



# **Inquiry into Gender Equality Policies & Institutions, Gender- Based Violence and Sorcery Accusation Related Violence**

## **Report to Parliament No.1**

**Parliamentary Committee on  
Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment**

October 2023

## Executive Summary

### Background

In September 2020, in response to the critical need to address these issues, twenty Members of Parliament (MPs) formed a Coalition of Parliamentarians to End Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which included both Governors and Open Seat members. The initiative was launched and led by the Hon. Powes Parkop, MP and Governor NCD and current Chairman of this Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

Two of the Coalition's concrete actions to end GBV were their organization of the United for Equality: First National Summit to End Gender-Based Violence (November 2020) and their subsequent advocacy for the establishment of a Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV (November 2020). The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV was chaired by Hon. Charles Abel and included the Hon. Allan Bird, Hon. Powes Parkop, Hon. Michael Dua, Hon. Aiye Tambua, Hon. Ginson Saonu and Hon. Allan Marat.

The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV organized two public hearings during the 10th term of Parliament, one in May 2021 and one in March 2022. That Committee further tabled two reports to Parliament in August 2021 and April 2022. Each report contained more than 70 recommendations for action by government officials.

Some progress has made since the hearings of the Special Parliamentary Committee. Highlights include: the first ever national GBV budgets allocated for 2022 (K7.93 mill) and 2023 (K9.86 mill), including substantial funding for Civil Society Organization (CSO) grants; the approval by the Department of Personnel Management in August 2022 of ten positions to staff the National GBV Secretariat; the inclusion of all RPNGC Family & Sexual Violence Unit (FSVU) officers into the RPNGC official establishment; increased funding for Victim Liaison Officers within the Family & Sexual Offences (FASO) Unit of the Office for the Director of Public Prosecutions; and the development by multiple provinces of their own provincial GBV strategies and budgets. Nonetheless, considerably more work remained to be done.

Following the national general elections held in July 2022, a new Parliament was sworn in August 2022. By November 2022, during the 20 Days of Human Rights Activism Campaign that runs from 20 November to 10 December each year, the new Parliament endorsed a Resolution to establish a Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, recognizing gender equality and women's empowerment as key to ending gender-based violence. The Terms of Reference (TOR) is attached in Annex 1.

The establishment of the Committee marked the first time in PNG's history that the National Parliament has mandated a permanent committee to review and provide oversight over GEWE issues. The Committee is Chaired by Hon. Powes Parkop (Governor NCD) and the Deputy Chair is Allan Bird (Governor East Sepik Regional). It comprises five additional members, namely, Hon. Rufina Peter (Governor Central Regional), Hon. Marsh Narewec (Wau Waria Open), Hon. Ricky Morris (Alotau Open), Hon. William Bando (Koroba Lake Kopiago Open) and Hon. MP Lohia Boe Samuel (Port Moresby North West Open).

The Committee held their first public hearings during the 11th Parliament from 24 to 26 May 2023. The schedule is attached in Annex 2. While the Committee is mandated to focus on the broader subject matter of GEWE, GEWE is the root requirement for ending GBV and sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV). To this end, the Committee agreed to focus its first public hearing predominantly on

the issues related to GBV and SARV and to follow up on recommendations made during the Special Committee hearings held in 2021 and 2022.

To open the 2023 hearings, the Committee called a representative group of civil society leaders from across the country to set the scene for their hearings. In recognition of the expanded TOR, the Committee used Day 1 of the hearings to review the overall policy frameworks and the national institutions responsible for guiding efforts to drive GEWE.<sup>1</sup> Day 2 and Day 3 were dedicated to providing oversight over government responses to GBV and SARV with remain egregious national gender-based issues, both at the national level and sub-national levels.

The May 2023 hearings, combined with the information collected during by Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV, demonstrate the need for fundamental structural change at the highest levels – including strengthening the institutions responsible for driving the national GEWE and GBV agendas; addressing long-term under-staffing and under-funding of critical essential services such as the health sector and the police service; and capacitating critical crisis response and justice staff with the needed knowledge, expertise and abilities. Meeting even just the basics would dramatically improve the lives of women and girls, and indeed all citizens. A focus on setting and meeting GEWE goals would work to ensure that agency, freedom and safety are enjoyed by every citizen of PNG.

### *Our Guiding Principles*

The Permanent Parliamentary Committee on GEWE emphasizes the alignment of our work with the Constitution of our nation. Most particularly, we wish to stress that equality is not a new notion for our country. Equality of our citizens – whether they are men or women – is embedded in the founding documents of our Nation. It is a core value of our founding fathers and is at the heart of our efforts to promote gender equality and to end GBV and SARV, problems which are not only crippling the lives of women and girls of Papua New Guinea, but in fact is crippling the progress of our entire nation.

This Committee on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) recognizes the importance of women being able to make their full contribution to the welfare of our country, on an equal footing with men. Obstacles to educational and other opportunities which face women at present should be removed, and insofar as it is within the power of the Government to do so, the difficulties facing women who wish to involve themselves in the affairs of the nation should be reduced.

We are led by the lofty vision of the National Goals and Directive Principals stated in the preamble of our Constitution.<sup>2</sup> These are the values and principles that define our aspirations for our country. The Directive Principles are intended to guide all activities of the State and its institutions, and as such, we use them to guide our own. In particular, and we quote directly:

- “Our first goal to be for every person to be dynamically involved in the process of freeing himself or herself from every form of domination or oppression so that each man or woman will have the opportunity to develop as a whole person in relationship with others.”
- “Equality and Participation: We declare our second goal to be for all citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country.”

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<sup>1</sup> The Department for Community Development in relation to the Office for the Development of Women and the National GBV Secretariat and the National and Provincial Councils of Women.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol\\_act/cotisopng534/](http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol_act/cotisopng534/)

- “We have also emphasized the importance of women being able to make their full contribution to the welfare of the country, on an equal footing with men. In recent years women have played a significantly greater part in the country's national life - in politics, in business, in social and cultural activities. But more effort should be made by government to hasten this development. Obstacles to educational and other opportunities which face women at present should be removed, and insofar as it is within the power of the Government to do so, the difficulties facing women who wish to involve themselves in the affairs of the nation should be reduced.”
- “All activities of the state should be directed towards the personal liberation and fulfillment of every citizen, so that each man and woman will have the opportunity of improving himself or herself as a whole person and achieving integral human development.”
- “All citizens should have an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the development of our country.”
- “We do not take development to be synonymous with material progress. For us the only authentic development is integral human development. This means that we use the term development to mean nothing less than the unending process of improvement of every man and woman as a whole person. We take our stand on the dignity and worth of each Papua New Guinean man, woman and child. In effect, this means that integral human development must reach out to and enrich Papua New Guineans in every part of the country.”

We are also guided by the justiciable sections of the National Constitution, including:

Section 32: “Right to Freedom: Every person has the right to freedom based on law ... “

Section 35: “Right to Life: No person shall be deprived of his life intentionally.”

Section 36: “Freedom from Inhumane Treatment: No person shall be submitted to torture (whether physical or mental), or to treatment or punishment that is cruel or otherwise inhuman, or is inconsistent with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.”

Section 37: “Right to the Protection of the Law: Every person has the right to the full protection of the law, and the succeeding provisions of this section are intended to ensure that that right is fully available, especially to persons in custody or charged with offences.”

Section 55: “Equality of Citizens: Subject to this Constitution, all citizens have the same rights privileges, obligations and duties, irrespective of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, religion or sex.”

The Committee reminds our Government and parliamentary Members that Papua New Guinea signed the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) in 1980 and acceded to the Convention in 1995 – almost three decades ago. Since then, numerous efforts have been pushed at a national and sub-national level to focus on this issue and to escalate its importance as a key political agenda, but not enough real progress has been achieved.

As a member of the United Nations, Papua New Guinea has also committed to uphold the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, endorsed the 1993 *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* and ratified the two international covenants on civil and political rights and social and economic rights in 1998. Papua New Guinea is also to be guided by the analysis and recommendations from the UN Secretary-General's in-depth study “Ending violence against women:

From words to action”,<sup>3</sup> which was mandated by General Assembly resolution 58/185, and highlighted the unacceptability of all forms of violence against women in all parts of the world. The 2013 World Health Organisation clinical and policy guidelines on “Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women” also make clear that GBV needs to be addressed as an urgent health priority and set out guidance that should inform PNG’s national response.<sup>4</sup>

In 2015, the elimination of violence against women and girls in public and in private was also adopted as part of the UN’s Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>5</sup> Addressing GBV has been included as one of the targets for the fifth Sustainable Development Goal. Target 5.2 calls on all States to: “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, in 2020, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez called for global action to address the horrifying global surge in domestic violence linked to lockdowns imposed by governments responding to COVID-19.<sup>7</sup>

In 2015, the Government endorsed the *Sorcery Accusation Related Violence National Action Plan*,<sup>8</sup> which called for more targeted actions to target these barbaric practices. In 2016, the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence 2016 to 2025*<sup>9</sup> was launched by the PNG Government to guide a more strategic and coordinated approach to addressing GBV within PNG. At its core, the strategy focuses on governance, data, crisis response and prevention. The Committee still considers both of these strategies relevant today and their implementation remains critical.

To date, neither strategy has been implemented in its entirety, nor has the overarching goal of achieving zero tolerance for violence been achieved. A 2018 (unpublished) progress report entitled “*Institutional Support to Set up the GBV National Secretariat*” provided a scathing review of Government efforts, stating in summary that the National Government should take the strategic recommendations more seriously. The shortfalls highlighted in that report were reviewed and updated in the report of this Committee and the reports of its precursor, the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV.

With these considerations, the Committees wishes to stress our united belief that ending gender inequality, GBV and SARV in Papua New Guinea is critical to the achievement of goals outlined in our Constitution, the Sustainable Development Goals which we endorsed as a member of the United Nations, the goals of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the goals of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which our nation acceded to in 1995. Most importantly, it is critical to the economic and social future of our entire country.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2006/1/ending-violence-against-women-from-words-to-action-study-of-the-secretary-general>

<sup>4</sup><https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/85240>

<sup>5</sup><https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

<sup>6</sup><https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

<sup>7</sup><https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.stopsorceryviolence.org/the-sorcery-national-action-plan/>

<sup>9</sup><http://www.ngbvs.gov.pg/about>

### Current data on GEWE, GBV and SARV

The World Bank estimates that balancing gender parity in employment in PNG would result in a GDP per capita increase of more than 20%.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, GBV work related absenteeism alone (not considering the additional costs) amounted to 0.5% of PNG's 2020 GDP, equivalent to USD 119 million).<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, against the measures of SDG-5 and according to the 2016-2018 PNG Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), the country is still failing to meet even basic GEWE targets. According to the 2022 UN Human Development Report, PNG is ranked as 160 out of 161 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. In 2016, only 40% of the students across higher education institutions were female, and more than 40% of women aged 15 to 24 are neither in school nor employed. For every 100,000 live births, 145.0 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 55.3 births per 1,000 women of aged 15. While women predominate market sellers and micro and informal enterprises, they make 26% fewer earnings than their male counterparts.

GBV continues to be widespread across the country and SARV is also a serious challenge, causing immense harm to its victims. The 2016-2018 Demographic and Health Survey found that 56% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence, and 28% have experienced sexual violence. One study also found that an average of almost 400 people are accused of sorcery each year, both of these studies likely conflate finds, as the DHS also found that 60% do not tell anyone of their injuries. A third of these cases led to physical violence or property damage. Amongst those accused of sorcery, 65 were killed, 86 suffered permanent injury and 141 experienced serious assault and harm, such as burning, cutting, tying or being forced into water.

Promoting GEWE and addressing GBV and SARV requires a multi-partner, multi-sectoral response. Stakeholders at all levels across the country need to be capacitated, resourced and supported to come together to do their jobs well and serve the national interests of ending violence and ensuring equality. It is all our duties to meet the expectations of the National Constitution, which envisaged a country where every single person would be equal, free from discrimination and free from violence.

### Summary of the May 2023 Hearings

The May 2023 hearings highlighted that the rates of GBV and SARV across the country remain distressingly high. Officials from the National Department of Health testified that rates of physical violence – against all people – are increasing exponentially.

As the NDOH submission stated: “This is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’; a catastrophic human rights violation alarming for a country not at war”. The Committee’s members were extremely concerned by this data. If not addressed, cases of violence could exceed more than 100,000 within only a few years, stressing already over-burdened health services and overloading the justice system.

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*NDOH reported that 63,722 cases of physical violence were treated at health facilities across the country from 2018 to 2022. They advised that “This [data] is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’; a catastrophic human rights violation alarming for a country not at war”*

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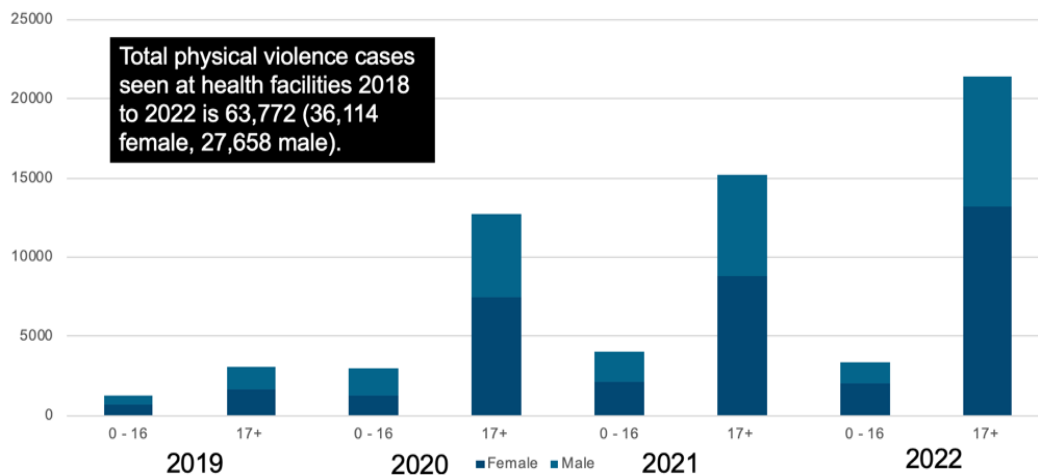
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<sup>10</sup> World Bank (2023) “Papua New Guinea Economic Update, March 2023: Unlocking the Economic Benefits of Gender Equality”, <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/39692>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

During the hearings, officials from the Royal PNG Constabulary (RPNGC) gave concerning testimony regarding the difficulties faced by survivors of violence in accessing justice. The RPNGC Superintendent responsible for overseeing the country’s Family and Sexual Violence Units advised that from January 2021 to April 2023: 30,028 cases were reported to FSVUs across the country; from these on 1,304 arrests (4%) were made; and there were a mere 156 convictions (8 of which were SARV cases).

Figure 1: Trends in physical violence cases 2019-2022 by sex and age  
(National Health Information System data)



While it is well-accepted that cases of GBV and SARV are grossly under-reported across the country (as previously stated only 60% of survivors report their experiences to anyone), even at aforementioned level of reporting, only 0.5% of all reported cases result in a conviction. This amounts to approximately 75 cases resulting in convictions every year, just over 3 convictions per province. It is clear from this data that perpetrators largely operate with impunity, safe in the knowledge that very few violent offenders go to jail, and survivors are discouraged to report.

Drawing on the public hearings and written submissions made by officials and civil society, the Committee has produced this first report to Parliament. The report provides a foundation for the Committee’s work over Parliament’s 11th term. The recommendations from the final report of the Special Parliamentary Committee are included at Annex 3 for easy reference and should still be actioned by officials.

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*PNGC reported that since 2021, 30,028 cases were reported to FSVUs across the country; 1,304 arrests were made; and there were 156 convictions (8 of which were SARV cases). This shows that only 0.5% of reported cases result in a conviction or approximately 75 convictions every year – just over 3 convictions per province.*

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We thank the officials who testified at the Committee hearings and wish to acknowledge the improved preparations of officials, most of whom came with written briefings, data and responses to previous recommendations made by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV. We also thank those officials and members of the public who provided written submissions to the Committee. Submissions can be read on our Committee webpage at <https://www.unitedforequalitypng.com/gewe-parl-comm>.

It is anticipated that this will be the first report in a series of reports prepared by this Committee to Parliament. With that in mind, this report has been written to provide a foundation on which future inquiries can build. While the recommendations of the Special Parliamentary Committee covered both strategic and specific issues, this first report seeks to provide a smaller set of high-level strategic

recommendations for the consideration of the Prime Minister, Ministers, Provincial Administrators, agency heads and senior officials.

We highly recommend that this report be read in conjunction with the reports previously submitted by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV. Those reports contained considerable data and explanatory information, which has not been repeated in this Report.

### *Recommendations to promote GEWE*

#### *Key GEWE institutions*

**Recommendation 1:** The Committee strongly advocates for the NEC to reassess whether the Department for Community Development and Religion (DFCDR) is fit-for-purpose or should be abolished. It has been insufficiently resourced for far too long and has failed to effectively implement the multiple social agendas for which it is responsible. In place of DFCDR, consideration should be given to creating a separate Ministry for Women and Youth, with a Minister committed to GEWE principles, proper funding and qualified staff. All other responsibilities of the Department such as child welfare, disability and religion should be decentralized to the Provinces.

**Recommendation 2:** Subject to Recommendation 1, the Committee strongly suggests that the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Religion should require the Office for the Development of Women (ODW), which sits as part of DFCDR, to immediately develop and submit a multi-year workplan and budget that sets out the key priorities for the Office, timelines for implementation, and key performance indicators. This could be done as part of the current 2024 budget process. Once endorsed the plan should be published online so that women’s advocates and other stakeholders, and indeed this Parliamentary Committee, can hold the ODW to account for delivering. This plan must be connected to the National GEWE Policy, once it is developed (cross-reference Recommendation 5).

**Recommendation 3:** The National Council of Women (NCW), and the Provincial Councils of Women (PCWs) which comprise its membership, is a critically important representative body for the women of PNG. The NCW and its members have not been operating for maximum impact. The Committee will hold a dedicated inquiry into the issues related to the functioning of the NCW and PCWs and will then make more specific recommendations accordingly. In the meantime, DFCDR should work with the PCW and the Interim NCW Executive Committee to resolve all issues that lead to the suspension of the Executive of the NCW (noting that the suspension of the National Executive does not affect the PCWs).

#### *Key GEWE policy frameworks*

**Recommendation 4:** The Committee encourages the Government to provide proper funding to ensure the GEWE priorities included in the Medium-Term Development Plan 4 are implemented, in particular, Strategic Priority Area 11.4: Women’s Empowerment, DIP 11.4 on “Gender Based Violence and Meri Seif Haus”. The Committee further recommends that funding priorities should be tied back into the National GEWE Policy (cross-reference Recommendation 5). Progress towards achieving key indicators should be regularly monitored and 6-monthly monitoring reports publicly published.

**Recommendation 5:** In line with the written plan submitted by DFCDR to the Committee in April 2023, the Committee encourages DFCDR through ODW to immediately commence the process of developing a National GEWE Policy, through an open and participatory process which is: evidence-based; draws on data, research and comparative good practice; and, reflects the real needs of women and girls



across the country. The Committee further recommends that a draft be officially sent to the Committee for review and comment no later than Quarter 1 of 2024.

**Recommendation 6:** In line with the written plan submitted by DFCDR to the Committee in April 2023, the Committee encourages DFCDR through ODW to immediately prioritize the participatory development of the next CEDAW report, including providing a draft to the Committee for review and comment no later than Quarter 1 of 2024. The Committee strongly suggests that the DFCDR immediately commence work on addressing the recommendations sent to the PNG Government by the CEDAW Committee in 2010.

**Recommendation 7:** Development partners, in particular international financial institutions and others providing direct financial support to the Government, are encouraged to introduce conditions in their agreements that require the Government to meet key GEWE and GBV-related targets, such as introducing temporary special measures for women or properly funding efforts to address GBV/SARV. The Committee will also follow up separately with key donors to advocate for this recommendation to be implemented.

### *Recommendations to address GBV and SARV*

**Recommendation 8:** The Committee encourages the National Government – working through national agencies but also through Provincial Governors, Governments and Administrators – to urgently develop, fund and implement workforce development strategies to increase the recruitment of (i) health service workers; and, (ii) police officers, to ensure that every province has an appropriate ratio of health staff and police officers to meet the needs of their population, including GBV and SARV survivors.

**Recommendation 9:** Better workforce planning, infrastructure development and budgeting needs to be informed by better data, identifying where people live across PNG and what their needs are. To achieve this, the Committee encourages:

- The Government to prioritize conducting the next census, to enable officials at national and provincial level to better understand the specific needs of communities across the country;
- DFCDR to immediately prioritize working with government and non-government stakeholders to develop proper GEWE and GBV data collection and sharing systems at the provincial and national levels.

**Recommendation 10:** The Committee encourages the National Government and Provincial Governments to allocate substantially more funding to support GBV efforts across multiple sectors. Ideally, some form of “programme budget” should be developed each year which captures the costs across all key agencies for addressing GEWE and GBV. Evidence from around the world informs the Committee that the budget should be aligned against clear performance indicators at both the institutional, sub-national and national levels, which would then enable the Government to better track the impact of their investments in delivering results. At a minimum, it is clear that the annual national budget should allocate a minimum of Kina 50 million per year across key sectors and agencies, with provinces also providing funding in support of their provincial GBV strategies. Funding should be provided for:

- Civil society organizations providing crisis response, recovery and integration services to survivors, in recognition of the reality that CSOs have a critical role to play in any national response to GBV and SARV;

- The recurrent staffing and operational costs of all Family Support Centres to ensure they have the capacities to provide health services to GBV/SARV survivors and the infrastructure costs of new FSCs, which should be attached to all Provincial Hospitals and District Health Centres;
- The recurrent staffing and operational costs of all Family & Sexual Violence Units across the country and the infrastructure costs of new FSVUs;
- The recurrent staffing and operational costs of the existing Family and Sexual Offences Unit within the Office of Public Prosecutions, as well funding for additional prosecutors;
- Prevention programs focused most particularly on youth and children, as well as on perpetrators and those at high risk of perpetrating or experiencing GBV; and
- Better terms and conditions for Magistrates across the country, including ensuring housing and other key incentives to recruit and retain high quality candidates.

**Recommendation 11:** The Committee urges the Government to urgently update the PSIP and DSIP Guidelines to require that a minimum proportion of SIP grants are directed towards addressing GBV and SARV, in accordance with some form of Provincial GBV Strategy and/or District Development Plan.

**Recommendation 12:** The National GBV Secretariat must urgently be established. The Director position must be filled as a priority, followed by the remaining 10 staff. The Secretariat must produce a results framework immediately for review by the Committee, which sets out what they will deliver and how they will contribute to improving the lives of GBV/SARV survivors.

**Recommendation 13:** The Committee encourages Treasury to establish a National GBV Trust Fund to hold the money allocated to the National GBV Secretariat, to separate out the funding from DFCDR's budget and facilitate more accountable GBV funding, spending and acquittals.

**Recommendation 14:** The Committee urges Provincial Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrations to explicitly commit to addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV by endorsing and providing regular annual funding to establishment Provincial GBV Secretariats and implement Provincial GEWE and GBV Strategies. More specifically, the Committee encourages:

- Governors, Provincial Governments and Provincial Administrators to demonstrate high level political commitment for addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV in their public statements;
- A minimum number of at least 3 full-time staff (GBV Coordinator, GBV Programme Officer & GBV Data and Administration Officer) to be recruited/allocated and funded to run a Provincial GBV Secretariat responsible for coordination the various government and non-government stakeholders involved in the provincial GBV/SARV response;
- A minimum annual amount of at least K500,000 per year should be allocated to the provincial GBV budget to fund both Government services and local CSOs who provide services across the referral pathway (see Annex 6).
- The development of tailored provincial prevention and communication campaigns focused at high-risk youth, including those in school, that focus on changing the behaviour of young people, and supporting them to develop healthy, equality-based, violence free relationships.

**Recommendation 15:** The National GBV Secretariat (or DFCDR until the Secretariat is established) should:

- Continue to be provided with a substantial annual budget to provide regularized grant funding to CSOs providing GEWE, GBV and SARV-related services across the country. Such funding must be accountably and transparently administered. The Committee will expect regular reporting on grantee recipients and their impact/results.

- Establish some form of Emergency Fund for frontline workers to access to support GEWE, GBV and SARV survivors, in accordance with clear guidelines and accountable management.
- Develop a national, government-funded, behaviour change campaign focused on increasing GEWE and reducing GBV and SARV.

**Recommendation 16:** Provincial Health Authorities are urged by the Committee to establish and run Family Support Centres in each district (attached to a hospital or existing health service), including providing funding for a proper number of trained health personnel, to ensure that health services are available to GBV and SARV survivors.

**Recommendation 17:** The Department of National Planning and Monitoring and Treasury is encouraged to provide funding to build dramatically more secure, accessible, properly designed and equipped, safe houses across the country, as part of DFCDR's initiative to build Community Development Centers. At a minimum, the Committee recommends that every province should have at least one safe house per district. Existing safe house providers should be convened to design and roll out National and/or Provincial Safe House Infrastructure Plan/s. Safe house SOPs and minimum benchmarks should also be endorsed and rolled out to ensure that adult and child GBV survivors are provided with adequate and safe shelter.

**Recommendation 18:** The Committee urges that more Government funding be directed to establish and support GBV counselling services for women, men and children across the country, whether in person or through telephone/online approaches. To ensure efficiencies, the NGBVS is encouraged to convene existing providers of GBV counselling services, both in-person and online, to assess the current service offering, identify good practice and lessons learned, and develop an Action Plan and budget for addressing the current gap in counselling. The Action Plan should include recommendations to address the current lack of accredited and/or trained counsellors within PNG.

**Recommendation 19:** Stakeholders in the law and justice sector are encouraged to:

- Examine options for establishing a regular operational level coordination mechanism that can be used to work better together to identify and respond to challenges in ensuring access to justice for citizens across the country, including GBV and SARV survivors.
- Produce a special Joint Annual Report on Addressing GEWE, GBV and SARV which provides data and narrative reporting on access to justice progress and ongoing challenges.

**Recommendation 20:** The RPNGC is encouraged to provide regular trainings on relevant laws (including reforms to SARV-related laws) to ensure police officers understand the relevant elements of the crime and survivor-centered investigative approaches to all police officers, (in particular, members of the FSVUs, Sexual Offences Squad, Homicide Squad, Criminal Investigation Division and police prosecutors, but also senior management and all sworn members).

**Recommendation 21:** The Government is urged to invest more funding to ensure that there is sufficient personnel and infrastructure to actually run GBV and SARV cases and ensure timely and accessible justice for survivors. Specifically, the Government is urged to ensure that:

- The OPP and Magisterial Services have proper funding to ensure sufficient qualified prosecutorial and judicial personnel are recruited and posted throughout the country to prosecute and adjudicate cases;
- Funding for ongoing continuing legal education is provided to ensure training for police officers and police prosecutors to ensure they produce proper case files for court.

**Recommendation 22:** The Committee encourages the Government to prioritize funding for the Village Court Secretariats within DJAG, to support their efforts to build the capacities of Village Court officials

in accordance with the *Village Courts Policy 2020-2030* which aims to revitalize the village courts system.

**Recommendation 23:** DJAG is encouraged to work with other justice stakeholders to examine whether current legal frameworks dealing with GBV and SARV are sufficiently strong to act as a deterrent, with specific consideration given to the current penalties for breaching Family Protection Orders, and current bail requirements for alleged GBV or SARV perpetrators.

**Recommendation 24:** The Committee encourages the National Courts to examine whether the “human rights track” could be expanded to include cases in relation to gender inequality and discrimination, GBV and SARV, recognizing that all constitute a violation of the fundamental human right to life and personal safety.

**Recommendation 25:** The Committee encourages DJAG, the OPP, the Magisterial Service and the National Courts to work together to ensure a supportive environment is developed for survivors and witnesses involved in court cases. The Committee specifically calls on those stakeholders to:

- Review current evidence law to permit the use of videos in certain contexts, in particular, for SARV cases, without requiring that the maker of the video testify in court as to its authenticity. For example, a signed statutory declaration could be sufficient.
- Develop a specific action plan and budget proposal to fund improvements to witness and victim support systems, including in relation to court processes and infrastructure, and to share this plan and budget with the Committee.

**Recommendation 26:** The updated SARV NAP should be produced as soon as possible by DFCDR, DJAG and other key stakeholders and should be presented to the Committee in draft for comment by no later than Quarter 1 of 2024 before being finalised. The new SARV NAP should ensure that education is prioritized as well as enforcement. With that in mind, DJAG and DFCDR are encouraged to work with experts within government departments, civil society and academics to develop and roll out an education campaign focused on preventing SARV, including by:

- Working with community leaders, especially church leaders, to educate communities in high-risk provinces in particular;
- Providing training to health workers to help them avoid contributing misunderstandings that sickness has been caused by “sorcery”;
- Providing training to all RPNGC officers (not just FSVU personnel), prosecutors, Village Court officials and magistrates across the country on legislation criminalizing SARV and the actions of glasmers/glasmeri and how it should be applied;
- Exploring options for developing a training program for paralegals and/or providing Government support to establish a dedicated SARV Community Legal Service;
- Providing training to Members of Parliament and Provincial Governments on SARV issues, drawing on the guidance of the Pan African Parliament Guidelines on Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks.<sup>12</sup>

**Recommendation 27:** DFCDR, working with the National Department of Education, CSOs and development partners, is urged to design and roll out community-focused GEWE enhancement and GBV and SARV prevention strategies, including:

- Developing early childhood and schools-based interventions that will teach children and young people that violence is not acceptable in a peaceful society and to equip them with other tools to

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/PAP-Guidelines-EN\\_0.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/PAP-Guidelines-EN_0.pdf)

peacefully resolve conflict. Specific education programmes needed to be designed to address misinformation amongst young people contributing to beliefs in “sorcery”, noting that recent research showed people under 45 years of age being more likely to be involved in SARV;<sup>13</sup>

- Learning from other Pacific jurisdictions which have been trialling programmes which seek to work with both men and women based around the principles of how to engage in “Respectful Relationships” and designing and then scaling up local pilots;
- Investing in specific interventions aimed at supporting behaviour change for men and boys,<sup>14</sup> including activities aimed at addressing the mentality of perpetrators of violence.<sup>15</sup>

**Recommendation 28:** The Committee calls on DPM, independent statutory bodies and private sector organisations to urgently invest more resources into enacting and enforcing policies which will require all employees and all contractors to demonstrate zero tolerance for violence and which will include sanctions where they engage in threats or acts of violence. More specifically:

- DPM is encouraged to explicitly integrate zero tolerance for GBV and sexual harassment into all government human resources policies and into the terms and conditions of employment for all officers working in the public sector, SOEs and Constitutional Offices;
- The Government is encouraged to develop and implement a policy or regulation requiring that the terms and conditions of all contracts entered into using government funds require contractors to commit to zero tolerance for GBV and sexual harassment and include that in their human resources policies and employment contracts;

**Recommendation 29:** DFCDR is encouraged to work with the Ministry for ICT and relevant experts and stakeholders to discuss concrete options for how to more effectively harness ICT to address GBV and SARV. These ideas could then be presented to the National GBV Advisory Committee for consideration and/or action.

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<sup>13</sup> The NRI/DWU/ANU consortium has produced a children’s book, film and ‘Peter and Grace Make a Difference’ teaching materials to help students learn skills that can minimize their susceptibility to SARV misinformation. These can be accessed on the website [stopsorceryviolence.org](http://stopsorceryviolence.org) and used free of charge in the school curriculum.

<sup>14</sup> Testimony on behalf of the Digicel Foundation regarding their Men of Honour programme was relevant in this regard. This programme could be evaluated more systematically to identify good practice and lessons learned that could be scaled up.

<sup>15</sup> Once written submission specifically referenced the good practice developed by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, which has been implementing programmes with male perpetrators for some time and also run programmes relating to male behaviour change.