



Inquiry into Gender Equality Policies & Institutions, Gender- Based Violence and Sorcery Accusation Related Violence

Report to Parliament No.1

**Parliamentary Committee on
Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment**

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Chairman's Foreword

I am honoured to be the Chair of the first Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (PPC-GEWE) established by our 11th National Parliament. The PPC-GEWE builds on the work of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) which operated during the 10th Parliament and of which I was also proud to have been an active member. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair of that Special Parliamentary Committee, Mr. Charles Abel, for his dedicated and passionate leadership, and equally thank the Members of that Committee, most particularly the Deputy Chairman, who is also the Deputy of the PPC-GEWE, the Hon. Allan Bird. The efforts of the Special Committee resulted in extremely frank discussions with all levels of government, private sector, and civil society. Through our inquiries, new light was shone on the inadequacies of our efforts. These were captured in the two reports tabled in Parliament on GBV in August 2021 and April 2022, which included over 70 recommendations for action. Our PPC-GEWE has used those two reports to guide our own inquiries and activities.

I would also like to thank our Prime Minister, the Hon. James Marape, and the Members of Parliament for approving the formation of the Special Committee during the 10th Parliament and then elevating the Committee to a Permanent Committee in this term. This act is a first and important step in demonstrating the Government's commitment and is a significant acknowledgement of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment for the future of our country. It responds to our national Constitution's goals and directive principles, which enshrine equality as a foundational value of Papua New Guinea. The expanded terms of reference for the PPC-GEWE are an important step forward and I would like to thank Government for their forethought in taking this action. Further, unlike the last Committee, the PPC-GEWE not only has an expanded scope, which covers gender equality and women's empowerment as well as GBV, but it is also a permanent Committee. This is a very important decision and a bold step forward in our collective efforts towards achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and ending GBV in the longer-term. It also supports the advancement of our country's commitments on the international stage.

I also thank the current Members of the PPC-GEWE, most of whom volunteered to be members of this Committee. It is a privilege and honour for me to Chair this important Committee of Parliament, and to have oversight over these long outstanding national goals and expected outcomes for our country.

As all who know me will be aware, I have long been a champion of the rights of the women and girls of our country. I strongly believe that without empowering the women and girls of PNG to actively, equally and safely participate in all aspects of public and private life, we will never properly harness the full potential of our country's abundant human resources and ensure inclusive and sustainable development for all our people. Global research concludes that higher levels of gender equality result in happier adolescents, whereas the greater the gender inequality in a society, the less likely girls are to survive to a full life. Higher levels of female education and literacy, lower rates of child mortality, and the inclusion of more women in political leadership positions, results in flow on benefits for the economy and society more broadly. The more bargaining power women have at home, the healthier their children are. The more women are educated, the more bargaining power they have in the home, and the more they can safely and meaningfully drive their own destinies. Women are almost twice as likely to participate in the labour markets of nations with high levels of economic freedom, than in those with low levels.

Women and vulnerable genders are left behind to the detriment of all and the true gain of none. The opportunity gender parity presents is real, not only for the advancement of human rights, not only for the economic destiny of Papua New Guinea, in fact, for the future of everyone, everywhere.

Our National Constitution, the founding document which guides the actions of every single person in our country – including every government, Minister and parliamentarian – makes very clear that equality between women and men is a core value and goal of this nation. This value must be protected and promoted by all of us. The Directive Principles that frame the Constitution demand that every person is and has to be free from “domination or oppression so that each man or woman will have the opportunity to develop as a whole person in relationship with others”.

The second directly principle calls “for all citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country”. To that end, the Directive Principles recognise that “Obstacles to educational and other opportunities which face women at present should be removed, and insofar as it is within the power of the Government to do so, the difficulties facing women who wish to involve themselves in the affairs of the nation should be reduced.”

It is the Committee’s role to use our powers to achieve the goals set out in the Constitution and we in the PPC-GEWE take the Constitution as our guiding light. The Constitution, and its values of equality, lead the work of the Committee. Our Constitution aims to ensure that women can meaningfully participate in the development of our country, without fear, and with every opportunity to exercise and enjoy their constitutional rights. This is the goal to which our Committee aspires. Our Constitution guided our efforts during the Committee’s first hearings from 24-26 May 2023 and the second hearings on 18-19 July 2023, where we heard the testimonies of those in government, private sector and civil society to better understand why our country continues to struggle with ever increasing rates of violence against women and girls.

I am still shocked when I recall some of the testimony that we heard from our expert official witnesses. Officials from the National Department of Health shared data with us which showed an alarming rise in the number of people presenting at health services for cases related to violence, including intimate partner violence and sorcery accusation related violence. They advised that the data is “only the ‘tip of the iceberg’; a catastrophic human rights violation alarming for a country not at war”. If not addressed, they suggested that cases of violence presenting at health services around the country could exceed more than 100,000 a year within only a few more years, stressing our already overburdened health system and overloading our justice services.

Following on from this testimony, we also heard from the police who provided similarly alarming testimony. Even recognizing that cases of GBV and SARV are grossly under-reported across the country, they advised that from January 2021 to April 2023, there were 30,028 cases reported to FSVUs across the country; from these only 1,304 arrests (4%) were made; and there were a mere 156 convictions (8 of which were SARV cases). This means that only 0.5% of all reported cases result in a conviction. This amounts to approximately 75 cases resulting in convictions every year, or just over 3 convictions per province per year. That is a staggeringly low conviction rate, considering the violence that we all know is going on in the country.

It is explained by the data on police ratios however, which show that are currently insufficient police officers per head of population in most provinces. A review of the 2022 RPNGC Annual Report shows that ratios vary between 1 officer per 714 people in the NCD/Central Divisional Command to 1 officer per 4,282 people in the Highlands Eastern-End Divisional Command. Of the total number of RPNGC officers, there are currently only 114 RPNGC officers staffing the Family and Sexual Violence Units (FSVUs), who are dedicated to assisting thousands of GBV and SARV survivors every year.

Violence is increasing for everyone in PNG. Worryingly, 70% of young people – both male and female – are saying they are violent in their relationships. With such high rates of harm, we are all aware that there will be no easy or quick fix for addressing the violence against our women and girls. Nonetheless,

we must all do better; no matter who we are, we must all commit to doing everything in our personal power to act for change.

Our hearing report contains 29 new recommendations. These new recommendations should be read in conjunction with the recommendations made by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV in their previous two reports from 2021 and 2022. While all recommendations warrant action, there are a handful which I am compelled to draw to the urgent attention of the highest levels of the Government.

Firstly, it is absolutely imperative that all levels of Government work together now and with a sense of resolve to develop, fund and implement workforce development strategies to increase the recruitment of properly trained and capacitated (i) health service workers and (ii) police officers (Recommendation 8). Every province must have an appropriate ratio of health staff and police officers to citizens. Services must be staffed with trained and experienced staff who have the support, resources and willingness to meet the needs of their population, most especially survivors of and those at risk of becoming victims to, gender-based violence. Without sufficient health workers and police officers, GBV and SARV survivors will continue to suffer and grow in number, without proper crisis response services and without access to justice.

Secondly, at an institutional level, it is beyond urgent that the National Government properly staff and resource the National GBV Secretariat, which was supposed to be established in 2017 to drive the implementation of the National GBV Strategy (Recommendation 12). Without a central unit with the skills, funding and leadership to drive this agenda, implementation of the Strategy will continue to languish. At the provincial level, it is also critical that Provincial Governors and Administrators urgently endorse locally contextualized Provincial GBV Strategies and establish properly resourced Provincial GBV Secretariats (Recommendation 14). In our decentralized system of government, our sub-national government structures must take on more responsibility for addressing GBV and SARV.

Thirdly, while it is essential that we strengthen our crisis response and justice services for GBV and SARV survivors, in the longer-term we must proactively build our society so that people no longer rely on violence as a means to an end. At the most fundamental level, we must invest more resources in rolling out GBV and SARV prevention and behaviour change strategies (Recommendations 27). We simply cannot accept violence as a way of resolving conflict anymore. It is not Christian; it is not constitutional; it is also neither a cultural nor a traditional practice. It is not who we want to be as a nation.

Our recommendations on prevention and behaviour change places particular importance on young people and the education system in our country. At school, our girls need to be safe, and ensured pathways to the highest levels of education. We also need to prioritize initiatives to educate children and youth people through the school system on the importance of respectful relationships and the need to use words, not violence, to manage disagreements and conflict. We also want more resources investment in working with young people, both in and out of the school system. Our country is a country of youth and yet our youth are lost. Unemployment in youth has skyrocketed – they have lost hope and they have lost role models. Youth are our next generation of parents and of leaders; they must be the ones who ensure that the PNG of our future has a zero-tolerance for violence as a means of problem solving. We must be role models to them or this circle of violence will never end.

For real prevention and behaviour change to take place in our country, the National Government must lead and take responsibility for investing in and inspiring the change needed. As the largest employer and the largest contractor in the country, the Government can also use its economic power to lift the status of women and girls and to change the trajectory of their lives. By integrating zero-tolerance for

GBV amongst its employees, its programs and its contractors, the Government can extend the constitutional values of gender equality and put an end to GBV (Recommendation 28). One concrete measure, already successfully trialled in the National Capital District, is to ensure that (i) the contractual obligations of government employees, programs and contractors include specific expectations for zero-tolerance of GBV, and (ii) these contractual obligations are monitored, evaluated and publicly shared. For example, all government employees should be required in their contracts of employment to agree to not being violent in their place of work, home and community. Moreover, they should commit to behave as leaders and role models in their communities in this regard. Those who do not uphold this obligation should be terminated. The same goes for government contractors: all should be required contractually to establish GBV and gender equality policies and strategies within their companies, and again, those who do not uphold this contractual obligation should no longer be permitted the privilege of serving government.

From the national level, the subnational and district level must follow – and through all agencies. We are asking the entire country to stop the GBV and to promote gender equality, but we must also start with ourselves – if we start with the Government, the public will follow suit. The private sector, for the most part, is already leading in this respect. As Government, we must benefit those corporate leaders who are striving to uphold the Constitution and the laws of our country, and those who are working tirelessly to end GBV. We know they are committed to our nation and our people, but they have also seen that the price of GBV and violence is unprecedented for their businesses. The value added by implementing gender equality policies serves to benefit their business goals and bottom line. So, the Government must learn from and work with private sector, as a partner, as we must learn from and work with the CSOs, front line experts and the international community.

I call on the Government and all agencies at every single level of operation to read all of our recommendations and action them. Being the change, we want to see in this country is incumbent upon us as Government leaders. To uphold the Constitution of our country - to show the Founders of our country who believed profoundly in the principles of equality that we will follow in their footsteps and stop our nation from falling behind the rest of the world in this regard. We are currently 161 out of 162 nations in terms of equality - it does not have to be this way. We have the power - all we need is the will. We have no time to lose. We must all start now.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the special role of civil society in playing their part in our national efforts to address GBV and SARV to date. A number of CSO representatives participated in our May 2023 hearings and provided us with great insights into the specific challenges women and girls are facing. We heard how hard they are trying to work at the ground level to give help survivors access services and get justice, but we also heard about the many obstacles they face. We know there are many more people working in communities across the country, tirelessly trying to stem the tide of violence and ease the pain of survivors, many of whom feel abandoned by their own governments because of a lack of support and care. For the record, I wish to express the thanks of a grateful nation – they are doing God’s work.



Hon Powes Parkop, LLB, LL.M, MP
Chairman – Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Parliamentary Committee
& Governor for National Capital District

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Abbreviations

AROB	Autonomous Region of Bougainville
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CJC	Community Justice Centre
CSO	Civil society organisation
DFCDR	Department for Community Development and Religion
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DJAG	Department for Justice and the Attorney General
DPM	Department of Personnel Management
DPMNEC	Department of Prime Minister and National Executive Council
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DSIP	Direct Services Improvement Program
ENB	East New Britain
FASO	Family and Sexual Offences
FPA	<i>Family Protection Act 2013</i>
FPO	Family Protection Order
FSC	Family Support Centre
FSVAC	Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee
FSVU	Family and Sexual Violence Unit (RPNGC)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
IPO	Interim Protection Order
MP	Member/s of Parliament
MTDP	Medium Term Development Plan
NAP	National Action Plan
NCD	National Capital District
NDOH	National Department of Health
NEC	National Executive Council
NGBVS	National Gender-Based Violence Secretariat
NGOs	Non-government organisation
OPP	Office of Public Prosecution
PGBVS	Provincial Gender-based Violence Secretariat
PHA	Provincial Health Authorities
PSIP	Provincial Services Improvement Program
RPNGC	Royal PNG Constabulary
SARV	Sorcery Accusation Related Violence
SIP	Services Improvement Programs
SOE	State owned enterprises
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOS	Sexual Offences Squad, RPNGC
TOR	Terms of Reference
WNB	West New Britain

Executive Summary

Background

In September 2020, in response to the critical need to address these issues, twenty Members of Parliament (MPs) formed a Coalition of Parliamentarians to End Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which included both Governors and Open Seat members. The initiative was launched and led by the Hon. Powes Parkop, MP and Governor NCD and current Chairman of this Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

Two of the Coalition's concrete actions to end GBV were their organization of the United for Equality: First National Summit to End Gender-Based Violence (November 2020) and their subsequent advocacy for the establishment of a Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV (November 2020). The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV was chaired by Hon. Charles Abel and included the Hon. Allan Bird, Hon. Powes Parkop, Hon. Michael Dua, Hon. Aiye Tambua, Hon. Ginson Saonu and Hon. Allan Marat.

The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV organized two public hearings during the 10th term of Parliament, one in May 2021 and one in March 2022. That Committee further tabled two reports to Parliament in August 2021 and April 2022. Each report contained more than 70 recommendations for action by government officials.

Some progress has made since the hearings of the Special Parliamentary Committee. Highlights include: the first ever national GBV budgets allocated for 2022 (K7.93 mill) and 2023 (K9.86 mill), including substantial funding for Civil Society Organization (CSO) grants; the approval by the Department of Personnel Management in August 2022 of ten positions to staff the National GBV Secretariat; the inclusion of all RPNGC Family & Sexual Violence Unit (FSVU) officers into the RPNGC official establishment; increased funding for Victim Liaison Officers within the Family & Sexual Offences (FASO) Unit of the Office for the Director of Public Prosecutions; and the development by multiple provinces of their own provincial GBV strategies and budgets. Nonetheless, considerably more work remained to be done.

Following the national general elections held in July 2022, a new Parliament was sworn in August 2022. By November 2022, during the 20 Days of Human Rights Activism Campaign that runs from 20 November to 10 December each year, the new Parliament endorsed a Resolution to establish a Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, recognizing gender equality and women's empowerment as key to ending gender-based violence. The Terms of Reference (TOR) is attached in Annex 1.

The establishment of the Committee marked the first time in PNG's history that the National Parliament has mandated a permanent committee to review and provide oversight over GEWE issues. The Committee is Chaired by Hon. Powes Parkop (Governor NCD) and the Deputy Chair is Allan Bird (Governor East Sepik Regional). It comprises five additional members, namely, Hon. Rufina Peter (Governor Central Regional), Hon. Marsh Narewec (Wau Waria Open), Hon. Ricky Morris (Alotau Open), Hon. William Bando (Koroba Lake Kopiago Open) and Hon. MP Lohia Boe Samuel (Port Moresby North West Open).

The Committee held their first public hearings during the 11th Parliament from 24 to 26 May 2023. The schedule is attached in Annex 2. While the Committee is mandated to focus on the broader subject matter of GEWE, GEWE is the root requirement for ending GBV and sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV). To this end, the Committee agreed to focus its first public hearing predominantly on

the issues related to GBV and SARV and to follow up on recommendations made during the Special Committee hearings held in 2021 and 2022.

To open the 2023 hearings, the Committee called a representative group of civil society leaders from across the country to set the scene for their hearings. In recognition of the expanded TOR, the Committee used Day 1 of the hearings to review the overall policy frameworks and the national institutions responsible for guiding efforts to drive GEWE.¹ Day 2 and Day 3 were dedicated to providing oversight over government responses to GBV and SARV with remain egregious national gender-based issues, both at the national level and sub-national levels.

The May 2023 hearings, combined with the information collected during by Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, demonstrate the need for fundamental structural change at the highest levels – including strengthening the institutions responsible for driving the national GEWE and GBV agendas; addressing long-term under-staffing and under-funding of critical essential services such as the health sector and the police service; and capacitating critical crisis response and justice staff with the needed knowledge, expertise and abilities. Meeting even just the basics would dramatically improve the lives of women and girls, and indeed all citizens. A focus on setting and meeting GEWE goals would work to ensure that agency, freedom and safety are enjoyed by every citizen of PNG.

Our Guiding Principles

The Permanent Parliamentary Committee on GEWE emphasizes the alignment of our work with the Constitution of our nation. Most particularly, we wish to stress that equality is not a new notion for our country. Equality of our citizens – whether they are men or women – is embedded in the founding documents of our Nation. It is a core value of our founding fathers and is at the heart of our efforts to promote gender equality and to end GBV and SARV, problems which are not only crippling the lives of women and girls of Papua New Guinea, but in fact is crippling the progress of our entire nation.

This Committee on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) recognizes the importance of women being able to make their full contribution to the welfare of our country, on an equal footing with men. Obstacles to educational and other opportunities which face women at present should be removed, and insofar as it is within the power of the Government to do so, the difficulties facing women who wish to involve themselves in the affairs of the nation should be reduced.

We are led by the lofty vision of the National Goals and Directive Principals stated in the preamble of our Constitution.² These are the values and principles that define our aspirations for our country. The Directive Principles are intended to guide all activities of the State and its institutions, and as such, we use them to guide our own. In particular, and we quote directly:

- “Our first goal to be for every person to be dynamically involved in the process of freeing himself or herself from every form of domination or oppression so that each man or woman will have the opportunity to develop as a whole person in relationship with others.”
- “Equality and Participation: We declare our second goal to be for all citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country.”

¹ The Department for Community Development in relation to the Office for the Development of Women and the National GBV Secretariat and the National and Provincial Councils of Women.

² http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol_act/cotisopng534/

- “We have also emphasized the importance of women being able to make their full contribution to the welfare of the country, on an equal footing with men. In recent years women have played a significantly greater part in the country's national life - in politics, in business, in social and cultural activities. But more effort should be made by government to hasten this development. Obstacles to educational and other opportunities which face women at present should be removed, and insofar as it is within the power of the Government to do so, the difficulties facing women who wish to involve themselves in the affairs of the nation should be reduced.”
- “All activities of the state should be directed towards the personal liberation and fulfillment of every citizen, so that each man and woman will have the opportunity of improving himself or herself as a whole person and achieving integral human development.”
- “All citizens should have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country.”
- “We do not take development to be synonymous with material progress. For us the only authentic development is integral human development. This means that we use the term development to mean nothing less than the unending process of improvement of every man and woman as a whole person. We take our stand on the dignity and worth of each Papua New Guinean man, woman and child. In effect, this means that integral human development must reach out to and enrich Papua New Guineans in every part of the country.”

We are also guided by the justiciable sections of the National Constitution, including:

Section 32: “Right to Freedom: Every person has the right to freedom based on law ... “

Section 35: “Right to Life: No person shall be deprived of his life intentionally.”

Section 36: “Freedom from Inhumane Treatment: No person shall be submitted to torture (whether physical or mental), or to treatment or punishment that is cruel or otherwise inhuman, or is inconsistent with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.”

Section 37: “Right to the Protection of the Law: Every person has the right to the full protection of the law, and the succeeding provisions of this section are intended to ensure that that right is fully available, especially to persons in custody or charged with offences.”

Section 55: “Equality of Citizens: Subject to this Constitution, all citizens have the same rights privileges, obligations and duties, irrespective of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, religion or sex.”

The Committee reminds our Government and parliamentary Members that Papua New Guinea signed the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) in 1980 and acceded to the Convention in 1995 – almost three decades ago. Since then, numerous efforts have been pushed at a national and sub-national level to focus on this issue and to escalate its importance as a key political agenda, but not enough real progress has been achieved.

As a member of the United Nations, Papua New Guinea has also committed to uphold the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, endorsed the 1993 *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* and ratified the two international covenants on civil and political rights and social and economic rights in 1998. Papua New Guinea is also to be guided by the analysis and recommendations from the UN Secretary-General's in-depth study “Ending violence against women:

From words to action”,³ which was mandated by General Assembly resolution 58/185, and highlighted the unacceptability of all forms of violence against women in all parts of the world. The 2013 World Health Organisation clinical and policy guidelines on “Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women” also make clear that GBV needs to be addressed as an urgent health priority and set out guidance that should inform PNG’s national response.⁴

In 2015, the elimination of violence against women and girls in public and in private was also adopted as part of the UN’s Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁵ Addressing GBV has been included as one of the targets for the fifth Sustainable Development Goal. Target 5.2 calls on all States to: “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”.⁶ Most recently, in 2020, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez called for global action to address the horrifying global surge in domestic violence linked to lockdowns imposed by governments responding to COVID-19.⁷

In 2015, the Government endorsed the *Sorcery Accusation Related Violence National Action Plan*,⁸ which called for more targeted actions to target these barbaric practices. In 2016, the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence 2016 to 2025*⁹ was launched by the PNG Government to guide a more strategic and coordinated approach to addressing GBV within PNG. At its core, the strategy focuses on governance, data, crisis response and prevention. The Committee still considers both of these strategies relevant today and their implementation remains critical.

To date, neither strategy has been implemented in its entirety, nor has the overarching goal of achieving zero tolerance for violence been achieved. A 2018 (unpublished) progress report entitled “*Institutional Support to Set up the GBV National Secretariat*” provided a scathing review of Government efforts, stating in summary that the National Government should take the strategic recommendations more seriously. The shortfalls highlighted in that report were reviewed and updated in the report of this Committee and the reports of its precursor, the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV.

With these considerations, the Committees wishes to stress our united belief that ending gender inequality, GBV and SARV in Papua New Guinea is critical to the achievement of goals outlined in our Constitution, the Sustainable Development Goals which we endorsed as a member of the United Nations, the goals of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the goals of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which our nation acceded to in 1995. Most importantly, it is critical to the economic and social future of our entire country.

³<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2006/1/ending-violence-against-women-from-words-to-action-study-of-the-secretary-general>

⁴<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/85240>

⁵<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

⁶<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

⁷<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052>

⁸<https://www.stopsorceryviolence.org/the-sorcery-national-action-plan/>

⁹<http://www.ngbvs.gov.pg/about>

Current data on GEWE, GBV and SARV

The World Bank estimates that balancing gender parity in employment in PNG would result in a GDP per capita increase of more than 20%.¹⁰ Conversely, GBV work related absenteeism alone (not considering the additional costs) amounted to 0.5% of PNG's 2020 GDP, equivalent to USD 119 million).¹¹ Unfortunately, against the measures of SDG-5 and according to the 2016-2018 PNG Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), the country is still failing to meet even basic GEWE targets. According to the 2022 UN Human Development Report, PNG is ranked as 160 out of 161 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. In 2016, only 40% of the students across higher education institutions were female, and more than 40% of women aged 15 to 24 are neither in school nor employed. For every 100,000 live births, 145.0 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 55.3 births per 1,000 women of aged 15. While women predominate market sellers and micro and informal enterprises, they make 26% fewer earnings than their male counterparts.

GBV continues to be widespread across the country and SARV is also a serious challenge, causing immense harm to its victims. The 2016-2018 Demographic and Health Survey found that 56% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence, and 28% have experienced sexual violence. One study also found that an average of almost 400 people are accused of sorcery each year, both of these studies likely conflate finds, as the DHS also found that 60% do not tell anyone of their injuries. A third of these cases led to physical violence or property damage. Amongst those accused of sorcery, 65 were killed, 86 suffered permanent injury and 141 experienced serious assault and harm, such as burning, cutting, tying or being forced into water.

Promoting GEWE and addressing GBV and SARV requires a multi-partner, multi-sectoral response. Stakeholders at all levels across the country need to be capacitated, resourced and supported to come together to do their jobs well and serve the national interests of ending violence and ensuring equality. It is all our duties to meet the expectations of the National Constitution, which envisaged a country where every single person would be equal, free from discrimination and free from violence.

Summary of the May 2023 Hearings

The May 2023 hearings highlighted that the rates of GBV and SARV across the country remain distressingly high. Officials from the National Department of Health testified that rates of physical violence – against all people – are increasing exponentially.

As the NDOH submission stated: “This is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’; a catastrophic human rights violation alarming for a country not at war”. The Committee’s members were extremely concerned by this data. If not addressed, cases of violence could exceed more than 100,000 within only a few years, stressing already over-burdened health services and overloading the justice system.

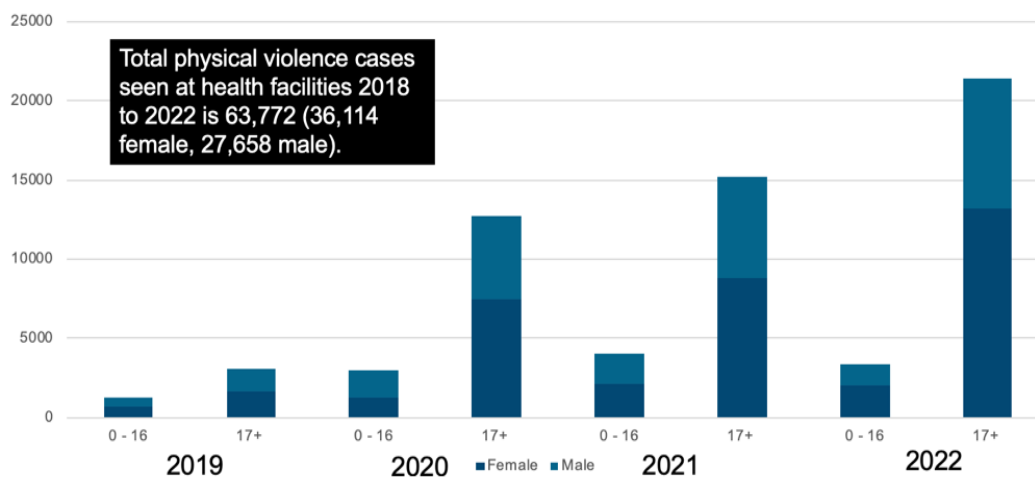
NDOH reported that 63,722 cases of physical violence were treated at health facilities across the country from 2018 to 2022. They advised that “This [data] is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’; a catastrophic human rights violation alarming for a country not at war”

¹⁰ World Bank (2023) “Papua New Guinea Economic Update, March 2023: Unlocking the Economic Benefits of Gender Equality”, <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/39692>.

¹¹ Ibid.

During the hearings, officials from the Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) gave concerning testimony regarding the difficulties faced by survivors of violence in accessing justice. The RPNGC Superintendent responsible for overseeing the country’s Family and Sexual Violence Units advised that from January 2021 to April 2023: 30,028 cases were reported to FSVUs across the country; from these on 1,304 arrests (4%) were made; and there were a mere 156 convictions (8 of which were SARV cases).

Figure 1: Trends in physical violence cases 2019-2022 by sex and age
(National Health Information System data)



While it is well-accepted that cases of GBV and SARV are grossly under-reported across the country (as previously stated only 60% of survivors report their experiences to anyone), even at aforementioned level of reporting, only 0.5% of all reported cases result in a conviction. This amounts to approximately 75 cases resulting in convictions every year, just over 3 convictions per province. It is clear from this data that perpetrators largely operate with impunity, safe in the knowledge that very few violent offenders go to jail, and survivors are discouraged to report.

Drawing on the public hearings and written submissions made by officials and civil society, the Committee has produced this first report to Parliament. The report provides a foundation for the Committee’s work over Parliament’s 11th term. The recommendations from the final report of the Special Parliamentary Committee are included at Annex 3 for easy reference and should still be actioned by officials.

PNGC reported that since 2021, 30,028 cases were reported to FSVUs across the country; 1,304 arrests were made; and there were 156 convictions (8 of which were SARV cases). This shows that only 0.5% of reported cases result in a conviction or approximately 75 convictions every year – just over 3 convictions per province.

We thank the officials who testified at the Committee hearings and wish to acknowledge the improved preparations of officials, most of whom came with written briefings, data and responses to previous recommendations made by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV. We also thank those officials and members of the public who provided written submissions to the Committee. Submissions can be read on our Committee webpage at <https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/gewe-parl-comm>.

It is anticipated that this will be the first report in a series of reports prepared by this Committee to Parliament. With that in mind, this report has been written to provide a foundation on which future inquiries can build. While the recommendations of the Special Parliamentary Committee covered both strategic and specific issues, this first report seeks to provide a smaller set of high-level strategic

recommendations for the consideration of the Prime Minister, Ministers, Provincial Administrators, agency heads and senior officials.

We highly recommend that this report be read in conjunction with the reports previously submitted by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV. Those reports contained considerable data and explanatory information, which has not been repeated in this Report.

Recommendations to promote GEWE

Key GEWE institutions

Recommendation 1: The Committee strongly advocates for the NEC to reassess whether the Department for Community Development and Religion (DFCDR) is fit-for-purpose or should be abolished. It has been insufficiently resourced for far too long and has failed to effectively implement the multiple social agendas for which it is responsible. In place of DFCDR, consideration should be given to creating a separate Ministry for Women and Youth, with a Minister committed to GEWE principles, proper funding and qualified staff. All other responsibilities of the Department such as child welfare, disability and religion should be decentralized to the Provinces.

Recommendation 2: Subject to Recommendation 1, the Committee strongly suggests that the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Religion should require the Office for the Development of Women (ODW), which sits as part of DFCDR, to immediately develop and submit a multi-year workplan and budget that sets out the key priorities for the Office, timelines for implementation, and key performance indicators. This could be done as part of the current 2024 budget process. Once endorsed the plan should be published online so that women’s advocates and other stakeholders, and indeed this Parliamentary Committee, can hold the ODW to account for delivering. This plan must be connected to the National GEWE Policy, once it is developed (cross-reference Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 3: The National Council of Women (NCW), and the Provincial Councils of Women (PCWs) which comprise its membership, is a critically important representative body for the women of PNG. The NCW and its members have not been operating for maximum impact. The Committee will hold a dedicated inquiry into the issues related to the functioning of the NCW and PCWs and will then make more specific recommendations accordingly. In the meantime, DFCDR should work with the PCW and the Interim NCW Executive Committee to resolve all issues that lead to the suspension of the Executive of the NCW (noting that the suspension of the National Executive does not affect the PCWs).

Key GEWE policy frameworks

Recommendation 4: The Committee encourages the Government to provide proper funding to ensure the GEWE priorities included in the Medium-Term Development Plan 4 are implemented, in particular, Strategic Priority Area 11.4: Women’s Empowerment, DIP 11.4 on “Gender Based Violence and Meri Seif Haus”. The Committee further recommends that funding priorities should be tied back into the National GEWE Policy (cross-reference Recommendation 5). Progress towards achieving key indicators should be regularly monitored and 6-monthly monitoring reports publicly published.

Recommendation 5: In line with the written plan submitted by DFCDR to the Committee in April 2023, the Committee encourages DFCDR through ODW to immediately commence the process of developing a National GEWE Policy, through an open and participatory process which is: evidence-based; draws on data, research and comparative good practice; and, reflects the real needs of women and girls

across the country. The Committee further recommends that a draft be officially sent to the Committee for review and comment no later than Quarter 1 of 2024.

Recommendation 6: In line with the written plan submitted by DFCDR to the Committee in April 2023, the Committee encourages DFCDR through ODW to immediately prioritize the participatory development of the next CEDAW report, including providing a draft to the Committee for review and comment no later than Quarter 1 of 2024. The Committee strongly suggests that the DFCDR immediately commence work on addressing the recommendations sent to the PNG Government by the CEDAW Committee in 2010.

Recommendation 7: Development partners, in particular international financial institutions and others providing direct financial support to the Government, are encouraged to introduce conditions in their agreements that require the Government to meet key GEWE and GBV-related targets, such as introducing temporary special measures for women or properly funding efforts to address GBV/SARV. The Committee will also follow up separately with key donors to advocate for this recommendation to be implemented.

Recommendations to address GBV and SARV

Recommendation 8: The Committee encourages the National Government – working through national agencies but also through Provincial Governors, Governments and Administrators – to urgently develop, fund and implement workforce development strategies to increase the recruitment of (i) health service workers; and, (ii) police officers, to ensure that every province has an appropriate ratio of health staff and police officers to meet the needs of their population, including GBV and SARV survivors.

Recommendation 9: Better workforce planning, infrastructure development and budgeting needs to be informed by better data, identifying where people live across PNG and what their needs are. To achieve this, the Committee encourages:

- The Government to prioritize conducting the next census, to enable officials at national and provincial level to better understand the specific needs of communities across the country;
- DFCDR to immediately prioritize working with government and non-government stakeholders to develop proper GEWE and GBV data collection and sharing systems at the provincial and national levels.

Recommendation 10: The Committee encourages the National Government and Provincial Governments to allocate substantially more funding to support GBV efforts across multiple sectors. Ideally, some form of “programme budget” should be developed each year which captures the costs across all key agencies for addressing GEWE and GBV. Evidence from around the world informs the Committee that the budget should be aligned against clear performance indicators at both the institutional, sub-national and national levels, which would then enable the Government to better track the impact of their investments in delivering results. At a minimum, it is clear that the annual national budget should allocate a minimum of Kina 50 million per year across key sectors and agencies, with provinces also providing funding in support of their provincial GBV strategies. Funding should be provided for:

- Civil society organizations providing crisis response, recovery and integration services to survivors, in recognition of the reality that CSOs have a critical role to play in any national response to GBV and SARV;

- The recurrent staffing and operational costs of all Family Support Centres to ensure they have the capacities to provide health services to GBV/SARV survivors and the infrastructure costs of new FSCs, which should be attached to all Provincial Hospitals and District Health Centres;
- The recurrent staffing and operational costs of all Family & Sexual Violence Units across the country and the infrastructure costs of new FSVUs;
- The recurrent staffing and operational costs of the existing Family and Sexual Offences Unit within the Office of Public Prosecutions, as well funding for additional prosecutors;
- Prevention programs focused most particularly on youth and children, as well as on perpetrators and those at high risk of perpetrating or experiencing GBV; and
- Better terms and conditions for Magistrates across the country, including ensuring housing and other key incentives to recruit and retain high quality candidates.

Recommendation 11: The Committee urges the Government to urgently update the PSIP and DSIP Guidelines to require that a minimum proportion of SIP grants are directed towards addressing GBV and SARV, in accordance with some form of Provincial GBV Strategy and/or District Development Plan.

Recommendation 12: The National GBV Secretariat must urgently be established. The Director position must be filled as a priority, followed by the remaining 10 staff. The Secretariat must produce a results framework immediately for review by the Committee, which sets out what they will deliver and how they will contribute to improving the lives of GBV/SARV survivors.

Recommendation 13: The Committee encourages Treasury to establish a National GBV Trust Fund to hold the money allocated to the National GBV Secretariat, to separate out the funding from DFCDR's budget and facilitate more accountable GBV funding, spending and acquittals.

Recommendation 14: The Committee urges Provincial Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrations to explicitly commit to addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV by endorsing and providing regular annual funding to establishment Provincial GBV Secretariats and implement Provincial GEWE and GBV Strategies. More specifically, the Committee encourages:

- Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrators to demonstrate high level political commitment for addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV in their public statements;
- A minimum number of at least 3 full-time staff (GBV Coordinator, GBV Programme Officer & GBV Data and Administration Officer) to be recruited/allocated and funded to run a Provincial GBV Secretariat responsible for coordination the various government and non-government stakeholders involved in the provincial GBV/SARV response;
- A minimum annual amount of at least K500,000 per year should be allocated to the provincial GBV budget to fund both Government services and local CSOs who provide services across the referral pathway (see Annex 6).
- The development of tailored provincial prevention and communication campaigns focused at high-risk youth, including those in school, that focus on changing the behaviour of young people, and supporting them to develop healthy, equality-based, violence free relationships.

Recommendation 15: The National GBV Secretariat (or DFCDR until the Secretariat is established) should:

- Continue to be provided with a substantial annual budget to provide regularized grant funding to CSOs providing GEWE, GBV and SARV-related services across the country. Such funding must be accountably and transparently administered. The Committee will expect regular reporting on grantee recipients and their impact/results.

- Establish some form of Emergency Fund for frontline workers to access to support GEWE, GBV and SARV survivors, in accordance with clear guidelines and accountable management.
- Develop a national, government-funded, behaviour change campaign focused on increasing GEWE and reducing GBV and SARV.

Recommendation 16: Provincial Health Authorities are urged by the Committee to establish and run Family Support Centres in each district (attached to a hospital or existing health service), including providing funding for a proper number of trained health personnel, to ensure that health services are available to GBV and SARV survivors.

Recommendation 17: The Department of National Planning and Monitoring and Treasury is encouraged to provide funding to build dramatically more secure, accessible, properly designed and equipped, safe houses across the country, as part of DFCDR's initiative to build Community Development Centers. At a minimum, the Committee recommends that every province should have at least one safe house per district. Existing safe house providers should be convened to design and roll out National and/or Provincial Safe House Infrastructure Plan/s. Safe house SOPs and minimum benchmarks should also be endorsed and rolled out to ensure that adult and child GBV survivors are provided with adequate and safe shelter.

Recommendation 18: The Committee urges that more Government funding be directed to establish and support GBV counselling services for women, men and children across the country, whether in person or through telephone/online approaches. To ensure efficiencies, the NGBVS is encouraged to convene existing providers of GBV counselling services, both in-person and online, to assess the current service offering, identify good practice and lessons learned, and develop an Action Plan and budget for addressing the current gap in counselling. The Action Plan should include recommendations to address the current lack of accredited and/or trained counsellors within PNG.

Recommendation 19: Stakeholders in the law and justice sector are encouraged to:

- Examine options for establishing a regular operational level coordination mechanism that can be used to work better together to identify and respond to challenges in ensuring access to justice for citizens across the country, including GBV and SARV survivors.
- Produce a special Joint Annual Report on Addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV which provides data and narrative reporting on access to justice progress and ongoing challenges.

Recommendation 20: The RPNGC is encouraged to provide regular trainings on relevant laws (including reforms to SARV-related laws) to ensure police officers understand the relevant elements of the crime and survivor-centered investigative approaches to all police officers, (in particular, members of the FSVUs, Sexual Offences Squad, Homicide Squad, Criminal Investigation Division and police prosecutors, but also senior management and all sworn members).

Recommendation 21: The Government is urged to invest more funding to ensure that there is sufficient personnel and infrastructure to actually run GBV and SARV cases and ensure timely and accessible justice for survivors. Specifically, the Government is urged to ensure that:

- The OPP and Magisterial Services have proper funding to ensure sufficient qualified prosecutorial and judicial personnel are recruited and posted throughout the country to prosecute and adjudicate cases;
- Funding for ongoing continuing legal education is provided to ensure training for police officers and police prosecutors to ensure they produce proper case files for court.

Recommendation 22: The Committee encourages the Government to prioritize funding for the Village Court Secretariats within DJAG, to support their efforts to build the capacities of Village Court officials

in accordance with the *Village Courts Policy 2020-2030* which aims to revitalize the village courts system.

Recommendation 23: DJAG is encouraged to work with other justice stakeholders to examine whether current legal frameworks dealing with GBV and SARV are sufficiently strong to act as a deterrent, with specific consideration given to the current penalties for breaching Family Protection Orders, and current bail requirements for alleged GBV or SARV perpetrators.

Recommendation 24: The Committee encourages the National Courts to examine whether the “human rights track” could be expanded to include cases in relation to gender inequality and discrimination, GBV and SARV, recognizing that all constitute a violation of the fundamental human right to life and personal safety.

Recommendation 25: The Committee encourages DJAG, the OPP, the Magisterial Service and the National Courts to work together to ensure a supportive environment is developed for survivors and witnesses involved in court cases. The Committee specifically calls on those stakeholders to:

- Review current evidence law to permit the use of videos in certain contexts, in particular, for SARV cases, without requiring that the maker of the video testify in court as to its authenticity. For example, a signed statutory declaration could be sufficient.
- Develop a specific action plan and budget proposal to fund improvements to witness and victim support systems, including in relation to court processes and infrastructure, and to share this plan and budget with the Committee.

Recommendation 26: The updated SARV NAP should be produced as soon as possible by DFCDR, DJAG and other key stakeholders and should be presented to the Committee in draft for comment by no later than Quarter 1 of 2024 before being finalised. The new SARV NAP should ensure that education is prioritized as well as enforcement. With that in mind, DJAG and DFCDR are encouraged to work with experts within government departments, civil society and academics to develop and roll out an education campaign focused on preventing SARV, including by:

- Working with community leaders, especially church leaders, to educate communities in high-risk provinces in particular;
- Providing training to health workers to help them avoid contributing misunderstandings that sickness has been caused by “sorcery”;
- Providing training to all RPNCG officers (not just FSVU personnel), prosecutors, Village Court officials and magistrates across the country on legislation criminalizing SARV and the actions of glasmen/glasmeri and how it should be applied;
- Exploring options for developing a training program for paralegals and/or providing Government support to establish a dedicated SARV Community Legal Service;
- Providing training to Members of Parliament and Provincial Governments on SARV issues, drawing on the guidance of the Pan African Parliament Guidelines on Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks.¹²

Recommendation 27: DFCDR, working with the National Department of Education, CSOs and development partners, is urged to design and roll out community-focused GEWE enhancement and GBV and SARV prevention strategies, including:

- Developing early childhood and schools-based interventions that will teach children and young people that violence is not acceptable in a peaceful society and to equip them with other tools to

¹² https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/PAP-Guidelines-EN_0.pdf

peacefully resolve conflict. Specific education programmes needed to be designed to address misinformation amongst young people contributing to beliefs in “sorcery”, noting that recent research showed people under 45 years of age being more likely to be involved in SARV;¹³

- Learning from other Pacific jurisdictions which have been trialling programmes which seek to work with both men and women based around the principles of how to engage in “Respectful Relationships” and designing and then scaling up local pilots;
- Investing in specific interventions aimed at supporting behaviour change for men and boys,¹⁴ including activities aimed at addressing the mentality of perpetrators of violence.¹⁵

Recommendation 28: The Committee calls on DPM, independent statutory bodies and private sector organisations to urgently invest more resources into enacting and enforcing policies which will require all employees and all contractors to demonstrate zero tolerance for violence and which will include sanctions where they engage in threats or acts of violence. More specifically:

- DPM is encouraged to explicitly integrate zero tolerance for GBV and sexual harassment into all government human resources policies and into the terms and conditions of employment for all officers working in the public sector, SOEs and Constitutional Offices;
- The Government is encouraged to develop and implement a policy or regulation requiring that the terms and conditions of all contracts entered into using government funds require contractors to commit to zero tolerance for GBV and sexual harassment and include that in their human resources policies and employment contracts;

Recommendation 29: DFCDR is encouraged to work with the Ministry for ICT and relevant experts and stakeholders to discuss concrete options for how to more effectively harness ICT to address GBV and SARV. These ideas could then be presented to the National GBV Advisory Committee for consideration and/or action.

¹³ The NRI/DWU/ANU consortium has produced a children’s book, film and ‘Peter and Grace Make a Difference’ teaching materials to help students learn skills that can minimize their susceptibility to SARV misinformation. These can be accessed on the website stopsorceryviolence.org and used free of charge in the school curriculum.

¹⁴ Testimony on behalf of the Digicel Foundation regarding their Men of Honour programme was relevant in this regard. This programme could be evaluated more systematically to identify good practice and lessons learned that could be scaled up.

¹⁵ Once written submission specifically referenced the good practice developed by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which has been implementing programmes with male perpetrators for some time and also run programmes relating to male behaviour change.

PART 1: Key GEWE Institutions and Policies

1. Introduction

The new Terms of Reference for the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on GEWE gives the Committee a mandate to provide oversight of the implementation of laws, policies and programmes related to promoting GEWE, not just those related to addressing GBV and SARV. To progress that oversight mandate, the Committee used their May 2023 hearings to review the key institutions that are responsible for driving the GEWE agenda for the Government, following an introductory session which gave civil society organisations and gender advocates an opportunity to highlight the ongoing challenges still facing women and girls across the country.

The Committee focused primarily on the most important government and non-government organisations (NGOs) with a specific GEWE mandate, namely the Department for Community Development and Religion which houses the Office for the Development of Women, and the National Council of Women. The Committee also dedicated time to reviewing progress implementing key national and international GEWE policy frameworks. Due to time constraints, the Committee did not call the Department of Personnel Management, which is the department responsible for overseeing the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy. It is anticipated that implementation of the GESI Policy will be reviewed in subsequent hearings.

2. Institutions mandated to drive the GEWE agenda

2.1. Key GEWE government bodies

The Office for the Development of Women (ODW) sits within the Department for Community Development and Religion (DFCDR). The ODW is the unit within the Government responsible for driving and coordination implementation of the GEWE agenda. It is supposed to be led by an Executive Director reporting directly to the Minister (similar to the Office of Family and Child Services). It has been under-funded for many years and has staff of very variable capacities.

There have been criticisms of the work of the ODW over the last decade. In previous eras (most notably, under the leadership of Minister Dame Carol Kidu until 2012), ODW was an active stakeholder in a range of GEWE activities, but over the last decade, it has been unclear what activities they have been implementing. ODW has not coordinated the production of CEDAW reporting to the UN since 2009. They have also not produced an updated National GEWE Policy since the last policy expired at the end of 2015 (see below for more detail). The failure of the ODW to properly implement its mandate is considered one of the most significant failures of the Government in relation to women's empowerment, contributing to the lack of a coordinated effort to address GEWE across the country. DFCDR has indicated an interest in developing legislation to formalise the role of ODW within the Government system but this work has not moved forward yet.

At the public hearings, the DFCDR Secretary advised the Committee that there has been a significant restructure of the Department over the previous six months. A new position of Deputy Secretary for Gender Equality and Human Rights has now been created and filled; they will be responsible for driving the GEWE agenda more proactively. The DFCDR team apologized to the Committee for the lack of progress in recent years, but the Committee rejected those apologies. They raised their concerns that

members of the restructured senior management team have still been officials for many years and must be held accountable for the many years of sub-standard work to date.

The Committee Chairman raised his concerns that DFCDR is responsible not only for ODW but also for establishing the National GBV Secretariat, which had still not been set up by the date of the hearings (see below for more). He questioned whether there is a more fundamental problem with DFCDR, which has been under-performing across many portfolios for many years.

Recommendation 1: *The Committee strongly advocates for the NEC to reassess whether the Department for Community Development and Religion (DFCDR) is fit-for-purpose or should be abolished. It has been insufficiently resourced for far too long and has failed to effectively implement the multiple social agendas for which it is responsible. In place of DFCDR, consideration should be given to creating a separate Ministry for Women and Youth, with a Minister committed to GEWE principles, proper funding and qualified staff. All other responsibilities of the Department such as child welfare, disability and religion should be decentralized to the Provinces.*

Recommendation 2: *Subject to Recommendation 1, the Committee strongly suggests that the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Religion should require the Office for the Development of Women (ODW), which sits as part of DFCDR, to immediately develop and submit a multi-year workplan and budget that sets out the key priorities for the Office, timelines for implementation, and key performance indicators. This could be done as part of the current 2024 budget process. Once endorsed the plan should be published online so that women's advocates and other stakeholders, and indeed this Parliamentary Committee, can hold the ODW to account for delivering. This plan must be connected to the National GEWE Policy, once it is developed (cross-reference Recommendation 5).*

2.2. National Council of Women

The PNG National Council of Women (NCW) is legally empowered to operate as the leading membership-based institution representing PNG women, with networks from national to local levels, and a variety of reporting obligations including to Parliament. The NCW is supposed to function across different government entities, while having a direct relationship with DFCDR. Although PNG has had an NCW since before independence, its capacities have ebbed and flowed over time. From 1975 to 1983, the national government funded most of the NCW's programmes and its office costs (approx. K700,000 per year),¹⁶ but by 1985, the confusion over the roles of the non-government NCW and the new Government Women's Division led to the collapse of the NCW.¹⁷ The NCW was revived in the late 1980s and received some support from the Government Women's Division from that time.¹⁸

In 2013, a specific *NCW Act*¹⁹ was passed by Parliament, which formalized the NCW's operations, including the election of key office-bearers. However, from 2014, there has only been an interim President and in 2017 there was a major dispute over the election of the President and executive after allegations from some Provincial NCW Presidents that the National Convention where the Executive's election is held was improperly run.²⁰ In accordance with s.11(5) of the NCW Act, the National

¹⁶ <https://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-GriWom2-c2-6.html>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Appendix+2%3A+Chronology+of+women%27s+movement+in+PNG.-a0223656410>

¹⁹ http://www.parliament.gov.pg/uploads/acts/13A_14.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QO4EGNau7c>

convention is to be held every five years. To this day, there remains a dispute over the NCW national elections, but provincial and district level councils of women still operate in many places. A commonly cited challenge impacting the functionality of the NCW at provincial level is a misunderstanding of the requirements of the 2013 NCW Act with regard to the appointment of a women's representative to the Provincial Executive Council. While the Act stipulates that women's representatives must be selected from the Provincial Council of Women executive, different practices exist including Governors hand-picking their own preferred women's representative.

During the public hearings, DFCDR indicated that they are committed to re-establishing the NCW. They advised that, following the disputes regarding the NCW elections, they had sought advice from the State Solicitor on how best to respond. Concerns were raised regarding whether the NCW Act included the power for the Minister to call for new elections²¹ and/or take other actions necessary to deal with the crisis. In the end, 5 years were allowed to pass between National Conventions; DFCDR has taken that to mean that a new Convention can be called and an Executive could be elected there in line with the current provisions of the NCW Act. To that end, they have been working with different Provincial Councils of Women (PCW) and other provincial stakeholders to facilitate the election of PCWs, to ensure that there are a minimum number of PCWs in place, which is a pre-requisite to holding

Following the testimony from DFCDR on Day 1, a number of women representatives from the National Capital District requested that they be given an opportunity to present to the Committee. They gave testimony on the final day and raised their concerns that DFCDR's approach to working with provinces to elect PCWs may also not be in line with the NCW Act. A written submission made on behalf of the Technical Working Committee to NCD Council of Women by Ms Barbara Toiya Komainde also stated:²²

The absence of a Voice to address issues affecting women especially the escalating rate of Gender based violence and immediately finding workable strategies to address this is critical to having a strong National Council of Women to be the regulatory body providing oversight of women's issues in the country. Women Leaders in the 22 provinces are calling for immediate call to a Special National AGM to rectify outstanding issues affecting NCW mention in the first letter to PPC.

The Technical Working Committee to the NCD Council of Women clarified their concerns in a written submission which stated, amongst other things, that: (i) the "Acting General Secretary is now being given a position as the Network Coordinator under the Office of Development for Women (ODW) – DFCDR. This Technically make the National Secretariate non-existent with implications to links severed with the Principal Members in the Provinces"; (ii) "There is no evidence before us that [the Model Constitution] that has been widely distributed to the provincial Councils of Women has officially been adopted by the NCW" such that it may not be proper for PCWs to be using; and (iii) the Minister should "use the appropriate mechanism to reinstate the caretaker NCW Executive Committee of the 2020 AGM removed by the Minister in 2021".²³

²¹ Section 11(5) of the NCW Act states that "Where the [National] Convention is not held within the period referred to in Subsection (1) [namely every 5 years] without any reasonable cause, the Minister shall, as soon as practicable, call an urgent meeting of the Executive Committee and, in consultation with the Executive Committee, immediately convene the National Convention" and s11(6) states that "(6) Where the Executive Committee fails to meet and consult with the Minister under Subsection (5), the Minister shall suspend the Executive Committee and convene the Convention within 21 days". It is understood that this requirement has now been met as five years have passed since the last National Convention was held.

²²https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/files/ugd/7f0c06_c9c17395cc5d4ce7aad8aa1e67a9d801.docx?dn=BARBARA%20TOIYA%20PARLIMENTARY%20COMMITTEE%20WEGE.docx

²³https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/files/ugd/7f0c06_03ca51c4c2484ab1865b93e8ad7eaa72.pdf?index=true

Recommendation 3: *The National Council of Women (NCW), and the Provincial Councils of Women (PCWs) which comprise its membership, is a critically important representative body for the women of PNG. The NCW and its members have not been operating for maximum impact. The Committee will hold a dedicated inquiry into the issues related to the functioning of the NCW and PCWs and will then make more specific recommendations accordingly. In the meantime, DFCDR should work with the PCW and the Interim NCW Executive Committee to resolve all issues that lead to the suspension of the Executive of the NCW (noting that the suspension of the National Executive does not affect the PCWs).*

3. GEWE national policy frameworks

3.1. National development frameworks

Section 55 of the Constitution of Papua New Guinea calls for equality of citizens in all areas of social, economic and political development irrespective of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, religion or sex. This allows for the making of laws for special benefit, welfare, protection or advancement of females, children and young persons, members of underprivileged or less advanced groups or residents of less advanced areas. Legislation is often required to operationalise constitutional rights. The 2010 Concluding Observations from the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) made a number of recommendations regarding law reform to promote women’s rights, but the majority have still not been actioned (see next section for more).

In terms of policy frameworks guiding national GEWE efforts, PNG’s Vision 2050 strategy provides a 40-year framework for improving the quality of life of the people through better quality service delivery, which should guide all Government activities and budgets. Vision 2050 reflects the government’s aspirations to improve PNG’s human development index through 7 pillars, namely human capital development, economic growth, institutional development and service delivery, improved security, environmental sustainability, cultural and community development and strategic planning. Each pillar includes gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, with specific priorities included in Pillar 1 on Human Capital Development, Gender, Youth and People Empowerment.

Vision 2050 has been operationalised through a rolling series of Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDP) from four to five years long. MTDP III completed at the end of 2022 and integrated women’s empowerment across all 8 Key Result Areas (KRAs) as well as via Goal 3.5: Equal Opportunity for All to Participate in, and Benefit from Development.²⁴ The new MTDP IV was launched on 7 July 2023. One of the Vice Minister’s responsible for shepherding the MTDP-IV forward presented a draft of the MTDP-IV to the Committee. The Committee is aware that early drafts of the MTDP-IV did not include gender as a specific priority. However, the final draft of the MTDP-IV now identifies 12 Strategic Priority Areas (SPA) and SPA 11 prioritises “Population, Youth and Gender Development”. There are now a number of specific indicators addressing GEWE issues in the MTDP-IV, with the narrative key result areas including “...establish 80 Meri Seif Haus centres [and] increase the percentage of the victims of gender-based violence receiving counselling services”. A nominal budget has been included to address issues such as women’s leadership, women’s employment and GBV/SARV.

²⁴ <https://png-data.sprep.org/dataset/medium-term-development-plan-iii-2018-2022-volume-1>

Figure 2: MTDP-IV – gender equality & women-related budget and indicators

Table 1 Investments		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total Est. Cost	Funding Source(s)
DIP Link	Investment	(K'mil)	(K'mil)	(K'mil)	(K'mil)	(K'mil)	(K'mil)	
DIP 11.4	Gender Based Violence and Meri Seif Haus	40.7	22.0	22.0	22.0	22.0	128.7	GoPNG/DPs
	Women in leadership and business support program	0.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	20.0	GoPNG/ DPs

Table 2 Key Result Areas		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Agency(ies)
No.	Key Performance Indicator						
1	Establish program for champions on women's issues (in 2024)				√		DfCDR, NYDA, Churches
2	Number of policies that mainstream gender	1	1	1	1	1	DfCDR, DPM
3	Number of Meri Seif Haus centers established in the country	10	20	40	60	80	DfCDR
3	Percentage of victims of gender-based violence receiving counseling services (%)	10	12	30	40	60	DfCDR, Police
4	Number of financial inclusion & literacy training conducted for women per year	4	5	5	6	2	CEFI
5	Number of state agencies implementing GESI Policy	10	12	16	22	30	DPM
6	Number of provinces implementing GESI Policy	2	5	12	17	22	DPM and DPLLGA
7	Number of programs on women in leadership and business implemented by both the government and partners	5	10	20	30	40	DfCDR/DPM

Recommendation 4: *The Committee encourages the Government to provide proper funding to ensure the GEWE priorities included in the Medium-Term Development Plan 4 are implemented, in particular, Strategic Priority Area 11.4: Women’s Empowerment, Deliberate Intervention Program 11.4 on “Gender Based Violence and Meri Seif Haus”. The Committee further recommends that funding priorities should be tied back into the National GEWE Policy (cross-reference Recommendation 5). Progress towards achieving key indicators should be regularly monitored and 6-monthly monitoring reports publicly published.*

3.2. National GEWE Policy

One of the most important ways of driving a coordinated approach to promoting GEWE across the whole of society and across the whole of Government is through a National GEWE Policy. However, PNG does not currently have a National GEWE Policy in place. The last policy expired at the end of 2015. The previous National GEWE Policy (2011-2015) described the government’s mission to promote improved equality, participation, and empowerment of women. The Policy called for GEWE to be mainstreamed across government agencies, but there was very little funding provided and staff had limited time and capacities to implement the Policy effectively.

In response to a written request for information by the Committee to DFCDR in advance of the Committee hearings, in April 2023 DFCDR sent the Committee a written update advising that they intended to commence a participatory process of developing an updated National GEWE Policy by November 2023 at a cost of K14 million. During the public hearings, there was no confirmation from DFCDR that this process had commenced. The Committee has subsequently seen a advertisement

from a development partner advertising to recruit a national consultant to support ODW with developing the National GEWE Policy.

Recommendation 5: *In line with the written plan submitted by DFCDR to the Committee in April 2023, the Committee encourages DFCDR through ODW to immediately commence the process of developing a National GEWE Policy, through an open and participatory process which is: evidence-based; draws on data, research and comparative good practice; and, reflects the real needs of women and girls across the country. The Committee further recommends that a draft be officially sent to the Committee for review and comment no later than Quarter 1 of 2024.*

4. Global policy frameworks

PNG has committed to UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, which together provide a framework for how countries can drive inclusive, effective, sustainable development. There are 17 SDGs in total; SDG-5 focuses on gender equality specifically (see below), and most other goals require gender mainstreaming if they are to be achieved. Countries are called on to regularly report on their progress towards implementing the SDGs. PNG submitted its first Voluntary National Report (VNR) in 2020, which included a specific chapter on SDG-5 progress. It was clear from the VNR that while some progress has been made, there is still considerably more work to be done by the Government to ensure the rights of women and girls are meaningfully realized.

SDG-5: Gender equality and women's empowerment

- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decisionmaking in political, economic and public life
- 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- 5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- 5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- 5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

4.1. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

PNG has also ratified a range of human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which it acceded to in 1995. CEDAW is the main international instrument which sets out a specific framework for promoting the rights of women and girls. PNG's implementation of CEDAW has been very variable. Every country that has ratified CEDAW is expected to report to UN CEDAW Committee every four years on their progress, but the PNG Government has not produced any CEDAW Reports for more than a decade.

In 2009, PNG produced its first and only State's Party report that covered the first, second and third reporting cycles since accession.²⁵ In 2010, the CEDAW Committee issued Concluding Observations for the consideration by the Government (see Annex 4).²⁶ The Government never produced a response to the CEDAW Committee's observations, despite multiple follow ups from the Committee.²⁷ No other reporting has been submitted since 2009, despite a CEDAW report being due in 2014, 2018 and 2022.²⁸ Notably, in 2023, PNG is supposed to be subjected to another review by the CEDAW Committee. The CEDAW Committee Pre-Sessional Working Group meeting is set for May / June 2023 and list of issues will be decided then. State parties' replies to that list of issues will constitute their States Party reports.

It is the responsibility of the Office for the Development of Women, working alongside other departments, to collect the relevant information and data to produce the report to the UN CEDAW Committee. In response to a written request for information by the Committee to DFCDR in advance of the Committee hearings, in April 2023 DFCDR wrote to the Committee to advise their intention to work with development partners and local stakeholders to collect information and evidence to be used to produce a States Party report for the CEDAW Committee. During the public hearings, DFCDR's testimony suggested that only limited progress had been made to date. They must speed up their efforts, as it is important for PNG's global standing, as well as an important data collection activity, to produce human rights treaty reports for the UN.

Recommendation 6: In line with the written plan submitted by DFCDR to the Committee in April 2023, the Committee encourages DFCDR through ODW to immediately prioritize the participatory development of the next CEDAW report, including providing a draft to the Committee for review and comment no later than Quarter 1 of 2024. The Committee strongly suggests that the DFCDR immediately commence work on addressing the recommendations sent to the PNG Government by the CEDAW Committee in 2010.

4.2. International loan agreements

In addition to examining issues related to UN human rights treaties, during the public hearings the Committee examined options for using other global forums and processes to promote GEWE. In particular, the Committee discussed with Treasurer Ian Ling Stuckey the possibility of tying donor funding to PNG to the delivery of specific actions related to GEWE. As a specific example, the Committee Chair suggested that international loan agreements with organisations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund could perhaps include clauses which require PNG to enact critical GEWE law reforms (for example, the introduction of temporary special measures to promote women in parliament) or implement GEWE policy priorities.

Recommendation 7: Development partners, in particular international financial institutions and others providing direct financial support to the Government, are encouraged to introduce conditions in their agreements that require the Government to meet key GEWE and GBV-related targets, such as introducing temporary special measures for women or properly funding efforts to address GBV/SARV. The Committee will also follow up separately with key donors to advocate for this recommendation to be implemented.

²⁵https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FPNG%2F3&Lang=en

²⁶https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FPNG%2FCO%2F3&Lang=en.

²⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/countries.aspx?CountryCode=PNG&Lang=EN

²⁸ Ibid.

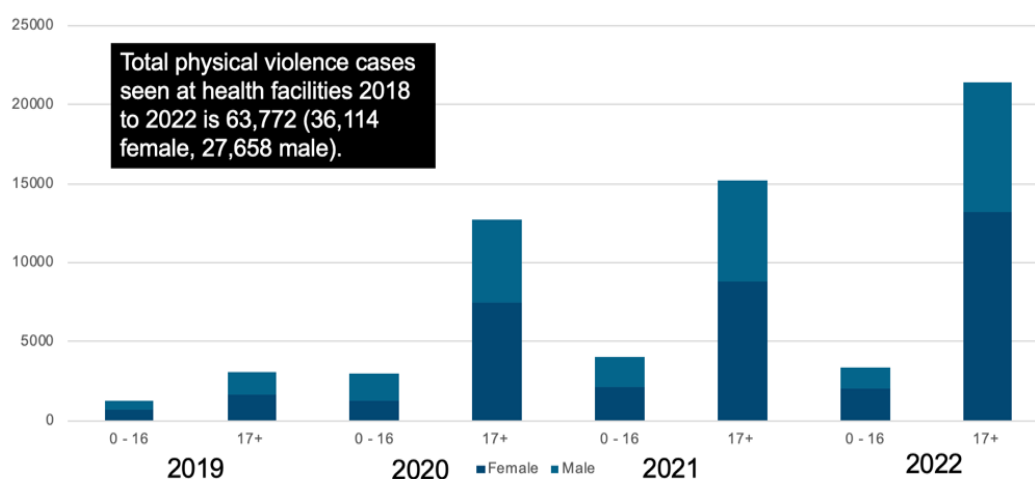
PART 2: Addressing GBV and SARV across the country

5. Introduction

The work of this Permanent Parliamentary Committee on GBV builds on the excellent work completed by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, which was chaired by Hon Charles Abel from 2020 to 2022. That Special Parliamentary Committee produced two reports to guide the improvement of efforts to address GBV and SARV across the country. This Report builds on the contents of those two reports. All agencies are encouraged to review and implement the more than 70 recommendations included in the final report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, which are attached at Annex 4 for easy reference, as well as the recommendations below.

The May 2023 hearings of this Committee highlighted that the rates of GBV and SARV across the country remain distressingly high. Officials from the National Department of Health (NDOH) testified that rates of physical violence – against all people – are increasing exponentially. As the graph at **Error! Reference source not found.** shows, NDOH reported that 63,722 cases of physical violence were treated at health facilities across the country from 2018 to 2022. As the NDOH submission stated: “This is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’; a catastrophic human rights violation alarming for a country not at war”. The Committee’s members were extremely concerned by this data. If not addressed, cases of violence could exceed more than 100,000 within only a few years, stressing already over-burdened health services and overloading the justice system.

Figure 3: Trends in physical violence cases 2019-2022 by sex and age (National Health Information System data)



During the hearings, officials from the Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) also gave concerning testimony regarding the difficulties ensuring access to justice for survivors. The RPNGC Superintendent responsible for overseeing the country’s Family and Sexual Violence Units advised that 2021 up to April 2023: 30,028 cases reported totally to FSVUs across the country; 1,304 arrests were made; and there were 156 convictions (8 of which were SARV cases). While it is well-accepted that cases of GBV and SARV are under-reported across the country, even at this level of reporting, the data shows that only 0.5% of reported cases result in an actual conviction. This amounts to approximately 75 cases resulting in convictions every year, just over 3 convictions per province. These statistics show that perpetrators are largely operating with impunity, safe in the knowledge that very few violent offenders go to jail.

During the hearings, the Committee also heard from multiple CSO representatives who work with GBV and SARV survivors across the country, who highlighted their concerns that government responses are still deficient. They raised a range of issues current crisis response, recovery and reintegration services across the country, including under-staffed health services, a severe lack of safe shelter for fleeing survivors and their children, a lack of counsellors for both survivors and perpetrators and a lack of well-trained police personnel to investigate and compile cases for prosecution. They also stressed the importance of investing in prevention and education activities to address the root causes of the increasingly violent culture of impunity that has become so common across the country.

The recommendations below respond to the challenges identified during the hearings. As the first report of this Committee, the recommendations are aimed at the strategic level, to set an agenda for the term of this Government and Parliament.

6. Staffing & budgeting to address GBV and SARV

Throughout the course of three sets of public hearings – two by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV in May 2021 and March 2022, as well as the first hearings by this Committee in May 2023- it has become clear that the fundamental problem identified by both CSO representatives and officials is that there is simply not enough personnel or funding being directed to providing the necessary crisis response, justice and other services required to reduce violence and support survivors where violence has occurred. Additional training, operational funding and other process improvements are all still required, but until the basic issues regarding lack of health workers, counsellors, safe houses, police officers, prosecutors and magistrates are addressed, there will be limited tangible improvements in the national response to GBV and SARV.

During the testimony from the NDOH, the Department discussed the need for more dedicated Family Support Centres to be established across the country, to ensure that GBV and SARV survivors can access trauma-informed, survivor-centred emergency and other health services. One limitation to their set-up however is the lack of qualified nurses available to staff them around the clock to support survivors. There was a suggestion to supplement the workforce with nurse practitioners or Village Health Assistants,²⁹ but more of these officers also need to be trained. Without a properly trained health workforce, deployed evenly across the country, right down to the district level and not just in major towns, survivors will continue to struggle to access services.

In the context of providing justice to survivors, it is also clear that there are simply not enough trained police officers across the country to enforce the law, including the law as it related to family and sexual violence offences. According to the RPNGC's own website, the RPNGC "has approximately 6,000 sworn members and will be increasing its strength to 10,000 by 2030".³⁰ This means that there are on average approximately 275 officers per province; in reality, officers are not evenly stationed across the country and many provinces are severely under-staffed. This also means there are only approximately 65

²⁹ During testimony from NDOH, the Family Health Services Manager, Dr Edward Waramin advised that NDOH are currently looking at developing a category of health workers called Village Health Assistants (VHA), ideally 2 per ward. These VHAs would function as their "eyes and ears in the community", and could help people navigate the health system to address their needs. This kind of pathway to services would be useful for addressing GBV and SARV. VHAs would likely be aware of violence in people's homes and could work to assist getting women the care they need and to help the men get counselling or other preventive services. NDOH have developed a policy, which is still to be endorsed by senior management and would then come to Parliament to approve their budget.

³⁰<https://www.rpngc.gov.pg/about-rpngc/#:~:text=It%20is%20one%20of%20the,strength%20to%2010%2C000%20by%202030.>

officers per 100,000 people in PNG, one of the lowest ratios of police to people in the world.³¹ A review of the 2022 RPNGC Annual Report shows that ratios vary between 1 officer per 714 people in the NCD/Central Divisional Command to 1 officer per 4,282 people in the Highlands Eastern-End Divisional Command. Of the total number of RPNGC officers, there are currently only 114 RPNGC officers staffing the Family and Sexual Violence Units (FSVUs) which are dedicated to assisting GBV and SARV survivors. New Ireland has no FSVU at all, while NCD has 8 FSVUs staffed by a total of 27 FSVU officers (see section 9 for more).

“There are on average approximately 275 officers per province; in reality, officers are not evenly stationed across the country and many provinces are severely under-staffed. This means there are only approximately 65 officers per 100,000 people in PNG, one of the lowest ratios of police to people in the world.”

If GBV and SARV survivors are ever going to be able to access proper crisis response, recovery and justice services,

there must be a systematic increase in trained personnel recruited by the Government to provide these services. This will require the Government to explicitly commit to specific workforce development strategies and to provide the funding necessary to implement them.

Recommendation 8: The Committee encourages the National Government – working through national agencies but also through Provincial Governors, Governments and Administrators – to urgently develop, fund and implement workforce development strategies to increase the recruitment of (i) health service workers; and, (ii) police officers, to ensure that every province has an appropriate ratio of health staff and police officers to meet the needs of their population, including GBV and SARV survivors.

In order to support proper workforce planning across the country, it is imperative that the Government has proper data on which to base its analysis of how many personnel are needed per province and where they should be stationed. Data can also be used to inform the location and numbers of key infrastructure such as health services, safe houses for survivors and police stations. Without the census having been completed, it is extremely difficult to do proper workforce and infrastructure planning.

The basic lack of current data is also compounded by the fact that there is currently no consistent GBV information management system being implemented across the country by key government service providers or CSOs. Some Provincial GBV Secretariats collect their own data, while the NDOH uses their own Health Information System and the RPNGC has recently started developing their own case management database for FSVUs. That said, none of these systems are currently connected up, which makes it very difficult to collect and use data related to GBV to plan for better services for survivors.

Recommendation 9: Better workforce planning, infrastructure development and budgeting needs to be informed by better data, identifying where people live across PNG and what their needs are. To achieve this, the Committee encourages:

- ***The Government to prioritize conducting the next census, to enable officials at national and provincial level to better understand the specific needs of communities across the country;***
- ***DFCDR to immediately prioritize working with government and non-government stakeholders to develop proper GEWE and GBV data collection and sharing systems at the provincial and national levels.***

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_number_of_police_officers

It is positive that the Government responded to the advocacy of the previous Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV by (i) increasing the funding directed towards DFCDR, the Department responsible for driving and coordinating implementation of the National GBV Strategy; and (ii) providing the recurrent funding and institutional support to finally put FSVU officers onto the RPNGC establishment and give them promotion and other entitlements.

However, it was clear from the testimony provided by multiple agencies during the public hearings that much more funding needs to be explicitly allocated across a range of Government department and agencies to ensure that they can provide proper services to GBV and SARV survivors. In the context of the Government's decentralisation agenda, it will not only be important for the National Government to increase allocations to key national agencies (namely the justice services, which are all centralized); it is also essential that Provincial Governments allocate proper funding to address GBV and SARV (see section 7.3 for more), in particular through Provincial Health Authorities which are now responsible for coordinating and funding health services within each province.

Recommendation 10: The Committee encourages the National Government and Provincial Governments to allocate substantially more funding to support GBV efforts across multiple sectors. Ideally, some form of "programme budget" should be developed each year which captures the costs across all key agencies for addressing GEWE and GBV. Evidence from around the world informs the Committee that the budget should be aligned against clear performance indicators at both the institutional, sub-national and national levels, which would then enable the Government to better track the impact of their investments in delivering results. At a minimum, it is clear that the annual national budget should allocate a minimum of Kina 50 million per year across key sectors and agencies, with provinces also providing funding in support of their provincial GBV strategies. Funding should be provided for:

- ***Civil society organizations providing crisis response, recovery and integration services to survivors, in recognition of the reality that CSOs have a critical role to play in any national response to GBV and SARV;***
- ***The recurrent staffing and operational costs of all Family Support Centres to ensure they have the capacities to provide health services to GBV/SARV survivors and the infrastructure costs of new FSCs, which should be attached to all Provincial Hospitals and District Health Centres;***
- ***The recurrent staffing and operational costs of all Family & Sexual Violence Units across the country and the infrastructure costs of new FSVUs;***
- ***The recurrent staffing and operational costs of the existing Family and Sexual Offences Unit within the Office of Public Prosecutions, as well funding for additional prosecutors;***
- ***Prevention programs focused most particularly on youth and children, as well as on perpetrators and those at high risk of perpetrating or experiencing GBV; and***
- ***Better terms and conditions for Magistrates across the country, including ensuring housing and other key incentives to recruit and retain high quality candidates.***

The Committee spent considerable time discussing the lack of funding currently being directed to essential service providers operating at the national and provincial levels, including government agencies as well as CSOs. The Committee spent some time considering how to more effectively channel provincial government funding towards GBV services. During testimony from provincial officials from the NCDC, East Sepik and Morobe, officials indicated that the more successful provincial responses relied on regular allocations of funding from their Provincial Governments. For example, the East Sepik Government allocates K300,000 per year to their Provincial GBV Secretariat and the NCDC has a specific NCD GBV Strategy which is funded by the NCD Government.

During the testimony of Treasurer Ian Ling Stucky, the Treasurer suggested that a certain percentage of funding from the Provincial Services Improvement Programs (PSIP) and District Services Improvement Programs (DSIP) be allocated annually towards addressing GBV and SARV. Noting that DSIP grants of K 10 million will be allocated to 95 Open Seat MPs each year, he suggested that if even just K500,000 of that funding was allocated to GBV and SARV. That would amount to more than K45 million of additional funding being directed towards addressing GBV and SARV annually.

Recommendation 11: The Committee urges the Government to urgently update the PSIP and DSIP Guidelines to require that a minimum proportion of SIP grants are directed towards addressing GBV and SARV, in accordance with some form of Provincial GBV Strategy and/or District Development Plan.

7. National and provincial institutions & frameworks

7.1. National level

The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV spent considerable time interviewing the Department for Community Development and Religion regarding the failure over many years for the Department to drive the implementation of the *National GBV Strategy 2016-2025*. Most significantly, DFCDR has failed for more than 7 years to establish the National GBV Secretariat which is supposed to specifically lead coordination efforts. The Committee also pressed DFCDR on this failure during the May 2023 hearings. DFCDR advised the Committee that a structure for the National GBV Secretariat was approved by the Department of Personnel Management in August 2022, However, there were delays advertising the positions, following the decision of DFCDR to (i) provide 6-months of funding to the national Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) when it ran out of donor funding in mid-2022 and (ii) absorb their staff into the interim National GBV Secretariat team from January 2023 on contract. In 2023, this meant that the interim National GBV Secretariat comprised two public servants and 6 former FSVAC staff on contract. DPM finally advertised for the positions in April 2023. Applications closing on 12 May 2023 but at the time of the hearings, no selections had taken place.

Since the hearings, the Deputy Chair held a meeting with DPM and DFCDR on 23 June 2023 to get an update on the recruitment process. (The Chair was due to attend but was unable). The Deputy Chair was advised that the selection process had still not proceeded. It was agreed that DPM and DFCDR will focus on recruiting the Director for the National GBV Secretariat as an urgent priority. They agreed to organise interviews with each of the five top candidates as soon as possible. On 18 July 2023, the Committee, with support from DPM, organized a one-day hearing to vet the shortlisted candidates for the National GBV Secretariat Director position. Eight candidates were interviewed – 5 women and 3 men. Following the hearings, the Committee Chair sent the Secretaries of DPM and DFCDR a letter dated 31 August 2023 summarising their assessments of each candidate. The Committee understands that their assessment will be considered by the final Appointment Committee responsible for making the decision on the Director position. At the time of writing, the Committee is not aware whether the Director recruitment process has been finalized yet and an offer made.

Recommendation 12: The National GBV Secretariat must urgently be established. The Director position must be filled as a priority, followed by the remaining 10 staff. The Secretariat must produce a results framework immediately for review by the Committee, which sets out what they will deliver and how they will contribute to improving the lives of GBV/SARV survivors.

During the hearings, the Committee spent considerable time interrogating the DFCDR Secretary, Mr Jerry Ubase, regarding progress made in 2022 to implement the National GBV Strategy, with a particular focus on the 2022 Annual Report provided and the expenditure breakdown (see Figure 4 below for details). The funding provided in 2022 was a direct result of advocacy by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, which recognized that DFCDR had a key role to play in coordinating GBV responses across the country and working with CSOs to support their efforts.

Figure 4: Expenditure breakdown from DFCDR 2022 GBV Annual Report

Item of expenditure	Amount (Kina)
Air travel	666,260
Domestic travel & accommodation	456,104
Accommodation	300,482
Transport and fuel hire	1,174,125
Office materials and supplies	774,399
United Nations Development Programme PNG	2,000,000
Family & Sexual Violence Action Committee	427,614
Contingency	777,782
Miscellaneous	208,287
TOTAL	K 6,863,173.15

The Committee raised serious concerns regarding the use of the 2022 budget funding and whether it what tangible results were produced. After some questioning regarding the K2 million provided to UNDP, DFCDR advised that the money provided was used to (i) procure and provide equipment to Provincial GBV Secretariats and (ii) provide grants to 13 CSOs across the country to provide GBV/SARV crisis response services and/or implement GBV-related education activities.³² Committee members raised concerns regarding how those grantees were selected and stressed the importance of ensuring a merit-based process which provided funding to CSOs with a good track record of work. The Committee also raised issues regarding the amount of travel, administration and general costs that appear to have been funded with the GBV money. It was not clear that these costs were justifiable or resulted in outcomes for GBV and SARV survivors. The Committee cautioned against so much travel and encouraged DFCDR to focus on supporting CSOs to provide services, noting that DFCDR itself is not specialist in providing GBV or SARV crisis response services.

In response to their concerns regarding whether funds had been properly used, the Committee raised the idea of setting up a GBV Trust Fund that would ensure a limited number of signatories and approval rights over the GBV funding. Without such oversight, the Committee was extremely concerned that funding could be misused. They queried whether ongoing funding should be provided to DFCDR for GBV-related activities if it was not being used to deliver results. That said, the Committee also recognized that with the National GBV Secretariat soon to be established, it was important that the Secretariat was given proper funding and a chance to properly manage the funding.

³² <http://www.ngbvs.gov.pg/post/government-awards-13-grants-to-csos-to-address-gbv-sorcery-violence>

Recommendation 13: *The Committee encourages Treasury to establish a National GBV Trust Fund to hold the money allocated to the National GBV Secretariat, to separate out the funding from DFCDR’s budget and facilitate more accountable GBV funding, spending and acquittals.*

7.2. Provincial level

During the term of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, hearings were scheduled for November 2021 which were intended to be used to oversee the response of Provincial Governments to addressing GBV and SARV. Eleven Provincial GBV Focal Points submitted written submissions to the Committee,³³ but the hearings were eventually postponed indefinitely due to delays in scheduling the November 2021 national budget session.

Recognising the importance of ensuring more effective provincial responses to GBV and SARV, the Committee decided to include provincial representatives in the May 2023 hearing from well-performing provinces to share their good practice and lessons learned (namely, NCD, East Sepik and Morobe). They also officially wrote to all Provincial Administrators requesting them to submit written updates on their progress setting up Provincial GBV Secretariats, as required by the National GBV Strategy, and developing Provincial GBV Strategies and budgets. At the time of writing, only 10 provinces have submitted their responses, namely AROB, ENB, Enga, Manus, Milne Bay, Morobe, Oro, NCD, Western and WNB (see Anex 7 for a summary). This is not good enough and demonstrates a concerning lack of commitment from some Provincial Administrators regarding this critical issue.

The oral testimony, written submissions, research and personal knowledge of Committee members indicates that there is a problematic variableness in provincial responses. Some well-performing provinces such as NCD, East Sepik, Morobe and East New Britain (who were invited to share their good practice but were unable to attend due to travel problems) have proper localized GBV Strategies in place, with dedicated staff who have some amount of budget to actually support coordination and implement activities. In other provinces, there is only a part-time GBV Focal Point in place, with no budget and GBV/SARV coordination added on to their existing position descriptions. This is not good enough more than seven years into the implementation of a National GBV Strategy which required all provinces to set up a Provincial GBV Secretariat.

Notably, in March 2023 a group of Governors, chaired by Committee Chair Governor Parkop, came together and endorsed the “Provincial Governors Position on the Current Decentralisation and Devolution of Power to Provincial Governments Resolutions” which included a resolution on addressing GBV. The full text relating to GBV is attached at Annex 5. Governo’s Resolution 2.15 calls on Governors to “Adopt the National strategies on GBV and SARV, allocate resources and roll out the strategies. Call on National Government to set up the National Secretariat on GBV and work with all Provincial Governments to roll out the national strategy.” This resolution provides an important first step in recognising the critical role of Provincial Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrations in addressing GBV and SARV.

Recommendation 14: *The Committee urges Provincial Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrations to explicitly commit to addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV by endorsing and providing regular annual funding to establishment Provincial GBV Secretariats and implement Provincial GEWE and GBV Strategies. More specifically, the Committee encourages:*

³³ <https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/dec-2021-gbv-inquiry>

- ***Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrators to demonstrate high level political commitment for addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV in their public statements;***
- ***A minimum number of at least 3 full-time staff (GBV Coordinator, GBV Programme Officer & GBV Data and Administration Officer) to be recruited/allocated and funded to run a Provincial GBV Secretariat responsible for coordination the various government and non-government stakeholders involved in the provincial GBV/SARV response;***
- ***A minimum annual amount of at least K500,000 per year should be allocated to the provincial GBV budget to fund both Government services and local CSOs who provide services across the referral pathway (see Annex 6).***
- ***The development of tailored provincial prevention and communication campaigns focused at high-risk youth, including those in school, that focus on changing the behaviour of young people, and supporting them to develop healthy, equality-based, violence free relationships.***

8. Crisis response services for survivors

The previous reports by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV discussed the provision of crisis response, recovery and reintegration services in great detail. The analysis and recommendations in the August 2021 and April 2022 Reports to Parliament remain relevant and should be reviewed and actioned by relevant stakeholders. During the May 2023 public hearings, CSO representatives and a range of government officials provided updates to the Committee and highlighted a number of issues which require specific consideration.

8.1. Role of CSOs in providing services to survivors

It is well-recognised that CSOs across the country have been playing a critical role in providing services to GBV and SARV survivors. In part, this has an instinctive response to the lack of government services available to survivors; CSOs have filled a gap that has been left because of a deficiency in government service provision in many communities. Notably however, even where Government is functioning effectively, it is important to recognize that CSOs will always have a role to play in supporting survivors with services, as they are often better-placed than government officials to provide sensitive, survivor-centred care over the whole course of a survivors journey.

In recognition of the role that CSOs currently play in responding to GBV and SARV – and will continue to play into the future – it is vital that the Government provide proper resourcing for CSOs, through a regular programme of small grant funding. In this regard, the Committee is supportive of Treasury providing funding to DFCDR (which is currently filling the role of the National GBV Secretariat until it is set up as an independent body) to provide grants to CSOs. It is the Government’s responsibility, not the responsibility of donors, to fund local CSOs to supplement and complement existing government services. That said, the Committee was concerned that CSO small grants were not provided in a timely or transparent way in relation to the 2022 DFCDR GBV budget. During the May 2023 hearings, the DFCDR Secretary advised that 13 CSOs had received grants after a merit-based selection process. This is positive but there should have been more transparency throughout the process. Based on inputs from the provinces, there should also have been more involvement of provincial GBV officials during the application and selection process, to ensure that the CSOs providing the most-needed services and who have a track record of work were those given priority for funding.

During the May 2023 hearings, multiple CSOs working to provide services to GBV and SARV survivors also highlighted the need to ensure that funding is available in emergency situations to help survivors when they are in immediate need of support. There was a suggestion that some form of emergency

fund could be established which could be used to provide small amounts of money for fuel, food, shelter and the like when a survivor needed immediate assistance. However, implementing such a scheme could be complicated, in order to ensure accountability and transparency. It is understood that some CSOs have already explored such small funds and that some development partners have also been exploring such options. Their advice and expertise should be tapped to assess whether and how such a fund could be set up in PNG.

Recommendation 15: *The National GBV Secretariat (or DFCDR until the Secretariat is established) should:*

- ***Continue to be provided with a substantial annual budget to provide regularized grant funding to CSOs providing GEWE, GBV and SARV-related services across the country. Such funding must be accountably and transparently administered. The Committee will expect regular reporting on grantee recipients and their impact/results.***
- ***Establish some form of Emergency Fund for frontline workers to access to support GEWE, GBV and SARV survivors, in accordance with clear guidelines and accountable management.***
- ***Develop a national, government-funded, behaviour change campaign focused on increasing GEWE and reducing GBV and SARV.***

8.2. Role of Provincial Governments in providing health services to survivors

As discussed in section 7.2 above, under the Government's decentralisation agenda, Provincial Governments have been given a greater role in ensuring services to their people, including in relation to GBV and SARV crisis response, recovery and reintegration. In this context, during the hearings, there was considerable discussion with the National Department of Health regarding the role of Provincial Health Authorities in planning and delivering health services, including for GBV and SARV survivors.

During the May 2023 public hearings, NDOH officials advised that Family Support Centres (FSC) attached to hospitals and other health services have been designed to provide specific health services to women and girls, including in the context of GBV and SARV. Until that reform was introduced, NDOH was only dealing reactively with GBV and SARV survivors, provided services when they presented with injuries from violence. That changed when NDOH former a small Gender Unit in 2014. Their major reform was to start building FSCs across the country, with support from DFAT and UNICEF. FSCs are intended to operate as a place where survivors can seek treatment not just for their physical trauma, but also counselling for mental trauma and sometimes even safe shelter to keep them away from danger. They now have at least one FSC in 19 provinces, with the focus now on decentralising FSCs down to the district level. Some provinces have already established FSCs at the district level – Southern Highlands Province has 11 district FSCs, Hela has 4 district FSCs, Western Highlands Province has 4 district FSCs and Simbu has 1 district FSC – reaching a total of 39 FSCs at provincial or district level.

NDOH advised that while the FSCs buildings were initially funded in 19 provinces with support from donors, operational and staffing costs now rest with the relevant Provincial Health Authority (PHA). NDOH now only has a role in setting overarching policies for their management and operations, but PHAs have to fund them and run them. Recruitment of staff for FSCs is now done by each PHA not the NDOH. Each PHA is supposed to determine its own workforce based on its own population and local health needs. The NDOH does not have a lead role in health workforce planning anymore, though DPM has an oversight and approval role.

The NDOH team proposed some additional suggestions for strengthening FSCs. Ideally, they should be designed to operate as multi-sectoral hubs, with the police also attending at the FSC to offer their

services to GBV and SARV survivors. NDOH envisages that counselling services could also be provided from the FSC hub, but there are not enough well-trained counsellors in PNG to fill that need (see section 8.4 below for more). As discussed in section 6 above, there are also proposals to invest more in training Nurse Practitioners and a new category of worker called a Village Health Assistant, to ensure that FSCs can be properly staffed to provide services.

Recommendation 16: Provincial Health Authorities are urged by the Committee to establish and run Family Support Centres in each district (attached to a hospital or existing health service), including providing funding for a proper number of trained health personnel, to ensure that health services are available to GBV and SARV survivors.

8.3. More safe houses required

The two previous reports of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV drew attention to the need for more safe houses to be established across the country. This issue was raised again at the May 2023 public hearings, with CSOs making clear there are not enough safe houses across the country. Safe shelter is an absolutely critical element of crisis response services for survivors. Without options for safe shelter apart from the perpetrator, survivors remain at acute risk. The April 2022 report of the Special Parliamentary Committee stated:

Research shows that there are no safe houses services in Simbu, New Ireland, Gulf, Central, Western and Hela Provinces. Many of the existing safe houses are being run by CSOs or the churches. The National Capital District has four safe houses, East Sepik Province has three safe houses, Morobe and Madang Provinces have two safe houses, and other provinces only have one safe house to service their entire population. The existing safe house infrastructure across the country is simply not sufficient to meet current needs.

Some funding was provided in the 2022 and 2023 DFCDR GBV budgets to support operational costs of existing safe houses. Of the 13 CSO grants provided by DFCDR in 2022, a number of them supported CSOs that provide safe house support. This was useful but not enough. In 2023, DFCDR also developed a Public Investment Programme budget proposal that focused on building more safe houses across the country, to ensure at least one properly constructed and run safe house in every province. That proposal was not approved but should be reconsidered. That said, DFCDR should not be actually tasked with running safe houses. CSOs and church-based organisations already have demonstrated capacities and commitment to run existing safe houses. DFCDR is encouraged to work with existing safe house providers to tap their expertise and jointly develop and implement safe house construction/renovations proposals, with the expectation that once built, the safe houses would be funded through small grants to CSOs responsible for staffing and running them.

Recommendation 17: The Department of National Planning and Monitoring and Treasury is encouraged to provide funding to build dramatically more secure, accessible, properly designed and equipped, safe houses across the country, as part of DFCDR's initiative to build Community Development Centers. At a minimum, the Committee recommends that every province should have at least one safe house per district. Existing safe house providers should be convened to design and roll out National and/or Provincial Safe House Infrastructure Plan/s. Safe house SOPs and minimum benchmarks should also be endorsed and rolled out to ensure that adult and child GBV survivors are provided with adequate and safe shelter.

8.4. More counselling services required

The two previous reports of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV drew attention to the need for more counselling services to be available across the country, both to help survivors to deal with trauma but also as a preventative measure, which could help perpetrators manage their anger and change their behaviours. The Family Protection Act actually specifically empowers the Family Court to refer parties to counselling, but there are not enough services.

The lack of counselling services both for GBV survivors and GBV perpetrators was raised again at the May 2023 public hearings by both CSOs as well as Government officials. It is very clear that PNG is ever to actually reduce the levels of violence in the country, people need to be supported to manage their anger and engaged in peaceful conflict resolution. Counselling is a key method for assisting people to process their trauma and find ways of moving forward peacefully. It is understood that DFCDR is already engaging with the PNG Counselling Association and the Child Fund 1-tok Counselling Helpline team to identify ways to partner to extend their services, but much more needs to be done. It is imperative that the Government invest in developing a much larger cohort of qualified counsellors whose services can be accessed in person and via telephone so that people across the country can be assisted.

Recommendation 18: The Committee urges that more Government funding be directed to establish and support GBV counselling services for women, men and children across the country, whether in person or through telephone/online approaches. To ensure efficiencies, the NGBVS is encouraged to convene existing providers of GBV counselling services, both in-person and online, to assess the current service offering, identify good practice and lessons learned, and develop an Action Plan and budget for addressing the current gap in counselling. The Action Plan should include recommendations to address the current lack of accredited and/or trained counsellors within PNG.

9. Access to justice for survivors

Improving access to justice for GBV and SARV survivors is one of the most important issues that the Committee will seek to deal with during this term of Parliament. Without justice, survivors cannot move forward and perpetrators are able to continue their illegal actions with impunity.

9.1. Coordination of justice responses

During the May 2023 hearings, justice officials were interviewed as panel, which gave an interesting insight into how the justice system should be better connected together to provide a seamless system for enforcing national laws. The Committee asked officials whether there is any coordinating mechanism that could help them to work together more effectively to identify ongoing challenges to ensuring justice for survivors and addressing them collectively. Officials advised that there is a National Coordinating Mechanism which brings together all departmental heads level, but there is nothing similar at the operational level.

The panel recognized the importance of improving operational coordination. At the sub-national level, some provinces have Provincial Law and Justice Committees that aim to coordinate actors in these sectors. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) noted that operational coordination requirements in the context of individual cases can vary because different justice service providers are needed at different points in the system; for example, committal processes may require a different set of people to work together than during the actual hearing of the full court case. In their written submission, the

OPP advised that their Family and Sexual Offences Unit hosts bi-monthly meetings with the RPNGC's Sexual Offences Squad (SOS) to plan the logistical arrangements for matters in the National Courts list. That meeting is also used as an opportunity to discuss issues relating to current cases, gaps in resources and legal issues. The OPP's FASO tea, and RPNGC's SOS also share a WhatsApp group which they use for urgent requests and communication.

DJAG's representative discussed reforms they have been pursuing to try to improve coordination at local levels, sharing an update on their rollout of Community Justice Centres (CJC) across the country. DJAG has set up 18 CJCs to date, but would like to roll them out across all 95 districts. Anecdotally, the Angoram CJC was discussed as a success story for the concept. As the DJAG official noted: "It used to be like the wild west, but since the CJC was built and judges started to run court circuits to the area, it has substantially improved." The CJCs operate out of specific buildings, which means they can be used to support circuit courts to visit outlying areas; without the infrastructure, circuit courts have nowhere to sit and remain far from the people. DJAG is also trying to use the CJCs to help Village Courts to provide more justice services and connect people to the formal courts system.

Recommendation 19: Stakeholders in the law and justice sector are encouraged to:

- **Examine options for establishing a regular operational level coordination mechanism that can be used to work better together to identify and respond to challenges in ensuring access to justice for citizens across the country, including GBV and SARV survivors.**
- **Produce a special Joint Annual Report on Addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV which provides data and narrative reporting on access to justice progress and ongoing challenges.**

9.2. Investigating criminal allegations of GBV and SARV

The RPNGC is at the frontline of investigating alleged cases of GBV and SARV. Survivors and CSO support services continue to raise concerns regarding poor police responses across the country, stressing that it is still very hard for many survivors to get help from the police. As discussed in section 6 above, one of the most critical limitations of the current police response is the severe lack of police officers deployed across the country. With only 6,000 sworn officers in place, there are only approximately 65 officers per 100,000 people or 1 officer per 1500 people. A review of the 2022 RPNGC Annual Report shows that ratios vary between 1 officer per 714 people in the NCD/Central Divisional Command to 1 officer per 4,282 in the Highlands Eastern-End Divisional Command.³⁴

The RPNGC representatives at the May 2023 hearings made clear that they are well aware of the challenges regarding staffing and resources for the police. As Figure 5 shows, as at April 2023, there are 54 FSVUs across the country. Since the last hearings, the Organisational Restructure Review has been implemented; the FSVUs are now a Directorate on their own and the position of head of the FSVU's will be elevated to an Assistant Commissioner of Police. It is now planned for there to be 4 police in each FSVU, though there remain challenges to get sufficient funding to progress recruitments. The RPNGC also now have plans to roll out into the 95 districts. That said, at present, many provinces still only have 1 FSVU and only a handful of officers. Submissions to the Committee made clear that FSVU officers need to be equipped to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week because the needs is enormous "with scared and traumatized women and children needing assistance [be]cause this [sic] abuses happen anytime and yes even at 2am in the morning".

³⁴ <https://www.rpngc.gov.pg/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/RPNGC-AMR-2022-Compressed.pdf>

While the FSVUs have been the focus of previous Committee hearings and are often showcased as the main response to addressing GBV and SARV, this overlooks the reality that the RPNGC also has a Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and a Sexual Offences Squad that operates as part of their Specialist Operations Section. These officers are also mandated to receive reports of GBV or SARV crimes and have specialist skills to investigate. It is important that they are trained and properly resourced to respond to GBV and SARV cases as part of the overall RPNGC response. In the written submission to the Committee by DJAG, they advised that through their partnership with the Centre for Excellency Bomana Training College, they conducted the first Investigation and Prosecution Training for police officers on the recent amendments to Criminal Code criminalising glasman/glasmeri in December 2022 for 40 police officers.³⁵

Figure 5: Staffing of FSVUs, as at April 2023

ROYAL PAPUA NEW GUINEA CONSTABULARY FAMILY & SEXUAL VIOLENCE DIRECTORATE					
NUMBER OF FAMILY & SEXUAL VIOLENCE UNITS AND STAFF ACROSS THE FOUR REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY					
NO	REGIONS	# OF PROVINCES	# OF UNITS	# OF STAFF	
1	HIGHLANDS	EASTERN END			
		1	EHP	4	7
		2	CHIMBU	2	5
		3	JIWAKA	2	4
		4	WHP	1	4
		WESTERN END			
		5	ENGA	2	4
6	SHP	2	5		
7	HELA	1	1		
		TOTAL	14	30	
2	MOMASE	8	MOROBE	9	17
		9	MADANG	2	6
		10	ESP	2	3
		11	WSP	1	2
		TOTAL	14	28	
3	SOUTHERN	12	NCD	8	27
		13	CENTRAL	4	9
		14	MILNE BAY	1	1
		15	POPONDETTA	1	2
		16	GULF	1	1
		17	WESTERN PROVINCE	2	2
		TOTAL	17	42	
4	NEW GUINEA IRELANDS	18	WNB	1	1
		19	ENBP	2	3
		20	MANUS	1	2
		21	AROB	5	8
		22	NEW IRELAND	0	0
		TOTAL	9	14	
OVER-ALL TOTAL		22	54	114	

Provided in the above table are the four regions, number of FSV Units in each region and the number of staffs stationed in those 54 units around our beautiful country of PNG.

The Office of the Public Prosecutor (OPP) also made a written submission which discussed their partnership with the RPNGC to help upskill officers. For example, in September 2022, the OPP conducted a Medical Evidence Workshop focused on crimes committed against women and children which was attended by 20 RPNGC officers as well as 40 OPP lawyers. In April 2023, they organised a Forensic Medical Workshop which was attended by OPP lawyers as well as Police Prosecutors. That same workshop will be rolled out in Lae and Kokopo later in 2023, and will include officers from the Homicide Squad, Sexual Offences Squad and CID. Advocacy workshops are also conducted annually with officers from the OPP, Public Solicitors Office and RPNGC on leading evidence from vulnerable witnesses. The OPP also conducts weekly training sessions for lawyers and police prosecutors, on topics such as SARV. The OPP specifically recognised that “inclusion of RPNGC officers in these workshops...aims to improve the investigative capacity of the officers involved”.

Recommendation 20: The RPNGC is encouraged to provide regular trainings on relevant laws (including reforms to SARV-related laws) to ensure police officers understand the relevant elements of the crime and survivor-centered investigative approaches to all police officers, (in particular, members of the FSVUs, Sexual Offences Squad, Homicide Squad, Criminal Investigation Division and police prosecutors, but also senior management and all sworn members).

³⁵ A total of 40 Police officers were trained, specifically Officers in Charge of the Police Prosecution, Criminal Investigation Division and Family and Sexual Violence Unit who were based in provinces that were identified as having high prevalence of SARV (i.e. the National Capital District, East Sepik, East New Britain Province, West New Britain Province and all the provinces in the Highland’s region).

9.3. Taking cases of GBV and SARV to the courts

The process of prosecuting cases involves a range of justice service actors. The previous reports of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV highlighted numerous challenges faced by justice actors in getting cases to court and ensuring convictions. It is recommended that the recommendations they made be reviewed and actioned by relevant justice actors. The police remain involved, as they are responsible for collecting the evidence that will be the basis for the case. Police prosecutors also often present cases at committal hearings. Notably, in the written submission from the Magisterial Services to the committee, they recommended that police prosecutors and CID officers should be given full scholarships to do Bachelor of Laws programmes, to help strengthen their skills. Upskilling police prosecutors and the investigators they work with would help strengthen their evidence briefs.

The Office of the Public Prosecutor plays a critical role in taking GBV and SARV cases to court, running most matters apart from those simple committals. The Magisterial Service and National Courts are then responsible for actually trying cases, with responsibilities split across the two court services depending on the seriousness of the case. It is positive that some progress appears to have been made by some justice actors since the last report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV was tabled. In their written submission, the DPP advised that his Office received an increase allocation in the 2023 budget which allowed them to progress a restructure which will see the office grow from 152 current staff to 243 staff. This will result in an increase of 45 new legal positions, as well as the creation of a Victim Liaison Officer in every OPP branch and additional paralegals. These are very positive signs of progress. DPM has advised the OPP that they can work within their current budget to effect the restructure, but will still be required to roll out the recruitments in phases. Their operational budget will also need to more than double over 5 years in order to fund the restructure.

Complementing the work of prosecutors is the work of the magistrates and judges who are responsible for hearing cases and making decisions based on the law. As the Magisterial Service noted in their written submission to the Committee, even if the police bring charges in case, without a magistrate to hear it, a case will not proceed. The Magisterial Service noted that their magistrates are responsible for dealing with 20 different types of jurisdiction (e.g. Family Court, Civil Court, Juvenile Court, Committal Court, IPOs, Summary Court). Over the course of the previous two hearings and the May 2023 hearings, officials from the Magisterial Service repeatedly raised the challenges they are having recruiting magistrates. Currently, there are still only 83 magistrates employed nationwide, despite a staffing ceiling of 200 magistrates, and 120 of those positions funded. In East Sepik, for example, they only have 2 magistrates outposted for the whole province and only 1 magistrate for Madang. The Magisterial Service is currently restructuring to try to improve the terms and conditions for Magistrates because they are losing more magistrates than they can recruit because conditions are not attractive for keeping staff. The Chief Magistrate is currently having discussions with DPM regarding improving the terms and conditions for magistrates (including housing) to encourage a higher calibre of applicant to fill their vacant positions. There is also a need for more court houses throughout the country with many provinces not having sufficient infrastructure to support circuit court magistrates. As the head of the RPNGC FSVUs noted during the May 2023 public hearings, “It’s very demoralising when we try to hold perpetrators accountable, but we don’t even have enough court officers to actually get through the cases. The court circuit takes too long to arrive in many places and there are not enough Magistrates”.

Recommendation 21: The Government is urged to invest more funding to ensure that there is sufficient personnel and infrastructure to actually run GBV and SARV cases and ensure timely and accessible justice for survivors. Specifically, the Government is urged to ensure that:

- ***The OPP and Magisterial Services have proper funding to ensure sufficient qualified prosecutorial and judicial personnel are recruited and posted throughout the country to prosecute and adjudicate cases;***
- ***Funding for ongoing continuing legal education is provided to ensure training for police officers and police prosecutors to ensure they produce proper case files for court.***

As Figure 6 shows, District Courts are responsible for processing Interim Protection Order and Protection Orders under the Family Protection Act, in addition to actually hearing cases against alleged perpetrators of GBV and SARV. In their submission, they advised that if people or CSOs believe that IPO applications are not being dealt with in a timely manner, they should directly contact the Magisterial Service headquarters for help. The written submission of the Magisterial Service noted that Village Courts also have a role in dealing with applications for IPOs under the Family Protection Act. DJAG advised during their oral testimony that there are 1,680 Village Courts

<i>Figure 6: IPOs processed by Magisterial Services</i>	
○	Total cases Pending Nationwide 2019-133
○	Total cases Completed Nationwide 2019-1898
○	Total cases pending nationwide- 2020-192
○	Total cases completed nationwide 2020-1495
○	Total cases pending nationwide 2021-433
○	Total cases completed nationwide 2021-1238
○	Total case pending nationwide 2022-366
○	Total case completed nationwide 2022-913
○	Total cases pending nationwide 2023-268
○	Total cases completed nationwide 2023-239

throughout the country, comprising over 18,480 officials, with 1,017 women officials (of which there are 808 female magistrates, 141 female clerks and 68 female peace officers). The Village Courts have the potential to play a greater role in addressing GBV and SARV because they have 4 Village Court Officers who could be utilised to help the public connect into the justice system. The Magisterial Service submission recommended that more training be provided to Village Court Magistrates and Peace Officers to help them understand their role. The Committee is pleased that DJAG advised in their written submission that they recently rolled out trainings on the issuing of IPOs to Village Court officials in ENB, Western, Hela, Southern Highlands and Morobe. A total of 354 officials have been trained since the last hearings of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, including training them to reinforce that processing and issuing of IPOs by Village Courts and other competent authorities is free of charge.

However, DJAG noted that the Department cannot continue their capacity-building program because the K 5 million in the 2022 budget meant for Village Courts was not released by Treasury and the 2023 budget appropriation has no funding at all allocated to the Village Courts program. DJAG also advised that the Village Courts Secretariat was allocated a significant amount of money from the K 11.9 million given by the European Union under the EU-PNG Partnership on Good Governance. This funding has also been sitting with Treasury since October 2021 after it was released by the EU under the Direct Budget component of the Partnership Arrangement.

Recommendation 22: The Committee encourages the Government to prioritize funding for the Village Court Secretariats within DJAG, to support their efforts to build the capacities of Village Court officials in accordance with the Village Courts Policy 2020-2030 which aims to revitalize the village courts system.

Multiple justice officials also made recommendations regarding ensuring proper penalties for GBV and SARV offences to encourage deterrence. It was suggested that there could be stronger presumptions against bail in relation to alleged GBV and SARV perpetrators. Where IPOs and POs are breached, the courts could also be empowered to issue a warrant and send people to jail, for the breach. That said, this would also require that jail cells to be up and running across the country. In terms of adjudicating

on cases, the Magisterial Services written submission recommended that more training should be provided to magistrates on sentencing tariffs, in order to encourage more consistency across judgements. It would also be useful to collect and publish more judicial precedents, to help guide the decision-making of magistrates and judges.

The Committee Chairman raised the issue again of using the human rights track of the National Courts to deal with GBV cases. -The DPP clarified that GBV is in the criminal track whereas the human rights track currently only deals with cases like police brutality. Likewise, the Family Court deals mainly with protection orders in relation to GBV, not other criminal issues related to GBV.

Recommendation 23: The Committee encourages DJAG to work with other justice stakeholders to examine whether current legal frameworks dealing with GBV and SARV are sufficiently strong to act as a deterrent, with specific consideration given to the current penalties for breaching Family Protection Orders, and current bail requirements for alleged GBV or SARV perpetrators.

Recommendation 24: The Committee encourages the National Courts to examine whether the “human rights track” could be expanded to include cases in relation to gender inequality and discrimination, GBV and SARV, recognizing that all constitute a violation of the fundamental human right to life and personal safety.

The OPP and Magisterial Services made a number of recommendations to improve courts themselves to ensure that they are survivor-centred. New and/or renovated court rooms should make the environment safer for all court users, and should ensure minimum contact between the accused and their victims. Accessibility ramps should be included to ensure access for people with disabilities. Defendant docks should be enclosed to deal with volatile defendants and video evidence should be permitted where defendants may get violent and/or to protect vulnerable victims or witnesses when testifying. There was also a suggestion made by the Committee Chairman that video evidence should be permitted to be used in court without the maker of the video having to testify to its authenticity in court. This requirement can be very difficult in SARV cases where witnesses often do not want to be identified, but reliable video of offences is available and in the public domain.

The head of the OPP Family and Sexual Violence Offences Unit discussed the challenges of protecting victims and witnesses in more detail during the hearings. She noted that they often have to deal with vulnerable children and with victims who are very uncomfortable in the justice setting and may not want to discuss sexual assault or such issues in public. As noted earlier, under recent reforms the OPP has created the position of Victim Liaison Officer to create a bridge between the victim and OPP. The person is to help prepare the victim or witness for the court process, including engaging with the prosecutor and then the court itself. She specifically noted her appreciation for CSOs, namely Femili PNG and the Salvation Army, who have helped the OPP with logistical support for victims in remote locations. They have actually assisted with bringing witnesses to court and helping keep them safe. They have also helped with counselling. They also now have a Victim Support Desk at the Waigani Court Complex managed by the Salvation Army.

Recommendation 25: The Committee encourages DJAG, the OPP, the Magisterial Service and the National Courts to work together to ensure a supportive environment is developed for survivors and witnesses involved in court cases. The Committee specifically calls on those stakeholders to:

- ***Review current evidence law to permit the use of videos in certain contexts, in particular, for SARV cases, without requiring that the maker of the video testify in court as to its authenticity. For example, a signed statutory declaration could be sufficient.***

- **Develop a specific action plan and budget proposal to fund improvements to witness and victim support systems, including in relation to court processes and infrastructure, and to share this plan and budget with the Committee.**

10. Addressing SARV specifically

While the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV was initially set up with a terms of reference that only referred to GBV, it became clear during the public hearings they held that sorcery accusation related violence is also a critical and related issue requiring the specific attention and resources. This Committee also recognizes that GBV and SARV responses are inherently connected and that addressing SARV is also a core part of this Committee's TOR.

In recognition of the importance of understanding and addressing SARV, the Committee called expert witnesses working to address SARV in the community, namely Ms Ruth Kissam from the Tribal Foundation and Father Philip Gibbs, a pastor and academic from Divine Word University (DWU) who is part of a research project on SARV being implemented in partnership with the PNG National Research Institute and the Australian National University. That research contributed to the development of the 2015 SARV National Action Plan and has also influenced the development of a global website for the International Network Against Witchcraft Accusation and Associated Harmful Practices³⁶ (which has two PNG representatives on its International Advisory Committee, namely Mr William Kipongi and Mr Anton Lutz).

In addition to the oral testimony provided to the Committee, Father Gibbs and his colleague Dr Miranda Forsyth made a written submission which stated that:

The deficiencies in the current response services that are ensuring justice for victims are also well known. In particular, we wish to highlight the following points: The government response has focused on police and courts. More attention must be given to Health and Education; Many Family and Sexual Violence Police Units are poorly managed and coordinated; Victims face large costs in seeking court action (eg. paying for food and transport for witnesses); Some churches and CBOs are doing good work, but need support (eg. cost of running safe-houses). However we cannot simply presume the value of the interventions of all such bodies (eg. when the main focus is on deliverance ("rausim spirit nogut")).

While there has been much criticism of the legal sector in this space, much of which is justified, we wish to draw attention to some positive activities and developments: Prosecutions of cases for SARV have been increasing over the past decade. In the years 2020, 2021 and 222 respectively 7, 8 and 13 people were convicted of SARV (wilful murder, murder, arson). In 2021 a case included a glassman as a defendant was committed to trial; Cases of defamation for accusations of sorcery are increasing in the district courts; The first case of a claim in the District court for damages for assault for SARV occurred, with damages of 7,000K and two pigs awarded by the court to compensate for injuries sustained during the attack; Village court magistrates use a variety of strategies to successfully prevent cases of SARV getting out of control.

The expert testimony provided both by CSOs as well as the Department of Justice and the Attorney General (DJAG) noted that PNG developed a specific SARV National Action Plan in 2015. DJAG is the Secretariat to the Core Committee on the SARV NAP, which comprises both government and non-state

³⁶ <https://www.theinternationalnetwork.org/>

actors. The budget requested for implementation was K3 million, but DJAG was only provided with K1 million, of which K500,000 was provided in grants to the churches to address SARV. There has been an effort over the last year to revive and revise the SARV NAP, with DJAG in the lead but DFCDR also providing support in recognition of their role in addressing GBV. A draft revised SARV NAP was presented to members of the SARV Core Committee for their initial input at a meeting on 28 April 2023. DJAG are preparing to host a wider stakeholder consultation in the coming months to gather input from provincial stakeholders on the working draft of the revised SARV NAP.

DJAG still convenes quarterly meetings for the SARV Core Committee to gather update on progress of activity implementation. In their written submission they noted that they usually hold those meetings in the NCD, but also try to involve stakeholders working in hot spot provinces, especially relevant Provincial Administrations, Provincial Police Commanders and key non-state actors including church representatives. In September 2022, DJAG convened their quarterly meeting in Morobe Province, in recognition of the need for more interaction with provinces to get a better handle on the practical measures that need to be taken at the provincial level to progress the SARV NAP.

It was recognized that while the focus of the last SARV NAP was heavily on prosecution, there would be benefit in rebalancing efforts to focus more heavily on prevention. Misinformation and lack of education are substantially contributing to the sorcery allegations which are steeped in superstition and misunderstanding. It is essential that more funding is provided for specific SARV education programmes. A DJAG official testified during the hearings that recent research by DWU/NRI/ANU found that approximately 65% of the perpetrators were under 45 years old, which was a surprising sign that younger people were being involved in SARV. The research also provided insights into the relationships between the accuser and victim; most commonly, it was people from the same community committed SARV offences, then people from the same tribe, with only 2% of accusers being classified as “outsiders”. This suggested that more work needed to be done inside communities to educate them and build their resilience to misinformation.

Recommendation 26: The updated SARV NAP should be produced as soon as possible by DFCDR, DJAG and other key stakeholders and should be presented to the Committee in draft for comment by no later than Quarter 1 of 2024 before being finalised. The new SARV NAP should ensure that education is prioritized as well as enforcement. With that in mind, DJAG and DFCDR are encouraged to work with experts within government departments, civil society and academics to develop and roll out an education campaign focused on preventing SARV, including by:

- ***Working with community leaders, especially church leaders, to educate communities in high-risk provinces in particular;***
- ***Providing training to health workers to help them avoid contributing misunderstandings that sickness has been caused by “sorcery”;***
- ***Providing training to all RPNGC officers (not just FSVU personnel), prosecutors, Village Court officials and magistrates across the country on legislation criminalizing SARV and the actions of glasmen/glasmeri and how it should be applied;***
- ***Exploring options for developing a training program for paralegals and/or providing Government support to establish a dedicated SARV Community Legal Service;***

- *Providing training to Members of Parliament and Provincial Governments on SARV issues, drawing on the guidance of the Pan African Parliament Guidelines on Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks.*³⁷

11. Education and prevention activities

While the bulk of Government and donor funding has historically been channelled towards providing crisis response and justice services to GBV and SARV survivors, the *National GBV Strategy* makes it explicit that the PNG Government is committed to developing a “zero-tolerance” culture in relation to GBV and SARV. The Committee is of the view that every single individual in the country should be encouraged to reject violence as a way of solving problems. However, as the data provided to the Committee by the NDOH during the May 2023 hearings showed, PNG is still far from adopting a zero tolerance for violence. Cases of physical violence are on the rise and the police data suggests that many perpetrators are engaging in violence with impunity.

The Committee is aware that some of the funding provided by the Government to DFCDR to address GBV was allocated to providing CSO grants that would support education and prevention activities. This grant funding needs to be increased and extended to ensure that such activities are being undertaken in every province in the country. The Committee is also interested in exploring other approaches to preventing violence, such as through early childhood education interventions, schools-based and other youth education programs, sports-based programmes, church-based programmes and lessons learned from other jurisdictions that have sought to teach both sexes about the principle of “respectful relationships”. None of these approaches will necessarily have a quick-impact in terms of ending violence, but it is important that the Government invest today in building a culture of peaceful resolution of conflict which prioritises respect for other people and a rejection of violence for problem-solving.

One written submission made by Ms Elizabeth Ramatlap and Ms Evelyn Daimoi-Ofasia highlighted the importance of education and awareness raising, not just for communities at large, but also for perpetrators of violence.³⁸ They stated: “We recommend that the Parliamentary Committee consider options for providing support services for perpetrators of violence such as conflict resolution skills or anger management courses and counselling. The Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation in Bougainville has experienced working with perpetrators to challenge unhealthy attitudes and behaviours and get perpetrators and getting them to be more supportive of their spouses. Important lessons can be taken from that pilot project and possibly replicated in other provincial locations.” They also encouraged more education campaigns to be implemented in Tok Pidgin.

Recommendation 27: DFCDR, working with the National Department of Education, CSOs and development partners, is urged to design and roll out community-focused GEWE enhancement and GBV and SARV prevention strategies, including:

- *o Developing early childhood and schools-based interventions that will teach children and young people that violence is not acceptable in a peaceful society and to equip them with other tools to peacefully resolve conflict. Specific education programmes needed to be designed to*

³⁷ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/PAP-Guidelines-EN_0.pdf

³⁸ https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/files/ugd/7f0c06_cc4e2ea803fe4020ad3e3102c200275a.pdf?index=true

address misinformation amongst young people contributing to beliefs in “sorcery”, noting that recent research showed people under 45 years of age being more likely to be involved in SARV;³⁹

- ***Learning from other Pacific jurisdictions which have been trialling programmes which seek to work with both men and women based around the principles of how to engage in “Respectful Relationships” and designing and then scaling up local pilots;***
- ***Investing in specific interventions aimed at supporting behaviour change for men and boys,⁴⁰ including activities aimed at addressing the mentality of perpetrators of violence.⁴¹***

In addition to recognising the work that CSOs have done across the country to address GBV and SARV, the Committee was keen to better understand the efforts of both public and private sector organisations in PNG to stamp out violence within their own workforces. The private sector is a huge part of the PNG community; if companies become allies in the fight to end GBV and SARV this could have a major impact in changing cultures of what is acceptable. Likewise, the public sector is the biggest employer across the country; if the public sector can use its leverage with employees to stamp out violence in their ranks, this could make a big difference.

Recognising that there have been a number of interesting initiatives to address GBV and SARV, the Committee invited representatives from the Bel Isi Programme and the Digicel Men of Honour Programme to talk to them about how their initiatives have worked and could be scaled up. Officials from the NCD Commission (NCDC) also gave testimony to the Committee about their own innovative initiatives to require contractors to the NCDC to sign up to “zero tolerance” pledges and to introduce their own codes of conduct for employees. The Committee is also aware that many organisations have effective policies to address sexual harassment which include discipline and sanctions provisions.

Recommendation 28: The Committee calls on DPM, independent statutory bodies and private sector organisations to urgently invest more resources into enacting and enforcing policies which will require all employees and all contractors to demonstrate zero tolerance for violence and which will include sanctions where they engage in threats or acts of violence. More specifically:

- ***DPM is encouraged to explicitly integrate zero tolerance for GBV and sexual harassment into all government human resources policies and into the terms and conditions of employment for all officers working in the public sector, SOEs and Constitutional Offices;***
- ***The Government is encouraged to develop and implement a policy or regulation requiring that the terms and conditions of all contracts entered into using government funds require contractors to commit to zero tolerance for GBV and sexual harassment and include that in their human resources policies and employment contracts;***

³⁹ The NRI/DWU/ANU consortium has produced a children’s book, film and ‘Peter and Grace Make a Difference’ teaching materials to help students learn skills that can minimize their susceptibility to SARV misinformation. These can be accessed on the website stopsorceryviolence.org and used free of charge in the school curriculum.

⁴⁰ Testimony on behalf of the Digicel Foundation regarding their Men of Honour programme was relevant in this regard. This programme could be evaluated more systematically to identify good practice and lessons learned that could be scaled up.

⁴¹ Once written submission specifically referenced the good practice developed by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which has been implementing programmes with male perpetrators for some time and also run programmes relating to male behaviour change.

12. Harness ICTs to strengthen GBV/SARV responses

During the first hearing of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV in May 2021, the Ministry for Information Communication and Technology (ICT) was invited to provide testimony to the Committee. They may a number of helpful interventions, including calling for more effort to made to harness ICTs to streamline justice processes that GBV and SARV survivors are using (for example, by developing an online application from for Family Protection Orders). The Ministry has not been subsequently called to present at public hearings, due to the Committee's decision to focus more on those core agencies directly responsible for addressing GBV and SARV.

However, a written submission to the Committee sent in June 2023 by the NCD Women's Office⁴² specifically focused on harnessing ICTs to improve systems and processes related to GBV and SARV. Below is a summary of some of the proposals contained in that submission:

- ***Data collection and analysis***: ICT tools can be used to collect and analyse data on GBV and SARV incidents, patterns, and trends. This can help identify hotspots, target interventions, and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention programs.
- ***Incident reporting mechanisms***: User-friendly mobile applications and online portals for anonymous incident reporting can be developed to report and alert GBV and SARV cases. Personal information on reports should remain confidential. Reporting mechanisms can be connected to local police and other authorities for timely intervention.
- ***ICT usage through awareness***: Social media, websites, mobile apps and mobile network SMS blasts can be used to leverage awareness about GBV and SARV. Educational content, statistics, survivor stories and information on available support services can be made available to vulnerable citizens through usage of ICT platforms.
- ***Dissemination of information on policies, laws and services***: Information on legal rights, protection orders, available shelters, counselling services and medical supports can be disseminated through these ICT platforms using SMS blasts, Social Media, and Websites.
- ***Helpline and Support Services***: Establish call centres or Helpline numbers, WhatsApp links and online chat services where victims or survivors can seek immediate support or counselling.
- ***Mobile apps for safety***: Mobile applications can be developed to help strengthen personal Safety. Applications can be enriched with features such as GPS tracking, emergency contact notifications and distress signal codes. These applications can be tailored to be user-friendly and accessible to persons with low digital literacy.
- ***Engaging men and boys***: ICT platforms can be used to engage men and boys in conversations about gender equality, respectful relationships and GBV. Apps can be used to promote positive masculinity and involve men and boys as allies and advocates in curbing violence.
- ***Training and capacity-building***: Online apps can be designed to provide training programs on GBV prevention, response, and support for local community leaders, health workers, teachers, law enforcement personnel, and ICT professionals.

Recommendation 29: DFCDR is encouraged to set up a meeting with the NCD Women's Office and the Ministry for ICT to discuss concrete options for how to more effectively harness ICT to address GBV and SARV. These ideas could then be presented to the National GBV Advisory Committee for consideration and/or action.

⁴² https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/files/ugd/7f0c06_d34262cb338b479ca4e7924008feb150.pdf