

Gender Base Violence: An analysis on PNG, Vanuatu and Solomon Island.

Abstract

Gender Base Violence rates in Melanesia especially PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu are among some of the highest in the region. A desktop research with all information gathered online. This analysis paper explored the GBV high rates in PNG, Vanuatu and Solomon Island, the triggers of gender base violence and the misconception of culture that is always associated with GBV in these three Melanesian States. The Women's role and contribution to national decision making and nation building, the legal systems, laws and policies on GBV and its failure to protect women in PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu. It also analysed the churches role in society and how churches can help in contributing to GBV advocacy and prevention measures long term.

Methodology:

This research was exclusively done online; information was gathered from different international and local reports, research papers, surveys/studies, government websites and international and local non-governmental organisation websites published work on Gender Base Violence and development.

Aim: The aim of the research is to gather information on latest statistics, analyse the impact of gender base violence on each country's development and the response of the churches to the issue of gender base violence and its role in addressing gender base violence in the society.

Tool: Analysis

Introduction

The number of women and children subjected to violence around the world is astonishing. According to the World Bank statistics on Violence against women and girls, 38% of the murders of women are committed by an intimate partner, 35% of women worldwide have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence from either an intimate partner or non-partner and 7% of women globally have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner. Moreover, 200 million have experienced genital mutilation or cutting¹.

In 2015, Amnesty International New Zealand report on sexual and gender-based violence in the Pacific stated that the Pacific Island region is one of the worst places to be a woman. It is estimated that 70% of women and girls in the Pacific have experienced rape or other sexual violence in their lifetime. Some of these cases have gone unreported due to the culture of shame and victim blaming by society². Out of the 3 Pacific sub regions of Micronesia, Polynesia and Melanesia, the Melanesian region has recorded the highest number of victims of gender based violence this is also partly due to the demography of this region. According to many sources the Melanesian regions of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island and Vanuatu are among some of the places where violence against women is common and is sometimes accepted as a social or cultural norm by society. This paper seeks to identify the issues pertaining to the high rates of violence, the misconception of culture and violence in PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu and the role of the church and advocacy on Gender Base Violence in the three countries.

Statistics

Statistics collected in PNG, Vanuatu and Solomon Island are limited and does not represent the real statistics of a particular country as a whole. For example, statistics collected in one particular PNG town in a province of the highlands region cannot represent the province, region and even the country. It is very challenging to collect statistics in the Melanesian region, due to many factors such as population, diversity of people, cultures, and remoteness of islands, mountains, valleys, and vast unreached majority of people in rural areas. The complexity and nature of Gender Base Violence itself, lack of good partnership with

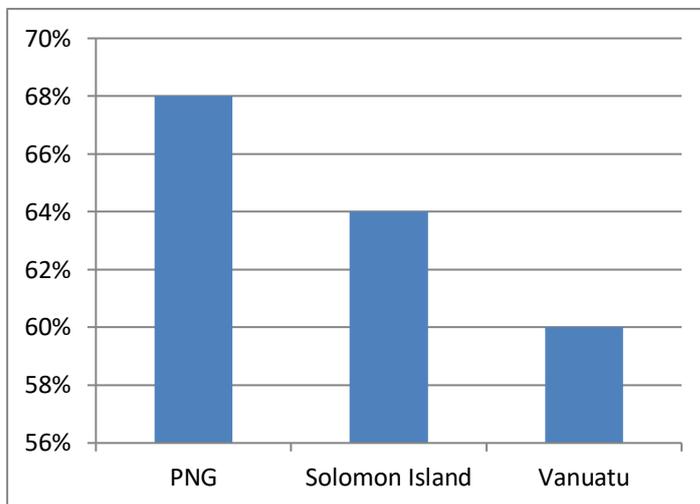
¹ The World Bank (April 4, 2018), '*Violence Against Women and Girls*'. Retrieved:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

² Amnesty International: Asia and the Pacific (7th April 2015), '*Sexual and gender-based violence in the Pacific*'. Retrieved: <https://www.amnesty.org.nz/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-pacific>

stakeholders, cultural factors such as Patriarchy, victim blaming and embarrassment/shame have prevented victims from reporting incidents.

Figure 1: Lifetime Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence



Graph source: UN Women: Global Database on Violence against women, Country Profile, 2018

Figure 1: The graph above shows the percentage of lifetime physical and/or sexual intimate Partner Violence in PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu. All three countries are in the 60% mark with Vanuatu just sitting at 60% and PNG at 68% close to 70%.

When comparing data from 5 years back, it is not surprising to see that the statistics have not changed. Statistics for Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Island have been stagnant for the last decade or so. For Vanuatu in 2014 gender base violence was recorded at 60%, since than Gender Base Violence statistics is still at 60% the latest Survey in Vanuatu by the Vanuatu Women’s Centre in Partnership with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office was carried out in May 2011. This survey found that 60% who have ever been in a relationship have experienced either physical or sexual violence or both by a husband or intimate partner³. Going a year back, a literature review by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in 2010 revealed that Vanuatu had no systematic studies of domestic violence in the country before date. In the Solomon Islands the latest survey was carried out in 2009 since than there are no updated surveys or research on Gender Base Violence in the Solomon Islands. In PNG there were no national statistics on Domestic violence, however the Minister

³ Vanuatu Women’s Centre & Vanuatu Statistics Office (May 2011), *Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships*. Graph Pg 56 . Retrieved: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304742327>

for Health in 2013 reported that 68% of PNG women experience violence⁴. After 5 years the statistics is still reported to be 68%, moreover when reviewing different reports the statistics are recorded at 67% or 70%, for some reports it is said to be 60%-70%, others say its 60% in an area and 100% in another depending on each area. The latest Surveys on PNG were only carried out in four places but limited to a specific town or city and in different years.

A Quantitative Finding from the United Nations Multi Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific 2013, surveyed different countries and areas on men as perpetrators and men's mental health. Bougainville was one of the areas that were chosen for this survey, the survey on Bougainville revealed that 68% of women reported either one or both Physical /Sexual Violence by an intimate partner. In 2014 to 2015 the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) surveyed 3,000 patients whom they have treated in regards to family and sexual violence in both the city of Port Moresby and the small rural town of Tari in the highlands region of PNG. In this survey 96% of patients were sexual violence survivors. The family violence in Port Moresby was recorded at 56% and in Tari it was 81%. From July 2014 – July 2016 FemiliPNG Inc. a family and sexual violence case management centre in Lae surveyed 937 of its clients and 168 dependents/children. From the survey 93% of their clients experience intimate partner violence and 60% of the children suffered from violence for which the perpetrator was a family member.

The limitations to data collection in the region have seen similar statistics in almost all reports since 2008. Surveys and research on these countries lapse 6-10 years deeming it as out dated. And for Papua New Guinea the statistics of the 1990s unfortunately have not changed⁵.

Therefore gathering real statistics through systematic research and data collection in these areas still remains an important need.

⁴ Blackwell (2nd April 2013), *PNG govt backs domestic violence law*. Retrieved: <https://www.news.com.au/world/breaking-news/png-govt-backs-domestic-violence-law/news-story/15304d1fd6228084fba571a1409fd47e>

⁵ Kwa E (2016), *Human Rights & Family Violence in PNG*, Lecture Notes for Australian Law Reform Agencies Conferences 2016. Retrieved: <https://www.lawreform.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Eric%20Kwa%20ALRAC.pdf>

Culture and Gender Base Violence

Based on the current Gender Base Violence Statistics in all three countries, culture and women's rights have become the focus of studies surrounding the high rates of violence and its impact on development⁶. Referred to as an epidemic in PNG and a serious concern in Solomon Island and Vanuatu, a great number of reports tend to focus more on the culture as the cause of the high rates and overlook other possibilities of GBV triggers.

In the Melanesian region there is limited understanding to what the real causes or triggers of gender base violence are. Generally the three most common triggers of GBV worldwide are; the accusations of infidelity (ongoing conflict), substance abuse (drug and alcohol) leading to mental health issues and the transgenerational impact of violence. The discourse of GBV focussing on culture has become a norm when dealing with GBV in the Pacific, supporting the misconception that most Pacific cultural practices lead to GBV. Even to say that culture is not one of the triggers of GBV would be misleading but as societies changes how have these cultures evolve? The socioeconomic change in society and what is termed "culture" today is important in distinguishing the traditional and modern forms of culture and its contribution to the GBV rates in the Pacific.

In the article what's culture got to do with it? Causes of intimate Partner Violence, Anouk Ride the author talks about how culture has become cliché in the study of Violence in Solomon Island and stated that apparently culture as said to be the cause of GBV in the Solomon Island is simply due to the way society perceived GBV, however the triggers of GBV in Solomon Island is the same as anywhere else in the world and the three main triggers identified where; alcohol related incidents, suspicion of infidelity or transgenerational transmission of violence⁷.

In her comment to Anouk Ride's article Judy Atkinson a specialist in the study of Violence and Trauma made a remark on what many research and reports overlook when researching or reporting on GBV, she stated that the high rates of violence in the Pacific is always blamed on culture as its cause, however there is little comparative analysis in understanding what truly maybe the underlying issue that is contributing to these high rates. According to Judy Atkinson reviewing a country's history and "the changing face of culture through

⁶ Ride A (April 13, 2016) *What's Culture got to do with it? Causes of Intimate Partner Violence*. Retrieved: <http://www.devpolicy.org/whats-culture-got-causes-intimate-partner-violence-20160413/>

⁷ Atkinson, J (13 April 2016). *What culture got to do with it? Causes of intimate Partner Violence*, Retrieved: <http://www.devpolicy.org/whats-culture-got-causes-intimate-partner-violence-20160413/>

colonisation and its contribution to violence within societies, colonial interface of violence on Indigenous women, the legitimisation of violence in its various forms on Indigenous women by the colonial masters, the transgenerational layers of violence on Indigenous people, in the war zone experiences and the intrusion into gender relationships”⁸ should also be identified and taken into consideration when researching GBV.

Looking back in history PNG, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have all been involved in some form of wars in the past and also recently. The significant war of the past was World War II. WWII was fought mainly in PNG and Solomon Island, Vanuatu was later involved in the war when American soldiers took over the island to prevent the Japanese from gaining grounds in the Pacific. Other recent wars were the 10 year civil war in PNG on Bougainville and in Solomon Island the 5 year civil conflict “Tensions” of 1998 – 2003. Vanuatu also had its share of Ethnic violence in 2007, where the country declared a State of Emergency after a tribal clash broke out regarding claims of sorcery⁹.

A research titled Women Remember the War, looked at the stories of women and their experiences during WWII. In the research there were stories of not just women directly involved in the war but transgenerational stories of women involved in the war told by children, grandchildren, or accounts of men telling stories of other women during the war. This research revealed the untold side of the war and women’s experiences during the war. Many stories of women were of confusion as they watched planes and bombs being dropped on their villages, stories of gang rape and brutal sexual violences by foreign soldiers and how that has affected them in the later part of their lives. It also shed light on the women’s contributions during the war. Doing laundry for solders or making roof thatching from sago leaves to put on the resettlement camps. The research reminded us of how domestic the war was, how it affected families, disrupt cultures, social norms and the legacies it left behind on these people¹⁰.

Similar stories are also told in the modern civil wars, tribal and ethnic tensions in PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu. Studies of violence against women and children viewed the

⁸ Atkinson, J (13 April 2016). *Re: What culture got to do with it? Causes of intimate Partner Violence*, [Blog Comment]. Retrieved: <http://www.devpolicy.org/whats-culture-got-causes-intimate-partner-violence-20160413/#comment-531848>

⁹ Mercer p (7th March, 2007), *Ethnic violence flares in Vanuatu*, BBC News Online. Retrieved: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6426877.stm>

¹⁰ Stead V (3 November 2017), *PNG’s women war time memories cast new light on Kokoda and the Pacific*, The Conversation: Academic Rigour journalist flair. Retrieved: <https://theconversation.com/png-womens-wartime-memories-cast-new-light-on-kokoda-and-the-pacific-war-85667>

increase in GBV levels as a legacy of these recent conflicts¹¹ Violence against women in PNG is also encouraging the spread of HIV/AIDs¹²and also led to a tremendous rise in sorcery related violence, which is usually directed at women accused of being witches commonly in the Highlands.

The aftermath of wars have seen, survivors continuing to experience physical and psychological scars, trauma, social stigma, the guilt and embarrassment, some survivors also become violent, this violence can become prevalent within neighbours or family and when it is deep-rooted in society it becomes a normal part of social life¹³.

Moreover, when examining the relationship between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific, it is found that the survivors of violence are likely to become perpetrators of violence¹⁴. Children who were survivors of violence or who grew up witnessing violence in their homes grow up to become violent themselves. This underpins the WHO Study that men who have experienced or were abused as a child have a double probability to become a perpetrator of intimate partner violence¹⁵. This study also confirms the concept of transgenerational transmission of violence identified universally.

Therefore, understanding the history of a country as a whole, what were the events that transpired and triggered changes to culture, the social- economic changes it went through, events that caused these changes and peoples reaction towards these changes. For countries who were involved in wars, what were the impacts it had on them during and after the wars and how can we identify and understand these traumas and interactions with violence some of these populations were subjected to during their experiences in the wars and the colonisation period. How have these events affected them, their children and passed down through generations to become known as culture today¹⁶.

¹¹ AusAID (2008). *Violence Against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on global and regional promising approaches*, AusAID, Canberra. Retrieved: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/violence-against-women-melanesia-east-timor-building-on-global-and-regional-promising-approaches-2008.PDF>

¹² Lewis (2009), *How is HIV transmission in PNG influenced by violence against women and attitudes towards condoms?*. Retrieved: <file:///C:/Users/Shahkeer/Downloads/HIVTransmissionVAWandcondoms.pdf>

¹³ Care (10 July 2013), *Gender Base Violence and War*. Retrieved: <https://www.care.org/impact/stories/gender-based-violence-and-war>

¹⁴ UNICEF (2015) *Harmful Connections: Examining the relationship between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific*. Retrieved: [https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Harmful_Connections\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Harmful_Connections(1).pdf)

¹⁵ Ibid, Pg.7

¹⁶ Ibid.

Identifying these events and triggers will give a clear and wholesome understanding on the GBV situation in each country and the types of approaches to take when addressing and advocating on gender base violence in this region. It is not only the culture but the changing culture, society and the transgenerational transmission of violence that are influenced by significant events in each of these countries' history.

Gender Base Violence and Development

Gender based violence becomes an issue for development in any country when the rate is high. The GBV impacts on development are; i) domestically - it affects the income distribution at home, when money is directed to health or legal fees there is less for food and other family needs. ii) Externally - it affects working women mentally and physically leading to low productivity at work, absenteeism and also leads to a low income for GBV survivors.

Apart from the current high rates of GBV in the three countries, PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu's child marriage rate is at 21%¹⁷ and an estimated 70% of PNG women are likely to be raped or assaulted in their lifetime¹⁸. According to the UNDP Human Development Report, PNG ranks 159 on the gender inequality index, Solomon Island does not have an index rank recorded and the same goes for Vanuatu.

With Fiji's success in electing 10 women into parliament in the recent 2018 election, unfortunately for PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu it is still a struggle. Electing women into parliament in these countries will take a communal effort and a long term plan to change the mindset and attitude of people towards women and leadership roles, currently there is only 2.0% of Solomon Island female sharing seats in parliament, PNG has 0% of women in parliament and Vanuatu also has 0% of women in parliament¹⁹.

In the Solomon Island 60.4% of the female population are in employment, Solomon Island women make up less than 30% of the public service and 6% of these women hold senior public service positions. Moreover 76.2% women are subsistence workers. In Vanuatu as of 2012 has a national labour participation rate of 70.9%, its female labour participation rate is 61.5% given a 67.6% national employment rate in 2009, the female population employment

¹⁷ UN Women (2018): *Global Database on Violence against women*, Country Profile, 2018, retrieved: <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries>

¹⁸ Pearlman J (1 February 2016), *Why 70 per cent of Papua New Guinea's women will be raped in their lifetime*, The Telegraph: Lifestyle, Women. Retrieved: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/why-70-per-cent-of-papua-new-guineas-women-will-be-raped-in-thei/>

¹⁹UNDP (n.d), *Human Development Reports: Table 5: Gender Inequality Index*. Retrieved: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

rate is 58.3% and the female unemployment rate is 5.2%²⁰. Vanuatu has 40% of women contributing to the labour force. In PNG the 2017 World Bank labour force participation rates for women is 97.4% and according to level of income for women, the low income rate is 65%, middle income 46% and high income 52%. The 2016 estimated ILO employment rates for women in agriculture is 15.4%, industry is 2.5% and services is 82.1%. The unemployment rate for women in PNG in the labour force is 1.7% compared to 1.9% men²¹.

The figures above gives a clear picture on labour participation and employment rates of women in Solomon Island, Vanuatu and PNG. As these countries develop and change more women are being employed in all the sectors in the countries. The labour participation of women in these countries is progressing really well over the years, however women representation in parliament is very poor. There is limited women participation in national decision making and this affects effective discussions and decision making on women and children related matters in the countries. Even with the progressive employment rates of women in each country a survey carried out in three different companies in PNG found that staff member lose 11.1days of work due to gender base violence and these affects and undermines women's working quality.

In their report the Overseas Development Institute stated that out of the total number of women surveyed 68% reported gender Base Violence in the past year with 47% experiencing severe forms of GBV. On average each staff member losses 11.1 days of work per year as a result of the impacts of gender base violence. For one company it was estimated that 26200 staff days are lost each year. The cost of time lost was estimated to have worth about 300, 000 PNG Kina in one company to 3million Kina in another company, when other cost of GBV are included than the cost of one company increases by 45%²².

This survey clearly points out how gender base violence affects labour productivity at work and the cost to businesses, when the cost of business is high in a country it affects a country's business sector, deterring investments and affecting the development of a country as a whole.

²⁰ ILO (n.d), *The International Labour Organization in Vanuatu*. Retrieved: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---jlosuva/documents/publication/wcms_366547.pdf

²¹ The World Bank (n.d), *Gender Data Portal: Papua New Guinea*. Retrieved: <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/papua-new-guinea>

²² Walker D et al (2015), *Gender violence in Papua New Guinea: The cost to business*. Retrieved: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9886.pdf>

Laws & Policies

Gender Base Violence is a breach of the United Nations declaration of Human Rights. The Convention on Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was ratified by PNG on January 12 of 1995, Vanuatu and Solomon Island accessioned the convention on the 8th of September, 1995 and on the 6th of May, 2002. This means that all three countries are obligated to abide by this ratification of the convention, through making policies, laws and recognising and achieving the 17 sustainable development goals especially goal 5 gender equality.

Regional and sub-regional policies and declaration on gender base violence include; The Pacific Leaders Equality Declaration, Pacific Regional Action Plan on women, peace and security and the Melanesian Spear Head Group Declaration on Combating Domestic and Family Violence. The constitutions of each country give support to equality for all its citizens regardless of gender, race, age or disability.

PNG in 2013 passed the Family Protection Act 2013 which dealt with domestic and family violence, making Family violence a criminal offence in Papua New Guinea. After four years, the enforcement of this law is still poor. Reports about the enforcement of FPA stated that police in PNG do not put a lot of importance on gender base violence complaints and generally there is a lot of impunity on GVB in PNG²³. Other forms of violence such as rape, statutory rape, gang or pack rape are illegal under the Criminal Code 1974 and Criminal Code (Sexual Offences and Crimes against Children) Act 2002 regulates sexual offences against children. Papua New Guinea also has a Sorcery Act of 1971 which was repealed in 2013 and included the death penalty as punishment for sorcery related killings after an international and country wide outcry on sorcery killings in the Highlands. It also has an Adultery and Enticement Act of 1988 that deals with adultery and compensation claims and in 2012 the Lukautim Pikinini Act 2012 was passed in parliament. The underlying laws for PNG allows for customary laws to be practiced in courts when dealing with gender base violence, bride price and conflict resolutions such and compensations and separation or traditional marriage.

The policies of GBV include National Policy for women and gender equity 2011 – 2015 and The Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy (GESI), this policy addresses and regulate GBV specifically for the private sector.

²³ Maribu G (17th November, 2017), *How is the Family Protection Act doing four years on?* The National. Retrieved: <https://www.thenational.com.pg/family-protection-act-four-years/>

Vanuatu was the first country in the Pacific to pass comprehensive domestic violence legislation, the Family Protection Act 2008 and in 2015 the Vanuatu National Gender Equality Policy 2015-2019. In 2014 Solomon Island passed its very first Solomon Islands Family Protection Act 2014 and in 2016 it launched the country's National Policy on Eliminating Violence against Women.

Passing rules and regulations is a positive step forward for these countries however, implementing it is another hurdle. The effective implementation of this laws and regulations remains a challenge for all three countries. In the Solomon Island the challenge is that the law is framed in a more western context that it is sometimes hard to carry out²⁴. In all three countries it is reported that even when filing reports on gender base violence at the police stations, these reports are filed without any further investigation carried out by the police. The behaviour of police towards gender base violence cases may be due to either just plain ignorance, victim blaming and/or lack of funding by government for police work.

When the cases of gender base violence reach the courts many of these cases do not push through because of the high legal fees or are thrown out due to lack of substantial evidence. Even if the cases are heard in court most cases do not get the justice they deserve due to stereotypes which reduces sentences for perpetrators.

In December 2016 'An Analysis of Judicial Sentencing Practices in SGBV Cases in the Pacific Island Region report', examined 908 sentencing records of sexual assault and domestic violence cases from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and Vanuatu. This report revealed three main forms of mitigating factors used when determining a reduced sentence, these factors are;

- i. Discrimination based on gender
- ii. Cultural or customary forms of conflict resolutions and
- iii. Provocation used as a defense mechanism

The discrimination based on gender takes into consideration who is the bread winner and the implications a tougher sentence may have on the family if the perpetrator was the sole bread winner. Customary forms of conflict resolution are compensation, bride price, return of bride

²⁴ Williams et al. (2016), *Domestic violence in the Solomon Islands*, Case Report, College of Medical and Dental Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, England. Retrieved: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304494368_Domestic_violence_in_the_Solomon_Islands

price or asking for forgiveness when a perpetrator is in the wrong and many perpetrators tend to use provocation as defense when the victim is accused of infidelity²⁵.

These types of considerations defeats the whole purpose of punishing and deterring such acts of violence and overall the deterrence of domestic violence in the society. The common law system is used in PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu and in this system, judicial decisions become case law and with these types of consideration by courts it sets the precedent for other cases to use in mitigating and determining reduced sentences for perpetrators in the future. Customary laws and practices related to marriage, the payment or return of bride price, adultery, the dissolution of marriage, the custody of children and the division of property upon divorce or death, need to be reviewed to adopt effective ways including forming legislations to amend or abolish any customary laws and practices indicated to be inconsistent with the Convention, legislations and other human rights treaties²⁶.

Many women in these countries either lose hope in the legal system or do not trust the system in place, because of these adversities. Laws and policies were made to protect a victim, which is only in theory, unfortunately for these countries it is a struggle practically and this also contributes to the lack of reported incidents in the countries. To add to that, there is also a great impunity of perpetrators in the region, bribery, threats or victim shaming prevents victims from reporting, resulting in perpetrator's immunity. The female population as a whole is under threat every day from violence or rape regardless of their age, statues, disability, background or profession.

Even with laws and policies in place the recent cases of violence is alarming For example: In PNG a 20 year old mother was accused of sorcery and witch craft and was burnt alive in 2013²⁷. In the Eastern Highlands Province there is at least one case of rape every week²⁸. No female in PNG is safe or feels safe, in 2017 MP Allen Bird brought up the issue of Gender

²⁵ Christie et al. (2015), *An Analysis of Judicial Sentencing Practices in Sexual & Gender-Based Violence Cases in the Pacific Island Region*. Retrieved: <http://www.paclii.org/other/general-materials/ICAAD-Analysis-of-Judicial-Sentencing-Practices-in-SGBV-Cases.pdf>

²⁶ Amnesty International (2009), *Papua New Guinea Briefing to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Violence against Women*. Amnesty International August 2009. Retrieved: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/PNG/INT_CEDAW_NGO_PNG_46_992_5_E.pdf

²⁷ Fox L (8th February 2013), *PNG PM condemns 'barbaric' sorcery killing*, ABC News. Retrieved: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-02-08/an-png-pm-condemns-sorcery-killing/4509182>

²⁸ Pokiton S (5th June 2018), *One Rape Case Every Week: EHP Police*, Loop PNG. Retrieved: <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/one-rape-case-every-week-ehp-police-77105>

Base Violence in parliament showing his concern after six female students were pack rape, there was an attempted kidnapping of a female media personal and the torture of a 6 year old girl that same year but nothing was done²⁹. Loop PNG in March, 2018 also reported the rape and murder of a disabled female in her family home in Port Moresby³⁰. And recently, after the gruesome death of a 26 year old woman in Port Moresby in November, 2018 due to injuries sustained from beatings by her boyfriend. Susan Setae the PNG counsellors Association president stated that a lot of money is put into GBV prevention programs in PNG however it takes every individual to take up responsibility in preventing such acts of violence by interfering when there is a suspicion or act of GBV taking place in the community. She also mentioned that the compassion in PNG for each other has deteriorated over the years allowing such acts of violence to take place and stated that PNG cannot develop economically or socially until it safeguards its women's decisions, ensuring their safety in the community through an effective and responsive police and judicial systems³¹.

These cases shows how ineffective the implementations of laws are and how gender base violence affects all women regardless. Laws and policies are only outlines and details of what needs to be done. Implementations of these laws and policies still fail women to date.

Issues

The challenges in getting updated statistics is due to the complexity of the countries in terms of the remoteness and diversity of areas, cultures and the lack of government services in these areas. It is very important that the statistics also reflect the situation in the rural areas because that is where the majority of each country's population live. Women in rural areas that face Gender Base Violence cannot get the services they desperately need and many domestic violence, different forms of sexual violence and other forms of violence against women go unreported all the time. This is also due to the lack of good partnership and coordination with stakeholders

Knowing how to tackle Gender Based Violence in Melanesia is tough, however by identifying the right approach in different cultures and situations is vital in effectively advocating for gender base violence in a cultured but changing society. For example: For

²⁹ Waeda J (30th November 2017), *GBV Agenda Hits Parliament*, Loop PNG. Retrieved: <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/gbv-agenda-hits-parliament-70432>

³⁰ Wavik I (6th March 2018), *Women with Disability raped: Killed*, Loop PNG. Retrieved: <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/woman-disability-raped-killed-police-74282>

³¹ Gware (3rd December 2018), *Don't Just Stand and Watch*, Loop PNG. Retrieved: <http://www.looppng.com/png-news/don%E2%80%99t-just-stand-and-watch-81039>

PNG, the approach used in Morobe Province cannot be used in the Western Highlands Province or Manus Province. Even within a province the approach used in a district cannot be used in another district. In a panel discussion by Lowy institute on new approaches to tackling gender-based violence in PNG, the Secretary for Community Development and Religion Anna Solomon mentioned that in a patrilineal society like PNG it is difficult for women to advocate to men on gender base violence. Women advocating for women is not very effective in this cultural rooted societies. Men in general simply do not listen to a woman, training men to be advocates on behalf of women is an effective way forward³², however identifying the right person to train for male advocacy is also key. It may not sound morally or logically correct in this modern times but it is the reality of these cultured areas of these countries especially rural areas. The rural areas have societal hierarchies, by identifying the males at the top of this hierarchies and training them would go a long way, cultural societies in Melanesia, especially rural areas only listen to someone who is in authority. When we start identifying the right person or persons these small and slow step will have a greater impact long term. Using the hierarchal structures to slowly advocate to rural people to view women as equal to men will help them accept women advocators in the long run. Changing the mindset is crucial at this point in time.

Partnership and coordination is also very important, by identifying who the best partners are will help government with data collection. Many reports have emphasized on the church and how church workers in these areas can help. Churches have the system and people already in place, by using the church systems in the remote areas where government services cannot reach would be very effective. Before colonisation, Missionaries and Mission stations were already in place in the remotest parts of the countries. This set up is still used until today, wherever you cannot find government services, churches and church services are present. Therefore when it comes to trust many rural people trust their pastors more aside from their family members and friends.

Governments can take advantage of these church systems, by training Pastors or evangelists in data collection, advocacy and counselling. This approach might be helpful to gather real data from these vast unreached areas in Melanesia.

³² Solomon A (2016), *NEW APPROACHES TO TACKLING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN PNG*, (Panel Discussion, Lowy Institute, 20th May 2016). Retrieved: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/news-and-media/multimedia/audio/panel-discussion-new-approaches-tackling-gender-based-violence-png-0>

Role of the Church in the 21st Century

The Church has so many different roles in society. The main concern and role of the church, deals with the eternal order which is the eternal salvation of human beings to be found in the kingdom of God in the afterlife, which is in connection with the temporal order concerning humanity's material wellbeing and needs on Earth to be able to receive that eternal salvation. With incarnated spirits and spirit filled bodies human beings are citizens of two dimensions the eternal and the temporal. The well-beings of humans in both dimensions need to be catered for equally, as they both go hand in hand. Our spiritual well-being depends on our physical and mental wellbeing in this temporal existence. The church continue the work of Christ as a teacher and a moral guide and Mathew 28: 19-20 gives the church that authority. Mathew 28: 19-20 states; 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age³³.

With the increase in world issues in the 21st century, the church also need to adopt to changes in trends and come up with effective approaches to addressing and advocating on these worldly issues, keeping its role in mind as the teacher and moral guide in this temporal order. Ecumenism and good ecumenical support in each country will see churches coming together and working together in identifying areas where they need to cooperate on and support government and NGO's in carrying out the advocacies and trainings.

In PNG through the church partnership program (CPP), the mainline churches in PNG are taking a new approach in addressing the issue of gender base violence through gender equality theology training of trainers' workshop. This is a week long program on how to tackle gender issues affecting the country and create changes in the communities through churches. The CPP was formed in 2014 and through its formation social issues such as gender based violence, witchcraft and sorcery were being identified³⁴.

In the Solomon Island World Vision International an Evangelical Christian humanitarian aid, development, and advocacy organization have been using a method called the "channels of Hope" partnering with church leaders to address the deeply entrenched attitudes that

³³ Religion Online (n.d), *The Role of the church in Society*. Retrieved: <https://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2731>

³⁴ Kolo P (7th November 2017), *Churches to look into Gender Base Problems*, Post courier Online. Retrieved: <https://postcourier.com.pg/churches-look-gender-based-problems/>

perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality in Solomon Island³⁵. The same approach is also used in Vanuatu involving Vanuatu's Main line churches to reduce gender-based violence through training and awareness in communities in Shefa and Tafea³⁶.

There are also other small scale approaches carried out in each church through counselling, advocacies and spiritual guidance, however there is more to be done and this can be achieved through effective advocacy for long term results such as doing:

Education Based Advocacies

- Developing interdisciplinary courses (combining Theology and Ministry) on gender studies into the theological colleges or seminaries curriculums.
- Facilitate gender study courses through programs targeting church ministers, pastors, or lay ministers.
- Develop and facilitate gender-based violence counselling courses targeting church ministers, pastors, lay ministers (teachers, youth leaders, women)

Other advocacy:

- Ongoing research and publication for gender-based violence in the Pacific.
- Lobbying for a review in customary laws and laws relating to marriage, bride price, compensation, sorcery and tribal or ethnic violence.

Conclusion

With the supposedly current high rates of gender base violence in the three Melanesian countries, PNG, Solomon Island and Vanuatu, churches or church organisations have the responsibility and is obligated to address and advocate effectively on not only the issue of GBV but also other social issues. Churches role to society is to keep the balance between people's eternal wellbeing and temporal wellbeing. The lack of church involvement in social issues also contributes to lack of social justice in the society, churches need to be more involved in the community supporting humanitarian work and be active in people's everyday

³⁵ World Vision (n.d), *Tackling gender-based violence in the Solomon Islands*. Retrieved: <https://www.worldvision.com.au/global-issues/work-we-do/poverty/tackling-gender-based-violence>

³⁶ Cullwic J (30th June 2016), *World Vision Vanuatu helping tackle gender-based violence*, Vanuatu Daily Post. Retrieved: http://dailypost.vu/news/world-vision-vanuatu-helping-tackle-gender-based-violence/article_46e81fd9-73c8-5a49-906b-20eb44d7ad53.html

life regardless of differences. The region is a diverse region (culturally, ethnically, politically and geographically), gender base violence is also still an issue that is equally complex to understand. However one thing that is common despite the diversity of these three countries is the Christian faith. It is vital to take advantage of this mundanity of these societies by strengthening ecumenical unity and co-operation between churches and creating and providing safe spaces through faith based programs, advocacies and counselling that will effectively counteract, prevent and reduce gender base violence rates in Melanesia.

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