



AP R2P

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Participants at the Pacific Islands Forum Workshop in Suva, 20-21 November 2014

Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea. The deliberations were facilitated by Helen Tavola, who has worked in Pacific countries for many years, including a period at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

PIFS Acting Secretary General Ms Andie Fong Toy observed the importance of the event in her remarks at the opening of the conference. Ms Fong Toy pointed out that although “some work has gone into implementing regional policy frameworks on these topics separately, rarely has there been an opportunity to consider how these three issues are interrelated. Seeking ways to reduce inequalities in human security is an important task in ensuring that our development efforts are effective and inclusive of all people in our Pacific Island countries.”

“Combining human security, gender equality and sustainable development in the one workshop sounds like it’s too much, but the connections between these three are quite precise,” said PIFS Conflict Prevention Officer and workshop co-convenor Timothy Bryar. “Inequalities in human security, including gender inequalities, not only indicate uneven development outcomes, but can also provide for the root causes of conflict which further undermine development”.

The stage was set for exploring these links by Ms Felicia Carvalho, who is Assistant Ministry of Finance for the Government of Timor-Leste. Ms Carvalho is also the Policy Coordinator of the G7+ Secretariat, an international organization that

SPOTLIGHT ON R2P

Human Security and Gender Sensitive Policy: Promoting and Protecting Sustainable Development

What does it mean to talk about “people-centered” security and what does it take to turn this concept into a reality in the Pacific Islands region? Senior development and finance planners, representatives from ministries for women, security and foreign affairs as well as representatives of the NGO and private business sector came

together for an innovative workshop at the Pacific Islands Forum in Suva, this November.

The two-day event examined ways for government officials to localize and harmonize regional and global commitments to human security and gender equality to build inclusive and sustainable development. The workshop was run by the Pacific Islands Forum (PIFS) in partnership with the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (AP R2P) located at the University of Queensland. Participating delegations represented Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands,



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represents countries rebuilding from conflict, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Liberia and Solomon Islands.

Ms Carvalho described the enormous challenges that confronted her country shortly after independence. She spoke about the many difficulties that contributed to a “loss of hope” in the early years, at a time when Timor Leste sought to assert its sovereignty. Between 1999 and 2006 the country was flooded with 8.2 billion in aid and yet poverty levels doubled. Ms Carvalho described the “stampede” of consultants who wrote “report after report” on her country, which made it feel as though “everyone else” had more expertise on Timor-Leste’s conflict recovery process than the country’s own people. In her presentation Ms Carvalho recounted how the Timor-Leste administration had begun to take control of the nation’s development trajectory, for example by prioritizing social cohesion as the basis for future sustainable development – a plan of action that often run counter to advice volunteered by external consultants.

Examples of strategies for sustainable development implemented by Timor-Leste included the rehabilitation of 150,000 internally displaced persons – a task that was achieved in two years, rather 10, as the UN had predicted. Ms Carvalho also listed the wide range of social protection policies initiated for the women of Timor-Leste. These have included shelters for young women and children exposed to violence in the home, social welfare payments made to female-headed households on the condition of dependents completing education levels, the development of maternal health clinics, gender focal points in every ministry and a domestic violence law passed by the parliament in 2010. Ms Carvalho also noted that woman are well represented in the East Timorese parliament, with levels of representation currently sitting at 38 per cent. Her address made clear that political will and determination, coupled with an effective



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mobilization of state resources, can lead to impressive achievements for the social well being agenda in a context where the legacies of conflict have posed significant challenges.

PIF Secretariat staff followed up Ms Carvalho’s presentation with a discussion of the various global and regional policy instruments that support human security, sustainable development and gender equality in the region. This wide array of mechanisms are often described as “overwhelming” for Pacific island governments that are required to absorb, plan for, implement and report on these frameworks but in a policy environment shaped by considerable institutional and financial constraints. These policy mechanisms include regional agreements such as the PIFS Framework for Human Security (2012), the recently formulated Samoa Pathway statement resulting from the Small Island Developing States Conference in Samoa this year, and the PIF Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration achieved at the Rarotonga PIF Leaders’ meeting in 2012. Other international policy instruments that support human security include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against women (1979), the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (2000), and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000).

Particular attention was given to the new UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are currently under negotiation and were the subject of a regional conference held by the Pacific Islands Forum in the days preceding the workshop.

In all of these discussions, delegates were reminded by PIFS officials of the need to ensure international and regional policy instruments are interpreted and acted upon in ways that match identified local priorities. “Don’t hire a team of consultants” and avoid trying to “reinvent the wheel” was the advice from Forum Development Planning officer, Charmina Saili. “Reflect on what you are already doing well” when trying to implement these objectives, she suggested, and try to ensure your plans are “manageable” rather than “overambitious”.

The question of human security from a human rights perspective was addressed by Filipino Masaurua, PIFS Human Rights Advisor. Mr Masaurua congratulated delegates from Solomon Islands on completing their periodic reporting requirements to the UN office of Human Rights, delegates from Kiribati for creating a new “Family Peace Act” earlier this year, and delegates from Vanuatu for their country’s decision in June 2014 to establish a National Human Rights Committee. He also noted that more could be done by reminding participants that despite

high economic growth in some Pacific Islands states, there was a continued persistence of high rates of violence against women and marginalization of persons living with disability. Building an inclusive and peaceful model of development requires more than attention to levels of GDP: it requires planners and policy makers to “think outside the box,” said Mr Masaurua. “Let’s do something” about the challenges that we know affect our societies, he urged.

Tim Bryar, the PIFS Conflict Prevention Officer outlined how the relationship between a social manifestation of exclusion and division can drive conflict in Pacific societies. He urged policy makers to respond to the results of violence and division in their societies, and also to examine the roots and origins of these divisions and to understand this work as an important aspect of the conflict prevention agenda.

Nicole George from AP R2P discussed the challenges of building a truly regional, Regional Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (RAP) – a plan that moves beyond the strong focus on upholding women’s security in conflict (an issue that has affected only a few PIF member states). Dr George emphasized the objective

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of “everyday” gendered security by considering how the provisions of the RAP could also be developed to examine the regional challenges posed by rising sea levels and climate change, maternal health challenges and excessive use of force on regional populations by state security forces and the military.

The workshop was designed to give maximum opportunity for deliberation on human security amongst country delegations. A series of country presentations allowed delegations to hear from each other and share reflections from case studies of “real world” experience.

Anna Naupa, who is PIFS regional and international issues advisor, discussed her involvement in the 20-year land management process that has been underway in her country, Vanuatu. Ms Naupa examined the local and global factors that assisted a land-grab process that the national government was now trying to unravel, and how the land reform agenda contributed to building human security.

Mr Hugo Hebala, Director of Research, Policy and Planning with Solomon Islands’ Ministry for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs discussed the lessons learned from the flash flooding event that hit the Honiara region in 2013, particularly its severe impact on informal settlements in that region and the experiences of displaced women, children and people living with disability, living in relief centres. He noted with concern the absence of durable solutions to manage future crises of this type.

Lawrence Bassie, working as a consultant in Security Sector Reform for United Nations Development Program (Pacific) discussed efforts to reform national policing and defense policy in Papua New Guinea to make it more attentive to human security principles.

UN women officer Toni Ann Brodber discussed how her office could help countries concretize their commitments to international instruments such as CEDAW into practical policy outcomes such as

Gender Responsive Budgeting. These sessions saw some very interesting lines of questioning evolve about the extent to which security agencies can themselves be sources of insecurity, the extent to which regional development partners follow through on their promises of assistance, and how far the promotion of women in decision-making, the judiciary or to senior public service positions, is itself a form of “discrimination”.

Breakout sessions were an important part of each day’s deliberations and allowed delegates from each country to reflect on the key human security challenges in their country and how these had emerged, the resources at their disposal to meet some of these challenges, how existing policies at the national and regional level could be capitalized upon and what new coordinating efforts might be required. Issues discussed included high unemployment levels, women’s reproductive health, women’s empowerment, the prevalence of gendered forms of violence (against women and girls, men and boys) and generalized levels of economic hardship.

Key ideas about the effective harmonization and localization of regional and global policy frameworks were reiterated at multiple points in the two-day discussion and are worth noting:

1. At many points participants reiterated the idea that there should be a strategic localization of global and regional frameworks that capitalize on the existing institutional set up, as opposed to having national ministries commit to overambitious goals that are ill-fitted to local policy contexts.
2. There should be careful translation of global and regional policy instruments so that objectives are harmonized with local cultural sensibilities. Terms like “violence against women” or “gender equality” can create a backlash in the region and some participants argued for the use of different language that resonates more closely with Pacific values.

In this vein, terms like ‘family peace’ rather than ‘violence against women’, respectful and effective communication rather than ‘equity’ in decision-making, and reciprocity rather than gender equality were seen to be more politically enabling terms to address questions around gender and human security in some social and political contexts.

3. Frameworks should be implemented in a way that ensures local ownership. Tim Bryar stressed that human security priorities should be seen not as a new obligation, but as a new way of looking at what many sectors of government are already doing, and meeting priorities that have already been understood as providing a basis for social cohesion and well-being.

The workshop concluded with discussions about how national collaborations across government might be developed in this policy area. There was widespread agreement amongst PIFS participants and government delegations that cross-representation from a range of government ministries was a particularly useful aspect of the workshop. It was felt that people are too often prone to working in policy silos, which leads to overlooking the extent to which ideas about policy priority areas and the “means of implementation” might be shared. It was therefore felt that policy makers would benefit from a continuation of this cross-departmental approach to policy harmonization. The presence of development planners in these discussions was particularly important with regard to identifying future resourcing priorities.

At the regional level the Forum Secretariat’s Conflict Prevention Desk committed to developing and moderating a web-portal that might become a site for further discussion

on inclusive “people-centered” security and for the exchange of ideas, information and online resources to support policy-makers’ work.

Reflecting on lessons learnt from the workshop, Janice Mose from Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade commented: “What really stood out for me was the shift from state security focus to human security focus and thinking about security as not just state-focused – the responsibility of policing or correctional services. But understanding that problems with environment, with health, with society can also been seen as about security, about dignity and about safety. If these things are coming onto the global agenda then we need to rethink how we understand security.”

Nicole George from the University of Queensland also reflected in the importance of this event for AP R2P Centre. “Bringing people from across different sectors of government together to talk freely and openly about the prospects and challenges of building peaceful and inclusive societies is an activity which is strongly aligned to our centre’s interests in the promotion of conflict prevention, and an engagement we hope to build on in the future,” she said.

The AP R2P and PIFS are hopeful that this first successful collaboration creates a foundation for future work that might assist national and regional policy-makers, civil society and those in the region’s research community working on the promotion of human security and conflict prevention.



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