

**SHARING AND EXPLORING PACIFIC APPROACHES  
TO DIALOGUE: A COMPENDIUM OF CASE STUDIES  
FROM PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**



# THE KONDIKA TRIBAL CONFLICT

A SUB-CLAN MEDIATION IN THE  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGHLANDS

Voice for Change is a non-government human rights and sustainable livelihoods organization based in Jiwaka Province, Papua New Guinea. The organization works in Jiwaka Province to create alliances with local communities, faith based organizations, women's groups, local level and provincial governments, tribal leaders and law enforcing agencies to promote food security and to end violence against women and girls, and is involved in conflict mediation as well.

UNDP Pacific Centre

ISBN 978-982-531-017-4



9 789825 310174

Title: The Kondika Tribal Conflict: A Sub-clan Mediation in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

By:

Sean Lees, Consultant

Marilyn Havini, Hako Women's Collective, Bougainville Women's Federation

Janet Murdock, Program Specialist and Tracy Vienings, CPR Team Leader - UNDP

Edited by: Jennifer Namgyal, UNDP Gender and Knowledge Management Specialist



# THE KONDIKA TRIBAL CONFLICT

## A SUB-CLAN MEDIATION IN THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGHLANDS

### **SUMMARY**

The Kondika tribal conflict, was not a conflict driven by competition over natural resources but is never-the-less emblematic of clan conflicts in the Highland region of Papua New Guinea. The conflict began in Jiwaka Province with a death of the clansman during a New Year's celebration and quickly escalated into full-scale displacement of 500 people and intermittent fighting. Due in part to an absence of state justice and security services, and the proliferation of cash and guns, the displacement lasted nearly four years before the matter was resolved through dialogic processes spearheaded by Voices for Change and the organization they helped create, the South Whagi Peacebuilders Association.

# 1. CONTEXT

Papua New Guinea is situated in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, and occupies the eastern half of the island of New Guinea. Other major islands within Papua New Guinea (PNG) include New Ireland, East and West New Britain, Manus and Bougainville. PNG highlands is marked by its mountainous terrain, which isolates many villages from each other in steep valley pockets, and results in significant numbers of culturally distinct peoples. There is an estimated 850 languages spoken in the country. Only eighteen percent of PNG's total population of 6.2 million people is believed to live in the country's urban centers.

PNG gained its independence from Australia in 1975. During its first 27 years as a sovereign state, the country experienced considerable political instability. From 1977 to 1999 incumbent Prime Ministers were ousted ten times through votes of no confidence. Numerous changes in government have dampened leadership capacity and service delivery rates. PNG's politics are highly dynamic and competitive with most members of Parliament elected on the basis of ethnicity or clan-affiliation. Hotly contested elections are increasingly accompanied by armed violence.

PNG is noted for its significant natural resource assets, including gold, copper, nickel, oil, gas, timber, fisheries coffee, cocoa, and copra. However, development of these resources is encumbered by a lack of transport and energy infrastructure, an opaque land titling system, and high rates of criminality.

The central Highlands region of PNG hosts more than thirty percent of the population of PNG and includes seven provinces, the newest of which are Hela and Jiwaka Provinces. Rich reserves of minerals, gas and petroleum have attracted large-scale resource development projects to the Highlands with profound effects on the region's social equilibrium. Resource extraction initiatives pollute rivers and streams, impacting on livelihoods, and cash compensation payments for mining rights, intensify claims over land and political position. Most central Highlanders follow traditional governance systems involving clan and tribal law, and are ill-equipped to negotiate terms of engagement with the resource extraction industry or state governance mechanisms. The permanent transfer of land is an unfamiliar concept to many rural groups where communal ownership practices are the norm.

Though tribal fighting has long been a feature of life in the Highlands, access and control over natural resources, and associated royalties are driving up new levels of armed conflict. Highlands warriors now fight with high powered

guns stolen or bought from the army and police or smuggled from Indonesia and Australia. Though reliable figures are scarce, there is broad consensus that confrontations involving firearms are resulting in a steep increase in the numbers of mortalities and injuries, as well as in the number of people internally displaced.

An increase in violent conflict coincides with rapidly changing social norms. Today, cultural prohibitions that once spared women and children from conflict-related death and injury are no longer honored. Whereas tribal fighting was once a ritualized and controlled event ensuring a minimum of property damage, today villages are targeted for burning and sources of livelihoods are attacked. Having never experienced life under effective state law and justice systems, Highland villagers are now expected to contribute to community weapon caches for protection.

Due to the degradations of traditional value systems, the absence of robust justice and security systems, and the lack of state social welfare services, Highland women experience intense levels of violence during times of conflict. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are used as a tool of warfare, serving as formal expressions of rage and revenge. Further, conflict related displacement leaves women significantly more vulnerable than men: living off the resources of another tribe burdens women with increased threats of sexual violence, forced marriage, polygamy and charges of sorcery by an aggravated host community. Women charged with sorcery are commonly maimed, tortured, and/or put to death.

The increased risks of violence that women face during times of conflict and displacement are furthered informed by socio-economic forces shaping male identity and behavior in PNG. Most societies of PNG are dominated by the interests of men who are socialized to be warriors, to exact revenge and recover lost honor through the killing and raping of one's enemies. Rambo is a common icon in the Highlands and is seen as key role model by many young men. Women are primarily valued as objects or possessions of men as cultural tradition makes women subservient and responsive to male needs. Male capacity to produce income is an important marker of status in PNG. Yet, where traditional livelihoods are either unavailable or undervalued under the pressures of a growing cash-economy, frustration among men bubbles to the surface with important if not terrifying implications for women.

The focus of this case study, the Kondika tribe conflict, was not – on the surface – a conflict driven by competition over natural resources but is nevertheless emblematic of ethnic conflicts in the Highland region. The conflict began in

Jiwaka Province with a death of the clansman and then escalated into full-scale displacement of 500 people. Due in part to an absence of state justice and security services, and the proliferation of cash and guns, the displacement lasted nearly four years before the matter was resolved through dialogic processes spearheaded by Voices for Change and the organization they helped create, the South Whagi Peacebuilders Association.

## 2. PROBLEM

During a 2009 New Year celebration in Jiwaka province, a drunken brawl between men of the Jimalekanem and Mindpakanem clan of the Kondika tribe led to the death of a nursing officer. Violent reprisals launched by members of the deceased's clan drove approximately 500 people of the Mindpakanem clan from their ancestral land. During their flight, women were raped and children were separated from their families. Many members of the Mindpakanem clan found refuge on the lands of the Berepka tribe and some resided with other friends and families.



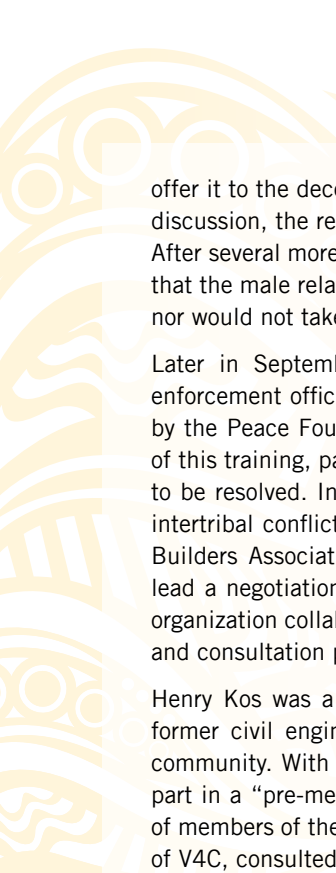
During the nearly four years of displacement, there were four attempts at reconciliation. The first two initiatives involved Government, Land and Peace Mediators, village court magistrates and councilors. These failed due to improper consultation of relatives of the deceased, and the staunch refusal by the Jimalakanem clan leadership to allow the Mindpakanem to return. The third and most promising reconciliation effort was initiated by the Berepka Tribe and led to a negotiated settlement involving cash and livestock. After the agreement was declared, men from the Mindpakanem clan set about reconstructing their homes on their ancestral lands. After completing five homes, the men were attacked by relatives of the deceased Jimalakanem clansman. This led to a new cycle of violence which subsequently resulted in the death of six men, five of which had been tortured to death at the hands of Jimalakanem clan members. The Mindpakanem men insisted on revenge for the death of five of their kinsmen and scuttled the fourth attempt at peace as quickly as it was launched.

Mindpakanem women suffered significantly during displacement. Women were unable to support their families and keep the members together. Most families were undernourished and lacked access to medical services. Children were not attending school. Some women were the subject of humiliation and sexual harassment by members of the host tribe. Voices for Change (V4C) bore witness to these challenges as it provided food, clothing, and counseling and economic recovery assistance to the Mindpakanem IDPs.

### 3. PROCESS

In response to continuing pleas from displaced Mindpakanem women, V4C was moved to promote a 5<sup>th</sup> round of peace talks. These talks would have three primary aims: 1) to bring about peace between two warring clans; 2) to ensure the safe resettlement of displaced families and; 3) to end displacement-related violence against women. In August, 2011, V4C discretely initiated contact with the male relatives of the deceased from the Mindpakanem clan. Each male relative was interviewed individually, to promote open discussion, free from the pressures of clan politics and the traditional values of a highly patriarchal society. After these discussions, the male relatives consulted with other members of the clan for wider inputs.

At a second meeting in September 2011, all relatives of the deceased were assembled and offered gifts of cash. This gesture carried significant symbolic relevance as under traditional custom, the initiator of peace must kill a pig and



offer it to the deceased's relatives before negotiations commence. After a long discussion, the relatives returned to their village to discuss the matter further. After several more consultations between V4C and the clan, V4C was informed that the male relatives would not stand in the way of a new peace process, but nor would not take part in the process directly.

Later in September, leaders representing major tribes in Minj, local law enforcement officials, and community leaders, attended a training conducted by the Peace Foundation Melanesia in South Whagi District. On the last day of this training, participants were asked to identify existing issues that needed to be resolved. In the context of this discussion, they identified the Kondika intertribal conflict as a priority and laid the basis for the South Whagi Peace Builders Association. This association appointed a chairman, Henry Kos, to lead a negotiation processes. After a budget was developed and funded, the organization collaborated with Mr. Kos to develop a plan for the “pre mediation and consultation process.”

Henry Kos was a leader of the clan hosting the displaced Mindpakanem, a former civil engineer, and a widely respected member of the South Whagi community. With his inputs and guidance, V4C appointed 34 leaders to take part in a “pre-mediation and consultation process.” Kos and a small number of members of the South Whagi Peace Builders, under the coordination efforts of V4C, consulted with the leaders of the Jimalakanem and the Mindpakanem clans separately about the possibility of peace and a return of IDPs to their land. The process was coordinated by V4C with support from the Minj District Police Station Commander.

In November, 2011, V4C assisted the South Whagi Peace Builders Association in hosting a meeting of 80 leaders, including clan leaders and police personnel and briefed them on V4C activities. At this first “pre-mediation and consultation meeting,” V4C also explained that it had financial resources to facilitate trainings and meetings which lent considerable legitimacy to the process.

At the meeting's conclusion, the assembled participants identified 20 members to form the core group of Peace Mediation Team (PMT). These 20 were selected based on their perceived neutrality, experience in managing disputes in the past, and high standing in the community. Among the 20 core members, a police station commander appointed himself and 2 other police personnel, 1 male and 1 female, to take part in the pre-mediation process. Meeting participants also created an executive committee within the PMT, and developed a “pre mediation and consultation program.”

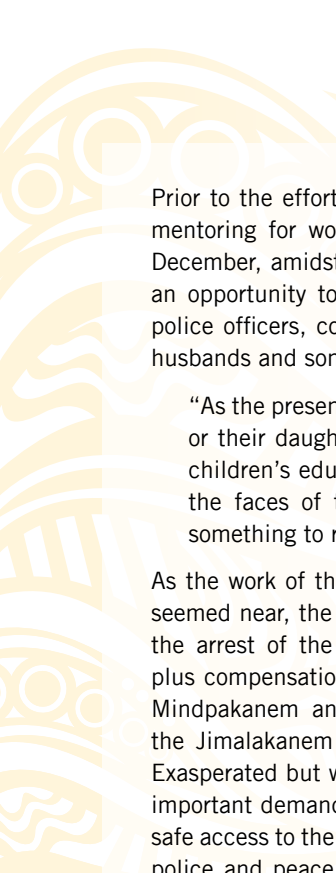


The PMT split into two groups of 10, including at least one police officer in each group, and consulted the Jimalekanem and Mindpakanem clans, separately. Eight consultations were held between mid-December and late January, 2012, as a part of the pre-mediation and consultation program. At the beginning, teams held individual interviews in a private setting with the men of these tribes, to hear their concerns and reflect on the conflict. This was an important approach, as the men expressed interest in peace but were reluctant to contradict leaders in public settings who may have held different views. Women and men were also consulted in separate focus groups in each respective tribe. According to V4C, questions raised among the clans included:

- How do you as an individual feel or see this ongoing conflict to be resolved?
- What are the likely risks involved and how can we avoid them?
- To restore complete peace, how do you see it done?
- In your opinion how much compensation can be awarded to deceased families? Number of pigs and amount of money?
- What is your opinion on the kind and type of penalties be awarded to those involved in the killing of 6 people during the fight from both tribes?
- In your opinion, what would be some of the boundaries set that could guide both tribes in future so that such conflicts' leading to war and fight does not occur in future?

After consultation with the respective clans, the PMTs would reconvene and brief each other on the outcomes, after which, PMTs would then return to the clans and brief clan leaders on what they had heard. Shuttle-diplomacy provided forward momentum on talks, and allowed discussion on a multitude of issues to be reconciled before a larger peace was restored.





Prior to the efforts of the Peace Mediation Team, V4C provided training and mentoring for women to speak out on issues in separate consultations. In December, amidst PMT efforts to reconcile the clans, IDP women were given an opportunity to address the District Court Magistrate, a state prosecutor, police officers, community leaders, leaders of faith-based organizations, and husbands and sons. As V4C explains:

“As the presentations progressed and the women spoke about how they or their daughters were abused and how they could not pay for their children’s education or to get their sick children treated in hospitals, the faces of the men changed and they said that they had to do something to resolve the conflict.”

As the work of the PMTs was coming to a close and a negotiated settlement seemed near, the Mindpakanem clan raised their conditions for resettlement: the arrest of the suspects implicated in the death of five of its clansmen plus compensation. The PMT discussed the settlement offer further with the Mindpakanem and sought a reduction of the terms. After consulting with the Jimalakanem clan, the PMT reported back that the offer was rejected. Exasperated but with little leverage, the Mindpakanem decided that the most important demand was to be resettled and thus, requested that they be given safe access to their land. They also demanded that law enforcement, including police and peace mediators commit to intervening quickly and decisively to any provocations. An agreement was forged out of these demands, and a peace reconciliation day event was held on 28 January 2012 to celebrate the finalization of the peace process.

## 4. PARTICIPANTS

### Voices for Change

Starting in 2009, Voices for Change provided assistance to IDPs, donating food and clothes and developing resettlement plans with the Berepka tribe. V4C provided counseling and funding for income generation projects. V4C also documented the challenges women IDPs faced living on other people’s land. These stories revealed that women and girls were subject to different forms of violence at the hands of the host community.

Increased evidence of the vulnerabilities of women and girls, prompted V4C to focus its work on ending gender based violence, promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and facilitating resettlement. In addressing these

challenges, V4C worked with provincial authorities, the police, village courts officers, and leaders from faith based organizations and schools, building strong relationships with each. In time, these relationships would be a significant factor leading to successful peace negotiations.

The organization is staffed by the co-founders, both women's rights defenders and counselors, and a former police station commander. The experience of the co-founders as survivors of tribal conflict and gender-based violence themselves is a significant motivating factor behind their work with displaced women. Their experiences allowed them to identify with the needs of displaced communities and this in turn, engenders trust among IDP women in their efforts.

### **Local police officers**

The District Police Station Commander in the South Whagi District showed considerable support to the pre negotiation and consultation process, attending events and appointing officers as members of the PMTs. His investment in the process was critical as it demonstrated that the state would hold individuals accountable if they were to break the terms of a negotiated settlement.

### **Chairman, Kondika Peace Negotiation**

The Chairman of the Kondika Peace Negotiation, Henry Kos, played an instrumental role in mobilizing constituencies behind the peace negotiations. Kos's status as a clan leader, civil engineer, and local mediator with extensive experience in the locality, gave legitimacy to the newly created South Whagi Peacebuilders Association. Kos accommodated the Mindpakanem clan on his tribal lands, brokered necessary payments from the Mindpakanem to the Jimalekanem clan, and mobilized his own clan to contribute pigs and money in the name of peace. Kos's involvement in the PMTs and related consultations was critical to ensuring opposing parties stayed on track towards peaceful relations and IDP resettlement.





## Clan leaders

Due to the considerable political insights, early and frequent consultations with clan leaders were critical to shaping approaches to negotiations. Clan leaders provided information that helped tailor questions that the PMTs put to aggrieved parties on sensitive issues. Clan leaders were also instrumental in managing internal peace negotiations and pushing an agenda for inter-clan peace. Importantly, some clan leaders had resources at their disposal that enabled them to start, prolong, or end hostilities. Thus, obtaining the support from these clan leaders was a critical factor to getting negotiations off the ground and bringing them to conclusion.

## Mindpakanem women

The displaced women of the Mindpakanem clan were instrumental to the peace negotiations on several levels. Women did much behind-the-scenes work to convince husbands, sons and grandsons of the need to restore peace. Women also lent valuable insights to PMT negotiators into the thinking of Mindpakanem men, giving expression to high levels of shame their men felt at not being able to protect their women while in displacement. Lastly, the presentations Mindpakanem women made to people in authority on the plight of women and girls in displacement provided necessary drive and momentum to peace negotiations during the critical period of consultations.

# 5. CHALLENGES

## Unequal levels of power

The Mindpakanem clan was displaced on New Year's Day, 2009 and in the process lost their land and livelihoods. Thus, the clan was unable raise the resources required for resettlement, either through compensation payments or forcefully, through the use of arms. Furthermore, the Mindpakanem had few men to pose a credible threat to the Jimalakanem clan. The Mindpakanem had little leverage to ensure that they would be compensated for the loss of life their clan had suffered or that their return to their land would be safe and sustainable. Under these circumstances, the Mindpakanem were seemingly of two minds: on the one hand, returning to their lands without acknowledgement and compensation for the lost lives of their men would be heartbreaking and humiliating. On the other hand, continuing to live as IDPs would only subject their clan, its women in particular, to additional years of suffering, and weaken the clan further.

## **Bias against women involved in peacebuilding**

After four failed attempts at peace, it seemed unlikely to warring clan members that a process led by a woman, Lilly Be'Soer, would have a greater chance at success. Women are not leaders in the Highland region or in PNG in general. (Since 1975, there have only been four women representatives in parliament.) According to Be'Soer, "women are rarely elected to local government and the idea of women Village Court magistrates is still new and still few." According to the Human Development Report 2011, PNG is among the lowest ranking countries in terms of gender equality and elimination of violence against women.

## **Uncooperative leadership**

Key leaders were vested in prolonging the conflict due to a variety of factors, not least of which was a desire to exact revenge and recover lost honor. Further, leaders saw little need for wide consultation among clan members for their inputs into negotiations. It was also difficult for constituents to oppose their leaders in public settings where peace talks had previously been contemplated.

## **Funding**

Lack of adequate funding made it difficult to meet project needs, including transporting IDPs to one central location, providing food and supplying necessary materials for long meetings. Inadequate funding levels delayed meetings and minimized participation at times. As a consequence, V4C staff had to fight a psychologically exhausting battle against the threat of diminished expectations among their themselves and their stakeholders.

# **6. BREAKTHROUGHS**

## **Buy-in from male relatives of deceased**

At the start of the peace process, it was recognized that success hinged in large part on the reaction of male relatives of the deceased to a fifth attempt at negotiations. If negotiators won their support, the male relatives could help open the other members of the Mindpakanem clan to the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Giving these key constituents an opportunity to speak discretely to negotiators about their support for peace and related concerns, and giving them ample time to discuss the matter with other relatives, was key to winning their eventual endorsement.

### Buy-in from clan leaders

Near the conclusion of talks, Mindpekanem leaders lodged demands for substantial compensation for the loss of life they suffered during Jimalakanem retaliation attacks. These preconditions for resettlement were considered unreasonable to PMT negotiators and were rejected later by the Jimalakanem clan. The resolve of Mindpekanem leaders was weakened after their women made public presentations on their plight in displacement and after lengthy consultations with the PMTs. In discussions, members of the PMT pointed out to Mindpekanem clansmen that they lacked the resources and manpower to force their way back on to their land, and would continue to have trouble generating income to support themselves. Meanwhile, IDPs were in danger of losing their ancestral lands altogether. The hard “reality testing” with the clan enabled an important breakthrough in the negotiations.

### Involvement of police commissioner

Prior peace agreements were broken with little or no consequences, in part because the former local police commissioner lent no support to peacebuilding efforts. The involvement of police in the pre-negotiations and consultations was an important breakthrough in that it gave increased confidence to stakeholders that conditions of a new peace agreement would be honored.

## 7. RESULTS AND IMPACTS

### Peace Agreement

A peace agreement between the tribes was achieved on “peace reconciliation day,” 28 January 2012, 6 months after V4C first initiated consultations. The agreement provided for the resettlement of the Mindpakanem to their lands and the creation of a “Verification Committee” to monitor implementation.



The penalties for breaching the peace agreement's terms were explained to everyone before signatures were affixed to the document. As also agreed, V4C monitors the resettlement process and works with local authorities to ensure compliance with the terms of the peace agreement. Further, it was resolved that a year after the resettlement of the IDPs, the PMT would set compensation targets between the Mindpakanem and Jimalakanem clans. It was later decided that both tribes would pay compensation to each other over two years. In this way, the settlement followed traditional norms: no suspects were handed over to the police for questioning, and rituals were conducted to honor the spirits of the dead and to free widows from residual bonds of marriage.

## Resettlement

The resettlement of the 500 displaced individuals from the Mindpakanem tribe is ongoing. As of this writing, about one third of the Mindpakanem have returned to their lands, and their houses are being rebuilt. But, it will be a slow process.

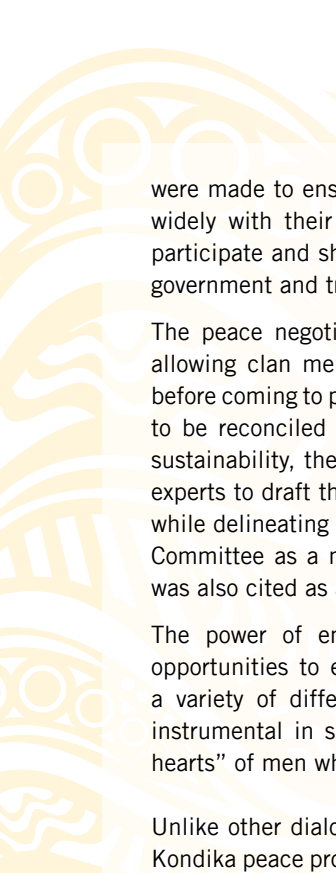
## Verification Committee

It was important that the resettlement process be monitored to ensure that IDPs could return safely to their tribal lands. Thus, the "Verification Committee" was a critical part of the negotiated settlement. The terms of reference for the committee were developed through focus group discussions conducted with members of both clans.

The Verification Committee is made up of ten representatives; five each from the Mindpakanem and Jimalekanem clans. Their principle task is to ensure that the conditions and terms of the peace agreement are implemented. In this capacity, they must attend to any issues arising during and after resettlement, working with the police where necessary. Importantly, the District Police Station Commander is also a member of the committee.

## 8. VALUES

The South Whagi Peacebuilders Association employed the dialogic values of inclusivity, impartiality, and long-term perspective, and empathy in the development of the Kondrika peace process. The peace negotiation team promoted a process that was inclusive of actors previously ignored in other peace attempts. V4C in particular, ensured that central actors in the conflict, namely male relatives of the deceased, were consulted and honored. Efforts



were made to ensure that these male relatives also had time to consult more widely with their clansmen. IDP women were also given an opportunity to participate and shape the process, mainly through their detailed testimony to government and tribal leadership.

The peace negotiation teams took a long term view on the negotiations in allowing clan member's substantial time to deliberate internally on matters before coming to positions; this allowed for internal disputes and disagreements to be reconciled between members of the same clan. In an effort to boost sustainability, the negotiators enlisted the help of local magistrates and legal experts to draft the agreement between parties, infusing additional legitimacy while delineating negotiated terms with clarity. The creation of the Verification Committee as a mechanism to manage residual tensions and disagreements was also cited as a means to a long-term peace.

The power of empathy was demonstrated when IDP women were given opportunities to express their fears and frustrations during displacement to a variety of different stakeholders in formal settings. Their testimony was instrumental in sustaining momentum towards peace and in “softening the hearts” of men who saw only a continuation of war.

Unlike other dialogic processes, joint ownership was not a key feature of the Kondika peace process. In fact, critical actors and supporters, such as the male relatives of the deceased, rejected a strong role in designing or participating in the peace process for personal and political considerations, but did not stop the process. Further, ongoing hostilities between clans may have required the peace negotiation teams to take a stronger hand in establishing the parameters of the negotiation format to ensure security for all participants, including the negotiators. In a rural setting with poor transport infrastructure, logistical challenges may also played an important part in developing a blueprint for talks before they commenced.

## 9. LESSONS LEARNED

### State participation can add legitimacy

The participation of the District Police Station Commander in the Kondika peace negotiations was critical to its successful conclusion. Law enforcement officials became vested partners in resolving a conflict, volunteering their time to participate in PMT negotiations with the two clans. In sharp contrast to prevailing expectations in the Highlands, the police were active participants,



engendering confidence among participants that the negotiation process would be backed up by the state. (The public generally respects and fear the police if they are engaged and invested in outcomes). Sustained involvement from provincial leaders also strengthened legitimacy in the process. Local authorities gained an opportunity to engage on a key issue of public concern and gain legitimacy through demonstrated commitment to the process.

### **Strong leadership**

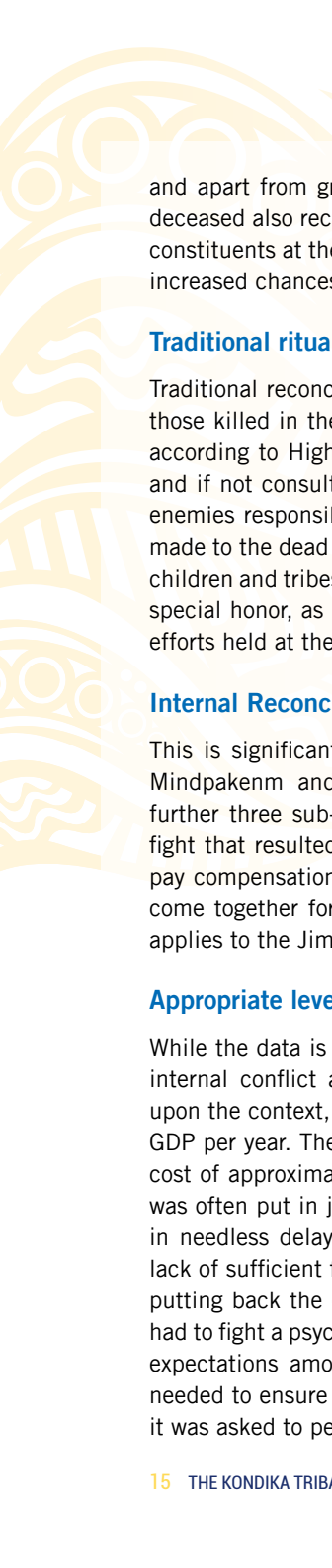
A strong and able leader was critical to moving the process forward. The Deputy chairman to the South Whagi Peace Builder Association and Chairman of the Kondika Peace Negotiations, Henry Kos, used his position and leadership skills to encourage participation of leaders of sub-clans and others supporting hostilities. As a member of high-standing in the community, his backing of the process amplified any existing support for peace negotiations. The creation of the PMT was a demonstration of respect and recognition of the importance of traditional leadership structures to the resolution of community conflict. The process worked to involve and “activate” these structures rather than sideline or ignore them, as so often happens.

### **Political acumen required to engage right actors**

PMT mediators employed sound political analysis to identify key decision makers on both sides of the conflict. Only genuine leaders from both sides of the process were invited to discussions for their views on the conflict, undermining potential spoilers. After leaders were offered an opportunity to air their concerns, the PMTs conducted further discussions, followed by analysis. Reconvening with details of these discussions the two PMTs sharpened their understanding of positions. This allowed for the clear and consistent representation of positions to opposing party leadership and limited the potential for misunderstandings.

### **Strive for inclusivity**

Before V4C's attempt at solving the Kondika conflict, relatives of the deceased had not been invited to express their views on IDP resettlement. Discussions were held only among leaders on the terms of peace. As a consequence, acts of retribution by aggrieved individuals followed initial attempts at return, and brought an early end to a promising attempt at peace. Careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past, V4C allocated significant time to each party to a conflict to express their reservations and overcome any internal conflicts over positions. Individuals who had suffered a loss of a relative were treated separately



and apart from group discussions. According to custom, the relatives of the deceased also received compensation for their loss. Securing the buy-in of key constituents at the center of the conflict enabled the process to go forward and increased chances for a sustainable peace.

### **Traditional rituals ensure lasting peace**

Traditional reconciliation-related rituals were called on to honor the spirits of those killed in the conflict. Great importance was placed on these events, as according to Highland beliefs, the spirits of the dead roam among the living and if not consulted properly, become angry at attempts to make peace with enemies responsible for their death. Special prayers were said and offers are made to the dead spirits to help them appreciate the difficulties their families, children and tribes are going through. The uncles of those killed were also given special honor, as a separate but related reconciliation process. Reconciliation efforts held at the family level are important to securing a sustainable peace.

### **Internal Reconciliation**

This is significantly important for the bigger peace to proceed for both the Mindpakenm and Jimalekanem. Among the Mindpakenm tribe, there are further three sub-tribes and one of the three, the Nintsgapam, initiated the fight that resulted in them being displaced. Traditionally, Nintsgapam has to pay compensation to the immediate relatives of the two sub tribes before all come together for peace reconciliation with the Jimalekanem and the same applies to the Jimalekanem.

### **Appropriate levels of funding**

While the data is scarce, the World Bank suggests that the costs of low-level, internal conflict and related displacement are surprisingly high; depending upon the context, costs to society range from one to ten percent of a country's GDP per year. The Kondrika Peace Agreement by contrast was concluded at a cost of approximately 10,000 USD. However, progress towards an agreement was often put in jeopardy by a lack of sufficient and timely funding, resulting in needless delays setting up meetings and other logistical impediments. A lack of sufficient funding, reduced participation levels at times and ultimately putting back the day for eventual resettlement. As a consequence, V4C staff had to fight a psychologically exhausting battle against the threat of diminished expectations among their themselves and their stakeholders. Funds will be needed to ensure that the Verification Committee has the means to do the job it was asked to perform.



