



*Presentation at UNESCAP Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2014
Helen Hakena,*

*Leitana Women's Development Agency, Bougainville, PNG and
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)*

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important panel and to provide the perspective of civil society and in particular the perspective of women, particularly Pacific women and women who have lived through resource generated conflict who bear witness to the realities of climate change and the consequences of unsustainable extraction, production and consumption.

Before I respond to the questions I want to provide you with a brief picture of the development context in my community of Bougainville, PNG.

When I was young Bougainville provided many of the ingredients for a sustainable livelihood: an abundance of arable land, a bountiful river and community knowledge. Of course there were things we lacked and needed to trade resources for some commodities and technology. But with carefully managed community resource management and trading with neighbours it could provide us with most of the 'means of implementation' for a sustainable life.

But Bougainville suffered a 20 year war when one of the world's largest open pit mines dominated our land, destroying not only our lands and environment but our communities. The environmental devastation of our river and our land has been well documented. Less than 1% of the profits of the mine went to the local communities. This unfair, unsustainable and exploitative environment ignited a war.

The Bougainville Revolutionary Army burnt my home in Ieta Village. I was seven months pregnant and suffering from Malaria. I was petrified and gave birth to my fourth son prematurely on a bare floor with no medical help. I witnessed other mothers suffer,

dying in childbirth with no medical attention before my eyes. Women were raped as a weapon of war. This conflict led to militarized communities, a whole generation of children missed out on going to school – they have no chance of getting ‘the future they want’ with no education and no chance to learn community knowledge or skills.

And what do you think it leads to? It leads to the world’s highest rates of violence against women. Last year, a UN study found that 62% of men admitted to raping women in Bougainville. I ask each of you, what kind of development agenda allows for this to happen?

So what kind of transformation do we need to see to provide genuine, equitable, sustainable and just development?

First – the purpose of our development agenda must shift to delivering development justice. Our aim must be to provide every human being with an equal right to development. To realise this we cannot allow the interests of some, of the powerful, of the rich to impose on others and take their natural resources, their lands and livelihoods from them. Development Justice is an approach that doesn’t focus on economic growth but on fair distribution of resources and wealth, on environmental justice, economic justice, social and gender justice and accountability to the peoples. Second – We must agree that development decisions have to be made by the local community – which must include women and those most marginalized. If this agenda allows local people to control their own development path it will be significant. This principle must be reflected in targets and indicators. We must have ways to measure the decision making power of local people over their own development.

Second – Land, oceans and resources are the most critical assets for sustainable living. Who has access to land and resources needs to be measured. Indicators that measure access and control over land and particularly measures how many people lose control, have their land taken from them or have land eroded or even disappeared by rising water and salinity must be included.

Third – There must be mechanisms that make the powerful accountable. How can we make the company that polluted our land and ignited conflict accountable when they are a foreign company with changing parent companies, different countries and with millions of dollars for lawyers? How can we make governments accountable for the

human rights commitments they have made? How can we make men accountable when they commit violence either at home or in war? How can we make the countries responsible for climate change accountable to the communities from the Cateret Islands whose Island has already disappeared? Those people are now living in Bougainville in a completely different environment without their traditional ways of survival. Accountability to the people is what is really missing from our current framework.

Fourth – We need a clear goal and targets to address inequality. We support the G77 call to restore the inequalities goal. We know wealth and resources are now in the hands of so few. We need targets to reduce that inequality but also measures to reduce it. The clearest way to do that is to agree to global taxes that will be used for development. Binding global tax systems will stop governments from trading away our prosperity so easily. Binding global tax systems will mean that developing countries can collect more for our governments. Binding global taxes on harmful practices will reduce them and also should provide money that then goes to developing countries for climate change programmes and for universal rights like social protection.

“I call on governments of our region to commit to a new model of development – a model of development justice where women are central to decision making around any development matters, locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. Where wealth, land and power is redistributed more equally, where economies focus on local communities and serve the people, not profits. Where our Earth is valued and cared for above individual interests, where militarization, violence against women is recognized as major development issues. Where human rights are our aim and where governments and corporations are accountable to us, the people, and where the voice of women in my community counts more than a balance sheet.”