
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MELANESIA AND EAST TIMOR

BUILDING ON GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROMISING APPROACHES

2008



Australian Government

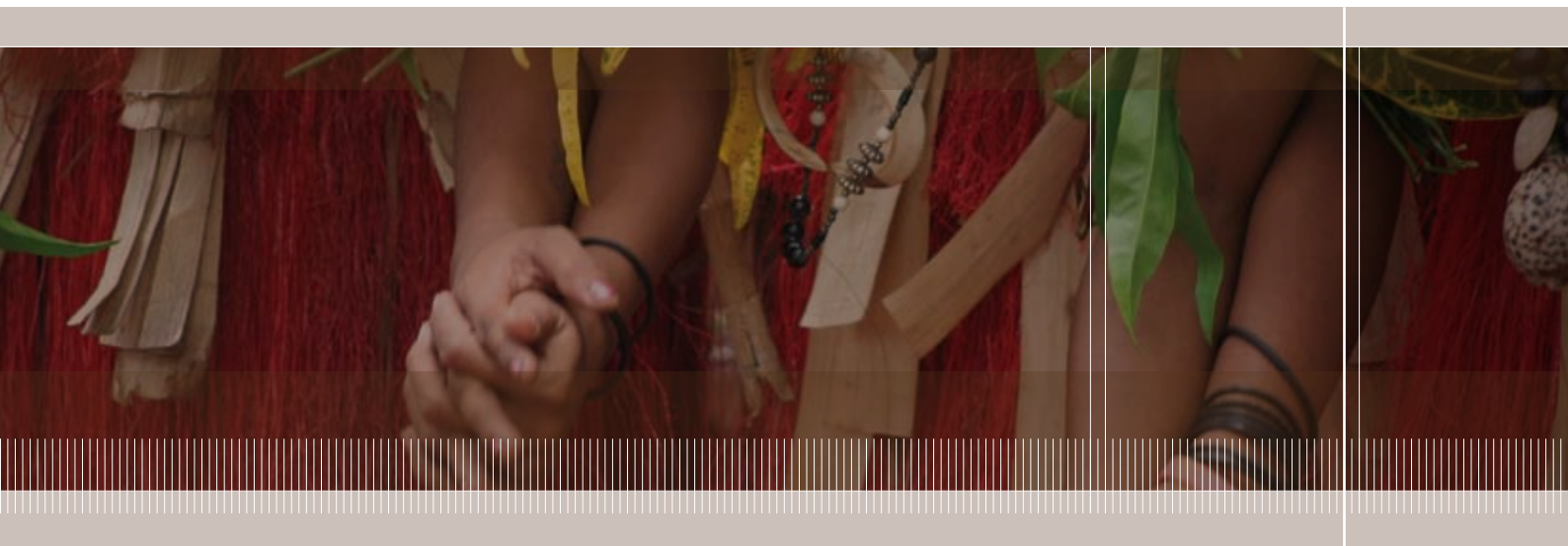
AusAID

Office of Development Effectiveness

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMKV	Association of Men Against Violence (Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia), East Timor
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CAVAW	Committee Against Violence Against Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FOKUPERS	East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae)
FSC	Family Support Centre
FSVAC	Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee, Papua New Guinea
FWCC	Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
ICRAF	Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum, Papua New Guinea
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
JSMP	Judicial System Monitoring Program, East Timor
KWP	Kup Women for Peace, Papua New Guinea
LRC	Law Reform Commission
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
ODE	Office of Development Effectiveness, AusAID
OPE	Office for the Promotion of Equality, East Timor
PATH	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRADET	Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
SEPI	Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, East Timor
STI	sexually transmitted infection
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNTF	United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
VBMSI	Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands (Voice of the Women)
VWC	Vanuatu Women's Centre
WHO	World Health Organization
WSB	Wan Smol Bag Theatre Group, Vanuatu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Violence against women is a serious global problem, affecting all countries of the world, including Australia. It has significant human rights dimensions, causing trauma to women, families and communities. It is both a symptom and a cause of gender inequality and discrimination. Violence against women is a major barrier to development in Melanesia and East Timor. A more comprehensive and effective response to violence against women is urgently required if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved in Melanesia and East Timor.

Violence against women increases health care, social service, policing and justice system costs and results in loss of productivity from both paid and un-paid work. A World Bank report on gender-based violence suggests that lost wages due to family violence amounted to 2.0% of GDP in Chile and 1.6% in Nicaragua, while in 2003, the Colombian national government spent 0.6% of its total budget on services to survivors of family violence. Estimates suggest that domestic violence cost Australia \$8.1 billion in 2002-03. In Melanesia and East Timor a high incidence of violence against women, combined with the culture of fear it generates, retards women's participation in political, social and economic life.

The Office of Development Effectiveness has assessed the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and girls in five of Australia's close partner countries: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and East Timor. More than 700 individuals and representatives of government, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations were consulted during a participatory assessment. The resulting package of reports is grounded in the perspectives and hopes of a broad spectrum of Melanesian and East Timorese society. The package comprises this regional report and five country specific reports, with the latter containing more specific recommendations for each country. This regional report seeks to: (i) articulate a framework for action that is relevant for all actors working to address violence against women across the region; and (ii) identify 'promising practices' that could guide efforts to scale up efforts to address violence against women.

What we know about violence against women in the region

Violence against women is severe and pervasive in Melanesia and East Timor. However, there is little published, quantitative research on violence against women in the region. This study confirms that the two most common forms of violence against women in these countries are consistent with global trends: (i) physical, psychological and economic violence against women by intimate partners and (ii) all forms of sexual violence perpetrated by intimate partners or others.



Women's low status in the region is a major obstacle to reducing violence against them. This low status is reinforced by some common customary practices and attitudes that put women at risk of violence. These practices, alongside economic factors, make it difficult, and often impossible, for women to protect themselves from violence. The three most important are:

- > *Bride-price* was cited in all countries except Fiji as the biggest factor (along with economic dependence) in perpetuating violence by men against their wives as it gives women the status of "property".
- > *Economic dependence* disempowers women in all of the study countries. Reliance on a male breadwinner and lack of control over economic resources is a major deterrent for women to complain about or escape from violence.
- > *Compensation and reconciliation* to maintain peace between groups and their (male) leaders is often prioritised over women's interests in the traditional cultures of Melanesia and East Timor. The practice of compensating women's husbands, fathers or tribal group creates a disincentive for addressing violence against women.

A framework for action

International evidence¹ indicates that efforts to reduce violence against women must be long-term, and focused on addressing structural inequalities together with providing victim support and access to justice. Multisectoral solutions are required, as isolated interventions are largely ineffective. This report assesses efforts to date in the region against such a multisectoral framework for action. The framework is based on three main strategies that have proven successful in other countries in reducing violence against women.

1. **Increasing women's access to justice** by passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders; provide women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence and the information necessary to access their rights; and ensure women are treated humanely and fairly by justice-system personnel.

Across the region, legal systems lack resources, causing significant backlogs, and are facing enormous logistical difficulties in providing services to rural communities. There is limited training for police and specific sexual offences units are under resourced. Many rural women rely on informal or custom-based systems but feel that these systems do not guarantee protection. Low rates of education and literacy, and barriers of language and mobility, mean many women do not know about their rights or the laws, where they do exist, intended for their protection.

¹ Office of Development Effectiveness, *Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: A Review of International Lessons* (2007).

However, some efforts have led to improvements in women's access to justice in the region. This has included strategies for improving overall gender equality in the sector in PNG and boosting the number of women on village courts, preparing comprehensive domestic violence legislation in East Timor and issuance of Domestic Violence Protection Orders in Vanuatu. In general, however, the formal and traditional justice systems in the five countries still have a long way to go in providing justice and protection for women.

2. **Increasing women's access to support services** including psychological, medical and legal support, and safe havens, as well as increasing support to organisations that provide these services.

As for the justice sector, existing services for supporting survivors of violence are limited, concentrated in urban areas and out of reach for rural women, who make up the majority of the population. Across the region, there is a huge unmet need for emergency and temporary shelter for abused women. Services are almost exclusively provided by NGOs and faith-based groups.

The quality of care women survivors receive is variable. Many support programs do not have trained counsellors. There is a tendency to fall back to traditional ideas of women's roles, encouraging forgiveness and acceptance and victim-blaming exhortations to be a "better wife".

3. **Prevention of violence** through coordinated efforts at all levels aimed at raising awareness; changing community attitudes about violence; and increasing women's status in society.

The greatest obstacle to eliminating violence against women is the belief, commonly held throughout Melanesia and East Timor, that it is justified. Women are often considered to be "at fault" and, therefore, deserving of the violence. A second obstacle is the perception that violence is a problem to be addressed by women only, and that others do not have a role to play. Violence is often seen as a private, family matter in which outsiders should not intervene.

Consistent with global trends, the longer-term prevention strategy has received less attention across the region compared with efforts to improve women's access to justice and services.

Promising practices

Despite major obstacles to progressing these strategies, several examples of promising practices were identified during the study. These could support a scaled up response. Some examples are:

- > **The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC)** was established in 1984 to counter the culture of silence surrounding violence against women. It provides crisis counselling and legal, medical, and other practical support services for women and children



who experience violence. The FWCC also provides technical support for other organisations working in the Pacific region, such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre.

- > **The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC)** is closely supported by the FWCC. The VWC has set up a network of community-level Committees against Violence against Women in all six provinces of Vanuatu. These committees are staffed by volunteers who receive basic training in legal literacy and counselling to provide support to women who are suffering domestic abuse or sexual assault. They coordinate closely with local authorities, such as police, health providers, and chiefs. Importantly, the committees have been instrumental in extending the reach of services to rural women – a key challenge for the region as a whole.
- > In Papua New Guinea, the **Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC)** plays a coordination and advocacy role across non-government and faith-based groups. The Government of PNG Department of Community Development has just adopted a new strategy for the FSVAC. This is a real achievement. To date, participation from government agencies in FSVAC has been weak or absent.
- > In East Timor a local NGO, **Association of Men Against Violence (Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia, AMKV)**, is undertaking critical attitudinal and behaviour change interventions targeting men. Men are too often neglected as partners in efforts to prevent violence against women. Additional support from donors would help strengthen AMKV and pave the way for AMKV to share its innovative approaches across the region.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that much progress has been made in the last 15 years in addressing violence against women. Thanks largely to the efforts of women's rights activists, all partner governments have made a public commitment to ending violence against women. However, there remains an enormous gap between public discourse and reality.

International donors have made important contributions to ongoing efforts, but support is poorly coordinated—between donors, and even among programs within the same agencies. To maximise the impact of development assistance, it is crucial to develop broad strategies involving a greatly increased and sustained contribution of financial resources, but also a commitment to discuss gender equality and violence against women in high level, policy dialogue with partner governments.

Recommendations

These conclusions, and the platform of 'promising practices' evident in the region, generate a series of recommendations for implementing the framework of action in each country. The recommendations emerged from the participatory approach used in this evaluation. They represent a proposed action plan for *all* actors. Partner

country governments will need to take the lead in mounting an effective response to violence against women. NGOs and civil society actors in each country have a major contribution to play. And donors need to significantly increase, and sustain over time, their levels of support.

Recommendations to **increase women's access to justice** focus on supporting national-level legal reforms alongside an integrated, long-term commitment to strengthen the response of the police and formal justice system. Also important are coordinated efforts to strengthen the capacity of community-based systems to deliver women justice, and increase support for organisations providing women's legal literacy and human-rights training.

Recommendations for **improving support services** focus on providing long-term support and resources for organisations that provide support services. Their capacity needs building to improve the quality of services, matched with investment in integrated models of service delivery. Efforts to extend access to services for women outside urban areas and to increase support for informal, community-based networks are critical.

Violence prevention recommendations stress the need to support integrated initiatives that have a strong emphasis on identifying and transforming gender norms. Partnerships with men are crucial and require strengthening. Strategic opportunities for integrating interventions to address violence against women into different operational areas should be identified.

These recommendations should be seen as a starting point, rather than the end point, of efforts to eliminate violence against women in the region. Local groups consisting of eminent government and non-government representatives in each country are developing specific plans in each country to implement these recommendations.

In addition to supporting these local plans, the report makes some specific recommendations for Australia. These include:

- > Integrating approaches to gender equality across all its interventions, with a commitment to seize opportunities to progress components of the framework of action.
- > Stepping up its high-level policy dialogue on violence against women with partner governments.
- > Developing broad strategies involving a greatly increased and sustained contribution of financial resources.
- > Encouraging greater investment in research on violence against women.



CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

In 2007, the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) argued that violence against women is a major barrier to development in Melanesia and East Timor, with serious effects on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, as well as their families, communities, and countries. ODE suggested that the Australian aid program could do more to assist partner countries address violence against women.² Following this initial report, ODE commissioned a study to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and girls in five countries: Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands Vanuatu and East Timor.

The goal was to contribute to the evidence base for effective interventions in the area of violence against women³ through a participatory assessment of what has been achieved in the region. An international evaluation team carried out the assessment. The team designed a multistage participatory methodology to identify lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up or applied in other countries. The study focused as much as possible on women's own experience of violence, and what protection and prevention does or does not help. More than 700 individuals and representatives of government, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and international organisations were consulted.

1.1 Methodology

With few exceptions, the interventions and programs included in this study have not been systematically evaluated for effectiveness. Therefore, it is difficult to identify best-practice models for addressing violence against women. Rather, several strong examples of 'promising' practices in the region are featured. Many are small, local efforts needing support to scale up and expand their reach. Practices were sought that:

- > address the need to transform harmful gender norms, attitudes and practices which underlie violence against women
- > have shown some indication of success or effectiveness in addressing violence against women—usually in the areas of strengthening access to justice, strengthening other services for survivors, and awareness-raising
- > women living with, or affected by, violence identified as helpful in responding to their needs.

The study also details a number of practices that cannot yet be listed as promising, either because they are too new or because not enough information is available about their impact in the community. These are highlighted in this report as 'interesting

² Office of Development Effectiveness, *Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: A Review of International Lessons* (2007).

³ In this report, the terms *violence against women* also includes violence against girls.



practices' that are worth following up, based on the evaluators' experiences with proven effective models in other parts of the world.

Finally, strategies that have been used elsewhere effectively, and that the team felt might be usefully adapted in Melanesia and East Timor, are identified as 'opportunities' for future intervention.

These steps formed the study's methodology:

1. **Document review** of more than 100 policy briefs, reports and studies on violence against women in the region, which provided a preliminary analysis of current and past work and international and regional lessons learned.
2. **Site visits** by the evaluation team of four to nine days were carried out in each country during September and October 2007. Helped by local researchers, the team carried out:
 - > **Semi-structured interviews** with key individuals, including policymakers, civil society leaders, women's groups, government officials, service providers, researchers and survivors who have used services, which provided valuable insight into how violence against woman is addressed.
 - > **Focus group discussions** with a diverse range of social actors, such as police officers, church members, community men and women and magistrates. The evaluation team used participatory techniques, including Venn mapping, free listing, timelines and open-ended stories to explore community attitudes toward violence against women and the options available to respond, at the community level and more broadly.⁴
 - > **Local researcher training.** The evaluation team trained local researchers to use participatory interviewing techniques and carry out additional interviews and focus group discussions in rural areas. In each interview or focus group discussion facilitated by either an international or local researcher, there was also at least one dedicated note-taker. Notes and reports from each interview were compiled, with care taken to record verbatim quotes as much as possible.
3. A **local advisory group** was set up in each country, including several knowledgeable, highly respected and well-placed women and men. The groups reviewed preliminary findings, formulated recommendations (with the international team) and identified possible next steps.⁵ Group members will also play a critical role in using the evaluation results to galvanise action in their respective countries and throughout the region.

⁴ These techniques are described at length in Ellsberg and Heise 2005, and are available online: www.path.org/publications/details.php?i=1524

⁵ Annex 3 lists advisory group members.

4. The **selection of promising practices** to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID's program staff, local activists, country advisory groups and local researchers. In all, more than 700 individuals participated, either through personal interviews, focus group discussions, or as members of local advisory groups.⁶
5. **Preliminary findings** were prepared by the international team based on the reports from the site visits and local researchers. Findings were presented during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, which involved the local researchers, AusAID representatives and advisory group representatives from all five countries.
6. **Major lessons learned and recommendations** for future development assistance in the field were developed by local advisory group members through a participatory, consensus-building process led by the international team during the Port Moresby workshop.
7. **Final documents** were reviewed by local advisory group members in each country, to ensure recommendations were faithful to what was agreed upon.

The result of this lengthy, complex process is a package of reports grounded in the perspectives and hopes of a broad spectrum of Melanesian and East Timorese society. This overall report outlines a framework for guiding cooperative action to address violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor. It is supported by five, brief, country-specific reports which permit a nuanced approach to proposed solutions and translate the framework into concrete, actionable proposals tailored to each country.

This package of reports is not a situational analysis, nor a comprehensive listing of all inspiring work being done in the region on violence against women. The short time frame for this evaluation was not sufficient to allow for an exhaustive review in every country. These reports therefore only include programs visited by at least one project team member.

The challenge of synthesising the enormous quantity of information gathered from all countries during this process—into relatively concise, policy-oriented briefs—required a focus more on common themes and solutions than the rich diversity of experiences encountered.

The team hopes that the package of reports and process of dialogue this project has generated will provide a blueprint for strengthening responses to violence against women in the region that is accurate, relevant and useful—for international donor agencies, government organisations, NGOs, community members, local decision-makers, activists and most importantly, the women who are affected by violence.

Note: Direct quotes from the research are included in this report in italics.

⁶ Annex 2 lists organisations consulted.



CHAPTER 2: A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

During the last decade, violence against women and girls—also referred to as violence against women and gender-based violence—has gained international recognition as a grave social and human rights concern affecting virtually all societies around the world. Epidemiological research has demonstrated that this violence is a major cause of ill health amongst women and girls. Its impact can be seen directly, through death and disability due to injuries, and indirectly, through increased vulnerability to physical and mental health problems. Violence and the fear of violence severely limit women's contribution to social and economic development, thereby hindering the achievement of important national and international development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and improving maternal and child health.

2.1 Scope, magnitude, consequences and causes of violence against women

Violence against women includes, but is not limited to:

- > **physical violence**, such as slapping, kicking, hitting or use of weapons
- > **emotional abuse**, such as systematic humiliation, controlling behaviour, degrading treatment, insults and threats
- > **sexual violence**, including coerced sex or being forced into sexual activities considered degrading or humiliating
- > **economic abuse**, such as restricting access to financial or other resources with the purpose of controlling or subjugating a person.

Both men and women can be victims or perpetrators of violence, but the characteristics of violence commonly committed against women and men differ. Women are more likely to be physically assaulted or murdered by someone they know—often a family member or intimate partner. They are also at much greater risk of being sexually assaulted or exploited, in childhood, adolescence or adulthood. Men are the main perpetrators of violence against men as well as against women.

Prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence vary widely among countries and sometimes even between studies in the same countries. A study of 10 countries—the *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*—carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO), found between 13 and 62 per cent of women have experienced physical violence by a partner over the course of their lifetime, and between 3 and 29 per cent of women reported violence within the

previous 12 months (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen et al. 2006). Internationally, 8 to 26 per cent of women and girls report having been sexually abused as children or adults. An estimated one of every three women globally is beaten, raped or otherwise abused during her lifetime (Heise, Ellsberg et al. 1999). A recent study, for example, found that in South Africa a woman is murdered by an intimate partner every six hours (Mathews, Abrahams et al. 2004). Women are also subjected to different types of violence throughout their lives.

Violence against women has serious consequences for women's health and wellbeing, ranging from fatal outcomes (such as homicide, suicide and AIDS-related deaths) to non-fatal outcomes (such as physical injuries, chronic pain syndrome, gastrointestinal disorders, gynaecological problems, unwanted pregnancy, miscarriage, low birth-weight of children and sexual dysfunction). Sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence is also associated with higher risk of subsequent victimisation, early sexual activity, substance abuse and multiple sexual partners. Researchers have documented negative outcomes among children of women who experience violence, including increased levels of child mortality and emotional and behavioural problems (WHO 2002; Ellsberg, Jansen et al. 2008).

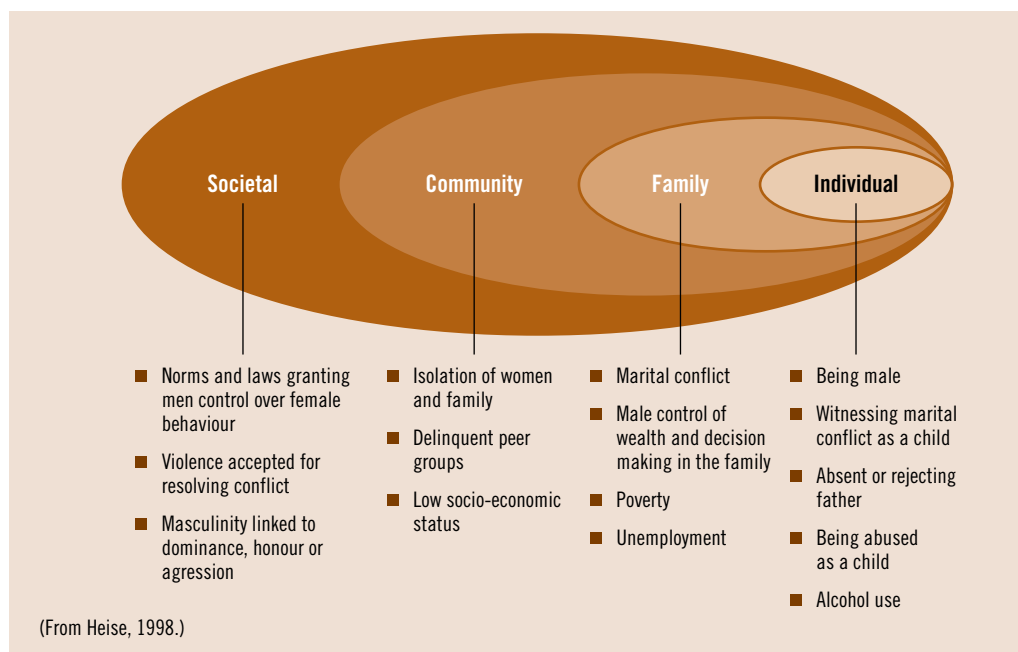
The link between violence against women and HIV infection is well established. Women who have experienced physical and sexual violence have higher rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The fear of violence also prevents many from negotiating safe sexual practices (e.g. condom use) and seeking treatment for STIs or other injury (e.g. genital trauma). (Maman, Campbell et al. 2000)

Violence against women causes significant economic costs—lower worker productivity and income, disability, lost years of life and lower rates of accumulation of human and social capital. This has intergenerational impacts: children miss out on the better outcomes and lower household poverty that result from increases in women's productivity and earnings. It also constrains poverty reduction efforts and generates other forms of violence now and in the future. (Morrison, Orlando 2004; Morrison, Ellsberg et al. 2007)

Violence against women is complex and shaped by forces operating at individual, relationship, community and society levels. Key risk factors include witnessing or suffering abuse as a child, exposure to violence as a child, male control of household decision-making and wealth, cultural norms supporting violence as a way of resolving conflicts, cultural norms supporting male dominance over women, low educational levels of men and women, and policies and laws that discriminate against women. Male abuse of alcohol is an important trigger. Figure 2.1 presents an ecological framework used by WHO and others to show risk factors for violence at different levels.



FIGURE 2.1 AN ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLAINING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



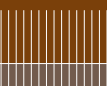
2.2 Interventions to prevent and respond to violence against women

Because violence against women is multicausal and multidimensional, interventions to prevent and respond to the issue must also take place on multiple levels. A World Bank review of global best practices concluded that multisectoral solutions are a critical part of any effective strategy addressing violence against women. Such strategies must improve coordination between sector-specific approaches, civil-society initiatives and government institutions. They must also take into account the need for change in all layers of the ecological framework—from national laws, policies and institutions, to community-level norms and support networks—and households and individual attitudes and behaviours (Bott, Morrison et al. 2004; Morrison, Ellsberg et al. 2007).

This study focused on three main strategies used throughout the world to reduce violence against women:

1. **Increasing women's access to justice** by passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders; providing women with the means to protect themselves and children from violence through access to restraining orders, divorce and child maintenance; and ensuring humane, fair treatment by justice-system personnel (including judges, police and forensic doctors). In Melanesia and East Timor, where parallel systems of justice operate, women need to have their rights upheld through both formal and traditional systems, and have access to the information necessary to exercise their rights effectively.

2. **Increasing women's access to support services**, such as psychological, medical, and legal support, as well as safe haven. The level of support for survivors of violence provided by government institutions, NGOs, women's rights groups, faith-based organisations and community-based organisations, also needs to be increased.
3. **Prevention of violence** by coordinating efforts to raise awareness; changing community attitudes about violence; and increasing women's status in society through political, social and economic empowerment. Preventing violence against women involves dialogue between all sectors of society at national, regional, and community levels. Prevention must also include awareness campaigns, advocacy and ongoing community-level activities.



CHAPTER 3: WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MELANESIA AND EAST TIMOR?

3.1 Previous studies on violence against women

There is little published, quantitative research on violence against women in the region. Studies conducted in East Timor, Fiji and PNG have used different methodologies and definitions, making findings difficult to compare. It is hard to know, for example, to what degree the findings of national studies conducted long ago in Fiji (1999) and in PNG (1982–85 and 1994) are still relevant.

Violence against women is difficult to research accurately because it is a sensitive and often shameful topic for survivors to discuss, and without strict standards of privacy and confidentiality, female respondents could be subjected to reprisals. For these and other reasons, WHO has produced a manual establishing ethical guidelines for researching violence against women and descriptions of appropriate quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Ellsberg and Heise 2005). These methods were used by WHO for its *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* in more than ten countries (WHO 2005). This approach allows cross-country comparisons, which help build understanding of the factors relating to violence. It also provides a baseline for tracking future trends and the impact of interventions. Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are carrying out national studies using the WHO methodology.

Table 3.1 presents results from existing studies on violence against women in the region (records from police and service agencies are not included). Because the number of women who report violence is generally only a small proportion of those suffering violence, these data are not a reliable estimate of the extent of violence (Ellsberg and Heise 2005). Variations in reporting rates are more likely to reflect changes in agency practice than changes in the prevalence of violence.

TABLE 3.1 RESULTS FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MELANESIA AND EAST TIMOR

Study	Methodology	Major findings
EAST TIMOR		
Hynes, Ward et al. 2003	Population-based survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 1 in 5 married women is afraid of her partner. > 1 in 4 women had been physically assaulted by her partner during the previous 12 months. > 1 in 10 women had been beaten while pregnant and half of these experienced a negative pregnancy outcome. > 16% of married women reported sexual coercion by their husbands during the previous 12 months. > 1 in 4 women reported sexual violence during the crisis versus 1 in 8 post-crisis. > During the crisis, 27% of women reported physical violence from outsiders (militias and military), whereas post-conflict rates were one-quarter of those during the crisis period.
FIJI		
Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) 1999	Participatory research, interviews and focus groups conducted with 1575 women in 8 provinces, and using retrospective analysis of the FWCC and police cases over the previous 5 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 66% of women had been physically abused by partners and nearly half repeatedly abused. > 26% of women had been beaten while pregnant (= 42% of physically abused women). > 48% of married women had been forced into sex by their husbands. > One-third of women had been hit for refusing sex. > Many women had been abused by female in-laws and siblings. > 13% of women had been raped. > 30% of rape victims were 11 to 15 years old. > 31% of perpetrators were family members.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA		
PNG Law Reform Commission 1992	Quantitative research covering 16 provinces and Port Moresby; postal questionnaire sent to public servants and wives; surveys of 2 squatter settlements; studies of domestic violence cases at a major hospital and 3 police stations; case studies of abused wives, and 3 anthropological studies (N=1203 women and 1192 men).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 67% of wives had been beaten by their husbands (national average). > Close to 100% of wives in the Highlands were beaten by their husbands, but half that for Oro and New Ireland provinces. > In urban areas, 1 of every 6 women interviewed needed treatment for injuries caused by their husbands. > 97% of patients treated for domestic violence injuries were women. > 94% of domestic violence complaints made to the police were made by women. > When wives hit husbands, it was usually in self-defence.
PNG Institute of Medical Research 1994	Study on sexual violence involving 432 interviews with women and men and 61 focus groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 55% of women had been forced into sex against their will. > Half of married women had been forced into sex by their husbands. > 60% of men interviewed reported having participated in lainap (gang rape) at least once.
Riley, Wohlfahrt et al. 1985	Study of case records of sexual assault victims needing medical treatment at Port Moresby Hospital (N=91).	<p>Of the female victims seeking treatment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > half were younger than 16, one quarter younger than 12, and one in 10 younger than 8 > many perpetrators were family members.
UNICEF and Resources 2005	Situational analysis based on qualitative data including focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, testimonies, life stories, and observations, from 3 selected areas spanning 7 provinces in PNG.	Many examples of child sexual exploitation were found in towns and in the vicinity of mines, logging operations, fisheries and other sites of resource exploitation or large-scale construction.
Amnesty International 2006	Interviews with women and service providers in 5 provinces and in the capital.	Widespread and extreme physical and sexual violence was reported by women and service providers.

3.2 Common forms of violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor

To gain a broad understanding of how violence against women is perceived in the region, the project team asked many groups—women and men—to participate in a ‘free-listing’ exercise and put forth what they consider to be forms of violence against women, and to say which forms are the most common and the most severe. Women who had undergone physical or sexual violence were invited to describe their experiences, and staff of agencies working with women who were living with, or had survived, violence were asked about the cases they see.

Women and men were usually consulted separately and generally produced different responses. For example, men tended to discount acts that did not result in injury:

Violence means there's a lot of force, where she gets an injury, where he hits her and causes a mark. If he just slaps her, it's OK (village men's focus group discussions, Vanuatu).

Men were less likely to mention emotional abuse, unless they had received awareness training. They typically recognised rape of unrelated women, or of girls as a serious offence (especially incest, or when an illegitimate child results), but not rape within marriage. Both women and men perceived physical violence by husbands against wives as the most common form of violence against women, often resulting in injuries and sometimes in death.

Intimate partner violence

Not surprisingly, women, even teenage girls, could consistently talk at length and in detail about the multiple types of physical, sexual, emotional, social and financial abuse they or others known to them had experienced. Abuse by intimate partners topped the list in every group discussion, in all countries. The examples in Box 3.1 show that physical violence is one part of a constellation of behaviours that simultaneously display and reinforce men's dominant role.



BOX 3.1: EXAMPLES OF COMMON TYPES OF ABUSE BY INTIMATE PARTNERS, AS REPORTED BY WOMEN*

*These types of abuse were reported in all countries, but for space reasons only typical, selected examples and quotations are included.

Physical

Hitting, kicking, punching, whipping with belt, hitting with any object close at hand, stabbing, throwing boiling water, hot oil or hot food, burning with cigarettes, breaking teeth, chopping off fingers

The husbands of working women like to give their wives black eyes, so everyone can see he's still the boss (FGD -- PNG)

Beating and choking, whipping with rope, pulling hair, breaking bones, burning with fire, banging head on floor.

Women need more training on domestic violence as a crime. They think of it as a normal, acceptable event because it happens daily (policewoman in a Victim Protection Unit, East Timor).

Early this year, there was a serious case [in our area] where the wife died; her neck was broken by her husband. Last year, another woman was killed who was pregnant (young women during focus group discussion, Solomon Islands).

Emotional

This degrades the woman; it lowers her self-esteem. She feels hurt and bad, even to the point of committing suicide ... I know women who have done this (young women during focus group discussion, Solomon Islands).

They call us slut, or pamuk (prostitute) and other rude words. They talk down on you. They say 'You're just a woman'. And psychologically, it's very damaging (survivor during focus group discussion, PNG).

Sexual

My own case is that if my husband has beaten me up, I don't want to have sex with him afterwards. But then he would force me, even in front of the kids, he would strip me off and the kids are telling him "Daddy, Daddy, stop", but he just treats me like that (survivor during focus group discussion, PNG).

Boys beat up their girlfriends who want them to use condoms (young women during focus group discussion, Solomon Islands).

Financial

He treats me like old clothes. My children and I are suffering till now, but he always has money for his drink. When I ask him for money for food, he beats me and beats me until our children come to separate us (personal story, East Timor).

Destruction or theft of property

Husbands and sons taking the woman's things, even her pots and pans, to sell for money for kwaso (homebrew) or drugs; burning her clothes because of jealousy (provincial women's focus group discussion, Solomon Islands).

Forced pregnancy

It's only men who own the land, so the in-laws put pressure on the woman to have a son. They say, "When are we going to have a landowner?" Even if she has five daughters, she has to carry on trying to get pregnant to have a boy. If she doesn't get pregnant, it leads to fights with the husband (women's focus group discussion, East Timor).

BOX 3.2: TYPES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OCCURRING IN THE COMMUNITY***Opportunistic rape**

If a girl has to stay late at school, she has to walk home alone, and then she can be raped (Vanuatu). If women have to walk anywhere, they try not to go by themselves, so they don't get raped (PNG).

Punishment or 'payback rape'

Even after the tensions, women married to men from the opposite side were still being raped, as punishment (Solomon Islands).

Men don't like women who act 'bigheaded'. Sometimes a man will get his mates to come round when he's having sex with his girlfriend, and they all rape her, to teach her a lesson (PNG).

Sexual abuse of girls, incest (especially father-daughter)

I have interviewed girls where fathers, uncles, brothers, even grandfathers and adopted siblings, were perpetrators of sexual violence (East Timor).

Gang rape

Pack rape is very common in PNG. They call it lainap. Recently, there was a case in the paper of 30 men doing this. And another [gang rape] of two young girls at the Goroka Show, right in the middle of the crowd, while the band was playing (PNG).

Abduction for rape

Sometimes men steal a girl and keep her for days or weeks and rape her continuously. This happens in town, and in the villages, too (PNG).

Conflict-related rape

Girls were just being picked up by the military in dark-glass cars, and no one could say anything because they were afraid for their lives (Solomon Islands).

Sexual harassment at workplaces and schools

It's very, very common in workplaces in PNG. It's happening everywhere these days, where the boss says, "You must do this", or she'll lose her job. Even a married woman has to do it, and she can't tell her husband, because if she does, he will beat her up on the spot (PNG).

Girls can get raped at high school, or at primary school, by the teachers. It's a common thing. They will probably call them in for some lessons or homework to do, and then the teacher starts playing a game, like 'If you do this for me, I can help you out in your subject or in your homework'. Even if she refuses, the teacher can push himself on her (PNG).

Sexual exploitation of women and girls by husbands, brothers, fathers

The father takes the money and sends the girl to the logging camp. Or they negotiate for the logger to build a house or buy an outboard motor. Some girls are only 14 or 15 (Solomon Islands).

We know there are men going round the internally displaced persons camps looking for women and girls to take for trafficking, but it's hard to get the information we need to catch them (East Timor).

*all quotes from focus group discussions



Sexual violence and exploitation

Sexual coercion inside and outside intimate relationships was common in all countries visited. While women acknowledged being forced to have sex with their husbands against their will, they for the most part did not understand this to be rape. In general, women do not talk even with friends about what happens in their sexual lives, seeing this as ‘shameful’, and knowing too that society expects them to comply with their husband’s sexual demands. Sexual violence outside marriage was also considered to be common, particularly in situations of conflict or emergency (Box 3.2).

Other forms of violence against women

In addition to domestic and sexual violence, women perceived several other behaviours or practices as serious forms of violence, such as:

- > arranged marriages
- > forced marriage as part of a dispute settlement
- > mistreatment of widows
- > sorcery accusations⁷
- > violence against sex workers
- > violence by women against women, particularly in disputes over men.

3.3 Women’s responses to violence

Through two stories of fictional women—one beaten by her husband, and another involving her younger sister who was raped by a schoolmate—this study explored the types of support to which women might have access in Melanesia and East Timor. The stories were presented during focus groups discussions and participants were asked where these women would go for help, what kinds of barriers they would encounter, and what would be the likely outcomes of their efforts.

The answers were strikingly similar throughout the region, and in line with international studies (WHO 2005). Women overwhelmingly seek the support of informal networks first. Formal services, such as women’s centres or the police, are used only as a last resort, for various reasons.

When responding to the story of Laila,⁸ the battered wife, participants said she might turn to her friends or family for immediate shelter; however, neither would be able to help for long. Laila’s friends might fear becoming involved, including because she may fear reprisals from her own husband. The family might feel the husband had a right

⁷ In PNG, there are an increasing number of cases in which women (and occasionally men) are accused of being witches and are brutally tortured, often to death. This appears to be linked to the recent spread of HIV/AIDS and the lack of understanding about how it is spread.

⁸ The names and circumstances in the story were modified in each country to make the story more typical for each setting.

to beat Laila, particularly if a bride-price had been paid. They might worry about being forced to return the bride-price to the husband's family. Also, given that customary law in several countries gives custody of children to the husband's family, the wife might lose her children if she separates.

When this happens, the father would tell the children that their mother ran away because she did not like them. Children suffer when their mother is not there (local court clerk, Vanuatu).

Because domestic violence is seen as a private matter, participants said other community members or relatives would unlikely intervene to protect Laila from her husband. *Mi no wantem save* ('I don't want to know' in Bislama) and *Ino bisnis blo mi* ('It's not my business' in Bislama) are phrases commonly used by those who witness violence but do not intervene to stop it.

Laila might also seek the support of the local chief or church pastor. The pastor would remind Laila that she vowed to stay in her marriage 'till death do us part', and would encourage her to 'forgive and forget' and return to her husband.

If the case is in the rural area, then [the] FWCC is too far and so pastors are usually the first stop. In some villages, the pastors can continue to visit them and counsel them based on biblical principles. The pandits would be doing the same thing (Social Welfare Department, Labasa, Fiji).

The chief, on the other hand, might set up a *kastom* court meeting, in which the husband or both the husband and Laila would pay a fine before the chief sent Laila back to her husband. Most women come to realise, as a result, they can do very little about the violence.

She cannot speak out because of bride-price is one [reason] and secondly she is under threat ...Part of the reason is she has no place to go back, like her father and mother they do not want her, which happens to some women. And some they have a lot of children and they can't go back. So they have their own reasons (Kup women's focus group discussion, PNG).

In these cases, violence is not likely to stop. After attempting to solve the problem, many women resign themselves to their fates.

When responding to the story of Freya,⁹ the younger sister who was raped, participants said shame and fear would most likely keep Freya from reporting what happened, even to her family:

In school, I couldn't talk to friends because I was ashamed. No, I didn't tell any of my friends (rape and incest survivor, Salvation Army home, Labasa, Fiji).

⁹ The names and circumstances in the story were modified in each country to make the story more typical for each setting.

Although police tend to take sexual assault more seriously than domestic violence (unless the assailant is the husband), the absence of police in rural areas means that when a victim discloses a rape, it will most likely be dealt with by the local chief. The chief would probably order the family of the perpetrator to pay compensation to the rape victim's family, which, depending on the setting, might take the form of pigs, woven mats, kava, shell money, whale's teeth or cash. Even some magistrates argued that cases of rape should be dealt with by chiefs rather than courts.

I think the most that can be done is to call the parties involved, maybe the chief can do it in a chief's hearing—he will take a walk over to the house of the man, and ask him to pay compensation to her or to the family (usually not her). The payment is to prevent a payback against him, maybe to rape his daughter (male magistrate, Solomon Islands).

The families might also arrange for the victim to marry the rapist.

Normally, the relatives of the girl take the belongings of the girl and say, "Here, you can have her." A case I saw was a reconciliation where the parents of the boy or girl decide for them to marry (male magistrate, Solomon Islands).

Whatever the outcome, all agreed Freya would endure many hardships for the rest of her life because of the rape, and would receive little support or sympathy from her family or community.

She will hide it for a long time, because she's a student she should have decided not to join these people at the party, so her being raped is her own doing (village woman, Navutulevu, Fiji).

In our Indian community, if it happens, the girls will drink and [commit] suicide because of it (teacher, Fulton College, Fiji).

3.4 Challenges to addressing violence against women

Violence against women is increasingly recognised as a serious human rights and development issue around the world, but many factors make it difficult to eliminate.

Women's low status

The status of women in Melanesia and East Timor is relatively low compared to women in other parts of the world. As measured by the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) gender-related development index,¹⁰ of the 136 countries rated, Fiji ranked 82 and PNG 124. Rankings are not available for the other countries studied (by the team, as opposed to the UNDP), but the indicators for female literacy and education, economic survival and political participation are low relative to the same indicators for men. High rates of maternal mortality (except in Fiji) indicate poor levels of health for women, as does the narrow gap between female and male life expectancy (Annex 1).

¹⁰ The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's gender-related development index ranking compared with its human development index ranking.

These indicators confirm what women and men in the countries visited already know from their own experiences. People interviewed regularly commented on women's low status relative to men, which they viewed as a major obstacle to reducing violence against them. These types of remarks were frequently heard:

In our culture, we don't give much respect to the women and children.
(police officer, PNG)

We are still tied to our traditional culture, where men are dominant and where they control the family and the village. We still have the problem of that mentality (woman activist, East Timor).

To be effective, a program of action to reduce violence against women and girls must be long-term, and conceived broadly enough to address these long-standing attitudes and the structural inequalities in which they are embedded.

Cultural factors

The women and men consulted frequently referred to customary practices and attitudes they believe put women at risk of violence and make it difficult or even impossible for them to protect themselves against it. The region is rich in cultural diversity, but certain common features emerged.

Bride-price: In all countries, except Fiji, bride-price was cited as the biggest factor (along with economic dependence) in perpetuating violence by men against their wives.

He will say he's paid bride-price so that gives him the right to hit her. The chief and the family will agree with this. They will say that 'You are his property' (focus group discussion, Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC)).

Frequently, wives believe they must put up with the violence. Regardless, leaving their marriage would mean repaying the bride-price, which is usually far beyond their means. The modern tendency for bride-price to be paid mostly or wholly in cash reinforces the view that payment gives a husband property rights. In the experience of the director of Solomon Islands' only women's shelter:

The men come and they say "I bought her for \$5,000. I can do anything with her. She's my property, not yours." (Sr. Doreen, Christian Care Centre)

Economic dependence: Everywhere, women's reliance on a male breadwinner was seen as a major deterrent to even complaining about, let alone escaping from, violence. Control of land and property in the region's predominantly patrilineal cultures is in the hands of men,¹¹ and the preference for educating boys rather than girls (who will eventually marry and leave home) means women have fewer income-earning opportunities, and the income from cash-crops or royalties from mining and

¹¹ This also applies to the few matrilineal societies in the region, except those that are also matrilocal, meaning that women stay on their clan land and their husbands move to live with them.



logging (which in PNG and Solomon Islands can bring in massive sums) is seen as belonging to men.

Women say: "If I report my husband for what he did, I won't get any money from him when he's in prison." So only a woman who has a job can come forward and do something about it. But most don't have jobs, and need the husband so they'll have money for school fees and things for the children
(female police officer, Solomon Islands).

In the end, many women feel they have no choice but to risk their safety to preserve the material welfare of themselves and their children.

Polygamy: In former times, men in many Melanesian and East Timorese cultures had the right to take more than one wife if they had enough land. Today, everyone relies on cash, so if a woman's husband takes another woman (as a girlfriend or another wife), she and her children lose out financially. In Solomon Islands, this practice has become so common that the women in a man's life are referred to colloquially by numbers (01, 02, 03, etc.) according to the order in which the relationships began. Women complaining about the 'other women' is one main cause of wife-beating in all countries visited, and sometimes of fights between women.

Sexual double standard: Christianity's expectations of fidelity and chastity do not generally overcome local cultural tolerance for men's sexual adventures or misdeeds, and have boosted cultural condemnation of women's perceived sexual misdeeds. Woman-blaming attitudes are common everywhere. In Solomon Islands, for example, some married women raped during conflicts were made to pay compensation to their husbands' families because of the shame caused by the rapes. Young women and girls are especially afraid of the 'shame and blame' they will suffer if they report being raped.

If we say Maina has been raped by David, it will cause Maina trouble. She will be embarrassed all the rest of her life. She may be subject to further assaults. She may be easy prey (male magistrate, Solomon Islands).

Patterns of 'out-marriage' for women: In the region, women generally move to live with their husband's kin once married. This means they are often far from sources of family help. Even when they want to return to their family to escape abusive husbands they may be refused, especially when there is pressure on land and resources.

Patriarchal religions: The major religions in the region are Christianity and Hinduism, both of which support the belief that the husband is the head of the family. Although some progressive churches are moving toward a more egalitarian view of marriage, what some women's activists in PNG call 'the Gospel approach to domestic violence—forgive and forget' is the message most women receive from their churches.

Compensation and reconciliation: In the traditional cultures of Melanesia and East Timor, maintaining peace between groups and their (male) leaders remains a highly-regarded value. The interests of women and girls are not seen as separate from those

of the group, so injuries against a woman or girl are dealt with by compensating the males who had rights to her (father, brother, husband). Women are unhappy about family members benefiting from their injuries and feel it undermines their future safety.

If a suspect is doing violence and he can afford to pay compensation for that, then by accepting the compensation, the violence is allowed to continue (village woman, East Timor).

In PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, a woman or girl who has been raped might be made to marry her rapist to normalise relations between the two families and clans.

Violence against women within the context of armed conflict and emergencies

Gains made in addressing violence against women in the region have often been eroded by armed conflicts, political crises or natural disasters, which have created conditions in which violence against women has increased. Women in East Timor, for example, suffered from violence and intimidation by occupying forces and local militias during the Indonesian occupation (1975 to 1999). The conflicts following the independence referendum in 1999 and those subsequent to independence in 2002 devastated the country's infrastructure and caused massive displacement of people seeking safety. Even now, many thousands still live in camps, where women and girls are vulnerable to domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and trafficking (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007; International Crisis Group 2008).

In Solomon Islands, ethnic tensions erupted during periods of armed conflict between 1998 and 2003. Many people had to flee their homes and three quarters of women 'suffered direct personal trauma', including violence and threats (International 2004). Agencies assisting women noted an increase of those seeking help for domestic violence and rape at the same time as all other services, including the police, were barely able to function.

Even after the tensions, the men went back to the villages and were abusing their wives because there was nothing for them to do (trauma counsellor, Caritas, Australia).

Similarly, after the 2006 tsunami:

There was lots of violence and beating of women due to loss of property during the tsunami and men taking out their frustrations on women (staff member, Save the Children, Solomon Islands).

In PNG, tribal fighting continues to disrupt life in many parts of the Highlands, where nearly half the population lives. In Bougainville, the effects of the nine-year civil war that ended in 1999, during which all services ceased, are still being felt. Armed men and boys, who for years used guns to intimidate women, became habituated to violence. High levels of armed crime and sporadic civil unrest continue to contribute to women's vulnerability to violence in large areas of PNG, especially in urban areas.



Fiji has also suffered political turmoil for much of the last two decades. The four coups in recent history (two in 1987, one in 2000 and one in 2006) have had a chilling effect on women's rights advocacy and programs. Research carried out by the FWCC and others documented the myriad ways in which violence against women increased as a result (Ali 2007).

As well as conflicts, all countries in the region suffer regularly from natural disasters, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, floods, mudslides, droughts, frosts and tsunamis. These disasters displace populations and increase women's dependency on men. They also increase women's vulnerability to physical and sexual violence, both from displaced males and from rescue workers.

HIV and AIDS as a cause and a consequence of violence against women

The increasing incidence of HIV and AIDS in the region adds a lethal potential consequence to sexual violence against women. In 2002, PNG became the fourth country in Asia-Pacific to reach the level of a generalised epidemic, in which the whole population is at risk. The number of known persons living with HIV or AIDS in the other countries in the region is still small but growing (Annex 1).

Sexual and physical violence against women contributes to the spread of HIV. Fear of partners' violent reactions makes women less willing to discuss using condoms or question their partners about their other sexual activities.

Women are now worried about getting HIV and it's causing more fights about the infidelity of the husband (Sr. Doreen, Christian Care Centre, Solomon Islands).

Women with abusive husbands are also afraid to admit they have been raped, been tested for STIs or HIV, or to disclose a positive diagnosis and access treatment. Social workers at Port Moresby General Hospital's Family Support Centre in PNG, for example, are finding:

Now that [antiretroviral therapy] has become available, women who kept quiet about their status when they were tested in pregnancy are coming to get the treatment. Some of them get bashed up when their husbands find out, even if they know they are responsible. We see them come in now with broken bones and quite bad injuries.

CHAPTER 4: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

4.1 Why is an integrated approach important?

Reducing violence against women requires simultaneous action at many levels by multiple actors. Government commitment and capacity, the participation of women in public life, a strong civil society and an understanding of gender and human rights issues are critical to creating an enabling environment for ending this type of violence. Commitment and coordination by international agencies and donors to support the efforts of national governments and civil society are also critical. Progress on these fronts is uneven across the region.

4.2 Barriers to achieving an integrated approach to violence against women

Lack of gender and human rights framework

Gender equality is an idea that has to be nurtured because it causes sensitivities. Merely talking about gender equality is a direct challenge to male dominance (Ministry for Women, Youth and Children, Solomon Islands).

Efforts to end violence against women are greatly strengthened when a coordinated approach to gender equality and human rights is taken. Without a shared understanding of these rights, it is not only difficult to effect permanent change on violence against women, it risks being counter-productive. The team witnessed numerous occasions where attempts to address violence against women were likely to have harmful effects on women because they were not based on a human-rights approach. Examples of such efforts are: counselling programs for abused women that encourage them to be more obedient to their husbands; approaches of some faith-based organisations to domestic violence that promote the authority of the husband; training materials on rape that place blame on the victim's dress or behaviour; and community responses to domestic violence resulting in vigilante groups and barbaric treatment of alleged offenders.¹² This is challenging for those providing funds, who want to ensure that competent gender analysis is applied in project design and appraisal (Box 4.1 describes a gender equality and human rights approach to violence against women).

¹² The team found examples of all of these, and many more.



BOX 4.1: ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of discrimination against women. Governments are obliged to respect, protect, promote and fulfil all human rights, including the right of women to be free from discrimination. Failure to do so results in, and exacerbates, violence against women. For example, if governments fail to criminalise certain forms of violence against women or allow discriminatory penal laws to remain in force, then these acts may be perpetrated with impunity.

A human rights approach places the discussion of gender-based violence within a broader framework of human rights and justice and challenges prevailing norms (e.g. ‘that domestic violence is a private issue’) and to empower individuals and communities to promote change. It further accepts that human rights are inalienable and indivisible—that women have a right to live free of violence under all circumstances and that they should not have to give up this right to maintain a family or ensure economic support for their children.

Adapted from United Nations 2006 and Guedes 2004

Implementation of international standards

As signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), all governments in the countries studied are obliged to exercise due diligence in protecting women against violence (Box 4.2). Signatories are also obliged to report regularly on progress towards the CEDAW’s 16 substantive Articles—a process that has proved valuable in creating more general awareness about gender equality and human rights. Fiji, Vanuatu and East Timor have submitted their first reports. PNG and Solomon Islands are still preparing theirs.

As part of national efforts to comply with the CEDAW, all countries in the region have, at some point, created national commissions or task forces to address the status of women, including violence against women. These are typically convened by the national women’s machinery¹³ (although the Fiji Violence against Women Task Force was chaired by the Ministry of Justice). In Fiji and Vanuatu, preparation of the government’s CEDAW report has served as an opportunity for government ministries and civil society to engage on the issue. Regrettably, the commissions or task forces are generally short-lived and under-resourced. National women’s machineries are also notoriously weak and they occupy marginal political space, which impedes their ability to galvanise support for gender issues in male-dominated governments. In several cases, political instability, as with the coups in Fiji and the tensions in Solomon Islands, has interrupted coordination. In Solomon Islands, the Ministry for Women, Youth and Children’s Affairs was disbanded even before the tensions, and has only recently been re-established. In other cases, as in PNG, a combination of factors, including changing political will, eroded gains made in the 1980s.

¹³ Refers to the government department, office or division responsible for women’s affairs. In some countries, such as PNG, the national NGO representing women is considered to be part of the national women’s machinery.

BOX 4.2: OBLIGATIONS OF STATES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN UNDER THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

States must promote and respect the human rights of women and exercise due diligence:

- (a) To prevent, investigate and punish acts of all forms of violence against women, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society, in custody or in situations of armed conflict.
- (b) To take all measures to empower women and strengthen their economic independence and to protect and promote the full enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms.
- (c) To condemn violence against women and not invoke custom, tradition or practices in the name of religion or culture to avoid their obligations to eliminate such violence.
- (d) To intensify efforts to develop and/or utilize legislative, educational, social and other measures aimed at the prevention of violence, including the dissemination of information, legal literacy campaigns and the training of legal, judicial and health personnel.

Source: United Nations 2003

Lack of evidence base

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a dearth of current local research on the magnitude and characteristics of violence against women needed to inform policy decisions. Although there is abundant evidence that violence against women is a grave problem throughout the region, and one that merits urgent action, international experience has shown that rigorously performed research can be a powerful tool for advocacy. Research findings can persuade decision makers of the need to act and can guide programming so scarce resources are used most effectively to maximise impact.

Lack of coordination among stakeholders

All countries acknowledged the importance of increased coordination, not only among government agencies and civil society organisations, such as NGOs, but also donors and other international agencies. In general, most groups spoken to do not have much knowledge about what other countries were doing, or in some cases, what different branches of the same agency were doing in the same country. Increased coordination is clearly critical to maximise impact and avoid duplication of efforts.

Women's participation in public life

With the exception of East Timor, which introduced special measures resulting in women making up 26 per cent of parliamentarians and holding three seats in every local-level council, the virtual exclusion of women from decision-making bodies vastly increases the difficulty of getting issues of importance to women onto the political agenda. In Fiji, 11 per cent of parliamentarians are women, but PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have all had periods with no female member. In PNG, only four women have been elected to its 109-member Parliament in its 33 years of Independence and at all lower levels women are barely represented.



In default of government leadership, civil society organisations, mostly made up of women, have attempted to fill the gap. Only Fiji, however, has a solid tradition of civil society activism, including by women, and this has come under serious threat as a result of the country's four coups in the last 20 years.

All countries have national umbrella organisations of women, which have tended to be conservative and riven by internal dissensions. East Timor's strong women's movement, which grew out of the years of resistance to Indonesian occupation, has been strengthened through coordinated donor inputs as part of reconstruction and nation-building.

4.3 Promising practices in integrated approaches to violence against women

National policies to promote gender equality

In contrast to the majority of women's machineries in the region, which lack sufficient resources and political support to be effective, the Office of the Secretary for State for the Promotion of Equality in East Timor has made remarkable progress in the six years since being established (Box 4.3).

Strengthening the evidence base on violence against women

In Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, population-based surveys are being conducted with funding from AusAID and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to gather information on the prevalence, perceptions and nature of violence against women in-country. In Vanuatu the survey is being carried out by the VWC, and in Solomon Islands by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Based on the methodology developed by the WHO for its *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*, these surveys will provide the baseline data needed to support national activities to address violence against women.

BOX 4.3: OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY IN EAST TIMOR

Initially known as the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), this body is now called the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI). Its head sits on the Council of Ministers and is therefore able to influence decisions. Strongly supported by United Nations' missions and agencies, the office has benefited from advice from senior international technical advisors on gender and violence against women and from substantial donor funding. Strengthening national capacity to address gender-based violence is one of its four core programs.

OPE/SEPI has worked on several fronts and with multiple sectors simultaneously. Its achievements include:

- > Legal changes to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies, including those that hear offences against women, at national and community levels, and training of female candidates in this area.
- > Draft legislation on domestic violence submitted to Parliament.
- > A new law giving local authorities duties to reduce domestic violence in their communities.
- > Development of a network of basic services for survivors.
- > Increased public awareness through extensive civic education and public awareness campaigns.
- > Advocacy with the Department of Education to include in school curricula the right of women to live free from violence.
- > Obtaining a grant of more than US\$5million under MDG-funding to work jointly on the economic empowerment of women, protecting them from violence. Funded activities under this grant (2008–10) include: strengthening referral systems and agencies in the districts, especially links between the police and NGOs; training and monitoring of the suco councils on implementing their new duties to reduce domestic violence; expanding the system of hospital-based safe spaces into the districts; and activities to prevent trafficking, protect female internally-displaced persons, and provide rehabilitation for perpetrators and increase men's activism.

Multisectoral coordination

PNG has developed an interesting model to increase coordination among organisations working to end violence against women called the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) (Box 4.4). One strength of, and at the same time a challenge faced by, the FSVAC is that it is a hybrid model, managed by an NGO with government participation. While this gives it legitimacy and greater NGO participation, it prevents it from having as much convening power or weight as it might have if located in a government ministry and chaired by a high-ranking official (e.g. the Ministry of Community Development, where the Gender Division currently sits). The FSVAC has now developed a new strategy for the next five-year period.



BOX 4.4: THE FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ACTION COMMITTEE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The FSVAC was founded in 2001 to enhance coordination among organisations working on violence against women in six focus areas:

1. institutional framework
2. legal reforms
3. services for victims
4. perpetrators
5. community prevention and response
6. data collection and research.

The FSVAC's role is to coordinate activities in each focus area, which involves working with dozens of groups around the country (with funding from bilateral and multilateral donors). Despite having only a small staff, the FSVAC has made valuable contributions in numerous ways, including: assisting with reform of sexual offences and child welfare legislation; promoting the Family Protection Bill; distributing legal literacy materials; developing training and advocacy materials; running national awareness campaigns, especially during the global 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women; collecting data from service providers; successfully lobbying for the establishment of FSCs in hospitals; and commissioning research. Provincial-level committees have also been set up in several provinces to coordinate local actions.

Source: Bradley and Kesno 2001

Strengthening women's political participation

East Timor is unique in the region for strongly promoting the political empowerment of women as a means of preventing violence against women. Remarkable progress has been made in increasing women's participation in public decision-making and leadership. During the 2001 elections, various affirmative action measures resulted in a national Parliament with 26 per cent female membership. The Independent Electoral Commission, which oversees and monitors the three levels of elections, has 25 per cent female membership. Women are also increasingly represented in high positions in government (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007). Box 4.5 describes an innovative approach to grassroots empowerment of women that has beneficial effects on violence against women.

Regional initiatives to build capacity of local institutions

Regional coordination and exchanges among groups have been critical for the growth of the anti-violence movement in Melanesia and East Timor. The FWCC, in particular, has played a central role in mentoring local organisations and supporting regional initiatives. The Centre also provides technical support for other organisations working in the region, such as the VWC. The FWCC convenes the Pacific Women's Network on Violence against Women, which meets every four years and carries out regional training workshops for network members, including civil society organisations and government departments that deal with violence against women. Support is provided through ongoing in-country support visits and the regional training and attachment

program, as well as regular liaison (email and telephone). The regional training and attachment program is conducted once a year and is an important aspect of the FWCC's services. It gives participants maximum exposure to strategies and activities that address violence against women. The curriculum is continually reviewed and updated, taking into account the latest regional and international information and practices. It also provides for specific needs—for example, upgrading counselling skills, improving centre management and conducting advocacy campaigns.

BOX 4.5: PARTICIPATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The primary intention of the Participation and Enhancement of Rural Women's Leadership program was not to intervene in addressing violence against women. The program targets elections for *suco* councils and chiefs, who in 2004 were given both the power and duty to protect women from domestic violence.

In preparation for the first *suco* elections in 2004, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), cost-sharing with the UNDP and the European Commission, began a large-scale program of 'transformative leadership training' for potential female candidates. Roughly half the female candidates (1265 out of 2596) received training; of whom 29 per cent were elected. Seven of these were elected as *suco* chiefs and 22 as *aldeia* chiefs.

An evaluation of the longer-term impact of these successful candidates and their family lives, as well as their participation in council decision-making, was carried out in 11 districts at the end of 2006. Examples of the findings include:

- > increased confidence and ability to speak up, both in the family and in the council
- > less conflict and violence in the family, attributed to their husbands paying them more respect—'Men are happy when their wives are elected. It's a privilege for the family.'
- > some husbands more willing to share money and domestic chores with wives, thereby reducing domestic disputes and violence
- > some elected women able to raise the issue of domestic violence with their councils, as well as other women's issues such as family planning, sanitation, children's vaccinations, school facilities and women's sports.

In 2007, UNIFEM and other donors introduced the five-year Integrated Programme for Women in Politics and Decision-Making, to build on gains made. This program also aimed to promote women's effective engagement in local conflict prevention and peace-building.

Source: Program documents and evaluation, and interviews with UNIFEM staff.

The Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) has also played a critical role in providing training and technical assistance to governments and NGOs in human rights and justice with a gender focus (Box 4.6). Both the RRRT and the FWCC are recognised throughout the region for their enormous contribution in building capacity around women's human rights.

United Nations agencies, and particularly the regional UNIFEM Office in Suva, have also played an important role in supporting and facilitating coordination between governments and civil society in addressing violence against women. In addition



to financial support for local efforts, through the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF),¹⁴ UNIFEM has provided regional capacity building for organisations working on topics covering violence against women, including project design and implementation skills.

BOX 4.6: PACIFIC REGIONAL RIGHTS RESOURCE TEAM

The Fiji-based Pacific RRRT works in eight countries in the region, including Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, to help state and non-state partner organisations build capacity on human rights and gender equality. The team works with policy makers, institutions and at the community level. The RRRT also offers workshops to community paralegals, judges, lawyers, medical practitioners, teachers, and police on human rights and gender equality, as well as to community members on their legal rights, and to government officials on human rights and the meaningful implementation of CEDAW.

The team has played a lead role in national legislative reform, including providing technical input into the drafting of the Family Law Act in Fiji (2003) and the recently passed Family Protection Act in Vanuatu (2008), both of which significantly increased options for women living with domestic violence. The RRRT has also provided input into draft instructions for a Bill of Rights for Solomon Islands as well as judicial training which has led to growing support for human rights, recognition of the importance of addressing violence against women as a human rights issue, and an increase in applications for international conventions in courts. Judgments in Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, for example, indicate that lawyers, activists and judges are using human-rights language more often and considering human rights more often to guide their decisions.

4.4 Overarching recommendations to strengthen the enabling environment for addressing violence against women

1. **Ensure all interventions are grounded in a human rights and gender-transformative approach.** This means all programs at national, provincial and local levels should explicitly acknowledge that gender inequality is reflected in community norms, institutional policies and practices and laws, and that violence against women is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men. Wherever possible, programs should adopt an integrated approach and aim to address the causes of violence and to transform gender relations, rather than simply providing palliative care.
2. **Support efforts to strengthen the evidence base on violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor.** There is a need for more research on violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor. Priority should be on:
 - > Research that documents the prevalence, characteristics and risk factors of all types of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, as well as under-documented forms of violence, such as commercial sexual exploitation of children, trafficking, sexual violence in armed conflict and emergencies, and femicide (the murder of women). Research should be based on methodologies already being used internationally

¹⁴ In 2007, the PNG government received a grant from the UNTF to strengthen efforts to address violence against women.

(e.g. WHO's *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*) to enhance the ability to compare.

- > Efforts to strengthen national statistics offices and incorporate indicators of violence against women into national information systems, such as HIV surveillance.
 - > Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of promising practices.
 - > The support needed to broadly disseminate existing research findings and build regional capacity to carry out research in women's rights organisations and formal research institutions.
3. **Encourage coordination of aid among international donors to maximise impact.**
As much as possible, support should be provided to organisations working on violence against women as core funding with multiple-year grants, rather than just project-focused or earmarked funding.
 4. **Support multisectoral coordination, including between government and non-government actors, at both national and local levels.** Support could include:
 - > developing and implementing national, provincial, municipal and community plans of action for preventing violence against women
 - > supporting interagency task forces on violence against women (e.g. within the context of CEDAW reporting)
 - > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
 - > collaborating on training and capacity-building of local stakeholders across sectors.
 5. **Strengthen women's leadership and economic and political participation at all levels.** Priority should be given to providing women the necessary tools, skills and opportunities to participate fully in the social and economic development of their communities and nations.
 6. **Build capacity in project management, communication and gender analysis.**
Priority should be given to building a common body of knowledge and experience in the region, through:
 - > supporting regional initiatives for building the capacity of local groups in key areas such as monitoring and evaluation, program management, counselling skills, communication and advocacy
 - > strengthening existing networks, including opportunities for shared learning with innovative programs inside and outside the region
 - > supporting joint initiatives in developing tools, program materials, etc., to improve the quality of work in the region
 - > supporting exchanges and mentoring opportunities for organisations in the region.



CHAPTER 5: IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

5.1 Why is access to justice important?

Effective justice systems are important in reducing violence against women. First, they can provide physical protection by invoking powers greater than that of individual offenders. Second, they can provide a crucial statement about what behaviours are not acceptable—this is particularly valuable where relations between women and men are undergoing change. And third, successful prosecution of offenders removes the sense of shame-and-blame so often felt by survivors, and contributes to their emotional recovery. Successful prosecution also acts as a deterrent to future offenders and an incentive for other survivors to come forward with their complaints.

5.2 Barriers faced by women in accessing justice

The justice systems in the countries studied face many challenges in meeting the needs of all citizens, not just those of women. These countries have inherited legal systems from former colonising or occupying powers that are cumbersome, complex, long out-of-date and unsuited to local conditions in many ways. All are under-resourced, loaded with massive backlogs and face enormous logistical difficulties in providing service to the rural majority. These issues are compounded by additional constraints limiting the ability of the law to provide justice and protection for women and girls who experience violence. In many cases, the recommendations at the end of this chapter—for increased commitment to providing women with access to justice for violence perpetrated against them—will contribute to developing the justice sector more broadly.

The legal framework

Although there has been progress in each country with legal reforms, each is still hindered in multiple ways by the legacy of outdated colonial laws. For example, no country has laws specifically criminalising domestic violence. Sexual-offence laws inherited from colonial governments also pose enormous barriers to successful prosecutions. These see sexual violence as an offence against morality rather than a crime against a woman's person and they require women to prove their good character by providing evidence, which exposes them to further trauma.

In addition to the need for specific legal reforms on violence against women, many other areas of law severely limit women's ability to protect themselves. These include family laws relating to separation, divorce, custody of children, maintenance and marital property; inheritance laws governing land and property; protection against sexual harassment; minimum age at marriage; age of consent; abortion; and discriminatory laws against sex workers but not their clients. (Annex 1 summarises the status of relevant legislation for each country.)

The formal justice system

Wife-beating happens every day, but only the brave ones come to us (police officer, PNG).

International experience has shown that legal reform is only the first step to increasing women's access to justice. Translating laws into policies and systems and ensuring police, magistrates and other justice system personnel are aware of and implement laws appropriately is equally important but more difficult to achieve. The formal justice systems in the five countries studied are, for the most part, not effective in providing justice or protection for women because they are urban-based, complex, intimidating, under-resourced, time-consuming, unreliable and administered mostly by males. Solving this implementation problem, especially by extending the reach of the formal justice system into rural areas, remains a core challenge across the region.

Police are usually the first entry point for most women seeking access to formal justice. Sadly, women generally find police response to be unhelpful at best, and sometimes even harmful. According to those interviewed for this report, including survivors of violence and police officers, the police tend to see domestic violence as a 'family matter', and either send women away to 'settle it at home' or attempt to mediate between the woman and her abuser at the police station.

In real life, in the police station, when we have this kind of case, most times it's determined at the enquiry desk. If it's a minor case, they would send a car to bring in the man and give counselling to settle it at the station. There's no training, just what they pick up on the job (police focus group discussion, Vanuatu).

Typically, no record of complaints are made, and if a woman wants to file one and have her husband arrested, police often counsel her to think about how she and the children will survive if the breadwinner is jailed (e.g. *He'll lose his job and then where will you be?*). As a high-ranking police officer in Vanuatu explained:

We give the couple ample time, because three days later the wife usually comes back and wants to withdraw the statement. So we tell the wife we will keep her statement for a few days before proceeding, because we don't want to waste our time.

In the relatively rare cases presented to a magistrate, and where custodial sentencing occurs, a very high proportion of decisions are reversed on appeal. A recent study presented by the FWCC, for example, reports that 90 per cent of sexual assault cases in 2006 were reversed on appeal, compared to 20 to 40 per cent of cases of murder, robbery and other crimes. (Ali 2007).

Given that violence against women is generally condoned in the region, it should not come as a surprise that many officers in the justice system—including police, lawyers, magistrates, judges and court staff—share the values and views of their communities, which support men's use of violence to control women. One main reason for lack of responsiveness by police and magistrates to women reporting violence is the assumption that she must have done something to deserve the beating or sexual assault.



Sexual violence in marriage was explained by beliefs about men's greater sexual appetites and their rights to satisfy them at will with their wives. For rape outside marriage, men (and many women) often blame the rape on the behaviour of the victim. For example, rape is seen as a result of the 'chemistry' men feel when looking at a girl dressed in contemporary clothes.

Women are wearing short skirts. That is taboo and that is how rape happens (male magistrate, Solomon Islands).

Traditional justice systems

Formal justice systems are not within the reach of many women and so most are forced to rely on informal or custom-based systems run almost exclusively by men to resolve their problems. Many women expressed dissatisfaction with these traditional systems, which resolve disputes through compensation to male-kin groups, which women feel neither address their personal suffering nor guarantee protection.

Compensation makes the family feel happy about the money, but not the girl (young women's focus group discussion, Solomon Islands).

Views expressed by women in East Timor were typical:

Once a woman is married, the elders say she must obey her husband because of the cows [paid as bride-price]. All decisions are made by men. They don't listen to women, and the woman is always blamed (women's focus group discussion).

Knowledge of laws and rights

Low rates of education and literacy, and barriers of language and mobility, mean many women do not know about their rights or the laws intended for their protection.

When women come to our workshops, they talk about a lot of kinds of violence they've experienced, like emotional abuse, and sexual. They didn't know before that it was violence, but they've been experiencing it (woman activist, Solomon Islands).

Men, too, may not be aware when their behaviours are harmful or seen as crimes under national legal systems. Informants mentioned cases in which women tried to educate their husbands about their rights and were beaten for it.

5.3 Promising practices in increasing women's access to justice

Transforming justice systems so they are more responsive to women suffering violence has been a primary focus of women's rights activists in the region for many years. In some cases, as in PNG, substantial gains were made during the 1980s through the work of the Law Reform Commission (LRC), only to disappear during the 1990s after the Commission's mandate expired (PNG Law Reform Commission 1992). In other countries the fruits of years of activism are finally being seen, as in Vanuatu where the Family Protection Act was finally passed in 2008 after nearly ten years of consultation and advocacy.¹⁵

In all countries, it is clear that hard-earned gains in providing justice can be fragile and short-lived, and that vigilant monitoring is needed to make a real difference in the lives of women. The reporting processes for CEDAW-signatory countries can stimulate pressure for ongoing justice sector reforms. Women's NGOs and activists in Fiji and Vanuatu have made good use of CEDAW processes and reports, and the other three countries whose reports have not yet been formally presented should also plan to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Legal reforms on domestic violence and sexual violence

All countries have either passed legislation or have draft legislation in the pipeline recognising the special circumstances of domestic violence and allowing magistrates to make orders on the spot where there are grounds, including temporarily barring the husband from the home, ruling on maintenance and custody of children, and banning molestation or harassment by the partner. Breach of such orders would be an offence on which police would be required to act automatically.

The Government of Fiji, with considerable input from civil society organisations, passed a Family Law Act in 2003 (entry into force in 2005). This law created the Family Law Court (opened in 2005) which issues restraining orders that married women can access relatively easily through civil means. The orders now take two to three days to obtain, compared with two to three weeks before the law was enacted. The Act also puts women on a more equal footing with men in relation to divorce, separation, maintenance, custody, adoption and other matters subsumed under family law—this greatly assists women needing to leave abusive marriages.

With the injunctions in place, women can leave the home with their personal items as opposed to being chased off without the opportunity to take anything with them. Also, with the provisions of the Act, counsellors can 'negotiate' on behalf of their clients so they coordinate court proceedings, etc (FWCC counsellor).

¹⁵ At the time of writing, this Act had still not been formally signed into law and is being contested by opponents.



The RRRT, a well-known Fiji-based human rights organisation, has called Fiji's Family Law Act a model for the region. There is now interest in reviewing family law in Cook Islands, Kiribati, PNG, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Recognising that enacting new legislation is a lengthy process, Fiji has also pioneered a quicker route to legal reform through test cases which establish new legal precedents and give fairer treatment to women. In 2004, years of gender training provided by women's rights NGOs to lawyers and the judiciary paid off in the Appeal Court ruling which stated that corroboration of rape from other witnesses was discriminatory against women.

In Solomon Islands, the Law Reform Commission has prioritised the reform of the morality offences of the penal code. The offences cover rape, indecent assault, defilement, procurement, and incest, but shortage of technical expertise means that progress is slow. East Timor, Fiji and Vanuatu have made some piecemeal improvements to their sexual offence laws, but only PNG has succeeded in making a major overhaul (Box 5.1).

BOX 5.1: CHANGES TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S LEGISLATION ON SEXUAL OFFENCES

Using technical expertise provided by the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Department for Community Development prepared amendments to the Criminal Code and the Evidence Act, which were passed in March 2002 after lobbying and advocacy by organisations representing women and children. Main features include:

- > Creation of clearly defined sexual offences against children (under 16 years, 18 years in some cases), including sexual touching and sexual exploitation, with increased penalties for those in a position of trust, such as parents, teachers and the police.
- > Definition of incest expanded to cover more categories of relationships, in line with custom.
- > Improved court procedures to protect survivors' safety and dignity.
- > Definition of rape expanded to cover penetration of the mouth or anus and use of objects; requirement for medical corroboration removed; victim's previous sexual conduct not admissible as evidence.
- > Rape in marriage became illegal by the removal of the final three words from the existing definition of rape in the Criminal Code: 'unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman, *not his wife*'.

Building on beginnings made by the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the UNIFEM and the Department for Community Development are collaborating on a three-year project to educate communities, leaders, health service providers, legal aid organisations, the police and the judiciary about the amendments in two pilot provinces. Progress will be monitored and evaluated annually.

Improving the formal justice system's response to violence against women

Establishment of special police units for offences against women: Special units within police departments have been used in all countries to strengthen the response to offences against women, including domestic violence and sexual assault. All are under-staffed and under-resourced, lack training, and are given low priority (or actively undermined) by other police. Despite this, women report receiving better attention from special units than when they have to report to front desks, and want to see the system better supported and expanded (Box 5.2)

Lesson learned

Special units for offences against women are valuable in providing institutional recognition that violence against women is a specific problem requiring specific skills

BOX 5.2: ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF A SPECIAL POLICE UNIT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- > well-trained, staff (mainly females), available 24 hours a day
- > facilities that allow for privacy and confidentiality
- > communication and data collection equipment, and access to reliable transport
- > strong links with medical services and organisations which provide support to survivors
- > high-level champions in the police force
- > training on violence against women for all police

Police No-Drop Policy: Several countries have developed internal policies requiring police to prosecute domestic assaults and making domestic assault by police a disciplinary offence.

The most successful is Fiji's 'No-Drop Policy', introduced in 1995. Intended to protect women from being pressured by husbands and families to drop charges, the policy requires police to see every case through to court, where women stand a better chance of favourable outcomes from trained magistrates. As the only such policy in force in Melanesia and East Timor, the No-Drop Policy is a groundbreaking effort to strengthen sanctions for domestic and sexual violence and protect victims from pressure and retribution by other family or community members. By taking the decision out of the hands of women and police, the policy transfers the responsibility for resolution to the courts and reduces the number of cases resolved through 'reconciliation'. However, over the past 13 years, implementation has been inconsistent and has led to unintended negative effects (e.g. a reluctance of some police to register cases of domestic violence and of women to report violence to the police). Stories from survivors of violence, as well as police officers and magistrates, indicate that while some women want the violence to stop, they do not necessarily want the offenders, their husbands or partners to go to prison. In these cases, the No-Drop Policy may act as a deterrent to reporting incidents of domestic violence to the police. However, it is still considered a promising practice within the region and other countries (e.g. Solomon Islands) are currently developing their own no-drop policies.



Training of justice systems personnel: During the research team's consultations with police, it was always immediately obvious which participants had attended FWCC training and which had not. The benefits of training for justice-system personnel were most visible in Fiji. There, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), the RRRT, and above all, the FWCC have for many years conducted sensitisation on gender, violence against women and human rights for magistrates, judges, police officers, public prosecutors and legal aid lawyers.

Lesson learned

Justice system personnel at all levels must be targeted with regular training and refreshers on violence against women and human rights

For years, magistrates have received gender training from the NGOs. Those have been effective. The NGOs have really educated people, even to the extent of criticising magistrates. That's good—it keeps us on our toes (magistrates' focus group discussion).

Domestic violence protection orders: Although specific domestic violence legislation is not yet in force in any country studied, women's rights activists and lawyers have found ways to provide survivors of violence with a minimal level of protection, at least in urban areas where police and magistrates are available. In 1992, Solomon Islands was the first jurisdiction in the region to introduce legislation on restraining orders for married women at risk of violence, though implementation and enforcement remain weak. In Fiji, the 2005 Family Law Act allows magistrates to make injunction orders in cases of violence. These can be made on urgent application in the absence of the defendant, and extended for up to one year once heard in court. Breach is automatically a criminal offence. Uptake of these orders is good, according to women's organisations.

Other countries awaiting their domestic violence legislation are using less-formal interim solutions. In PNG some magistrates are using ad hoc orders based on century-old 'keep-the-peace-provisions'. In Vanuatu, court rules and procedures were changed by a sympathetic Chief Justice to allow magistrates to issue short-term Domestic Violence Orders, and this system is still being used pending the coming into force of Vanuatu's Family Protection Act of 2008.

Although protection orders cannot completely solve the problem of women living with violence, they can provide women with breathing space to consider their options.

It reduces the violence and makes the man think. It makes him realise there's someone more powerful than him that is superior and can order him how to behave (public solicitor, Vanuatu).

Medico-legal protocols for sexual assault: PNG and East Timor are developing standard formats to guide the medical examination of sexual assault of women and children. These ensure that medical evidence for use in possible prosecution is collected and stored in ways that meet the evidentiary requirements of the legal system. Experience in PNG has shown that continued cooperation between these two sectors has been difficult to maintain, and protocols have been used and dropped over the last 20 years. A new format, developed through a joint working group, is being piloted and will be incorporated into training for doctors, lawyers, prosecutors and the judiciary. These procedures should ensure women receive the medical treatment they need, regardless of their intention to prosecute.

Lesson learned

The development and implementation of medico-legal protocols for sexual assault contribute to improved medical and legal outcomes for survivors.

Integrating gender equality and human rights principles into custom- and community-based systems

Recognising the extreme limitations of formal justice systems, all countries have explored ways of strengthening informal or community-based systems for restoring harmony and solving disputes generally. These systems are much more accessible to the majority of people, and if supported with capacity building in gender equality and human rights principles they offer important opportunities for reducing violence against women.

Community-based justice, community policing, restorative justice, peace mediation and conflict resolution are being enthusiastically promoted by governments, donors and civil society organisations. However, these approaches can work **against** gender justice unless they include specific measures to level the playing field. Although the language of ‘community-based initiatives’ is apparently gender-neutral, the reality is that communities are still largely controlled by men and custom still generally operates to men’s advantage. Unless women are included in planning and implementing, their needs and interests, including justice for victims of violence, are not likely to be addressed.

Lesson learned

Male gatekeepers of traditional justice systems are crucial entry points for change.

In Vanuatu, training through the Vanuatu Women’s Centre Male Advocates Program has targeted village chiefs and other male leaders, with encouraging results. Methods used are described in Chapter 7 (Box 7.1). The work is challenging, but many participants end their week of training by saying *‘faia itet the fire is dead’*, meaning they have overcome their anger and resistance (Tahi and Ali 2006). Chiefs who agree to abide by certain standards of personal conduct become part of the male advocacy



network, attend refresher sessions and work with their local Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAWs).

The chiefs and the church are now inviting the CAVAW into their problem-solving meetings. The women have suffered too much, but nowadays life is much better than in the past for the women in this area (Chief, Vanuatu).

As a chief, I can talk to other chiefs. I'm a member of the North Ambrym Council of Chiefs, and we make the decisions about everything on the islands ... I answer the questions in meetings because many of the questions are critical. Men always want to put women down. So I always do my best to explain the rights of women and children (Chief, Vanuatu).

Another example of community-based approaches to justice is the Nauro-Gor Community Laws in PNG (Box 5.3).

BOX 5.3: NAURO-GOR COMMUNITY LAWS, SIMBU PROVINCE, PNG

In 2005, nine clans came together to make peace after 32 years of devastating tribal fighting, mediated through the Catholic Church. Male leaders signed a peace agreement and formulated a list of community laws which they pledged to support. These were based on local custom and contained provisions which restricted women and trivialised domestic violence. Men were appointed to leadership positions in the new Nauro-Gor Association, and several were trained as community police.

During 2006, the communities participated in 'community conversations', a community development approach to HIV/AIDS prevention integrating principles of gender equality and human rights. Leadership positions were then created for females in the association. Two men (including the Chairman) and two women were selected to attend a week-long training course with UNIFEM in Port Moresby on gender and human rights. This led to the community laws being revised with the participation of women, and an equal number of female community police being trained. The association has since asked for gender equality and human rights to be taught in local schools.

The making of peace—itself a major achievement—has created an openness among communities, including male leaders, and a willingness to rebuild their lives with different principles. The initiative is in its early days, and women as well as men need time to change old habits of subservience and dominance. The ongoing process of community conversations, and commitments of continued support on gender equality and human rights from UNIFEM and Oxfam, is helping consolidate the present commitment and enthusiasm of the new leadership and prevent potential backlash.

Recent initiatives of the village courts system in PNG deserve mention, in that these courts apply custom but are part of the formal justice system (since 1973). Officials therefore receive training and some supervision, making it feasible (though challenging) to integrate new standards on human rights and fairness for women into local-level justice. Earlier efforts to improve local justice for women have been progressively stepped up since 2000, with slow but encouraging results. This model addresses the need expressed in other countries visited for greater harmonisation between custom-based and formal justice systems.

Monitoring outcomes for women

East Timor has the best example in the region of monitoring women's experiences with formal and informal justice systems, through the Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP). This program was established in 2001 by an East Timorese NGO. Its reports have been used to press for reforms, including measures to increase election of women to local decision-making bodies (the *suco* [local government] and *aldeia* [village] councils) and the 2004 Decree-Law on Domestic Violence. Under this law, chiefs of *suco* councils are given duties to prevent domestic violence, support and protect victims, and punish and rehabilitate perpetrators. Continued monitoring of implementation will be used to inform the training for *suco* councils.

Lesson learned

Ongoing monitoring of women's experiences with tradition-based and restorative justice systems is essential to ensure women's rights are being appropriately addressed.

Strong local women's rights organisations can be effective watchdogs of traditional and restorative justice systems. Some CAVAWs fulfill this role in Vanuatu, supported by their national organisation, the VWC. The experience of some women's community-based organisations in the Highlands of PNG (e.g. Kup Women for Peace) shows this can be difficult and even dangerous work. Participating in wider networks, capacity-building for leaders and providing resources increase the chances of sustainability and success. However, monitoring should not be delegated solely to NGOs. Justice systems should monitor and report on outcomes for women as a normal part of their operations.

Legal literacy for women and survivors

All countries lack adequate legal aid services, and so other ways have been found to help women understand and cope with legal processes. Self-help leaflets, produced by women's NGOs with donor assistance, have been successfully used by women to obtain support and protection orders, but uptake of legal options is much greater where women receive help from trained workers. All major support agencies attempt to help survivors, and some, such as the FWCC, the VWC, the Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAF) in PNG, and the RRRT at the regional level, also provide paralegal training for other organisations.

Lesson learned

In addition to awareness of their rights, women need in-depth knowledge and skills to exercise their rights effectively.

In East Timor, the JSMP's Victim Support Service has helped improve outcomes for women. It educates women and children survivors of physical and sexual violence about legal processes and provides one-on-one support throughout every case it takes on. Results are lower drop-out rates, higher sentences, and faster hearing of cases.¹⁶

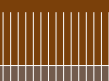
TABLE 5.1 APPROACHES AND PITFALLS FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Potentially promising approaches	Typical pitfalls and problematic approaches
Enacting laws on violence against women.	Low technical capacity in legislative drafting, causing extreme delays; lack of sensitisation for members of legislatures; inadequate support for public advocacy.
Reforming family and property laws.	Family courts that pressure women to reconcile; lack of training for magistrates on violence issues.
Using CEDAW reporting processes to stimulate demand for legal reforms.	Failure to provide sustained technical expertise; lack of integration into justice-sector priorities.
Educating legal officers and the police about the new laws.	Insufficient resources allocated for in-depth training at all levels; training without follow-up refresher sessions; failure to monitor and evaluate implementation and impact of laws.
Policies requiring police to treat domestic assault as a crime.	Failure to allocate resources for implementation and monitoring; lack of police protocols for dealing with cases of domestic violence.
Disciplinary measures against police offenders.	Lack of commitment to implementation; under-funding of police-welfare sections.
Special police units for offences against women.	Use of male rather than female staff; poor training; failure to provide logistical support and address issues of resentment from general-duties police. Can absolve the rest of the police force from responsibility for addressing violence against women.
Implementing police no-drop policies.	May deter women from reporting, for fear of the consequences if their husbands are jailed; police may resist accepting reports.
Increasing, improving or providing training for police.	Training that focuses on new recruits or special units rather than all police, including the highest levels of command; training that is one-off, or not tailored to the target group.
Introducing short-term Domestic Violence Protection Orders.	May be too short in length for survivors to plan next steps; hard to enforce.
Introducing medico-legal protocols for rape.	Over-promotion of medical evidence; pressure on survivors to prosecute; inadequate training.
Strengthening custom-based justice systems.	Failure to recognise and address entrenched male bias; inadequate resources for sustained sensitisation on gender issues and reduction of potential backlash.
Introducing/expanding community-based policing.	Domestic violence often dealt with as a family matter; lack of accountability leads to power abuses; risk of vigilante behaviour and human rights abuses in enthusiastic but untrained communities.

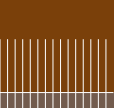
Monitoring of customary justice outcomes by women's organisations.	Short-term funding for capacity-building; perpetuates view of violence against women as a low-priority women's issue.
Involving women in custom-based justice bodies.	Tokenism; lack of sustained capacity-building for women and sensitisation for men.
Providing public education on laws and rights.	Framing violence against women as an issue of gender/women rather than human rights and development; failure to reach men as well as women; lack of integration into educational curricula; failure to partner with service providers.

5.4 Recommendations for increasing women's access to justice

1. **Support national legal reform efforts.** This should address specific legislation on domestic and sexual violence, including age of consent and age of marriage, and other areas of law limiting women's ability to obtain protection (such as laws relating to marriage breakdown, custody of children, maintenance, property rights, inheritance and sex work). Equally important is monitoring the legislation implementation and its impact on women.
2. **Commit long-term support to strengthening police response to violence against women.** Police are usually the first entry point for women seeking justice, and their response to cases of domestic and sexual violence is critical. Four concurrent approaches are recommended:
 - > ongoing targeted training for police at all levels, including introducing clear protocols for responding to domestic and sexual violence that emphasise women's legal rights to be protected from violence
 - > strengthening and monitoring the dedicated units for domestic and sexual violence that exist in all countries in the region
 - > applying consistent disciplinary action against police offenders
 - > monitoring women's experiences and case outcomes.
3. **Strengthen the response of the formal justice system to violence against women.** Ensure that laws and policies on violence against women are properly implemented by:
 - > transforming discriminatory attitudes through systematic targeted training of lawyers, magistrates, judges and other justice system personnel on gender and human rights issues
 - > promoting women's participation at all levels of the justice system.



4. **Strengthen the willingness and ability of community-based justice systems to respond to women's right to protection from violence.**
 - > Support dialogue between justice-sector personnel, women's NGOs and traditional leaders on how to honour women's human rights through traditional or restorative justice.
 - > Promote increased participation of women in justice-related decision-making bodies, and monitoring outcomes.
5. **Increase support for NGOs offering women legal literacy and human rights training.** Wherever possible, men should also be informed about women's legal and human rights.



CHAPTER 6: SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS

6.1 Why are support services important?

Improving women's access to support services is a pressing need around the world. The WHO's *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* found that in most countries more than half of the women who had experienced domestic violence had not told anyone about their experiences before the interview. Of those who had, the majority had spoken to immediate family or close friends, followed by local leaders. Only a very small percentage of women reported going to the police, a health centre, a women's centre or another formal service (WHO 2005).

The services that women and girls who have experienced violence require vary depending on their circumstance. While in a crisis, for example, they may require medical treatment, psychological and legal counselling, or urgent protection and safe haven for themselves and their children. Women who have been living in abusive relationships for a long time may need information about divorce, child custody and maintenance options. They may also need a sympathetic and knowledgeable advisor to help them decide what to do. Sexual assault victims need forensic documentation, prophylaxis for STIs, emergency contraception and police investigation. Starting the process of leaving a violent relationship is a particularly dangerous time for a woman, and this is when women are at greatest risk of homicide (Campbell, Webster et al. 2003). Whatever the need, it is important that a range of services be accessible and coordinated, and above all, that providers are respectful of a woman's right to decide what is the best and safest alternative for herself and her children.

Lesson learned

Women need support that is compassionate, timely, non-judgmental and, above all, respectful of their decisions.

One goal of the anti-violence movement in Melanesia and East Timor has been to increase the availability and quality of formal and informal support available to women. Many creative and innovative approaches have been used throughout the region, but there are still many gaps and challenges. Every country has at least one crisis centre to provide counselling and information to survivors of violence. Most of these centres are run by local NGOs, such as the FWCC, the VWC, Solomon Islands FSC, Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor (PRADET), the East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (*Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae*—FOKUPERS), and Family Voice in PNG's Eastern Highlands. The majority of centres visited by the team offer high-quality, compassionate services and coordinate as much as is feasible with hospitals, police and magistrates. Most also offer specialised counselling, legal advice and court accompaniment. Only a few organisations have trained lawyers on staff, and even fewer have medical staff, or



provide sexual or reproductive health services (with the exception of hospital-based centres in PNG). Only the centres in East Timor provide onsite emergency shelter, but the others coordinate with other agencies that do.

6.2 Barriers faced by women and girls seeking support services

Limited access

In most of Melanesia and East Timor, existing services are concentrated in urban areas, out of reach for rural women, who make up the majority of the population. In Solomon Islands, the country's only women's centre (the FSC) and women's shelter (the Christian Care Centre) are based in Honiara, the capital, even though 80 per cent of the population live in rural villages, spread out over many islands. In a few urban areas in PNG, there may be a women's or church NGO with some experience in supporting rape survivors, but generally there is no outreach in rural areas. One PNG policeman summarised the situation this way:

The ladies have rights, but in PNG they can't get the help they need. They have to live through the trauma.

Coordination amongst services is weak

In most countries, services are often far apart from each other, with little coordination among different offices. One woman in Vanuatu described having to go to five offices in one morning to obtain a Domestic Violence Protection Order, all the while trying to hide from her violent husband who was looking for her all over town. Navigating through this complex system can be expensive, demoralising and even dangerous. Because of the lack of coordination, a woman may have to repeat her story over and over. At the end of the journey, she is likely to be told by the police, judge, chief or whomever she turns to for help, that there is nothing to be done and she should simply return home. Not surprisingly, many women become discouraged and eventually give up. After her ordeal, the woman from Vanuatu commented:

I personally felt that it was too much for me to go through, especially when I was walking from one station to another in utter fear.

Quality of services is uneven

Another serious challenge is that, aside from the support provided by professional crisis centres, the quality of care many women receive from different institutions is uneven. Many support programs for abused women and girls do not have trained counsellors, for example. Staff tend to use their 'common sense' in dealing with women, which is often heavily influenced by traditional views of women's roles in society. Most police officers, teachers and traditional and Christian leaders interviewed said they 'counselled' women, although what this means in practice varies a great deal. In many cases, counselling appears to be a euphemism for encouraging forgiveness

and acceptance on the part of women, as well as exhortations to be a ‘better’ (more submissive) wife. For example, a pastor from Vanuatu who counsels battered women described his work this way: *“In 2007 I have counselled, prayed with and helped seven women whose marriage have been destroyed by acts of adultery and violence but are now living happily with their husbands who have also come to know the Lord.”*

Lesson learned

Counselling that reinforces traditional gender norms and blames women for violence is counterproductive.

Lack of resources

Many NGO-run centres survive on shoestring budgets, with sporadic donations from individuals or international organisations. Very few receive core funding or national government funds. This has a big impact on continuity of service, and on the ability to expand services beyond urban areas. Main exceptions are the VWC and the FWCC which have received core funding from international donors over a sustained period and have three branches each in rural areas. These branches are a testament to what can be achieved with long-term financial commitment from donors.

There is a huge unmet need for emergency and temporary shelter for abused women throughout the region. Although relief is temporary, having a safe place to go in the midst of a crisis can mean the difference between life and death for women living with violence. Many existing centres are led by faith-based organisations, such as Haus Ruth in PNG (City Mission) (Box 6.1); the Salvation Army in Fiji; and the Christian Care Centre, run by the Church of Melanesia in Solomon Islands. The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) also provides shelter for women in many countries, although not specifically for survivors of violence. East Timor has the most extensive network of safe houses. In Dili, FOKUPERS runs a safe house and supports groups in other provinces that run safe houses and assist women who have experienced violence (Trembath and Grenfell 2007). Other women’s or church organisations provide temporary shelter in six other towns. While there is no shelter in Vanuatu, the VWC has a small fund to help women obtain emergency housing.

The philosophy of the centres varies. Some have an expectation that women will return to their husbands, whereas others, such as the Haus Ruth Hostel in PNG (Box 6.1), support any decision a woman takes, and provide counselling and legal support for divorces and custody disputes. In addition to providing safe haven, the Christian Care Centre in Solomon Islands has carried out broad community-education programs, as well as a landmark study exposing the widespread commercial sexual exploitation of children in logging camps.



BOX 6.1: HAUS RUTH HOSTEL, PAPAU NEW GUINEA

Since 2001, Haus Ruth has been providing short-term accommodation, counselling and other support services to abused women and children. The hostel can hold up to 30 women, of whom some are employed women paying rent, which helps sustain the service. The City Mission and donors make up the difference. Staff are full-time, well-trained, and have excellent links with other services. The hostel is always full, and has to turn many women away. Those lucky enough to be taken in express enormous gratitude for the service, and say they find strength in the support of the other women.

Women want peace of mind and rest. When we enter this place they are like friends to us. They are like family. They love us and feed us three times a day. We encourage each other, how to stand up and tackle our problems ... It's only when you can share your pain with others that you can feel some relief (Director, Haus Ruth, PNG).

Because they have so few options, women often have no choice but to return home after staying in an emergency shelter. However, the shelters contribute to women's empowerment, and therefore, to longer-term change. Indeed, many studies around the world have shown that once a woman decides to leave a violent situation, even for a few days, the likelihood of eventually being able to live a violence-free life is greatly increased.

6.3 Promising practices in supporting survivors of violence

Integrating service delivery

Ensuring survivors receive the multiple kinds of assistance they need in a timely fashion is an important aspect of high-quality, woman-friendly service provision. Ideally services should be available in one location, and there are several examples of this in the region.

Lesson learned

Integration of services with other actors increases sustainability and improves the quality of services for female survivors.

One approach, used in PNG, is to locate a range of services in FSCs in hospitals throughout the country. The FSCs (recently renamed 'Stop Violence Centres') are based on the international model of one-stop shops. Each is typically staffed with a counsellor or social worker, and offers short- and long-term counselling, legal advice, medical treatment, help with emergency accommodation and other practical needs, and referrals to local support organisations. The hope is to also achieve police presence so all needs are addressed in the same, safe location. The FSC in Lae's Angau Hospital, operating since 2003, is a successful example of how this model can work. With help from *Medicins sans Frontieres*, it is being developed as a Centre for Excellence and a model for other provinces.

PRADET provides mental health counselling and assistance to women and children who have experienced physical or sexual abuse under a memorandum of understanding with the East Timor Department of Health. PRADET runs a facility at Dili Hospital, where survivors receive medical treatment and other forms of assistance in a safe environment (Box 6.2).

BOX 6.2: PSYCHOSOCIAL RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT IN EAST TIMOR'S SAFE ROOM PROJECT (FATIN HAKMATEK)

In 2002, PRADET established a 'safe space' in an area of Dili Hospital to treat victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. In 2006, it transferred to a purpose-built facility on the hospital grounds, funded by multiple donors, where it operates on the one-stop shop model, offering medical treatment, counselling, legal advice, some practical assistance with food and transportation, overnight accommodation when needed and referrals to other resources.

Key features include:

- > a well-designed facility with strong security and a separate entrance to one of the interview rooms so police can take victim statements without entering the main building
- > a homey environment with space for staff and volunteers to work, relax and cook
- > private interview rooms and confidential recordkeeping
- > trained female staff who have received regular support since the outset of the project from one consistent international mentor, and others as required
- > opening hours (seven days a week, with after-hours service)
- > good connections with other agencies working on violence against women and ongoing support groups of survivors of different kinds of violence.
- > training opportunities for doctors and other health workers.

PRADET's work on creating a formal medico-legal protocol for violence against women also deserves mention. It has developed and is piloting a standard pro forma in East Timor's three languages to facilitate the collection during medical examinations of evidence for use in legal prosecutions, based on WHO guidelines.

Improving the quality of care and support services

The FWCC has developed a training module for counsellors incorporating a gender and human rights focus and putting women's safety and autonomy above all else. This outstanding program has been successfully adapted by professionals and community members (e.g. the CAVAWs in Vanuatu). The FWCC also has developed and implemented a well-designed system of supervision and reporting, with frequent site visits and in-service training for staff. They carry out a month-long regional training program every year and train in other regions on counselling and setting up women's crisis centres (Box 6.3).

Another example of how quality of service can be improved through multisectoral coordination is the gender-based violence Referral Partners Network in East Timor. The network routinely brings together all the major agencies, advocating on their behalf with government and donors for improvements (Box 6.4).



BOX 6.3: FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

The FWCC is an autonomous, multiracial NGO established in 1984. It provides crisis counselling and legal, medical and other practical support services for women and children who are suffering from or who have survived violence.

The FWCC works to address all forms of violence against women, including rape, assault, sexual harassment and abuse of children. It is involved in public advocacy and community education on gender violence. The centre aims to influence public perceptions on violence against women and counter the culture of silence on the issue. The FWCC provides awareness programs and training on women's fundamental human rights and the contribution they make to development. It has three branches in provincial towns throughout Fiji.

A recent evaluation with former clients and stakeholders of the FWCC program concluded that service provision is consistently high quality and clients feel they are well supported.

The Australian Government has provided financial support to the FWCC since 1989. The New Zealand Government also has a long association with the centre, although support was initially channelled through the Fiji Government and Oxfam New Zealand. In 2000, the New Zealand Official Development Assistance (now the New Zealand Agency for International Development) began providing direct support to the Fiji branches.

BOX 6.4: THE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE REFERRAL PARTNERS NETWORK, EAST TIMOR

Begun in 1999, the Referral Partners Network's current NGO members are FOKUPERS, PRADET, JSMP Victim Support Service, Oxfam Australia, the Alola Foundation, Rede Feto, and the Association of Men Against Violence. Government is represented by the national Victim Protection Unit and the Department of Social Services. Multilateral donors are represented by the UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNICEF, and the International Organization for Migration.

The Network has two approaches for improving collaboration and coordination of support services:

1. A working group that meets regularly to develop a shared approach to case management, with standardised protocols and data collection and training standards and materials.
2. A subgroup of the network, the Referral Pathways Group, that meets weekly to discuss difficult cases, and to help members logistically in contacting outlying areas, finding transportation for witnesses or safe accommodation for children being victimised at home, or keeping track of the movements of traffickers suspected of exploiting women and children in the internationally-displaced persons camps. Members (several of whom are male) attend consistently and value highly the moral and practical support they receive.

Strengthening community-level networks

We thought we were just housewives, but then we started doing this work. All the mothers realised they had a lot of power to change our lives (focus group discussions, Morata).

Although ideally there should be at least one women's crisis centre in each major city or province, there will never be enough to cover the needs of all women in the region. Therefore, a key strategy to ensure that women have the information and support they need is to strengthen informal support networks at village level. The CAVAWs in Vanuatu are an impressive example of what can be accomplished with relatively few resources. Set up under the leadership of the VWC, there are more than 30 spread

throughout the six provinces of Vanuatu. They have had great success in helping women resolve their problems through counselling, by accompanying them through police and judicial procedures, and by providing counsel to local chiefs in settling cases of domestic violence (Box 6.5).

BOX 6.5: COMMITTEES AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN VANUATU

The VWC has set up a network of community-level CAVAWs in all six provinces of Vanuatu. The volunteers receive basic training in legal literacy and counselling skills and provide support to community women suffering domestic abuse or sexual assault. There are now 33 CAVAWs in Vanuatu. They coordinate closely with the branch offices of the VWC, as well as local authorities, such as police, health providers and chiefs. They receive periodic visits and training from the VWC, and a small stipend to help with transporting survivors, paying court fees and meeting other needs. Another important part of the Committees' work is raising awareness in the communities around women's rights and violence against women.

As they have become increasingly skilled and respected, CAVAW members play critical roles in helping women obtain Domestic Violence Protection Orders, reporting and accompanying women to the police or magistrate courts, and even advising local chiefs in settling domestic disputes. Because community leadership tends to be heavily male-dominated, village women have appreciated receiving information and counselling from women who are willing to advocate on their behalf.

Before the establishment of the CAVAWs, lots of children and women died from bashing from husbands and fathers. Women now remind their husbands/partners that they can report them to the CAVAW, which has reduced fighting in the homes to a great extent. Men themselves now realise that women no longer have nowhere to go, but have the CAVAW to help them. Men are beginning to respect their wives because there is now a body [CAVAW] in place that will support the women and punish the men for mistreating them (female CAVAW member from Torba).

Other organisations, such as Family Voice in the Eastern Highlands of PNG, have initiated a program of community activists, both men and women, who work to promote mediation and violence prevention activities.

The women of the Morata Safe House in Port Moresby have developed an inspiring approach to violence prevention, based on community solidarity. In 2003, a group of women in the Morata settlement began acting on wife-beating, with the inspiration and support of a committed female police officer. One leader obtained her husband's permission to allow beaten wives to spend a few nights in their house, until they could safely go home. Under threat of arrest by the female police officer, the abusive men agreed to treat the house as a safe haven. Members of the safe house raise funds locally and contribute whatever food items they can spare to the sheltered women. More than 70 women have so far been helped. The group has now branched into other activities, with some donor funding.



6.4 New opportunities for increasing access to support

This section discusses approaches to increasing women's access to the types of support that have been used successfully in other parts of the world—particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America—but have not been adopted widely throughout the Pacific region. Although in most cases, there is not enough experience in the region to call these types of support 'promising approaches', during the consensus-building workshop in Port Moresby, promising opportunities for new approaches were considered that should be adapted and encouraged in Melanesia and East Timor.

Integrating care for survivors of violence into health services

Health services provide a unique opportunity to address the needs of survivors of violence, since most women come into contact with this system at some point in their lives. At the same time, since violence is the cause of so many common and serious problems, including injuries, unwanted pregnancy, pregnancy complications, emotional distress and depression, sexually transmitted diseases, and chronic pain. It is important for health providers to understand each client's history of abuse so they can provide appropriate treatment.

Lesson learned

The health sector has a key role to play in identifying and supporting women and girls living with violence.

Research indicates that while female victims of violence use primary and secondary health services more than non-abused women, only a very small percentage are identified by health workers. Health providers are often reluctant to ask women about violence, even when there are obvious signs, out of fear of offending the victim or opening up a Pandora's Box of issues they will not be able to deal with. On the other hand, women often hide the real cause of their injuries or distress, out of fear of reprisals or shame. Research has shown, however, that many will disclose violence to their health providers if asked in an empathetic, non-judgmental way, and in fact, welcome the opportunity to talk about their situations. This requires motivating and training providers and establishing systems to support their efforts.

Lesson learned

There is a need to improve documentation and information systems regarding services for survivors of violence.

To effectively integrate violence against women into health-sector programming, it is not enough to train providers to screen for violence. Experience has shown that a systems-approach is needed, and adjustments must be made to all aspects of services, including: policy development; protocols for screening and referrals; capacity-building for documenting, counselling and appropriate treatment; coordination with other sectors; and most importantly, monitoring and evaluation. There are several examples in other regions (particularly in Latin America and Asia) where violence has been

successfully integrated into health programs, especially sexual and reproductive health services, emergency service, and mental health programs (Velzeboer, Ellsberg et al. 2003; Ellsberg 2006).

The integration of efforts to address violence against women into health sector programming has been largely ignored in the region. PNG's Department of Health was the first to introduce a formal protocol for and training on domestic violence for health workers in primary health care in rural and urban areas (Box 6.6). The package of materials developed in 2004 has not been widely implemented. An urgent priority in PNG is removing the extra fees domestic violence victims are forced to pay in some provincial health care facilities, in a mistaken attempt to deter tribal violence.

BOX 6.6: PAPUA NEW GUINEA—DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S PROTOCOL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In 2003, the PNG Department of Health introduced a protocol on domestic violence based on a simple desktop checklist of six steps. The health worker asks about domestic violence with certain presenting conditions, ensures privacy, informs the client she has the right to be protected, provides treatment, plans with the client how to reduce future risk, and records injuries in the woman's health book. Each health worker is required to develop a local referral network, recorded on the inside of the checklist.

The checklist explains that the 'health worker's role is to prevent domestic violence by a) helping victims reduce their risk and b) encouraging community action. Please follow all the steps. If you only treat the injuries, it allows the violence to continue'.

Addressing violence against women and girls in the education sector

Sexual harassment and violence against women and girls is widespread in educational settings throughout the world. Although there has been little research in the Pacific, many respondents considered it to be a serious problem in Melanesia and East Timor. Perpetrators include schoolmates, teachers and other school staff.

Schools, and more broadly the educational system and communities, can help prevent violence against women by reforming education-sector laws and policies to improve the institutional response of schools to violence against women and mobilise communities to support girls' safety and rights. This requires training teachers and students, establishing codes of conduct that prohibit gender violence in schools and, most importantly, developing and implementing policies on teacher misconduct. In PNG, efforts to do so have failed and a teacher fired for misconduct was brought back after pressure from the teachers' associations.

Lesson learned

The education system should contribute to preventing violence by establishing codes of conduct for teachers and staff and sanctioning misconduct.



TABLE 6.1 APPROACHES AND PITFALLS FOR IMPROVING SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

Potentially promising approaches	Typical pitfalls and problematic approaches
Women's crisis centres	Access is difficult for rural women; scarce funding means uneven care; services can be spread out and dispersed.
Integrated services (e.g. one-stop shops)	Difficult to coordinate services between the health sector, the justice sector and women's groups.
Training for service providers	Training not accompanied by institutional changes that make it possible to improve service delivery; lack of follow-up and ongoing monitoring; lack of buy-in from superiors, so training is not put into practice; training focused on awareness-building rather than increasing relevant skills; not enough people trained in one institution to create a critical mass for institutional change.
Community-level networks	Not enough funding; focus on awareness-raising and not on community action; not enough coordination between local groups and national or regional networks; content may justify violence or encourage patriarchal norms.
Safe havens	Only short stays provided; not all have trained counsellors; some encourage only reconciliation and do not provide information about other options.
Health-sector involvement in violence against women	Often connected only to emergency services or medical/legal systems, rather than to other related programs in primary care (STIs, sexual and reproductive health, mental health); no linkages with local networks for referrals; providers may treat survivors with victim-blaming attitudes if not properly trained; lack of training amongst health providers; lack of documentation of violence and care; fees for service (or punitive fees in PNG), making care inaccessible.

6.5 Recommendations for improving support services

- I. **Prioritise long-term support and resources for organisations providing support services.** Long-term commitment, especially in the form of core funding, enables promising programs to develop capacity, deepen human-rights perspectives, scale-up services, and expand the breadth of support for victims. This is especially important in this region where capacity is a challenge and where access is usually limited to urban areas.

2. **Encourage and invest in integrated models of service provision.** Integrated, multisectoral approaches facilitating women's access to critical services and resources are key to meeting the holistic needs of survivors of violence. Models for support and scale-up include:
 - > one-stop shops at health-care facilities that integrate medical care and counselling with access to police and legal services, shelter and longer-term support where available
 - > women's groups and NGOs that provide counselling, safe haven and other services aimed at empowering women, offering options and supporting their choices regarding leaving abusive relationships. Support should be prioritised for organisations demonstrating good levels of coordination and communication with other groups working in the area.
3. **Increase and extend access for women outside of urban areas.** In tandem with recommendation 2, aim to ensure that women living far from urban centres have access to safe havens, legal and psychosocial counselling, medical care and other services. Support should include strengthening health-sector initiatives on violence against women.
4. **Increase support for informal community-based networks, including safe havens.** Informal networks provide the only meaningful access to services at the village level for the vast majority of women in all five countries and, as such, need increased support. They are essential components of any strategic approach designed to strengthen overall reach and access.
5. **Strengthen and increase government engagement in support services, especially in the health and education sectors.** Engaging government agencies is essential for facilitating the integration and coordination of services across sectors, institutionalising protocols, ensuring consistency of service provision and sending the message that providing meaningful support for victims of violence against women is a top priority. Also place emphasis on the:
 - > Health sector—creating conditions in which primary health care providers have the skills and knowledge to identify women living with violence, to provide basic information, counselling and appropriate medical care and documentation; and refer women to services for follow-up.
 - > Education sector—developing national policies to prevent and sanction violence against girls in schools, and deal appropriately with misconduct.
6. **Support capacity-building to improve quality of service.** This should include providing standardised/accredited training on counselling for violence against women and standardised protocols for service delivery.



CHAPTER 7: PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

7.1 Why is prevention important?

One important lesson learnt over three decades of work around the world is that prevention must be a key part of any strategy to eliminate violence against women. This involves providing communities with information and the skills needed to take action around the harmful impact of violence against women on families and communities, *as well as* challenging attitudes that promote men's power over women and acceptance of violence as a legitimate way to resolve conflict. Transforming deeply-entrenched values and beliefs must be a long-term goal.

Efforts to reduce violence against women, therefore, are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment, and must be considered within the context of changing gender norms and increasing women's human rights. Programs attempting to address violence without addressing the root causes of the problem (e.g. those encouraging reconciliation and forgiveness, or anger management among men) are unlikely to reduce violence over time, because they do not challenge men who believe the violence is justified.

Globally, more attention has been paid to strengthening the law and justice systems and support services for victims of violence than to preventing violence. In this respect, Melanesia and East Timor are no exceptions. However, the review team found numerous examples of innovative programs that are breaking new ground in violence prevention by addressing the traditional norms that encourage violence against women, reaching out to men and youth to involve them as allies in prevention, and placing violence against women within a broader context of social change.

7.2 Barriers to prevention

The greatest obstacle to eliminating violence against women is the belief, commonly held throughout Melanesia and East Timor, that it is justified. A recurring theme that emerged throughout the interviews with government authorities and local leaders was the need to identify 'who is at fault' for the violence before finding a solution. The underlying belief is that women deserve to be beaten or raped under some circumstances, including when:

- > the wife talks too much
- > a woman dresses inappropriately (e.g. wears a mini-skirt or trousers)
- > a wife does not want to have sex with her husband
- > the wife does not have food prepared when her husband comes home from work.

Some traditional customs (e.g. bride-price, which is common in all countries except Fiji) tend to reinforce these patriarchal attitudes. Bride-price is commonly believed—even by many women—to give men the right to control their wives, with violence if necessary.

PNG men have this mentality that they've paid for our bride-price so they own us, without realising that we have our rights too (women's focus group discussion, Morata, PNG).

Because of paying bride-price in cows, when you talk to a lot of older men [about domestic violence], they say: "I don't hit my wife, I hit my cow" (male interpreter, East Timor).

The only time men's use of violence is questioned is if he beats his wife 'excessively', 'out of drunkenness' or for 'no good reason'. Some traditional violence prevention programs interpret addressing the roots of the problem to mean helping women become 'better' (more obedient) wives (e.g. by offering budgeting courses to help women avoid disputes over money with their husbands). Other programs encourage reconciliation and forgiveness without questioning men's right to beat their wives. Because they do not challenge the underlying premise that violence is sometimes appropriate, and that women should submit to their husbands' wishes in all respects, these programs tend to perpetuate and support men's use of violence against women.

A second obstacle to preventing violence against women is the perception that challenging the problem is for women only, and that others do not have a role to play. Violence is often seen as a private, family matter in which outsiders should not intervene.

People think that gender is an issue for women only. When we go out and run workshops for men, a lot of men have come up to us and said: "Why do you talk about this? This is women's stuff. Let the women talk about it" (Association of Men Against Violence, AMKV, East Timor).

A third obstacle to change is the common view that violence against women is an isolated and relatively unimportant issue that has little to do with community and national development.

These three obstacles are common throughout the region, but as more and more influential individuals and organisations take a stand on violence against women, the effects are slowly emerging.

7.3 Promising practices in violence prevention

Cultures have never been static except where arguments against women's rights are concerned. Cultures can change, and we should become the agents of that change (Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development 2006).

Our traditions put chains on women, but we can get rid of the things that oppress us (village woman, East Timor).



It is easy to wonder if it is possible to expect people to change attitudes and practices that are so deeply embedded.

Throughout Melanesia and East Timor, violence against women is justified as a part of *kastom*, or culture. However, women activists in the region, as elsewhere in the world, are pointing out that culture is dynamic and constantly changing, and that ‘custom’ is often misrepresented or exploited by dominant groups to protect their own interests.

Men use culture as an excuse—they just don't want to give up their authority (Vanuatu's Department of Women's Affairs).

Yet by engaging communities in respectful dialogue, many people, including traditional leaders, are willing to eliminate practices that are unfair to women.

Advocacy

Few of the gains made in the last 20 years would have been possible without the persistent lobbying and advocacy efforts of women's rights activists throughout the region. Women's organisations have used creative ways to raise public awareness and pressure legislators and authorities for policy change.

One of the most effective tools for raising awareness is the yearly campaign commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (November 25 to December 10). This campaign draws attention to the issue and advocates for new laws and policies to protect women and girls. Through radio and print media, the campaign has brought the subject of violence against women and children into the public domain and kept it on national and regional political agendas. In Vanuatu, for example, the CAVAWs carry out community-level celebrations for the 16 Days campaign, for International Women's Day and other related dates/events. In PNG, many men and women wear black to work on Thursdays to remind others about women who have died from violence. In 2007, while the review team was visiting, the PNG *Courier-Post*, Dame Carol Kidu, and others sponsored a petition drive and presented signatures to Parliament, demanding more attention be paid to curbing the apparent increase in horrific crimes of violence against women.

A range of prevention approaches are being used in East Timor, including awareness-raising with the general public through campaigns (especially around the 16 Days) and distributing printed materials; targeted awareness with men, women, youth and leaders; making the prevention of domestic violence a legal duty for local authorities; and linking awareness work to other types of activities.

Previously, we never heard about domestic violence. Now we hear about it all the time (male interpreter, review team).

Use of mass and alternative media

The team found numerous examples of how mainstream and alternative media have raised public awareness on violence against women throughout the region. Influencing mainstream mass media sources has, however, been challenging. Although they have enormous potential to draw attention to the situation of women suffering from violence, in practice these media sources often exacerbate the situation through their coverage—by sensationalising acts of brutality, violating the confidentiality of victims and promoting traditional stereotypes of women that justify violence. The FWCC and many other organisations in the region have, as a result, carried out training for journalists, to challenge their sensationalist, victim-blaming bias. In PNG, the editor of the *Courier-Post* has become an ally by reporting on and promoting activities of the women's movement, such as the petition to Parliament.

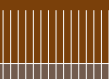
Lesson learned

Communication approaches are more effective in changing attitudes when they stimulate dialogue among participants, rather than simply giving information or prescribing new attitudes.

Other organisations, such as Fem'LINK Pacific, use alternative women's media channels to increase the visibility of women's rights initiatives throughout the region. Fem'LINK runs the program *Radio in a Suitcase* and a quarterly newsletter, which provide a medium for women to talk about their experiences and the key issues they face. In Solomon Islands, the organisation Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands (VBMSI, or Voice of the Women in pidgin) uses radio media to document and disseminate women's stories and provide information to women about CEDAW and women's rights generally. In 2006, VBMSI entered into partnership with Fem'LINK to document cases related to peace and conflict, including violence against women and child abuse.

Entertainment education

Another pioneering approach to communication for social change uses entertainment to raise awareness on important social issues, including violence against women. Internationally, this type of work is known as 'education entertainment', or 'edutainment'. Evaluations of internationally-acclaimed edutainment programs such as *Soul City* in Africa, *Break Through* in India and *Sexto Sentido* in Nicaragua, have shown that multimedia programs can help transform attitudes toward gender by providing role models with which audiences can identify—role models who are dealing with everyday problems in new ways (Usdin, Christofides et al. 2000; Solorzano, Peña et al. 2005). Part of this strategy is to create an environment in which people start talking about new issues by saturating communities with mass media including television, radio, theatre, posters and leaflets, all focusing on the same messages. Mass media messages are reinforced with interpersonal-communication activities, such as workshops, town meetings and dialogue with cast members/entertainers.



The combination of this and local activities over a sustained period has proven to be an effective catalyst for individuals and communities to take action on important issues facing them.

The Vanuatu theatre group Wan Smol Bag (WSB) is an outstanding example of the powerful impact of edutainment programs at their best, and its influence can be seen throughout the region. WSB was established as an amateur theatre group in 1989. Since then it has developed a reputation for delivering high-quality, locally produced film, radio and theatre productions. WSB uses drama and creative materials drawing on contemporary issues to inform and encourage community discussion on issues, including HIV/AIDS, sexual health, domestic violence and citizens' rights and responsibilities.

With these activities, we are able to create an open and conducive atmosphere, whereby young people interact with peers, and many of whom are themselves offenders or victims of violence so that they can understand, accept, and change their behaviour to violence (group leader, WSB).

Part of what makes WSB so successful is the combination of multimedia and interpersonal-communication activities. Every year, WSB does outreach work on two different islands, for two weeks each. During the first week, they perform several times, then conduct workshops with chiefs, community leaders, CAVAWs and provincial councils.

Dialogue with the chiefs is very important because it's the men who have to change, and chiefs play such an important role in our society. It's their job to try and solve all the problems in the village, including marriage problems. Sometimes it's the church pastor, but mostly it's the chiefs, so we work with them to give them some suggestions on how to handle these cases with more respect for women.

We tell them about the laws to protect everyone, the fundamental rights and freedoms of the constitution, because people don't know about this and don't see how it affects their lives. It's a very big issue (WSB focus group discussion).

Men as allies in violence prevention

Most of the programs on reducing violence against women are targeted toward perpetrators, and it is like trying to deal with the symptom of violence but not the root of the violence (WSB focus group discussion).

Lesson learned

Men and boys can be powerful allies in violence prevention. The emphasis should be on positive benefits-based approaches with a clear gender and human rights perspective.

During the 1980s and 1990s, men were viewed primarily as perpetrators, rather than potential partners in violence prevention. Accordingly, most programs focused on teaching men how to deal with anger and conflict without resorting to violence. Most batterers' treatment programs are run in coordination with the criminal justice system, with attendance mandated by the court (as an alternative to a jail sentence). International research has found, however, that these programs are not effective in reducing male violence against women because they do not address underlying causes. This is particularly true in a setting where violence against women is culturally accepted (Morrison, Ellsberg et al. 2007).

Lesson learned

Violence is everyone's business

There is a need to reach out and build strong partnerships with key stakeholders, such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, local authorities, justice operators (particularly police and magistrates), teachers and health workers.

In the last decade, a new approach has emerged that engages men and boys in open dialogue about violence and masculinity, and focuses on the positive benefits of more gender-equitable values and practices. These programs encourage men and boys to develop new ways of relating with women and girls based on solidarity, cooperation and fairness rather than domination and control. This new approach is being promoted and supported by an international alliance of NGOs called MenEngage.¹⁷

Although international research in this area is scarce, a recent review by WHO of 58 interventions concluded that: 'Men and boys can and do change attitudes and behaviour related to sexual and reproductive health ... their use of violence against women, and questioning violence with other men ... as a result of relatively short-term programs.' The review found that programs rated as 'gender-transformative' had a higher rate of effectiveness.¹⁸ 'Programs with men and boys that include deliberate discussions of gender and masculinity and clear efforts to transform such gender norms seemed to be more effective than programs that merely acknowledge or mention gender norms and roles.' The review also pointed to the importance of integrated programs that '... reach beyond the individual level to the social context, including relationships, social institutions, gatekeepers, community leaders and the like.' The review noted that regrettably most programs are small in scale, and relatively few with men and boys go beyond the pilot stage or the short term (Barker, Ricardo et al. 2007; International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Instituto Promundo 2007).

Another reason engaging men and boys in dialogue around gender and power dynamics is important is that as women's organisations grow and public discourse begins to change matters, the potential for backlash increases, and with it, the

¹⁷ For more information: www.menengage.org

¹⁸ Programs were considered 'gender transformative' if they clearly discussed gender norms and the social construction of masculinity and made efforts to critically discuss, question, and/or transform such norms in the program.



potential for polarising the debate as a struggle between women and men. An example of this took place in Vanuatu, when the Violence against Men and Family Protection Centre opened in Lugaville, Vanuatu (Taylor). The Centre arose as a reaction to the work of the VWC and the increasing use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders, which, according to the Centre, was an effort to break up families and undermine the role of men as the head of the family.

Now, women provoke us constantly, and we're becoming no good because of them. They only think about one side (Presbyterian pastor and Centre member, quoted in Taylor).

The VWC has countered this backlash through its own work with male advocates, many of whom are also pastors, chiefs and community leaders who serve as positive role models for Vanuatu men.

Although several violence prevention programs target men and boys in Melanesia and East Timor, the majority are not 'gender transformative'. Much preventive work with men and young men, particularly programs implemented by faith-based organisations, present domestic violence as a 'family problem' that is the responsibility of both partners and can be prevented or solved through mutual understanding. Initiatives to reduce violence against women by appealing to men to be better husbands and fathers carry the risk of reinforcing the patriarchal attitudes and norms of male control which are the underlying causes of the problem.

As mentioned earlier, integrated violence prevention means engaging different sectors in dialogue around violence against women. Traditional leaders are enormously important, because they are, to a large degree, gatekeepers for support and/or justice women might seek. In most communities, traditional justice is based on reconciliation and community harmony rather than individual rights. Some groups have succeeded in 'negotiating' cultural change that is more supportive of women's right to live without violence. The Male Advocates Program, implemented in Fiji and Vanuatu, is an example (Box 7.1).

BOX 7.1: ENGAGING MALE ADVOCATES IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN FIJI AND VANUATU

The Male Advocates Program in Fiji was started in 2002 by the FWCC. The aim was to engage men as allies in challenging violence against women, and encourage them to take responsibility for the issue. The first program was carried out among Fijian military personnel, but since then many other influential male leaders and public figures have participated. Many have reported life-changing transformations. The program has since been adapted and replicated in some other countries in the region, including Vanuatu and Cook Islands.

The Male Advocates Program implemented in Vanuatu by the VWC is modelled after the training program set up in Suva by the FWCC. The first men recruited to the program were trained in Suva by the FWCC. Subsequent training courses have been held in Port Vila with the help of the FWCC.

The VWC strategy is to engage men in leadership positions in their communities, particularly police officers and village chiefs, to support violence prevention activities. In Vanuatu, male advocates have played a pivotal role in establishing the CAVAWs. This has allowed them to participate in a broader effort and play a leading role in violence prevention in their communities. In addition to police officers and other local authorities, many traditional chiefs have undergone male advocacy training, which has facilitated dialogue between women activists and local councils of chiefs.

East Timor is alone amongst countries visited in having an active organisation of men who base their work on analysis of their own personal practice. This informs their social activism on encouraging men's participation in the struggle against violence against women, and on gender equality more broadly. As the leaders of the Association of Men Against Violence or *Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia* (AMKV) reported:

Transformation needs to start in the home, because that's where the patriarchal system starts. That's where discrimination comes from.

AMKV is an NGO that has maintained a high level of volunteer activism despite only sporadic, project-specific funding (from Oxfam, Caritas and UNFPA). It is a stellar example of 'south-to-south' capacity-building, having been formed following the trainings conducted in Dili in 2002 by the well-known Nicaraguan men's group, *Puntos de Encuentro*. It currently has 15 focal points in seven districts (six in Dili) and a fluctuating number of other volunteers.

Wherever possible, AMKV begins its community engagement by helping groups of community men organise around their own priorities, which usually involve income generation (e.g. from community gardens, doing carpentry work, or selling snacks). Discussion of violence against women and gender equality arises naturally during these activities.

Faith-based approaches to violence prevention

The standard injunction of male clergy for victims of violence to respond with forgiveness and unconditional Christian love to their perpetrators only encourages more violence, thus avoiding dealing with the destructive consequences of violence behaviours. Churches that continue with this teaching have forgotten that Christian forgiveness must go hand in hand with justice (Felemoni-Tofaeono 2004).

Churches in Melanesia and East Timor are strong, and church leaders are key stakeholders in community development and social-change efforts. Although the first place many women experiencing violence go to seek help is to pastors and religious leaders, the most common advice they receive there is to reconcile with their husbands and 'forgive and forget'. Biblical teachings are frequently used to justify male domination and violence. This is beginning to change, however, and several churches and faith-based organisations have taken a strong stand against violence against women, and set up counselling services and shelters for abused women and girls. Examples are women's shelters such as Haus Ruth in PNG, run by City Mission; the Christian Care Centre in Solomon Islands, sponsored by the Church of Melanesia; and the Salvation Army safe houses in Fiji. Although these organisations play a much-appreciated role in providing support for abused women and children, few are critical of the patriarchal values that support violence against women.

The Weavers Program of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools is a noteworthy example of the gender-transformative approach to violence prevention.



Weavers focus on domestic violence against women as part of its core program. They designed and developed a curriculum for working with theological schools and faith-based organisations on violence against women in the South Pacific. The curriculum includes readings on violence against women as a human-rights violation and social problem, and calls for reflection and action against violence against women within Christian communities and churches of the Pacific region. One of the program's strengths is that it directly faces difficult issues, such as '... the ways in which biblical interpretations and unsound theologies have contributed to the problem of violence against women ...', by encouraging women to be submissive to their husbands and forgive offenders. One program contributor called on communities and churches of Oceania '... to remember the untold, hidden, painful stories of women who have been victims of domestic violence ...' and '... to plead for a contribution to the call of worldwide Christian activists to overcome all forms of violence against women, as followers of the Christ of peace and love'.

7.4 New opportunities for violence prevention

Community mobilisation

Experience has shown it is much easier to change attitudes than behaviour. Therefore, raising awareness is only the first step in preventing violence at community level. Chapter 5 highlighted the important role community-based networks play in increasing women's access to support. But these networks also play a key role in preventing violence against women, by sending powerful messages that this is no longer a private matter, but a matter that affects everyone. This approach will likely encourage women to come forward with their stories, but also put men 'on notice' that their community will no longer tolerate mistreatment of women.

In addition to direct support, members of groups such as the CAVAWs in Vanuatu set an example by their own conduct, by carrying out awareness-raising activities and serving as a catalyst for community dialogue and action to prevent violence.

With the exception of the CAVAWs in Vanuatu, there has been relatively little systematic community mobilisation work in Melanesia and East Timor. Many groups carry out occasional awareness-raising activities in communities, but for the most part they conduct one-off visits without systematic follow-up. This does not lead to ongoing community activism.

Lesson learned

Violence prevention is more than raising awareness. It requires long-term, systematic engagement of communities, institutions and decision-makers. The most effective community mobilisation efforts use a positive, approach that emphasises the benefits of not using violence.

LeCommunity mobilisation refers to something more than awareness-raising—it is a process of social change that requires intimate knowledge of, and respect for, a community and the belief that communities can change. It is also a long-term process in which individuals, families and local leaders join together to encourage sustained action on the part of community members to change attitudes. The goal is to create a more supportive, nurturing environment for women and girls.

The Uganda-based Raising Voices organisation has developed a methodology for stimulating community engagement for violence prevention, which has been used throughout East and Southern Africa with great success.¹⁹ It is based on a theory of social change which is founded on the belief that individuals and communities make important changes in stages, rather than all at once. Understanding these stages helps activists initiate change in communities that lack awareness about violence against women as a problem, guide them through increasing their knowledge on the issue, prepare them to take action against violence in their own lives and in their communities, and sustain change. The emphasis is on transforming attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviour, in a way that involves the whole community (Michau and Naker 2003). Raising Voices has identified ‘power’ as a key concept for working with violence—not only the power of men over women, but also the power within individuals and in communities to take action. The organisation encourages communities and families to consider ‘balancing power’ between men and women as an alternative to patriarchal norms.

Working with youth

We need to target these programs at the young people who are the future of the country and who will either be victims of violence or perpetrators in the communities. They need to learn about violence today for tomorrow (focus group discussion, WSB).

As the members of a focus group of youth in Vanuatu expressed, young people are the future of the country, and reaching them with new messages about gender relations is crucial for preventing violence. Many groups, such as Save the Children in Solomon Islands, target youth in Melanesia and East Timor, particularly around life skills, livelihoods, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention. Some programs already have an explicit gender focus. Very few, however, address violence against women and girls in a meaningful way. This lost opportunity should be addressed immediately because violence is a constant part of the lives of children and young people. Those not being physically, sexually or emotionally abused have witnessed such abuse within their families and communities. This is particularly true in areas that have experienced conflict. Research has shown that boys who witness or experience violence in the home are much more likely to become violent adults, and girls who witness or experience violence are more likely to be victimised as adults.

¹⁹ More information: www.raisingvoices.org and through the GBV Prevention Network of East and Southern Africa at: www.preventgbvafrica.org



Lesson learned

There is an urgent need to incorporate awareness-raising and skills on violence prevention and gender equality into programs for youth—in schools and in informal settings.

The impact of violence on a girl's future is devastating. She is less likely to finish school, more likely to have an early or unwanted pregnancy, more likely to suffer from a range of mental and physical ailments for the rest of her life, and more likely to be unable to participate as a fully functioning member of society. Therefore, violence prevention programs are urgent for youth, in schools and in informal settings. In Latin America, *Instituto Promundo* in Brazil and *PATH/Intercambios* in Nicaragua have developed tools for working with adolescent girls and boys, as well as pre-adolescents, to strengthen self-esteem and empowerment in the case of girls and more gender-equitable behaviours amongst boys.²⁰

Integrating violence prevention into health and education programs

As mentioned in the last chapter, the health and education sectors have a potentially important role to play, not only in detecting and supporting victims of violence, but in encouraging gender-equitable attitudes and non-violent behaviour. Because violence is such a major threat to the health and wellbeing of women and girls, it should be addressed in community education activities on sexual and reproductive health, including safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS prevention, mental health and family planning.

This project did not find a specific program in the region that integrates gender and violence into school-based curricula or into reproductive health education programs. This area needs to be substantially strengthened. The Safe Schools Project in Africa and the *InterCambios* Alliance in Latin America have developed tools that could be easily adapted to other settings.²¹

The increasing spread of HIV & AIDS, particularly in PNG, although devastating in its effects, has, paradoxically, opened the door for preventive work on violence against women. HIV & AIDS is having a disproportionate impact on the region's women. This reflects women's greater vulnerability to HIV and the fact that pervasive gender inequalities undermine women's ability to negotiate safe sexual practices. As a result, women often contract the virus from their male partner. This reality has created an environment in which many people are ready to recognise and address gender inequality, violence against women, and the need to empower women as a means of reversing the epidemic. In PNG, several important steps have been taken to integrate gender and violence prevention into national HIV/AIDS programs and policies (Box 7.2).

²⁰ More information: www.promundo.org.br, www.alianzaintercambios.org and www.path.org

²¹ More information on health education and violence against women: www.alianzaintercambios.org (in English and Spanish) and the Family Violence Prevention Fund: www.endabuse.org More information on the United States Agency for International Development-funded Safe Schools project: http://www.ungei.org/resources/1612_528.html

An innovative, community-based program called Stepping Stones was recently introduced in Fiji as part of an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy. Stepping Stones addresses sexual and reproductive health within the context of gender relations and engages women, men and youth in talks over several weeks of workshops, all facilitated by trained promoters. The program was originally implemented in Africa, and has been adapted for use in the Pacific region and piloted in Fiji. International research, as well as a recent evaluation on the efforts in Fiji, provides evidence that the intervention can be effective in reducing HIV risk behaviours and gender-inequitable norms (Jewkes, Nduna et al. 2006).

That HIV & AIDS is, in part, being fuelled by violence against women, does not mean that violence against women should be seen predominantly through the lens of HIV & AIDS. A comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to addressing violence against women is required; HIV & AIDS programming provides just one component of such a response.

BOX 7.2: HIV/AIDS AS AN ENTRY POINT FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Through collaboration between the National AIDS Council and AusAID's HIV/AIDS support programs, several new initiatives have been introduced in PNG, including:

- > Required training for all paid and unpaid persons working on HIV/AIDS, with core modules on gender inequality, violence against women and human rights (since 2002).
- > The *National Gender Policy and Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2006–2010*, adopted in 2007, which asserts gender inequalities and violence against women as priority strategies. This is a first in the Asia-Pacific region.
- > A handbook distributed to all organisations working on HIV/AIDS, giving guidelines on how to integrate gender sensitivity and prevention of violence against women into activities on HIV/AIDS.
- > Community Conversations: a method for community mobilisation around HIV/AIDS that addresses gender power inequalities and is now being widely adopted by the government and NGOs.
- > Save the Children's work with young people in Goroka on sexual health, using participatory action research that links violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Women as peacemakers

Women have played a crucial role in helping resolve the armed conflicts that have plagued the region, such as tribal fighting and the Bougainville conflict in PNG, tensions in Solomon Islands, and conflict in East Timor. In many settings, these courageous women have also started to take a stand on violence against women and speak up against violence of any kind (Box 7.3 is an example from PNG). Drawing attention to the links between violence against women and social violence is extremely important and should be encouraged.

Lesson learned

Women have played a crucial role in restoring and maintaining peace throughout the region. They can also play a crucial role in preventing violence against women.



BOX 7.3: WOMEN AS PEACEMAKERS: KUP WOMEN FOR PEACE, SIMBU PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The organisation that became Kup Women for Peace (KWP) grew out of the activities of three women who were so driven by the atrocities they had experienced during 30 years of tribal fighting that they were willing to risk their lives by breaking custom and secretly meeting with women of enemy tribes to talk about peace. They formed a committee of women in each tribe and clan and, in 2002, peace was finally made. Since then, KWP volunteers have helped maintain peace by acting as polling officers during national elections, doing community awareness on good governance, helping arrange the public surrender of armed gangs, and obtaining water tanks for schools.

Despite peace, *'wife-beating is still common'*, so KWP volunteers carry out regular house-to-house awareness:

We move around and sleep in people's houses with families. After we speak to people from that household, we move on to other houses and do awareness there. We also go to the men's [meeting] house at night, and in the daytime, we go to the small markets in the community. People ask lots of questions and they learn so much this way.

This face-to-face method is highly effective because of the illiteracy barrier (most women's schooling was disrupted by the fighting) and because whole families learn together.

Women's economic and political empowerment

Because women's status is so low throughout the region, increasing their participation in political leadership positions and economic and social status at all levels must be a priority. This means strengthening women's participation and leadership in community development and economic programs, as well as increasing women's representation in national-level leadership positions, including in Parliament.

East Timor is unique in the region for strongly promoting the political empowerment of women as a means of preventing violence against them. Remarkable progress has been made in increasing women's participation in public decision-making and leadership. During the elections of 2001, for example, affirmative action measures resulted in a national Parliament with 26 per cent female membership. The Independent Electoral Commission, which oversees and monitors the three levels of elections, has 25 per cent female membership (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007). Women are also increasingly represented in high positions in government (e.g. at ministerial and vice-ministerial levels in the ministries of state, administration, planning and finance, foreign affairs and education). The Participation and Enhancement of Rural Women's Leadership are innovative approaches to grassroots empowerment of women that have beneficial effects on violence against women.

Lesson learned

Women's economic and political empowerment is key to preventing violence. Therefore, increasing women's participation in leadership positions and supporting economic livelihood programs are part of the strategy for violence prevention.

Economic development programs, particularly those targeting women, should also incorporate education around violence against women and gender relations. There is evidence from Bangladesh and other parts of the world that programs increasing a woman's access to economic resources can put her at risk of increased violence, if not carefully addressed in the program. This is particularly true in settings where a woman's status is low, because increasing her income can lead to greater conflict within the family (Koenig, Hossain et al. 1999). On the other hand, if such issues are addressed within the community and among women leaders, such programs can significantly contribute to reducing violence against women. A random control study in South Africa, for example, found that women who participated in a program of micro-lending that involved education about rights and violence against women, as well as in community mobilisation activities, reduced the levels of violence by 50 per cent over a two-year period. The researchers noted that repayment rates were also improved as a result (Pronyk, Hargreaves et al. 2006; Kim, Watts et al. 2007).

In East Timor, several initiatives address the links between violence against women and women's empowerment, such as the Alola Foundation, Oxfam and FOKUPERS, which use economic or community development opportunities as entry points for raising awareness (Box 7.4). The review team saw opportunities for integrating more education around violence and women's rights in other countries, such as the Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme micro-financing program, the AusAID-funded community-sector program in Solomon Islands, and the Rokotaniken Association's economic empowerment program for women from West Areare, Malaita.

BOX 7.4: COMMUNITY-BASED INCOME GENERATION AND AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN EAST TIMOR

The Alola Foundation was established in 2001 in response to the horrific abduction and gang rape by militia of Alola, a 14-year-old girl. It has increasingly moved toward providing practical support for the economic empowerment of women and has now teamed with Oxfam to enable rural women's groups (with most members younger than 30) to set up income-generating cooperatives.

Three-day village-based workshops are offered, which begin with interactive methods for stimulating discussion of the main forms of violence and discrimination experienced by women in their daily lives, such as discrimination in land- and property-inheritance patterns, male dominance in leadership, and cultural attitudes that disempower and blame women. The workshops then help women identify small, manageable steps they can take in their own lives to reduce violence and discrimination.

The workshops form income-generating cooperatives that help reduce women's economic dependence on men. Alola provides continuing training and support to the cooperatives, including marketing opportunities.



TABLE 7.1 APPROACHES AND PITFALLS FOR IMPROVING VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Potentially promising approaches	Typical pitfalls and problematic approaches
Encouraging media coverage of violence against women	Mainstream media sensationalises violence without good training and follow-up.
Working with men to prevent violence	Messages that reinforce male entitlement and patriarchal attitudes (e.g. the man is the head of the household and should not use violence to enforce his authority).
Working through faith-based organisations	Pressuring women to reconcile with abusers; messages that reinforce women's obligations to submit to their husbands and forgive violent behaviour without addressing the root causes of violence.
Working with youth	Victim-blaming messages that reinforce dominant patterns of masculinity and place responsibility for preventing violence on girls; approaches that do not address the need for changes in gender relations and attitudes.
Community mobilisation	Often carried out as one-off activities rather than ongoing processes; does not involve community members as leaders in the process; does not involve all members of the community, but focuses only on one sector (women, leaders etc.); does not use gender and human-rights approaches; focuses only on the harmful effects of violence and not the positive benefits to the family and the community of violence prevention; places responsibility for violence prevention on women, or conversely, on male-dominated leadership, without involving women; does not challenge normative gender attitudes.
Mass communication activities	Messages reinforce dominant gender norms; are not combined with local, interpersonal communication activities; are not based on formative research and audience surveys to identify the most effective messages.

7.5 Recommendations for strengthening violence prevention efforts

1. **Prioritise support for initiatives with strong emphasis on identifying and transforming gender norms.** Primary prevention of violence against women is based on fostering community norms of gender equality as well as non-violence. A number of innovative strategies have been adopted that address the norms, attitudes and behaviours (rooted in gender inequality) that underlie violence against women, but many require additional support. Priority should be given to:
 - > advocacy efforts aimed at raising community awareness around violence against women and calling for legislative and policy-level action to address the issue

- > mass and alternative media initiatives that increase the visibility of women's rights initiatives and offer a forum for women's voices to be heard
 - > multimedia edutainment activities that offer a safe and entertaining, community-wide forum for opening up discussion around violence against women and related issues
 - > community mobilisation that focuses on prevention as a process of social change and sustained action on the part of the entire community.
2. **Strengthen partnerships with a range of actors and sectors not traditionally involved in addressing violence against women.** Initiatives that show the most promise engage all sectors of the community, especially key decision-makers and opinion leaders. Churches, faith-based organisations and traditional chiefs are important partners in galvanising community-based transformation of gender norms and related behaviours. Men and male youth generally have not been engaged in efforts to prevent violence against women, yet they are critical partners in effecting long-lasting change.
3. **Identify strategic opportunities for integrating violence against women into different program areas and defining links between violence against women and related issues.** Areas include:
- > micro-finance or micro-grant initiatives targeting women living in poverty and offering women a measure of economic empowerment
 - > workplace initiatives and policies addressing sexual harassment and promoting gender parity and equity
 - > education-sector programs aimed at: (a) challenging stereotypes and gender norms in materials and curricula and promoting gender equality; (b) achieving gender parity in classroom representation of girls and boys at all educational levels; and (c) implementing policies to prevent violence against girls in schools and punish violent offenders.
 - > health-sector programs addressing the links between violence against women, HIV infection, safe motherhood, sexual rights and factors that increase women's vulnerability
 - > peace-building activities, especially where women are mobilising to end conflict and foster peace and reconciliation in their communities
 - > disaster preparedness and response programs.



CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that much progress has been made in the last 15 years in addressing violence against women. Thanks largely to the tireless efforts of women's rights activists, the issue is now recognised by all governments in the region as a serious social and human-rights problem that must be addressed in the context of national development. All governments involved have ratified the CEDAW and made a public commitment to ending violence against women.

However, there remains an enormous gap between public discourse and reality. Although national policies and laws addressing violence against women have been put in place in most countries in the region, implementation has lagged for various reasons, including:

- > inadequate resources, both by national governments and international donors
- > government commitments that change with political tides
- > gains that are often fragile and short-lived
- > organisational capacity that is weak in most countries—in governments as well as civil society.

International donors have made important contributions to ongoing efforts, but support is poorly coordinated—between donors, and even among programs within the same agencies. To maximise the impact of international cooperation, it is crucial to develop broad strategies involving a greatly increased and sustained contribution of financial resources, but also a commitment to include gender equality and violence in the policy dialogue with partner governments. This should be carried out at sector-program level, and be a central theme in overall cooperation strategies. Monitoring progress with clear indicators is also key to ensuring that international cooperation results in a meaningful contribution to ending violence against women.

8.1 Recommendations

The recommendations of this report emerged from the participatory approach used in this evaluation and represent a proposed action plan for all actors. They have been included throughout the report in relevant sections. They are also presented together here as a proposed action plan for increasing women's access to justice, improving treatment services and preventing violence against women. It is important that these recommendations are seen as a starting point, rather than the end point.

Ownership of this action plan is vitally important to its ongoing success. The authors also recognise that each country in the study is at a different point in its efforts to address violence against women, and that each country will have different priorities and different levels of capacity to implement the recommendations. The authors have therefore refrained from assigning recommendations to particular actors, or strictly

sequencing them, believing that implementation should form part of the ongoing negotiations between Australia, partner governments, other donors and civil-society actors. This in itself is a recommendation to both Australia and other actors—use these recommendations to lobby for, negotiate and act on a concrete plan of action. Having said that, there are recommendations that, while not exclusive to Australia, can be implemented by AusAID, within its own programming in the immediate term. These are presented first.²²

8.2 Recommendations for Australia

There are no recommendations for Australia that cannot be implemented by other actors and there are no regional recommendations that Australia cannot incorporate into its day-to-day programming and activity identification and design processes. There are, however, recommendations Australia can act on *now*, either as part of its program management or in existing activities, without having to wait for others to come on board.

These represent an integrated approach and are intended to be implemented in entirety. They are not a menu from which options for addressing violence against women should be selected in isolation. In other words, these recommendations will not make much of an impact on treating and preventing violence against women if they are not implemented in an integrated way. Indeed, if they are implemented in isolation, they may cause more harm than good.

1. **Ensure all interventions are grounded in a human rights and gender-transformative approach.** While this is a recommendation for *all* actors, it provides Australia, in the immediate term, with a touchstone for helping to determine whether an activity or form of support is likely to be gender transformative and therefore effective in dealing with the root causes of violence against women. This means all programs at national, provincial and local levels should explicitly acknowledge that violence against women is based on unequal power relations between women and men and women and that gender inequality is reflected in community norms, institutional policies and practices and laws. Wherever possible, programs should adopt an integrated approach and aim to address the causes of violence and transform gender relations, rather than simply providing palliative care.
2. **Step up its high-level policy dialogue on violence against women with partner governments.** Significant and sustained progress in reducing violence against women is contingent on a demonstration of greater leadership on this issue from partner governments in each country. Australia can encourage partner governments to assume greater leadership. It should prioritise frank discussions about the problem of and solutions to violence against women in its policy dialogue with each partner government. (This needs to be handled with sensitivity, much like Australia's approach to corruption.)

²² Note that when these recommendations appear in the main report, they are directed at all actors, and the wording has been changed slightly to provide an AusAID focus here.



3. **Support efforts to strengthen the evidence base on violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor.** Australia is in a position to take the lead in the need for more research on violence against women, first with its own programs and then as a regional actor. Priority should be on:
 - > Research that documents the prevalence, characteristics and risk factors of all types of violence against women and girls—based on methodologies already in use internationally (to enhance the ability to compare findings across countries).
 - > Efforts to strengthen national statistics offices and incorporate indicators of violence against women into national information systems, such as HIV & AIDS surveillance.
 - > Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of promising practices, with a particular focus on identifying and reacting to any potential backlash that may arise.
 - > Support for broadly disseminating research findings and building regional capacity to carry out research in women's rights organisations and formal research institutions.
4. **Ensure that programs are coordinated.** Multisectoral coordination is key, particularly for partner governments; however, Australia can 'start at home' by
 - > **Ensuring large programs are coordinated with each other as well as internally:** AusAID should work across sectors within program areas to ensuring own sectoral programs are coordinated and working together to increase women's access to justice, improve support services and prevent violence against women.
 - > **Encourage coordination of aid among donors to maximise impact:** As much as possible, support should be provided to organisation working on violence against women as core funding with multiple year grants, rather than just project-focused or earmarked funding. AusAID should particularly seek to reduce the multi-donor reporting burden on CSOs working to address violence against women.
5. **Build capacity in project management, communication and gender analysis.** Australia has an opportunity to greatly improve its own capacity in gender analysis and gender sensitive programming. In supporting capacity building of local organisations more broadly, priority should be on building build a common body of knowledge and experience in the region, through:
 - > supporting regional initiatives for building the capacity of local groups in key areas such as monitoring and evaluation, program management, counselling skills, communication and advocacy

- > strengthening existing networks, including opportunities for shared learning with innovative programs inside and outside the region
 - > supporting joint initiatives in developing tools, program materials, etc., to improve the quality of work in the region
 - > supporting exchanges and mentoring opportunities for organisations in the region.
6. **Ensure that all training delivered or funded by AusAID is based on best practice.** Training, particularly in the law and justice sector, is a common approach for AusAID when the Agency is seeking to raise awareness of violence against women and build the capacity of key actors to respond. However, more effort is needed to incorporate lessons learnt on successful approaches to training. To maximise impact AusAID must ensure:
- > training is based on a human rights approach and is gender transformative
 - > training is appropriately targeted and ongoing (rather than one-off or ad hoc)
 - > appropriate follow up and support for those who have been trained
 - > monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to assess the impact of the training and monitor potential backlash.

The recommendations listed above are not exclusive to Australia, and should be viewed as a critical part of any plan for action.

8.3 Recommendations for all stakeholders

1. **Encourage coordination of aid among international donors, to maximise impact.** As much as possible, support should be provided to organisations working on violence against women as core funding, rather than project-focused or earmarked, with multiple-year grants.
2. **Support multisectoral coordination, including government and non-government actors, at both national and local levels.** Support could include:
 - > developing and implementing national, provincial, municipal and community plans of action for preventing violence against women
 - > supporting interagency task forces on violence against women (e.g. within the context of CEDAW reporting)
 - > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
 - > collaborating on training and capacity building of local stakeholders across sectors.
3. **Strengthen women's leadership and economic and political participation at all levels.** Priority should be given to providing women the necessary tools, skills and opportunities to participate fully in the social and economic development of their communities and nations.



8.4 Recommendations for increasing women's access to justice

4. **Support national legal reform efforts.** This should address specific new or reformed legislation on domestic and sexual violence, including the age of consent and marriage, and other areas of law limiting women's ability to obtain protection (such as laws relating to marriage breakdown, custody of children, maintenance, property rights, inheritance and sex work). Equally important is monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of any new or reformed legislation.
5. **Commit long-term support to strengthening police response to violence against women.** Four concurrent approaches are recommended:
 - > ongoing training for police at all levels, including introducing clear protocols for responding to domestic and sexual violence that emphasise women's legal right to be protected from violence
 - > strengthening and monitoring the dedicated units for domestic and sexual violence that exist in all countries in the region
 - > applying consistent disciplinary action against police offenders
 - > monitoring women's experiences and case outcomes.
6. **Strengthen the response of the formal justice system to violence against women.** Ensure that laws and policies on violence against women are properly implemented by:
 - > transforming discriminatory attitudes through systematic training of lawyers, magistrates, judges and other justice system personnel on gender and human rights issues
 - > promoting women's participation at all levels of the justice system.
7. **Strengthen the willingness and ability of community-based justice systems to respond to women's right to protection from violence.**
 - > Support dialogue between justice-sector personnel, women's NGOs and traditional leaders on how to honour women's human rights through traditional or restorative justice.
 - > Promote increased participation of women in justice-related decision-making bodies, and monitoring outcomes.
8. **Increase support for NGOs offering women legal literacy and human rights training.** Wherever possible, men should also be informed about women's legal and human rights.

8.5 Recommendations for improving support services

9. **Prioritise long-term support and resources for organisations providing support services.** Long-term commitment, especially in the form of core funding, enables promising programs to develop capacity, deepen human rights perspectives, scale up services and expand the breadth of support for victims. This is especially important where capacity is a challenge and access is usually limited to urban areas.
10. **Encourage and invest in integrated models of service provision.** Integrated, multisectoral approaches facilitating women's access to critical services and resources are key to meeting the holistic needs of survivors of violence. Models for support and scale-up include:
 - > one-stop shops at health-care facilities that integrate medical care and counselling with access to police and legal services, shelter and longer-term support where available
 - > women's groups and NGOs that provide counselling, safe haven and other services aimed at empowering women, offering options and supporting their choices regarding leaving abusive relationships—support should be prioritised for organisations demonstrating good levels of coordination and communication with other groups working in the area
11. **Increase and extend access for rural women.** In tandem with recommendation 13, aim to ensure that women living far from urban centres have meaningful access to services. Support should include strengthening health-sector initiatives on violence against women.
12. **Increase support for informal community-based networks, including safe havens.** Informal networks provide the only meaningful access to services at the village level for the vast majority of women in all five countries and, as such, need increased support. They are essential components of any strategic approach designed to strengthen overall reach and access.
13. **Strengthen and increase government engagement in support services, especially in the health and education sectors.** Place emphasis on:
 - > Health sector—creating conditions in which primary health care providers can gain the skills and knowledge to: identify women living with violence; provide basic information, counselling, and appropriate medical care and documentation; and refer women to services for follow up.
 - > Education sector—developing national policies to prevent and sanction violence against girls in schools, and deal appropriately with misconduct.

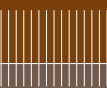


14. **Support capacity-building to improve the quality of services.** This should include providing standardised/accredited training on counselling for violence against women and standardised protocols for service delivery.

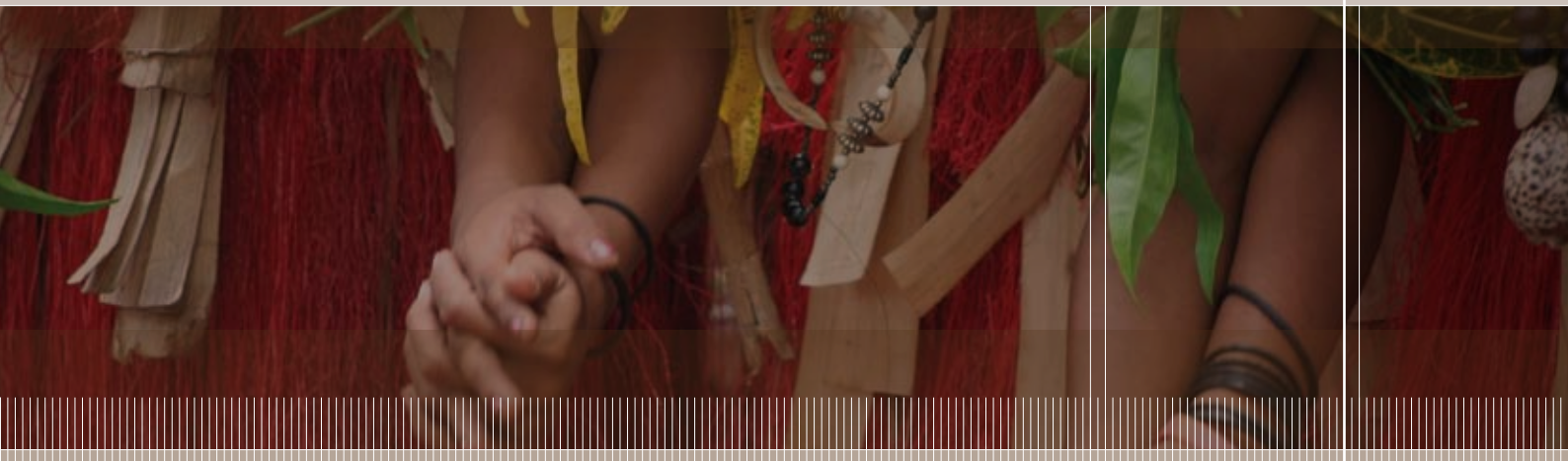
8.6 Recommendations for strengthening violence prevention efforts

15. **Prioritise support for initiatives with strong emphasis on identifying and transforming gender norms.** Primary prevention of violence against women is based on fostering community norms of gender equality as well as on non-violent behaviour. A number of innovative strategies have already been adopted that address the norms, attitudes and behaviours (rooted in gender equality) that underlie violence against women, but many require additional support. Priority should be given to:
 - > advocacy efforts aimed at raising community awareness around violence against women and calling for legislative and policy-level action to address the issue
 - > mass and alternative media initiatives that increase the visibility of women's rights initiatives and offer a forum for women's voices to be heard
 - > multimedia 'edutainment' activities that offer a safe, entertaining and community-wide forum for opening dialogue around violence against women and related issues
 - > community mobilisation that focuses on prevention as a process of social change that requires sustained action on the part of the entire community.
16. **Strengthen partnerships with a range of actors and sectors not traditionally involved in addressing violence against women.** Initiatives that show the most promise engage all sectors of the community, especially key decision-makers and opinion leaders. Churches and faith-based organisations and traditional chiefs are important partners in galvanising community-based transformation of gender norms and related behaviours. Men and male youth generally have not been engaged in efforts to prevent violence against women, yet they are critical partners in effecting long-lasting change.
17. **Identify strategic opportunities for integrating interventions that address violence against women into different areas.** These include:
 - > micro-finance or micro-grant initiatives targeting women living in poverty and offering women a measure of economic empowerment
 - > workplace initiatives and policies addressing sexual harassment and promoting gender parity and equity

- > education-sector programs aimed at: (a) challenging stereotypes and gender norms in materials and curricula, and promoting gender equality; (b) achieving gender parity in classroom representation of girls and boys at all educational levels; and (c) implementing policies to prevent violence against girls in schools, and punish violent offenders.
- > health-sector programs addressing the links between violence against women, HIV infection, safe motherhood, sexual rights and factors that increase women's vulnerability
- > peace-building activities, especially where women are mobilising to end conflict and foster peace and reconciliation in their communities
- > disaster preparedness and response programs.



ANNEXES



ANNEX 1: SITUATION OF WOMEN IN MELANESIA AND EAST TIMOR: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

		EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
POPULATION²³ (THOUSANDS)		1,108.8	931.7	5,931.8	581.3	215.4
	Female	545.6	464.4	2905.3	287.0	105.5
	Male	563.2	467.3	3026.5	294.4	110.0
	Ratio	103/100	101/100	104/100	107/100	104/100
Age 0–14	Population (thousands)	389.7 (35.1%)	284.9 (30.6%)	2,210.7 (37.3%)	233.1 (40.1%)	67.4 (31.3%)
	Female	191.7 (17.3%)	139.5 (15.0%)	1,086.5 (18.3)	114.2 (19.6%)	33.0 (15.3%)
Age 15–64	Population (thousands)	682.5 (61.6%)	603.8 (64.8%)	3,481.4 (58.7%)	328.3 (56.5%)	139.6 (64.8%)
	Female	334.9 (30.2%)	301.3 (32.3%)	1,690.1 (28.5%)	162.3 (27.9%)	68.4 (31.8%)
Age 65+	Population (thousands)	36.6 (3.3%)	43.0 (4.6%)	239.7 (4%)	20 (3.4%)	8.5 (3.9%)
	Female	19.0 (1.7%)	23.6 (2.5%)	128.7 (2.2%)	10.5 (1.8%)	4.1 (1.9%)
Rate of growth²⁴		2.05%	1.39%	2.12%	2.47%	1.43%
Rural %²⁵		73.5%	49.2%	86.6%	93.0%	76.5%

²³ The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook 2008: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The UNDP Human Development Report: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators> Latest figures are for 2005.

B. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER-RELATED DEVELOPMENT INDICES RANKINGS (OUT OF 177 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES)

	EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
Gender-Related Development Index ²⁶	-	82	124	-	-
Human Development Index ²⁷	150	92	145	129	120

C. HEALTH INDICATORS

	EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
Maternal mortality / 100,000 live births ²⁸	380*	210*	470*	220*	68
Infant mortality /1,000 Live births ²⁹	42.0	11.9	46.7	19.7	50.8
Adolescent fertility rate/1,000 live births (15–19 years old) ³⁰	177	37	60	47	49
Total fertility rate (live births/woman) ³¹	3.4	2.7	3.7	3.7	2.57
Prevalence of people living with HIV/AIDS	- ³² [<0.2]	600 [0.1 (0.1-0.4)]	0.6% -60,000 [1.8 (0.9-4.4)]	6 cases, 3 women	2 women
Women with access to skilled birth attendants ³³	18%	99%	41%	85%	88%

*Figures adjusted by UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA to account for misreporting and misclassification.

26 Human Development Report, 2007–2008: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/268.html> East Timor, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu were not given gender-related development index rankings because of insufficient disaggregated data.

27 Human Development Report, 2007–2008: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/279.html>

28 Human Development Report, 2007–2008: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/98.html>

29 The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook 2008.

30 Defined as the number of live births among women ages 15–19 per 1000 women in that age group. World Bank Group GenderStats Database, <http://devdata.worldbank.org/home.asp> Figures are for 2004.

31 The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook 2008.

32 Human Development Report 2007–2008: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/79.html>

33 Human Development Report. Figures are for 2005.

D. EDUCATION INDICATORS

		EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
Literacy rate ³⁴	Female	52 (50.1)	95.9	50.9	N/A	N/A
	Male	65	95.9 ¹³	63.4	N/A	N/A
Gross primary enrolment ³⁶	Female rate	145%	105%	70%*	94%	116%
	Ratio of m/f rates	0.92	0.98	0.88*	0.95	0.97
Gross secondary enrolment ³⁷	Female rate	52%	91%	23%*	27%	38%*
	Ratio of m/f rates	1.0	1.07	0.79*	0.83	0.86*
Gross tertiary enrolment ³⁸	Female rate	12%*	17%	-	-	4%*
	Ratio of m/f rates	1.48*	1.20	-	-	0.58*

*Data refer to an earlier year.

E. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

	EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
National Parliament seats held by women ³⁹	25.3%*	N/A / 109:7 prior to coup	0.9% 109:1	0% 50:0	3.8% 52:2

*Proportion after 2001 elections (originally members of the Constituent Assembly).

F. CONFLICT SITUATION

PNG	Bougainville civil war (1990–1999); ongoing provincial inter-ethnic conflicts.
Fiji	There have been four coups in the last 20 years.
Solomon Islands	Ethnic and inter-island conflict or tensions, 1998–2003.
East Timor	Occupation from 1975–1999; conflicts post independence from Indonesia.

³⁴ Human Development Report. Figures are for 1995–2005.

³⁵ Data questionable according to report.

³⁶ Human Development Report. Figures are for 2005. Gross enrolment refers to the total number of pupils of any age in a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the total population of the age group appropriate to that level.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Human Development Report 2007–2008.

G. LEGAL PROTECTION AND JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

	EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
CEDAW					
Acceded	2003	1995	1995	2002	1995
Reported	NONE	2002	NONE	NONE	2007
CONSTITUTION	Guarantees women's equality before the law and includes an anti-discrimination clause.	Guarantees women's equality before the law and includes an anti-discrimination clause, but not equal benefits or outcomes.	Guarantees women's equality before the law but does not contain a definition of discrimination or a specific anti-discrimination clause.	Does not guarantee women's equality before the law, but includes a comprehensive anti-discrimination clause.	Guarantees women's equality before the law, but not equal benefits or outcomes. Does not include anti-discrimination clauses.
SEXUAL ASSAULT LAW		Fiji has legislated against sexual assault, but laws provide inadequate protection. All sexual offences (except indecent assault) require penile penetration. Different categories of defilement for girls younger than 13 and girls 13 to 15 impose different sentences (life imprisonment for the former, and 10 years for the latter).	PNG has legislated against sexual assault. The Criminal Code (Sexual Offences and Crimes against Children) Act of 2002 extended the definition of penetration for sexual assault to all orifices by the penis or any other object, and removed the marital immunity which prevented a woman from charging her husband with rape.	Solomon Islands has legislated against sexual assault, but laws provide inadequate protection. Most sexual offences, except indecent assault, require penile penetration. Different categories of rape for girls younger than 13 and girls 13 to 15 impose different sentences (life imprisonment for the former and five years for the latter).	Vanuatu has legislated against sexual assault, but laws provide inadequate protection. All sexual offences require penile penetration except indecent assault. The penalty for defiling a girl younger than 13 is 14 years imprisonment but for a girl between 13 and 15 it is five years.
Defences		The Fiji Penal Code provides a defence in sexual assault prosecutions for the accused to claim he did not know the girl was not of legal age in all offences except the defilement of a girl younger than 13. Consent is not available as a defence for sexual assaults on girls younger than 16.	The PNG Criminal Code provides a defence in sexual assault prosecutions for the accused to claim he did not know the girl was not of legal age in offences relating to girls older than 12. Consent is not available as a defence for sexual assaults on girls younger than 16.	Although there is generally no defence in sexual assault prosecutions in Solomon Islands for the accused to claim he did not know the girl was not of legal age, there is an exception in relation to a charge of defilement of a girl between the ages of 13 and 15.	The legislation in Vanuatu does not provide a defence in sexual assault prosecutions for the accused to claim he did not know the girl was not of legal age.



	EAST TIMOR	FIJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
Mandatory prosecution/ minimum sentences		No mandatory prosecution or minimum sentences for sexual assault offences. Legislation does not prohibit customary practices of forgiveness for reducing sentences.	No mandatory prosecution or minimum sentences for sexual assault offences. Legislation specifically provides for custom to affect criminal sentencing, which may reduce a sentence if compensation has been paid.	No mandatory prosecution or minimum sentences for sexual assault offences. Legislation specifically provides for custom to affect criminal sentencing, which may reduce a sentence if there has been forgiveness.	Vanuatu has introduced minimum sentences, but not mandatory prosecution for sexual assault offences. Legislation specifically provides for customary law to affect criminal sentencing, which may reduce a sentence further if there has been forgiveness.
Discriminatory common law rules on sexual assault (see note)		Fiji has not legislated against the use of prior sexual conduct, the necessity for corroboration in sexual offence prosecutions, or the requirement for proof of resistance, but a 2004 precedent ruled against the need for corroboration.	PNG has not legislated against the requirement for proof of resistance but has legislated against the use of prior sexual conduct and the necessity for corroboration in sexual offence prosecutions.	Solomon Islands has not legislated against the use of prior sexual conduct, the necessity for corroboration in sexual offence prosecutions or the requirement for proof of resistance.	Vanuatu has not legislated against the use of prior sexual conduct, the necessity for corroboration in sexual offence prosecutions or the requirement for proof of resistance.
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAWS		Fiji's Penal Code does not contain offences for domestic violence. Women have to rely on general assault provisions. Fiji's Family Law Act of 2003 provides for protective injunctions for legally married women.	PNG has not incorporated domestic violence offences into its criminal laws.	Solomon Islands has <i>not</i> incorporated domestic violence offences into its criminal laws. Restraining orders are available to protect married women from the threat of violence, with powers of arrest if the order is breached.	The Family Protection Act of 2008 provides for victims of domestic violence to apply in court for a Family Protection Order (restraining order). It also provides definitions of domestic violence, family and spouses.
AGE OF MARRIAGE	18 for males, 15 for females. ⁴⁰ The consent of both parents is required for the marriage of minors.	16 for females and 18 for males. In the marriage of minors, the consent of the father is privileged over the mother.	18 for males and 16 for females. The consent of both parents in the marriage of minors.	15 for both males and females. Those between 15 and 18 must seek approval from their fathers.	16 for females and 18 for males. The consent of <i>both</i> parents in the marriage of minors.

40 Indonesian Civil Code, beginning at Article 290.

	EAST TIMOR	FUJI	PNG	SOLOMON ISLANDS	VANUATU
ABORTION	Abortion is criminalised in East Timor.	Abortion is criminalised in Fiji, with a penalty of seven years and life imprisonment if it is performed at 28 weeks or more of pregnancy. Although abortion can be lawfully carried out to save a mother's life, women do not have access to safe abortion facilities.	Abortion is criminalised in PNG with a penalty of seven years imprisonment. There is no exception to save a mother's life.	Abortion is criminalised in Solomon Islands, with a severe penalty of life imprisonment. Although abortion can be lawfully carried out to save a mother's life, women do not have access to safe abortion facilities as a right.	Abortion is criminalised in Vanuatu, although abortion can be lawfully carried out for 'good medical reasons', and the penalty of two years is low compared to other Pacific countries.
FAMILY LAW		The Family Law Act (2003) provides for the establishment of a family court and stronger laws for gender equity in relation to divorce, separation, maintenance, custody, adoption and other matters subsumed under family law. However, it only applies to married persons.	PNG provides for maintenance orders during separation and after divorce for both children and spouses. However, the basis on which maintenance is provided is left largely to the discretion of the court, with the broad criteria of the means, earning capacity and conduct of the parties.	Solomon Islands provide no legislative provision for the division of property after separation and divorce and, therefore, any determination is left to custom, which may discriminate against women.	Vanuatu provides no legislative provision for the division of property after separation and divorce and, therefore, any determination is left to custom, which may discriminate against women.
CUSTOMARY LAW		The Constitution gives constitutional status to custom in relation to land. However, other customary practices do not have constitutional status, and coupled with strong anti-discrimination provisions, give women partial protection against customary law that discriminates against them on the basis of sex/gender.	The Constitution recognises the legitimacy of customary law provided it is not repugnant to humanity, does not result in injustice, or is not contrary to the interests of a child younger than 16. Guarantee of equality takes precedence over custom, and traditional practices that discriminate against women may in theory be legally challenged.	The Constitution of Solomon Islands gives constitutional status to customary law in a range of situations including land, marriage, divorce and other personal laws. However, customary law cannot be inconsistent with the Constitution, and the presence of anti-discrimination provisions leaves women with some legal recourse against custom that discriminates against them.	The Constitution of Vanuatu recognises the legitimacy of customary law, provided it is not contrary to justice, morality and good order. However, the absence of a guarantee of equality and anti-discrimination provisions means traditional practices that discriminate against women may be lawful in some circumstances.



ANNEX 2: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED²³

Fiji

Organisation

National Department for Women

Fiji Police Force

Prosecutors

Suva Police Academy (focus group involving 13 officers)

Nasova Police Academy (interviews with 5 officers)

Public prosecutors and legal aid counsellors (8 officials)

Magistrates (focus group involving 9 individuals)

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (interviews and focus groups involving 15 staff)

Women's Action for Change (focus group involving 12 members)

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT)

Fem'LINK Pacific

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Fiji Association of Social Workers

Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International

National Council of Women

Salvation Army headquarters

Mahaffey Girls Home (focus group involving 8 girls)

AIDS Task Force

FJN+ (Fiji's HIV-positive peoples' network)

Equal Ground Pacifica

Pacific Counselling and Social Services

FRIEND (Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises 'N' Development)

Soqosoqo Vakamarama

Fiji College of Advanced Education

Fulton College

United Blind Peoples' Association

SPATS

AusAID Staff

AusAID Community Justice Program

Pacific Region Policing Initiative

Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project

International Labour Organization Programme Office

Men as Partners—United Nations Population Fund

UNIFEM

²³ To protect confidentiality, individuals consulted have not been named.

Papua New Guinea

Organisation

Port Moresby

Ministry for Community Development

Minister Dame Carol Kidu

Gender Division

Welfare Division

CEDAW taskforce

Child Protection

National Department of Health

National Department of Education

Port Moresby General Hospital, Family Support Centre

Royal PNG Constabulary

Sexual Offences Squad, Boroko

Victims Desk, Waigani

Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (secretariat and member organisations)

Salvation Army

Anglicare

Papua Hahine Social Action Forum

World Vision PNG

Community Justice Liaison Unit

Porosapot (Save the Children)

Tingim Laip (HIV/AIDS prevention)

ICRAF

DCD Gender Division

Department of Education, Counselling and Guidance Branch

FSVAC Strategy Review team

National Council of Women (interviews with 10 members)

Haus Ruth (including interviews with staff and 16 current and former residents)

Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum

PACSO (PNG AIDS civil society organisations) (interviews with 11 members)

National Research Institute

Morata Women's Safe House (interviews with 6 members)

Oil Palm Research Association

AusAID Law and Justice Sector Program (interviews with advisors)

Sanap Wantaim (AusAID's HIV/AIDS program)

AusAID's health program

AusAID's education program



Eastern Highlands Province

Royal PNG Constabulary, Goroka police
 (interviews/focus group with 26 police officers)
 Eastern Highlands, provincial village courts administrators
 Kainantu Police (focus group involving 7 officers)
 Kainantu Hospital, Family Support Centre

 Eastern Highlands Family Voice (interviews with staff and survivors)
 Goroka Base Hospital, Family Support Centre
 Eastern Highlands Province, FSVAC provincial branch
 Save the Children
 Sisters of Mercy, Goroka
 LJSP Eastern Highlands Province
 Kona-Bena (village focus group involving 14 individuals)
 Kainantu Save the Children's project for sex workers (focus group involving 15 individuals)
 Kainantu Gold, Women in Mining

Simbu Province

Kup Women for Peace (5 members)
 United Nauro-Gor Association (officials)
 Gor Community (focus group involving 19 adults)
 Gor Community (focus group involving 28 youth)
 Gor Community policewomen (focus group involving 26 officers)
 Gor Community policemen (involving 20 officers)

Solomon Islands

Organisation

Ministry of the Prime Minister
 Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs
 Government of the Western Province
 Social Welfare Division, Welfare Division Office, Gizo
 Gizo Hospital
 Government Law and Justice Sector officials
 Chief Justice of Solomon Islands
 Magistrates (9 interviewed)
 Police (20 interviewed in Honiara and Gizo)
 Public Solicitor's office
 Law Reform Commission

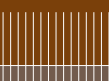
 National Council of Women
 Provincial Council of Women, Gizo
 Provincial Council of Women, Auki

Family Support Centre (including interviews with staff and clients)
 Christian Care Centre
 Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands
 Solomon Islands Christian Association, Federation of Women (SICA FOW)
 Save the Children Youth Outreach Project (Honiara and Auki)
 (over 30 youth consulted)
 Caritas National Training Office
 Rokotanikeni Women's Association (Honiara and Auki)
 Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association
 Catholic Women's Group, Auki
 AusAID Community Support Program staff
 RAMSI Advisers (Law and Justice, Machinery of Government)
 RAMSI, Participating Police Force

Vanuatu

Organisation

Department of Women's Affairs
 Ministry for Justice and Social Welfare
 Vanuatu Police force
 Port Vila (focus group involving 11 officers)
 Port Vila Family Protection Unit
 Tanna (interviews with officers)
 Isangel (interviews and focus group involving 13 police officers)
 Department of Public Prosecutions
 Port Vila Courthouse (interviews with magistrates)
 Office of the Public Solicitor
 Office of the Ombudsman
 Port Vila Central Hospital
 Vanuatu Women' Centre
 interviews with Executive staff
 focus groups with 20 staff and volunteers
 interviews with 7 male advocates
 National Council of Women
 Vanuatu Association for NGOs
 Vanuatu Family Health Association
 Wan Smol Bag Managers
 Wan Smol Bag (focus group involving 12 youth)
 Sanma Counselling Centre (interviews with staff)
 University of South Pacific Legal Centre
 Christian Broadcasting Network
 Beach Comber Resort
 Tafea Women's Centre
 Tafea Counselling Centre



Committees Against Violence Against Women

Interviews and focus groups with CAVAW members from: West Vanualava; Gaua; South Santo; Big Bay; Pentecost; East Ambae; Huritahi; Gaiovo; Lonahli; Emae; Lamén Island; Ambrym; Midmaug

Malfatumaauri Council of Chiefs

Pango area (separate men's and women's focus groups)

Saratamata area, Ambae (focus groups)

Centreville Christian Fellowship youth (focus group)

AusAID Staff

including gender specialists and legal sector advisors

New Zealand Agency for International Development

East Timor

Organisation

OPE/SEPI

PNTL National Investigations Office

Police VPU, Liquiça

Police VPU national headquarters

Police VPU, Dili

IDP camp, Dili (camp organisers)

JSMP

GBV Referral Partners Network

(Members from UNICEF, IOM, JSMP, UNIFEM,

Oxfam, PRADET, FOKUPERS, national VPU, lawyers)

PRADET

Oxfam Australia

Alola Foundation

Participants of a joint Oxfam/Alola workshop on violence against women, gender, and financial management in Liquiça (involving 30 participants)

AMKV

Caritas Australia

UNFPA

UNIFEM

UN Human Rights Monitoring Unit

Asia-Pacific Support Collective

Irish Aid

AusAID

Australian Federal Police

ANNEX 3: ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Fiji

Shamima Ali, Coordinator, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
 Virisila Buadromo, Director, Fiji Women's Rights Movement
 Imrana Jalal, Human Rights Adviser, Regional Rights Resource Team
 Dr Tokasa Leweni, Director for Women
 Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Howard's Law
 Professor Vijay Naidu, University of the South Pacific
 Dr Neil Sharma, University of the South Pacific
 Dr Lepani Waqatakiwewa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Women, Social Welfare

Papua New Guinea

Ila Geno, Chief Ombudsman
 Sir Mari Kapi, PNG Chief Justice
 Dame Carol Kidu, parliamentarian and Minister for Community Development
 Biri Kimasopa, former Minister for Justice, currently businessman
 Avie Koison, President PNG-Alumni Association
 Iva Kola, former NCD Deputy City Manager
 Cecilia Nembou, , Vice-Chancellor, Divine Word University
 Oseah Philemon, Editor-in-Chief, Post Courier
 Margaret Thomas, former Minister Counsellor, AusAID, PNG
 Robert Titi, Co-ordinator of Men Against Violence
 Ume Wainetti, FSVAC National Co-ordinator
 Ruby Zarriga, Director, Department of National Planning

Solomon Islands

Ms Afu Billy, Regional Director, Common Wealth Youth Program
 Ms Stella Delaiverata, Office for the High Commission on Human Rights
 Mrs Judith Fangalasua, Director, SICA Commission
 Ms Josephine Kama, Gender Adviser, Community Sector Program
 Sir Albert Palmer, Chief Justice of Solomon Islands
 Mr Solomon Palusi, Undersecretary, Ministry Home and Ecclesiastical Affairs
 Mr George Pitakoe, Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association
 Mrs Ethel Sigimanu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry Youth, Women and Child Affairs
 Ms Josephine Teakeni, Director, Vois Blong Mere
 Mrs Janet Tuhaika, Acting Director, Women's Development Division



Vanuatu

Chief Joseph Dick, Male Advocate, Vanuatu Women's Centre

Morris Kaloran, Director, Department of Correctional Services

Merilyn Tahi, Coordinator, Vanuatu Women's Centre

Hilda Taleo, Director, Department of Women's Affairs

Kali Vatoko, National Coordinator, Pacific Children's Program

Delphine Vuti, Senior Lieutenant, Vanuatu Police Force

East Timor

Note: An advisory group was not established for East Timor.



ANNEX 4: MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

International research team members

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Kritoe Keleba

Barbara Kepa

Martha Kup

Agnes Mek

Dr Angela Kelly, Director of the Cadet Training Program, PNG Institute of Medical Research

Solomon Islands

Salote Austin

Caroline Laore

Vanuatu

Naomi Bolenga

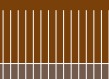
Emily Niras



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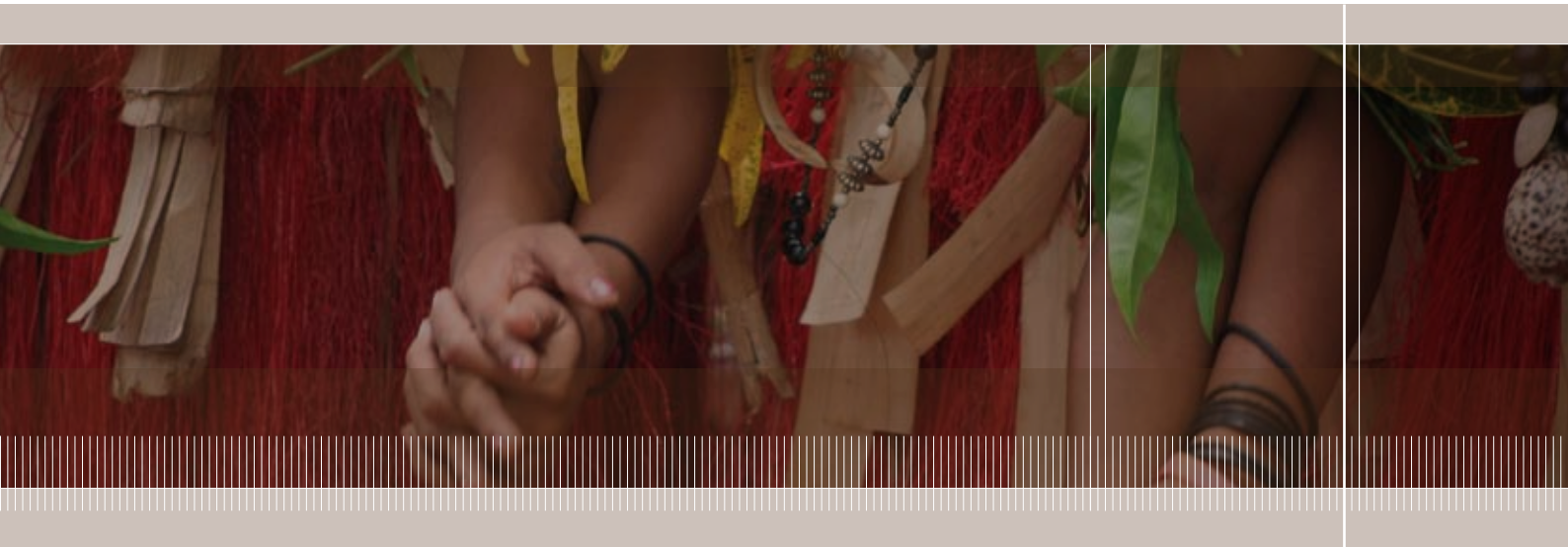


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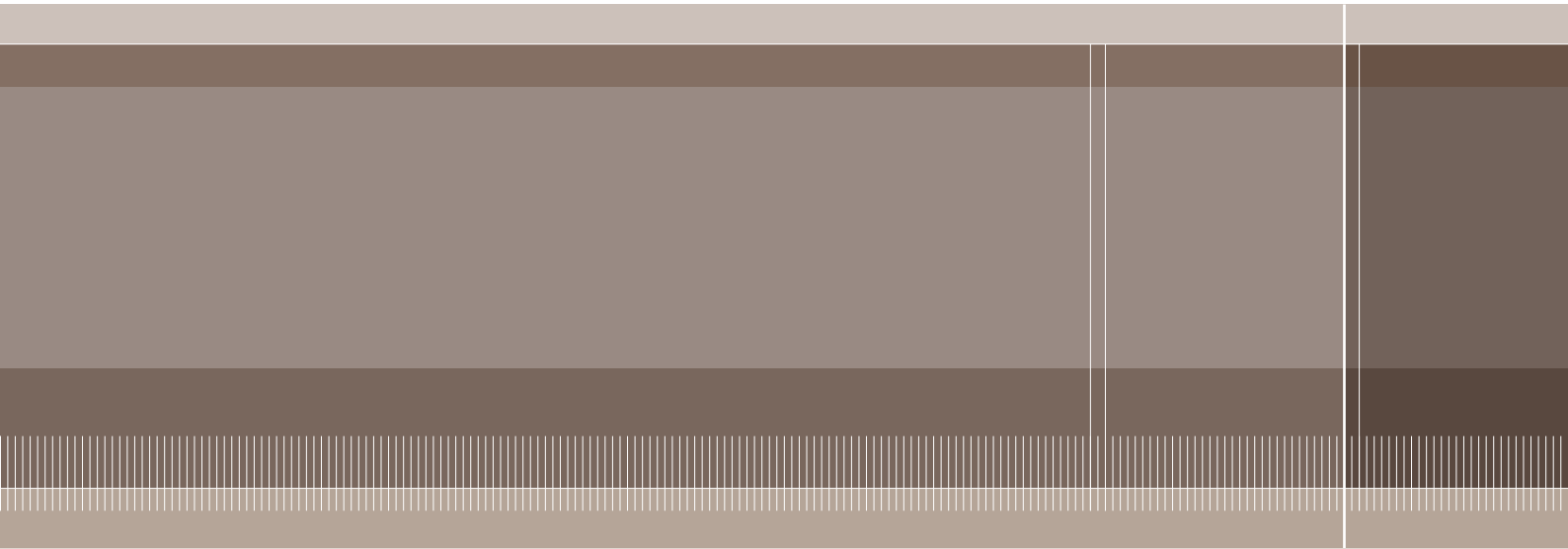
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COUNTRY SUPPLEMENTS



PAPUA NEW GUINEA COUNTRY SUPPLEMENT



1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This paper supplements *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Regional and Global Promising Approaches*, which addresses the issue of violence against women in the region as a whole. The main report describes all promising approaches identified by the team from across the region, and proposes, by way of a series of recommendations, an action plan relevant for all five countries studied. This document attempts to provide more country-specific information on Papua New Guinea (PNG), permitting a more nuanced approach to proposed solutions. It is intended that the regional report and the PNG report, when read together, will provide a comprehensive picture of promising approaches across the region, recommendations relevant for all countries and specific direction for where to focus efforts in PNG.

The process began in 2007, when the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness identified violence against women as a major barrier to development in the region, with serious effects not only on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, but on their families, communities and countries (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2007). Following a review of international lessons learned, visits of four to nine days were carried out by the international evaluation team to each of the five countries in the region (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and East Timor) during September and October 2007.

Interviews and focus group discussions using a set of participatory exercises were carried out with policymakers, service providers, users of the services, civil society groups and community members. These were continued by locally recruited researchers, except in East Timor, where there was a shortage of qualified individuals, but a number of recent studies.¹ Selection of the potentially promising practices to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID staff, local activists, and the local researchers. Local advisory groups of prominent individuals were established in each country in order to provide feedback and direction to the evaluation team, to encourage ownership of the review's findings and to help promote and implement its recommendations. (Annex 1 lists advisory group members for PNG.) Research was done in Port Moresby and Goroka (Eastern Highlands Province) by the international evaluation team. Additional fieldwork in Simbu and Eastern Highlands Provinces was carried out by four researchers of the PNG Institute of Medical Research Cadet Training Programme.

In all, 64 organisations were consulted via interviews with 41 individuals and focus group discussions with another 248 people. (Annex 2 lists organisations consulted.²)

¹ Many thanks to Martha Kup, Agnes Mek, Barbara Kepa, Kritoe Keleba, and the director of the Cadet Training Programme, Dr Angela Kelly, for their thorough work.

² To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

Regional recommendations on the four theme areas (multisectoral coordination, access to justice, support services for survivors and prevention) were developed during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, which involved local researchers and advisory group representatives from all countries.

This is not a situational analysis, nor is it a comprehensive or complete listing of all the good work that is happening in PNG. There are many inspiring examples of work being done in all parts of the country on violence against women, but only those that were brought to the team's attention could be covered. The study focused on finding lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up, or applied in other countries. It highlights women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention.

2 SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Ethnic and cultural diversity in PNG prevent generalisations about women's experience of violence. However, the risk of violence both at home and in the community is a constant presence in the lives of many women in large parts of PNG, especially in the Highlands and major cities. Previous research has established that two out of three women experience domestic violence as a national average³ and that 50 per cent of women have experienced forced sex.⁴ Gang rape, payback rape, rape in connection with tribal fighting, and the torture and murder of women suspected of sorcery are distinctive features of violence against women in PNG, with the additional risk of contracting HIV in the context of a generalised epidemic spreading rapidly throughout rural and urban areas.

Women in PNG are disadvantaged in numerous ways relative to men and to women in other parts of the world. Economic deprivation due to lack of land rights, patterns of out-marriage, and little independent access to cash income trap women, making them dependent on men for economic survival and reinforcing the expectations of male dominance and control founded on the still-prevalent practices of bride-price and polygamy. Further details on other cultural factors that contribute to women's exposure to male violence in PNG are in Chapter 2 of the regional report to which this paper is a supplement.

PNG ranks 124 out of the 136 countries in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) gender-related development index.⁵ PNG's maternal mortality is more than double that of any other Pacific Island country. Educational enrolment rates for girls relative to boys are among the lowest in the Pacific, which leads to

3 PNG – Law Reform Commission (LRC) 1992

4 National Sex and Reproductive Research Team 1994

5 The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's gender-related development index compared with its human development index.

disadvantage in the formal economy. (Annex 1 of the regional report details further indicators of women's situation).

Currently, PNG ranks 145 of 177 countries listed in the UNDP's human development index.⁶ Growing poverty, high levels of armed crime and sporadic civil unrest have a disproportionate impact on women in large parts of the country, especially in urban areas. Increasingly, women's economic survival is dependent on exchanging sex for money, goods or favours, either through informal transactional sex or regular sex work (National HIV/AIDS Support Project 2005). This is alarming within the context of HIV/AIDS. In 2002, PNG became the fourth country in the Asia-Pacific region to reach the level of a generalised epidemic, and since 2005, more infections have been recorded among women and girls than among men (National AIDS Council of Papua New Guinea 2006a). The high level of domestic and sexual violence in PNG contributes to the rapid spread of the epidemic.

On women's political participation, PNG is 119 in an international ranking of 121 countries (Schoeffel 2004). Only four women have ever been elected to PNG's national Parliament in the 33 years since Independence. The picture is similar at provincial, district and community levels. The national machinery for women—the National Council of Women and the Gender Division of the Department for Community Development (DCD)—has been marginalised, and the level of awareness of human rights, including women's human rights, remains low. Although PNG acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995, it has yet to submit its first country report.

3 MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

PNG has benefited from the work of two organisations that have been active in multisectoral coordination, the first from a government base and the second from civil society. Beginning in 1985, the Law Reform Commission (LRC) took a strong lead and coordinated collaboration between government, non-government, and private-sector partners for five years. In 1990, it completed its *Parliamentary Report on Domestic Violence* and was obliged to end its involvement in the issue. Activism lapsed until the creation in 2000 of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) under the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council, a civil-society organisation with private-sector funding established to offer policy advice to the Government of PNG.

The FSVAC has a coordination and advocacy role and is guided by its integrated multisectoral strategy (Box 3.1). While it has achieved a great deal, participation from government agencies has been weak or absent. In May 2008, a new strategy for the FSVAC was developed through an AusAID-funded process involving extensive

6 A measure of development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite index (http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_2007-2008_tables.pdf).

consultations. The strategy has been framed as a national strategy for the country rather than just for the FSVAC, in the hope of stimulating government ownership. Multisectoral coordination at provincial and district levels will be a focus of the new strategy, which has recently been adopted by the DCD.

BOX 3.1: THE FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ACTION COMMITTEE

Since 2001, the FSVAC has been implementing a multisectoral strategy under six focus areas (Bradley and Kesno 2001):

- > institutional framework
- > legal reforms
- > services for victims
- > perpetrators
- > community prevention and response
- > data collection and research.

The FSVAC's role is to coordinate activities in each focus area, which involves working with dozens of groups around the country, with funding from various bilateral and multilateral donors. Despite having only a small staff, the FSVAC has made numerous valuable contributions, including: assisting with the reform of sexual offences and child welfare legislation; promoting the Family Protection Bill; distributing legal literacy materials; developing training and advocacy materials; running national awareness campaigns, especially during the global 16 Days of Activism for Eliminating Violence Against Women; collecting data from service providers; successfully lobbying for the establishment of hospital-based centres; and commissioning research. Provincial-level committees have also been set up in several provinces, to coordinate local activities.

4 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

It is widely acknowledged within PNG's justice sector that the current justice system does not yet provide adequate protection for women against violence, whether through formal or informal means. Offender impunity remains the norm. This perpetuates women's suffering and undermines prevention efforts. A number of encouraging recent initiatives, however, have aimed to strengthen women's access to justice, many picking up on initiatives introduced by the LRC during the 1980s, which fell into disuse during the 1990s (PNG LRC 1992). Many other initiatives have begun or are in the pipeline than can be profiled here, but it is expected that this heightened attention to violence against women will bare fruit in the near future.

Australian Government support for the law and justice sector in PNG has, since 2004, focused on sector-wide capacity development by supporting PNG Government priorities and using PNG Government systems. A valuable 'plus' in the law and justice sector has been the adoption of a sector gender strategy in 2006 (Box 4.1). Australian support through the Law and Justice Sector Program (LJSP) has supported the implementation of this strategy, including through technical assistance in the areas of gender, family and child rights and HIV mainstreaming. This is a positive

development and the benefits of this more sustainable approach are bearing fruit. However, given the scale of the problem and the size of the sector, greater investment in these areas, with a priority focus on implementing the gender strategy to improve the justice system's response to violence against women at all levels, is necessary.

BOX 4.1: PNG'S JUSTICE SECTOR GENDER STRATEGY, 2005–2010 STRATEGIES:

Develop policies and practices that will enable men and women to participate equally as employees of the Law and Justice sector.

- > Develop and support a human rights approach to service delivery throughout the sector.
- > Develop sector-wide knowledge and involvement in the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS.
- > Strengthen relationships between sector agencies and civil society organisations to promote non-violent conflict resolution.
- > Increase women's access to the formal justice system.
- > Monitor women's experiences of restorative justice initiatives and encourage gender equitable practices.
- > Enhance PNG's capacity to provide detailed information on the situation of women and men before the law.

Specific activities related to violence against women include:

- > Training prosecutors and magistrates on the new Sexual Offences legislation.
- > Developing and providing training on a medico-legal *pro forma* on sexual assault.
- > Piloting a 'court accompaniment' program with the Salvation Army for survivors of rape or child sexual abuse.
- > Supporting the Police Commissioner's efforts to improve police response on domestic violence.
- > Setting aside one day a week in the National Court to hear sexual offence cases.
- > Reviewing and updating village court policy to include family and sexual violence.

4.1 Legal reform

A major breakthrough is the new legislation on sexual offences, including marital rape and offences against children. This came into force in 2003 and has the potential to improve both reporting levels and prosecution outcomes for sexual offences. Initial training and awareness activities conducted by sector agencies are being strengthened by a joint approach with the DCD and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (Box 4.2).

BOX 4.2: CHANGES TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S LEGISLATION ON SEXUAL OFFENCES

With technical expertise provided by the UUNICEF from 2000 to 2002, the FSVAC and the DCD prepared amendments to the Criminal Code and Evidence Act, both of which were passed by Parliament in 2002.

Features include:

- > Clearly defined **sexual offences against children** (under 16 years for most offences, under 18 years for others). Offences include sexual touching and sexual exploitation, with increased penalties for those in a position of trust, such as parents, teachers and the police.
- > Definition of incest expanded to cover more categories of relationships, in line with custom.
- > Court procedures improved to protect survivors' safety and dignity.
- > Definition of **rape** expanded to cover penetration of the mouth or anus and use of objects; requirement for medical corroboration removed; victim's previous sexual conduct not admissible as evidence.
- > **Rape in marriage** became illegal.

UNIFEM and DCD are now collaborating on a three-year project to educate communities, leaders, health service providers, legal aid organisations, the police and the judiciary about the amendments in two pilot provinces. Progress will be monitored and evaluated annually.

4.2 Police response

Despite some encouraging initiatives and the best efforts of some individual women and men, domestic violence is still not consistently treated as a crime by the police, except in the most extreme cases. Women are often pressured to drop charges and are not provided with additional sources of support. Domestic violence perpetrated by police is also widespread (Amnesty International 2006).

Recently there has been a surge of interest in the issue following the attendance by the current PNG Police Commissioner at the Pacific Police Commissioners' Conference of 2007, where a joint resolution was passed to make violence against women a priority. The Police Commissioner announced he intended to tackle police who abuse their wives. He issued a memorandum directing police to treat domestic assault as a crime, not a 'family matter'. Translating this intention into real change will be an enormous task requiring sustained and substantial support. Experience in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu indicates that strong commitment at the highest level of command is more effective in creating change than relying on training at lower operational levels.

The establishment of Sexual Offences Squads in the late 1980s, through the influence of a highly supportive police commissioner, is an example of initial improvements that have diminished over time and failed to lead to sustainable change. The purpose of the squads is to facilitate the reporting and prosecution of sexual offences by reducing the trauma for survivors. Box 4.3 describes both the ideal and the current reality. Initially, the squads were set up in most provincial police stations, with AusAID project funding, but those remaining are barely functioning. Nevertheless, the overall approach remains valuable and is also favoured by the other countries in the region.

The resumption of Australian support to the PNG police provides an opportunity to support the current Police Commissioner's violence against women reform agenda, and to strengthen the hand of the squads within the PNG police.

BOX 4.3: POLICE SEXUAL OFFENCE SQUADS

Ideally, a successful squad needs:

- > well-trained staff (mainly females) available 24 hours every day
- > facilities that allow for privacy and confidentiality, communication and data-collection equipment, and reliable access to transport
- > strong links with medical services and organisations that provide support to survivors
- > high-level champions in the police force.
- > training for all police on addressing violence against women.

In reality, all squads are seriously under-staffed, lack training, are grossly under-resourced, and are given low priority by other police. There is no specific training or orientation for the positions, officers are transferred in and out without consultation, many female officers have been replaced by men (undermining the basic principle of providing a victim-sensitive service), and even essential resources (telephones, private interviewing facilities, transport, computers and lockable filing cabinets) are generally absent. Remarkably, a few dedicated individuals struggle to provide a service, even resorting to public transport and working during off-duty hours to help victims.

Despite this overall dysfunction, women report receiving better attention from the squads than they get when forced to report to police station front desks. Women want to see the system improved.

4.3 Traditional and community-based justice

The formal system of government courts is difficult for most women to access due to lack of knowledge of the law and their rights, male dominance within staff and the judiciary, and the placement of services only in major towns. Most survivors must rely on community-based justice through village courts, which remain strongly male-biased. PNG's experience of trying to make the village courts more woman-friendly provides sobering lessons.

Assisting village courts, accustomed to applying customs that assert male control over women, to move toward greater gender equality, is a challenge. Significantly increasing the number of female magistrates in PNG's village courts has proven difficult. It is only in recent years that real increases have begun to occur. By the late 1990s, only a handful of female magistrates could be found in PNG, with estimates of only 8 or 10 across 1400 courts from a total pool of 7500 magistrates. Proposed amendments to the Village Courts Act, requiring each village court to have one or more female magistrate (out of a usual total of four or five per court), failed to pass PNG's Parliament in 2000. Despite this setback, a renewed push to promote female magistrates is yielding results: women's representation in village courts is now accelerating. In 2006, the

numbers had risen to 60 and by mid-2008 the total had risen to 250⁷ magistrates.⁸ This renewed push is also bringing increased attention to human rights and gender equality in training for officials, and strong encouragement for each of PNG's 14 000 village courts to have a female magistrate. Revisiting the failed 2000 amendments to the Village Courts Act could pay dividends.

Village courts are already integrated into the formal justice system (since 1973). Less formal systems, such as 'restorative justice', community-based justice, community policing, peace mediation and conflict prevention/resolution, supplement PNG's village court system. These less formal mechanisms play a valuable role, including by engaging men in reconciliation and restorative processes. But they also have the potential to undermine gender-equality goals unless the specific rights and needs of women and children are recognised and appropriately addressed. For example, restorative justice is central to the PNG Government's national law and justice policy. However, restorative justice can subordinate women's rights to protection from violence and to redress for wrongs as individuals, to the goal of restoring harmonious relationships within and between groups dominated by men. And 'community' is a gender-blind term, masking the fact that communities are usually controlled by men. This highlights the importance of ensuring that competent gender analysis is a fundamental component of the design, implementation and monitoring of all the above approaches to ensure the human rights of women and men are protected and promoted. Further research in this area may be prudent to ensure restorative justice and community-engagement frameworks recognise, respect and protect the rights of women.

The lesson from the Nauro-Gor example (Box 4.4) is that gender-equitable approaches do not emerge spontaneously from male-dominated traditional groups, but sensitive support to gatekeepers of traditional justice can stimulate change from within. The communities' hopes for peace and economic development can help create an environment conducive to gender change and entry points for integrating human rights.

⁷ Written communication, Elizabeth Morgan, LJSP Village Courts Advisor.

⁸ Personal communication, Elizabeth Morgan, LJSP Village Courts Advisor.

BOX 4.4: COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE AND PEACEMAKING: NAURO-GOR COMMUNITY LAWS INITIATIVE, SIMBU PROVINCE

In 2005, male leaders of nine clans came together, mediated by the Roman Catholic Church, to make peace after 32 years of devastating tribal fighting. They signed a peace agreement and formulated a list of 'community laws', which they all pledged to support. These were based on local custom and contained provisions that were restrictive of women and that trivialised domestic violence. Men were appointed to leadership positions in the new United Nauro-Gor Association, and several men trained as community police. At the same time, Oxfam offered funding for some economic development activities in the area.

During 2006, members of these same clans participated in Community Conversations, a community development approach to (HIV/AIDS) prevention that integrates principles of gender equality and human rights throughout all its processes. Male leaders then decided to create positions for women in the United Nauro-Gor Association. Two men (including the chairman) and two women were selected to attend a week-long training course on gender and human rights with the UNIFEM in Port Moresby. This led to the revision of the 'community laws, with the participation of women, and the training of female community police equal to the number of male police. The association has asked for gender equality and human rights to be taught in local schools.

The making of peace—itself a major achievement—has created an openness among communities, including male leaders, to rebuilding their lives with some different principles. The initiative is still in its early days, and both women and men need time to change old habits of dominance and subservience. The ongoing process of Community Conversations, and commitments of continued support on gender equality and human rights from UNIFEM and Oxfam, will help to consolidate the present enthusiasm of the new leadership and prevent potential backlash.

The community policing system (Box 4.4) requires a word of caution. These volunteer auxiliaries are given uniforms and rudimentary orientation, but there is no training on gender or human rights, nor any effective oversight or accountability. Indeed, Amnesty International's 2006 report found this approach reinforced power hierarchies in the community, trivialised crimes against women and discouraged women from attempting to access formal remedies. Even where women are also appointed as community police, as in the example above, there is the risk of corruption and vigilante behaviour. Compensation is retained as the main method of settling problems, even though women do not feel this approach resolves their issues: *'The victim does not get anything. She loses out double time: suffering the beatings and not having a share of the compensation payment'*. (reserve policewoman, Kainantu).

4.4 Knowledge of laws and rights

Three approaches to improving knowledge of laws and rights have been used in PNG for many years: public awareness using printed materials and media campaigns, legal literacy training for organisations and individuals and legal support to individual cases. Many organisations are still using the leaflets produced 20 years ago by the LRC and the Women and Law Committee, since the legal situation pertaining to domestic violence and related family laws has not changed. The leaflets are distributed by national and provincial FSVACs, provincial councils of women, Family Support Centres and numerous others. A new push for awareness on the new sexual offences legislation is being undertaken by the DCD, with UNIFEM support (Box 4.1).

The Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAF) is a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) based in Port Moresby that has specialised in giving trainings on legal literacy and providing legal aid to survivors since the early 1990s. Demand far outstrips supply, since PNG's Public Solicitor's Office provides little legal aid in family cases. An interesting pilot project is the Salvation Army's effort to develop a court-based program of volunteers to support complainants in cases of sexual or physical violence. These initiatives are supported by Australia's LJSP and additional support in these areas should be encouraged. Knowledge of laws and rights, also a strategy for prevention, is discussed further in Chapter 6.

5 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

5.1 Core support

PNG does not have a strong lead agency providing services to abused women and children. The country's national lead agency, the FSVAC, has no service provision function. Existing services are small and scattered, under-resourced technically and financially, located only in major towns, and provided mostly by faith-based organisations. The penetration of faith-based organisations into PNG's rural areas, where Government services are weak or non-existent, offers opportunities to extend the reach of support services to survivors of violence in rural areas. However, using faith-based organisations to provide such services requires complementary actions. Standardised training on counselling for survivors of sexual and domestic abuse encompassing a human-rights approach is needed; some counselling provided by faith-based groups can be counterproductive to protecting the rights of women. An example of counselling messages provided by a faith-based service is in Box 5.1.

BOX 5.1: MEN'S EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THEIR WIVES' BEHAVIOUR ***Respect**

[The man] is the head of the family. In Papua New Guinean culture, men are to be the leader in our societies and tribes ... Ladies, no matter how important you are at your professional level, when it comes to your home, your man is the head of the family ... [The] wife encourages and strengthens her husband's masculine leadership role and must never try to destroy, usurp, weaken or eliminate it ... A man has status among his peers if the wife is seen to have respect for him ...

Submissive

Support his ego. Be submissive to him ... [A wife] submits to her husband, not because he (the husband) demands it but because Christ directs her to it in his word ...

Helper

Men like their wives to anticipate their needs and not wait to be told. 'You were created to be a helpmate.'

Sexual fulfilment

'Sexual relations two or three times a week on average. Willingness to experiment, find ways to increase his enjoyment of sex'.

*Extracts from an interview with a family counsellor of PNG Counselling and Care, published as 'Things that husbands want their wives to know' in New Age Woman (a monthly supplement to the national newspaper *The Post Courier* February 2008, pp. 26–27).

Against this background, PNG has examples of promising practices in service provision for survivors. These include organisations such as Family Voice, a Goroka-based NGO providing counselling for women and children, training for community volunteers to assist survivors in accessing health and justice services and coordinating the Family Support Centre for survivors at the local hospital.

Family Support Centres (recently renamed Stop Violence Centres) are being set up in all major hospitals in PNG, as an initiative of the National Department of Health (NDOH) (Box 5.2). Similar hospital-based centres are in use in other parts of the world, including in East Timor, to improve coordination of services to victims.

5.2 Safe havens

There is a huge unmet need for emergency and temporary shelter for abused women. Port Moresby has three, run by the Salvation Army, ICRAF and City Mission (Haus Ruth), the latter being the largest and offering the most comprehensive services (Box 5.2). In some parts of the country, shelter is provided by churches, HIV/AIDS care centres and women leaders in their own homes. Often these provide only temporary relief, since women usually have no other choice than to return home, but they do contribute to women's empowerment and, therefore, to longer-term change.

BOX 5.2A: HOSPITAL-BASED 'ONE-STOP CENTRES'

For many abused women, the first (and often the only) help they seek is medical treatment for their injuries. For this reason, PNG's NDOH decided to set up hospital-based centres for women who have been physically abused or raped, where they can receive treatment, counselling and referrals in privacy; where they cannot be pursued by irate husbands; and where medico-legal evidence can be collected in a timely and respectful manner. Funding for these Stop Violence Centres has been provided by AusAID and UNICEF.

The preferred model is the one-stop centre, where treatment, counselling and legal aid are provided on the spot by paid staff and trained volunteers, and where police statements are prepared. This spares women the many difficulties, dangers and costs involved in visiting other agencies around town. Overnight accommodation is available in an emergency, with referrals to shelters for longer periods. Lae's Angau Hospital has the country's current best practice model, which has been in operation since 2001 and is now being supported by *Médecins Sans Frontières*.

The 'safe space' model is being used by smaller hospitals. The Centres at Goroka Base and Kainantu Hospitals have only one room each, but each has one paid staff member and is expanding its volunteer roster. Both are coordinated by Family Voice, which provides follow-up support and connections to other organisations. However, there is no women's shelter in the area, and no access to safe overnight accommodation.

In 2007, the NDOH stepped up its efforts to improve and standardise the Centres, expand them to all provincial hospitals, formalise protocols and referral pathways, and introduce training for staff and volunteers.

BOX 5.2B: TWO MODELS OF SAFE HAVEN FOR ABUSE SURVIVORS IN PORT MORESBY**Haus Ruth hostel**

Since 2001, Haus Ruth has been providing short-term accommodation, counselling and other support services to abused women and children. The hostel can hold up to 30 women, some of whom are employed women paying rent, which helps sustain the service. City Mission and donors make up the difference. Staff work full time, are well trained and have excellent links with other services. The hostel is always full and has to turn many women away. Those lucky enough to be taken in have found strength in the support of other women, and expressed enormous gratitude for the service.

Women want peace of mind and rest. When we enter this place, they are like friends to us. They are like family. They love us and feed us three times a day.

We encourage each other, how to stand up and tackle our problems ... It's only when you can share your pain with others that you can feel some relief.

Morata women's group

In 2003, a group of women in Morata settlement, Port Moresby, began taking action on wife beating, with the inspiration and support of a committed female police officer. One of the leaders of the group obtained her husband's permission to allow beaten wives to spend a few nights in their house, until they could safely go home again. Community men agreed to treat the house as a safe haven, under threat of arrest by the female police officer. Members raise funds locally, and contribute whatever food items they can spare to the women being sheltered. More than 70 women have so far been helped in this way. The group has now branched out into other activities, with some donor funding. The city council covering Port Moresby is planning to support the expansion of this model throughout the city through the project *Meri Seif Ples* (Safe Places for Women).

5.3 Health services

PNG's NDOH is the first in the region to introduce a formal protocol and training on domestic violence for primary health care providers in rural as well as urban areas (Box 5.3). It is also developing clinical and medico-legal guidelines on rape for use in health facilities around the country.

BOX 5.3: NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROTOCOL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Introduced in 2003, this protocol is based on a simple desktop checklist of six steps. The health worker is required to ask about domestic violence with certain presenting conditions, ensure privacy, inform the client she has the right to be protected, provide treatment, plan with the client how to reduce future risk, and record injuries in the woman's health book. Each health worker is required to develop a local referral network, recorded on the inside of the checklist.

The checklist explains that the 'health worker's role is to prevent domestic violence by a) helping victims reduce their risk and b) encouraging community action. Please follow all the steps. If you only treat the injuries, it allows the violence to continue'.

A teaching poster and separate leaflets for men and women, used in health-promotion activities or given to individual clients, have been produced and distributed. A full package of training materials was created, and tutors from all the colleges of health work and nursing were trained in 2004 in how to use them. By error, the materials were not fully incorporated into the new curriculum for community health workers, so rollout of the system was disrupted. The NDOH is in the process of re-implementing the system and stepping up training. In 2008, it created the position of Gender-Based Violence Coordinator to sustain the new emphasis on this issue. An urgent priority is removing extra fees for domestic violence victims, imposed in some provincial health-care facilities in a mistaken attempt at deterrence.

6 PREVENTION

Most prevention initiatives in PNG remain focused at the level of awareness raising, with little use of human rights or empowerment approaches. The lack of effective sanctions through the justice system seriously impedes efforts to change community norms. Much of the preventive work with men and young men, such as that done by Men Against Violence through the FSVAC, has not attempted to transform gender relations but has presented domestic violence as a 'family problem' for which both partners are responsible and that can be prevented or solved by better mutual understanding. This approach perpetuates rather than challenges accepted gender roles and male authority. Initiatives by faith-based organisations to reduce violence against women by appealing to men to be better husbands and fathers carry the risk of reinforcing the patriarchal attitudes and norms of male control that are one of the underlying cause of the problem.

6.1 HIV/AIDS

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in PNG, although devastating in its effects, has paradoxically opened the door for preventive work on violence against women. HIV/AIDS is having a disproportionate impact on PNG's women. This reflects women's greater vulnerability to HIV and the fact that pervasive gender inequalities undermine women's ability to negotiate safe sexual practices. As a result, women often contract the virus from their male partner. This reality has created an environment in which many people are ready to recognise and address gender inequality, violence against women and the need to empower women as a means of reversing the epidemic.

Box 6.1 describes the kinds of promising work being done.

BOX 6.1: HIV/AIDS AS AN ENTRY POINT FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

These initiatives have been introduced through the collaboration between the National AIDS Council and AusAID's HIV/AIDS support programs:

- > Required training since 2002 for all paid and unpaid persons working on HIV/AIDS, with core modules on gender inequality, violence against women and human rights.
- > The *National Gender Policy and Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2006–2010*, adopted in 2007, which asserts gender inequalities and violence against women as priority strategies (National AIDS Council of Papua New Guinea 2006a). This is a first in the Asia-Pacific region.
- > A gender advisor position created in the National AIDS Council.
- > A handbook distributed to all organisations working on HIV, giving guidelines on how to integrate gender sensitivity and prevention of violence against women into activities on HIV/AIDS (National AIDS Council of Papua New Guinea 2006b).
- > Skills for addressing the links between violence against women and HIV testing and disclosure included in training for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) counsellors.
- > A training course for men and boys, accredited by the National AIDS Council, addressing gender equality and violence against women.
- > Community Conversations: a method for community mobilisation around HIV/AIDS that addresses gender power inequalities and is now being widely adopted by Government and NGOs.
- > Save the Children's work with young people in Goroka on sexual health, using participatory action research that makes the links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Two gender advisor positions created within AusAID's program of support on HIV/AIDS (Sanap Wantaim).

That the HIV/AIDS epidemic in PNG is, in part, being fuelled by violence against women, does not mean that violence against women should be seen predominantly through the lens of HIV/AIDS. A comprehensive, multisectoral approach to addressing violence against women is required; HIV/AIDS programming is just one component of such a response.

6.2 Prevention of conflict

In the Highlands, where tribal fighting causes enormous suffering and violence for women in many ways, ending tribal conflict is a potent means of preventing and reducing violence against women. The experiences of Nauro-Gor and Kup, in Simbu, show that making peace does not eliminate violence against women, but it does reduce it, putting women in a stronger position to protect them and opening opportunities for changes in gender relations. Kup Women for Peace (KWP) not only took the lead in creating peace, but have continued to do so through their innovative methods of reducing domestic violence and creating leadership roles for women (Box 6.2).

BOX 6.2: WOMEN AS PEACEMAKERS: KUP WOMEN FOR PEACE, SIMBU PROVINCE

The organisation that became KWP grew out of the activities of three women, driven by the atrocities they had experienced during 30 years of tribal fighting, who risked their lives by breaking custom and secretly meeting with women of enemy tribes to talk about peace.

Between 1999 and 2002 they formed a committee of women in each tribe and clan. During the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women in 2002, peace was finally made at the compensation ceremony for a university student killed in the fighting. People saw that *'the mothers are doing all they can to bring peace'*, and they made a settlement, at which the KWP leaders gave their first public speech. Since then, KWP volunteers have helped maintain the peace by acting as polling officers during national elections, doing community awareness on good governance, helping arrange the public surrender of armed gangs, and obtaining water tanks for schools.

Despite the peace, *'wife-beating is still common'* and KWP volunteers carry out regular house-to-house awareness raising. *'We move around and sleep in people's houses with families. After we speak to people from that household, we move on to other houses and do awareness there. We also go to the men's [meeting] house at night, and in the daytime, we go to the small markets in the community. People ask lots of questions and they learn so much this way.'* This face-to-face dialogue method is highly effective because it overcomes the illiteracy barrier (most women's schooling was disrupted by the fighting) and because whole families learn together, diminishing the risk of male backlash.

KWP members recognise that *'It's hard to break down culture in a short time'*. They have found it very helpful to access *'many trainings on national rights, self rights, formation of women's groups, HIV/AIDS, community justice, peace mediation, and other things'*. Support from donors for local development projects and from UNIFEM for gender equality training in schools has also increased members' confidence and influence in the community.

6.3 Women's empowerment

Because women's status is so low in PNG, increasing their participation in political leadership positions and economic and social status at all levels must be a priority. This means strengthening women's participation and leadership in community development and economic programs, as well as increasing their representation in national-level leadership positions, including in Parliament.

Political participation

There is recent evidence demonstrating that having more women in government has a positive impact on the provision of public goods to communities. Research comparing local governments in India that have reserved seats for women (and so which have a higher representation of women), with those that do not reserve seats for women (and so have lower representation by women), found that:

... villages [with] reserved [seats] for women leaders have more public goods and the quality of these goods is at least as high as in non-reserved villages. Moreover, villagers are less likely to pay bribes in villages [with] reserved [seats] for women. Second, we provide evidence from two Indian states that children in villages headed by female [leaders] do better on two dimensions, drinking water and immunisation. Girls in villages reserved for female [leaders] also experience an improvement in school attendance.⁹

The team is not aware of similarly rigorous research on the impact of women leaders on violence against women. However, intuitively the team would expect more women leaders (in national parliaments, local governments, senior public and private sector positions) to have a positive impact on efforts to reduce violence against women. Emerging evidence from East Timor appears to support this belief.

In 2004, East Timor's local (*suco*) councils and chiefs were given both the power and the duty of protecting women from domestic violence. A 2006 evaluation of efforts to increase women representation on the *suco* councils, and to equip them with 'transformative leadership training' prior to their election onto the councils, identified some positive impacts:

- > Increased confidence and ability to speak up, both in the family and in the council.
- > Less conflict and violence in the family, attributed to husbands paying more respect. *'Men are happy when their wives are elected. It's a privilege for the family'.*
- > Some husbands more willing to share money and domestic chores with wives, thereby reducing domestic disputes and violence.
- > Some elected women able to raise the issue of domestic violence with their councils, as well as other women's issues, such as family planning, sanitation, children's vaccinations, school facilities and women's sports.

Economic empowerment

In the longer run, economic empowerment of women will strengthen violence-prevention efforts in PNG (as well as having many other positive development outcomes). However, economic development programs in PNG, particularly those targeting women, need to incorporate education around violence against women and gender relations. Programs increasing a woman's access to economic resources can put her at risk of increased

⁹ Beaman, L, Dufllo, E, Pande, R & Topalova, P 'Women Politicians, Gender Bias and Policymaking in Rural India' (UNICEF, December 2006), p. 4.

violence, if not carefully addressed in the program. This is particularly true in settings where a woman's status is low, because increasing her income can lead to greater conflict within the family (Koenig, Hossain et al. 1999). On the other hand, if such issues are addressed within the community and among women leaders, programs can significantly contribute to reducing violence against women. Community-mobilisation activities and micro-finance programs in PNG involving education about rights and violence against women are likely to significantly reduce the levels of violence against women and improve repayment rates in micro-finance activities.¹⁰

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

PNG's progress in addressing violence against women over the last 20 years has gone through peaks and troughs, but appears now to be on a strong upswing. Initiatives first begun in the days of the LRC but that fell apart during the 1990s have been reintroduced and are taking root in more solid ground. This can be attributed to a number of factors, such as the energetic work of the FSVAC and numerous other NGOs in raising public awareness of the issues; the recognition that gender inequality and violence against women are key drivers of the HIV epidemic; the role of the media in highlighting cases of extreme violence against women; and the increasing support from donors for addressing gender issues in their programming.

In the past, donor support for gender issues was hampered by a lack of Government of PNG leadership in this area and by the lack of a vibrant women's movement and political leadership committed to promoting women's interests. Recently, however, the quiet perseverance has paid off, with justice-sector agencies and the Department of Education inaugurating gender policies and strategies that include attention to violence against women, and the NDOH currently embarking on the same process. A consultative process for developing a new national strategy for the FSVAC has also contributed to creating a critical mass of agencies and individuals ready to push for genuine change. The climate is right for all actors in PNG—government, civil society and donors—to strengthen collective efforts to address the scourge of violence against women.

The recommendations outlined in the regional report on priorities for supporting anti-violence against women initiatives are all relevant for PNG. In addition, the team suggests a number of other priorities.

¹⁰ For example, see: Pronyk, PM & Hargreaves JR, et al. 2006, 'Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster randomised trial', *Lancet* 368(9551): 1973–83; Kim, JC & Watts, CH et al. 2007, 'Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in South Africa', *American Journal of Public Health* 97(10): 1794–802.

Australia is well positioned to play a supporting role in this endeavour by systematically integrating into its PNG program, work and strategies to reduce violence against women through human rights and gender-sensitive approaches.

7.2 Specific recommendations for all Papua New Guinea actors

Support the development of a government-led national plan of action. This is one of the recommendations of the UN Secretary General's *Report on Violence against Women 2006*. The Government of PNG's decision to endorse the FSVAC's new national strategy is positive. Through the use of participatory processes across PNG Government departments, the new FSVAC strategy provides a basis to strengthen government ownership and leadership on the issue. The next challenge is to translate this new strategy into a Government-led national plan of action to address violence against women.

Conduct national research using the World Health Organization's methodology (WHO 2005). PNG's statistics on violence against women derive from research that is 15 to 25 years old. In 2006, the National Research Institute conducted a survey of domestic violence, but the results (not yet available) will not readily allow comparisons with other countries because the methodology chosen was the original one pioneered by the LRC rather than the state-of-the art methodology developed and recommended by WHO. National research using this methodology has been carried out in Samoa, is being undertaken in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and is planned for Fiji. It would be highly desirable to carry out a similar study in PNG.

Strengthen the enabling environment. Advocacy and activism on violence against women are more likely to succeed where there is open public discourse on gender and human rights, where leaders are sensitised to women's human rights, where women can participate effectively in decision-making bodies, where there is an active civil society, and where there are independent institutions for investigating human-rights complaints. Action on all these fronts would be highly beneficial.

Cultivate high-level male champions on violence against women within the public and private sectors. This is particularly important in the public sector, as the only female minister is too overstretched to effectively carry this agenda alone. The current Police Commissioner is one clear example of a motivated and highly influential champion who, with access to technical support, could make faster progress on his agenda for violence against women.

Develop community-level male champions on violence against women based on Vanuatu's Male Advocates Programme, targeting traditional leaders such as village court magistrates, peace officers and community police. It may be feasible to envision this as a joint enterprise between Australia's LJSP and the Sport for Development and Peace Initiative, to encourage cross-generational communication and prepare future leaders.

Invest in capacity development for organisations providing critical support services.

Numerous organisations and individuals are providing ‘counselling’ or other support services in cases of violence against women in ways that can exacerbate the problem and increase women’s exposure to violence. Competency-based training is urgently required to develop specific skills to address cases of violence against women and children. A standardised and accredited program of training could target professional and lay counsellors; health workers, including staff at Stop Violence Centres; clergy and pastoral workers; VCT counsellors; social workers; community development workers; welfare officers (government and private sector); youth workers; school guidance officers; and peace mediators.

Assess the effectiveness of justice-sector actors and initiatives, such as village courts, community justice training, peace mediation training (through Peace Foundation Melanesia), community policing, and the restorative justice approach generally, in addressing women’s needs, improving gender parity, addressing potential backlash and promoting human rights. This requires the application of a gender lens to the key concepts and underlying values and field research to understand the processes affecting, and potentially distorting, implementation, as well as the development of clear monitoring criteria and procedures.

Create a focus on preventing violence against women and girls through support to the education sector. Existing procedures to prevent and respond to sexual harassment of students and staff, to train guidance counsellors, and to conduct safety audits of facilities continue to be poorly implemented. The capacity of the District Women’s Education Facilitators system to address violence against women requires strengthening. This would enable more effective advocacy in schools and communities.

The most glaring gap at present, however, is the dearth of core curriculum materials explicitly promoting the right of women and girls to be free of gender violence, and teacher training to facilitate both the appropriate use of materials and the ability of teachers to identify and provide support to students experiencing or at risk of violence, whether at school or in the home. This will become increasingly necessary as more students lose one or both parents to AIDS-related illnesses.

Support political empowerment of women at the national, provincial and community levels, drawing on the positive experience in East Timor.

Support economic empowerment of women through equality in land rights, property and inheritance rights, and income-generating opportunities, while incorporating education around violence against women and gender relations in all relevant empowerment interventions to minimise short-term spikes in violence against women.

7.3 Specific recommendations for Australia

Be explicit and proactive in supporting gender equality and human rights in policy dialogue, encouraging, motivating and assisting the PNG Government to address violence against women.

Provide expertise in gender and in violence against women to all sectoral programs during design and implementation, to ensure the integration of appropriate strategies and indicators. Programs that have had sustained technical input on gender, such as the LJSP, the Basic Education Development Project and Sanap Wantaim, have made far greater progress in addressing women's issues, including violence, than those that have not. The work of AusAID's recently appointed gender advisor presents an opportunity to conduct and update a stocktaking of initiatives regarding violence against women and of the level of in-country expertise, and to develop an active 'community of practice' on violence against women that should include donors as well as practitioners.

Continue to support the FSVAC strategy process and assist stakeholders in conducting sustained and strategic advocacy, both for PNG Government follow-up action to implement the strategy and for its further development as a national plan of action with buy-in from all government departments and civil society agencies. This would also include:

- > Providing long-term core support to the FSVAC as the main multisectoral coordinating body at both the national and provincial levels. The impressive achievements of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) and the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) have been made possible by the continuity of core funding for 20 and 12 years respectively.
- > Appointing a violence-against-women capacity development specialist to work with the FSVAC for one to two years. This is an urgent need for the FSVAC, as confirmed by the recent FSVAC review and strategy upgrade process. The position requires an experienced international professional (not a youth ambassador), as no one is available locally who has sufficient depth and breadth of expertise in this relatively new field.

Maintain rigorous quality control of programs and services that address gender and/or violence against women. All Australian-funded activities in this area should be grounded in a gender equality and human rights perspective, as described in the regional report. This is particularly relevant to the governance, health (including HIV/AIDS), and justice sectors when considering funding for mediation and counselling, and approaches by faith-based groups, which may have an agenda that conflicts with human rights and gender-equality principles.

Provide targeted support to key Government of PNG departments at national and provincial levels.

- > **Assisting the departments of Finance and Planning** to integrate strategies on violence against women into national and provincial planning would add value. In the longer term, the Office for the Development of Women and the Gender Division of the DCD plan to advise all Government of PNG departments on how to integrate a gender perspective that includes violence against women into their planning processes. In the interim, Australia should consider offering a short-term gender advisor with expertise in violence against women to develop counterparts' strategic planning skills on these issues.
- > **Develop the leadership capacity of the DCD.** Both the department's Gender Division and the proposed Office for the Development of Women require sustained capacity building across the board, but particularly on violence against women. The latter should be done speedily, to make use of the valuable opportunity that exists to enable the current minister to accept a greater leadership role on violence against women. The minister is motivated, but is overworked and in need of specialist advice and support in this area.

Support the introduction of competency-based training. Australian support for a new training college may offer the best entry point for this initiative. In the interim, a training package addressing the levels of need and types of audiences could be developed and piloted through other institutions, such as the Divine Word University or the International Education Authority. A proposal for further developing such a package based on existing draft materials trialled this year in PNG has been submitted to Sanap Wantaim, which would allow a fast start to be made on this initiative.

Increase support for women's empowerment, both political and economic, subject to efforts to minimise violence backlash by incorporating education around violence against women and gender relations in all empowerment interventions. AusAID's community development program provides a key opportunity to pursue this agenda.

ANNEX 1: ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS FOR PNG

Ila Geno, Chief Ombudsman

Sir Mari Kapi, PNG Chief Justice

Dame Carol Kidu, parliamentarian and Minister for Community Development

Biri Kimasopa, former Minister for Justice, currently businessman

Avie Koison, President PNG-Alumni Association

Iva Kola, former NCD Deputy City Manager

Cecilia Nembou, , Vice-Chancellor, Divine Word University

Oseah Philemon, Editor-in-Chief, Post Courier

Margaret Thomas, former Minister Counsellor, AusAID, PNG

Robert Titi, Co-ordinator of Men Against Violence

Ume Wainetti, FSVAC National Co-ordinator

Ruby Zarriga, Director, Department of National Planning

ANNEX 2: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED¹¹

Organisation

Port Moresby

Ministry for Community Development

Minister Dame Carol Kidu

Gender Division

Welfare Division

CEDAW taskforce

Child Protection

National Department of Health

National Department of Education

Port Moresby General Hospital, Family Support Centre

Royal PNG Constabulary

Sexual Offences Squad, Boroko

Victims Desk, Waigaini

Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (secretariat and member organisations)

Salvation Army

Anglicare

Papua Hahine Social Action Forum

World Vision PNG

Community Justice Liaison Unit

Porosapot (Save the Children)

Tingim Laip (HIV/AIDS prevention)

ICRAF

DCD Gender Division

Department of Education, Counselling and Guidance Branch

FSVAC Strategy Review team

National Council of Women (interviews with 10 members)

Haus Ruth (including interviews with staff and 16 current and former residents)

Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum

PACSO (PNG AIDS civil society organisations) (interviews with 11 members)

National Research Institute

Morata Women's Safe House (interviews with 6 members)

Oil Palm Research Association

¹¹ To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

AusAID Law and Justice Sector Program (interviews with advisors)

Sanap Wantaim (AusAID's HIV/AIDS program)

AusAID's health program

AusAID's education program

Eastern Highlands Province

Royal PNG Constabulary, Goroka police

(interviews/focus group with 26 police officers)

Eastern Highlands, provincial village courts administrators

Kainantu Police (focus group involving 7 officers)

Kainantu Hospital, Family Support Centre

Eastern Highlands Family Voice (interviews with staff and survivors)

Goroka Base Hospital, Family Support Centre

Eastern Highlands Province, FSVAC provincial branch

Save the Children

Sisters of Mercy, Goroka

LJSP Eastern Highlands Province

Kona-Bena (village focus group involving 14 individuals)

Kainantu Save the Children's project for sex workers

(focus group involving 15 individuals)

Kainantu Gold, Women in Mining

Simbu Province

Kup Women for Peace (5 members)

United Nauro-Gor Association (officials)

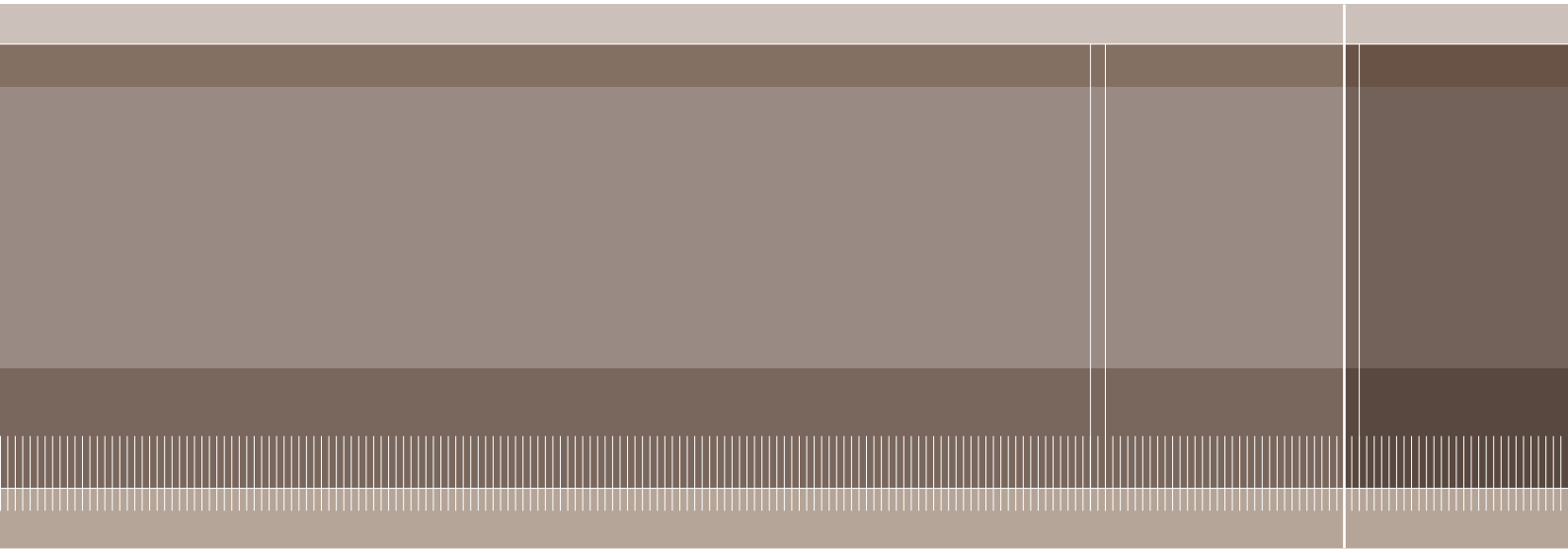
Gor Community (focus group involving 19 adults)

Gor Community (focus group involving 28 youth)

Gor Community policewomen (focus group involving 26 officers)

Gor Community policemen (involving 20 officers)

SOLOMON ISLANDS COUNTRY SUPPLEMENT



1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This paper is a supplement to *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Regional and Global Promising Approaches*, which addresses the issue of violence against women in the whole region.. The main report describes all promising approaches identified by the team from across the region, and proposes, through a series of recommendations, an action plan relevant to all countries studied. This supplement provides more country-specific information on Solomon Islands, permitting a more nuanced approach to proposed solutions. The main report and the Solomon Islands report, when read together, provide a comprehensive picture of promising approaches for addressing violence against women, recommendations relevant for all countries and specific direction for where to focus efforts in Solomon Islands.

The process began in 2007, when the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness identified violence against women as a major barrier to development in the region, with serious effects not only on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, but on their families, communities, and countries (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2007). Following a review of international lessons learned, visits of four to nine days were carried out by the international evaluation team to each of the five countries in the region (East Timor, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu) during September and October 2007.

Interviews and focus group discussions using a set of participatory exercises were carried out with policymakers, service providers, users of the services, civil society groups and community members. These were continued by locally recruited researchers, except in East Timor, where there was a shortage of qualified individuals, but a number of recent studies.¹ Selection of the potentially promising practices to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID Post personnel and local activists. Local advisory groups of prominent individuals were established in each country to provide feedback and direction to the evaluation team, to encourage ownership of the review's findings and to help promote and implement its recommendations. (Annex 1 lists advisory group members for Solomon Islands.)

In all, more than 120 persons were consulted in Solomon Islands, including 40 through individual interviews and more than 80 in focus groups. (Annex 2 lists the organisations consulted.) Regional recommendations on the four theme areas (access to justice, support services for survivors, prevention, and multisectoral coordination) were developed during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, involving the local researchers and representatives of the advisory groups from all the countries.²

¹ The local researchers in Solomon Islands were Salote Austin and Caroline Laore.

² Solomon Islands was represented by Josephine Kama, on behalf of the Department of Women's Affairs, and Chief Justice Albert Palmer.

This is not a situational analysis, nor is it a comprehensive or complete listing of all the good things happening in Solomon Islands. Many inspiring examples of work are underway in all parts of the country on violence against women, but only those brought to the team's attention could be covered. The study examined lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up, or applied in other countries. It focused as much as possible on women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention.

2 SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Violence against women is rife; it exists and we can no longer ignore the fact that it is occurring. There must be zero tolerance for men's violent behaviour. (Ethel Sigimanu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs)

As in all the countries included in the study, violence against women was considered to be a serious and common problem in Solomon Islands. Domestic violence (physical, sexual and emotional abuse by an intimate partner or family member) was mentioned by most respondents as the most common form of violence against women. However, many forms of sexual violence are increasingly common, including:

- > child sexual abuse by family members (incest)
- > commercial sexual exploitation of girls (particularly related to the logging and fishing industries) (Box 2.1)
- > sexual violence during armed conflict (the tensions of 1998 to 2003)
- > gang rape of girls, often by young men.

Violence against women is exacerbated by the pervasive poverty and low status of women with respect to men. Solomon Islands is amongst the least-developed countries in the world, ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as 129 out of 177 countries in the human development index (UNDP 2007). It does not yet figure in the gender-related development index. Of the many who live in poverty, women and children are the most powerless and the most affected. Maternal mortality is high, estimated to be 130 per 100 000 live births. Women's health is compromised by widespread gender-based violence, both in times of peace and armed conflict, and by traditional practices that negatively impact women's health.

Women's participation in public leadership positions is almost non-existent in Solomon Islands. None of the 50 members of Parliament are women, making Solomon Islands one of only a few countries with this situation. The evaluation team met with a group of leaders in the women's movement to discuss gains and challenges in the area of violence against women, starting in 1983 with the creation of the

National Women's Council. During the 1990s, Solomon Islands had a fairly strong women's rights movement, but it has been greatly weakened in recent years. These are some of the most significant moments:

- > **International landmark events**, such as the participation of women from Solomon Islands in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (1995).
- > **Government initiatives**, mostly as responses to advocacy efforts of the women's movement, and including the creation of the first Ministry for Women (1993) and a National Plan for Women (1998).

BOX 2.1: COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN SOLOMON ISLANDS*

Because the logging is in the village, the children aren't safe. (housekeeper in a logging camp, Makira Province)

In early 2006, community members from Makira Province began noticing problems after logging companies arrived in the area. Leaders approached the Christian Care Centre (CCC) with concerns about the amount of time children were spending in logging camps and the number of girls who had become pregnant and who were receiving money for sex with loggers. In response, the CCC instituted the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) project, designed to strengthen understanding of the nature and extent of the problem and to raise awareness about child exploitation and child abuse. Through meetings and interviews with more than 1000 community members and leaders and 370 children in six villages, the CCC uncovered stories of different types of exploitation and abuse of children. A report on the project's findings noted that:

- > child prostitution was the most prominent type of exploitation in every village visited—the report's 25 stories of prostitution involved 36 children ranging in age from 13 to 15, including a 14-year-old girl who was exploited by two different men on different occasions
- > early marriage and the sale of children into marriage by parents or third parties—the report includes 12 stories of girls marrying before age 15 or being sold into marriage, most to foreign loggers
- > a range of cases involving child sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse
- > young boys are used as *solairs* to arrange for meetings with young girls or carry messages for loggers in exchange for money or alcohol
- > children were being used to produce pornography both as subjects and participants in viewing.

The behaviour of logging company workers clearly contributes to abuse and exploitation. However, other factors were also identified, including access to money, norms around marriage, changes to traditional practices and the lack of awareness around CSEC on the part of community members. The lack of monitoring in camps means that loggers have easy access to children and are not held accountable for illegal actions.

The CCC has recommended urgent action on this issue, including raising awareness and understanding of the nature of CSEC, strengthening prevention efforts, mobilising and supporting service organisations, and engaging logging companies in raising awareness, reducing the vulnerability of children and increasing accountability.

*Source: Herbert 2007.

- > **Milestones in the creation of organisations and networks that protect the rights of women and girls:** creation of the Family Support Centre (FSC, 1997), the CCC (1998) and Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands (VBMSI or Voice of the Women, 2003).

However, the civil conflict of 1998 to 2003, referred to in Solomon Islands as ‘the tensions’, provides the backdrop against which all current activities must be understood (Box 2.2 describes the tensions and its effect on women and girls). After a positive and enthusiastic start during the 1990s to address women’s rights and violence against women, the gains of the previous decade were virtually wiped out by the conflict. During this period, violence against women was greatly heightened with increased cases of domestic violence and sexual assault, and gang rapes by rival military organisations (used to terrorise the population and inflict harm on enemy groups). During this period, the Government of Solomon Islands collapsed and lawlessness, crime and violence were the norm.

During the tensions, especially during the period of active fighting, about May to August 2000, people had to put up with everything because they were afraid for their lives. Girls were just being picked up by the military in dark-glass cars, and no-one could say anything because they were afraid for their lives. (female activist, Honiara)

Eventually, negotiations between armed groups succeeded and, in 2003, the Government of Solomon Islands invited the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) into Solomon Islands with a mandate to restore law and order and economic development. Since then, conditions have slowly begun to return to pre-tension conditions. However, the devastating impact on the population and on civil society, including the women’s movement, is still evident. Most of the population was directly affected by the conflict and a large proportion severely traumatised.

The tension has made the violence worse. Where a man used to just beat his wife, now he beats o2 and o3, and can still go back and fight o1 again, if she’s still there.³ What I see now is that there’s no passion left. The people are just flat. There’s no energy anymore. The women’s organisations are not vibrant. They’re just sitting around talking, not doing anything.’ (female activist, Honiara)

³ This numbering system refers to multiple partnerships. In Solomon Islands, the practice has become so common that the women in a man’s life are known colloquially as o1, o2, o3, etc., according to the order in which the relationships began.

BOX 2.2: EFFECT OF THE TENSIONS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS (1998 TO 2003)*

The five years from 1998 to 2003 in Solomon Islands were marked by severe escalation of civil unrest, caused primarily by regional disparities in economic and social opportunity. Gender based violence against women and girls became entrenched. Police estimate that the number of violent incidents against women during and after the conflict has been *'hugely under-reported'*. In a March 2004 study, 85 per cent of Solomon Islanders reported that their families were directly affected by the conflict. Three quarters of women *'suffered direct personal trauma'*, including rape, death of family members, threats of violence and intimidation, and being held up at gunpoint. Those responsible, whether police personnel, armed groups, or private individuals, were rarely brought to justice. Witnesses and victims seldom filed complaints, often because there was no opportunity to do so or because they feared reprisals.

Many women also observed a link between the conflict and a range of other consequences, including increased tension in their homes, domestic violence, and family breakdowns: *'Even if you are not actively involved in fighting, the tension between husbands and wives in the home increased due to the changing situation, the frustration, and tensions resulted in disagreements over trivial matters'*. In Honiara, the FSC, a key first point of contact for female victims of violence, indicated a substantial increase in the number of women seeking assistance during the conflict. Amnesty International's interviews with counsellors found that domestic violence had been exacerbated by the inaction and inability of the police to address reported cases and by women's restricted freedom of movement and opportunity to seek assistance.

Violence does not necessarily reduce once a conflict has abated. Being raped during the conflict, by police or members of armed groups, often led to stigmatisation or other social consequences for victims, particularly unmarried girls. Married victims were often required to pay 'compensation' to their husbands' families because of the shame brought on. Some women also expressed fear that a girl or woman, once known to have been raped, may be left or abused by her husband or be more likely to become a target of rape again.

*Source: Amnesty International 2004.

3 MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

After being disbanded several years ago, the Ministry for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs is back on track and developing new activities at national and provincial levels, with support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women and other international donors. Currently, the Women's Development Division (WDD) is preparing the second Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) report for Solomon Islands, which could be an important opportunity to draw attention to women's rights issues and violence against women. The resurgence of the Ministry of Women has produced early dividends—the Provincial Council of Women in Auki is now functioning with WDD support, and the Provincial Council of Women in Gizo has just reopened with Oxfam support.

While multisectoral coordination through the WDD is weak and needs to be improved significantly, there is room for optimism. The new Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs is a well-known and respected leader. There is enthusiasm about her role and ability to galvanise and coordinate

action between Government and civil society. The immediate challenge is seizing this opportunity to strengthen the WDD's ability to coordinate activities addressing violence against women, within Honiara and beyond.

Another important WDD initiative is a population-based survey to obtain relevant information on the prevalence, perceptions and nature of gender based violence in Solomon Islands. The survey is being carried out by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community with funding from AusAID and the United Nations Population Fund. Based on the methodology developed by the World Health Organization *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*, this survey will provide relevant baseline data to support Solomon Islands government activities to address gender based violence.

4 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The presence of RAMSI since 2003 has gone a long way toward restoring peace and stability, which are the basic conditions for progress on women's rights. RAMSI's work across all three of its programs is guided by a number of key principles, one of which is RAMSI's commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering women in Solomon Islands.

4.1 Legal reform

The law can be valuable for reshaping expectations of what behaviour toward women is acceptable, but only if offences against women are reliably and efficiently prosecuted. Currently, the penal code is obsolete. There is no domestic violence legislation and marital rape is not a criminal offence. Statutory rape, or 'defilement', defined as 'illegal' sex, is difficult to prosecute, because according to customary law, there is no legal minimum age for marriage. This creates virtual impunity for loggers who exploit young girls. The loggers can say they have provided bride-price to the family and are legally married according to customary law.

Updating the penal code in Solomon Islands should be an urgent priority. Law reform will also give greater effect to recent changes within the police force (e.g., establishing a Domestic Violence Unit (DVU)—see below).

4.2 The formal justice system

The Solomon Islands police force was greatly weakened during the tensions, with many police officers reportedly participating in both sides of the conflict. With the help of RAMSI, a major effort has been made to rebuild the police force and regain public trust.

Given the pressing need to restore law and order generally, addressing domestic and sexual violence has not been a priority. However, a Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) was recently established in the police force and the Sexual Offences Unit (SOU) has

been revived. The DVU has developed a domestic violence policy, which includes establishing 'no-drop' procedures⁴ and mandatory arrest for offenders, as well as a 'no-tolerance' approach toward police suspected of domestic violence abuses. The new policy awaits formal approval from the police commissioner.

Like the rest of the law and justice sector, the judiciary was deeply affected by the tensions and incurred additional resource constraints restricting its capacity; it is still recovering. The courts continue to struggle with an enormous backlog of cases (some from more than 10 years ago). Urgent priority has been placed on completing the trials of those accused of corruption and violence during the tensions, and other issues have taken a back seat.

The logistical issues facing magistrates in the rural areas are particularly daunting. There are not enough police or jail facilities in these areas. Additionally, the magistrate circuits do not have adequate budgets to cover food, lodging or petrol for boats.

Judges are able to provide protection orders for women experiencing domestic violence; however, these are not necessarily respected by the police, and in practice, are difficult to enforce. According to one survivor of violence:

The police don't understand their duty. Last time I went to them, the police said, "You've got to think about it. He'll lose his job and where will you be?" I showed them my non-molestation order. I showed them my sleeve was ripped and that my arm was dislocated. The policeman looked at it and said, 'This is a useless piece of paper', and threw it away. (female client of the FSC, Honiara)

Few police officers or magistrates have been trained on domestic violence, either in Solomon Islands or abroad. Moreover, the justice system is overwhelmingly dominated by men, who share many traditional beliefs around the appropriateness of using violence against women, and this shapes the degree to which they are willing to enforce the law. A recently created Association of Women Lawyers of Solomon Islands is encouraging more women to enter law.

4.3 Community-based and traditional justice

Customary approaches generally involve compensating the injured party's family (this could be the family of the wife, if the husband is found to be at fault, but if the woman is at fault, she has to pay compensation to the husband). Then the chief will likely direct the couple to reconcile. *'The goal of law is punishment. But the goal in many rural areas is to bring peace between the families. The goal is not to punish.'* (male police officer)

⁴ Under a 'no-drop policy' (already in use for several years by the Fiji police force), once a complaint is lodged, the investigation should continue and the case sent to the magistrate, regardless of whether the woman subsequently asks to have the charges dropped. This not only takes the burden of continuing a case off the woman, but also discourages police from taking matters into their own hands and refusing to receive complaints or attempting to reconcile the couple.

Some traditional customs, such as bride-price (common in most of Solomon Islands), exacerbate the risks of violence to women. Bride-price is seen by many as conferring to a man a degree of ownership over his wife, and this is often interpreted as a license to beat her and treat her as he wishes. Most women do not feel the traditional system of justice meets their needs because it is administered by men and upholds traditional gender roles and values that favour men. In the case of rape, courts and police are more likely to favour criminal charges; however, very few women or girls report rape to the authorities because of the stigma attached to it. According to one magistrate:

There is no established principle for dealing with rape, because by custom, it is considered a taboo to talk about sexual acts about ladies. If we say Maina has been raped by David, it will cause Maina trouble. She will be embarrassed all the rest of her life. She may be subject to further assaults. She may be easy prey. It's best to settle outside the courts so that people don't have to talk about it.

4.4 Knowledge of laws and rights

The level of knowledge among community members in Solomon Islands regarding laws on violence against women and human rights remains low. An important initiative in this area is the series of community paralegal training courses targeted at women leaders, youth leaders, and teachers, run by the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT). The RRRT provides a technical advisory training program operating under the auspices of the UNDP. A single legal officer provides advice and legal awareness training on human rights issues in Honiara and in all provinces. The RRRT now has a pool of trainers who raise awareness and advocate on human rights, in particular, the CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

Women suffering violence have few avenues of support. In general, informal channels such as family members, friends, chiefs or pastors are seen as more accessible, although not sympathetic or helpful. The two main institutions providing the bulk of services for abused women and children in Solomon Islands—the FSC and the CCC—are both based in Honiara.

The FSC, founded in 1995, provides awareness-raising programs and skills training on violence against women to community groups throughout Solomon Islands. It provides legal information and facilitates referrals to and cooperation with relevant stakeholders, such as the police, the Public Solicitor's Office, the Prosecutions Office, and confidential counselling services.

The FSC used to have a community education program and a theatre group. During the tensions, however, the FSC scaled back its work, including long-term prevention efforts and theatre performances. After peace was restored, the FSC received support from AusAID through Oxfam Australia. Its leadership has recently undergone a number of changes resulting from an internal management crisis. As a result, donor funding has been greatly reduced and some core programs discontinued. The FSC currently provides onsite counselling for women, but its outreach program is no longer active. Those interviewed, however, pointed to the FSC as the source of all work on gender based violence in Solomon Islands. They respect its work, even though its operations have been reduced. Coordination among the FSC, the CCC, the police and the SOU is reportedly very good.

The Christian Care Centre, founded by the sisters of the Church of Melanesia, is the only safe haven for abused women and girls in Solomon Islands. The CCC provides counselling services and activities to occupy victims residing at the centre and conducts community awareness programs. The CCC is about 20 minutes outside of Honiara, which means women need transportation to get there. This is usually provided by the police or the CCC. Women are allowed to stay for up to two weeks (although many stay longer). Once at the centre, they are, however, isolated from their families and support networks. The majority of women return to their husbands after staying at the CCC. They are allowed to return to the CCC only a limited number of times.

Although the FSC and the CCC function well together in Honiara, they can only reach a small fraction of the women needing help. There is little formal support for women in rural areas, where the great majority of the population lives. As mentioned above, most domestic problems are settled through customary practices and other informal mechanisms.

Some survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault receive medico-legal services at hospitals. However, the health sector does not have a policy on violence against women. This is a significant policy gap. Because violence against women is a major cause of injury and ill health among women, this area should be made a priority. Integrating violence against women into health services require establishing policies and protocols and encouraging health providers to identify support needed, refer women and girls who are suffering from violence, provide training, and follow-up to ensure programs are implemented effectively. Training for doctors and nurses should be integrated into pre-service and in-service training. Violence prevention should also be integrated into community health programs, including sexuality, reproductive health and HIV prevention programs.

6 VIOLENCE PREVENTION

One core development challenge in Solomon Islands is delivering services beyond Honiara and some provincial centres. Government agencies do not yet penetrate much beyond the capital. Consequently, it is important to identify actors that can extend their reach into rural Solomon Islands, where the majority of people live, to make a positive contribution to addressing violence against women. Some organisations mentioned below have such reach and have already initiated work in this area. They have yet to realise their potential, however, and need further support.

- > **Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands (VBMSI)** is a prominent Non-Government Organisation (NGO) promoting the rights of women. VBMSI coordinates with other women's organisations and uses radio to document and disseminate women's stories and provide information to women about CEDAW and women's rights in general. In 2006, VBMSI entered into partnership with **Fem'LINK Pacific** to document cases relating to peace and conflict, including violence against women and child abuse. VBMSI already has some reach into rural areas, but strengthening its advocacy capacity would further extend this reach and enable distribution of a greater volume of materials promoting women's rights and addressing issues of violence against women.
- > **Solomon Islands Christian Association, Federation of Women (SICA FOW)** brings together the five main church organisations from across Solomon Islands into an extensive network devoted to implementing women's development programs. The network varies in size and capacity outside Honiara. The network could be used to more robustly work to address violence against women in rural communities.
- > **Save the Children** carries out activities with youth, focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention and sexual and reproductive health in Honiara and other provincial centres. Although explicit training on violence against women is not part of this outreach, some gender sensitisation training is conducted. These programs provide entry points to engage youth on the issues of gender and violence against women and they provide a good opportunity to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change on a wide scale. More explicit efforts to deal with the issues could bolster outreach.
- > **Caritas and trauma support:** At the height of the tensions in 1998, the Roman Catholic Church helped provide assistance to displaced Malaitans in and around Honiara. One year later, the non-profit organisation Caritas launched a program of trauma support for Solomon Islanders, training approximately 80 trauma support workers over subsequent years that have serviced more than 5000 people. Trauma support workers were trained to listen to child soldiers, women and girls who were raped during the tensions and others traumatised by events. The workers apply the following philosophy: *'Unless there is forgiveness and personal healing, there is no true reconciliation.'* (trauma support worker)

This network of trauma support workers met an incredible need, although the support workers were not trained to provide formal counselling services. The support network remains even though the need for trauma support has dissipated since the tensions ended. Counsellors advise that it now provides some help to women and girls with violence-related issues, though this is on an ad hoc basis. The network stretches beyond Honiara and with additional training and resources, might now be strengthened and used to provide community outreach activities to address issues of violence against women.

6.1 Women's empowerment

Because women's status is so low in Solomon Islands, increasing their participation in political leadership positions and economic and social status at all levels must be a priority. This means strengthening women's participation and leadership in community development and economic programs, as well as their representation in national-level leadership positions, including in Parliament.

Political participation

There is recent evidence demonstrating that having more women in government has a positive impact on the provision of public goods to communities.⁵ The team is not aware of similarly rigorous research on the impact of women leaders on violence against women. However, intuitively the team would expect more women leaders (in national parliaments, local governments, senior public and private sector positions) to have a positive impact on efforts to reduce violence against women. Emerging evidence from East Timor appears to support this belief.

In 2004, East Timor's local (*suco*) councils and chiefs were given both the power and the duty of protecting women from domestic violence. A 2006 evaluation of efforts to increase women representation on the *suco* councils, and to equip them with "transformative leadership training" prior to their election onto the councils, identified some positive impacts:

Increased confidence and ability to speak up, both in the family and in the council.

Less conflict and violence in the family, attributed to their husbands paying them more respect. *'Men are happy when their wives are elected. It's a privilege for the family.'*

Some husbands more willing to share money and domestic chores with wives, thereby reducing domestic disputes and violence.

Some elected women able to raise the issue of domestic violence with their councils, as well as other women's issues, such as family planning, sanitation, children's vaccinations, school facilities, and women's sports.

⁵ Beaman, L Duflo, E Pande, R & Topalova, P 'Women Politicians, Gender Bias and Policymaking in Rural India' (UNICEF, December 2006), p. 4.

However, women's participation in public leadership positions in Solomon Islands is almost non-existent. Of the 50 members of Parliament, none are women, making Solomon Islands one of only a few countries with this situation. To successfully address violence against women, this needs to change over the long term. RAMSI provides a good opportunity for donors and the Government of Solomon Islands to work together to increase the levels of political participation by women. Some work is underway, but on a relatively small scale.

Economic empowerment

In the long run, economic empowerment of women will strengthen violence prevention efforts in Solomon Islands (as well as having many other positive development outcomes). Economic development programs in Solomon Islands, particularly those targeting women, need to incorporate education around violence against women and gender relations. If not carefully addressed, however, programs increasing a woman's access to economic resources can put her at risk of increased violence. This is particularly true in settings where a woman's status is low, because increasing her income can lead to greater conflict within the family (Koenig, Hossain et al. 1999). On the other hand, if such issues are addressed within the community and among women leaders, such programs can significantly contribute to reducing violence against women.

Community-mobilisation activities and micro-finance programs in Solomon Islands that involve education about rights and violence against women are likely to significantly reduce the levels of violence against women as well as improving repayment rates in micro-finance activities.⁶ Two current activities provide a basis from which to take this agenda forward in Solomon Islands.

- > **Rokotanikeni Association and economic empowerment of women:** The Rokotanikeni Association was established in 1999 following a study carried out by Dr Alice Pollard on the changing roles of women and men. Its primary focus is to provide economic empowerment to women from West Areare, Malaita, thereby giving them greater control over the resources necessary for advancing their families. Membership has grown to more than 500 since its inception.

The Community Sector Program (CSP), funded by AusAID, is currently reorganising its activities to concentrate on capacity-building at the ward level of the Provincial Council of Women. The CSP could provide an opportunity to strengthen women's participation in community leadership and, potentially, to engage in prevention activities for violence against women.

⁶ For example, see: Pronyk, PM & Hargreaves JR, et al. 2006, 'Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster randomised trial', *Lancet* 368(9551): 1973–83; Kim, JC & Watts, CH et al. 2007, 'Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in South Africa', *American Journal of Public Health* 97(10): 1794–802.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

After a promising start in the 1990s to address women's human rights and violence against women in Solomon Islands, these issues were put on the back burner during the tensions. Since peace was restored, most development and emergency efforts have focused on basic issues, such as restoring law and justice institutions and economic livelihoods. However, it is clear that violence against women and girls threatens not only the health and wellbeing of individuals, but affects Solomon Islands society as a whole. Therefore, efforts to address violence against women must be integrated into the country's overall social and economic development strategy.

A great deal of enthusiasm exists around rebuilding the momentum lost and strengthening efforts to eliminate violence against women. Because the law and justice sector is so weak at present, it seems priority should be on developing community-level efforts to prevent violence and support victims. The Committees Against Violence Against Women from Vanuatu and that country's work with male advocates (emphasising outreach to local authorities, police officers, chiefs, and magistrates), could be a useful model for strengthening village-level work. Ultimately, however, the effectiveness of community-level efforts depends on national law reform.

The recommendations in the regional report on priorities for supporting anti-violence against women initiatives are all relevant for Solomon Islands. In addition, the team suggests a number of other priorities for support within Solomon Islands (described below).

Australia is well positioned to play a supporting role by systematically integrating into all of its programming, strategies to reduce violence against women through human-rights and gender-sensitive approaches.

7.2 Specific recommendations for all Solomon Islands actors

Support research dissemination: The results from the study on violence against women will provide an excellent opportunity to draw attention to the issue. Full advantage should be taken of this. Support should be made available for public awareness activities around the results, including disseminating them through formal and informal channels, community-level activities and outreach activities with churches and the Council of Chiefs, etc.

Support multisectoral coordination, both among local groups working on women's issues and interagency coordination within the government. The revival of the Ministry for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs and the preparation of the second CEDAW Report provides an opportunity to strengthen coordination and incorporate activities to address violence against women into other government ministries. Line

agencies, such as the ministries of Health, Justice and Legal Affairs, Corrections and Education, need to be involved. However, leadership from the Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet is also required to deliver an effective multisectoral approach. Priority should be given to activities facilitating interagency coordination among international agencies and donors.

Support legal reforms in relation to personal and domestic violence and streamlining procedures for addressing violence. This would involve:

- > developing domestic and personal violence legislation as an urgent priority
- > undertaking police training on the new legislation
- > conducting community consultation and education activities on the new legislation.

Until more comprehensive laws are in place, supporting the work of the SOU and DVU in the Solomon Islands police force may yield some gains. This support may also pave the way for more substantive legal reforms. The domestic violence policy developed by the police force provides a blueprint for new procedures to deal with rape and domestic violence. Once approved, support should be given to disseminating the policy, training police officers and magistrates around the new procedures, and underlining the need to ensure women's needs for protection and redress are met. Support should also include broader legal literacy and human rights-based training for community members, such as the work being carried out by the RRRT. Options to engage more women lawyers should be explored.

Increasing access to justice of women in rural Solomon Islands requires complementary initiatives, including:

- > Increasing the capacity of the courts to travel on circuit outside Honiara. This is expensive in Solomon Islands and would require the injection of substantial resources.
- > Simple, non-discretionary legislation allowing the police to seek restraining orders (particularly interim or urgent ones). These orders would help women seek protection in between court sittings on circuit.
- > Given the limited reach of the formal justice system, improving the links between the formal justice system and traditional and community-based justice systems may help improve women's access to better quality community justice. Because local chiefs deal with the majority of violence incidents, it is critical to involve them in a way that supports women's rights and interests. The program of male advocates implemented in Fiji and Vanuatu has succeeded in engaging male leaders as allies, including police officers and chiefs. This approach should be explored as a potentially useful model for Solomon Islands.

Providing services for survivors of violence: Clearly there is a need for strengthening organisations with a national reach that can support community efforts and spearhead advocacy efforts. The FSC is best-positioned, by virtue of its history and commitment, to fill this role. To make a meaningful difference, substantial investment is needed for core support and capacity-building. Training and mentoring by other groups in the region, such as the type of support the Vanuatu Women's Centre has received from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, would be valuable.

Extend the reach of services into the provinces. One core development challenge in Solomon Islands is delivering services beyond Honiara and some provincial centres. Government agencies do not yet penetrate much beyond the capital. This is a key challenge for Solomon Islands, but a critical one: 85 per cent of the population live in rural areas with minimal access to services. There are no easy solutions to achieving this. Creative ways are needed to extend women's access to basic services through community-sector programs. This should include exploring whether the trauma support network supported by Caritas during the tensions could be revitalized to help address violence against women in rural areas.

Integrate attention to violence against women in the health system. The first step would be to establish policies and protocols encouraging health providers to identify, support and refer women and girls suffering violence as required. This requires training and follow-up to ensure programs are implemented effectively, and are embedded in the health system as it strengthens its reach into rural areas.

Address violence against women through primary and secondary education. Policies should be developed and implemented to prohibit sexual harassment and violence against girls in schools, from teachers or students. In addition, schools should address violence and gender equity in the curriculum.

Engage youth and men in prevention activities: Working with the youth in such groups as Save the Children provide an excellent way to address the linkages between violence against women and girls and other health and development issues, such as HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health. Efforts to integrate work on violence against women into programs for economic empowerment of women and local development should also be supported.

Support activities around communication for social change: The FSC used to have a theatre group appreciated for its work in rural areas. This program could be revived, perhaps with technical support from regional groups, such as Wan Smol Bag in Vanuatu, experienced in using communication for social change techniques for issues of domestic violence and gender with young people and rural communities. The communications work of VBMSI in radio also merits further support.

7.3 Specific recommendations for Australia

Be explicit and proactive in supporting gender equality and human rights in policy dialogue. This includes encouraging, motivating and assisting the Government of Solomon Islands to address violence against women. The upcoming nationally representative survey on gender-based violence is an opportunity to do so. Australia should support the development of a strategy to widely disseminate the study results and seize the opportunity to promote discussion among Solomon Islands stakeholders about how to improve multisectoral coordination around this issue and the recommendations in this report.

Incorporate a human rights and gender perspective into all Australian-funded activities, including RAMSI. This will reinforce Australia's efforts to maintain high-level policy discussion about the problem of violence against women in Solomon Islands. Given the extent of Australia's involvement in the law and justice sector, and the need for urgent legal reform in Solomon Islands, this should become an initial priority. Support should be available to train technical advisors and counterparts in advocating for gender equality and addressing violence against women. All program designs should include relevant gender analysis on ways to address violence against women. The access issues faced by rural and vulnerable women should be considered in all service delivery and law and justice programs.

Substantially increase support of services for survivors of violence. Women in need require many more services, particularly outside Honiara. The capacity of the Government of Solomon Islands to provide these is limited in the short and medium term. Consequently, Australia should seek to strengthen organisations with a national reach that are able to support community-based efforts and spearhead advocacy efforts.

Support shared learning and exchanges with other organisations in the region. Government agencies and women's groups need to build capacity in the area of violence against women, and exchange visits with other countries in the region could be of great value. In addition to mentor support from well-established groups such as the FWCC, opportunities to learn from groups working in similar settings (such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre), could be beneficial, particularly in assessing whether the male advocate model and Committees Against Violence Against Women could be adapted to Solomon Islands. Australia should encourage such exchanges. Australia should also work with other donors to harmonise efforts with NGOs and civil society organisations, especially to reduce the reporting burden on these groups.

Increase support for women's empowerment, political and economic, subject to efforts to minimise violence backlash by incorporating education around violence against women and gender relations in all empowerment interventions. AusAID's community development program provides a key opportunity to pursue this agenda.

ANNEX 1: ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Ms Afu Billy, Regional Director, Common Wealth Youth Program
Ms Stella Delaiverata, Office for the High Commission on Human Rights
Mrs Judith Fangalasu, Director, SICA Commission
Ms Josephine Kama, Gender Adviser, Community Sector Program
Sir Albert Palmer, Chief Justice of Solomon Islands
Mr Solomon Palusi, Undersecretary, Ministry Home and Ecclesiastical Affairs
Mr George Pitakoe, Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association
Mrs Ethel Sigimanu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry Youth, Women and Child Affairs
Ms Josephine Teakeni, Director, Vois Blong Mere
Mrs Janet Tuhaika, Acting Director, Women's Development Division

ANNEX 2: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED⁷

Organisation

Ministry of the Prime Minister

Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs

Government of the Western Province

Social Welfare Division, Welfare Division Office, Gizo

Gizo Hospital

Government Law and Justice Sector officials

Chief Justice of Solomon Islands

Magistrates (9 interviewed)

Police (20 interviewed in Honiara and Gizo)

Public Solicitor's office

Law Reform Commission

National Council of Women

Provincial Council of Women, Gizo

Provincial Council of Women, Auki

Family Support Centre (including interviews with staff and clients)

Christian Care Centre

Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands Christian Association, Federation of Women (SICA FOW)

Save the Children Youth Outreach Project (Honiara and Auki)

(over 30 youth consulted)

Caritas National Training Office

Rokotanikeni Women's Association (Honiara and Auki)

Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association

Catholic Women's Group, Auki

AusAID Community Support Program staff

RAMSI Advisers (Law and Justice, Machinery of Government)

RAMSI, Participating Police Force

⁷ To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

FIJI COUNTRY SUPPLEMENT



1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This paper is a supplement to *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Regional and Global Promising Approaches*, which addresses the issue of violence against women in the region as a whole. The main report describes all promising approaches identified by the team from across the region, and proposes, through a series of recommendations, an action plan relevant to all countries studied. This supplement provides more country-specific information on Fiji, permitting a more nuanced approach to proposed solutions. The regional report and the Fiji report, when read together, provide a comprehensive picture of promising approaches for addressing violence against women, recommendations relevant for all countries and specific direction for where to focus efforts in Fiji.

The process began in 2007, when the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness identified violence against women as a major barrier to development in the region, with serious effects not only on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, but on their families, communities, and countries (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2007). Following a review of international lessons learned, visits of four to nine days were carried out by the international evaluation team to each of the five countries in the region (East Timor, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu) during September and October 2007.

Interviews and focus group discussions using a set of participatory exercises were carried out with policymakers, service providers, users of the services, civil society groups and community members. These were continued by locally recruited researchers, except in East Timor, where there was a shortage of qualified individuals, but a number of recent studies.¹ Selection of the potentially promising practices to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID Post personnel and local activists. Local advisory groups of prominent individuals were established in each country in order to provide feedback and direction to the evaluation team, to encourage ownership of the review's findings and to help promote and implement its recommendations. (Annex 1 list advisory group members for Fiji.)

In all, more than 120 individuals were consulted in Fiji, including 60 individuals interviewed and another 60 who participated in focus group discussions. (Annex 2 lists the organisations consulted.) Regional recommendations on the four theme areas (access to justice, support services for survivors, prevention, and multisectoral coordination) were developed during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, which involved all the local researchers and representatives of the advisory groups from all the countries.²

¹ The local researchers in Fiji were Roshni Sami and Matelita Ragogo.

² Fiji was represented by Shamima Ali of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre.

This is not a situational analysis, nor is it a comprehensive or complete listing of all the good things that are happening in Fiji. Many inspiring examples of work are underway in all parts of the country on violence against women, but only those brought to the team's attention could be covered. The study examined lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up, or applied in other countries. It focused as much as possible on women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention.

2 SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The most common forms of violence reported during the review were physical, sexual and emotional violence by an intimate partner and sexual assault, including child sexual abuse. The main information on the prevalence of gender-based violence in Fiji comes from a 1999 survey carried out by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC). According to the study, 66 per cent of women surveyed experienced physical violence from an intimate partner (Fiji Women's Crisis Centre 1999).

A survey of 550 women working in paid employment in Fiji urban centres in 2002 revealed that sexual harassment of women in the workplace is significant, widespread and varied in nature, and offences are predominantly multiple. One in three women interviewed reported being sexually harassed in the workplace in their working life—1 in 5 within the last 12 months and 1 in 7 reported that it was still happening.³

International research has shown that violence against women is inextricably linked to women's socioeconomic status overall. Although conditions in Fiji are notably better than in other Melanesian countries, women in Fiji are still disadvantaged in numerous ways relative to men. Fiji ranks 82 out of the 136 countries on the United Nations (UN) Development Programme's gender-related development index.⁴ Maternal mortality and infant mortality are both relatively low for the region (75 per 100 000 live births and 20 per 1000 live births respectively). The literacy rate of women and men is very high (96 per cent), and enrolment rates are the same or slightly higher for girls than boys at primary and secondary levels, though somewhat lower for tertiary education.

Women's participation in the formal political process is limited relative to men. After the 2006 election, only 8 out of 71 seats in the House of Representatives (11.3 per cent) were held by women, and women hold only 13.6 per cent of all Parliamentary seats (the 32 members of the Senate are appointed by the President.). While this is lower than the global average of around 16.6 per cent, and may ultimately be threatened in the continuing aftermath of the 2006 coup, Fiji has a high number of women parliamentarians compared to other Melanesian countries. On the other hand, the

³ Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) report on Tebbutt Research, October 2002.

⁴ The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's gender-related development index compared with its human development index. Fiji ranks 92 on the human development index.

women's movement in Fiji is vibrant and has extensive experience in activism around violence against women. The evaluation team met with a group of more than 20 leaders in the women's movement to discuss gains and challenges in the area of violence against women, using the 1968 creation of the National Women's Council as a starting point. Among the most significant moments, the following were mentioned:

- > **International landmark events**, such as the participation of women from Fiji in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing (1995); the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1995); the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000); and the World Council of Churches Decade for Women, which runs from 2000 to 2010).
- > **Government initiatives**, mostly as responses to the advocacy efforts of the women's movement: the creation of the first Ministry for Women (1987) and the 'No-Drop Policy' for police investigations (1995); the formation of the police Sexual Offences Units (SOUs) (1995); development of the National Plan for Women (1997); and the passage of the Family Law Act (passed in 2003, entered into force in 2005).
- > **Milestones in the creation of organisations and networks that protect the rights of women and girls**, such as the FWCC (1984); the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (1986); Women's Action for Change (WAC) (1993); Women's Initiative for Peace (2000); and Fem'LINK (2000).

Of all the countries visited as part of this study, Fiji is by far the most advanced in addressing violence against women, due in no small part to the country's long and active women's movement and the presence of vocal and long-lived organisations such as the FWCC, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and the Regional Rights and Resources Team (RRRT). These groups were the first in Melanesia to tackle violence against women from a human-rights perspective and successfully harness the power of the media, particularly radio, to create broad community acceptance that violence should be viewed through a human rights framework.

However Fiji has also suffered significant setbacks in addressing violence against women. The most significant have been due to political instability, which has kept Fiji in turmoil for much of the last two decades (Box 2.1), exacerbating poverty and hindering efforts to address violence against women.

BOX 2.1: IMPACT OF COUPS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The four coups in recent history, two that took place in 1987, and more recently, the coups in 2000 and 2006, have had a chilling effect on women's rights advocacy and programs. Research carried out by the FWCC and others show that violence against women, both from intimate partners and from strangers, increases during and following the coups, while at the same time, the capacity and willingness of police to respond diminishes. Women were the target of ethnically motivated attacks following the 1987 and 2000 coups, while the increase in poverty following each coup had an obvious impact on women's empowerment.

The coups are also a setback to gains made in reducing tolerance towards violence against women, resulting in a stalling of the relationships built between the women's movement and law and justice institutions. As leaders of the women's movement are also often vocal human rights defenders, women's Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have also been specifically targeted during and following coups, at times resulting in restricting the movement of the leaders of the women's movement and limiting their capacity to continue their regional work in building capacity to address violence against women. Since the 2006 coup, coordination between civil society and government agencies has largely broken down, and rifts have emerged within CSOs, not only around engagement with the interim Government, but also regarding such core issues as the role of a human rights perspective in development. This has meant that a number of key pieces of legislation has been put on hold, with CSOs unwilling to campaign for them to be passed until democracy is restored.

3 MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

Although there is a history of strong collaboration between CSOs and government agencies around violence against women, evidenced by the multiple policies and laws enacted in recent years, the political and economic instability caused by the four coups in the last 20 years has taken its toll. An Inter-Agency Task Force on Violence against Women was convened by the Ministry of Women in order to follow up on Fiji's commitments with respect to the Beijing Platform of Action and the Fiji Women's Plan of Action (1998–2008). This task force, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ministry of Justice, facilitated the participation of both government and non-government actors. The task force was discontinued before the 2006 coup and, as a result, there is little systematic coordination between Government and NGOs and between different government agencies. Many participants believe this has contributed significantly to the erosion of available services. The task force was reconvened in the first half of 2008, but with a focus on legislation, rather than coordination. As a result, NGOs and CSOs have withdrawn from the task force, unwilling to sponsor the tabling of key pieces of legislation until democracy is restored. International donors, including UN agencies and AusAID, have also significantly reduced their engagement with the Government of Fiji, and support for some bilateral projects, such as law and justice, has been discontinued or reoriented.

4 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Compared to other Melanesian countries, Fiji's formal justice system is further advanced in recognising and addressing violence against women, and Fiji provides many promising example of legal reform and judicial and police training. However, it is important to remember that in common with other Melanesia countries, rural Fijian women, who are the majority of the population, have great difficulty accessing the formal justice system which is largely urban based, and rural women frequently rely on, or are coerced into, traditional justice systems that are overwhelmingly patriarchal and based on notions of reconciliation that provide few options and limited protection for victims of violence.

Over the last 10 years, Fiji has made significant gains have been made in Fiji in terms of increasing women's access to justice for violence, particularly with regard to intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Some highlights follow.

4.1 Legal reform

The Government of Fiji, with considerable input from CSOs, passed a Family Law Act in 2003 (put into force in 2005). Two organisations—the FWRM (Box 4.1) and the Pacific RRRT—played a key role in removing 200 years of British law based in discrimination against women.⁵ The resulting law, based on a no-fault principle of divorce, uses a compassionate counselling-based system and created a Family Division of the High Court which prioritises children's needs and parental support.

For the first time, the law allows Fiji women to share in matrimonial property, recognises women's non-financial contribution to marriage and asset accumulation, acknowledges various UN conventions affecting the family and accepts the results of scientific tests to establish parenthood. From early results it appears that the Fiji Family Law Act will substantially reduce the cost of engaging lawyers and using legal aid.

With the injunctions in place, women can leave the home with their personal items as opposed to being chased off without the opportunity to take anything with them. Also, with the provisions of the Act, counsellors can 'negotiate' on behalf of their clients so they coordinate court proceedings, etc.

(FWCC counsellor)

The RRRT has called Fiji's Family Law Act a model for the region. There is now interest in reviewing family law in Cook Islands, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

⁵ Implementation of the 2003 legislation in 2005 brought closure to a civil society legislative lobbying campaign that had begun in 1986 with the FWRM community legal education workshops and the government appointment in 1997 of a Family Law Reform Commissioner.

Two other important pieces of legislation for which the women's movement has lobbied are the Domestic Violence Bill and the Employment Relations Bill. These were drafted and ready to be tabled in Parliament just before the coup of 2006. The Employment Relations Bill, which includes some limited protections against sexual harassment, was promulgated in 2007 by the interim regime and put into force in April 2008. The Domestic Violence Bill has been put on hold, and CSOs have decided to wait for a return to democracy before pursuing its enactment. Before the 2006 coup, the women's movement was also lobbying for reform to the Penal Code, particularly the Sexual Offences part. The reform will include harsher penalties for perpetrators, widen the definition of rape and de-criminalise prostitution and abortion. The Penal Code reform had finished its consultation stage and a report was with the Office of the Attorney General for legislative drafting before the 2006 coup. It is not clear whether the reform is a priority for the interim government and women's organisations have decided to push for the reform until democracy is restored.

BOX 4.1: FIJI WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The FWRM is a feminist NGO established in 1986 to redress the imbalances of women's socio-economic and political status through campaigning and lobbying for legislative and attitudinal change in Fiji.

The FWRM played a key role in advocating for the 1997 Constitution which gives women unprecedented equal rights. The movement fought for Article 38 of the Constitution, which protects against discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender, marital status and sexual orientation.

In addition, the FWRM played a significant role in advocating for other key legislative reforms, including the Family Law Act, and in advocating and providing draft legislation for sexual harassment to be included in the Employment Relations Bill.

The FWRM provides a free legal information and referral service for women in Suva and delivers feminist training to groups and organisations, including developing school and institution-based education and awareness-raising programs.

4.2 Formal justice system

All participants agree that transforming laws and policies to strengthen sanctions for offenders is critical, but it is equally important to transform the knowledge and attitudes of the administrators of justice at all levels to ensure the laws and policies are properly implemented. Moreover, women need to be informed about their rights and have the necessary knowledge and tools to demand justice.

The FWCC and RRRT, in particular, have devoted a great deal of effort to training police officers, judges, magistrates and prosecutors on violence against women. The FWCC has also been outspoken in demanding accountability from the justice system, by denouncing cases of police or judicial misconduct or inaction, and by educating the public on basic rights under the law. The FWRM is RRRT's partner and is the primary vehicle for furthering women's legal literacy and knowledge of their rights. The effect of these efforts was evident in the responses of focus group participants.

I have been teaching at the academy for a while, and the gender component does make a difference; our male officers begin to understand it and talk about it—half of them say they were not aware of these gender perspectives, and some say they had an idea but just never took it seriously. (female police academy instructor)

In addition to the legal reforms mentioned earlier, another significant achievement of the anti-violence movement in Fiji was the establishment of a police No-Drop Policy in 1995. Before this, women who reported domestic abuse cases to the police often faced severe pressure from family, in-laws, and community members, and often returned to the police station shortly afterward to withdraw their complaints. Under the No-Drop Policy, once a complaint is lodged, the investigation must continue and the case must be sent to the magistrate, regardless of whether the woman subsequently asks to have the charges dropped. This not only takes the burden of continuing a case off the woman, but it also discourages police from taking matters into their own hands and refusing to receive complaints or attempting to reconcile the couple. According to one magistrate:

The police No-Drop Policy has made a big difference. In cases of domestic violence, the police does not allow the complainant to withdraw, and that tips it to the magistrates. (male magistrate, Suva)

The No-Drop Policy—the only such policy in force in Melanesia and East Timor—was a groundbreaking effort to strengthen sanctions for domestic and sexual violence and to protect victims from pressure and retribution by other family or community members. By taking the decision out of the hands of women and police, the policy transfers the responsibility for resolution to the courts and reduces the number of cases resolved through supposed reconciliation.

Over the past 13 years, however, implementation of the policy has been inconsistent and has led to unintended effects. Although no one disputes that it has improved police response to violence against women overall, the review team heard stories of survivors of violence still being subjected to insensitive attitudes, and even ridiculed by some police officers.

I saw a case where a client had been to the police station repeatedly. The officer said to her, ‘You must just like seeing my face, why don’t you just take a photo and keep it at home?’ They are treated like this at the counter, in front of other people there—you see eyebrows lifting right there at the front desk and they start gossiping right there. (social worker, PCSS -Partnership and Client Services Survey)

Stories from survivors of violence, as well as police officers and magistrates, indicate that some women want the violence to stop, but not necessarily for the offenders—their husbands or partners—to go to prison. In these cases, the No-Drop Policy may act as a deterrent to reporting incidents of domestic violence to the police. As a result, reporting to police becomes a last resort, and the state institutions are not engaged at earlier (less physically damaging) stages of domestic violence. There is also evidence

that the Policy does not always remove the pressure on women. Rather it shifts the pressure. Women either feel they should not lay charges in the first place or they feel pushed by the courts to reconcile with their husbands.

She might not go to the police because she'll be thinking of her husband and children.
(village woman)

Another important milestone was the creation of the police SOUs in 1995, with offices in Labasa, Lautoka and Suva. The goal of the SOUs is to look after the needs of victims of sexual assault. This has been accompanied by improvements in remote testimony and other devices, including use of videos and screens to protect vulnerable witnesses while giving testimony.

Finally, a new program called the Welfare/Employment Services Unit was established within the police force in 2003 to support the welfare of police officers and reduce the stress and trauma within their workforce. The development of the unit was partly the result of scoping work undertaken as part of AusAID's law and justice program which identified police as perpetrators of domestic violence and pointed out that the issue needs to be tackled from within. The program has tackled the problem of domestic violence perpetrated by police officers, and gives their wives an opportunity to report their husbands' violent behaviour to the internal affairs division.

Most of the individuals interviewed agreed that much of the progress made up until 2006 has been eroded after the coup. Training and monitoring of police by the FWCC, WAC and the RRRT has been made more difficult, though the trust and respect that these organisations were able to build up prior to the coup means that relationships have been maintained, and may have acted as a brake on more excessive behaviour on the part of the military. Even so, the increased number of military personnel in leadership positions within the police force—and the high turnover in police staff, with many officers trained in domestic violence and sexual assault being transferred to other positions—has led to a generalised sense that less priority is being given to cases of violence against women. This has led to the perception amongst women's rights activists that impunity has increased, with the No-Drop Policy being less regularly enforced, and activities of the SOUs reduced.

The new laws and police procedures lay greater responsibility on the judiciary to resolve cases of domestic and sexual violence. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) has also been sensitised to the issue of violence against women, and has aggressively pursued stiff sentences for sexual offenders, including cases of marital rape. In one landmark case, the ODPP was able to eliminate the evidentiary requirement for corroboration for sexual assault, which had been a barrier for women to reporting rape and to prosecuting offenders successfully. The use of test cases has proved an efficient path to legal reform, and can be an effective tool for CSOs seeking to fast track legal change.

However, there is evidence that attitudes and practices within the judiciary are still weak. The Criminal Procedures Code provides the judiciary with the option of promoting reconciliation in a number of offences and this has, in practice, been used as justification, along with concerns for the economic impact on women and children, for promoting reconciliation or imposing suspended sentences on offenders, even against the wife's wishes. When abusive husbands apologise to their wives according to traditional custom (*bulu bulu*), the offender's remorse may also be considered as a mitigating circumstance. The result is often, in the absence of counselling or rehabilitative actions, that victims and offenders return to the same situation.

The wife comes in under pressure. According to the law, you should put him in jail, but if you do that, with the poverty, who's going to feed those five kids? It's a dilemma we go through every day. Personally, we would like to see him go in ...but sometimes she begs us not to send him to prison. (male magistrate, Suva)

There seems also to be some confusion over the role of the Court in promoting reconciliation. Technically, the Penal Code allows for reconciliation – Section 163 states that the court *may* promote reconciliation but does not mandate it. However the following quote demonstrates that there is a continuing need for the judiciary to undergo legal and gender-sensitising training:

Assault in the case of domestic violence is reconcilable. We are supposed to promote reconciliation, according to Section 163 of the Penal Code. (male magistrate, Suva)

Moreover, women seeking justice for domestic or sexual violence cases have a distinct disadvantage, as defendants have access to professional legal counsel, either from the Legal Aid Commission or private lawyers. In contrast, the summary prosecutors who try cases in magistrates' courts are typically police officers with limited legal training and no special training in violence against women. This is a less critical problem for High Court cases, which are prosecuted by the ODPP.

In the relatively few cases in which custodial sentencing occurs, a very high proportion are reversed on appeal. A recent study presented by the FWCC, for example, showed that 90 per cent of sexual assault cases in 2006 were reversed on appeal, compared to 20 to 40 per cent of cases of murder, robbery and other crimes.

4.3 Knowledge of laws and rights

All participants agreed that knowledge about the Family Law Act and procedures for obtaining restraining orders remains scarce, and most women still do not know about their legal rights. This leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by insensitive police or magistrates more interested in ‘resolving’ cases through reconciliation than protecting women and children. The FWCC, RRRT and FWRM have devoted great effort towards increasing legal literacy, but much remains to be done.

‘Women don’t know about the procedures. Earlier, we had a very slow movement of urgent cases being listed. The next problem we have is that after we make the orders, if they are breached, there is a breakdown in communication between the police and our staff. They [victims] should be able to go straight to the police, and the police send the case to us, but it can take three weeks before we hear it—the woman could be dead by the time we hear about it. (female magistrate, Suva)

This poor woman is standing there, is not aware that she can get him charged, and so they will just tell her “we will warn him”. If they have had a bad experience with police, they will never return to complain even when things are getting worse. (social worker, PCSS)

5 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

The FWCC has been the main institution providing psychological, human-rights based crisis counselling and practical support for battered women and children in Fiji. Founded in 1984, with headquarters in Suva and branches in Ba, Labasa and Nadi, the FWCC has a staff of counsellors well trained in crisis intervention (Box 5.1).

Not surprisingly, support services are much more accessible for women living in Suva and other urban centres, which comprise approximately half the population. The scarcity of emergency housing for battered women remains a significant problem in Fiji. Emergency shelters are either owned or administered by NGOs. Four of the seven shelters are run by the Salvation Army. Survivors of violence either voluntarily go to these shelters for help or are referred to them by the State’s Social Welfare Department (SWD) or by women’s NGOs like the FWCC. There are approximately seven homes to which the SWD can refer women or family cases for emergency housing. However, demand typically exceeds availability—for example, a home with capacity for 20 may house 30 women and young family members.

The FWCC has set up constructive working relationships with police, courts, doctors and hospitals, accommodation providers, and welfare agencies to ensure access to services. They have also trained other agencies across the region, both government and non-government, on introductory counselling skills.

BOX 5.1: FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

The FWCC is an autonomous, multiracial NGO established in 1984. It provides crisis counselling and legal, medical and other practical support services for women and children who are sufferers and survivors of violence.

The FWCC works to address all forms of violence against women—including rape, assault and sexual harassment—and abuse of children, and is involved in public advocacy and community education on gender violence. The FWCC's aim is to influence public perceptions on violence against women to counter the culture of silence on the issue. Awareness programs and training provided by the FWCC advocate for recognition of women's fundamental human rights and their contribution to development.

The FWCC also provides technical support for other organisations working in the Pacific region, such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre. The FWCC is the Secretariat for the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women, which meets every four years and carries out regional training workshops for network members, including CSOs and government departments that deal with violence against women. Support is provided through ongoing in-country support visits and the regional training and attachment program, as well as through regular liaison by email and telephone. The regional training program is conducted once a year and is an important aspect of the FWCC's regional services. It provides participants with maximum exposure to a variety of strategies and activities that address gender-based violence. The curriculum is continually reviewed and updated, taking into account the latest regional and international information and practices. People with specific needs are also provided for (for example, upgrading counselling skills, improving centre management, or conducting advocacy campaigns).

A recent evaluation of the FWCC program concluded that former clients and stakeholders agree that service provision is of a consistently high quality and clients of the service are well-supported.

The Australian Government has provided financial support to the FWCC since 1989. The New Zealand Government also has a long association with the centre, although support was initially channelled through the Fiji Government and Oxfam New Zealand. In 2000, New Zealand Official Development Assistance (now the New Zealand Agency for International Development [NZAID]) began providing direct support to the Fiji branches.

6 PREVENTION

Globally, much more attention has been paid to law and justice and support services for victims of violence than to preventing violence. In this respect, Fiji is no exception. However, there are numerous examples of innovative programs breaking new ground in violence prevention, either by addressing the traditional norms that encourage violence against women—by reaching out to men and youth to involve them as allies in prevention—or by placing violence against women within a broader context of social change.

Efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment, and must be considered within the context of changing gender norms and increasing recognition of women's rights. Programs attempting to address violence without addressing the roots of the problem are unlikely to succeed as they do not challenge men's belief that the violence is justified. Such programs include those that encourage reconciliation and forgiveness or

encourage anger management amongst men. While these approaches are clearly an important part of the suite of approaches for addressing violence, particularly in a post-conflict situation, and while they may address some triggers of violence, they do not aim to change the underlying assumptions that violence is acceptable and, so alone, are unlikely to result in significant or lasting change.

The FWCC and other women's rights NGOs have actively challenged these attitudes through public-awareness campaigns, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, celebrated every year. Using both radio and print media, they have brought the subject of violence against women and children into the public domain, and have kept it squarely on national and regional political agendas. They also carry out educational activities in communities surrounding Suva and the FWCC's branch offices. Data from 2004 to 2006 on referrals to the centre show that more than 85 per cent of FWCC referrals come from the media and friends and relatives of the client. These figures also give a sense of the effectiveness of the FWCC's media campaigns and community education work.

Following are other examples of innovative programs that aim to change traditional gender norms and promote more equitable relationships between women and men.

Fem'LINK Pacific is a regional feminist media organisation, set up in response to the 2000 coup and based in Fiji. Fem'LINK began from the need to address the lack of gender initiatives in the mainstream media. Fem'LINK runs the *Radio in a Suitcase* program, publishes a quarterly newsletter and reports on issues in the women's movement. Through *Radio in a Suitcase*, Fem'LINK provides a medium for women to talk about their experiences and the key issues they face. Fem'LINK also has a website with e-talk which focuses on women's roles in preventing, reconciling and avoiding conflict.

The FWCC started the **Male Advocates Programme** in 2002 to engage men as allies in challenging violence against women, and to encourage men to take responsibility for the issue. The first program was carried out among Fijian military personnel and, since then, many other influential male leaders and public figures have participated. Many participants have reported attitudinal and/or behavioural changes since the program's inception. The programme has since been adapted and replicated in many other countries in the Pacific region, including Cook Islands and Vanuatu.

The Weavers Programme is a theological training curriculum on violence against women and the church (Box 6.1).

Women's Action for Change also carries out theatre and workshops, involving men in examining traditional gender relations and violence against women. WAC was formed in 1993 and has established itself as a radical left wing feminist and human rights NGO with an agenda for change using hands-on activism, including arts and diverse learning.

WAC provides community-based dramas and workshops on diverse issues including child sexual abuse, women's reproductive health and violence against women. Workshops range from day-long activities, sessions when WAC is invited to be a resource at another group's workshop, to two-week processes. Because of the wide range of age groups and the different types of communities, organisations and schools reached by WAC, methodologies vary. Sometimes workshops are conducted immediately after a performance; this is common when working with students. All programs are human rights-based and work on identifying human rights (including women's rights) and providing access to them; hence the parallel focus on restorative justice, mediation and nonviolence.

Stepping Stones, an intervention program originally designed to address HIV prevention and gender relations, it targets communities and engages women, men and youth in a series of weekly workshops. The program was originally implemented in Africa and has since been adapted for use in the Pacific and piloted in Fiji. International research, as well as a recent evaluation in Fiji, provides evidence that the program can reduce HIV risk behaviours and gender-inequitable norms (Jewkes, Nduna et al. 2006).

FWRM's young women in leadership program engages young women and girls to bring about positive change in their homes, among their peers and in their community. Initiated in 2003, the program focuses on equipping participants with the skills and knowledge needed to challenge gender stereo-typing and norms and to advance women's human rights. It offers a year-long training course called the Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF) for young women between 18 and 25 years. The graduates go on to form the ELF Alumni and many continue to work in human rights and development. Three graduates are now employed in NGOs—one for Marie Stopes International as a community trainer and two at FWRM (one as a researcher and the other as the current Young Women's Officer). Recently an ELF graduate was recruited as a research officer at FWCC. The success of the program has also resulted in requests for technical assistance for development of similar programs in Kup PNG, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

BOX 6.1: THE CHURCH AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: THE WEAVERS PROGRAMME

The standard injunction of male clergy for victims of violence to respond with forgiveness and unconditional Christian love to their perpetrators only encourages more violence, thus avoiding dealing with the destructive consequences of violent behaviours. Churches that continue with this teaching have forgotten that Christian forgiveness must go hand in hand with justice (Felemoni-Tofaeono 2004).

The Weavers Programme, part of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS), advocates for women in theological education. Weavers has focused on domestic violence against women as part of its core program, designing a curriculum for working with theological schools and faith-based organisations on violence against women in the South Pacific. The course, based on four years of consultations with SPATS member schools, includes a series of readings on violence against women as a human-rights violation and social problem, and also calls for reflection and action against violence against women within Christian communities and churches of the Pacific. One of the program's strengths is that it directly faces such difficult issues as 'the ways in which biblical interpretations and unsound theologies have contributed to the problem of violence against women', by encouraging women to be submissive to their husbands and forgive offenders. One contributor called on communities and churches of Oceania 'to remember the untold, hidden, painful stories of women who have been victims of domestic violence' and 'to plead for a contribution to the call of worldwide Christian activists to overcome all forms of violence against women, as followers of the Christ of peace and love'.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

The progress made in Fiji to reduce violence against women is impressive and serves as a testament to the hard work of women's rights and human rights activists over a sustained period. The Family Law Act and the No-Drop Policy are models for increasing women's access to justice for other Melanesian countries. For more than 20 years, the FWCC has led the way in providing Fijian women with high-quality services, and has pioneered an innovative program to involve men as allies in reducing violence against women. Several other groundbreaking initiatives by other organisations to address violence against women in other forums, such as theological training, HIV/AIDS prevention and youth education, have demonstrated how violence can be incorporated in creative ways into a broader social agenda. Particularly noteworthy is the role that many Fiji-based organisations, such as the FWCC, FWRM and the RRRT, have played in strengthening the capacity of CSOs and governments in the Pacific through regional training programs and mentoring other organisations in the region. The success of these programs is also a testament to long-term and sustained support on the part of international donors, most notably AusAID and NZAID, which have provided core support to the FWCC nearly since its inception.

The history of coups, in particular the most recent one in 2006, has caused serious setbacks in the Government's response to violence against women, most evident in the current gaps in coordination among government agencies and the erosion of the

quality of services, particularly with regard to women's access to justice. Nonetheless, Fiji has much to be proud of and much to share with other countries in leading the way for violence reduction in the region.

7.2 Specific recommendations for Fiji

When implementing the overarching principles and general recommendations on the themes described in the main regional report, the team suggests a number of priorities for support within the Fijian context. While the current rules of engagement in Fiji limit the role AusAID and other donors can take, there are still opportunities and planning should begin now so engagement can be increased after democracy is restored. As with the regional report, recommendations here are presented in two parts—those that will require a more coordinated response in order to assign priority and responsibilities, and those that can be immediately considered and acted on by AusAID—note however, that *all* recommendations are relevant for *all* actors working in Fiji to address violence against women. Note also that because of the rules of engagement, AusAID is more constrained in the immediate term than it is in other countries studied.

7.3 Recommendations for all actors

Support multisectoral coordination: This is a sensitive area, given the current political situation in Fiji. However, many participants indicated interest in reviving earlier forms of coordination, such as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Violence against Women. This might provide an opportunity for incorporating activities to address violence against women into other government ministries, such as the ministries of Health and Education. Again, until democracy is restored, multisector engagement may be challenging for the NGO community and donors, however, support should be prioritised for activities that facilitate interagency coordination among international agencies and other actors in this field. As one of the largest donors currently supporting efforts to end violence against women, AusAID should play a key role in harmonising the efforts of international agencies to maximise impact. The Fiji multi-stakeholder committee lead by the United Nations (UNFPA) is already playing an important role here and should be supported.

Continue support for reforms that strengthen women's access to justice, including training of police, magistrates, and judges in implementation of laws, both within the constraints of the current rules of engagement and after democracy is restored. Support should include more broad legal literacy and human rights-based training for community members and should recognise the challenge faced by rural and vulnerable women in accessing justice. Care should be taken to ensure that community-based and restorative justice programs take women's needs into account so they do not end up reinforcing attitudes or structures that discriminate or encourage violence against women. All law and justice interventions should be backed by thorough research and evaluation efforts to assess and improve effectiveness.

Increased emphasis on violence prevention. Although women's rights organisations in Fiji have extensive experience in public awareness and advocacy campaigns, there is less emphasis on ongoing systematic prevention work at the community level. Programs that address gender norms—such as Stepping Stone—should be scaled up and combined with long-term strategies to establish and sustain community networks to support survivors and prevent violence. In addition, support should be given to multi-media programs that challenge prevailing attitudes about violence, including 'education entertainment' (such as Wan Smol Bag's *Love Patrol* television program in Fiji and Vanuatu).

Integrate attention to violence against women throughout the health system. Although survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault receive medico-legal services at hospitals, there is no policy regarding violence against women in the Department of Health. Because violence against women is a significant cause of injury and ill health among women, this area should be made a priority. Integrating violence against women into health services requires establishing policies and protocols that encourage health providers to identify support and referrals for women and girls suffering violence, as well as training and follow-up to ensure programs are implemented effectively. Training for doctors and nurses should be integrated into pre-service and in-service training. Violence prevention should also be integrated into community health programs, including those focusing on sexuality, reproductive health and HIV prevention..

Address violence against women through primary and secondary education programs. Policies should be developed and implemented to prohibit sexual harassment and violence against girls in schools—from teachers or students. In addition, schools should address violence and gender equity in their curriculum.

Support for engaging men and youth as allies in ending violence against women. The successful work of the FWCC in training and enlisting opinion leaders as male advocates deserves continued support. In addition, AusAID should explore ways to expand working with men and boys at a community level, as well as integrating violence against women and women's rights into programs for youth, particularly in sexual and reproductive health and life skills. Such programs should explicitly aim to challenge the prevailing cultural norms that encourage women's subordination and violence against them.

7.4 Specific recommendations for Australia

Ensure all interventions are delivered within a human rights and gender transformative framework. AusAID also needs to ensure the needs of rural and vulnerable women are captured during analysis, design and implementation of all activities.

Target and coordinate support. AusAID should identify its own area of comparative advantage, so it avoid duplication, and ensure its support is strategic, sustained and

coordinated, both within the bilateral program and with other donors and actors. AusAID should work with other donors to harmonise efforts to support NGO and CSOs with a particular view to reducing the reporting burden on these groups.

Support research to increase knowledge about the characteristics of violence. Increase evaluation research to measure impact, particularly the impact of law and justice interventions. Research should also focus on the experiences and needs of rural and vulnerable women. Given the current studies in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu on the prevalence of violence against women, it could be useful to repeat the 1999 study on the issue, using methods that are comparable to other studies in the region. Increasing capacity of local researchers in research on violence against women and monitoring and evaluation are also needed. Other types of research, particularly regarding the effectiveness of interventions such as the No-Drop Policy and training for law and justice sector operators, is also much-needed. While the rules of engagement may prevent immediate action, AusAID should identify the areas that would most benefit from impact evaluation and plan to start these evaluations once democracy is restored.

Continue support of the FWCC. There is no doubt the FWCC plays a critical role in galvanising public opinion and action around violence against women, not only in Fiji but throughout the region. This is not to say that support should not also go to other organisations supporting efforts to address violence, but support for the FWCC should be the cornerstone of this strategy. Priority should be given to the position of the FWCC as a regional Centre of Excellence and to strengthening its role as a leader in advocacy for women's rights, as well as its strengths in training and mentoring other groups throughout Fiji and the Pacific region.

ANNEX 1: ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Shamima Ali, Coordinator, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

Virisila Buadromo, Director, Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Imrana Jalal, Human Rights Adviser, Regional Rights Resource Team

Dr Tokasa Leweni, Director for Women

Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, Howard's Law

Professor Vijay Naidu, University of the South Pacific

Dr Neil Sharma, University of the South Pacific

Dr Lepani Waqatakirewa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Women,
Social Welfare

ANNEX 2: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED⁶

Organisation

National Department for Women

Fiji Police Force

Prosecutors

Suva Police Academy (focus group involving 13 officers)

Nasova Police Academy (interviews with 5 officers)

Public prosecutors and legal aid counsellors (8 officials)

Magistrates (focus group involving 9 individuals)

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (interviews and focus groups involving 15 staff)

Women's Action for Change (focus group involving 12 members)

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT)

Fem'LINK Pacific

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Fiji Association of Social Workers

Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International

National Council of Women

Salvation Army headquarters

Mahaffey Girls Home (focus group involving 8 girls)

AIDS Task Force

FJN+ (Fiji's HIV-positive peoples' network)

Equal Ground Pacifica

Pacific Counselling and Social Services

FRIEND (Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises 'N' Development)

Soqosoqo Vakamarama

Fiji College of Advanced Education

Fulton College

United Blind Peoples' Association

SPATS

AusAID Staff

AusAID Community Justice Program

Pacific Region Policing Initiative

Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project

International Labour Organization Programme Office

Men as Partners–United Nations Population Fund

UNIFEM

⁶ To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

VANUATU COUNTRY SUPPLEMENT



1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This paper is a supplement to *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Regional and Global Promising Approaches*, which addresses the issue of violence against women in the region as a whole. The main report describes all promising approaches identified by the team from across the region, and proposes, through a series of recommendations, an action plan relevant to all countries studied. This supplement provides more country-specific information on Vanuatu, permitting a more nuanced approach to proposed solutions. The regional report and the Vanuatu report, when read together, provide a comprehensive picture of promising approaches for addressing violence against women, recommendations relevant for all countries and specific direction for where to focus efforts in Vanuatu.

The process began in 2007, when the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness identified violence against women as a major barrier to development in the region, with serious effects not only on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, but on their families, communities and countries (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2007). Following a review of international lessons learned, visits of four to nine days were carried out by the international evaluation team to each of the five countries in the region (East Timor, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu) during September and October 2007.

Interviews and focus group discussions using a set of participatory exercises were carried out with policymakers, service providers, users of the services, civil society groups and community members. These were continued by locally recruited researchers, except in East Timor, where there was a shortage of qualified individuals, but a number of recent studies.¹ Selection of the potentially promising practices to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID Post personnel and local activists. Local advisory groups of prominent individuals were established in each country to provide feedback and direction to the evaluation team, to encourage ownership of the review's findings and to help promote and implement its recommendations. (Annex 1 lists the advisory group members for Vanuatu.)

In all, 140 individual were consulted in Vanuatu, including 43 individual interviews and 97 people who participated in focus group discussions. (Annex 2 lists the organisations consulted.²) Regional recommendations on the four theme areas (access to justice, support services for survivors, prevention, and multisectoral coordination) were developed during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, involving all local researchers and representatives of the advisory groups from all countries.³

¹ Local researchers in Vanuatu were Emily Niras and Naomi Bolenga.

² To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

³ Vanuatu was represented by Merlyn Tahī, Director of the Vanuatu Women's Centre, and Morris Kaloran, Ministry of Justice.

This is not a situational analysis, nor is it a comprehensive or complete listing of all the good things happening in Vanuatu. Many inspiring examples of work are underway in all parts of the country on violence against women, but only those brought to the team's attention could be covered. The study examined lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up, or applied in other countries. It focused as much as possible on women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention.

2 SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Men need to explain the cultural ways of doing things, and women should abide by it.
(community man, Port Vila)

Men are the head of the family, and when women are well-educated, it is difficult for a man to exercise his authority over the women. (men in Nakamal)

Women have 10 heads, so that if I want to straighten her out, I can beat her as much as I want to, but will only succeed in cutting one of the heads.(men in Nakamal)

There are no systematic studies of domestic or sexual violence in Vanuatu. However, information on cases collected by women's groups, such as the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC), highlight the high rates of gender-based violence, especially intimate partner violence, in the country. Many women noted the use (and misinterpretation) of *kastom* and prevailing norms to excuse such violence. According to some researchers, for example, the payment of bride-price is used by many men to justify abuse, or even the murder, of wives (Tor & Toka 2004).

The VWC is currently carrying out an ambitious study on the prevalence and characteristics of violence against women in Vanuatu, based on the methodology of the World Health Organization's (WHO) *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*. This should provide valuable evidence for the purposes of advocacy and improving programmes to address violence against women.

Despite its small size (barely 200 000 inhabitants), Vanuatu has an extraordinarily diverse population, spread over 68 inhabited islands and speaking more than 80 languages (not including dialects). The majority of the population live in rural and remote areas, which can make it extraordinarily difficult and expensive to provide timely access to health services or the formal justice system. Vanuatu is one of the poorer countries in the region, ranked 12 out of 14 Pacific countries in 1999 and 118 out of 177 countries worldwide in 2005, according to the United Nation's (UN) Development Programme human development index. Women are nearly invisible in the public service, with only 2 female parliamentarians out of 51 in 2006 (slightly less than 4 per cent), and only 15 per cent of senior government positions held by women.

Although the Constitution of Vanuatu grants equal rights to women, Vanuatu has a highly patriarchal society. Political and social life in Vanuatu, including gender roles and power relations between women and men, are also greatly influenced by traditional cultural attitudes and practices—*kastom*. The strictures of *kastom* permeate all aspects of society, and customary practices and rules as decreed by local chiefs, or by the national Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs, have the status of law, particularly in rural areas.

Thus, despite Vanuatu's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other international conventions on women's rights, the murky area between traditional and modern laws can lead to discriminatory practices, such as a ruling of the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs forbidding women to wear trousers, or setting a ceiling on the payment of bride-price (which was seen by women's rights activists as legitimising a practice that discriminates against women). Violence against women, by all accounts is common throughout Vanuatu, is often justified as a part of *kastom*.

However, this interpretation is disputed by one study completed on *kastom* and violence against women. The authors argue that *kastom* itself, or practices specific to Vanuatu culture, is not a static concept, and has undergone many changes throughout history. They distinguish between 'traditional *kastom*' and 'modern *kastom*', and show how over time, customary practices such as bride-price (originally an exchange of goods between families that recognised the value of women), have become distorted and are now used to imply men's ownership of women (Tor & Toka 2004).

Churches—particularly Christian churches—also play a prominent role in Vanuatu society and frequently provide ad hoc support for women, often through the many Christian women's groups and societies. Churches also provide counselling and some mediation and advocacy of peaceful family relations. However, churches are vocal opponents of broken homes and often discourage women from leaving violent situations in order to maintain the family. In drawing heavily from biblical teaching, the churches often reinforce notions of family that place women below men.

3 MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

Multisectoral coordination, both among government agencies and among Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), has been recognised as a weakness in Vanuatu. In 1997, violence against women was placed as the number four priority out of nine benchmarks for improving the status of women in Vanuatu. The Department of Women's Affairs developed a policy on violence against women in 2002, and recently developed a Plan of Action for Women, which has yet to be approved by the Government. The Department of Women's Affairs is seriously under-resourced, and

it does not appear that many of the activities included in the national plans have been implemented. Although there are other women's NGOs concerned with violence against women, albeit not to the extent of the VWC, there is no formal network functioning at present to coordinate activities on the issue.

4 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

4.1 Legal reform

The most significant piece of legislation with respect to violence against women is the Family Protection Order Bill. This Bill was drafted in 1997 and passed by Parliament more than a decade later, in June 2008. The Family Protection Order Bill provides women with a means for protection from violent partners through restraining orders. Most importantly, it provides protection for women in rural areas where there are no courts. It authorises an alternate agency, like a chief, church leader, or any 'notable community leader, male or female', appointed by the Department of Women's Affairs as a 'registered person', to intervene in cases of violence.

Despite intensive lobbying by the Department of Women's Affairs, the VWC, and many other human rights organisations, the Bill met with strong opposition from powerful groups, such as the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs and religious groups, who argued that it would erode the authority of chiefs in *kastom* courts and promote the breakdown of families. However, after extensive consultations, the lobbying efforts finally paid off and the law was passed in 2008. However the law is still controversial and being contested by some conservative sectors of society and due to a challenge from the Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC), it has not been gazetted and remains on hold while the Supreme Court determines its constitutionality⁴.

4.2 Formal justice system

Many women in Vanuatu do not have easy access to the police because of their remoteness to the nearest police post. Even when physical access is not an issue, in general, women consider the police a last resort, in part because of fear of inciting greater wrath and violence from their partners, but also because of the callous treatment women often receive from the police, who typically share the same attitudes on violence against women as the rest of the Vanuatu's male population. One police officer explained that the purpose of hitting your wife '*is not to kill her, but to teach her*'. Another police officer acknowledged that '*many police here believe that women wearing trousers cause men to rape women*'.⁵

⁴ The Vanuatu Christian Council petitioned the President of Vanuatu to not gazette the Family Protection Bill on the grounds that it contravenes the Christian principles stated in the preamble of the Constitution. At the time of publication, the Supreme Court had not yet made a ruling.

⁵ A study of rape victims was carried out by the women's movement to refute this charge, which found that all of the women in question had been wearing either traditional island dress or grass skirts at the time they were assaulted.

A senior police official acknowledged that 80 per cent of police incidents are related to domestic violence or violence within the family. However, very few cases are recorded or investigated.

We give the couple ample time, because three days later the wife usually comes back and wants to withdraw the statement. So we tell the wife we will keep her statement for a few days before proceeding, because we don't want to waste our time. (police officer)

Only in more serious cases—‘where the wife is being threatened and it is likely she’ll be assaulted again’—do the police refer the woman to the VWC, which can help her obtain a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO).

Several survivors of violence told stories of police indifference:

I also was not feeling safe and comfortable with the whole thing because there was no confidentiality at the police station when dealing with my application. This is because the policeman who had dealt with my case is a friend and family of my husband, and even before the order was served, my husband had already known about it. (woman in focus group discussion)

The Port Vila police station has a Family Protection Unit (FPU), which deals primarily with cases of rape. There is no standard protocol for dealing with domestic or sexual violence cases, and no training for police officers has been held in Vanuatu. Police officers themselves have identified that a clear procedure for dealing with domestic violence would be helpful:

Vila is small, so if a neighbour or relative comes in, [the police officer at the desk] would have to dismiss the case because of the personal connection. Or, if it was the wife of another police officer, no one would want to deal with it. But if there was a protocol, it would help a lot. (senior police officer, Port Vila)

In some provinces, the police have become more sensitive to cases of violence against women, due to the Male Advocates Programme of the VWC. Many male advocates are themselves rural police officers who credit participating in the program with having changed their own views about violence and gender. In addition, a few police officers have received training in Fiji under the Pacific Regional Police Initiative. However, no follow-up has taken place with these officers. The review team met one police officer who received training in Fiji but he was transferred to the Fraud Squad shortly afterward and no longer deals with domestic violence cases. The VWC supports the adoption of a ‘no-drop policy’ in Vanuatu, similar to the one in Fiji. To make a difference, this would require a large amount of training and high-level commitment within the police force, as well as increased capacity in the courts.

The capacity and reach of the courts also limits women’s access to justice. Access to the legal system is extremely problematic in rural communities, occurring only when courts are on provincial circuits. A lack of access to state legal institutions for a large proportion of the population not only makes accessing formal justice extremely

expensive, it has resulted in the chief taking on number of legal functions. Despite having no jurisdiction, Chiefs often hear cases of sexual assault and violence. When cases do get to magistrate court they are prosecuted by police prosecutors who have para-legal training, but no specific training on gender or violence against women. There are significant problems with backlogs, exacerbated by difficulty filling judicial appointments and most recently by the destruction by fire of the main court house in Port Vila. Failure of witness to appear is also a significant strain on the court system, requiring hearings to be rescheduled or cases abandoned. This is a frequent occurrence because of the geographic isolation of most of the population and the limited resources police have to track down and detain witnesses or perpetrators.

4.3 Domestic Violence Protection Orders

As a result of Parliament's delay in passing the Family Protection Order Bill, the Chief Justice of Vanuatu, urged by women's rights activists, took the unusual step in 2001 of issuing a court rule to enable women to receive DVPOs. The orders are processed by the Public Solicitor's Office, and the VWC is able to facilitate the process. DVPOs provide relatively quick and effective legal protection against domestic violence for a short period (typically 14 days), after which the victim and the accused need to appear in court. In the provinces, the VWC is able to obtain the orders by fax from Port Vila.

Many women are now using it. It's good, fast, and very effective. It's just a matter of the women deciding to use it. If they're determined, it can be very good for them, and helps the marriage, too, so both parties have time to assess the marriage safely. It reduces the violence and makes the man think. It makes him realise there's someone more powerful than him that is superior and can order him how to behave. (official from the Ombudsman's Office)

In theory, when there is a breach, or the accused does not appear in court, the magistrate has the power to order his arrest. However, there has never been a charge of breaching a DVPO brought before the court.

Most survivors of violence interviewed for this report felt the DVPO had been very helpful.

When I applied for the DVPO in September 2007, it provided me with the protection I needed against my husband, who at that time, was violent for the first time in our married life together. The DVPO enabled me to return to my children after hiding in a neighbour's home for more than two days, and this also meant that my husband had to leave the house temporarily to allow me to return home. I think the DVPO was a rude awakening for my husband, who after moving out of the house, came to realise the seriousness of his violent acts and was eager for us to meet and reconcile, and that is exactly what we did and we're now living together again with our children. (survivor of domestic violence, Port Vila)

Nonetheless, a DVPO can be difficult and prohibitively expensive for women to obtain, even in Port Vila. One woman reported that she had to go to five different offices to obtain one: she went to the police station, then was sent to the hospital for a medical report, then to the Government Finance Office to pay the fee, then to a legal clinic at the University of the South Pacific (USP) for help in preparing the DVPO, and finally, to the magistrate's court for signature. After that, she had to return the signed order to the police, who took two days to serve it. During this period, she was fearful her husband would track her down and hid for three days at a neighbour's house while waiting for the police to serve the protection order.

"I personally felt that it was too much for me to go through, especially when I was walking from one station to another in utter fear." (Survivor of domestic violence, Port Vila)

For women living in rural areas, gaining access to orders is even more difficult. Others felt the 14-day period of the order, with limited opportunities for renewal, was not enough time to ensure their safety while they decided what to do.

From my experience, I personally feel that a 14-day order is too short for a woman who is scared and trying to get away from her violent partner. The problem is that the 14-day order is very expensive, and if a woman would like to have a longer period of order, she cannot afford this. (survivor of domestic violence, Port Vila)

DVPOs are also inconsistently applied in some cases. The review team found that in one provincial town, for example, women who receive orders have to leave their house, as opposed to their husband, and they usually have to leave their children behind because, according to *kastom*, children belong to the father (despite custody laws specifying that cases should be decided 'in the best interests of the child' regardless of traditional practices).

When this happens, the father would tell the children that their mother ran away because she did not like them. Children suffer when their mother is not there. (local court clerk)

4.4 Traditional and community-based justice

As noted earlier, the chief system and *kastom* law are extremely strong in Vanuatu, even in urban areas. Traditional courts, led by local chiefs, are empowered to hear cases dealing with various issues, such as robbery and land disputes, as well as cases pertaining to family disputes, including child maintenance and custody and domestic violence. A typical traditional court case is resolved by means of a 'grace solution', which involves exchanging goods on both sides of the dispute, such as woven mats, pigs (those with round tusks being more valuable), cash and *kava* (a narcotic drink commonly used in Vanuatu). The goal of traditional justice is always community and family harmony and reconciliation over individual rights; therefore, a chief will rarely fault only one side of a dispute and will never support the separation of the couple. Chiefs are all men, and women feel they are frequently disadvantaged in traditional court hearings.

In the case of domestic and sexual violence, a woman will almost always turn to her local chief for support before the police or other institutions. Going through a *kastom* ceremony does not preclude pursuing criminal charges, but compensation may mitigate any punishment.

Even in Vila, she'll go [to the chief]. The chief will try to reconcile them and make them pay the fines, and then send them home. The woman will have to pay a lot of money if she's the one who asks for the meeting, so her family will have to help her. The chief will maybe also give a fine to the husband and then make them shake hands and go home. This will not solve her problem because he will hit her again anyway. He will say he's paid bride-price so that gives him the right to hit her. The chief and the family will agree with this. They will say that 'You are his property'. (member, Committee Against Violence Against Women [CAVAW])

The chiefs are not supposed to deal with sexual assault or incest cases, but in practice, many chiefs hear these cases as well. For female sexual assault victims in rural areas, this may be the only practical option, as they are far away from the police and courts, and have limited or no access to appropriate medical treatment that would allow for the correct collection of evidence. Even if a rural woman was to take her case to the police, the police often do not have the resources to locate and detain the perpetrator, and in such situations, the chiefs are seen as the only form of redress.

Under the penal code, all sexual offences are police matters. But the chiefs do still take these in Kastom Court and order compensation. Sometimes they fine the girl for being in the wrong place, or even make the girl marry the rapist! (women's rights activist)

The treatment of women in some traditional courts has improved recently, with the training provided by the VWC's male advocates, some of whom are police officers and chiefs. This is described in greater detail later in the report.

5 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

Until recently, few options were available for women and girls seeking support for domestic or sexual assault. As mentioned earlier, it is common to feel that bride-price gives husbands the right to treat wives as property and beat them when they disobey. If a woman seeks refuge within her own family, they are unlikely to support her for more than a few days, for fear of being required to return her bride-price.

Because domestic violence is seen as a private matter, other community members or relatives are unlikely to intervene to protect a woman from her husband. 'Mi no wantem save' ('I don't want to know' in Bislama) and 'Ino bisnis blo mi' ('It's not my business') are common refrains from bystanders. In addition to local chiefs, many women seek support from Christian pastors. Like the chiefs, the pastors have a strong orientation toward reconciliation, so the likely outcome will be counselling, either to forgive and forget or to become a more obedient wife, to avoid beatings.

The VWC is the main source of support for women living with violence. Founded in 1993 by a small group of dedicated women in Port Vila, it now has branches in the provinces of Sanma and Tafea, in addition to the main location in Port Vila.

The VWC provides legal support and counselling for women and girls who have been abused, and can offer temporary shelter (Box 5.1). The Centre has also developed two innovative programs, the Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAW) and the Male Advocates Programme, both of which aim to increase access to support for rural women and transforming community attitudes toward violence against women (Box 5.2). Over time, the VWC has become recognised throughout the country for its outstanding work on behalf of women and children.

BOX 5.1: THE VANUATU WOMEN'S CENTRE

The VWC is an independent community service organisation established in 1993. It is based in the capital of Port Vila. The VWC's program on violence against women includes providing counselling services, community awareness and legal advocacy interventions throughout the country.

The VWC manages two branches, the Sanma Counselling Centre on Santo and the Tafea Counselling Centre on Tanna, both established in 2003. The VWC has a network of island-based CAVAWs, which undertake local community-awareness activities and help women and children living with violence in remote communities.

The VWC's activities include centre-based counselling; mobile counselling in Vila settlements and rural areas on Efate and during visits to CAVAWs in the islands; referrals to other agencies; and legal assistance, including representation in court for survivors and telephone counselling. Clients from outer islands are assisted through the Client Support Fund. Safe-house services are provided for women from Efate and the islands. A Court Fees Fund is used to assist women with court fees for domestic violence court orders, child maintenance claims, medical fees or other legal fees, such as payments for custom court hearings.

During 2008, the VWC is carrying out an ambitious study on the prevalence and characteristics of violence against women in Vanuatu, based on the methodology of the WHO multi-country study. This should provide valuable evidence for the purpose of advocacy and improving programmes to address violence against women.

The VWC is managed by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), which is also the Secretariat for the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women.

BOX 5.2: COMMITTEE AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The VWC has set up a network of community-level CAVAWs in all six provinces of Vanuatu. The volunteers receive basic training in legal literacy and counselling skills and are available to provide support to community women suffering domestic abuse or sexual assault. There are now 33 CAVAWs functioning in Vanuatu. They coordinate closely with the branch offices of the VWC, as well as local authorities, such as police, health providers and chiefs. They receive periodic visits and training from the VWC, and a small stipend to help with transporting survivors, paying court fees and meeting other needs. In addition to support to survivors, an important part of the CAVAWs' work is raising community awareness around women's rights and violence against women.

As they have become increasingly skilled and respected, CAVAW members have played critical roles in helping women obtain DVPOs, reporting and accompanying women to the police or magistrate courts, and even advising local chiefs on settling domestic disputes. Because community leadership tends to be heavily male-dominated, village women have appreciated receiving information and counselling from women who are willing to advocate on their behalf. The leader of a CAVAW in West Vanua Lava, herself a survivor of violence, spoke of the difficulties in setting up the CAVAW in 2002:

Before the establishment of the CAVAWs, lots of children and women died from bashing from husbands and fathers. Women now remind their husbands/partners that they can report them to the CAVAW, which has reduced fighting in the homes to a great extent. Men themselves now realise that women no longer have nowhere to go but have the CAVAW to help them. Men are beginning to respect their wives because there is now a body [CAVAW] in place that will support the women and punish the men for mistreating them.
(female CAVAW member from Torba)

This CAVAW leader has come to an agreement with the village chief, such that if a husband repeats violence after a report was brought to the attention of the chief, the chief will allow the CAVAW to help the wife file charges with the police.

Since the establishment of the CAVAW, there has been a big difference. The chiefs and the church are now inviting the CAVAW into their problem-solving meetings. The women have suffered too much, but nowadays, life is much better than in the past for women in this area. (male CAVAW member and local chief)

There is no coordinated response for women seeking medical treatment for violence-related injuries or sexual assault, and no formal procedures for dealing with domestic violence or sexual assault. Doctors and nurses receive no formal training on treating sexual assault or collecting medical evidence. Limited resources are available for training nurses and a generalised nursing workforce shortage. Currently in Vanuatu, for every three nurses that retire, only one is recruited.

In Port Vila, domestic violence and sexual assault victims are generally treated through the accident and emergency department, which has no private waiting area, leaving women feeling exposed and vulnerable. There is no formal referral service to either the police or for formal counselling, and women frequently have to return to the hospital for their medical report if the doctor is not available at the time. Likewise, no formal procedure exists for police to escort women to the hospital for medical treatment, and the review team heard conflicting accounts of whether a woman needs to seek treatment before she sees the police, or whether police have to request a medical report before the doctor will provide one.

These issues are exacerbated for women in rural areas who frequently have only limited access to basic health treatment and, in the case of sexual assault, virtually no access to appropriate pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted infection treatments or post-exposure prophylaxis. There are also limited resources to collect and store appropriate evidence.

6 VIOLENCE PREVENTION

One important lesson learned in more than three decades of work around the world is that prevention must be a key part of the strategy to eliminate violence against women. Preventing violence involves providing communities with information and building awareness around the issue, as well as challenging the attitudes that promote the superiority of men over women and accept violence as a way of resolving conflict. Changing attitudes on such deeply entrenched values and beliefs is a long-term goal. As mentioned above, the VWC carries out advocacy for new laws and policies. Additionally, the group is working to raise awareness at both the country level—through national media such as radio and newspaper articles—and the community level, through the CAVAWs and the Male Advocates Programme.

6.1 The ‘midel man’: Male advocates in Vanuatu

The Male Advocates Programme is modelled after the training program set up in Suva by the FWCC, and the first men recruited to it were trained in Suva by the FWCC. Subsequently, with continued help from the FWCC, training courses have been held in Port Vila. The VWC’s strategy is to engage men in leadership positions in their communities, particularly police officers and village chiefs, to support violence-prevention activities. Many of these male advocates are also members of the CAVAWs. The review team met with several male advocates, who spoke enthusiastically about their work.

I usually use the English word ‘advocate’. But if I had to say it in Bislama, I could say ‘midel man’. As I understand it, we are like middle people. We stay in the middle between men and women. For these issues affecting women, men don’t really understand, so we try to help out. We explain that women and men are both human beings and that they both have the same rights. One of the most important things we try our best to do all the time is to involve responsible leaders, such as church leaders, chiefs, youth leaders, provincial and area council leaders, in all our activities. These activities would include the 16 Days of Activism, Children’s Day, and any other day which we celebrate in the community. When we involve the leader in these activities, everyone feels free and comfortable to join us, and we all cooperate and support each other in making the event a successful one. (male advocate)

Male advocates also attribute changes in their personal lives to the program (Box 6.1). Together, the CAVAWs and the Male Advocates Programme have greatly increased women’s access to support and justice, particularly in rural areas where there are few other services. The male advocates who are also chiefs play a particularly important role in talking with other chiefs.

BOX 6.1: THE STORY OF A MALE ADVOCATE

Before I became a male advocate, I had violence in my home despite the fact that I am a police officer and should be upholding the law. I believe part of the reason I was violent stems from the tough police training I had received, as we were taught to be tough and strong men, and we were always under strict rules and commands, which brainwashed me into a monster. I was always violent toward my wife, and our life at home was not a happy one. After going through the male advocate training provided by the VWC, I now treat my wife with more respect than before. Being a male advocate, I am now able to put myself into the women's shoes and speak for them. Our CAVAWs around East Ambae area would refer all women victims to me for counselling and advice. If they choose, I also counsel their husbands, and it has really helped so many couples restore peace and unity in their homes. (male advocate, East Ambae CAVAW)

6.2 Wan Smol Bag

The Vanuatu theatre group, Wan Smol Bag (WSB), is an innovative program combining community theatre, print media, videos and workshops to draw attention to such issues as drug addiction, gender roles, domestic violence and sorcery. The programs are developed through formative research and are performed in Bislama throughout the country (Box 6.2).

BOX 6.2: WAN SMOL BAG

WSB was established as an amateur theatre group in Vanuatu in 1989. Since then, it has developed a reputation for delivering high-quality, locally produced film, radio and theatre productions. WSB uses drama and creative materials that draw on contemporary issues to inform and encourage community discussion on a range of issues, including HIV/AIDS, sexual health, domestic violence and citizens' rights and responsibilities.

With these activities, we are able to create an open and conducive atmosphere whereby young people interact with peers, and many of whom are themselves offenders or victims of violence, so that they can understand, accept and change their behaviour to violence. (group leader)

Responding to community discussions around these issues, WSB developed program that support youth services, including peer education, sexual and reproductive health, good governance, and community-based environmental conservation. The activities engage youth, men and women in discussions around priority development issues for the community that have shown potential for mobilising positive change around issues such as domestic violence.

WSB reaches out to youth before they leave school, providing them with valuable sexual and reproductive health information and links to services they may find difficult to access. As one group member said: *Many of us have changed our attitudes and behaviour after having been through this place. Many of us have shunned our violent behaviours after we learned to respect others.*

WSB also supports local non-government program, providing training in the use of its information, education and communication materials and techniques. Increasingly, WSB is being approached to work on various national and regional program, and its materials are used by a wide range of teachers and development agencies throughout the Pacific.

6.3 Women's economic and political empowerment

Because women's status is so low, increasing their participation in political leadership positions and economic and social status at all levels must be a priority. This means strengthening women's participation and leadership in community development and economic programs, as well as increasing their representation in national-level leadership positions, including in Parliament and in the public service.

Increasing women's economic empowerment also provides women with more options to escape from violence, access health and legal services and care for their children. Economic development programs, particularly those targeting women, should also incorporate education around violence against women and gender relations. The review team saw opportunities for integrating more education around violence and women's rights in the Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme's micro-financing program, which provides funding to women through centres that act as guarantor. Women working in close proximity (to one another, and to their families), provides a demonstration effect for men in the community:

Men do sometimes take their wives' money. But usually, men see successful examples of other women using the loan to run businesses and make more money, so they are less likely to want to spoil it. This is the benefit of having a local group, where everyone sees what's happening. (officer in the Department of Women's Affairs.)

The program also has component targeted at teaching men how to save money. Although it has no formal link to a violence-prevention objective, and at the time of the field work, funding was uncertain, the review team saw opportunities for integrating more education around violence and women's rights, and for continuing or scaling up the program

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

Despite its small size and relatively scarce resources compared to other countries, nearly 20 years of activism in Vanuatu have yielded impressive gains in raising public awareness about women's rights and violence against women, increasing women's access to justice and providing support for victims. The VWC has been recognised by the national government, as well as in international forums, for its groundbreaking work. In particular, the model of community mobilisation represented by the CAVAWs and the engagement with local chiefs and leaders through the Male Advocates Programme, are impressive achievements that can serve as models for many other countries. The multi-media work of WSB, and its skilful and professional use of popular culture and interpersonal communication, are also outstanding and should be considered best practice for the region.

7.2 Specific recommendations for Vanuatu

As with the regional report, recommendations here are presented in two parts: those requiring a more coordinated response to assigning priority and responsibilities and those that can be immediately considered and acted on by AusAID. Note, however, that *all* recommendations are relevant for *all* actors in Vanuatu working to address violence against women.

7.3 Recommendations for all actors

Support multisectoral coordination, both among local groups that work on women's issues and interagency coordination within the government. The Department of Women's Affairs would be well positioned to lead such coordination, if it were properly resourced and supported. There is also potential for the Justice Ministry to play a significant role by chairing the committee and driving multisectoral coordination. This might also provide an opportunity to incorporate activities to address violence against women into other government ministries, such as Health and Education. Support should also be prioritised for activities facilitating interagency coordination among international agencies.

Support legal reforms and training of police, magistrates and judges in the implementation of laws. Now that the Family Protection Order Bill has been passed, training of police (including senior officials and magistrates, as well as establishing mechanisms to monitor implementation, are critical. Support should also include more broad legal literacy and human rights-based training for community members. Efforts to increase access to justice must also recognise the particular needs of rural women.

Integrate attention to violence against women throughout the health system. Although survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault receive medico-legal services at the hospitals, there is no policy regarding violence against women in the health sector. Because violence against women is a significant cause of injury and ill health among women, this area should be a priority. Integrating action to address VAW violence against women into health services should be based on a thorough analysis of the health system and requires establishing policies and protocols to encourage health providers to identify, support and refer women and girls suffering violence, as well as training and follow-up to ensure that program are implemented effectively. Training for doctors and nurses should be integrated into pre-service and in-service training. Violence prevention should also be integrated into community health program, including sexuality, reproductive health and HIV prevention.

Address violence against women through primary and secondary education. Policies should be developed and implemented to prohibit sexual harassment and violence against girls in schools, whether from teachers or students. In addition, schools provide an opportunity for addressing violence and gender equity in the curriculum.

Engage youth in violence prevention activities. Integrating violence into existing youth programs should be supported, in particular opportunities to strengthen young women's leadership capacity.

Integrate violence prevention into economic and development programs for women. Efforts to integrate work on violence against women into programs dealing with the economic empowerment of women and local development, such as the Vanuatu Women's Development Scheme ANWODS program, should be supported.

Explore opportunities for increasing women's political empowerment and leadership at both the formal and informal levels, within the community, Parliament and the public service.

Facilitate dialogue between the formal justice system and traditional and community-based justice systems. Because the majority of cases of violence are dealt with by local chiefs, it is critical to involve them in efforts to address violence in a way that supports women's rights and interests. The Male Advocates Programme has succeeded in engaging male leaders, including police officers and chiefs, as allies. Further efforts to engage the Council of Chiefs in harmonising approaches to deal with violence against women should be supported as long as they are grounded in a human-rights framework and do not further entrench patriarchal power norms.

7.4 Specific recommendations for Australia

Incorporate gender perspective and violence against women into ongoing bilateral aid, in keeping with AusAID's enhanced priority on gender equality, particularly in law and justice programs. Support should be made available to train technical advisors and counterparts in advocating for gender equality and addressing violence against women. All planned program designs should include a gender analysis of the relevant sector and the implications of the planned assistance on violence against women. The needs of rural and vulnerable women need to be captured, and the access issues faced by rural women should be considered in all service delivery and law and justice programs.

Continue support of the VWC. There is no doubt that the VWC plays a critical role in galvanising public opinion and action around violence against women in Vanuatu. This is not to say that supporting efforts of other organisations in addressing violence is not important, but supporting the VWC should be the cornerstone of this strategy. Strengthening and expanding on the work of the CAVAWs, as well as the Male Advocates Programme, should also be priorities. The role of the FWCC in mentoring the VWC has been key for their success, and should also be supported in some capacity.

Continue support for entertainment education activities. WSB carries out groundbreaking work in using communication for social change techniques to involve young people and communities in reflecting and mobilising around social issues, including domestic violence. Depending on the capacity and interest of WSB, support could be given for scaling up this type of work throughout the region, by training women's organisations in social communication methods, and perhaps for mentoring other organisations in the region.

Support for shared learning and exchanges with other organisations in the region.

There is a great need for capacity building of government agencies and women's groups in violence against women, and exchange visits with other countries in the region could be of great value. In addition to continued mentoring from the FWCC, opportunities to exchange experiences with other countries, such as East Timor and PNG, could be beneficial, particularly in the areas of multisectoral coordination, and work with men and youth. AusAID should also work with other donors to harmonise efforts to support NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), with a view to reducing their reporting burden.

Support research dissemination. The results from the study on violence against women will provide an excellent opportunity to draw attention to the issue, and full advantage should be taken of this opportunity. Support should be given for public awareness activities around the results, including disseminating them through formal and informal channels, community-level activities and outreach activities with such stakeholders as churches and the Council of Chiefs.

ANNEX 1: ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS FOR VANUATU

Chief Joseph Dick, Male Advocate, Vanuatu Women's Centre
Morris Kaloran, Director, Department of Correctional Services
Merilyn Tahi, Coordinator, Vanuatu Women's Centre
Hilda Taleo, Director, Department of Women's Affairs
Kali Vatoko, National Coordinator, Pacific Children's Program
Delphine Vuti, Senior Lieutenant, Vanuatu Police Force

ANNEX 2: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED⁶

Organisation

Department of Women's Affairs

Ministry for Justice and Social Welfare

Vanuatu Police force

Port Vila (focus group involving 11 officers)

Port Vila Family Protection Unit

Tanna (interviews with officers)

Isangel (interviews and focus group involving 13 police officers)

Department of Public Prosecutions

Port Vila Courthouse (interviews with magistrates)

Office of the Public Solicitor

Office of the Ombudsman

Port Vila Central Hospital

Vanuatu Women' Centre

interviews with Executive staff

focus groups with 20 staff and volunteers

interviews with 7 male advocates

National Council of Women

Vanuatu Association for NGOs

Vanuatu Family Health Association

Wan Smol Bag Managers

Wan Smol Bag (focus group involving 12 youth)

Sanma Counselling Centre (interviews with staff)

University of South Pacific Legal Centre

Christian Broadcasting Network

Beach Comber Resort

Tafea Women's Centre

Tafea Counselling Centre

Committees Against Violence Against Women

Interviews and focus groups with CAVAW members from: West Vanualava; Gaua; South Santo; Big Bay; Pentecost; East Ambae; Huritahi; Gaiovo; Lonahli; Emae;

Lamen Island; Ambrym; Midmaug

Malfatuma Council of Chiefs

Pango area (separate men's and women's focus groups)

Saratamata area, Ambae (focus groups)

Centreville Christian Fellowship youth (focus group)

AusAID Staff

including gender specialists and legal sector advisors

New Zealand Agency for International Development

⁶ To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

EAST TIMOR COUNTRY SUPPLEMENT



1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This paper is a supplement to *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Regional and Global Promising Approaches*, which addresses the issue of violence against women in the region.. The main report describes all promising approaches identified by the team from across the region, and proposes, through a series of recommendations, an action plan relevant for all countries studied. This supplement provides more country-specific information on East Timor, permitting a more nuanced approach to proposed solutions. The regional report and the East Timor report, when read together, provide a comprehensive picture of promising approaches for addressing violence against women, recommendations relevant for all countries and specific direction for where to focus efforts in East Timor.

The process began in 2007, when the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness identified violence against women as a major barrier to development in the region, with serious effects not only on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, but on their families, communities, and countries (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2007). Following a review of international lessons learned, visits of four to nine days were carried out by the international evaluation team to each of the five countries in the region (East Timor, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu) during September and October 2007.

Interviews and focus group discussions using a set of participatory exercises were carried out with policymakers, service providers, users of the services, civil society groups, and community members. These were continued by locally recruited researchers, except in East Timor, where the shortage of qualified individuals meant none were available. This was not seen as a serious disadvantage in East Timor because of the remarkable body of recent research on the topic available from the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP) and other agencies. Selection of the potentially promising practices to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID Post personnel and local activists.

In all, 29 persons representing 21 organisations were interviewed in East Timor, and an additional 54 people were involved in focus groups. (Annex 1 lists organisations consulted.¹) Regional recommendations on the four theme areas (access to justice, support services for survivors, prevention, and multisectoral coordination) were developed during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, involving the local researchers and representatives of the advisory groups from all countries.²

¹ To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

² It was not possible to form an advisory group in East Timor due to prior commitments of the suitable candidates.

This is not a situational analysis, nor is it a comprehensive or complete listing of all the good things happening in East Timor. Many inspiring examples of work are underway in all parts of the country on violence against women, but only those brought to the team's attention could be covered. The study examined lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up, or applied in other countries. It focused as much as possible on women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention.

2 SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

East Timor (known locally as Timor-Leste) has been shaped by decades of political repression and armed conflict. The country is one of the least developed in the world, and is ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as 150 out of 177 countries in the UNDP human development index. Because of a lack of disaggregated data, East Timor does not yet figure in the UNDP's gender-related development index. Maternal mortality is estimated to be 800 per 100 000 live births, among the highest in the world (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007). Women have lower levels of education and literacy than men; participate less in the formal workforce; and are usually in lower-paid, less-secure work, which exposes them to the risk of sexual harassment. Until recently, women were poorly represented in decision-making bodies at all levels, but great efforts are being made to change this through the continuing nation-building process.

All aspects of life in East Timor suffered as a result of the oppression and armed conflict that began with Indonesia's annexation of the territory in 1974 and escalated to the crisis following the Independence referendum of 1999. Since the new Government was established in 2002, there have been periods of renewed conflict and continued instability (International Crisis Group 2008). Women's vulnerability to all forms of violence and exploitation increases greatly during times of instability and population displacement (Hynes, Ward et al. 2003). Vulnerability from women increased substantially in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps around Dili District that arose in the wake of the 2006 crisis.

Violence inflicted on women and girls during the Indonesian occupation and subsequent military conflicts was what first propelled violence against women to the national and international arena. Since then, it has been increasingly recognised that women experience a great deal of violence in normal life, particularly in the family. Various recent studies have documented the prevalence of physical and sexual violence (Hynes, Ward et al. 2003; Swaine 2003; Robertson 2005).

East Timor's experience of peacemaking and reconstruction in the period since 1999 has led to a high level of engagement in gender equality and human rights. This is due to a coordinated effort by the United Nations (UN) agencies operating in East Timor (United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) Gender Affairs Office 2004), as well as to the strong Indigenous women's movement that arose during the years of resistance to Indonesian control. Strengthening civil society has also been a major thrust of international support, both before and since Independence. It is estimated there are more than 500 national and international Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) operating in East Timor, including many with a focus on gender-based violence (Trembath and Grenfell 2007). As such, East Timor has several examples to serve as models for other countries in the region. However, cultural impediments to eliminating violence against women remain strong (further detail is in Chapter 2 of the regional report).

3 MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

East Timor is well advanced in terms of multisectoral coordination compared with the other countries in the study. This began through the UN mission that took control in 1999 and was the first UN peacekeeping operation to have a fully functioning gender affairs office. The focus on gender was maintained during the second UN mission in 2004, which provided support to East Timor's own national machinery on gender equality.

In 2001, a unit specifically for the advancement of gender equality was included in the new Government. Initially called the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), it is now known as SEPI—the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality. Strengthening national capacity to address gender based violence is one of its four core programs for promoting women's equality and empowering women. This office has realised remarkable achievements at the level of national policy and implementation in the six years it has been operating, as summarised in Box 3.1. The national government's appointment in 2004 of Gender and Human Rights Focal Points in every district administration and in key line ministries has also contributed to multisectoral coordination.

At the level of service provision, the Gender Based Violence Referral Partners Network routinely brings all major agencies together, and also advocates for improvements with government and donors.

BOX 3.1: ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY

Initially known as the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), this body is now called the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI). SEPI has worked on several fronts and with multiple sectors simultaneously. Its achievements include:

- > Legal changes and training of female candidates to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies, including those that hear offences against women, at both national and community levels.
- > Draft legislation on domestic violence to be submitted to Parliament (Box 4.1).
- > A new law giving local authorities duties to reduce domestic violence in their communities (Box 4.4).
- > Development of a network of basic services for survivors.
- > Increased public awareness through extensive civic education and other campaigns.
- > Advocacy with the Department of Education to include in school curricula the right of women to live free from violence.

SEPI recently obtained a grant of more than US\$5 million to work jointly on the economic empowerment of women and protection from violence. Funded activities under this grant (which runs from 2008 to 2010) will include strengthening referral systems and agencies in the districts, especially links between the police and NGOs; training and monitoring of *suco* local councils on implementing their new duties to reduce domestic violence; expanding the system of hospital-based safe spaces into districts; and activities to prevent trafficking, provide rehabilitation for perpetrators and increase men's activism.

4 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Women seeking justice for acts of violence in East Timor face a number of hurdles, including the complex combination of patriarchal legal systems dating from former rulers, the legacy of corruption, the destruction of infrastructure during the conflicts, and the adherence to customary beliefs and practices that are disadvantageous to women. Despite these challenges, East Timor has made some notable progress toward strengthening women's ability to access justice.

4.1 Legal reform

Crimes of violence against women are still covered by the penal code inherited from Indonesia. Domestic violence is dealt with as 'maltreatment of women', prosecution for rape involves complex procedures and unrealistic requirements for evidence, and rape in marriage is not an offence. Family and property laws are patriarchal and discriminate against women.

The new government of East Timor has engaged in the massive task of reforming the legislation and processes inherited from Portugal and Indonesia and has prioritised certain legislation affecting women. Draft legislation on domestic violence has been prepared and is pending Parliament's approval of the new penal code. A recent decision from the Government of East Timor to decriminalise the penal code's defamation law should pave the way for passage of the domestic violence legislation.

The draft legislation is wide-ranging in its provisions and progressive in its reference to principles of gender equality, sexual autonomy and human rights (Box 4.1).

BOX 4.1: NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION*

Following the first National Women's Congress in 2000, the OPE began preparing legislation on domestic violence in consultation with government and civil society stakeholders. A draft was provisionally approved by the Council of Ministers in 2005. Key features include:

- > A definition of domestic violence, which includes both direct and indirect physical, mental or sexual mistreatment that would keep women 'in a stereotypical role associated with gender' or that would 'deny their human dignity, sexual autonomy ... and moral integrity.'
- > Inclusion of relationships such as those 'analogous to marriage', extended family members, household servants and people living in the household.
- > Sentencing can involve alternative punishments to jail at the discretion of the court, and orders for maintenance can be attached.
- > A definition of support services for victims outlining the roles and responsibilities of government, traditional and community leaders, and police and civil society in providing assistance to survivors.
- > Education: the government is required to provide education on domestic violence (e.g., within school curricula).

The 2008 annual plan of SEPI includes budgeted activities for training with legal professionals and the police, and education for the public, once the law is passed.

*Sources: Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007, and Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality 2007.

4.2 Formal justice system

The police themselves say that '*domestic violence is a big part of police work*'. (Senior Commander, National Investigations Office of the National Police of East Timor [PNTL]) However, a 2005 study of police treatment of women found that police generally take action in domestic violence cases only if the victim is seriously injured and asks for her husband to be charged (Judicial System Monitoring Programme [JSMP] 2005).

Like the other countries of the region, the PNTL has set up special units for addressing violence against women. These units face serious human, financial and logistical constraints but have promoted a greater recognition among the police and the public of the seriousness of these offences and have made some progress in improving the police response.

Victim Protection Units (VPUs) were first established in 2000 with UN assistance, under the command of the National Investigations Office. A national VPU coordinates the work of the 13 district VPUs, which take complaints of violence against women and children, either directly or as referrals from regular police, and are responsible for conducting investigations for cases proceeding to prosecution.

The VPUs are located in district police stations. The majority face staffing and resource challenges. The Dili VPU is exceptional in that since early 2007, its five East Timorese staff (three women and one man) have been mentored by eight international policewomen with previous experience in violence against women, provided through the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Dili VPU has its own building, with attractive and child-friendly facilities, funded by donors. At least some of the international specialists would be better placed in the national VPU, where they could help further develop the framework, tools and training necessary for the district VPUs to better fulfil their mandate. As the UN scales down its peacekeeping operation in East Timor, however, it seems likely these specialists will be withdrawn.

Although there are many shortcomings in the present functioning of the police VPUs, all organisations consulted agreed this is an important initiative that should be strengthened and maintained.

The law can be a valuable tool in reshaping expectations of acceptable behaviour toward women, but only if offences against women are reliably and efficiently prosecuted. In East Timor, a great deal is known about women's experiences with the formal justice system for crimes of violence against them, through the excellent work of the JSMP and the Women's Justice Unit (WJU) (Box 4.3). Through their work, East Timor benefits from the most comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible information about women's access to justice of any of the countries in this study. Procedural delays and errors, however, remain rife, with few scheduled hearings taking place.

BOX 4.3: THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME AND THE WOMEN'S JUSTICE UNIT

The **JSMP** is an East Timorese NGO established in 2001 to support the development of the post-Independence judicial system. It is Dili-based, but undertakes training and case monitoring in other districts. It has a well-deserved reputation for producing high-quality reports, which have been used to stimulate and guide policy reform. Several of these exposed the poor record of the judicial system in handling offences against women, which led to the formation of the Women's Justice Unit, a special unit within the JSMP focusing on this issue.

The **WJU** of the JSMP was formed in 2004 to monitor the treatment of women within the formal justice system, particularly in cases of sexual assault and domestic violence. It has a staff of three East Timorese nationals and one international advisor. It continues the JSMP's tradition of producing well-researched reports. Many of the reports of the JSMP and its WJU are available in English on the JSMP website at www.jsmp.minihub.org.

The WJU also conducts advocacy and training to improve the justice sector's understanding and treatment of cases involving gender issues, in addition to conducting public education on gender violence and women's human rights in all 13 districts. It produces public information materials such as posters, brochures, and radio and television programs explaining how female victims can receive help from the law.

4.3 Traditional and community-based justice

Many women do not feel the traditional *adat* system of justice meets their needs because it is administered by men and upholds traditional gender roles and values that favour men, yet the great majority of East Timorese women have access only to this form of community-based justice. For this reason, the OPE and women's activist groups opted to try to make traditional systems more responsive by introducing legislation to make *suco* (local government) councils and chiefs more proactive in reducing domestic violence and assisting beaten wives (Box 4.4).

BOX 4.4: DECREE-LAW ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES' RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Decree-Law No. 5/2004, passed in April 2004, outlines the duties of *suco* local councils and chiefs. It is noteworthy in several ways:

- > Use of gender-inclusive language.
- > Inclusion of two women, plus a female representative for youth and elders, in every *suco* council.
- > Permission for women to be elected as *suco* or *aldeia* (village) chiefs.
- > Requirement that chiefs 'promote the creation of mechanisms for the prevention of domestic violence' and 'support initiatives regarding the follow-up and protection of domestic violence, and the rehabilitation and punishment of domestic violence perpetrators so as to suppress the occurrence of such cases within the community'.

An extensive program of training for *suco* councils and awareness for communities is underway and is planned to continue (Chapter 6, Box 6.3). Periodic monitoring and evaluation will assess the effectiveness of this approach to improving community-level justice for women.

4.4 Knowledge of laws and rights

'Women need more training on domestic violence as a crime. They think of it as a normal, acceptable event because it happens daily' (VPU policewoman, Liquiça District).

Numerous organisations are attempting to fill this need by raising awareness in various ways.

One of the best models assessed by the team involves working with individual survivors. The Victim Support Service (VSS) was established as a unit within the JSMP in 2005 and has four staff members (a coordinator and three lawyers, all women). It provides one-on-one legal support to women and children survivors of physical and sexual violence throughout each case that it takes on. It also tries to assist with material needs, such as transportation, accommodation and food, largely by networking with other NGOs.

While actively supporting survivors in accessing justice, the VSS also works to transform the justice system itself. Its achievements are: fewer domestic violence cases handed back to traditional authorities; longer sentences for offences against women and children; and faster hearing of cases.

In 2005, the VSS was selected by a Domestic Violence Scoping Mission on behalf of the Chief Minister of the National Trust of Australia (ACT) as the most strategic organisation to receive funding support from the ACT (Relationships Australia 2005). As of 2008, it will be funded as an independent NGO.

5 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

5.1 Core support

As elsewhere in the region, core support services for survivors are provided by NGOs. The Government's Department of Social Services (DSS) has four offices in the country but lacks sufficient resources and capacity to carry out its mandate of supporting individuals in crisis and providing child protection services. In Dili, the East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (FOKUPERS) has the most comprehensive services, including specialised counselling, legal advice, court accompaniment and shelter. The organisation is also active in four districts through its community-based gender based violence focal points.

PRADET (or Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor) is an NGO specialising in mental health counselling and psychosocial support. Its system of 'referral pathways' guides survivors of violence through accessing services. This system is being expanded to communities around the country, and in Dili, its centre is the 'safe space' run by PRADET at the government hospital (Box 5.2).

A number of other NGOs offer various kinds of support to survivors and referrals for particular services where needed. Good communication and coordination between the agencies is assisted by the work of the Gender-Based Violence Referral Partners Network described in Box 5.1.

BOX 5.1: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE REFERRAL PARTNERS NETWORK

Begun in 1999, the Network's current non government members are the FOKUPERS, PRADET, JSMP VSS, Oxfam Australia, the Alola Foundation, Rede Feto, and the Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV). Government is represented by the national VPU and the DSS. Multilateral donors are the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The Network has two approaches to improving collaboration and coordination of support services:

- > A working group, which meets regularly to develop a shared approach to case management, with standardised protocols for data collection, training and materials.
- > The Referral Pathways Group, a sub-group of the Network, meets weekly to discuss difficult cases and to assist each other logistically, in contacting outlying areas, finding transportation for witnesses or safe accommodations for women and children being victimised at home. The Network has also played a key role in keeping track of the movements of suspected traffickers exploiting women and children in the IDP camps. Members (several of whom are men) attend consistently, and value highly the moral and practical support they receive.

5.2 Safe havens

FOKUPERS runs a safe house in Dili offering accommodation (both emergency and longer-term), counselling and referrals for women and child victims of abuse. It also supports groups doing similar work in several other districts. A problem affecting most shelters is the risk of being overwhelmed by people displaced by the conflicts, which is holding back the expansion of shelters to all parts of the country. In some places, sympathetic individuals, such as the wives of district administrators, arrange temporary shelter (JSMP 2005).

5.3 Health services

PRADET runs a facility at Dili Hospital where survivors can receive medical treatment and other forms of assistance in a safe environment. The 'safe-space' or 'one-stop shop' approach to providing sensitive and coordinated care is being promoted in many countries. PRADET's project is a good example of its kind (Box 5.2).

PRADET's work on creating a formal medico-legal protocol for violence against women also deserves mention. It has developed and is piloting a standard pro forma in East Timor's three languages to facilitate the collection during medical examination of evidence for use in legal prosecutions. This is standard recommended practice, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has published a manual outlining procedural guidelines (WHO 2002). PRADET's approach is unique in that it combines evidence collection for domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse in one pro forma. This makes for a lengthy and expensive document, and it remains to be seen whether this method will prove to be practical.

BOX 5.2: PRADET'S SAFE ROOM PROJECT (FATIN HAKMATEK)

In 2002, PRADET established a safe space in a room in Dili Hospital to provide treatment for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. In 2006, it transferred to a purpose-built facility on the hospital grounds, where it operates on the one-stop shop model, offering medical treatment, counselling, legal advice, some practical assistance with food and transportation, overnight accommodation and referrals to other resources. Key features include:

- > A well-designed facility with strong security and a separate entrance to an interview room so police can take victims' statements without entering the main building.
- > A homely environment with space for staff and volunteers to work, relax and cook, with private interview rooms and confidential recordkeeping.
- > Trained female staff who receive regular support since the outset of the project from one consistent international mentor and others as required.
- > Open seven days a week, with after-hours service.
- > Good connections with other agencies working on violence against women and ongoing support groups for survivors of different kinds of violence.
- > Training opportunities for doctors and other health workers.

The space is much-needed: in the first eight months of 2007, *Fatin Hakmatek* assisted 144 clients, including survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, child sexual abuse, abandonment and attempted suicide.

6 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

A range of approaches to prevention is being used in East Timor. Arguably, East Timor's prevention efforts are the best developed of all the countries included in this study. However, there is still much to do to strengthen the prevention response to violence against women. The goal for East Timor should be to build on the good practices already evident in the country.

6.1 Awareness raising

A range of awareness-raising campaigns have been held in East Timor (especially around the global 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women) and the printed materials have been distributed to the general public. In addition, various groups have been involved in raising awareness for men, women, youth and leaders; making the prevention of domestic violence a legal duty for local authorities; and linking awareness work to other activities.

SEPI and women's NGOs have done a great deal of awareness-raising around the country, particularly on domestic violence. As the team's male interpreter said: *'Previously, we never heard about domestic violence. Now we hear about it all the time'*. Further efforts are needed to target policy- and decision-makers. *'Everyone in communities now knows what domestic violence is because we have done a lot of*

communication around the country. But some people at the highest levels don't! They need awareness at their level!' (Idelta Rodriques, Secretary of State, OPE/SEPI)

FOKUPERS' program of community action assists women's groups to set up projects and supports local strategies on domestic violence, such as accompanying survivors through the court process or acting as advisors to *suco* chiefs when hearing cases of offences against women.

6.2 Women's empowerment

Because women's status is low in East Timor, maintaining and increasing their participation in political leadership positions and economic and social status at all levels must be a priority. This means strengthening women's participation and leadership in community development and economic programs, as well as increasing women's representation in national-level leadership positions, including in Parliament.

6.3 Political participation

There is recent evidence demonstrating that having more women in government has a positive impact on the provision of public goods to communities.³ The team is not aware of similarly rigorous research on the impact of women leaders on violence against women. However, intuitively the team would expect more women leaders (in national parliaments, local governments, senior public and private sector positions) to have a positive impact on efforts to reduce violence against women. Compared with the Melanesian countries in this study, East Timor is well placed given the significantly greater participation of women at all levels of politics.

East Timor has strongly promoted the political empowerment of women as a means of preventing violence against women. Remarkable progress has been made in increasing women's participation in public decision-making and leadership. During the 2001 national elections, for example, affirmative action measures resulted in a national Parliament with 26 per cent female membership. This proportion has been maintained in subsequent elections. The Independent Electoral Commission, which oversees and monitors the three levels of elections, has 25 per cent female membership. Women are increasingly represented in high positions in Government (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007). Box 6.1 describes an innovative grassroots approach to empowering women that has beneficial effects on violence against women.

³ Beaman, L Duflo, E Pande, R & Topalova, P 'Women Politicians, Gender Bias and Policymaking in Rural India' (UNICEF, December 2006), p. 4.

BOX 6.1: PARTICIPATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The Participation and Enhancement of Rural Women's Leadership (PERL) program was not designed primarily as an intervention to reduce violence against women, but it has had positive results in addressing violence against women. PERL targets elections for *suco* councils and chiefs, which in 2004 were given both the power and the duty of protecting women from domestic violence (Box 4.4).

In preparing for the first *suco* elections in 2004, UNIFEM (cost-sharing with the UNDP and the European Commission) began a large-scale program of 'transformative leadership training' for potential female candidates. Roughly half of all female candidates (1265 out of 2596) received training and 29 per cent elected. Seven of these were elected as *suco* chiefs and 22 as *aldeia* chiefs.

The long-term impact on these successful candidates and their family lives, as well as their participation in council decision-making, was evaluated in 11 districts at the end of 2006. Examples of the findings include:

- > Increased confidence and ability to speak up, both in the family and in the council.
- > Less conflict and violence in the family, attributed to their husbands paying them more respect. *'Men are happy when their wives are elected. It's a privilege for the family.'*
- > Some husbands more willing to share money and domestic chores with wives, thereby reducing domestic disputes and violence.
- > Some elected women able to raise the issue of domestic violence with their councils, as well as other women's issues, such as family planning, sanitation, children's vaccinations, school facilities and women's sports.

In 2007, UNIFEM and other donors introduced the five-year Integrated Program for Women in Politics and Decision-Making to build on gains made, with a component aimed at promoting women's effective engagement in local conflict prevention and peace-building.

Source: Program documents and evaluation, interviews with UNIFEM staff.

6.4 Economic empowerment

In the longer run, economic empowerment of women will strengthen violence prevention efforts in East Timor Islands (as well as having many other positive development outcomes). Economic development programs in East Timor, particularly those targeting women, need to incorporate education around violence against women and gender relations. If not carefully addressed, programs increasing a woman's access to economic resources can put her at risk of increased violence. This is particularly true in settings where a woman's status is low, because increasing her income can lead to greater conflict within the family (Koenig, Hossain et al. 1999). On the other hand, if such issues are addressed within the community and among women leaders, these programs can significantly contribute to reducing violence against women.

Community-mobilisation activities and micro-finance programs in East Timor that involve education about rights and violence against women are likely to significantly reduce the levels of violence against women as well as improving repayment rates in

micro-finance activities.⁴ There is a strong base of activities from which to take this agenda forward in East Timor, including through the work of Alola and Oxfam, who use economic or community development opportunities as entry points for raising awareness about violence against women (Box 6.2).

BOX 6.2: COMMUNITY-BASED INCOME GENERATION AND AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Alola Foundation was established in 2001 in response to the horrific abduction and gang rape by militia of Alola, a 14-year-old girl. The organisation offers three-day village-based workshops, which begin with interactive methods for stimulating discussion of the main forms of violence and discrimination experienced by women in their daily lives. Women are then assisted in identifying small and manageable steps they can take in their own lives to reduce violence and discrimination against women and themselves.

The Foundation has teamed with Oxfam to enable rural women's groups (most of whose membership is younger than 30) to set up income-generating cooperatives at the culmination of the workshops. These help reduce women's economic dependence on men. Continuing training and support to the cooperatives, including marketing opportunities, are also provided.

6.5 Engaging men

The international evidence is clear: changing men's attitudes and behaviours to reduce violence against women is crucial. East Timor is the only country visited that has an active organisation of men who have become social activists after analysing their own personal practices (Box 6.3). These activists are well-suited to encourage greater and broader participation by men in the struggle to end violence against women and promote gender equality.

BOX 6.3: ASSOCIATION OF MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE

The Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV) is an East Timorese men's NGO that has maintained a high level of volunteer activism despite only sporadic, project-specific funding (from Oxfam, Caritas Australia, and UNFPA). It is a stellar example of 'south-to-south' capacity-building, having been formed following the trainings conducted in Dili in 2002 by the well-known Nicaraguan organisation, *Fundación Puntos de Encuentro*. It has 15 focal points in seven districts (with six in Dili) and a fluctuating number of other volunteers.

Wherever possible, AMKV begins engaging the community by helping groups of community men organise around their own priorities, which usually involve income generation (e.g., money earned from community gardens, doing carpentry work, or selling snacks). Discussion of violence against women and gender equality arises naturally during these activities.

AMKV is also noted for innovative 'guerrilla tactics'—creating mini-awareness moments whenever opportunities arise, during which members initiate loud conversation about gender equality (e.g., while riding on a bus or attending a cockfight). They have also been funded to conduct their own workshops with returned refugees, with groups of self-admitted violent men, with men in IDP camps, with community groups and leaders of both sexes, and with students. AMKV runs sessions on 'internal reflection and peer mentoring' for members, to assist them maintain standards of personal behaviour that reflect the organisation's goals.

⁴ For example, see: Pronyk, PM & Hargreaves JR, et al. 2006, 'Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster randomised trial', *Lancet* 368(9551): 1973–83; Kim, JC & Watts, CH et al. 2007, 'Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in South Africa', *American Journal of Public Health* 97(10): 1794–802.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

Both the Government and civil society in East Timor are to be congratulated for firmly grasping the opportunities offered by post-conflict reconstruction and nation-building to tackle violence against women. UN missions and donor agencies have also played influential roles, supporting the Government's capacity to address gender equality issues, including violence, through the OPE/SEPI. This strategy has paid off. Of all the countries in this study, East Timor's Government has taken by far the strongest lead on violence against women. Strong government leadership has allowed SEPI and civil society actors to attract additional external funding. This funding has often been used to support well-designed programs that use multipronged approaches, address the strategic needs for gender transformation, and respond to the practical needs for service provision and institutional change.

East Timor has demonstrated promising practices in virtually every aspect of the theme areas profiled in earlier chapters. East Timor has a short history as an independent nation, so most of the interventions described in this report are recent. Remarkable progress has been made in a short time, and it will be crucial for East Timor to consolidate gains made and extend them into the rural hinterland. There are no grounds for complacency, and decades of work remains to be done. East Timor should be mindful of what has happened in Papua New Guinea (PNG) which established a national program of action on domestic violence in 1985 and then, after five years of intense work, did not sustain the program's financial, technical and political support. In the end, gains made quickly vanished. Hopefully, East Timor will learn from this experience and continue to go from strength to strength.

The recommendations outlined in the regional report on priorities for supporting anti-violence against women initiatives are all relevant for East Timor. In addition, the team suggests a number of priorities for support within East Timor (described below).

Australia is well positioned to play a supporting role in this endeavour by systematically integrating into all its programming, strategies to reduce violence against women through human rights and gender sensitive approaches.

7.2 Specific recommendations for East Timor

Support implementation of the new domestic violence legislation, which should be passed by Parliament shortly. The effectiveness of the legislation is contingent on its sound implementation. OPE/SEPI's access to international expertise, positions the office well to lead the implementation effort.

Provide technical and financial support to the VPUs at the national level by creating standard procedures and protocols for continued training and mentoring of police officers throughout East Timor, and also at the district level by providing logistical support to all units and upgrading district-level police facilities generally.

Investigate opportunities for developing local systems of temporary shelter for women as part of the response to domestic violence required from *suco* councils under Decree-Law No. 5/2004.

Promote the economic empowerment of women as a long-term prevention strategy. This could be achieved by expanding community-level awareness and skills-building for women, such as the Alola/Oxfam workshops. *‘We have the ideas, we have the people, but we just don’t have the strength or the resources to implement what we want. There are a whole lot of groups that wanted to participate in these workshops, but we could only bring in three. Our resources don’t allow us to reach the other groups’* (Oxfam staff member).

Strengthen the AMKV. This innovative organisation should be encouraged to consolidate and expand in more areas of the country. Providing core funding for the AMKV would enhance its stability and credibility and make it more effective. The group is doing groundbreaking work in the region, and its leaders and members should be given opportunities to participate in the global movement of men against violence against women through visits to other countries and attendance at conferences.

7.3 Specific recommendations for Australia

Be explicit and proactive in supporting gender equality and human rights in policy dialogue, encouraging, motivating and assisting the Government of East Timor to deepen its commitment to address violence against women.

Incorporate a human rights and gender perspective into all Australian-funded activities. This will reinforce Australia’s efforts to maintain a high-level policy dialogue about the problem of violence against women in East Timor. All program designs should include relevant gender analysis to identify opportunities to address violence against women. The access issues faced by rural and vulnerable women should be considered in all service delivery and law and justice programs.

Encourage better coordination of development assistance to reduce violence against women. A large number of donors are already providing assistance to the Government of East Timor and local groups to address violence against women. However, some efforts overlap and, therefore, may not be achieving maximum impact. Improved donor coordination on gender equality issues generally, and violence against women specifically, would help identify further opportunities to strengthen the national response to violence against women. Australia should take a leadership role in improving donor coordination.

Increase support for women's empowerment, particularly economic empowerment, subject to efforts to minimize violence backlash by incorporating education around violence against women and gender relations in all empowerment interventions. AusAID's community development program provides a key opportunity to pursue this agenda.

ANNEX 1: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED⁵

Organisation

OPE/SEPI

PNTL National Investigations Office

Police VPU, Liquiça

Police VPU national headquarters

Police VPU, Dili

IDP camp, Dili (camp organisers)

JSMP

GBV Referral Partners Network

(Members from UNICEF, IOM, JSMP, UNIFEM,
Oxfam, PRADET, FOKUPERS, national VPU, lawyers)

PRADET

Oxfam Australia

Alola Foundation

Participants of a joint Oxfam/Alola workshop on violence
against women, gender, and financial management in Liquiça
(involving 30 participants)

AMKV

Caritas Australia

UNFPA

UNIFEM

UN Human Rights Monitoring Unit

Asia-Pacific Support Collective

Irish Aid

AusAID

Australian Federal Police

⁵ To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

