

JUNE 30, 2021

Youth Submission to the Special Parliamentary
Committee on GBV
Inquiry into Gender Based Violence



Submitted by UNFPA on behalf of the Youth Representatives

Youth Submission to the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Inquiry into Gender Based Violence

This submission is made on behalf of the young people of PNG. Young people aged between 15 and 24 represent the largest and growing segment of PNG society¹. This provides PNG with a unique opportunity to leverage the growing population of young people to accelerate sustainable development. With the right skills, experiences and information, young people have a unique opportunity to lead inclusive, rights-based and sustainable development now and into the future. We must be given the chance to do so now.

Gender based violence (GBV) is a primary roadblock. GBV is not only a wide-spread rights violation but inhibits our ability and opportunities to take on leadership roles in the fostering of a safe, healthy and equal society.

UNFPA organised and facilitated a consultation with young people and youth organisations (see annex for full list) with support from UN Women to identify key issues relevant to the Inquiry ToR. The following recommendations were made:

Issues and Recommendations

1. Police

- The exclusion of FSVUs from the institutional police structure is of major concern. As a result of this, they are not prioritized for government funding for the Royal PNG Constabulary. This disincentives joining the FSVU as there is no room for growth or promotions.
- There is a general lack of manpower for policing in the country. This is also the case for the Family Sexual Violence Units (FSVU) which are responsible for responding to Gender Based Violence cases. In many places, FSVUs are either non-existent or are severely under-resourced.
- A general lack of sensitization on GBV amongst police officers on GBV means they do not know how to respond safely and appropriately. While Community and village police try to respond but they are not properly appointed and in most cases not sensitized and under-resourced.
- Anecdotal reports indicate that a high proportion of police personnel commit violence against their wives themselves. This aligns with trends globally. This normalization of GBV contributes to police choosing not to support or respond to women who are reaching out for help.
- The lack of proper screening for Police Recruits which affects quality policing including GBV response.
- Publicize and promote avenues for public reporting of police misconduct. In addition, ensuring that these avenues are free from internal and can act independently.
- Inclusion of youth volunteers at FSVUs to ensure youth-friendly services. Youth volunteers would support FSVU service delivery and be champions for FSVUs especially in rural areas as well as facilitate link to community police. It is important to recognise that youth represent a large proportion of perpetrators and survivors of violence, this highlighting the need for youth-friendly security sector/police services.

Recommendations:

¹ PNG Demographic Health Survey

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1. FSVUs to be merged into Police Structure and fully resourced.
2. Sensitization of ALL (not just FSVUs) Police Personnel on GBV and handling of GBV Cases, including on Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence and Abuse.
3. Institute and/or monitor Code of Conducts. Introduce tougher penalties for officers and duty bearers who perpetrate violence and abuse. Police have a responsibility to protect citizens and must be held accountable when they do the opposite.
4. Proper screening for recruitment and in-depth training for new recruits ensuring that only the best can make it into the Police Force
5. Strengthen village and community policing systems in place ensuring that they are equipped to support and do referrals especially for those in rural areas that need assistance.
6. Inclusion of youth volunteers at FSVUs.

2. Justice

- The young people identified that access to justice can be a costly exercise for many survivors, especially securing medical reports needed for the justice process.
- Interim Protection Orders are poorly enforced and often not enough to protect survivors as their case goes to trial. Testifying witnesses and service providers also face risk of violence for participating in the justice process in support of the survivor.
- There is limited support for and understanding of best-practice evidence-based restorative justice as well as perpetrator rehabilitation programs. There is a need for greater understanding of 'what works' in restorative justice and rehabilitation programmes amongst practitioners and linked to this, support for evidence based and well monitored interventions. It is critical to note that support for perpetrator interventions should not be at the expense of services for women, children and survivors in line with a survivor-centred approach.

Recommendations

1. Greater enforcement of Interim Protection Order and additional protection mechanisms for survivors throughout the trial process as well as testifying witnesses and service providers who face violence for participation.
2. Support for evidence-based contextualised restorative justice and perpetrator rehabilitation programmes that are adequately funded while maintaining a priority focus on the needs of women, children and survivors of violence.
3. Strengthen Restorative Justice system for youth that focuses on rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims/community and community reintegration.
4. Strengthen Juvenile Justice System that focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration programs for young offenders (Lobby for a Youth Justice System)
5. Enforcement of existing laws and introduction of tougher penalties imposed for perpetrators of GBV such as intimate partner violence including homicide, torture of women, sexual Assault and rape including of minors.

3. Health

- There is a need for health workers to be sensitized properly on dealing with GBV cases including those involving adolescent survivors. Young people and adolescents experience high degrees of stigmatisation, judgment and in some cases, refusal of support by health service providers due to their age when trying to access GBV and sexual and reproductive health services. This places them at greater risk of experiencing repeated violence and the poor health outcomes. Youth-friendly services can be the difference between whether young people reach out for support or not.
- Despite NDOH directives that Family Support Centres provide GBV health and emotional support services free of charge, accessing health is still costly for survivors. In some cases, the FSC may not provide all five essential services under its roof, requiring survivors to be referred to other wards. These wards charge survivors for services as part of their standard process. In some cases, FSCs themselves charge survivors for various aspects of support including medicine or consultation fees. Requiring survivors to walk from one ward to another is difficult for the survivor who may be injured and is highly retraumatizing. Referrals to/from other services like police and safe houses require additional support for safe transport which is often beyond the means of survivors, with those facilitating the referral (friends, family or service providers) having to pay themselves.

Recommendations

1. Proper training and sensitization of health workers on clinical management for survivors of Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence.
2. Ensure accessible and inclusive Youth-Friendly health services especially for GBV and sexual and reproductive health through adequate resourcing, training and capacity building, supervision and monitoring to ensure health services don't discriminate against young survivors. Ensure inclusive services cater to the needs and realities of diverse populations ,including young people with disability and youth people for diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.
3. Further the decentralisation of Family Support Centres to ensure they are available in rural areas and urban areas at provincial, district and sub-district levels.
4. Enforcement of the directive for specialised health services for GBV survivors to be free of charge including in FSCs but also at axillary clinics/wards in cases where they provide one or more of the 5 essential services. Financial support for transportation to ensure safe referrals and follow-up. Greater push for all FSCs to provide full five essential services under one roof in line with the FSC SOPs to ensure survivor confidentiality, safety, dignity and respect.
5. Mental Health
 - The high levels of violence throughout PNG society means that many are living with trauma experienced as children and carried with them throughout the course of their lives. With no access to mental health care, this unresolved trauma further strengthens the reliance on violence in everyday life. Moreover, GBV survivors have very limited options for seeking mental health and psychosocial support. There is an urgent need to expand mental health and psychosocial support services from specialised clinical to community-led support. This includes ensuring the availability of counseling services for children who witness and experience violence and abuse.

Recommendations:

1. Urgent investment in strengthening and expanding mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for all people including children, adolescents and adults. Including greater investment in pre and in-service training through tertiary institutions, training and capacity building for current service providers, greater support for community-led MHPSS intervention and greater awareness on mental health to destigmatize and normalise mental health.

6. Case Management

- There is a need to strengthen the GBV case management system while including government and non-government case management services. Case management services are not available in the majority of locations across the country. Where they are available, service providers especially CSOs are overstretched and underfunded. There is also a need to invest in the technical capacity and quality of case management services.
- There are many examples of case workers releasing information without the consent of the survivor which places them at risk. Confidentiality protocols and the consequences of breaches in confidentiality are not being considered, with case workers in many instances being negligent or choosing to release information to a perpetrator and their family about a survivor's whereabouts and reports. There is a need for clear mechanisms for accountability of those who work in response and clear avenues to hold the government accountable to their commitments to addressing GBV.

Recommendation

1. Long-term strategy for developing GBV case management systems including bolstering the capacity of GBV case management providers and expanding service coverage.
2. Prioritise and reinvest in a one- stop-shop model for all services and support under one roof centred on GBV case management in line with international best practice. This would help mitigate risks associated with current referrals including cost and retraumatization.
3. There needs to be an official Code of Conduct in place for all GBV service providers including but not limited to case workers. Service providers must be trained and have a strong understanding of the survivor-centered approach, including the principle of confidentiality. should have clear, enforceable and monitored confidential protocols to ensure that the system does not re-victimize survivors of GBV that reach out for support and protection. Service providers who release information without the informed consent of the survivor should be penalized and held accountable.

7. Schools (Formal Education System)

- Schools are a critical place to teach children and young people about child abuse, GBV and impact the knowledge and skills to foster healthy, non-violent relationships. However, curricula do not adequately incorporate these topics in line with international standards and teachers are not properly sensitized nor have the skills to deliver relevant content. Youth advocates who have worked in schools also identified that there are challenges with getting schools to accept awareness teams going in to talk to students.
- Most teachers have not received child protection training and are not sensitized on GBV

- Schools also lack counselors and reporting mechanisms for assisting children (students) who may be experiencing Violence and Abuse

Recommendations

1. National Department of Education directive for compulsory respectful relationship curriculum integrated into existing curricula for children and young people as well as peer-education in school coupled with investment in teaching training and support. This will help address challenges with buy-in from schools in respectful relationships, positive personal development and growth and GBV awareness and sensitization programs including those delivered by young people.
2. Mandatory Child Protection and GBV training for teachers and sensitization for education staff including teachers, principals and guidance counsellors. Teachers need to also be able to identify if their students are experiencing violence at home and safely refer them where there is a need. This is a critical entry point as it may be their only way of getting out of the violent situation.
3. Formalised referral pathways with standard operating procedures which include schools to ensure a clear and functional system for reporting and responding to GBV issues and protection of students.
4. Ensure and support schools to have trained and sensitized staff responsible for confidential counseling to support students.

8. Media

- In PNG, radio is not properly censored and radio stations are not held accountable for the type of content they share. Content on radio stations is often inappropriate and reinforces negative messages that contribute to sexual harassment and violence and its normalisation.

Recommendations

1. NICTA and Censorship board to hold accountable mainstream media organization especially radio stations that allow or produce inappropriate content as humor that reinforce negative messages linked to sexual harassment or that may not be appropriate on public radio for all ages.
2. Enforcement and monitoring of media Code of Conduct.

9. GBV Prevention, Advocacy & Awareness

- Evidence-based long-term GBV prevention and social norm change work is underfunded. There is a strong focus on advocacy and awareness, however these alone do not support the long-term social norm change that is needed to prevent GBV. There is a common conflation between GBV primary prevention and social norm change programming, and awareness raising and advocacy activities amongst practitioners which adds to this challenge.
- Advocacy and awareness programs primarily focus on women. However increasingly they are targeting men and boys. This is welcome and should be expanded. However there is a need to ensure engaging men and boys focuses on working with them to achieve real, long lasting change and that the voices of men in the call against GBV do not come at the expense of centering women's and survivors' voices. Advocacy and awareness activities are also limited in scope, with limited reach to rural areas and communities.
- Lack of strong partnerships for GBV

Recommendations

1. GBV prevention programmes must identify and target root causes of GBV. They must be evidence-based, sustainably resourced, contextualised and long-term to achieve the social norm change required to address the root causes in order to prevent violence. There is a need for greater awareness on 'what works' in GBV prevention to support informed and effective programming. As part of this, there is a need for positive masculinities programming which targets men and boys who are living in a society that normalizes male violence. These should be linked with or integrate mental health services such as counseling and therapy.
2. Government must support and strengthen awareness programs at the national, provincial and local level on what constitutes GBV; Types of GBV; Where to seek help and Assistance; Penalties of GBV etc. Clear information on pathways and what should be expected from services is important as well as ensuring people understand what GBV is in all its forms.
3. Utilize existing networks, people and systems to get awareness and information down to the grass-root level. This includes, Teachers, Health care workers, Human Rights Defenders, villages courts ensuring that all have the necessary resources to support information dissemination.
4. Information for awareness on GBV must be made available for different audiences and in the main languages.

10. Accountability, Governance and Coordination

- As elsewhere, there is a need for close monitoring of Government commitments for addressing preventing GBV.
- The National Youth Development Authority as the responsible government youth agency must be accountable for addressing issues affecting youth that become a contributing factor to young people engaging in and perpetrating violence. This includes ensuring youth are engaged in positive programs and there are avenues for meaningful youth participation.

Recommendations

5. Monitoring and regular (annual or bi annual) reviews or inquiries to ensure that government and relevant stakeholders live up to commitments and taking action accordingly. This should be an avenue to hold these stakeholders accountable.
6. Strengthen the functioning and accountability of NYDA to young people and youth-friendly services. Including:
 - NYDA increased its role and capacity in leading youth inclusion and ensuring youth-friendly services across sectors to meet the needs of all young people.
 - NYDA must substantively engage with youth networks and representatives in all its work at national and sub-national levels to ensure it functions as a truly representative body. Government youth representatives and youth councils must be staffed/volunteered by young people.
7. Strengthened coordination and accountability of civil society work and initiatives in the GBV space.

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Conclusion

To conclude, as stated in the *2020 National GBV Youth Submission*, “Young people are not the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today and architects of tomorrow. Youth voices should neither be tokenized nor politicized. Youth understand their responsibility as partners for development and believe in the value of intergenerational dialogues with leaders so that they are not to be spoken to but to be heard as well.”

Facilitated by UNFPA with the support from UN Women in Papua New Guinea.

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Annex 1: PARTICIPANTS AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THIS SUBMISSION.

- Beyond 3 Billion
- Bougainville Youth Federation Associates
- East New Britain Youth Wave
- Equal Playing Field
- Family Health Association Youth
- Magna Carta
- National Youth Development Authority
- SANAP WANTAIM Campaign
- SEA Women for Melanesia Youth
- The Voice Inc.
- Tribal Foundation Senisim Pasin
- UN Women
- Young Women's Christian Association
- Youth Advocates & Representatives from 22 Provinces of PNG
- Youth with Disability Network

Annex 2: YOUTH OUTCOME STATEMENT 2020 NATIONAL GBV SUMMIT, YOUTH SIDE EVENT.

Youth noted that:

Rapid changes in PNG society and increasing inequality and dislocation has exacerbated violence. Youth while saying attention is given to preserving their identity little is done to ensure this also addresses the root causes of violence; inequality. The Youth recognized the importance of youth learning from the values and practices of equality from the past, to bring them forward to today, and the critical role and responsibilities of the youth in bringing change.

Challenges of continued access to education and family support in enabling girls and young women to change and be safe and supported when they step up were noted.

The Wisdom of older generation of leaders was considered vital to younger activists in driving the agenda of equality through their influence, continued support for young voices and forging spaces for the youth to participate.

The cycle of violence against children is inherited into adulthood and including in intimate partner relationships. This is clearly seen in the statistics which indicate that men who witness their mother abused by their father are three times more likely to become abusers themselves.

The role of activism has transformed as violence has increasingly been captured by modern technology increasing awareness, reporting and the documentation of violence via social media, social media platforms and mainstream media where young people are actively engaged.

The role of technology provides a means for youth to raise their voices, and create space for themselves. However, it was noted by youth delegate that action needs to happen offline to change reality: social media alone is insufficient. There is also a need to ensure young people have access to accurate information and education about their rights, what violence enfices, redefined masculinity, how to break gender stereotypes and the setbacks caused by violence in society.

True government accountability needs political leaders, civil services centers and policy makers to strategize on sustainable programs that respond to gender-based violence, and invest in targeted, youth-tailored programmes.

The importance of supporting children to set boundaries and foster empathy for others was noted. Much work is needed related to the early detection and prevention of violence, starting with children knowing what a respectful relationship is and identifying safe spaces. Teachers in school need to be able to recognize and respond to children in their classes and under their preview who are experiencing violence.

Young people need to know the laws that protect them while understanding that they can play a role in changing the status quo by advocating Members of Parliament to lobby for practical interventions, in the National Government.

There is a clear need for young men and women to be informed about the rights and the principles of equality so they can make well informed, respectful choices regarding sexual and intimate relationship.

There is need for children's access to technology to be overseen by also the parents who understand that children today have access to information and experiences related to sex more so than in the past. Parents need to be open and prepared to address this, to reduce the risk of children experiencing harm and violence as they seek to explore.

The consistent engagement of young people in the cyber space. This opens up the risk of online/technology facilitated violence. The solution to protecting children in today's cyber environment comes down to the home and parenting. Fostering values, morals, respect, empathy and critical thinking in children so they are equipped to use technology for the right purposes and to protect themselves from its worst aspects.

The role of the National Youth Development Authority and its mandate to connect and ensure a coordinated and inclusive entry point for engaging young people was recognized.

The special case of youth issues and the governing structures of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville are quite different from Papua New Guinea. Their youth representatives at the Summit supported the youth of Papua New Guinea in these recommendations.

Human rights and equality know no boundaries of religion, political opinion, race, colour, sex, gender, caste and status in society. Violence affects everyone and the time to act is now.

The Outcome Statement for Youth Side Event Recommends:

1. Government to commit funds to support effective programs that seek to address violence and achieve equality. While there is a host of quality development programs, they are not sustainable because government does not support these in the long-term.
2. Amend the District Development Authority (DDA) 2014 to include provisions for youth inclusion in rural and urban governance structures of decision making at the DDA Board and the PEC which sets the structure for the youth council networks.
3. The GBV Strategy needs to be implemented and monitored. Government needs to commit financial and human resources for the roll-out of the National and Provincial GBV Strategies. This needs to be tracked by a commitment to specific results in the immediate, medium and long-term timeline.
4. To provide specialized services for youth and children as an immediate priority. This requires uniform standards in all universities, vocational and primary and high schools to ensure safety of youth and children; schools need to be safe spaces for both youth and children. Teachers need to be supported to be able to recognize and respond to the needs of youth and children that are experiencing violence. The gaps in implementation of laws must be adhered specialized services for children developed, resourced and implemented.
5. To be held accountable to measurable commitments for the implementation of the GBV Strategies and creating an enabling environment for youths.
6. Corporate social responsibility practices and programmes of the private sector must align to the GBV response initiatives.

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7. Revisit Welfare and Social Services to ensure they are appropriately and adequately resourcing and financing Social Workers, Mental Health Clinics and Rehabilitation Programmes.
8. Organizations must have Social Work services and embedded work place guidelines and codes of practice when dealing with youths.
9. Review education curriculum to ensure it is integrated and value-based; and includes the civic education for youth to learn about the constitution and their human rights. Teachers training and education service delivery, will be critical to ensure strong outcomes are achieved.
10. Establish consistent services and infrastructure for social services in the deep and inner rural areas (focus).
11. Fund and resource provincial gender-based violence units (Current FSVU) to have a RR within eight to twenty-four hours and Standard Operating Procedures.
12. In addition, community development organizations must revisit FSVAC funding and be sensitive to political interference as well as create a space for youth representation on the FSVAC Board to monitor evaluate and accountability.
13. Specific services for youth perpetrators need to be examined such as: a. Juvenile Justice centers in rural areas, and programs infrastructure and abuse in prison. b. Halfway house and rehabilitation, pathways to educated youth volunteers for change. c. Adapted programs in urban areas to the rural area context and share best practices. d. Youth desks in each province and youth hubs
14. Revisit our values of indigenous wisdom to drive peace building in societies, known as the PNG Ways.
15. Churches must understand their inclusive development is not biased and should accept all youth regardless of their faith.

That Youth:

1. Continue the conversation of equality and lead with influence.
2. Capitalize on the existing a network of youth volunteers and reach out to other youth organizations to invest their time and effort to make equality a reality. Actively contribute to positive change through volunteerism and different levels of engagement and environment and commit to become the change they want to see.
3. Consult, raise awareness and call upon youth to develop specific demands and asks from a local through to national level to push for change.
4. Use international treaties that the government has signed to hold them accountable. These are legally binding documents that require us to change our national laws to comply. Youth continue to inform themselves in order to hold Government account, and to lobby and advocacy Government to follow these obligations.

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5. Hold the Coalition accountable to follow up and follow through on this outcome statement

Conclusion

Young people are not the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today and architects of tomorrow. Youth voices should neither be tokenized nor politicized.

Youth understand their responsibility as partners for development and believe in the value of intergenerational dialogues with leaders so that they are not to be spoken to but to be heard as well.