



## Family and sexual violence

Business and development exchange summary

Women play a crucial role in every society. Sexual, gender- and family-based violence pose a major challenge to the development of countries on all levels: socio-culturally, politically, and economically. In many developing countries, women are responsible for child rearing, and also act as the economic mainstay of the population, being the principal labourers generating land productivity.

This is generally true in Papua New Guinea where agriculture contributes 36% to GDP, and is the most important industry. Many Papuan communities are matrilineal, which means it is the woman's line that determines kinship and the inheritance and use of land. However, PNG ranks 124 out of 136 countries listed on the UNDP's gender development index, placing it in the bottom 10% of countries worldwide. Although it is difficult to measure the extent of family and sexual violence (FSV), studies undertaken by non-governmental organisations and government-related agencies all highlight the same trend: FSV is pervasive.

Statistics show a problem that has become endemic: two out of three women have experienced domestic violence in the country. Surveys carried out by CARE International and Save the Children in 2010 showed that 22% of young women aged 15 to 30 in Bougainville had experienced forced sex in the preceding year; in the Eastern Highlands province, it was 15% of 15 to 25-year-olds.

Other studies reported that 100% of wives had been hit by their husbands in the Highlands Province, whereas, in the Oro and New Ireland Provinces, this figure was closer to 50%. Trauma is the leading cause of death for females in the 15-44 age group and the fourth most common cause of death for all ages: and accounted for 90% of female trauma in 2009. Figures also show that FSV has been increasing, while, at the same time, traditional and cultural protections against it are decreasing. The social capital of PNG society is seriously undermined by this activity, and productive capacity significantly reduced in communities struggling with deaths, grievous injuries and psycho-traumatic distress.

The prevalence of FSV in PNG is due to a combination of factors, including women's low status in society, their lack of political representation and access to justice, economic dependence, and a lack of land rights in practice. There exist very separate socio-cultural traditions for men and women, and accusations of witchcraft are also used as an explanation for gender-based violence. Customary practices, such as male polygamy, bride price and in-marriage, as well as cultural norms that regard FSV as a way for men to affirm authority, also underpin the gender gap.

Several donors are engaged in increasing economic opportunities in Papua New Guinea, with programmes focused on training and capacity-building, mobile banking and access to finance, youth unemployment, strengthening smallholder oil palm production, telecommunications improvements, state-owned-enterprise reform and support for small and medium enterprises.

There also are several initiatives and committees currently in existence, which are designed to bring together businesses, government, donors, NGOs, churches, and communities to address FSV either directly or indirectly. These include the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC – an independent organisation that develops policy and directly influences and monitors government decision-making); the Business Coalition against HIV and AIDS (BAHA – which provides support to the business community in the workplace response to HIV/AIDs); the Porgera Joint Venture framework (which is a number of initiatives designed by Barrick Gold Corporation and the Porgera Joint Venture, to address specific incidents of GSV involving women residing in the Porgera Valley, where the gold mine operates); and Yumi Lukautim Mosbi (which is a partnerships model for urban safety and crime prevention).

Our research in Papua New Guinea will focus on GSV awareness and prevention models currently being undertaken by the private sector and business associations, as well as reviewing the documented international experience of corporate engagement on this issue. We will also identify relevant models of donor-business engagement that exist in other areas of development, which might have a potential application for the alleviation of gender and sexual violence. In addition to drawing out examples of good practice, we will conduct a review of new business interest, and seek to assess the levels of potential responsiveness and commitment by businesses not currently engaging with this issue.<sup>1</sup>