



# Women on the Frontline Newsletter

Melanesia

July 2022 | Edited by Jane Namurye

## Foreword

Greetings from Women on the Frontline (WFL). In this edition, we are bringing you updates from Melanesia and Burundi. These updates have been put together by bishops' spouses, leaders and key women involved with the work of WFL in each of these provinces and dioceses across the Anglican Communion before, during and after the pandemic. Retreat, reconciliation training, creative art, drama, and sharing of stories/testimonies continue to be the main focus of our ministry. In this edition we will also hear spouses' expectations for the Lambeth Conference from the Anglican Province of Melanesia.

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Melanesia

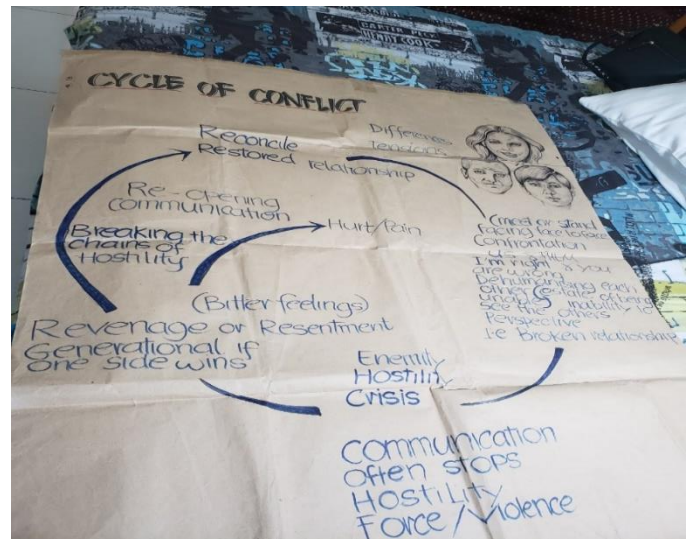


# MELANESIA

Melanesia is one of the countries within the Pacific Region. Since WFL's visit in 2018, our work has impacted 90% of the bishops' and clergy wives from three dioceses in the province. This has encouraged Bishop Patterson Theological College to partner with WFL Melanesia to support bishops' and clergy wives to receive further training and be able to minister in their respective dioceses.

Mary Vunagi, wife of the former Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACOM) continues to nurture and accompany Dorah Dawea, the wife to the Archbishop of ACOM, and spouses in other Dioceses in Melanesia following the WFL visit in 2018.

Despite the challenging years of the pandemic, Mary and Dorah, who are both passionate about this ministry, have continued to run retreat and reconciliation training. These meetings, Mary says, have enabled bishops' wives and women to recognize their God-given gifts, purpose and value in the ministry and to work alongside their husbands. Mary adds, these meetings give the spouses a sacred space to share with each other the challenges and experiences of their ministry and gives them the confidence to share freely – through WFL they are empowered.



## Art

The work of WFL continues to play a significant role during and after every visit in all the provinces. The use of art, for example, has helped these women to capture their imagination through the bible stories and relating to their situations and lives as well. It is in such times of fellowship that women get to know and pray for one another more specifically, as the art activity becomes more meaningful and real to all those participating in the session. Through art work, spouses develop confidence and willingness to move out of their comfort zones into new and challenging territories, Mary says, as most of those taking part find it easier to relate and connect with those around them. In every WFL visit, the team tries to encourage participants to work closely with one another, and see themselves as children of God and known individually to God..

## | Participants in groups|

There is a lot of interest in the work of WFL in Melanesia. There are around 18,000 Mothers Union members and women, who are very anxious to be part of and work alongside bishops' wives in ACOM.

Melanesia is one of the countries within the Pacific Region that has experienced ethnic tension for a considerable number of years, but it's slowly recovering. WFL's reconciliation training has contributed to equipping bishops' wives, Mothers Union and other women to be instrumental in peace efforts at the national, community, church and family levels; promoting reconciliation and mending relationships.



## BURUNDI

WFL visited Burundi in 2018. In this edition, we hear success stories of how the work of WFL has impacted the dioceses. In the diocese of Muyinga, Leonie Nibona, a Bishop's wife, leads the Mothers Union, young mothers and women using the available resources through creative art; a skill she received when WFL visited before the pandemic.

Art, one of the activities which is part of every visit, has impacted the livelihood of women and communities in the Diocese of Muyinga. In the Diocese of Muyinga, the women usually sit together in a circle or sometimes in a semi-circle as shown in this picture. They reflect on the craft work, and allow God to speak to them individually through Bible studies and praying together. The weaving of these baskets also plays a significant role in mentoring young girls and women in the community.



These baskets are not only a symbolic representation of how God weaves the women together in his service, but are also used as gifts to friends of the diocese, fruit baskets at home and decorations. The baskets also help generate income for the women to be able to support their families and send their children to school.



## LAMBETH CONFERENCE

Women on the Frontline has been closely following the Global and Regional Spouses' Conversations for the Lambeth Conference. Below we feature some of the views and expectations from the Anglican Church of Melanesia in relation to WFL, which reflect some of the expectations of spouses throughout the Anglican Communion:

*"ACOM recognizes the importance of the Ministry of WFL given that it was introduced to a few Provinces in the Anglican Communion. The Lambeth Conference will be a platform where those involved can talk about their experiences of the program, the changes and impact that the program is having on them personally as Bishops' spouses and unitedly as Bishops' spouses in their provinces, for example."*

*"A platform so that this program can be shared widely across the Anglican Communion and where possible it can be promoted and shared within Provincial Peacebuilding Ministry throughout the Anglican Communion or those that may be ready for the program."*

*"Support Bishops' Spouses in building confidence and capacity to implement this Training into their communities. In the Melanesian context, Bishops' Spouses are the Mothers' of the Church and are expected to work closely with Women, Youth and Children, especially vulnerable people and the voiceless in order to bring about transformation in peoples' lives thus building a strong foundation in God's Church."*

*"It supports the Ministry of WFL build upon what it already has, by providing Training for Bishops' Spouses & Women on "Trauma Counselling". Most of our families, mostly women and children experience living through trauma at different levels due to situations they encounter and most times do not have enough professional services that deal with their pains. Bishops' Spouses and Women leaders could form a network team of Trauma counsellors once gone through trainings."*

We are very much looking forward to meeting up at the Lambeth Conference and discussing how we can best support the bishops' spouses in the future.

### *| Prayer Support for Women on the Frontline |*

*We would be so grateful if all our supporters could join with us in providing prayer support, in particular for:*

- The spouses' preparation for the Lambeth Conference, follow up on visas and prayer for the families left behind.
- Good conversations at the Lambeth Conference especially around greater support for bishops' wives in the future.
- Progress on WFL website development and next steps after the Lambeth Conference.
- The toolkit roll out, and the mentoring programme, so that the work of WFL can cascade down to a greater number of dioceses and communities in the respective provinces.
- Confidence for spouses so that they are able to grow and lead this work and have the resources to do so.
- Continuing support and funding for the increasing number of retreats and workshops.
- Networking and strengthening relationships across the provinces in-country, both in each region and globally across the Anglican Communion.
- Wisdom to know where to go and when to visit those provinces not yet visited

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### **| Supporting Women on the Frontline |**

The work of WFL has only been possible because of the very generous support from J.C. Flowers Foundation, Lambeth Partners, Anglican Communion Fund, friends and well-wishers, for whom we are so grateful.

If you would like to become a friend of WFL yourself, and help us in this ministry, whether by prayer or making a donation, please contact the WFL team at [wfl@lambethpalace.org.uk](mailto:wfl@lambethpalace.org.uk).