

Recommendations from VfC on EGBV in Jiwaka Province

**Ending Gender Based Violence**

Ending violence in homes and communities is the cornerstone of achieving the promise of PNG's Constitution. Equality, Participation and Integral Human Development, with every citizen and leaders are fully aware of their basic rights and their social obligations and their mutual accountability to develop our families, communities, province and country together. The Violence against Women and Girls threatens and hinders the achievement of political, social and economic stability in the Province and the Government of the day must give this issue a priority. The Preamble to our National Constitution clearly states that “*we reject violence and seek consensus as a means of solving our common problems*”.

The Voice for Change on ending GBV in Jiwaka Province commends the newly formed Parliamentary Committee on Gender Based Violence for initiating this public inquiry and hereby submit our recommendations. The grievances are coming from the hearts of the mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers and daughters by way of these recommendations.

**Who we are?**

*Voice for Change* (VfC) is a women’s human rights organization in Jiwaka Province aiming to empower and mobilize rural women to take leadership in addressing gender-based violence and increasing women’s economic empowerment. The Voice for Change’s primary focus is on ending VAW and building new norms to enable equality, development and peace, emphasized advocacy, awareness, education and collective commitment to change - among communities and with local and provincial government. Evidence of prevailing norms, attitudes and behaviors was collected through the VAW baseline study. This informed the development of tools and approaches for community-based education on human rights, gender equality, the PNG Constitution and laws to protect women and girls from violence.

**Voice for Change’s Activities**

VfC is providing emergency safe house, counselling, legal support and referral services to GBV survivors. They also have access to capacity-building training in livelihood skills to become economically independent and to groups of other survivors where they can share experiences and find peer support. Carried out Repatriation and integration of survivors of violence. Provision of legal advice and information, does documentation and representation in court. VfC is developing education and awareness materials and works with referral partners to build communities’ understanding of laws relating to GBV and Sorcery Accusation Related Violence (SARV). VfC is responding to requests from communities in tribal conflicts, providing training on conflict resolution and peace building skills to community leaders, and facilitating conflict resolution and peace-making processes as needed.

and lead by example.

VfC ‘s Young Women Leadership program aims to empower young women from Jiwaka Province to become leaders to advocate, educate, raise awareness, influence change and lead by example to promote Greater Gender Equality and Women’s Rights.

**Recommendations:**

The Voice for Change humbly makes the following observations and recommendations to be included in the deliberations of the Parliamentary Committee on Gender Based Violence:

**Support Women Leaderships at all levels**

The Parliamentary Committee has a mandate to look at TSM and women’s leadership, so we are making a recommendation to strengthen support for women’s leadership at all levels including the Temporary Special Measures for National Parliament and equal representation in local level authorities. Women leaders are more likely to advance women’s priority issues such as GBV

1. **Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan**

We recommend the Jiwaka Provincial Government to implement the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence plan developed with Voice for Change in 2017 or develop a new one in collaboration with key stakeholders and implement the plan with adequate resources and budget.

1. **The Community Development Office**

Support the Community Development Office in Jiwaka with adequate resources and budget to function effectively and collaborating with stakeholders on Violence against Women and children

1. **Child Welfare Office**

Child Welfare Officer is strongly recommended and be supported fully in order to function to address needs of children.

1. **Family Sexual Violence Unit (FSVU)with proper training**

The office of the FSVU in Jiwaka must be supported adequately to carry out its work. The FSVU must discourage mediation on Domestic Violence and GBV cases as it does not lead to justice for survivors, and often interrupts the formal justice, The Police and the Judiciary must immediately take action to ensure that the law of the country prohibits gender-based violence by consistently enforcing them.

1. **Stop withdrawal of cases that are already being charged or perpetrators in custody.** No Drop Policy for perpetrators reported to the police, the police strongly need to enforce the laws. *Often, we see cases of perpetrators apprehended when charged but soon they are released when relatives* storm up at the police station with excuses and even threaten the survivor to release the perpetrators.

**Use of Laws**

We recommend that Legal Officers should be funded and attached to the Community Development Division or CSOs to help women survivors who want to access justice. We also call for for Public Prosecutors to be attached to FSVUs, so that they can take up GBV cases.

* 1. All efforts must be made to assist survivors to use the laws including specific implementation of laws and strategies to address Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) effectively and supporting key institutions and stakeholders to deliver effective programs and services to prevent and respond to VAWG.
  2. We call on the Government to put an end to compensation and reconciliation for very serious crimes, including rape and severe injury against women and girls. These are often negotiated informally and not in a proper court of law.

1. **Establishment of special courts for GBV that can help tackle the issue** These courts must comply with the amendments made to the Evidence Act in 2012 to reduce the trauma experienced by survivors of violence when going to court.
2. **Education on laws, policies and Gender Based Violence Plan**

Education and advocacy at all levels (community, police, public servants, schools, parents, youths) to shift mind sets and transform gender norms towards equality, respect, rights and protection for all women and men, girls and children. Strengthen women rights organizations and networks across all community and provincial levels for women rights to support this education and advocacy, including on gender norms, as well as practical actions for example the process of courts (making a summons, making an appeal etc). Teach the next generation and introduce Gender Issues at lower primary education or early childhood learning.

1. **Strengthen the Law Enforcing Agencies and Institutions (Police, District and Village Courts)**

The Government must ensure long funding commitments for responding to violence. Increase the resourcing and capacity building of the FVSU to respond better to women and children’s survivors. Ensure that the Role of the FSVU is fully understood by all parts of the police and justice system.

10.1 FSVU - All police stations across Jiwaka to appropriately respond to violence, especially sorcery related violence and violence against women and children.

10.2 New Village Court Officials and Equal number of Males and Female appointed

Implement the call to recruit the new staff for the Village Court Officials with formal education and provide capacity building on understanding GBV plans, Lukautim Pikinini Act, Human and Women and Children’s Rights, Family Protection, Policies that promote and protect women and children.

1. **Village and District Court Fees & Appeal fees** should be done away (fees and appeal fees) There is evidence of bribery and bias decisions in Village Courts. There is lack of a monitoring these institutions and we are requesting for a system in place to monitor the work of these courts.

We request the Parliamentary Committee on GBV refer this recommendation to the Village Court Secretariat and the Minister for Justice

1. **Hospitals** and Medical Report fees should be done away for women survivors of violence. We believe that this has already been done as a bureaucratic directive but it is not being implemented universally. We recommend that the Health Department is instructed to comply. Political endorsement by the Parliamentary Committee could help enforce the bureaucratic directives that have been issued.
2. **Support for Survivors**

13.1 We call for increased resources for service provision (counselling, legal, health, safe accommodation) in rural areas where women continue to have limited access to these services.

**13.2 Proper Coordinating and Strengthen the Case Management or Case Referral systems.**

A Case Management system that is working, a GBV coordination committee is operating and individual cases are attended to till each case is closed properly

13.3 **Health Services**

13.3.1 A proper medical report to be provided (free of charge) by the Health Centre or Hospital attending to the women if she requests for a medical report.

13.3.2 Each hospital or health center should have a Family Support Centre to attend to women and children in need that face violence

14. **A Protection system** for witnesses and Women Human Right Defenders needs to be introduced and enforced

**15. Funding CSOs**

15. 1 Acknowledge those been involved in this work, especially the churches and CSOs and Individuals.

15.2 We are recommending the government develops a mechanism to provide funding for recognized or accredited CSOs, women’s organization and groups that are working towards EVAW

**16. Community Obligations**

Leaders from various institutions in the community such as churches, youths, Village Court Official, Peace Officers, and Ward Councilors must carry out their duties and roles effectively. A system must be in place of reinforce existing systems/laws to make these leaders accountable. Most issues such as VAW and SARV are happening under the nose of these leaders but perpetrators are not being held accountable by community leaders.

**17.** **Sorcery Accusations Related Violence (SARV)**

Addressing sorcery accusation related violence (SARV) needs collaborated efforts from all especially law enforcing institutions. This issue needs a separate approach as it requires a long-term support and is more complex.

We recommend a separate desk at the police station to attend to SARV cases, with additional training and resources. This office should work with local women’s rights organizations and communities who are supporting victims of SARV and can advise the police.

**Some Contributing Factors to VAW**

The causes of GBV are the Gender Inequality, PNG has deep social, cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes of individuals that women are of lesser value compared to men and these leads to practices that are discriminatory to women and girls.

A recommendation for detailed research into both “**bride price**” and **polygamy** and how the customs were practiced traditionally. What is happening now is an abuse of the abuse of these customs is now causing a lot of problems for women and children. There are a lot more children affected by polygamy.

1. **Brice Price Payment**

**We call for a standardize bride price to maintain the culture or tradition of the tribe and family for celebrating a union of two people (and their families and clans).** The province needs to look into this seriously and standardizes the amount of money and number of pigs to be exchanged when people get married. Bride price is one of the major factors contributing to domestic violence. It is commonly believed – even by many women – to give men the right to control their wives, with violence if necessary. In abusive marriages, women are trapped by their inability to repay the bride price, especially with the escalation of cash and material goods, which are increasingly required. Relatives often do not want to repay the bride price if the woman leaves the men and would discourage divorce. We request the Parliamentary Committee to strongly denounce the English word “brideprice” which has commodified women and to strongly denounce or legislate against **the abuse of** the traditional marriage exchange customs.

1. **Polygamy- A call to ban polygamy or legislate against the abuse of polygamy**.

There are a lot of disharmony and violence in families who practice polygamy. Many families are deserted, distorted and neglected and so much unhappiness in homes, men are not taking up their responsibilities as a husband and a father. Many children are affected in so many ways, cannot complete education and turn to drugs. Polygamy, which is the traditional rights of men in some cultures to have several wives, has become distorted in the cash economy, where men take on other wives and girlfriends without supporting them. This puts women in competition with each other for the husband’s attention and resources for their children.

1. **Liquor Outlets**

There are currently too many liquor outlets operating in odd locations and odd hours and causing excessive social problems in homes and communities as a result of alcohol abuse. We demand the Government to strictly enforce the Liquor Licensing Act and ensure that liquor businesses comply with it in Jiwaka. Alcohol and drug addiction has become a family and social problem. Government should work with churches or NGOs to develop programs to help address addictive behaviour and recognize alcoholism and drug addiction as health issues that need to be addressed. Voice for Change’s data from 2020 indicated of 31% of the violence reported relate directly to substance abuse related. In Jiwaka, Marijuana is produced and consumed widely and its impacts on consumers are a grave concern as many survivors report of husbands and or partners consuming the substances and cannot think properly and the family do not live in harmony, Many reports of young children turn to drugs when mothers cannot pay for their school fees and theses youths cause a lot of disturbances and lead in conflicts or torture women and families of sorcery accusations related violence (SARV)

1. **Sorcery Accusations Related Violence**

The impact of sorcery accusation related violence on women and the deep and enduring beliefs in magic and sorcery in Jiwaka Province blaming any death, injury or illness on the practice of sorcery. The torture and killing of the alleged sorcerer (most often marginalized women) increasingly occur in broad daylight, in public spaces. Torture and murder of poor, marginalized and older women is increasingly common. Even if the victim’s survives violent mob attacks, they are usually stripped of their property, homes, and rights to land and become outcasts or internally displaced. The majority of women victims, their families or communities do not report this cruelty and violence to the authorities including the police due to threats and intimidation of witnesses by perpetrators.

**Conclusion**

We demand for our four Members of Parliament (MPs), Dr. Tongamb, Governor of Jiwaka, Hon Joe Kuli, member for South Whagi, Dr. Fabian Pok, Member for North Whagi and Hon Wake Goi, Member for Jimi, to come together, endorse, support and implement the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan. The Plan calls for effective referral system for women and children who are abused can seek needed support.

The National Gender Based Violence Plan was endorsed by the National Government in December 2016 and immediately after that, the National Capital District was the first one to design its plan for implementation. The Jiwaka Province has a chance to become the second province in PNG to have the Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan in place. The women of Jiwaka are now looking up to you to endorse and implement the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan.

VfC in Jiwaka recognizes that to address GBV there are budget implications and recommends that public/private/community partnerships be developed to address this serious development issue. We recommend that all politicians take ownership of the issue of GBV and allocate funds from the DSIP to implement programs at the District and our communities.

The Voice for Change stands ready to work in partnership with our politicians to achieve this.

**For our Jiwaka Parliamentarians** - PLEASE - LEAVE A LEGACY BEHIND FOR OUR CHILDREN!

We the women of Jiwaka can assure you all, that this can start with us and through us, the women of Jiwaka, we are the daughters, aunts, mothers, sisters and grandmothers of Jiwaka. If Jiwaka society no longer accepts violence as normal and works to decrease the high level of violence against women, then Jiwaka will not only be beautiful in its natural environment but also in its human relations.

Thankyou

Lilly BeSoer

For and on behalf of Team VfC, June 2021