

IMAGES OF THE CRISIS:

PAINTING MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF BOUGAINVILLE CONFLICT (1988-2001)





Derr, Rorovana



Dominic Montai, Buin

Front cover: Chernz, Gagan

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George, Rorovana

FOREWORD

Bougainville is an autonomous region since August 2001. The Autonomous Bougainville Government is today fully committed to achieving two major tasks. We need to heal the wounds left by the tragic conflict that cost us so many lives and caused so much cruel pain and at the same time we need to prepare the peaceful future of our beautiful island.

I am very pleased that the project jointly designed and monitored by the Buka Branch of PNG Red Cross, the University of Papua New Guinea and generously supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross addresses our most essential concerns. This project has been an opportunity to highlight and advertise the rich Bougainville culture.

The project has been conducted in four communities: Buka Town, Rorovana, Buin and Gagan. I would like to express my warmest congratulations to the very talented participants who took part in the projects. I hope that in the near future such opportunities will be offered to other communities in our beloved Bougainville.

Hon Rose Pihei,
Minister for Culture and Tourism
Autonomous Bougainville Government

**Images of the Crisis:
Painting memories and experiences of Bougainville conflict
(1988-2001)**

The Bougainville Art Project was proposed in 2012 by the PNG Red Cross, the University of Papua New Guinea and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It was designed to offer people a platform to express their memories related to the Bougainville conflict. It also became a project where participants came to express their ideas and concerns about Bougainville today and tomorrow. During the project about 150 people were trained.

Between 1988 and 2001 Bougainville was shaken by one the most deadly conflict occurring in the Pacific since WWII. It is commonly acknowledged that civilians and armed forces have been severely affected by the conflict. The conflict caused up to 20 000 victims. Although there have been a number of reconciliation projects and arms deposit initiatives only few projects have been designed to assist Bougainvillians in the post conflict stress management. The current project aims to bring to Bougainvillians a support in this domain.

To achieve this goal, we organized a series of artistic workshops which were preceded by a series of reflections and then four training sessions were offered in Buka and Gagan (North Bougainville), Rorovana (Central Bougainville), and Moro (South Bougainville). Men and women, young people and their elders shared their



Anonymous, Buin



Vincent Maniarah, Gagan



Ronald Dissing, Buka Town



Nathaniel Maniarah, Gagan



R. Micah, Gagan

views and memories around an innovative artistic practice. Participants were invited to put in images some of their memories of Bougainville Crisis and to draw images of their hope about the present and the future of Bougainville. The training basically lasted a week in each community.

The workshop consisted in an artistic training for adults introducing a very new technique. The participants were first invited to study the Art of Somuk a pioneer Bougainville artist who worked in the 1930's and who was perhaps the first contemporary artist from the Pacific to gain international recognition. The technique which was introduced is called "fixé sous verre" and it consists in applying black ink at the back of a transparent medium (glass, plastic or rhodoid). Once dry, the ink is partly removed with a stylus. The scratched fields are then covered with paint. Artists are working at the back of the image, which has been a challenge for many participants. But they answered very enthusiastically and created very innovative and moving images.

The workshop clearly demonstrated the need for Bougainvillians to find ways to express their memories, emotions and pains related to the conflict (1989-2001). The method which was used allowed participants to express themselves in their own terms and conditions. And the artworks which were completed during the training show that such innovative methods could be part of the general process of peace and reconciliation. Many pictures feature scenes of combat and violence. One of the most common sequence featured by the participants were burning houses. But other featured the conflict in a more allegorical way: they featured weapons or people crying. Many people chose to represent a church. During the conflict church and religion were the only hope and support for many Bougainvillians. During the peace process church groups and religious events have also played one of the most constant role to heal psychological wounds and bring back together families and communities. Landscape, sunsets, visions of calm seas were also very popular topics and inspired many participants. By depicting serene landscape the participants expressed their wish to build a peaceful and harmonious society and environment in which themselves and their children want to grow.

The outstanding quality of the artworks created on this occasion could be further promoted as an international showcase for Bougainville culture.

Nicolas Garnier



Anonymous, Buin



Joe Ki, Buin



Vireil, Buka Town



Dominic Montai, Buin



Michael Apex, Buin



Anonymous, Buin



Anonymous, Buka Town



Thomas, Buin



Ronald Dissing, Buka Town

Images of the Crisis: Painting memories and experiences of Bougainville conflict (1988-2001) is a project designed by PNG Red Cross, Buka Centre, the Melanesian and Pacific Studies Centre at UPNG and the ICRC. It was designed to train communities of Bougainville in contemporary art expressions and to assist these communities in expression the painful memories of the conflict.

- PNG Red Cross, Buka Centre. The PNG Red Cross was instrumental in the design of the project. It was an answer to the needs of Bougainvillians. The PNG Red Cross is committed to implement projects to support populations facing humanitarian ordeals.

- UPNG, MAPS Centre. The University of Papua New Guinea as first tertiary education institution of the country is committed to design educational projects with a specific Melanesian orientation. To serve this purpose, we tailored and a highly original and innovative program in phase with the needs and the sensibility of Melanesian societies while reaching academic excellence.

- ICRC. The ICRC is mandated to the protection and assistance to victims or armed conflict and violence. The consequences of the conflict are still impacting Bougainvillians even years after its end. In this context, the project helps families to cope with the humanitarian issues related to the aftermath of the Bougainville conflict.



Mel Tepi, Rorovana