



# The Catholic Reporter

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## Hela province in grip of tribal warfare

By Fr Nicholas Yambu OFM Cap Parish Priest, Tari, Hela Province

Tribal fights in Hela are a common thing. The recent fights have been different though, as traditional rules of fighting and engagement are not observed. In the past, rival enemies were not allowed to burn houses when their enemies were inside.

It was also a taboo to kill women and children or to hunt and kill an enemy in other people's territory. Only people who are directly related to the fight were considered enemies. But these rules of engagement have been broken and women and children have been killed in these fights. Ten years ago I didn't see any factory-made guns used in tribal fights. Now the M16 is a common weapon.

I don't believe that the declaration of fighting zones will solve the problem because fights are mostly happening in the bush. Enemies are hunting each other and mobile phones make it easier to identify enemy targets. The culprits, or 'owners of fights' as they say here, can easily hide. The fights have started over different things. People



Bishop Donald Lippert OFM Cap of Mendi (centre) and deacon Elias Zambra (right) with the Huli tribesmen of the oil and natural gas rich Hela province (11 Oct 2014). Photo: Anne Kathrin Gleske

may fight over something like a pig, but then it easily connects with previous tribal rivalries or political differences. I can't say what these fights are really about. These people have fought over different things so frequently that it becomes complex to trace the cause.

Government services in towns and in no-fighting areas are still operating. People not related to the fight are free to go into towns and move around.

As far as Church work goes, things are not affected much. Church buildings are generally respected by warring tribes. But

Church workers and Christians from warring tribes are affected and are in hiding.

Some have taken refuge in other areas and can't gather for Church meetings and activities. Declaring a state of emergency and pouring in more police and army or money is a short term solution.

Long term measures must be taken if Hela is to stop these fights and move ahead with development. The leaders, starting with the elected politicians, must cooperate, work together and pour in resources to address these issues. They must spend more time in their Hela electorates and be in regular contact with their people. Their people must see them as being on the ground with them to address the issues head-on instead of living in Port Moresby and coming into Tari only to distribute money or for important occasions.

Money allocated for development by the government must be used for the intended purposes, so people can see real change happening and be happy. When you have so many unhappy and frustrated people, it leads to tribal fights.

Leaders must come down to the level of the people and empower them for their own development instead of making them wait around for cash-handouts. Hela leaders must work in partnership with church groups like the Hela Council of Churches to address some of these issues. Unless there is a real political will and a heart for the people, very little is going to be achieved.

## WHERE IS THE MONEY FOR HEALTH?

Health services in Papua New Guinea are suffering because the Government is not releasing funds promptly enough.

Chairman of Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS), Archbishop Stephen Reichert expressed his disappointment that the release of salary and operational funds to the Churches is frequently delayed.

"We welcome the Government's commitment to health care in the latest budget."

"However, we urge the Government to release funds on time to Churches who run health facilities in partnership with the Government Department of Health."

"Over the past 18 months



there have been frequent delays in the release of salary and operational grants for Church-run facilities. As a result, many Church health workers are not paid for up to two or three months at a time. Surely this injustice and viola-

tion of the rights of Church health care providers is avoidable."

"The constant delay in funding is unacceptable to the Church and disrespectful to the Church health workers who provide lifesaving services," he said.

Archbishop Reichert explained that the Churches provide close to 50 per cent of all health care in Papua New Guinea; in remote and rural areas, where the majority of the people in the country live, that figure increases to around 80%.

"I often hear that the Government seeks to work in closer partnership with Churches. Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS) welcomes this," he said.

"By providing health serv-

ices, the Churches actually save the Government money, but more importantly, they provide health services to people in areas the Government cannot reach."

"On the Government's part a clear expression of partnership is to pay the Churches on time, every time and according to budget so that the Churches can pay their workers on time."

"The frequent late release of salary and operational grants is puzzling. Doesn't Government care about Church health care providers and their families? Doesn't Government care about the health of the people these health workers serve? We are given no explanation," he said.

"Church Health workers are highly committed people who often work in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations."

"The very late payment of salaries, in particular, has adverse impacts on morale and performance."

"If the Government is truly handing down a budget for families and the whole community, it must meet its basic commitment of paying Church health workers in a timely and just manner."

Archbishop Reichert noted that the Government's commitment of ensuring equal pay of Church and government workers has not yet fully happened. (24th November 2014)

## Dialogue between Christians and Muslims

Over 30 years ago, Professor Maurice Borrmans, on behalf of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians, published a booklet titled *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, which spelt out several conditions for a fruitful engagement between members of the two Abrahamic faiths. I list some of his recommendations below:

Christians have to approach Muslims with a dialogical attitude, not a confrontational one. Both sides need an honest self-criticism and recognition of their relative responsibility in the tragic Christian-Muslim clashes of the past.

Christians need to study Islam as an indispensable tool to overcome arbitrary judgment and prejudices. Care should be taken not to identify Islam exclusively with Arab civilisation.

Christians have to be aware of the Muslim view of Christianity, founded on the presupposition that their Holy Book *Al Quran* has given them the solely reliable source of knowledge of Christianity.

Christians should recognise the seeds of God's Word found in Islam, like submission to *Allah*, God's transcendence and unity, daily ritual prayers, fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, prescribed contributions to charity, etc.

A dialogue of life and action should characterise Christian-Muslim relations. There are many issues which need a common response by faith communities, like the preservation and integrity of creation, the defence of life and human rights, the dignity of marriage and family, the implementation of justice and peace, etc.

Islamic leaders, on their part, should distance themselves and their communities from the violent and terroristic acts allegedly committed in the name of Islam and propose Islam as a religion of peace and mercy.

In a dialogical spirit should also be discussed the most notorious obstacles to mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims, like marriage regulations, custody of children, freedom of religion, etc.

The promotion of a moderate form of Islam should be a priority in Papua New Guinea if we want to ensure the peaceful co-existence of people belonging to different religions in this country, for the benefit of the present and future generations. (F.Z.)

# Islam in Papua New Guinea

By Fr Franco Zocca  
Melanesian Institute  
Goroka.

"Islam is the natural religion of humankind" is the solemn statement contained in the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (1990). It is based on the following alleged saying (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad: "Every child is born naturally a Muslim. It is the influence of the child's parents or other agents that makes him or her a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian."

The Prophet's statement was very often quoted to me by Muslims I interviewed over the last two years in Port Moresby and Simbu.

When I asked them why they converted to Islam they corrected me saying, "We did not convert, we just reverted to our natural religion." It seems that this claim by the Prophet has been the foundation of the Islamic mission strategy in PNG: to convince Papua New Guineans that their traditional beliefs and practices were "nat-

urally Islamic". Certainly, some traditional customs like polygamy, the subordination of women, clearly defined gender roles, and some forms of punishment for wrongdoing find parallels in Islamic societies, but I was amazed to hear that traditional women's dress (or undress) and the consumption of pork could also be considered "Islamic"!

In any case, this strategy seems to have been successful because in recent years the number of Papua New Guinean Christians who have "reverted to their natural Islamic religion" has been considerable. In fact, according to the recently released 2011 Census data, the Islamic population in rural areas of PNG has risen from about 300 in the year 2000 to 1352 in 2011. They are concentrated mainly in the Highlands, especially in Simbu (589), Jiwaka (211), Southern Highlands (113) and Western Highlands (69). There are also pockets of Islam in rural West New Britain (104), Oro (88) and Morobe (30).

Unfortunately the National Statistical Office has not yet released data regarding the nationality of Muslims in PNG as a whole and the number of Muslims in urban areas. The total number of Muslims in PNG, both national and expatriate, could now exceed 2000. In the previous census in the year 2000 there were only 756, of which 280 were expatriates.

The great majority of Papua New Guinean Muslims now belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. In the 1980s the majority were Ahmadiya, which is a sect considered heretical in Indonesia and other Islamic countries. Ahmadias, as they are called, were mostly Simbus living in West New Britain. When some of them went back to Simbu, they spread their new faith there. Unfortunately they feel now under attack by the Sunnis and many have abandoned Islam altogether.

"To join Islam is like going into prison", an Islamic leader (*imam*) said to me. He explained his apparently uncom-

plementary statement by saying that Islam is all-embracing, regulating every aspect of human life: There are many rules, which are not easy to follow, starting from the five daily prayer times to the small details of behaviour, like how to kill an animal, how to behave in the toilet, how to dress, what animals are allowed to be eaten and so on.

He knew that Islamic law (*Shari'a*) has many similarities with Jewish law, the heavy burden of which was taken away by Jesus, as St Paul strongly reminded the Galatian Christians who were tempted to submit to the heavy yoke of the Mosaic Law.

Islam is now established in PNG. It will likely grow in numbers and in power as Muslim refugees at the processing centre in Manus are given residency here and as young Papua New Guinean Muslim boys and girls, now boarding in Koranic schools in Malaysia, Fiji and West Papua, come home well indoctrinated. How should Christians behave in regards to Muslims in PNG?



Bishop Don Lippert OFM Cap launched the Year of Consecrated Life in the diocese of Mendi on 21 November 2014. Photo: Anne Kathrin Gleske

## A missionary from Myanmar to PNG

By Fr Robert Moe  
Goodenough Island, MBP

Fr Robert Moe, an ethnic Kaya from the mountains of Myanmar, a country where Catholics are 1% of the population, discovered his vocation as a seminarian and became a missionary. The journey of the 35-year-old priest reflects the fate of the Church in Myanmar, which is marking the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first evangelization this year and with the rest of the country is now opening up to the world.

Fr Robert, tell us about yourself

I was born in 1979. I entered the diocesan seminary in Myanmar at 14. In 2003 I met some of the PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions) fathers who were teaching there. I particularly remember a talk

with Italian Fr Adrian Pelosin. At that time, he was working in Thailand, but he often came to see us. That year, he spoke to us about the life of a missionary, about his work. This generated a desire in me for the missions outside the boundaries of my diocese. Fr Adrian told us that "if you become a missionary, you cannot count on staying in your country, tribe, diocese or family. They send you out of your culture and geographical boundaries, because this is the missionary vocation". That sparked my interest even more. I was struck by Fr Adrian's experience, the way he was living his charisma, his relationship with the Buddhists, his love and concern for street kids. After talking with our bishop, three of us from the diocese of Loikaw made the decision to join PIME.

What did your missionary experience give you?

I suggested to my superiors to send me to Papua New Guinea because I loved forests more than cities. But when I arrived I noticed the difference. In my home State of Kaya there are mountains. In Milne Bay there is only water; you go on the sea, by boat. I went to Watuluma at Goodenough Island. I found it hard to adapt to the local way of thinking. There, the priest must do a bit of everything. The priest must sometimes be a judge, sometimes a teacher. So I often feel unable to take on all these roles. In addition, the culture is different. Sometimes you say something and locals understand something else. It is a cultural shock. Anyway, I am glad for these years.

With all the needs one can

see in Myanmar, what is the point of going on mission elsewhere?

My friends asked me that same question several times. I myself tried to find an answer. In Myanmar, Christians (Protestants and Catholics) are at best five per cent of the population. In Papua New Guinea most people are Christians. We are here to help the local Church grow and mature. For my part, I do what other missionaries have done, when they brought the faith to Myanmar. I received the faith because others made this choice before me, abandoning their country and their people. They came to us to pass on the faith. Now it is up to us to pass it on ourselves. In my diocese and in my country, we need to understand the urgency of passing on the faith to the world. This is why I am here. ([www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it))



Fr Robert Moe, 35 years old, from Myanmar, a PIME missionary in the diocese of Alotau.

# The death penalty dangerous for women?

By Fiona Hukula

*National Research Institute*

On 6 February 2013, Papua New Guinea woke up to graphic pictures of Kepari Leniata, a 20 year old woman being burned in Mt Hagen by a mob of angry people who felt that an accusation of sorcery warranted such inhumane punishment. In April of 2013, Helen Rumbali a teacher and women's leader from Nagovisi, South Bougainville was abducted, tortured and subsequently killed because it was believed that she was responsible for the death of a man.

## Public outcry

These two horrific events and the continuous violence that women in Papua New Guinea endure led to a nationwide protest (otherwise known as the National Haus Krai) on 14-15 May 2013. The National Haus Krai drew support from Papua New Guinea and friends of PNG living in other parts of the world.

At the National Haus Krai, a petition demanding leadership and action from the government was presented to Prime Minister Peter

O'Neill. The National Haus Krai and public demand for action prompted a reaction from government in the form of an amendment to section 299 and 347B of the criminal code which now supports the application of the death penalty as a way of punishment for wilful murder of a person on account of accusation of sorcery and aggravated rape.

Both amendments directly relate to crimes against women. The amendment to section 299 is gender neutral; however, there is evidence to show that in some parts of PNG women are more likely to suffer from violence that stems from sorcery accusations. (Gibbs 2013)...

I think it is important to acknowledge the fact that the PNG government is really trying to address the issue of violence against women, hence the amendments to the criminal code.

The question that needs to be asked here is whether the implementation of the death penalty will serve its intended purpose of deterring violent crimes against women.

## Lack of data

The non-availability of up to date data from key agencies such as the Police means that we are not able to properly ascertain information about the levels of violent crime against women.

However we all know that this is an issue. The media has played a large role in keeping the violence against women on the agenda in PNG. This year alone, we have seen reports in the media of more than one woman raped and mutilated in Lae.

A few weeks ago three female staff of the National Broadcasting Corporation were sexually assaulted after their drop off bus was held up at Morata. I also think of the great work of the Highlands Women's Human Rights Defenders Network (Monica Paulus and others). There are people out there (victims & families) who have been affected by sorcery deaths and aggravated rape and would clearly like to see the most severe punishment for those perpetrators.

## Our justice system

In terms of addressing violence against women in this country and

in the context of applying the death penalty to perpetrators of violent crimes against women, it is important to question whether all the possibilities for punishment have been explored and if implementing the death penalty will truly serve as a deterrent. Studies in other parts of the world show that capital punishment is not a deterrent for serious crimes. But the most important issue for PNG is the state of our current criminal justice system. For the death penalty to be the final outcome of a case there needs to be solid evidence so as to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a person is guilty of aggravated rape or a sorcery related killing. Otherwise there is a very strong possibility of a miscarriage of justice which is obviously a terrible outcome not only for an innocent person, but also in the context of the wider repercussions for the victim. Not only will the wrong person be accused and murdered, but the original victim may suffer further in terms of payback or harassment from relatives of the wrongfully accused. Even if the perpetrator is proven guilty, there is still the possibility that the victim will be the

subject of attacks by the family of the culprit.

It is with this in mind that I return to the question of whether enough has been done to strengthen our current criminal justice system so that punishment for crimes against women is enforced. The public needs to have faith in the criminal justice system for cases to be reported and fair outcome sought.

I also ask if having the death penalty will be more harmful for women. I just highlighted the issue of payback if there is a miscarriage of justice. I think it should also be a concern if the implementation of the death penalty may lead to women being killed.

For example, in a case aggravated rape the women may well know who her attacker is and actually not live to tell her story. I have carried out research with approximately fifty sex offenders and the majority of them knew who their victims were. We need to think carefully before any decision is taken. Or women may end up suffering even more. (*Constitutional Law Reform Commission - Death Penalty FORUM - UPNG, 13 Nov 2014*)

# Haus krai last November

By Bomai D Witney

Different societies treat death and burial differently. In Papua New Guinea, the death of a family member or relative is a time when nuclear, extended, clan and tribal members come together to mourn the dead person for a few days or even weeks.

Every person that is present at the *haus krai* is related to the deceased in some way. It is usual that no one says bad things about the deceased at the *haus krai*. Everyone says something good.

Those who have bad things to say know when, where and who to share with. It is increasingly evident that the *haus krai* is becoming an expensive exercise.

Hospital morgues are now a transit place for the corpses of commoners. The wealthy and employees of public and private sectors are assured of a space at the funeral home. There used to be just one funeral home in Port Moresby, now the business has extended to Goroka, Lae and Madang.

Bury the dead where the umbilical cord is planted is true for dead people in PNG. Air Niugini and other public transport providers have been making huge amounts of money from transporting corpses. In the Simbu culture, people cry, rub mud on their bodies and, in some extreme cases, cut off their fingers, throw themselves into ve-

hicles or off cliffs.

The relationship between the living and the dead is expressed in this way. It is also difficult to accept the fact that a loved one has passed away and people often look for an explanation. In many cases, someone is accused of sorcery.

I learned a few things about life and death as I was listening to the Most Reverend Bishop of Bougainville, Bishop Bernard Unabali, at Saint Mary Help of Christians at Kefamo. Goroka last October.

I tried to understand the dominant *haus krai* culture and connect its relevance to the Catholic faith in praying for the dead during the month of November.

I realised that the Catholic practice of praying about the dead is not something that stops at the *haus krai* and burial. The relationship of caring for the dead through prayer and offering is a continuing relationship. Death marks a change of relationship with the living.

Bishop Bernard began by saying that the Catholic Church's role is to assist families and people to grow in faith, live a good life and be assured of a peaceful death. At almost every *haus krai* people talk about the good things people did while alive and all these things go with them to the grave.

The family members and friends learn to adopt a few good things from

the deceased. If Christians are to leave legacies for the good of mankind, they have to live a life of care and reaching out to others.

A life of faith and prayer is a foundation for service and commitment for the common good. It is also the foundation of being a human being leading a life of self-worth and dignity.

One has to be strong with principles and moral standing in the family and community and not be strong based on illegal accumulation of wealth used to exploit others.

Bishop Bernard said parents must strive to make children grow with love and extend that love to others through evangelisation and missionary work.

The parents must be the best parents to their children, the teachers must give their best to their students, nurses, doctors and other professions must be driven by the desire and commitment to give their best.

Therefore, during the month of November every year, the Catholic Church is dedicated to think of loved ones, family members and friends who have passed on, to visit their cemeteries, pray, reminisce about their lives and make an offer to thank God for their lives. The month of November also reminded us of our own life as death can meet us any time.

([http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa\\_people/2014/11/bishop-bernards-message-on-the-connectivity-of-life-death.html#more](http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2014/11/bishop-bernards-message-on-the-connectivity-of-life-death.html#more))

## Health workers or HEART workers?

By Augustine Koroma

**Graduation of 18 Rural Laboratory Assistants**

DWU, Madang 25 Nov 2014

"To an ordinary villager any health worker is a *doctor man* – *doctor meri*. Titles such as Community Health Worker, Nurse, Optician, Audiologist, Ophthalmologist, ENT do not exist in a villager's vocabulary. You are all doctors out of one very special word in the village life: respect.

And where is the root of their respect? It's in their hearts, not their minds.

The respect that you and I got as health practitioners was a reflection of our work. You have already travelled the valleys and the mountains, you have crossed rivers and swamps day and night.

You have fought the mosquitoes and escaped the snake bites. You have survived the cold and the heat.

The first pay package and your first bush material accommodation were not your motivational factors. Without anyone telling you and without you realising it, you loved your work; and because it was a

calling from the heart you went out there and helped those who were sick and dying.

You committed your entire life to serving our people because you took your work as a very special ministry. Now you are equipped with new lab testing skills. People of all walks of life will come to you.

I wish to encourage you not to lose focus of your heart's ministry. Treat everybody with respect and fairness regardless of their status, ethnicity, gender, age, colour and religion.

Simply thank God for, amongst the many, you have been chosen to carry out this special ministry. Commit yourselves wholeheartedly in the spirit of service.

Do not ask what the Government, the Department of Health or the community can do for you; rather ask yourself what you can do for your people in your community, province and country.

Laboratory Assistant: Work or Ministry? You must know that it is a very special ministry.

Therefore you are sent forth to give service with your heart's commitment."

# Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters rejoice across PNG

## 125<sup>th</sup> Foundation Anniversary

By Sr Mary Anthida Kueckmann SSpS

On Monday 8 December, Foundation Day, the six missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) on the staff of Divine Word University (DWU) in Madang will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Congregation, 115 years in Papua New Guinea and 45 years of service at DWU. The campus family will join them in thanksgiving.

Two of the early teaching sisters, Sr Inez Strobl (now at Alexishafen) and Sr Edith Thies (Malala) will be special guests of honour, along with Sr Helene Senft, who has been guiding and caring for the student religious sisters for many years. Historical pictures are being prepared to show a timeline paying tribute to all the sisters who have been teaching or serving on the staff of DWU. The Holy Mass will be presided by Fr Jan Czuba, SVD, President of DWU, and co-celebrated by other Divine Word missionaries and priests. The SVD priests and the Holy Spirit sisters have St Arnold Janssen, a German priest from the nineteenth century, as their common founder.

### Communities at feast

In Goroka, the celebration will take on a triple character: 125<sup>th</sup>



Sr. Florence Utah SSpS, a missionary to Ethiopia and South Sudan, Africa.

Jubilee anniversary of the Congregation, the Golden Jubilee of Sr Cecilia Koesters and the Diamond Jubilee of Sr Marianetta Hilt; both in PNG for many years. Sr Cecilia is a nurse by profession and has been provincial leader and novice directress, while Sr Marianetta served in several communities as cook and manager, instructing many young girls in practical life skills. There

will be thanksgiving Masses and celebrations in the various places where the Holy Spirit sisters are present: at the Provincial House in Alexishafen outside Madang; in the three communities of East Sepik; and in the Enga, Western Highlands, Simbu, Eastern Highlands and Port Moresby communities. As well as DWU, Malala Secondary School in Madang Province is another big teaching

engagement for the missionary sisters.

### Fighting poverty and diseases

Besides formal and informal teaching and nursing, the Holy Spirit Sisters have been at the forefront in training and guiding young women in family like work, financial management, the fight

against HIV/AIDS, spiritual guidance and counseling. As proactive religious women, the sisters have played an integral part in the local church by being involved both at the grassroots and diocesan and national levels.

The number of national sisters now stands at 23. Some of them are serving overseas in Australia,

Fiji, Ghana, Togo, St Kitts, USA, and the Philippines. Sr Florence Utah, who has been in Ethiopia for six years, is now preparing for her new mission in South Sudan, where her skills as a nurse and midwife are urgently needed.

As our 3,500 Sisters around the world in over 40 countries celebrate 8 December together with our Founding Generation in heaven and with all the sisters who have gone before us, we ask God's blessing for our present and future mission in the spirit of our General Chapter 2014: "Empowered by the Spirit, sharing the good news among peoples".

## "MOMENTS OF TRUTH"



Br Barry Louisson

by Brother Barry Louisson, written as an investment in the people of Papua New Guinea with whom he has lived and worked since 1952. The book's style and content are particularly suited to Papua New Guineans, a 'story' people, but it would have appeal for other readers who have some familiarity with the writer, the people or the subject.

It is not intended to be a complete autobiography but rather a presentation of an appropriate theme for the Catholic Church and world of today.

Probably the best recommendation comes from those who have pre-ordered copies, including staff of the publishers.

"Persons educated in the Brothers' schools will love reading this, especially your own ex-students," said one person who assisted with editorial work prior to publication.

"It is of both personal and historical interest: spiritually uplifting without being too religious; Catholic, yet suitable for people of any Christian denomination; an invitation to Christian living... I photocopied it for friends and fellow-missionaries and many Sisters want personal copies."

In the publication of this book, the author and the publishers paid special attention to making it accessible to the ordinary people. It is a non-profit venture of the Vunakanau Brothers' community.

[*Moments of truth: A missionary in PNG for 62 years* by Br Barry Louisson, Moore Printing Kokopo 2014, 250 pp, K20 + postage. Order it by writing to: Christian Brothers, Vunakanau, P.O. Box 2510, Rabaul, ENBP 611, Papua New Guinea - Tel. (+675) 983 7022 - email barry.vuvu@gmail.com]



Sr. Florence Utah SSpS, a missionary to Ethiopia and South Sudan, Africa.