RAMSI should implement a deep intervention strategy to engage the services of foreign and local curriculum experts to develop a formal peace curriculum for secondary schools in the Solomon Islands. There is no legal provision for the development of a formal peace curriculum as a long term peace-building initiative in the new Truth, Reconciliation and Justice Bill which was adopted in 2009. However, curriculum development is a key function of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) which can submit a concept paper for cabinet approval. Once cabinet approval is sought, development of a peace curriculum can commence, as the Education Act provides the legal framework for curriculum development in the country. While this process will take some time, the integration of peace topics into the school curriculum has already begun and can pave the way for the development of a fully-fledged peace curriculum in the future.

## **Education for Peace-in-Action**

Education for Peace-in-Action is used in this article to refer to the peace education activities which are taught in schools and as well those activities which are extra curricular. The ethnic conflict led Solomon Islands authorities to rethink its school curriculum. In its search for alternatives, the Solomon Islands Government commissioned a study to look into overhauling the country's entire education curriculum. This study released its findings in a 2008 report titled: *National Curriculum Statement*. The broad curriculum policy in this report is:

This National Curriculum Statement is an outcome of the Education Sector Investment Reform Programme (ESIRP) which began in 2004. The Education Reform has emphasized education for life, through which relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes can be acquired by pupils. The learning opportunities offered will enable learners to live in harmony with others and with their environment and to prepare for adult life and making a living.<sup>6</sup>

It is against this curriculum policy framework that the integration of peace education into the secondary school social studies curriculum was conceived. The integration of peace education topics is regarded as crucial for the new junior secondary school (Years 7-9) social studies curriculum. In the senior secondary school (Years 10-12) social studies curriculum the focus is more on studying conflicts and wars with little or no attention to peace-building. It is obvious that some aspects of peace-building are integrated across the Junior Secondary School curriculum as highlighted in

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, *National Curriculum Statement* (Honiara: Curriculum Development Centre, 2008), p. 5.

Table 1 below. This means that learning activities in these subjects have components of peace which later lead to “a transferability of knowledge, skills and attitudes in real life”. As highlighted in Table 1, the focus on forgiveness and reconciliation in the ‘Christian Life within the Community’ strand is a real life example of what has been the practice in many communities.

In this sense the integration of peace education into the curriculum is one of the primary means for effecting sustainable development in the country. Thus, the primary goal of the curriculum reform as enshrined in the National Curriculum Statement<sup>7</sup> is not merely to effect the integration of peace education into the curriculum, but to transform the Solomon Islands into a peaceful society and develop a sense of common citizenship to the larger task of nation-building.

The students in both junior and secondary levels not only learn about peace in the classroom, but they also practise it as their way of life. All students are affiliated to Christian denominations and their upbringing includes attending church services on Sundays. Schools also hold church services as part of their extra-curricular activities. During the Christmas break students usually form village choirs and go around neighbouring villages singing Christmas carols as a way of preaching the message of peace as embodied in their Christian beliefs. In terms of indigenous peace practices, the students participate in traditional ceremonies held in their villages. This is a testament to the strong articulation between indigenous beliefs, including peace practices, and introduced Christian beliefs and values—a common phenomenon throughout the Melanesian Pacific.

The students also participate in a number of sporting activities. Each school is assigned a teacher responsible for organising sports. Every Friday afternoon is devoted to sports and the popular games are soccer, volleyball, netball and athletics. Some of the secondary school students have been selected over the years to be part of their provincial soccer squad in the Solomon cup, which was held annually and brings together teams from all provinces. This is a national peace initiative aimed at creating a culture of peace among school children. This initiative is organised under the theme ‘national kids football, cultural exchange, and education festival’. In this national peace education program apart from playing soccer, participating schools also engaged in cultural exchange by way of showcasing their traditional dances and arts. The festival was an annual event in the past but was discontinued due to lack of funding. However, a similar event, which is called Carols in the Islands, has been on-going and usually attracts many school children in Honiara.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

**Table 1: Form 1-3 (Years 7-9) Secondary School Social Studies Peace Strand Links with Other Subjects**

Subject	Year Level	Strand	Strand Theme	Link Description (Sub Strand)	Link with Social Studies Syllabus
Arts & Culture	10	Cultural Studies	Cultural studies	Language Living in Harmony with others	Year 9 Practicing Peace building
Christian Education	8	Christian Life within the community		Forgiveness & Reconciliation	Year 8 Practicing Peace
Science	7	Earth & Beyond	Earth & Beyond	Tectonics, Earthquakes, tsunami & volcano <i>with implications for maintaining peace in times of natural disasters</i>	Year 7 Volcanoes Earthquakes & Tsunamis <i>with implications for maintaining peace in times of natural disasters.</i>
	8	Earth systems	Earth systems	Climate and weather <i>with learning activities addressing peace through traditional adaptability strategies to changing climate and weather.</i>	Year 8 Climate and weather <i>with learning activities addressing peace through traditional adaptability strategies to changing climate and weather.</i>
Agriculture	7	Introduction to Agriculture		Shifting cultivation. <i>This point to some aspects maintaining environmental peace through shifting cultivation.</i>	Year 7 Shifting cultivation and its alternatives. <i>This point to some aspects maintaining environmental peace through shifting cultivation.</i>
English	7-9	Speaking or oral skills Listening Skills Reading and interpreting skills Writing skills Research in Library  <i>These skills are applied to resolving conflicts and practice peace.</i>			Year 7-9 English skills and Language is used in learning of social studies curriculum contents <i>particularly in learning activities dealing with conflict resolution and practicing peace.</i>

Note: *italic* inserts are the author's interpretations.

Source: Curriculum Development Centre, *Social Studies Syllabus for Secondary School (Years 7 - 9)* (Honiara: Curriculum Development Centre, 2007), pp. 10-1.

For most provincial participants the festival may be their first time in the capital city (Honiara) and it is educational for them to visit the government Ministries, the National Parliament and other national institutions and organisations. Many rural schools' principals who have attended the festival

commented that it created a sense of national identity for participating schools from outlying islands. Participation in the 'national kids' football, cultural exchange, and education festival' rotates around the schools in each province so that every school has an opportunity to represent their province. This program inculcates in students a sense of national identity and social cohesion especially for isolated students from the remote provinces. For instance a principal commented:

When the school represented the province in the festival it changed the students' worldview. Now the students are able to feel that though we are from Temotu Nendo we are part of a province called Temotu and Temotu is part of a country called the Solomon Islands.<sup>8</sup>

## **Peace-building to Reconnect the Layers of Solomon Islands Society**

RAMSI has been the subject of debate among critical Solomon Islanders and foreign analysts. Many ordinary Solomon Islanders believe that if RAMSI leaves waves of crisis will arise again. The question is how long RAMSI will maintain law and order in the Solomon Islands while the issues that ignited the conflict are left unaddressed. As Kabutaulaka has argued:

foreign intervention, while useful in the short term, does not offer an easy solution to internal problems. It might create a quasi-functioning state that is able to restore order ... but without addressing the underlying causes of unrest ... the risk is it will create a culture of dependency.<sup>9</sup>

As alluded to earlier, the underlying causes of the conflict are deep-seated traditional issues of land and compensation, and they remain important during post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building. The process of peace-building as a pre-requisite to post-conflict reconstruction cannot advance if these issues are ignored. The danger is that the longer these issues remain unresolved, the more likely it is that resentment will build up. In addition, uneven development and grievances relating to powerful local perceptions of relative deprivation due to underlying causes would remain an obstacle to sustainable peace.

The services of RAMSI can be well utilised in post-conflict reconstruction if Solomon Islanders are part of the intervention, particularly when traditional issues are being dealt with. Foreign intervention without local input cannot solve complex traditional issues. In addition, the civil component of RAMSI must take a leading role in post-conflict reconstruction, including the services of civil engineers to build and repair bridges, roads and other infrastructural amenities. However, when this issue was raised by a Parliamentarian, RAMSI objected that these activities were beyond the scope of the

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<sup>8</sup> Fieldwork Notes, 15 March 2010.

<sup>9</sup> T. Kabutaulaka, 'Beyond Ethnicity: Understanding the Crisis in Solomon Islands', *Pacific News Bulletin*, 5 May 2000.

mission.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates the inherent dilemma with such interventions in how far external actors can/should go in addressing underlying problems without inducing debilitating levels of dependence on the part of local actors. Some would say that RAMSI has already crossed this line (by doing too much, rather than too little), leaving very high levels of local dependency as it contemplates drawdown and exit. This is a very difficult balancing act to achieve and which is shared, in varying degrees, across all substantial post-conflict reconstruction exercises.

For the last thirty years the Solomon Islands has survived through band-aid development. There have been waves of political instability and economic crisis. If RAMSI is going to have a positive impact on the development of the country, it is time to engage in the “deep intervention” advocated by Tim Anderson.<sup>11</sup> For the Solomon Islands, deep intervention would include healing the real development wounds of the past and not merely providing a band-aid through the maintenance of law and order. Such sentiments were also echoed by Gaurav Sodhi, who stated that:

RAMSI has concentrated its efforts on peripheral problems and ignored the real constraints to growth ... agriculture is the key ... without land surveys, registration and long term leases there can be no progress ... without an economic growth outlook ... RAMSI has no exit strategy.<sup>12</sup>

And as Anderson further added, it is “doubtful that RAMSI carried sufficient political will for such deep intervention”.<sup>13</sup>

The longer RAMSI remains in the Solomon Islands in the absence of deep intervention the more likely it is that a new set of problems will arise that are detrimental to peace-building. In Honiara many residents are feeling the negative economic pinch of RAMSI’s presence. Hellen Maebuta has revealed that many locals are moving to squatter settlements because they can no longer afford the high monthly house rentals in the city.<sup>14</sup> The *Solomon Star* on 16 January 2007 reported that:

any economic gains since RAMSI’s arrival in July 2003 were confined to and are urban-based, creating a bubble economy—a bubble which can burst at any time as it is at the mercy of politics. In real estate, for example, the rental market has gone through the roof in Honiara in the last three years—with a three-bedroom dwelling now fetching an average rental of SI\$15,000 a month. As it is, the rental market is now out of reach for Solomon Islanders. Major employers including the Government are finding it hard to secure reasonable accommodation for its employees. A SI\$5,000-

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<sup>10</sup> J. Waipora, ‘Report on RAMSI’, *Solomon Star*, 7 February 2008, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Anderson, ‘The Limits of RAMSI’, 27 April 2008, <<http://www.aidwatch.org.au>> [Accessed 22 July 2008].

<sup>12</sup> G. Sodhi, ‘Five out of Ten’, *Island Sun*, 4 February 2008, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, ‘The Limits of RAMSI’.

<sup>14</sup> Hellen Esther Maebuta, *Livelihood Strategies of People in Solomon Islands Squatter Settlements* (Suva: The University of the South Pacific, 2007), p. 45.



a-month rental was considered excessive only three short years ago. Not anymore. Such a price is now at the bottom end of the rental market.<sup>15</sup>

This economic scenario provides evidence to substantiate one of Anderson's critical analyses about RAMSI:

the 'aid caravan' in Honiara since 2003 has also brought with it a number of common and highly resented features that we could collectively characterise as 'aid trauma'. These comprise: an inflationary 'enclave bubble economy', failures in human and institutional capacity building and relative deprivation.<sup>16</sup>

Anderson has raised issues that are of great value to the long-term development of the Solomon Islands. To achieve development in the post-conflict reconstruction era, the Solomon Islands needs a culturally-appropriate deep intervention beyond the limits of maintaining law and order. It was in this context that a motion to pave the way for a review of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act, under which RAMSI operates, was passed in Parliament on 24 July 2008. The motion mandated the Solomon Islands Foreign Relations Committee to find ways in which RAMSI can develop programs according to the aspirations and plans of the Solomon Islands.<sup>17</sup> The committee's findings and recommendations had highlighted a number of key issues and it will be interesting to see how these will be successfully implemented and sustained when RAMSI finally leaves.

A Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace (MNURP) was established in 2001 as a means to broker reconciliation and peace in the ethnic conflict. The ministerial functions include: peace and reconciliation; post-conflict rehabilitation; truth and reconciliation programs; and national unity programs. Following the ethnic conflict, reconciliation and peace were established through the provision of a peace and restoration fund. The fund ran from 2000-2004 and mainly concentrated on rebuilding schools that had been burnt down during the ethnic crisis. In the post-conflict era many of the reconciliation and peace initiatives which were undertaken by MNURP received mixed reactions. However, this did not deter the government from pursuing the peace process in the 'Happy Isles'. In the 2008 national budget the government allocated SI\$5 million for national reconciliation and peace programs. Of this amount, more than SI\$3.3 million was for the truth and reconciliation process, SI\$700,000 for promotion of national unity and peace, and SI\$500,000 for training workshops and seminars for leaders to deal with conflict and prevention of violence. SI\$450,000 was allocated for the

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<sup>15</sup> 'The Blame Game has Shifted', *Solomon Star*, 16 January 2007, <<http://www.solomonstarnews.com/?q=node/12302>> [Accessed 18 January 2007].

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, 'The Limits of RAMSI', p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, 'Parliament Passes Motion on', 24 July 2008, <<http://www.sibconline.com.sb/Story.asp?IDnews=23020&IDThread=175>> [Accessed 25 July 2008].

promotion of peace-building and partnerships and networks.<sup>18</sup> These national peace programs were aimed at bringing together different sectors of the Solomon Islands community. Educational initiatives such as seminars and workshops were designed to bring together communities who had been in conflict to mend broken relationships. However, the outcomes and effectiveness of these peace-building programs are yet to be evaluated. One of the key concerns is that peace seminars and workshops were a piecemeal approach because it was only for a short period of time compared to a school peace curriculum. In looking back to the early forms of reconciliation and peace-building, some of these initiatives should have been carried through and sustained by the functions of MNURP. For instance, the good work of the National Peace Council was prematurely disbanded.<sup>19</sup>

The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is a commission officially established by the Solomon Islands Government in April 2009. It has been formed to investigate the causes of the ethnic conflict that gripped the country between 1997 and 2003. The Commission is the first of its kind in the Pacific Islands region. The purpose of the TRC is to address the trauma experienced by people during the conflict. The members of the TRC began hearing testimony from witnesses, victims and perpetrators of the conflict in March 2010.

The Solomon Islands TRC model was derived from international experience (and to a large extent designed by international actors/agencies, such as the International Centre for Transitional Justice in New York who provided the technical assistance), and rather than being based on local circumstances and experience it draws on the model used in Sierra Leone. The common problem is that of institutional transfer in international development practice. While the overarching application of a truth commission is a valid undertaking, what remains to be tested is whether retributive and restorative justice takes on different meanings in small communities. The other peculiarity of the Solomon Islands TRC is that amnesties were established before truth-telling and the majority of the perpetrators had already been brought to trial and imprisoned before the TRC began operating. Such a mismatch opens up further areas of debate regarding the realities of the truth-telling process in the Solomon Islands. The question that remains is: how can the TRC meaningfully contribute to peace-building? Most Solomon Islanders have argued that inviting victims and perpetrators to testify in public hearings has not brought about true reconciliation, because in the culture of the Solomon Islands truth-telling is only able to bring about reconciliation and healing if the process is concluded with traditional rituals.

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of National Unity Reconciliation and Peace, 'Reconciliation and Peace Programme Budget 2008', 7 April 2008, <<http://www.sibconline.com.sb/story.asp?IDThread=175&IDNews=22144>> [Accessed 12 April 2008].

<sup>19</sup> John Braithwaite et al., *Pillars and Shadows: Statebuilding as Peacebuilding in Solomon Islands* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010).

As TRC hearings do not utilise traditional rituals, they are likely to re-open old wounds and breed new resentments.

Christian churches are one of the influential organisations of civil society in the Solomon Islands. About 95 per cent of the population is affiliated to the Christian faith: 34 per cent belong to the Church of Melanesia (Anglican), 19 per cent are Catholics, 17 per cent South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC),<sup>20</sup> 11 per cent United Church and 10 per cent Seventh Day Adventist (SDA). Along with these mainstream churches, the charismatic and Pentecostal churches, the Jehovah's Witness and the Bahai faith are also active in the country. Over the years some Solomon Islanders have converted to the teachings of Islam. In almost every village throughout the country there is either a church building, or a church leader. Village daily routines begin with Morning Prayer meetings and end with evening prayers, which mean that churches have tended to be more influential in daily life than the state.

The Anglican Church made use of its influence in peace-building when it embarked on peace-building initiatives. The Anglican Communion News Service reported that from 28 April to 1 May 2008, about ninety members of the Church of Melanesia met for a four-day provincial consultation in Honiara on the theme: 'Healing Past Hurts: A way forward for the Church of Melanesia' in the Church's Ministry of Reconciliation and Peace-building.<sup>21</sup> The Consultation agreed on seven key areas for a reconciliation and peace-building ministry in the Church of Melanesia in the Solomon Islands: Healing Ministry; Mediating Ministry; Reconciliation Ministry; Marriage and Family Ministry; Rebuilding and Strengthening Christian societies in post-conflict areas; seeking justice for suffering people; and developing structures for coordinating, prioritising and implementing each ministry's programs.<sup>22</sup> Vital programs to spearhead the church's peace-building process included: a family-based training centre for livelihood on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal; surveys to acquire more information on those affected by the violence; programs for displaced Malaitans; a ministry for former militants; memorial services for those lost; and further training for members of religious communities and others, particularly in the area of trauma-counselling and conflict resolution. This consultation was the beginning of the church's healing process. Such a gathering was able to bring together conflicting parties in the spirit of their faith. It enabled church members who had been separated for many years to see each other again and share their stories of suffering and resurrection. These peace-building initiatives are built on the earlier roles of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) Peace Office and various groups such as the Melanesian Brothers in initiating

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<sup>20</sup> David Stanley, *South Pacific Handbook* (California: Moon Publication Inc., 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Anglican Communion News Service, 'Consultation on Reconciliation and Peacebuilding', 19 July 2008, <<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2008/5/6/ACNS4399>> [Accessed 22 July 2008].

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

dialogue between rival groups, and the Sycamore Foundation in facilitating reconciliation between prisoners.<sup>23</sup>

The churches are well placed in the communities and therefore they can be effective in implementing peace-building programs. However, due to lack of financial support the churches could not adequately implement their programs. What the churches are doing in terms of peace-building is viewed by many as part of their pastoral duties to their flocks. While this is true, their work is part of the national peace-building initiatives which the government needs to recognise and become partners with the church. To make this happen, the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace needs to collaborate with the churches so that their peace-building programs are well coordinated to the national peace-building policies.

## Conclusion

A key lesson arising from this discussion is that, given the mismatches between forms of peace-building, peace education in schools and community-based processes of building peace are as vital as larger national and international peace-building efforts. Thus, peace education to enhance grass-root peace-building initiatives, supported by infrastructural and community development activities, represents the most practical and successful approach. Given the disconnected layers in the country's peace-building, the long term sustainability of peace remains a major challenge. Therefore, reconnecting peace-building initiatives through education could be a tool for civilisation of peace into the future.

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<sup>23</sup> Braithwaite et al., *Pillars and Shadows*.