

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN JIWAKA PROVINCE, PNG

AN ANALYSIS OF THE VOICE FOR CHANGE
COMMUNITY SURVEY

REPORT SUMMARY
DECEMBER 2015

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is endemic in Jiwaka province, Papua New Guinea (PNG). Women experience multiple forms of violence both within their homes and in public spaces; and there are limited avenues for accessing the justice sector to seek legal redress and protection.

Voice for Change's community survey on VAWG is the first of its kind in Jiwaka Province. Over a thousand women and men from twelve communities participated in community consultations which utilised images of thirty forms of violence as a basis for discussion. This survey provides a wealth of information on forms and severity of violence experienced by women and girls in Jiwaka Province, barriers to accessing justice and community attitudes towards VAWG.

This summary provides an overview of the community survey methodology, key findings and recommendations to inform the efforts of the government of Jiwaka Province, donors and development agencies to address violence against women and girls.

METHODOLOGY

The community survey was conducted during August-September 2013 at twelve sites in Jiwaka Province by a Community Survey team made up of Voice for Change staff and members of the Jiwaka Human Rights Defenders Network in collaboration with Minj District Police.

Voice for Change saw the survey process as an opportunity to contribute to changes in community's attitudes in relation to VAWG through participatory methodology which utilised community consultations and smaller focus group discussions to enable collective discussion and reflection. To facilitate safe spaces for discussion, each community was divided into four separate groups: mature women; mature men; young women and young men. Men made up 52.5% and women made up 47.5% of survey participants and there were also roughly even numbers of mature (48%) and young (52%) participants. 71 case studies were also collected as part of the survey process.

The decision was made to use images of forms of VAWG rather than verbal descriptions of violence to better ensure that the participants had a shared understanding of the forms of VAWG being discussed and to ground the discussions in the actual experiences of women and girls.

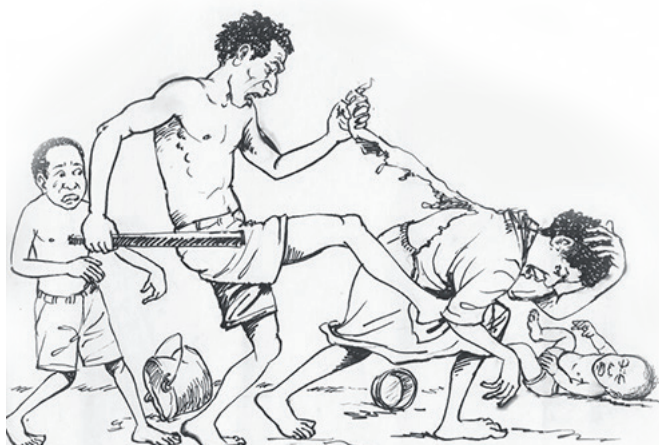
KEY FINDINGS

Frequency and severity of forms of violence against women

"Since marriage, life was never the same. ... her husband doesn't do any single thing. She works and works and says that old age is catching up too fast because of all the hard work. She does all the males chores as well. All her husband does is sleep all day and gambles in the night (cards)."

- All community groups surveyed agreed that VAWG was taking place in their communities.
- The most common forms of violence identified by participants were wife beating (32%), gang rape/rape (24%), and violence against women accused of sorcery (14%).
- The forms of VAWG considered the most serious in Jiwaka Province by participants were women's daily burden of work (described by survey participants as 'slavery') (18%), neglect associated with polygamy (11%), drunken men destroying women's market stalls and stealing money (10%), husbands taking their wife's money (9%), and wife beating (8%).
- Significantly, male participants were more likely to identify violence in public spaces such as drunken men destroying market stalls, drunken men disturbing women in public spaces and gang rape/rape as the most severe forms of violence.
- In contrast, women identified forms of violence in their day-to-day lives within the household, such as being overburdened with work, neglect as a result of polygamy and husbands taking their wife's money, as most severe.

Images used in the community Voice for Change survey, illustrated by Albert Ipu. Wife beating (left) and women overburdened with work/slavery (right).



Access to justice

“When the victims come back to the village, compensation is exchanged between the two parties to solve the matter. Because of the lack of police force, compensation is slowly eroding the proper justice system and so criminal cases are being handled in the village.”

- The justice system is failing to respond to the needs of women and girls in Jiwaka Province.
- The costs associated with the formal justice system make access prohibitive for most women. Complainants must pay for the summons, court fees and transport and food costs for themselves and witnesses.
- Mediation within the family/community or the payment of compensation was identified by participants as the primary existing mechanism for addressing VAWG. This practice represents a double violation of women’s rights and allows perpetrators to act with impunity.
- Within the formal justice system, survey participants reported that women encountered bias in the deliberations and processes of the village court system and within the police, including bribery in favour of male perpetrators.

Community attitudes towards violence against women:

“He will ask me for money when he has not money and beats me up very badly to get money. One day he came over to me and asked for money but I said I had not money he got up and beat me very badly. Nearly he killed me... All the people saw it and they ran away.”

- VAWG is seen as a normal part of life in Jiwaka Province, particularly over-work, abandonment, neglect and financial exploitation. The subordinate status of women in the society is compounded by the payment of bride price and widespread cases of polygamy.
- Women in Jiwaka live in constant fear of violence and this is impacting on women’s ability to move freely, undertake economic activities, access education and participate in community life.
- Violence results in increased poverty for women in the community and is also impacting on the welfare and education of their children.
- Men frequently profit from violence in the form of financial exploitation of their wives, compensation payments to male family members and bride price payments.
- Participants expressed a strong desire for change in their communities within relationships, community attitudes, behaviours and practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Jiwaka Province, community and development agencies/ donors should consider the following recommendations:

Address violence against women and girls as a priority:

- Introduce a Jiwaka Provincial working group to address issues of VAWG, which would be made up of representatives from Government, Police, NGOs, health services and other relevant stakeholders. Develop and implement VAWG Provincial Strategy and Action Plan to improve the situation.
- Support and resource organisations and networks working in the community to provide support to women and girls

survivors of violence and to change attitudes in relation to VAWG.

- Improve the access, affordability and quality of support services for women and girl survivors of violence, including establishing and resourcing safe houses, free access to healthcare and legal support services.
- Make information available about support pathways in cases of violence against women and girls by clearly displaying Police and other services/organisations’ contact numbers in public places, such as markets.
- Prioritise approaches that increase participation of women in community decision-making and village courts, as well as in development activities at provincial level.

Improve the access to justice to meet the needs of women and girls:

- Prioritise rule of law and justice for women and girls in cases of VAWG.
- Introduce specific training aimed at police staff and members of village courts to change attitudes towards VAWG and improve responses to women’s needs.
- Resource the Minj and Banz police stations’ rapid response teams and evaluate their work as a model to be potentially introduced in other areas.
- The Police should actively collaborate with and refer women to support services such as Voice for Change and other organisations working on VAWG.
- Introduce laws in relation to polygamy, allegations of sorcery and the sale of liquor as measures to address contributing factors to VAWG.

Adopt strategies to change community attitudes towards violence against women:

- Support a public awareness campaign to educate the community on VAWG, gender equality, women’s legal rights and support available.
- This campaign should make clear that the practice of informal mediation and the payment of compensation is illegal; recognise bride price as a harmful practice; promote respectful relationships within the household; and encourage men’s participation in household and caring work.
- Recognise that unequal ‘slave-like’ unpaid care and domestic work is a form of violence which is having a severe impact on women and girls in Jiwaka province and must inform responses to VAWG.
- Develop strategies to work with ward councillors, members of the District Development Authorities, Church authorities, Village Assemblies and companies as powerful advocates for change in Jiwaka province.
- Organise safe spaces for women and men, including young people, to discuss VAWG and the impact on women and girls.
- Prevention efforts should target the community and individual levels, including men/young men. The Jiwaka Human Rights Defenders Network and the use of community pledges could be considered as good practice models.



JIWAKA
POLICE

