



1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain

Submission to 2021 GBV Parliamentary Committee

Background

- The **1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain** (the Helpline) was launched on the 20th of August 2015 and delivers comprehensive **counselling, information and referral service** for survivors of family and sexual violence through a **national toll-free Helpline**.
- The Helpline is managed by **ChildFund PNG** in partnership with **CIMC-Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC)** and **PNG Counselors' Association (PNGCA)** and with funding support from the New Zealand Aid Programme and UN Women and UNICEF.
- The service provides survivors and their families an immediate and comprehensive support package which includes: **access to information, referral to nearby service providers, and personal and confidential counselling** at the time of the call.
- The helpline has **eleven (11) phone lines** and is staffed by **twenty-three (23) professional counsellors** and social workers.



1-Tok Counsellor taking a call



- The Service is available **24 hours a day, 365 days** a year across all provinces in three languages; **Hiri Motu, Tok Pisin and English**.

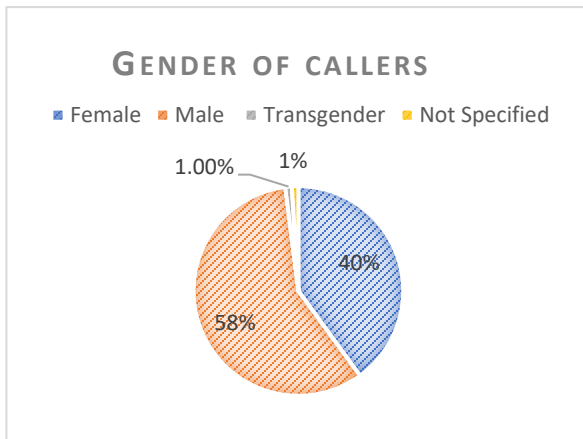
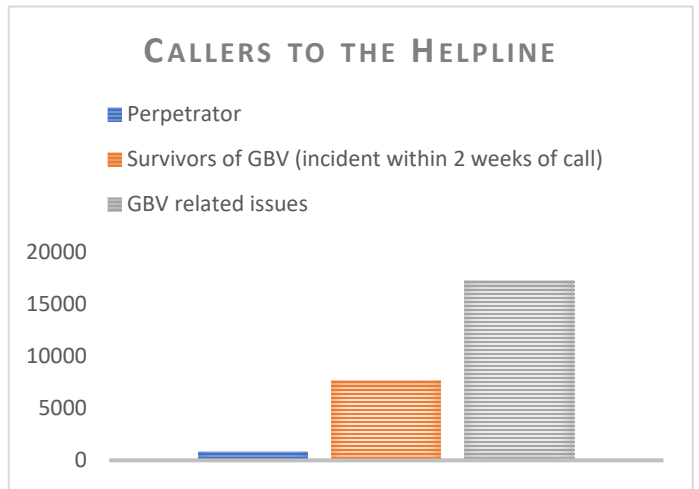
1-Tok Helpim Lain - Service Statistics 2015 to date

The Helpline has responded to:

- 7,657 survivors
- 779 perpetrators and
- 17,265 family and sexual violence issues

The majority of referrals to the Helpline are:

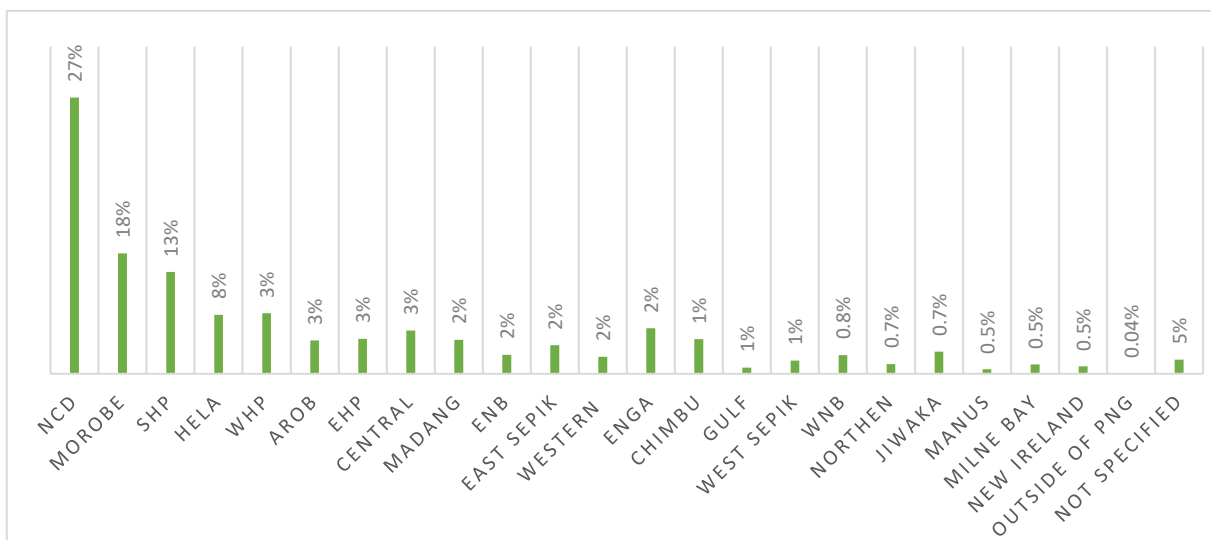
- Police
- Counselling Services
- Welfare
- Courts



More men call the helpline however, **over 90% of family and sexual violence survivors are female.**

DISTRIBUTION OF CALLS ACROSS PROVINCES

The Helpline receives calls from all **22 Provinces** in PNG.



Key Points

- The Helpline provides a critical service and, in some provinces, it is the only available professional counselling service. The Helpline is able to fill gaps in an unstable and under-served area of the social sector.
- It is also providing an important **support function to government** agencies responding to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The Helpline has responded to over **49,310 calls** with **58,939 interventions** provided to callers (counselling, crisis, safety planning, suicide etc.)
- The Helpline has undergone a number of rapid changes and expansions during the pandemic that have allowed it to respond to a **growing number of clients (including children)**, and provide **longer service hours**.
- These expansions have been possible through **short term funding** opportunities with UN Women and UNICEF. These grants allowed the Helpline to respond to surging demand during the crisis as well as address pre-existing needs. **This crisis funding ceases in December 2021.**
- The Helpline is **fully funded through international donor mechanisms**. There is no PNG Government funding provided for the operations of the Helpline.
- Current **Helpline funding ends in 2023.**

A Counsellor's Story

Counselling can help survivors and perpetrators of violence including children heal their issues or problems and end the cycle of abuse.

“I am a counsellor working on the 1-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain. One day, I picked up a call from June,* aged 24. ‘Something prompted me to call,’ she told me.

“June said that she and her sister had experienced physical and sexual violence at the hands of their stepfather for more than 10 years. It began when she was only 12 years old and her sister 13. Their mother was threatened and forced to keep silent about the abuse. Some years later, June’s mother’s relatives discovered the horrific facts, but although a huge row broke out between the two sides of the family, nothing further was done to bring June’s stepfather to justice.

“Eventually, the matter was reported to police. Rather than attempt an arrest, the police informed the family that if the abuse continued, they should lodge a second complaint and only then would the perpetrator be arrested and charged. June alleged there was some evidence that the police had not taken the matter any further because of bribery and corruption.

“Having listened to June’s story, I provided ongoing counselling support and information by explaining her right to seek justice.”

“Counselling helped me to heal and finally be heard and develop a plan to help me get justice”

“Through the Helpline, I think I helped June to shift her focus from a very negative state of mind to something that was more positive, by helping her feel more in control of her life and more confident about claiming her rights. She came to understand different types of abuse and the effect it has on survivors such as herself and her sister. We also talked about what June needs now. It is clear that she has lost a great deal of self-esteem as a result of her stepfather’s actions. We also talked about her safety and what measures she can take to prevent any serious incidents from arising in the future.

“I think the Helpline is vital. Providing everyone – but especially survivors of domestic violence – with counselling and information on their basic human rights is essential.

** Not her real name*

Key Challenges

One of the key challenges facing the Helpline is that of **sustainability**. Planning needs to take place and **government support and collaboration is critical**. This would provide a strong direction, secure longer term resources and ensure that the helpline will become a service that is firmly planted as a national helpline service for women, men, girls and boys impacted by violence in PNG.

In Papua New Guinea, there is an overall **shortage of safe and effective services** available to survivors of family and sexual violence. It is common for the Helpline to have to remove organisations from the Service Provider Directory when organisations **fold due to lack of funding** and support. Many existing services are run by churches or small, local non-government organisations and often **rely on external funding**.

The **funding, governance and management arrangements** for the Helpline **post 2023 are uncertain** at this stage. FSVAC and ChildFund are in the **early planning stages** for the Helpline **post-2023**. There is a need to explore funding options beyond this and also, management and governance arrangements.

The potential of the helpline continues to develop – working to reach more areas, more clients, including children and has been exploring how to **reduce and remove barriers to access** – but it requires the **security of on-going funding** to continue the work.

What Can Government Do

- Officially recognise and promote the 1-Tok Kaunselin Helplim Lain
- Provide funding support to the Helpline to ensure its sustainability
- Join the 1-Tok Partnership to support sustainability planning of the Helpline
- Recognise and prioritise family and sexual violence as a development issue facing the nation
- Commit funding for prevention and response initiatives addressing family and sexual violence