

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Family and community violence prevention and response study in Papua New Guinea

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INTRODUCTION

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the largest Pacific nation with a population of around 8 million people where 40% of its citizens live in poverty. It is a heterogeneous country, with 800 ethnic groups and 800 indigenous languages. PNG has made limited progress on human development in the last decade, with women faring worse than men in every metric, from health, education and employment to positions of leadership in society.

Violence against women and children is endemic throughout PNG. While no national data exists, it is estimated that around 70 percent of women experience violence in their lifetime¹—and this is thought to be higher in the Highlands of PNG. The country's 2015 Lukautim Pikinini (Child Welfare) Policy cites statistics claiming that around 75 percent of children experience physical abuse during their lifetime.

The endemic rates of violence expose community members to multiple, ongoing and severe trauma. This trauma has the greatest impact on children. Research shows that exposure to family violence in childhood is strongly linked to poorer mental and physical health outcomes, anti-social behaviours and an increased risk of experiencing and perpetrating violence as adults, and thus creating a trans generational cycle of trauma.

New approaches are required that recognise the key drivers of intergenerational violence and the role of individuals and the community in long term prevention, the trauma informed prevention approach is such an approach being piloted.

TRAUMA INFORMED PREVENTION: INTERVENTION SUMMARY

The Trauma Informed Prevention (TIP) initiative is a new innovative approach to violence prevention in the Pacific that unites the community to address their collective trauma and stop the cycle of violence. It is critical for all members of the community to work through their experiences of violence and trauma in a safe space, before they are asked take responsibility for their own behaviour.

The TIP initiative will be delivered through four Peer Support Circles in each community: 1) Women's Peer Support Circle, 2) Young Women's Peer Support Circle, 3) Men's Peer Support Circle, and 4) Young Men's Peer Support Circle. Peer Support Circles create a safe space for members to heal from their pasts, learn and practice new skills, and create new pathways for their futures. The Circles will be segregated by age and gender to increase the likelihood that members will feel comfortable, enabling them to share

and reflect on life experiences together. TIP is a three-year program delivered in three phases: Me, My relationships, and My community, with each phase taking roughly one year to complete. It is expected that the implementation of phase one of the project will be completed by June 2019.

PROJECT AIM

The research is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of phase one of the trauma informed prevention initiative while also identifying the strengths and the weaknesses of the approach to inform the design of phase two and three of the intervention. The research will also identify best practices in formal and informal community response mechanisms to child abuse.

THE EVALUATION

The research process includes a literature review and semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with randomly selected participants, non-participating community members, key stakeholders and local leaders. The work builds upon Oxfam's extensive experience in combating GBV in PNG and globally, the IMR's research expertise, the Family Sexual Violence Action committee's policy expertise, consultancy expertise on the TIP approach and the relationships and experience of local partners in the target communities. Our approach combines local operational knowledge and risk management, a proven track record of managing sensitive research to the highest ethical standards and a pathway to convert learning into national policy and practice. This is a two-year project that will run from June 2019 till May 2021.

PROJECT VALUE ADD

The project will **contribute to improved responses and prevention of GBV in PNG** through evaluating the effectiveness of the TIP approach and identification of best practices in formal and informal community response mechanisms to child abuse. The project will focus on Phase I of the TIP approach, support design of following phases and **inform the development of national guidelines for the management of child abuse cases in PNG**. The project will also **strengthen the capacity of the Family Sexual Violence Action Committee and partner organisations and Oxfam** to promote best practices in implementing of GBV prevention approach including methodologies and tools for ongoing data collection and analysis.

1. Human Rights Watch. 2015. World Report 2015: Papua New Guinea. Available from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/papua-new-guinea>

