

# SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

**A SUBMISSION**

HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORKING COMMITTEE

CHAIR : EASTERN HIGHLAND FAMILY VOICE P.O. BOX 1641 GOROKA EHP

# PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

## SUBMISSION BY

EASTERN HIGHLANDS FAMILY VOICE  
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EASTERN HIGHLAND PROVINCE

and

OTHER PARTNERS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK COMMITTEE IN EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE, **NAMELY:**

- OXFAM
- DISABILITY DESK – DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- Family Support Center –Goroka Hospital
- Family and Sexual Violence Unit –Goroka Police Station
- Eastern Highlands Family Voice Inc.

## **Who are we and what do we do?**

We are a network of concerned organizations and individuals operating in the Eastern Highland Province that are committed to addressing human rights issues in general and most of us specifically on GBV/FSV issues by providing prevention services like awareness, advocacy and lobby on rights and gender issues, education and training on empowerment and capacity building, and as a response by providing paralegal support to survivors, operating a safe house, a Family Support Center (FSC), providing a referral pathway for survivors and basic counselling support to survivors the province for the last 20 years. We will continue our work into the future.

We are honored to participate in this critical and long overdue public inquiry into GBV in Papua New Guinea and humbly submit our thoughts and recommendations as per the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Further clarification can be sought from:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Are we seeing the light at the end of the tunnel?

After many years of advocating for Gender Based Violence (GBV) and related family issues to be recognized as a development issue rather than just a domestic issue, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) applaud the Prime Minister for establishing the Parliamentary Committee on GBV and particularly commend the Governors and Members who have joined the Committee to inquire into GBV and its impact on our families, communities and our nation.

It is high time for political leaders in the highest echelon of society to recognize GBV as a development issue. People develop a nation and if people are fragmented at the basic unit of society, development aspirations are marking time or regressing in many fronts. Thus, this submission is to highlight some of the issues and factors that surround the GBV agenda and to make some recommendations for intervention strategies to be developed, funded and implemented towards making Papua New Guinea a peaceful, harmonious and productive nation.

## **BACKGROUND**

We collectively recognize that Papua New Guinea is an extremely diverse nation culturally and linguistically and thus a 'one size fits all' explanation and solution to GBV is not possible. Our submission is based on some reflections from the Eastern Highlands Province.

We submit that women are treated as second class citizens where they bear and rear children, keep the house and ensure the husband and children are taken care of and wanted for comfort and pleasure. Not only that women are barred from owning land in the patriarchal systems, making decisions and sharing a seat with the men at men's house. They are observant participants standing at the periphery with limited opportunity to participate. This has significant implications for the nation as our gender ratio is close to 50/50, and thus 50% of the people of this country are not participating in nation building in a meaningful way other than providing a large unpaid labour force. Thus, including women in all spaces and levels of the socioeconomic and political structural organization of our nation is an important human rights and development issue.

Further where women are included, it is mere tokenism for posterity measures where compensation for services provided by them is not on level parity with their male counterparts. Furthermore, women face more challenges from the domestic front when injuries from domestic violence leaves the wounded and dead at the hospitals and those seeking justice filling police stations and overwhelming the justice system. Thus the so called "domestic issue" affects productivity at work, becomes an economic burden on the state and impedes development on the national scale. Therefore, it should be treated as a grave and serious human rights and development issue and be addressed as such.

## SUBMISSION

We submit to the Parliamentary Committee that, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE(GBV) in its many forms are only symptoms of underlying apparent and root causes that needs to be understood to address them. We delineate the symptoms, the apparent causes and the root causes below as we understand them. Once the root causes are identified and understood, then intervention strategies will be developed to address the root causes.

**Symptoms of GBV:** Gender based violence(GBV) is defined by UNHCR as, “... *harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms*” The symptoms and impact of GBV are many and varied and interconnected reaching into all phases of life in every space. A symptom is a sign or indicator of a cause or problem that is situated somewhere else. In that sense then GBV symptoms that are highlighted here are only indicators of root causes that are somewhere else. The symptoms include among others the following;

- **Physical violence:** bodily harm is perpetrated against another person based on their gender
- **Financial abuse:** the violence can be caused by the bread winner to the other who is at home and the reverse is also true.
- **Emotional and psychological abuse including coercive control:** the violence can cause stress, depression, emotional and psychological issues leading to suicidal thoughts or suicide.
- **Sexual violence:** Sexual violence can happen in any space but more so at the home where marital rape occurs, intimate partner violence causing much insecurity and fear in the very place of refuge where love and protection should abound.

**Apparent causes:** The apparent causes are the issues that seem to provoke the violence or abuse at the time. These issues can look very real but at closer scrutiny they are apparent causes for the violence-not the real reasons that violence occurs A list is indicated below;

- **Compatibility issues:** The partners have too many differences in culture, religion, education, finances, and just the way they see things could become a cause for violence in the home.
- **Money:** Money often triggers violence when there is too little of it or someone is not being careful in spending.
- **Alcohol and Drug:** Alcohol and drug abuse could be posited as a trigger for violence and this happens very frequently.
- **Media and technology:** Sometimes spouses blame the other for spending much time on TV or touch phone these days. It maybe flirting with someone else or pornography which irate one partner thus violence occurs.
- **Betrayal of trust and family life:** Adultery does trigger violence in marriage boundaries.

- **Gender role and responsibility:** Gender concepts, roles and responsibilities are not understood and may be a cause for violence where there are conflicting with long held ideas.
- **Learnt Behaviour:** Home situations and what is happening there can be beneficial or detrimental. Everything happening in the home is learnt by children and often later practiced in adult life so the trauma of GBV becomes intergenerational.
- **Abuse of custom:** E.g. Bride price and polygamy are not being practiced according to custom.

**Root causes:** The root causes of violence are the underpinning issues and they may be cultural and others which are long held as the norm and way of life. They may do these things consciously or unconsciously but they do it because it has always been that way. Some of the root because we believe are;

- **Cultural and traditional beliefs and value systems:** The way things have been done through the ages is long held to be the way things must operate. One such long held views is that a man must beat his wife into submission otherwise he will be disrespected in the eyes of the elders and the community. Or that a woman must be submissive to her husband if not then she will be taught to respect and be submissive.
- **Masculinity, patriarchy and entitlement issues:** As examples of cultural beliefs are masculinity and patriarchy. The man must always be the head of the clan, tribe and every one including children and women must adhere to the clan leaders' commands. If a clan leader or man wants something it should be rendered to him without argument or debate. This is where Entitlement comes in where when a man wants sex he must have it without delay. These are very strong views which have mellowed over the years but the residual contents still are lodged in the minds of succeeding generations.
- **Mindset and attitude:** The mind of a child trained very early in the formative years of childhood from 0-7 years is very receptive and concrete. This has been proven by science that the mind develops by absorbing information through his/her senses very early in life. The value system if taught early in life is ingrained in the mind and it is hard to change very quickly. It is an important juncture to intervene to promote a healthy mind and attitudes later in life.
- **Religious value systems:** Religious indoctrination has a very important impact on the lives of people. Once informed they will respect what the Bible says and will adhere to it. The Bible is very clear about how gender relations should be enacted. Wife should submit to her husband while the husband must love and honor his wife. This should be understood as a reciprocator relationship where the husband show submission and love to her as does his wife. The man is not showing love (GBV issues) to his wife so the churches should be active in the child development to early instill into children to respect and love girls and women. Further the Bible actually says the woman was made with a rib from Adams side and not a bone from the foot or the head. There is an

inherent sense of equality in the creative process. As an important change agent, the church must take on this responsibility seriously. Should take on early child development programs as a matter of policy.

- **Formal Education: Education system** is a significant change agent in the development of children very early in life. As it is now teachers and the curriculum are not properly designed and taught to change the mind and attitudes of the child very early. This should include relationship to person living with special needs. The teachers and students must have guidelines to learn to unlearn what has been passed on to them from their families and villages.
- **Genetic disorder (e.g. anger)**. A person could be predisposed to anger and shows up as an aberrant behavior due to genetic inherited behavior trait. These should be identified and treated accordingly.

## **INTERVENTIONS**

We submit to the Parliamentary Committee on GBV that the following suggested interventions be taken on board to deal with GBV and FSV issues in the country to support nation building. These are presented in 2 parts short (Response) and long-term strategies (Prevention).

We also recommend that that the following principles be adopted to prepare the intervention strategies;

1. **Consultation with stakeholders:** Consultation with front line service providers and actors as they are the experts on what is and not required in designing and implementing GBV strategies.
2. **Women leaders:** Should include women's leaders in the initiatives
3. **Address Underlying causes:** should aim to transform the underlying causes of GBV by transforming gender relations (looking at individuals (knowledge, behavior, attitudes), resources, formal laws and policies, and social norms
3. **Human Rights lens:** The strategies should be centered on human rights
4. **Focus on workable Solution:** Should build on solutions that are already effective – e.g. work of CSOs.

## **PART 1 SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GBV. (Immediate Response to GBV)**

### **1.1 COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SERVICES AND POLICY RESPONSE ACROSS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.**

There is an urgent need for coordination of services by all government agencies to address GBV collectively as immediate response strategy. To its credit the government has the GBV strategies in place so if it is serious about addressing GBV then it should;

- **Community Development Department Funded:** Fund the Department for Community Development and Religion to adequately coordinate and implement the GBV strategy.
- **Law and Justice Sector should adequately have funded:** Fund to strengthen the law and justice system including police, rural lockups, village police, CIS to enforce the existing laws, as well as for training of village court magistrates and peace officers.
- **Logistical Infrastructure to support GBV:** Fund and support, safe houses, family support centers, civil society organization to implement the PPP policy to socialize the polices and strategies on the ground.
- **Change of PPP:** Consider amending the PPP policy to a PPCP policy (Public, Private, Community Partnership) recognizing that genuine and funded support for community ownership is fundamental to addressing GBV
- **Gender Polices in all government Departments and agencies:** Demand that all government departments and agencies must introduce gender and child protection policies as part of their management tools if they do not already exist.
- **Rehabilitate Perpetrators:** Support services for Rehabilitation of perpetrators
- **Male participation:** Men and boys should be encouraged to participate as they are mostly the perpetrators of GBV to arrest, reduce and eliminate GBV issues.
- **Women fear of reporting:** Women are fearful of leaving their partner or reporting the violence that is being perpetrated. They should be provided with a safe and secure space to come and relate their fears and to be addressed.
- **Counselling Services:** Counselling services (including couple counselling) must be provided at every hospital and Clinic throughout the country for women and all abused persons to access counselling, justice and rehabilitation
- **Addictive Reponses Behavior Strategies:** Establish addictive behaviour response strategies in partnership with churches/CSOs to address alcohol, drug and gambling abusive behaviours
- **Toll free number for Rapid response:** Toll free number for Police for Rapid Response for GBV. And fund the response activities to respond immediately.

## 1.2 SUPPORT OF FRONT LINE GBV SERVICE PROVIDERS

GBV service providers include CSOs, Church and semi-government agencies like CIMC. These entities usually have their own funds from external sources but when the donors move on their involvement in addressing GBV and FSV issues on the ground stop as well. They go through stressful process to acquire resources from external sources to continue the good work that they have started. Most often the CSOs and FBOs are misunderstood and ignored by government agencies which often refuse to work with CSOs and have a negative perception of them.

They refuse to accept change as promoted by the GBV change providers as many public officers are guilty as perpetrators of GBV/FSV issues so reluctant to change policies, strategies and structures as it will affect them. However, government policies must be implemented in partnership with the private and public actors via the PPP policy (or PPCP policy). This is a huge and prevailing problem so it requires every actor to contribute to

addressing this national disease. Further these organizations are not included in the budgetary process of both the National and Sub-national levels.

- So, if the government is serious about addressing GBV/FSV then it should seek to support these entities through a funding facility like the CPP for the churches.
- If funded the government could coordinate reporting and monitoring and evaluation of the funds.

## **PART 2 LONG TERM STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GBV/FSV (long term response to GBV)**

**2.1 Holistic and Systematic Change:** GBV/FSV has been a present and nagging issue throughout human history therefore it cannot be dislodged very easily or quickly. It will require a concerted and holistic process to arrest, reduce and eliminate it from human societies. We must not only address the symptoms but also address the root causes. It is recommended that the following strategies be developed and used by all change agents towards addressing the problem over time.

- **Curriculum Developed for Schools:** Develop curriculum that includes topics like Family Life, Value Systems, Respectful Relationships, Standards for peaceful and harmonious community living, respect for property and other people and so on for schools right through to colleges and universities. We must work towards a peaceful and harmonious society 50 years down the line.
- **Implementation:** Once the education curriculum, resources, information kits and text books are in place the CSOs, Churches and government agencies will in partnership with the education department, implement them.
- **Haus Man/Meri: Introduction of positive cultural values:** Traditional education institution the Haus Man/Meri must be reintroduced in cultures where they existed traditionally so that the new set of value systems will be taught to children in those venues in the rural communities. Some values like, marriageable age, polygamy and its problems, skills and productivity and so on. Each child should be issued with a certificate signed by the village elder, pastor and ward councilor that they have been initiated in the values of life. Must begin the process of developing a new generation that thinks and behave differently than our own. Otherwise the old ideas of masculinity, patriarchy and entitlements will continue to be propagated and we are the worse for it. Further Churches and NGOs will take it on in the urban areas –draft and or adopt government child development programs and implement.
- **Professional Counselling Services:** Professional Counsellors to be trained by Universities to be holders of Bachelors, Masters and even PhD to do proper socio-psychological counselling in a Melanesian cultural context with a specific focus on GBV and survivor centered approaches.
- **Rehabilitation of perpetrators:** The perpetrators require medical and spiritual support to reform their mindset and behavior therefore rehabilitation centers should be established either as part of the prison system or in the communities with the churches or NGOs.

### **PART 3 NATIONAL DATA BASE OF GBV AND OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES**

In terms of addressing complex and pressing issues like GBV, information and statistics are very critical for decision making. The statistics used in various key documents is derived from small population or sector studies and do not give a real sense of the situation in the country. Therefore, a very comprehensive system to collect data and to produce statistics to inform government decision making for planning purposes is very important and long overdue. Data compiled from small samples can completely distort the true situation. So we submit to the committee that;

- A national database system should be developed: A centralized data base is established with the Department for Community Development and Religion which is fed into by District and Provincial data base units to generate national statistics for informed decision making towards nation building.
- To collect the data a Referral pathway system should be established with a Standard data collection form to be used by all actors, strengthened and supported.

### **PART 4 SUPPORTING WOMEN LEADERSHIP**

Traditionally women are generally good managers as they have learnt the skills of managing a home with the resources they have to their disposal. Therefore, when they are barred from taking leadership positions in any space, the country is missing out a lot from such neglect. If they were involved as leaders and decision makers alongside their male colleagues there will be balance in perception, in design, in implementation and in the expected outcomes. Male and female participation as equals affords that balance which has been lacking and the country is the worst for it. Women leaders are also well placed to address GBV – international evidence shows that more women in leadership leads to better public policy for issues that most impact women, such as GBV therefore, we submit to the committee that;

- **Curriculum for Schools:** Develop a curriculum on gender concepts that are inclusive (includes needs of people living with special needs) and teach it in schools to differentiate gender roles concepts and ideas. Traditional Vs modern concepts and look at how to create respectful gender concepts that combine tradition and modernity and work for PNG.
- **Define Concepts:** Define masculinity/patriarchy and feminism/matriarchy by conducting research in PNG to really understand the mechanics and operations of each set of concepts and ideas. And to make sense of the emerging new ideas and how to merge them into the social fabric and order of PNG society.
- **Sponsor Research to underpin landownership and draft Laws and Policies:** Research into resource ownership strategies and leadership roles in PNG society and look at identifying where the strength of women was in traditional society and develop the new concepts around them to give a new meaning and agency to existing ideas to empower women.

- **Sponsor Research into customs that have changed** and sometimes now negatively impact women e.g. “bride price” and polygamy.
- **Encourage properly managed community conversations** to analyze the negative impacts of changing customs and develop change management strategies to protect women and children.
- **Women’s Leadership Pathway Defined:** Researched information to be collated on benefits of women leaderships by providing case studies from the past or current to support the concept of women’s leadership roles in the contemporary PNG society.
- **Text Books containing Gender Concepts and Ideas:** All this information should be reproduced in text books and resource materials for implementing the curriculum from kindergarten to tertiary institutions.
- **Temporary Special Measures (TSM).** The government should look at reserved seats for women in the national parliament (22 seat model or 5 seat model) and or enforcing quotas for women candidates in political parties.
- **Investing in Women’s Development:** Especially in low to middle management levels for women to take leadership positions in government and business.

#### **PART 5 COVID19 IMPACT ON GENDER AND GBV**

The CoVID19 pandemic in very many ways has affected and disrupted the way people live their lives especially in a family environment. The lockdowns and the “new normal” is perplexing and annoying to say the least and fragmenting the very throbbing nerve of society when I cannot hug my love ones and friends and family. Hugging and embracing is the very conduits through which love and emotion flows to keep familial relationships alive and intact. But now there is so much stress, fear and uncertainties. It is causing much pain in many ways affecting all but more so the women, elderly and the disabled. We service providers observe each day where women and children are severely affected either as victims of violence or emotionally psychologically affected because of restrictions. Therefore, we submit to the committee that;

- **Health Department Adequately funded:** The Health Department should be funded adequately: The health department should take ownership and responsibility for taking care of its citizens when the government funds the department adequately. They should have all the PPEs and have the best of care for the health personnel and then they should be situated to help the people.
- **The New Normal:** The rest of the people be encouraged to take on the “New Normal” seriously by wearing face masks, social distancing, washing of hands etc.
- **Open Up Business:** Then open up the provincial borders and allow business, school and life so that people can make their living. But of course all “New Normal” strategies must continue to apply.
- **Pandemic Law and Rights Restriction should be relaxed:** Under the Pandemic Act, rights are being restricted and people are feeling the pinch socioeconomically therefore under the “New Normal “conditions, life should slowly be allowed to settle in the new way of life.

- **Emergency Funds:** Provide emergency fund for workers laid off: The government, if it is able to, must look at ways of compensating people who are being laid off due to the pandemic, so that they can use the one-off support to generate income to support their lives.

## CONCLUSION

The Eastern Highlands Family Voice and the Human Rights Network of the Eastern Highlands are grateful for this opportunity to contribute to this national conversation on GBV.

It is not a new conversation and has existed in the political domain for over 30 years and was brought to Parliament by the late Hon. Bernard Narakobi in the Law Reform Commission of Papua New Guinea, Final Report on Domestic Violence: Report No. 14 1992. Since that time, laws and policies have been developed and passed by Parliament to address this critical development issues. However, implementation of these laws and policies has been erratic and often dependent on donor funds. Sadly, genuine and visible political commitment and leadership has been lacking.

**We collectively commend the Chairman and Members of the Parliamentary Committee on GBV for their determination to fill this leadership vacuum.** We thank you all for taking the time to read our submission. In addition to the recommendations made within our submission as per the TOR of your Committee, we add the following recommendations:

- That before the end of this Parliamentary term, your Chairman requests the Prime Minister to establish a Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Violence with a focus on Gender Based Violence, inter-tribal ethnic violence and resource development related violence.
- That a Ministerial Committee of critical Ministers be established by the Prime Minister to meet twice annually to review and integrate progress made on the GBV policy
- That violence, and in particular GBV, is politically recognized as a critical development issue and publicly condemned
- That every District MP allocates mandatory funds from the DSIP to support institutionalized and infrastructural responses to address GBV in their District in line with the GBV policy.
- That District MPs be encouraged to work in partnership with recognized CSOs and churches in their response to GBV in their Districts.

In line with this final recommendation, our network commits to assist your Parliamentary Committee on GBV with implementation of recommendations at community level with your assistance to access appropriate funding.

Respectfully submitted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 by:

**Name of organization:**

**Signature of Rep**

Community Development Disability Desk –DoCD

Mr. Terry Waliota

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Eastern Highlands Family Voice Inc



Eastern Highlands Family Support Center



Eastern Highlands Family and Sexual Violence Unit



**Logos**

Sr Gaim Jonduo  
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