



A National Body overseeing Development of Counselling Profession

PNGCA, PO BOX 1530, PORT MORESBY, NCD

Telephone: 675) 321 1714

Mobile: (675) 7391 6367

WhatsApp: PNG Counsellors Association

Email: pngcounsellorsassociation@gmail.com

SUBMISSION:

To: Parliamentary Committee on Gender Based Violence

Goal: Acknowledging and supporting the development of counselling profession and counselling services as one of the key measures to prevent and address family sexual violence.

Facts:

Root causes of Social Norms

Papua New Guinea is a country that has a depth of cultural heritage that must be appreciated as it makes us as a people unique in comparison to other people. Papua New Guinea's many cultural values were developed to protect not just individuals but also the communities, clans and tribal values and to provide a safe and secure society.

Social Norms that form the basis of PNG cultural practices reflect our:

- fear of the unknown
- measures to control people's behavior
- means for Protection and safety and
- survival as a people
- desire to maintain peace and harmony within and between communities, clans and tribes
- drive for accumulation of wealth
- appreciation and commitment to love and care for the families
- Way of creating obligations

The social norms which set the basis of our cultural practices are now being abused to create the image of PNG man being a superior being to a woman. Hence, we see the exchange of goods between families to acknowledge a marriage between couples now being termed as bride price. This term completely changes the real reason why goods are exchanged between the two families. Or why brothers exchange sisters in marriage. Or the reasons why a leader's daughter is given in marriage to a man in another clan. Communal rights in our PNG societies are seen as more

important than individual rights. The more we see women demanding their rights as individuals the more violence we witness.

Can Counselling help address immediate and long-term measures to prevent family and sexual violence?

- Counselling is a missing link in services provided to survivors of family sexual violence and to the perpetrators. Counselling is part of Mental Health but in PNG it is considered to be only for those who are severely mentally ill. Otherwise generally many people who experience trauma during tribal fights, natural disasters, work place trauma, sexual harassments, even the Bougainville conflict and Family Sexual Violence (FSV) just to name a few are not considered to need such professional help.
- There are less than 10 qualified mental health doctors in PNG and we do have some mental health nurses, maybe one to each provincial hospital, this is not enough. In the area of counselling there are 38 diploma graduates, all trained under Australian Counselling Qualification. There could be around five to six people with a master's degree and may be two or three holding PHD in counselling gained overseas. The rest of the service providers in the FSV referral pathways are not trained counsellors but out of passion offer counselling services
- Counselling is not new to Papua New Guinea, though most time it is given as advice or mediation takes place to help resolve issues. In PNG context counselling in this form is not really in the best interest of an individual, as our social norms reflect that it is more in the interest of the family and the extended community.

How can counselling help?

- Anyone who has experienced abuse (in whichever form) through counselling will require emotional support of some kind. But, everyone's needs will vary. You may have a support network you can lean on but, equally, you may not feel comfortable speaking to loved ones about what has happened. Or maybe you have, but they aren't sure of how to help you further. Whatever your situation, it can be beneficial to seek help from a counsellor or therapist in order for you to see a way out and escape from a cycle of powerlessness. You deserve to be listened to with respect and without being judged if you choose to talk about your experiences.
- Counselling offers you a safe space to talk, without fear and without judgment. Your counsellor can listen to you, help you come to terms with what has happened, and understand your options for moving forward. Counselling can help in many ways, at whatever stage you are with your life. It can act as a support if you are in the process of leaving an abusive relationship and help to restore self-esteem re-examine healthy ways of relating following abuse.

- Counselling support can be requested to help prevent violence from happening, issues to be discussed before matters get out of hand.

Can Perpetrators receive Counselling:

- Perpetrators can be counseled too. 49% of the callers to the only telephone counseling service in PNG are men seeking information, assistance for loved ones who are abused and for themselves. There is huge demand by men for face to face counselling because of problems both family relationships and others issues that they face.
- The Family Protection Act 2015 also calls on courts to do referrals from the family court for counselling.

Key Challenges: Lack of training and development of counselling profession

- Counselling is not social work nor is it psychology. Counselling is a profession that involves a process of assisting and guiding a client to resolve personal, social, psychological problems and difficulties, using counselling skills to help the person to learn more about self and to use such understanding to enable the person to become an effective member of the community.
- PNG national training institutes do not offer counselling training because it is a profession that was not considered important until recent years when the concern was raised by FSVAC.
- PNGCA recently developed with assistance from DFAT and Child Fund Cert IV in counselling which is a PNG National qualification accredited by Department of Higher Education Science and Technology (DHEST). PNGCA had involved PNG Training Institutions in the development of Cert IV but none came forward to offer the training. IEA Tafe took up the challenge and is now accredited to offer the course on Cert IV in Counselling.

Recommendations:

PNGCA Board recommends to the GBV Parliamentary Committee that:

1. Counselling be recognized as a key service to be provided to survivors and perpetrators of family sexual violence
2. UPNG Arts Faculty and University of Goroka include Counselling degree course in their course offerings
3. Pacific Leadership and Governance Precinct (former Admin College) offer the Cert IV and the PNG diploma course (currently under development).
4. PNGCA be recognized by the GoPNG as the body that accredits and regulates the counselling profession of PNG.