ISSUES PAPER

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNICATING SENSITIVE ISSUES IN FRAGILE SETTINGS: LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE BOUGAINVILLE REFERENDUM RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

The forthcoming referendum in Bougainville is an event with profound implications. The independent Bougainville Referendum Research Project, conducted by the PNG National Research Institute (PNG NRI), aims to support informed dialogue and decision making for the referendum and to encourage learning from international experience. This desktop literature review was commissioned to inform the design of a communication strategy to maximise the uptake and positive impact of this important research. It explores the key challenges and different approaches for communicating sensitive issues in fragile settings around the world. It draws upon relevant literature and international examples with immediate practical application in mind, especially for the PNG NRI and other parties conducting outreach in relation to the Bougainville referendum.

This review examines cross-disciplinary literature, including post-conflict, peacebuilding, mediation and media theory. It begins with an overview of literature concerned with the role of communication in fragile settings and its intersection with human rights. A discussion of challenges for communicating sensitive issues in fragile settings follows, based on the themes of trust and information flows, access and inclusivity, civic and voter education for elections and referendums in fragile settings, and mitigating risks. The review concludes with key lessons learned and recommendations for parties undertaking Bougainville referendum civic and voter education, media policy decision makers and the academic community. This paper points to the difficulties faced by governments, community members, civil society, the media and development actors in fragile contexts. In such settings, a flexible approach and managing risks are of utmost importance.

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Introduction

With a target date of 15 June 2019, the forthcoming referendum in Bougainville is an event with profound implications for Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB). It is a significant milestone in the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA). Its outcome will determine future governance arrangements for Bougainville.

Holding a referendum is a new process for PNG. The outcome is subject to ratification by the National Parliament, with the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) and the national government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG) to consult over the referendum results, as required under the BPA. Both the ABG and GoPNG have identified that greater public awareness and community engagement on the implementation of the BPA require urgent attention to ensure the credibility, integrity and inclusiveness of the referendum (ABG, 2016, p.1).

The PNG National Research Institute (PNG NRI) is a leading public policy think tank. Its independent Bougainville Referendum Research Project is contributing to efforts to get everyone "Referendum ready". The research aims are to support informed dialogue and decision making for the referendum and to encourage learning from international experience.

The project will help fill critical knowledge gaps and improve understanding of options for the conduct of the referendum and potential implications. A series of independent studies, conducted by international experts, will be released progressively in 2018. The studies propose to inform stakeholders on three key questions:

1. What is a referendum and why is it being held?
2. How can the referendum be effectively administered?
3. What are the possible outcomes and how can the outcome of the Bougainville Referendum be effectively managed and implemented?

The PNG NRI will make research-based evidence available to government officials to inform their decision-making in preparation for the referendum. Furthermore, the impartial information generated from the project will become freely available to all parties. All parties are encouraged to incorporate points into their communications, including civic and voter education materials, and media coverage. In this way, the research will help to raise complex and sensitive issues for consideration before voters go to the referendum.

Communicating the research findings

The PNG NRI wants lessons learned internationally, combined with the unique local contexts, to inform the design of a communication strategy for its Bougainville Referendum Research Project, aimed at maximising the uptake and positive impact of its research. The Institute also wants to provide learning to support the design and implementation of official civic and voter education and voter information programs for the referendum.

What are the sensitive areas when communicating difficult and complex issues in a fragile setting? What are the risks? What are specific considerations for civic and voter education in fragile contexts? Understanding

how these issues and challenges have been managed in other contexts will be useful for the PNG NRI and other parties involved in planning and administering the Bougainville Referendum. This desktop literature review explores the key challenges and different approaches for communicating sensitive issues in fragile settings around the world, including consideration of civic and voter education.

Methodology

This review examines cross-disciplinary literature, including post-conflict, peacebuilding, mediation, human rights, communication for development (C4D) and media theory. It draws from reports, studies, case studies, articles, manuals, toolkits, and websites. Much of this literature is concerned with the characteristics of fragile settings and observations about the communication challenges they present for government, populations, the media, civil society, and for national and international aid organisations.

There is a wealth of relevant literature, despite gaps raised by some authors. Baddorf (2015), for example, found a gap in research on communications in conflict and post-conflict environments, including monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness, while Iroga (2008) identified a lack of literature on conflict reporting in Solomon Islands. Certainly, there are gaps in the literature examining communications and media in the Bougainville context, and more broadly, the dissemination of research findings by public policy think tanks in fragile contexts.

There is more discussion in the literature of civic and voter education for elections than for referendums. This review recognises that referendums are different political events from elections (Dekavalla, 2016) in that a referendum is a direct vote on a specific issue, in contrast with votes cast at elections, which are in relation to parties or candidates (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network). A rights-based approach dominates the discussion about civic and voter education for elections. This review, however, assumes such principles apply also to civic and voter education for referendums.

Rather than attempting a comprehensive review,

this report aims to draw out and summarise relevant literature, examples, and lessons from international experiences with immediate practical application in mind, especially for the PNG NRI and other parties conducting outreach in relation to the Bougainville Referendum.

This review begins with an overview of literature concerned with the role of communication in fragile settings and its intersection with human rights. The concepts of fragility, civic and voter education, and voter information are defined herewith.

A discussion of the key challenges for communicating sensitive issues in fragile settings follows, based on the themes of trust and information flows, access and inclusivity, civic and voter education for elections and referendums in fragile settings, and mitigating risks. The report concludes with a summary of key lessons learned and recommendations.

An Overview: Key concepts in communication

There is consensus in the literature on the importance of communication in development and peacebuilding. For instance, Bloh (2010) maintains that strategic communication becomes a key component of the development process by creating space for dialogue between diverse stakeholders. Spadacini (2015) on the other hand finds that open dialogue and communication are central to building peace.

In conflict-affected states, the communication sector becomes even more crucial in helping to manage expectations, aiding the formation of an inclusive national identity, and fostering an engaged citizenry (Kalathil et al., 2008). Communications can be used to mitigate and prevent violence as well as to incite and escalate it (Oatley, 2011, p.21). Baddorf (2015) goes further, asserting that in such environments, effective communication can have life and death consequences for many people, given the sensitive issues at hand, such as military attacks or kidnappings.

The literature points to earlier dissent over whether communication is synonymous with information.

Waisbord (2005, p.83) asserts that the idea that communication equals information and that development problems are reduced to citizens' 'lack of information' has been discredited. Mefalopulos (2008) maintains that information should be considered as one output of communication and, in many cases, not even the main output.

Defining fragility

Despite widespread use of the term "fragility", there is no consensus on its definition. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines it as "the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks" (OECD 2016, p.73). Fragility can lead to violence, the breakdown of institutions, displacement, humanitarian crises or other emergencies (OECD, 2016). According to Deane (2013, p.3), fragile states are often fractured states, divided along religious, political, ethnic or other factional fault lines. The World Bank Group (2017) combines fragility, conflict, and violence with the acronym "FCV" and treats them collectively as a critical development challenge.

Rather than being fixed, fragility is a continuum, according to Muggah et al. (2012, p.16), with collapsed states at one end, and states that feature some stability yet face risk of regression at the other extreme. The OECD uses a scale to identify fragile contexts, where data exists, and classifies PNG and Solomon Islands among 56 fragile contexts (OECD 2016, p.76).

For the purposes of this report, fragile settings include countries or zones experiencing armed conflict, emerging from armed conflict, or affected by grave political, social and economic vulnerability (Muggah, 2012). This includes conflict, post-conflict, and peacebuilding contexts.

Stark assessments of fragile contexts dominate the literature, which includes insights from communicators and journalists into the on-ground reality. Iroga (2008) highlights how Solomon Islands media received threats from militants and even police officers for almost every critical story they published or broadcast. Staff being expelled from a fragile setting where the government is unhappy with an entity's communication is among the serious risks highlighted (Baddorf, 2015).

Yet there are exceptions. Participants at a symposium on sexual and reproductive health in fragile states called for such settings to be recognised as places of resilience that offer surprising opportunities to bring about change, such as the mobilisation of community leaders and society to address sensitive issues (van Dijk, 2015). Viewed as societies in transition, post-conflict states provide an unparalleled opportunity to educate citizens on the equality of women and men, and the crucial contribution women can make to building democracy and peace (UN DPI, 2005).

Communication and Human Rights

Enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Freedom of Expression covers the freedom "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (OHCHR, 2017, Article 19). This encompasses press freedom as well as Freedom of Information, with the latter defined as the right to access information held by public bodies (UNESCO, 2017), applicable to such statutory authorities as the PNG NRI.

Flowing from this recognition of freedom of expression as a fundamental human right, discussion in the literature about human rights, media, and communications extends from nation building and C4D, to the public's right to civic and voter education. For example, UNICEF maintains that C4D is a human rights-based approach and a two-way process for sharing ideas and knowledge using communication tools and approaches that empower individuals and communities to take action to improve their lives (Spadacini, 2015).

The notion that communication is a human right is by no means new to PNG. A National Policy on Information and Communications, circa 1993, acknowledged communication as a basic human right, including the "right to inform and to be informed, the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of information and assembly, and the right to communication opportunities" (Evans, 2001).

Ward (2014) explains that credible and inclusive

elections are based on basic democratic principles which are affirmed in the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Key among these are the rights to freedom of speech and access to information. These principles mean that the electorate and political actors have the right to freely discuss political issues and public policies and to express opinions (Ward, 2014).

Amongst related discussion threads, a BBC Media Action report on the role of media and communication in fragile states concludes that sacrificing media freedom and freedom of expression with the aim of making a state more stable is unlikely to be effective (Deane, 2013, p.25).

Defining civic and voter education and voter information

Civic education is aimed at conveying knowledge of a country's political system and context and may, for example, cover information on the value of democracy and the importance of peace and national reconciliation (UN DPI, 2005). Civic education is a continual process, not necessarily tied to the electoral cycle (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network) and it seeks to instil an appreciation by citizens of their roles in the democratic process (UNDP Africa, 2013, p.22).

Voter education is concerned with such concepts as the role, responsibilities, and rights of voters, which involves explanations, not just a statement of facts. Voter education requires more lead-time for implementation than voter information (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network). The main responsibility for voter education rests with the government, namely the national election management body, although the media, non-governmental, and international organisations can play a role (UN DPI, 2005).

Voter information refers to basic information enabling qualified citizens to vote, including the date, time, and place of voting, the type of election and mechanisms for voting (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network).

This review notes that government and non-state actors have been undertaking civic education in Bougainville

for many years, focused on the BPA and its pillars, and that voter education about the referendum is also well under way. The Bougainville Audience Study (Thomas et al., 2017), however, reveals that about three quarters of respondents are not sure, or indicate they do not know much about the referendum, with just six out of 100 people saying they are clear about the referendum and its processes.

It may be argued that intensive civic and voter education and voter information for the Bougainville Referendum, with universal coverage of the electorate, should be treated as a right and a priority. The UN maintains that voter and civic education are even more critical in post-conflict countries, especially where the system of government and voting processes are new (UN DPI, 2005). Brice Bado (Dec 2015) recommends that providers of electoral assistance in post-conflict settings make peacebuilding through civic education a priority, arguing that civic education helps to improve the relationships between electoral stakeholders as well as between former combatants, and by raising awareness of major peace and national reconciliation issues (Bado, 2015). Such points are explored further throughout this document.

Trust and information flows

In fragile settings, challenges related to trust, credibility, and the flow of information are detailed in the literature.

Building trust

A legacy of little or no interaction between government and society and a lack of trust in government are characteristics of fragile and conflict-affected states (GSDRC, 2017). The priorities in war-to-peace transitions are reconnecting people to the state and managing expectations through inclusive public dialogue (World Bank, 2008).

Public trust develops out of constructive citizen-state relations, with its basis in responsive public institutions, connected with citizens through inclusive participatory processes (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008). In Sierra Leone, Talking Drum Studios and a Community Peacebuilding Unit used an "alliance building approach"

to emphasise the importance of forging strategic partnerships with other institutions at a local and national level (Everitt et al., 2004).

Establishing trust in information is a key challenge for organisations in fragile settings (World Bank, 2008; Oatley et al., 2011), due to such factors as suspicions of where free information is coming from and who the political backers of the information are. In fractured states, the politics of identity is often fuelled by where and how people get their information, what shapes their opinion and loyalty, and how they find views like their own reflected in the public domain (Deane, 2013). Brice Bado (2015) argues that restoring trust may be achieved through civic education.

In fragile settings where the government is absent, non-state actors play an important role and people rely on personal networks: tribes, clans, family, religious groups (World Bank, 2008). For example, in Timor-Leste during a period when the national government provided little reliable input into the public sphere, citizens and civil society relied on rumours and informal channels to influence their debates and opinion (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008).

In Bougainville, verbal communication and word of mouth are considered a traditional means of passing information across gender, age, geographical location and social strata. The type of information conveyed depends on how much people trust the information source and how important they consider the information (Thomas et al. 2017, p.15). The Bougainville Audience Study (Thomas et al., 2017) also finds that the government [unspecified] is seen as pivotal in spreading the necessary information about the referendum. Respondents perceive the government as distant and indifferent in this regard.

A lack of trust can also apply within government in fragile settings (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008). In Timor-Leste, a pervading culture meant most ministers did not disclose information beyond a small group of trusted advisers. Information-sharing and transparency were considered irrelevant. Von Kaltenborn-Stachau (2008, p.40) points to the need for the executive within state institutions to promote inter-departmental coordination and the development of a clear understanding of departments' roles and mandates.

Credibility and local context

A survey found that in conflict and post-conflict environments, the credibility and reputation of an organisation are key factors, enabling them to communicate effectively. Messages will only resonate with the audience when a credible source delivers them (Baddorf, 2015). "You can have the most perfectly crafted message that is logically impeccable but if it's broadcast via an American military loudspeaker, the message won't be accepted", according to a US communicator in Iraq (Baddorf, 2015, p. 24). In Timor-Leste, the low quality of official decisions and the divided institutions caused public opinion to be very critical of the state and doubt its credibility (World Bank, 2008).

Various principles guide UN electoral assistance, including respect for national sovereignty and ownership, and respect for the local context (Ward, 2014). Communicators must have a strong understanding of the local context and culture as a measure of credibility, according to the local people and organisations (Baddorf, 2015).

The literature makes clear that communicating in the preferred languages of audiences has many benefits, including building credibility. The impact on community members of hearing their own and their neighbours' voices on-air, articulating their views in the local language, boosts the self-confidence of the community (Mefalopolous, 2008). The use of local languages can also extend the reach of communications. For example, to reach audiences in rural areas of Kenya, two seasons of *The Team* were translated into three local languages, as well as Swahili, and aired on popular radio stations (SFCG, 2017).

PNG has the highest linguistic diversity in the world with more than 800 distinct languages; English, Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin) and Hiri Motu are the official languages (PACMAS, 2013). Almost half of the respondents in the Bougainville Audience Study said they are comfortable consuming media in English. The majority, however, preferred the language to be Tok Pisin (87%). About a third expressed that they preferred

media in their local language and Tok Ples (34%).

Management of information flows

Poor information flow and coordination within and among state institutions can severely limit the quality of official deliberations and decision making (World Bank, 2008). The C4D community argues that communication and information flows are integral to empowering and enabling a healthy, vibrant civil society (Oatley et al., 2011, p. 4). Graffiti is a popular form of expression and communication in many fragile settings (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008, p.39). It shows how citizens can try to spread information.

Regimes often control access to information to draw loyalty and support from individuals. By providing public entry points for communication, state institutions can overcome public disempowerment, the dangers of which are highlighted (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008). Organisation must look for ways to challenge the use of information to encourage violence while also creating a culture of trust and reliability between communities and the media (World Bank, 2008). For media covering terrorist attacks, mastering the flow of information, and ensuring its truth and accuracy are journalistic practices that can prevent fear from turning into panic or paranoia and dividing society (Marthoz, 2017, p.39).

The early PNG policy took a broad view of the entire spectrum of communication to serve the cause of information flow and communication processes in development (Evans, 2001). The Bougainville Crisis left a gap in information systems and information dissemination (Thomas et al., 2017), which is bridged in a gradual process. For example, the ABG Bureau of Media and Communications, established in 2005, is intent on improving the flow of information to the population, ensuring informed participation in public dialogue (Thomas et al., 2017), despite its limited resources.

Using storytelling to address sensitive issues

The use of 'edutainment' (programs that mix education and entertainment) in fragile states is effective. It helps increase collective social action and can promote social trust, conflict resolution and reconciliation (Skuse et al., 2012). Despite reaching less people, storytelling or popular theatre are effective in discussing sensitive issues and in gradually inducing change in an audience's attitudes and behaviours (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Drama presents benefits for addressing sensitive issues indirectly (Spadacini, 2013). The story format – whether delivered through radio drama, poetry, theatre, or comics – enables the audience to step out of their immediate reality to identify in an emotional way with the characters of a story (Spadacini, 2013, p.38). Through the resources that the state or non-state actors provide this methodology is considered invaluable for civic and voter education for the Bougainville Referendum.

A lauded concept is the television series *The Team* launched by Search for Common Ground and Media Focus on Africa in the aftermath of the 2008 Kenya post-election violence. It has since been replicated in 19 countries where the series addresses real issues facing societies, using sport as a unifier to surmount barriers (SFCG, 2017). Each production follows the characters in a football team who must overcome their cultural, religious, tribal, or other differences in order to work together to win the game (see: www.sfcg.org/the-team/). The target group of *The Team*, males aged 15–35, represented the largest, single listener group (Spadacini, 2013). Mobile screening of episodes were organised before groups discussions in areas affected by the post-election violence.

Access and participation

Physical infrastructure

The combination of violent conflict and insufficient capital expenditure can mean the loss or deterioration of government buildings, schools, roads, telecommunications networks, and other infrastructure. This leaves gaps in services and information systems. People in rural and remote areas face the most significant hurdles. These communities are often at greatest risk of violent conflicts (Oatley, 2011, p.23).

In Liberia, 14 years of civil war resulted in the breakdown of education and health systems, particularly beyond the capital (UNDP 2011). A radio show, introduced

in 2003, attracted interests from senior government officials. It offered them an opportunity to address their constituents directly. Most roads were destroyed during the war and large parts of the country remained inaccessible during the rainy season (UNDP 2011).

Similarly, destruction to much of the infrastructure during the Bougainville crisis made rebuilding information systems and providing the population with access to information a challenge for the government (Thomas et al., 2017). An upgrade in 2017, however, for NBC Bougainville's shortwave service should help increase radio access from 25 percent (Thomas et el., 2017, p.11). Radio is already Bougainville's most commonly accessed traditional mass media, even though just one fifth of respondents owned a radio per se (Thomas, et al., 2017). Broadcast quality and financial constraint are issues. The Bougainville population have a lot to say when it comes to owning or accessing radio, TV, the internet, and mobile phones. Thirty percent of the population are unhappy with the continuous cost of recharging cited by 30 percent of respondents for the latter (Thomas et al., 2017, p.12).

Education systems and literacy

In some fragile contexts, formal education systems are interrupted over a period of many years. Many of the youth in Bougainville have missed out on formal education because of the crisis. They are referred to as the "lost generation" (Thomas et al., 2017).

Education affects literacy levels, which in turn influences how people use media and access information. PNG has an adult literacy rate of 56 percent (in its 2000 Census). While there is no recent reliable data for AROB, qualitative interviews by Thomas, et al. (2017) indicate a general low level of literacy. This implies that any communication targeted at the majority of the PNG and AROB population must be accessible to those with minimal formal education.

The combined use of media and outreach work is a highly effective way to engage rural, often illiterate populations while promoting peace building. Street theatre and other participatory media and visual aids are accepted in the literature as proven methods of outreach with illiterate audiences.

Participation

It is indisputable that the issue of participatory citizenship should be central to development efforts (Waisbord, 2005). Research has shown that lack of opportunities for groups to participate in and exert their influences on political and development processes contributes to their sense of being outsiders in their own community. It makes them more susceptible to act as spoilers of peace (UNDP, 2011).

Mefalopulos (2008) provides a detailed analysis of the participatory paradigm. It is based on the dialogic, two-way model, as opposed to "diffusion" thinking, which is heavily rooted in the monologic, one-way model of communication. Participatory approaches require individuals to be considered active agents of development efforts rather than passive recipients (Mefalopulos, 2008, p.50). However, a cautious, conflict-avoiding style of communications in post-conflict areas can be a barrier to more participatory processes.

Developing key messages in a dialogic mode involves using open-ended content aimed at stimulating dialogue among various groups of stakeholders. This approach is particularly useful when addressing sensitive issues on which the audience's knowledge and inputs are considered particularly beneficial (Mefalopulos, 2008). A lack of care in crafting public leadership messages, both formal and informal, was a major problem in Timor-Leste (World Bank, 2008).

Waisbord (2005) refers to a growing realisation that top-down and bottom-up communication strategies are necessary to tackle a host of problems successfully. Von Kaltenborn-Stachau (2008) maintains that introducing participatory mechanisms gives a voice to the disenfranchised, allows the public to shape policy decisions, and holds the state accountable to the public will. Certainly, the Bougainville Audience Study (Thomas et al., 2017) identifies a desire by respondents for a "bottom up approach" whereby "all ideas must start from inside the community and go upwards".

When considering the use of participatory media (such as street theatre, role playing, video, social mobilisation) in fragile states, Skuse et al. (2012) caution that face-to-face communication may be difficult and risky

depending on the intensity of conflict. It is only effective if there is an audience for it. ABG Radio Ples Lain is appreciated for traveling to communities around Bougainville (Thomas et al, 2017), enabling direct interaction, although its service is inconsistent.

In Kenya, national-level political violence centres on competition to control the presidency and corresponds to the country's election cycles (OECD, 2016, p.45). In 2013, a national campaign supported by the UN and Google Kenya used footballers, Olympians and other local sports stars to reduce the risk of violence in Kenya's elections. The Sports 4 Peaceful Elections campaign involved famous Kenyan sportspeople hosting Google+ Hangouts in an attempt to: sensitise Kenyans, including the diaspora, on the electoral process; encourage responsible social media use ahead of the elections; and elicit a personal pledge from citizens to maintain peace (UNDP, 2013). As sport is popular content on TV, radio and in newspapers in Bougainville (Thomas et al, 2017), a similar campaign might work for the Bougainville Referendum.

Inclusivity

The literature indicates that inclusivity has advantages and disadvantages. Careful consideration is required. Building an inclusive public dialogue and giving a voice and a stake to a wide group of stakeholders is essential to avoid renewed fragmentation and violence (World Bank, 2008). The OECD (2016) proposes that power sharing and inclusion do not automatically lessen the tensions that poor state-society relationships create, but can even exacerbate them. Focusing, however, on a single actor, layer of society, or sector will not work in a complex fragile context. Rather, working with multiple types of actors at different layers of society will deliver better results (OECD 2016).

A UN mediation reports finds that inclusivity is more likely to address the root causes of conflict during mediation. It, however, raises challenges because not all parties may want to engage or have the coherence to do so (UN DPA & UNEP 2015).

The versatility of violence to transform in changing circumstances, as well as the complexity of motivations for individual behaviour, make it tempting to homogenise

actors, yet this can compound risks (OECD 2016). For community outreach, influential "high impact" groups and their leaders who are trusted and accepted should be identified. These may include religious leaders, local associations, and activist groups depending on the local context.

UNICEF's C4D principles include ensuring active and meaningful participation of children and women, and giving visibility and voice to marginalised and vulnerable groups (Spadacini, 2013). Monitoring should pay attention to negative forces from marginalised peace spoilers capturing the public sphere (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008). Women leaders and groups are often effective in peacemaking and should be involved (UN DPA & UNEP 2015). In some post-conflict zones women's groups have mobilised public opinion in favour of maintaining the peace (UN DPI, 2005). For example, providing strategies to involve youth and ensuring their understanding of the BPA and their active involvement in it can prevent further conflict. This helps them to realise their potential as key change agents (Thomas et al., 2017). The study finds that strategies that create safe spaces for youth to express themselves and build their knowledge and confidence are necessary to mediate their increasing participation and voice in society.

In Liberia, (UNDP 2011), young men had played a multifaceted role during the war. The Know Your Law Makers radio call-in show was developed by the Centre for Promotion of Democracy. The radio show was broadcasted on the UN radio station in Liberia. The Centre produced a rolling four-week schedule that listed the themes to be covered each week. These were circulated to listening groups one week in advance. The group members had an opportunity to discuss them and identify questions and points they wished to raise in the live call-in programme. The listening groups offered a space for young men to use the radio call-in programme as a communication channel. The groups had a positive impact in galvanising young people to take a more active role in society (UNDP 2011). Such a model could be trialled in Bougainville, with or without UN involvement.

Inclusivity toolkit approach

The toolkit is a popular approach to communicating in fragile settings, discussed mainly in the C4D literature. Different techniques in different contexts might be necessary to deal with specific problems and priorities. Mp3 portable audio players and other new communication technology can be effective to deliver civic education to remote populations in areas where poor media and communications infrastructure exists (Skuse et al., 2012). A toolkit approach enables flexibility (Spadacini, 2013). Where possible, strong research should back up any C4D intervention (Spadacini, 2013).

Communication strategies should take advantage of new media but not treat these as a replacement for proven traditional methods. Mobile technology and social media have opened up new opportunities for local people to get more actively engaged in conflict prevention and peace-building activities. For example, new media technologies have helped them warn each other where violence is occurring, or even to tell their own stories.

Mass media, combined with interactive new media tools such as mobile technology and web-based platforms, enables dialogues to expand and conversations taken to a higher level (Spadacini, 2013, p.5).

The media

The difficult role of the media in fragile settings is highlighted in the literature. To survive in fragile settings, journalists need to fully understand the conflict and report with a great degree of caution (Iroga, 2008).

According to Bloh (2010), the media has a significant role in influencing whether a society opts for violence or peace at every stage of a conflict. One factor is a conventional view in the media that conflict "sells" and peace is boring (Bloh, 2010). To help promote peace, Iroga (2008) urged media organisations in Solomon Islands to disregard the Western value that bad news is good news.

Frequent promotion of division rather than searching out commonalities, "the conflict is portrayed as a sport,

in which there are winners and losers" (Bloh, 2010, p.13). This is consistent with the term, "strategic game frame", which describes media coverage that views an election like a competition between opponents (Dekavalla, 2016).

Dekavalla (2016) in her study of print media coverage of the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum (which resulted in a 'No' vote on the question: should Scotland be an independent country?) concluded that although elections and referendums are different in nature, the data did not demonstrate much difference in how these events were framed by the press. Newspapers promoted an understanding of the referendum as being about pragmatic decision-making on policy and political competition, rather than purely a decision about constitutional matters of self-determination. The study's findings have implications for evaluating the performance of the news media in explaining what a referendum is and are relevant for the Bougainville Referendum (Dekavalla, 2016).

One notable trend in fragile states, where the media has traditionally been in the hands of the state or a small number of private operators, has been the appropriation of the media by citizens, particularly through social media and new technologies (Deane, 2015, p.7). In Timor-Leste, even community radio stations with limited resources are attempting to implement more interactive programming. As mobile phones are expensive, some stations invite public officials to discuss local issues on air and then invite the community to provide feedback by coming to the station (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008).

Media education and training

The "sensationalist and unprofessional behaviour" of journalists and editors in Timor-Leste had severe consequences when reporting on alleged massacres furthered the violence during the 2006 crisis (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008, p. 61). It was attributed to the age and inexperience of journalists and a lack of professional training.

Media training and formal journalism education are favoured in the literature as solutions to the challenges facing the media and the quality of reporting. Without

proper training, the media will not have the ability to realise its full potential as an important player in achieving peace in conflict situations (Iroga, 2008).

Peace journalism theory, conflict reporting, and how to transmit accurate and useful information after an isolated incident of violence to help restore order are among the recommended areas of training for the media. As one example, the DAME project included Rumour Management training containing guidance for the media in Timor-Leste on how to report on issues with conflict potential while avoiding an incendiary approach (Koekebakker, 2015).

The role of independent media

Independent media plays a crucial role in building and sustaining democracies in fragile states (Bloh, 2010). For example, Burundi's private media had a significant influence on opinion formation in the national public sphere when it facilitated public support of the peace process and the acceptance of the Arusha Accord (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008, p.21). Through the openness of the media, rebel groups were able to broadcast their views and contribute to the public debate, which led to more open debate and changed the public sphere dynamics significantly (von Kaltenborn-Stachau, 2008). However, Deane (2013) cautions that the newly independent media in fragile states has increasingly become a target for factional actors.

Where communication is defined as the goal of development, community radio is conceived as a mechanism for people to voice their opinions about specific issues and a resource to mobilise citizenship into action (Waisbord, 2005). Community radio also gives listeners access to sensitive subjects that might not otherwise be addressed by the community or in individual households, such as how to protect against sexually transmitted diseases, information about alcohol or drug abuse, and how to confront violence against women and children. Programs that address these and other subjects may encourage families and community members to discuss them.

Deane argues also (2013, p.24) that the media's complex role is "lost" in the aid architecture. Media regulation is among the areas needing attention in fragile settings,

along with assigning clear responsibility for strategic planning and support to the media and access to digital technologies within one agency.

New Dawn FM and the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) partnered and produced and screened six awareness videos in AROB communities to stimulate public awareness and debate on disarmament, the referendum, good governance, missing persons, war widows, and corruption (PACMAS, 2015). This made New Dawn FM staff realise "what a unique position we are in as an independent media and to be able to draw attention to these issues in all the different Bougainvillean communities" (PACMAS, 2015), (note that New Dawn FM has since received government and private funding).

Media relations

Baddorf (2015) cautions that the media environment, especially in conflict zones, requires more than simply issuing a media release. Detailed consideration may be needed to take account of media censorship and the dominance of state-owned media.

Significant effort should go into framing messages to counter propaganda, decide who the most effective messengers will be on any given issue and ensure reporters understand the background to the conflict and the evolving realities on the ground.

To reduce the risk of inaccurate reporting, it is up to communicators and other staff to support journalists and enable informed reporting. Baddorf (2015, p.41) gives an example of a communicator working in Syria who was liaising with foreign reporters: "Looking at the 21 August 2013 chemical attacks, he couldn't write a report 'just saying the Assad government bombed this neighbourhood'." "Instead he had to explain 'why [Assad] picked this specific area, what weapons did he use, what the reactions were on the ground from the different actors based on their totally different ideologies, so getting people to understand Syria as a whole'."

Mitigating risk

There is substantial evidence in the literature that recognising risks and being prepared to manage them

can pay off. This involves a shift from unplanned and ad hoc responses when crises occur to proactive, systematic, and integrated risk management (World Bank Group, 2013). Communicators in conflict and post-conflict environments face issues and risks, which are uncommon in developed countries and should be trained to protect themselves, their colleagues, their sources and their data (Baddorf, 2015).

In an unstable setting, incidents may occur which interrupt communication activities, including civil unrest, blockades or power outages, which prevent staff from reporting for duty, or cut off access to specific locations. Maintaining online content and avoiding state blocking of websites and discussion forums may be yet another challenge (Skuse et al. 2012).

Visibility strategies should promote "smart risk-taking", based on a careful analysis of all security implications and adopting measures to mitigate risks (OHCHR, 2011, p.17). Incorporating contingency planning in communication strategies is one way of managing risk, such as including alternative venues or approaches.

Managing unintended consequences

There is consensus in the literature that the unintended consequences of planned outreach activity are one type of risk which should be considered when designing a communication strategy involving a fragile setting. In extreme cases, putting the names or information that community members provided in the wrong hands could mean imprisonment or even death for these people (Baddorf, 2015).

Baddorf (2015) found that local people in fragile environments occasionally or frequently had security fears about being associated with a particular organisation. They were concerned they would be targeted as a result. Depending on risk levels, OHCHR field staff might hold official meetings with authorities during public visits or opt for private meetings or other discrete methods of interaction.

Before quoting local people in any form of communication, staff have a responsibility to clearly explain how the material will be used and to gain their consent. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has a policy of never naming local sources or revealing the identities of victims or perpetrators in its public reports (OHCHR, 2011). Communicators may also need to take steps to prevent sensitive information being intercepted (OHCHR, 2011, and Baddorf, 2015).

When visiting areas controlled by militants, the media must think how the report might be exploited by the militants. Even if the tone is critical or negative, militants can pick out the clips or images that suit them and redistribute them across their own media and social networks. They can also stage the presence of "invited or authorised international journalists" for the population under their control and present it as a recognition of their importance and power on the international scene. If the media accept this risk and decide to negotiate "the invitation" with terrorist groups, they must explain the conditions in which the report was carried out, the limits that were set, how they framed the persons interviewed, the constant surveillance, the verification of all the footage by the militants, and so on (Marthoz, 2017).

In certain cultures, the absence of words can also carry a meaning, such as dissent through silence, communicators must be aware of this in order to avoid unexpected situations and misunderstanding (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Countering misinformation

In the Baddorf survey (2015), 75 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that in conflict environments, communicating quickly is vital to accomplishing an organisation's mission. The rapid advance of new technology and new media is changing communication approaches in fragile settings, in particular the required speed of response (Baddorf, 2015, p.46).

Not responding can lead to assumptions that a particular entity has something to hide. Making a delayed response means inaccurate information can be spread. Multiple sources said that militants would often be quicker at communicating than international actors who may, for example, have lengthy clearance processes to contend with (Baddorf, 2015). Social media provides a platform for fast response on the public record.

Bhatia (2013) observed that an individual's personal experience acts as important guard against complete misinformation. For instance, in a 2004 election, the Bhartiya Janata Party in India failed to retain power despite the unprecedented magnitude of its India Shining campaign. Commentators argued that its underlying message was rejected by many voters who found it contrary to their own experience (Bhatia, 2013).

An open communications approach by electoral commissions based on the public's right to know and the media's right to report will help voters make an informed choice on election day (Ward, 2014). It will also help to dispel rumours and misinformation that often circulate in an electoral context, which is especially important in post-conflict and transitional situations that are often marked by increased tension and political conflict (Ward, 2014).

In a United States school district referendum process in Minnesota, a community group had successfully influenced votes in three previous referendums with a strategy of spreading misinformation and making accusations to create an atmosphere of mistrust (Griffiths, 2008). Having identified misinformation as a risk, the district authority finally employed an aggressive response technique to all rumours or misinformation ahead of the next referendum, for example, using paid advertising, flyers and the community group's email discussion forum. The three other tactics that contributed to achieving their desired outcome were: a total commitment to improving communication with the public; repeating key messages over and over; and clearly defining and communicating the outcomes of both a "yes" and "no" vote in the referendum (Griffiths, 2008).

Ahead of a plebiscite in Guam, community members and activists were working to educate the public about the definition of each plebiscite option, yet often had to counteract false or misleading information disseminated by the local media. The authors proposed that students produce voter guides intended to serve as a gateway for the interested, but perhaps less-informed or less-educated, voter who needs a springboard to access more sophisticated deliberations about the plebiscite (Na'puti

and Hahn 2013).

Civic and voter education in fragile settings

Brice Bado (2015) argues that the best way to achieve electoral security and restore sustainable peace after a civil war is to support large-scale civic education activities. One crucial aim involves demilitarising the mindset of combatants and others affected by the war. This in turn strengthens their commitment to peace (Bado, 2015). Brice Bardo (2015) maintains that civic education plays a critical role in fostering a change of identity for ex-combatants. It sets new goals and new values, as well as provide the opportunity to the entire population to discern a new social contract for a peaceful co-existence, despite the grievances of the war (Bado, 2015).

Marthoz (2017), in a UNESCO terrorism handbook for journalists, identifies fear as an emotion powerful enough to determine the outcome of elections. It is yet another reason why civic and voter education and voter information are important in fragile contexts.

Many examples of civic and voter education and voter education experiences and ideas are offered up in the literature. The PNG NRI has observed numerous examples, including BPA and referendum fact sheets issued by the ABG, updates in The Bougainville Bulletin, joint publications on the BPA issued by the National Coordination Office of the Bougainville Affairs, workshops by civil society organisations and media outreach.

Civic education programs in fragile states are most effective when spread across multiple media channels. This enables a social mobilisation or community dialogue component to extend the reach of key messages (Skuse et al., 2012, p. 13). Some election management bodies limit themselves to posters and direct mailings to voters. Other groups organise materials or activities such as street theatre, role playing, radio spots, jingles, songs, comic strips or Internet campaigns to ensure that all voters have access to the information they need to participate intelligently in the voting process (UN DPI, 2005).

Brice Bado (2015) argues that to increase the probability of peace, electoral civic education should include all relevant parties to the war, not only parties to the post-conflict election. The need to involve marginalised groups is a common theme. However, resourcing can limit the extent of civic education. For example, prior to the 2009 Sudan elections, there was concern that its National Electoral Commission did not have the means, in terms either of personnel, financial, and material resources, or community presence, to ensure effective outreach on its own (IFES, 2008).

Bhatia (2013) examines how illiterate citizens in India can become politically informed, explaining the role of non-literacy sources and informal conversation. Television news has an important role in India because of the inaccessibility of the print media to its large illiterate population, and because illiteracy, coupled with low internet penetration, means that online communication plays only a marginal role in its politics. For instance, during elections, Indian news channels broadcast short instructional videos on how to get a voter card and use an electronic voting machine. Mobile loudspeakers are attached to rickshaws and play pre-recorded civic and voter education messages (Bhatia, 2013).

In pursuing universal coverage of the electorate, for recent elections in the Central African Republic, voter education and information was provided to citizens seeking refuge in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo. Tripartite agreements were worked out with the governments of those asylum countries, enabling information to reach refugee camps and urban refugee settlements (UN News reports).

Good practice considerations and examples

Coordination – Various domestic and international organisations can be involved in planning and administering civic and voter education. Uncoordinated efforts and competing agendas can cause confusion and information overload. They should move towards a coordinated effort to provide a coherent voter and civic education program (IFES, 2008).

Vetting of materials – It is good practice to have all voter education material vetted by the election management body to ensure its accuracy (UN DPI, 2005, p.59).

Pre-testing of civic and voter education messages – Dekavalla (2016) concluded there was an overall sense during the campaign for the Scotland referendum that it was not easy to gain 'knowledge' that would enable a decision on the referendum, and this was also reflected in opinion polling. She proposed one reason may have been that facts and figures were interpreted differently by each campaign and were hard to evaluate. Mefalopulo (2008) maintains that pre-testing messages with a relevant sample of the intended audiences before producing communication materials is imperative. Messages get "decoded" or interpreted in different ways by individuals, and they can also be reinterpreted through interpersonal communication (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 123).

Identify knowledge gaps – There are first-time voters in every referendum. Young adults eligible to vote for the first time may need special messages explaining how to register and cast a ballot. In the case of the 2009 elections in Sudan, while up to 60 percent of the electorate were first-time voters with limited knowledge about the process, this lack of knowledge applied also to those who would serve as election officials, political party staff, and candidates (IFES, 2008).

Official glossary – A glossary of key referendum terms can serve as a resource to civic educators and broadcasters, to promote consistent use of terminology (IFES, 2008). An App, named "My Vote, My Right," is a civic education tool created for Moroccan citizens, including the deaf community. Among its content, the App features live-person videos of all terms of the Moroccan sign language electoral lexicon in French, Arabic, and Moroccan sign language. Users can also spread its content virally via social media (see www.ifes.org/news/new-version-moroccan-sign-language-mobile-app-released-0).

Air time for campaigns – When allocating air time in a post-conflict environment where the state may be holding its first elections to parliament in a long time, there may be a preference for straight forward equal treatment, which requires all political parties to receive the same allocation of airtime on a channel (Ward,

2014).

Code of conduct – In Nepal, communication via media statements and media briefings was clear and open. This helped the media to report with accuracy on preparations, but within the parameters set out in a Media Code of Conduct. The Code included accountable and public mechanisms of oversight without interfering with the freedom of the media to cover the elections. The Press Council of Nepal was involved (UNDP Africa, 2003). In Guyana, an Independent Refereeing Panel assessed media-related complaints based on a Media Code of Conduct for their elections (Ward, 2014).

Safe spaces – In post-conflict countries where security remains a problem, safe resource centres should be established where information exchange can take place (ACE Project).

Evaluation of civic and voter education programs – Focus groups, targeted surveys and evaluation sessions with all partners are methods recommended by IFES for periodic assessment of civic and voter awareness. In one example, IFES conducted a survey of voting-age adults in Kinshasa and three provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo where it was implementing the Voter Opinion and Involvement through Civic Education Plus (VOICE+) Project in 2011. The main activities evaluated via face-to-face interviews were the boîte à images (image box) civic education sessions, a civic and voter education toolkit using pictures and guided discussion, and a media campaign using radio and TV spots. Its findings highlighted the need to use both image-based civic and voter education materials in face-to face settings, as well as media-driven formats, to maximise the impact and retention of electoral knowledge (IFES, 2015).

Allowing sufficient lead time – In Sierra Leone, radio programme strands such as 'Meet your Candidates' and 'Parliament Bol Hat' were part of voter education activities. The low voter turnout might have been remedied to some extent by public education bodies starting their voter education earlier. It was believed a concerted campaign around the local elections began just two weeks beforehand.

Budget allocation – Tight deadlines and budget limitations may induce managers to put pressure on communication experts to produce quick fixes. In such cases, the basic foundations of development communication are neglected, and the results are usually disappointing, especially over the long term (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Media monitoring – Media monitoring is part of an early warning system for potential problems in an election process. It can reflect the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of the process (Ward, 2014). It can indicate the likely eventual acceptance of the results and identify incidents of inflammatory speech that could fuel violence. In Guyana, monitoring measured the time and space given to political parties and candidates. The tone of content to aggregate coverage at regular intervals during the campaign period, measuring balance and impartiality were also considered. Regular reports were published in the public domain to enhance public accountability.

Conclusion

This literature review points to the difficult, and at times perilous, nature of the challenges for communicating in many fragile settings around the world: for governments, community members, civil society, the media and development actors. In such settings, a flexible approach and managing risks are of utmost importance.

The favoured considerations for communicating sensitive issues in fragile contexts are: taking time to gain a deep understanding of the local context, seeking input from audience members into developing and testing key messages, and indirectly addressing issues via storytelling.

It is hoped that this review's insights, lessons learned and recommendations can serve as a useful contribution to the thinking behind civic and voter education for the Bougainville Referendum, and for broader communication and outreach efforts in other fragile settings, in the Pacific Islands region and globally.

Summary of key lessons learned

- **Dialogue and communication are central to the peacebuilding process** – In conflict-affected states,

strategic communication becomes a key component of the development process. It supports such post-conflict priorities as reconnecting people to the state, managing expectations, and creating networks that enable timely information exchange to prevent unrest. It assists in creating an enabling environment for public dialogue where the state, civil society, and the media can speak and listen.

- **Thought processes and decision making are shaped by the conflict experience** – Individual and group mind-sets are profoundly affected by the conflict experience, shaping the way they think, act, speak and view themselves and others. It is necessary to be aware of mind-sets shaping communication patterns, particularly when dealing with former combatants and clandestine movements.

- **Poor official information flows can affect the quality of decision making** – In settings defined by uncertainty and lawlessness, poor information flows and coordination between state institutions can severely limit the quality of official deliberations and of the decisions taken. This can result from the flow of too little or too much uncoordinated information. Perceptions of low quality of official decisions can cause the public to be very critical of the state and to doubt its credibility.

- **Inadequate physical infrastructure creates gaps in information systems** – The combination of war, instability, and insufficient capital expenditure can result in the loss or deterioration of government buildings, schools, roads, telecommunications networks, and other infrastructure. This leaves gaps in information systems which need to be overcome. People in rural and remote areas face the most significant hurdles, yet it is these communities who are often at greatest risk of violent conflict.

- **Cater for education and literacy levels** – In some fragile contexts, formal education can be interrupted for years. This can impact literacy levels, which in turn affects how people consume media and access information. The use of preferred languages is essential. Many of the youth in Bougainville today have missed out on formal education due to the

crisis, and they are often referred to as the "lost generation".

- **Different combinations of traditional and new media in different contexts are necessary to deal with access issues and priorities** – Communication strategies should take advantage of new media but not treat these as a replacement for proven traditional methods. Mobile technology and social media have opened up new opportunities for local people to get more actively engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, for example, enabling them to warn each other where violence is occurring, and to tell their own stories. The affordability of access is a common issue in fragile settings.

- **Communication strategies must be flexible to take account of unpredictable circumstances** – In fragile settings, the political situation and relations between different sections of society can be unpredictable and change quickly. Communicators should take account of the changing circumstances on-the-ground and be responsive and flexible.

- **Voter and civic education are even more critical in post-conflict countries** – In post-conflict settings, the outcomes of public ballots may have an unprecedented impact on a nation's future. The stakes are high, yet electoral processes and the system of government may be new or unfamiliar to many voters. Civic education should be viewed as a means to build peace. Civic education that includes all electoral stakeholders and parties to the armed conflict, including former combatants, strengthens inclusiveness and ownership in the process. Moreover, informed citizens are less likely to be manipulated by potential peace-spoilers.

- **Coordinating civic and voter education between parties not used to working with each other can be a challenge** – Various domestic and international organisations can be involved in planning and administering civic and voter education. Uncoordinated efforts and competing agendas can cause confusion and information overload. They should move towards a coordinated effort to provide a coherent program. The very process of generating

common information can build confidence.

- **Trust is a key challenge when setting up public communication networks** – Given there can often be suspicion of where "free" information is coming from and who the political backers of this information are, establishing trust and reliability of the source of the information is a difficulty to overcome. Using trusted local groups and their leaders to disseminate accurate information can be a significant first step in creating or rebuilding trust.

- **Pay attention to marginalised groups** – In some post-conflict countries, women's groups have been particularly effective in educating the public on peace-building in the context of an election and mobilising public opinion in favour of maintaining the peace. Providing strategies to involve youth and ensuring their understanding of peace processes and their active involvement in it, can not only prevent further conflict, but also realise their potential as key change agents. Stakeholder monitoring should also pay attention to negative forces from marginalised peace spoilers capturing the public sphere.

- **Inclusivity has advantages and disadvantages and should be part of risk assessments** – Building an inclusive public dialogue with multiple types of actors at different layers of society and giving a voice and a stake to a wide group of stakeholders is essential to avoid further unrest. However, organisations should carefully assess who it is most appropriate for them to partner with. For community outreach, influential groups and their leaders who are trusted and accepted should be identified, and these may include religious leaders, local associations and activist groups.

- **Unintended consequences of planned communication activity are one type of risk which must be considered** – Messages should be carefully crafted to avoid endangering anyone quoted in released stories or statements. Event details should not be broadcasted in advance if this would put participants at risk. The use of street theatre and other participatory tactics may be difficult depending on the context. There is no guarantee of an audience if ill advised.

Recommendations

In addition to informing the development of a communication strategy for the PNG NRI's Bougainville Referendum Research Project, this report makes recommendations (as of January 2018) for parties undertaking civic and voter education in AROB and PNG, for media policy decision makers, and for the academic community:

- The task of further developing and implementing joint, coordinated and intensive civic and voter education and voter information programs for the Bougainville referendum should be treated as a priority, and resourced appropriately;

- An updated joint strategy should aim for universal coverage of the electorate, building on previous initiatives seeking to consult and engage women, youth, veterans, and to improve relationships between all referendum stakeholders;

- The strategy should stipulate a requirement to have all voter education and information material vetted by the referendum management body (or nominated lead agency) to ensure its accuracy and consistency;

- Joint guidelines should be developed to promote responsible information flows and the sharing of balanced information for the referendum applicable to all parties, which could take the form of a broader, updated national policy.

- The low levels of literacy in the population together with the use of technical terms such as 'referendum' and 'independence', requires an effective translation service into Pidgin English, Tok Pisin, and Tok Ples. All parties must use official translations.

- An induction and training program should be considered for media representatives and communicators at the time they commence work in Bougainville connected with the referendum. Journalism education and training, especially in the fields of peacebuilding and conflict reporting, must be given priority to enhance journalists' ability to report with accuracy in violent and post-conflict situations;

- Further action is needed to restore telecommunications infrastructure and transportation services in AROB, focused on service improvements for communities in remote areas of AROB. Public investment to further improve access to radio should be pursued, as per findings of the 2013 Autonomy Review. Improvements in ICT services should be coupled with public education about how to use the internet;

- Efforts to improve the resourcing and penetration of media outlets in Bougainville should be supported. The Government of PNG and ABG could assign responsibility for strategic planning and support to the media within one agency to concentrate action;

- Lessons may be shared globally, an evaluation report should be published covering the effectiveness of the joint referendum communication strategy, including civic and voter education, voter information, media training and actions to improve the flow of balanced information for the Bougainville Referendum.

This paper also endorses recommendations by other authors for further research into conflict and peacebuilding reporting, and into monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of communication programs in conflict and post-conflict environments, with a focus on the Pacific Islands region.

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