



MANY VOICES: ONE MESSAGE
STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PNG

ACTIVIST TOOLKIT
(OCT 2009 – MAR 2010)

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	p. 3
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PNG	p. 4
WHAT WE WANT	p. 5 - 6
KEY MESSAGES	p. 7
WHAT YOU CAN DO	p. 8 - 9
RESOURCES	p. 10

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit contains background information and actions to take to end violence against women in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

It is only an inspiration and a starting point for activism, so we encourage you to be as creative or bold in your activism as you like!

This Activist Toolkit is valid from October 2009 to end of March 2010, including for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence (2009) and International Women's Day (2010).



Image: (front page) A vegetable vendor waits for customers Tuesday on the island of New Britain, Papua New Guinea © AP Photo/David Longstreath. (this page) The Goroka Show 2009 where groups from many parts of Papua New Guinea come to celebrate their unique cultural songs, dances, and customary dress. © Michael Johnson

MANY VOICES, ONE MESSAGE

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PNG



QUICK FACTS

Capital city: Port Moresby
Official languages: English, Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu
Population size: 6.6 million
Current Prime Minister: Sir Michael Somare
Average Life Expectancy: 55 years
Literacy rate: 61.2% (men), 50.9% (women)

Women attending an Amnesty human rights training session, Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea, 2005. © AI

INTRODUCTION

As our nearest geographical neighbour, Papua New Guinea (PNG) comprises the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and approximately 600 other islands. With a population of around 6.6 million, PNG is the largest country in the South Pacific, both in terms of land area and population size.

It is difficult to generalise about the people and culture of PNG. Over 800 languages are spoken and traditions and customs vary greatly across the country. Its borders encompass varied and rugged terrain and the majority of the country is not accessible by road.

85% of Papua New Guineans live in rural areas, subsisting on agriculture, forestry and fishing. They have little contact with or access to the police or the formal justice system and are largely beyond the reach of

government services, including education and health care. In fact, the largest service provider in Papua New Guinea is not the State, but the Christian Church.

Crime and lawlessness is perhaps the most highly publicised problem facing PNG and it has earned the country a costly reputation for being unsafe for travel and investment. Although reliable crime statistics are not available, there is little doubt that PNG faces an epidemic of serious violent crime, which includes armed robbery, murder, gang rape, home invasion, tribal fighting, election-related violence and violence relating to resource development projects.

Fraud, corruption and “white collar crime” are also prevalent in PNG and undermine the ability of relevant State institutions to address the country’s violent crime problem. Transparency International has

ranked PNG 151 of 180 on its corruption scale.

PNG is currently ranked 148 out of 182 countries listed in the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) human development index, and is the lowest ranked of any South Pacific country.

The Government of PNG is a Parliamentary Democracy. Politics in PNG remains highly male dominated with only one female MP (Dame Carol Kidu) currently elected out of 109 MPs. Only four women have ever been elected to PNG’s national Parliament in the 34 years since independence and the picture is similar at provincial, district and community levels. Women continue to find it hard to have their voices heard within decision-making bodies and Parliament is a prime example.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PNG

Violence against women in PNG is pervasive and widespread. Research conducted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), UN Agencies and AusAID indicates that the rates of violence against women in the Pacific region are among the highest in the world.

For the past five years of Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign, we have advocated for women's right to live free from violence.

Violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights violations – in war or peace, at home or in public, and at the hands of the State, family or strangers, women experience gender-based violence. Violence against women cuts across all cultures, classes, ages and sexual identity. And in PNG, it's no different.

The statistics and stories may be shocking. However, this only paints part of the picture. The patriarchal culture in PNG, as elsewhere, means that violence against women is a key way to maintain women's inequality. Violence against women is intimately connected to other customs which maintains women's subordinate status – such as polygamy and bride price – and which strengthen men's belief that they 'own' their wives. Women also face many different types of violence – violence by their husbands and family, rape and gang rape, sexual violence by police, 'pay back' violence against women as part of tribal fighting and 'sorcery'-related killings.

Yet, instead of offering tangible solutions to violence against women, the PNG Government continues to do little, with its tendency to dwell on difficulties and a lack of resources meaning little has changed for women since the first research into the issue was conducted 20 years ago. In addition, while the formal justice system on the whole promises equality, protection and redress, in practice it is remote, inaccessible, and ineffective and complacency by law enforcement officials

greatly compounds the situation for women.

SMALL STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION...

In 1995, PNG ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

While states that have signed up to the convention are required to submit a progress report to the UN CEDAW Committee one year after ratification and every four years after that, PNG only recently submitted its first report (a combined First, Second and Third report). This is a positive step and demonstrates that the government is ready to have its progress on women's rights and eliminating violence against women examined in an international forum.

In response to PNG's submission, Amnesty International has submitted a 'shadow' report to the CEDAW Committee, focusing specifically on the state of violence against women in PNG. (After a government submits its report to a treaty monitoring body, many NGOs often submit a 'shadow report' outlining what they believe that government has overlooked or incorrectly represented.) For a copy of Amnesty International's submission, see your Community Campaigner.

The Government of PNG is due to appear before CEDAW in July 2010 to present their report and answer questions about their progress.

Another positive step is that at the annual Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, held in August this year in Cairns, Pacific Island leaders committed for the first time

in 40 years to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence. This was a huge recognition of the need for action at the highest level to end violence against women, and a huge milestone for women who have been campaigning on the issue for many decades.

SOME STATISTICS

Two decades ago, PNG led the way in the region in identifying and documenting violence against women. The statistics above reflect the research conducted at the time. While this information may now seem dated, more recent interviews conducted by Amnesty International as part of a research trip revealed that rates of violence are unlikely to have decreased and some women's organisations fear they may have risen.

- 67% of wives had been beaten by their husbands (national average). (PNG Law Reform Commission 1992)
- Close to 100% of wives in the Highlands experienced violence by their husbands, but half that for Oro and New Ireland provinces. (PNG Law Reform Commission 1992)
- In urban areas, 1 of every 6 women interviewed needed treatment for injuries caused by their husbands. (PNG Law Reform Commission 1992)
- 55% of women had been forced into sex against their will. (PNG Institute of Medical Research 1994)
- 60% of men interviewed reported having participated in *lainap* (gang rape) at least once. (PNG Institute of Medical Research 1994)

More info...

- AusAID's 2008 report, *Violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor* (http://www.ode.usaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/vaw_cs_full_report.pdf)
- Amnesty International's 2006 report, *PNG: Violence Against Women: Not Inevitable, Never Acceptable!* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA34/002/2006>)

WHAT WE WANT

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of PNG to make a formal commitment when it appears before the CEDAW Committee in July 2010 to end violence against women through law reform and greater provision of services, including safe houses.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of PNG to formally commit to:

- dedicating financial and other support to organisations currently providing emergency accommodation to women and children fleeing family violence.
- announcing publicly the amount of funding committed towards safe houses and to establish a transparent process for accessing these funds.
- introducing and enforcing specific domestic violence legislation.

WHY WILL THIS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

After the Government of PNG appears before the CEDAW Committee, the Committee will release its Concluding Observations which includes recommendations on what PNG should do. These recommendations will put PNG under international scrutiny to make these changes. They will also be used by women's rights activists and NGOs to lobby the Government.

Amnesty International believes that as a smaller country, PNG will be more susceptible to international pressure by the UN. PNG has also demonstrated openness to the process by finally submitting their report which was long overdue. Making a formal commitment in front of the CEDAW Committee will make it more difficult to 'back pedal' later and will boost the government's political will.

THIS WORKS! THE EXAMPLE OF FIJI

After nearly eight years of lobbying by NGOs, Fiji's women's rights activists were able to take advantage of the CEDAW reporting process to get the long-stalled Family Law Bill passed by the country's Parliament. By documenting the bill's necessity in their shadow report, they were able to garner the Committee's support for a new law. The Committee then made this clear in their dialogue with the Fiji Government delegation in January 2002, as well as in their Concluding Observations. The new Family Law Act heralds in a new era for Fiji families – women and children in particular – by removing systemic discrimination against women and putting children at the centre of custody and child support decisions.

International Women's Day event involving an Amnesty International speaker, women's human rights activists and the community of Porebada (a village near Port Moresby); a canoe race was held where the Stop Violence against Women canoe was launched. © AI



WHY WOULD TAKING ACTION IN AUSTRALIA MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PNG?

We have a strong historical relationship

Australia and PNG have a strong historical relationship, with Australia administering the territories of Papua and New Guinea for much of last century until PNG gained full independence in 1975. Australia remains accountable to ensuring peace and development in PNG – both which are seriously impeded by the current rates of violence against women.

We are a major donor

Australia is PNG's largest bilateral aid donor, and our government has well-developed close ties with PNG counterparts in government and the law and justice sector.

The momentum is building

At the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Cairns this year, Pacific Island leaders made a commitment to end violence against women. This commitment was made at a regional forum and demonstrated an increased political will that we should leverage.

International solidarity goes a long way

Demonstrating solidarity with women's rights activists can go a long way in PNG. In our direct work with PNG women's activists, women have been greatly appreciative and motivated through Amnesty International's attention and support.

Little country, big influence

Due to PNG's relatively small size and lesser political power on a global scale, international criticism and pressure from an organisation such as Amnesty International can have a greater impact.

TIMELINE

2006

- Launched Amnesty International's report, *Papua New Guinea – Violence Against Women: Not inevitable, never acceptable!*
- Launched a campaign digest, *Papua New Guinea - Women Human Rights Defenders in Action*.
- Released an appeal for women human rights defender, Anna Benny, who disappeared in late 2005.
- Amnesty International sponsors a 'Stop Violence Against Women' canoe and participates in a local canoe race.

2007

- Amnesty International Australia's *Stop Violence Against Women* Campaign Coordinator visits PNG, meets with women's rights activists and survivors of gender-based violence.

2008

- Amnesty International speaks at a human rights forum in PNG on violence against women.

2009

- Lobbying around the annual Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting.
- During the Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, Amnesty International participated in a side event attended by officials and ran a media briefing for journalists covering the event.
- The Amnesty International Health Team have recently returned from a research trip to PNG and are expecting to launch a report on HIV/AIDS in early 2010.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDERS: GOING STRONG IN PNG

PNG women's rights activists have been campaigning for decades for the government to take action on violence against women. In 2007, women's rights activists presented a petition with over 6000 signatures to the government calling for a proactive approach to ending violence against women.

Amnesty International has been in contact with women's rights defenders in PNG and is working to support their efforts. For more information on women's rights activists in PNG see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA34/004/2006>.



International Women's Day event involving an Amnesty International speaker, women's human rights activists and the community of Porebada (a village near Port Moresby); a canoe race was held where the Stop Violence against Women canoe was launched. © Amnesty International

KEY MESSAGES

- Violence against women in PNG is widespread and pervasive

- The Government of PNG has a responsibility to take action to combat and prevent violence against women, and to live up to the international human rights obligations it has committed to.

- Amnesty International is calling on the Government of PNG to commit to:
 - law reform – to introduce specific domestic violence legislation
 - to increase the provision of services, such as safe houses

- Sign the petition!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

TWO ACTIONS TO TAKE

1. Sign the petition – get as many signatures as possible!
2. Write a letter

SIGN THE PETITION

Get as many signatures for the petition as possible!

Here are some ideas:

- **Hold a stall**

Decorate the stall with materials that will grab people's attention (eg. placards, banners, colour). Be proactive about approaching passers-by instead of waiting for them to come up to you.

- **Make some noise**

Collaborate with drummers or musicians from PNG.

Organise to walk around your capital city or town centre with a drummer from PNG, asking the people who you pass to sign the petition.

- **Make it visual**

Construct something visual to represent what we are campaigning for, such as a safe house or reclaiming some public space as 'violence free'. Remember to keep in mind that we are campaigning for PNG so we need to make our ideas culturally appropriate.

- **Go to where the people are**

Go to where large numbers of people already are and pass around the petition. Is there a charity movie screening planned? A forum on ending violence against women? Can you pass the petition around your lecture theatre? Is there a festival on?

- **Spread the petition online**

The petition is also available online at

www.amnesty.org.au/svaw. Email the link to your friends.

Post it to your Facebook, MySpace or Twitter page. Or

include the website address as part of your email signature.

REMEMBER!

Return all petitions to your Community Campaigner by 31 March 2010.

TIPS

- Give people who seem interested more to do.

For example, give them the flyer and ask them to write a letter. Or invite them to the next event in your Action Centre. Interested people have the potential to become new Amnesty activists, so give them something to come back to us for!

- Ask people to **write legibly** – we lose many potential new members by not being able to read their handwriting.

- Suggest to people **who take a flyer to pass it onto a friend** and ask their friend to take action too.

WHERE WILL THE PETITIONS GO?

Amnesty International will present the petitions to Prime Minister Somare before the Government of PNG appears before the CEDAW Committee in July 2010.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

WRITE A LETTER

Send an urgent letter to the Prime Minister of PNG, Sir Michael Somare, calling on the Government to:

- commit financial and other support to organisations currently providing emergency accommodation to women and children fleeing family violence.
- announce publically the amount of funding committed towards safe houses and to establish a transparent process for accessing these funds.
- introduce and enforce specific domestic violence legislation.
- formally commit to the above three points when reporting on steps taken by the Government to end discrimination and violence against women at the 46th Session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in July 2010.

The Right Honourable Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare
Prime Minister
P.O.Box 639
Waigani
National Capital District
Papua New Guinea
Fax: 0011 (675) 327 7328 / (675) 327 6630
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

IMPORTANT!

Remember to let us know how many letters you write to the PNG Government. It's important for us to know the impact we are having and to see if the letter-writing is working. This will also help us create more effective campaigns in the future. Contact your Community Campaigner or send your numbers to activism@amnesty.org.au.



Two women and a baby watch as a helicopter takes off after leaving supplies at their makeshift village in northern Papua New Guinea after a tsunami © AP Photo/Rick Rycroft

RESOURCES

Stop Violence Against Women in PNG Petition

Many voices: One message DL size Flyer

Placards (x 8)

Many voices: One message Banner

Amnesty International 2006 report

Papua New Guinea -- Violence against women: Not inevitable, never acceptable!
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA34/002/2006>

Women human rights activists in PNG campaign digest

Papua New Guinea - Women Human Rights Defenders in Action
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA34/004/2006>

Appeal case for Anna Benny

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA34/005/2006>

Amnesty International Press Release

Pacific leaders pledge to end violence against women
<http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/21504/>

PNG's report to CEDAW

Report on the Status of Women in Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville 2008
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm>

Amnesty International's Shadow Report on PNG to the CEDAW Committee

Papua New Guinea: Briefing to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
Available from your Community Campaigner

Let us know what you think!

Tell us what you like or didn't like.

Send your comments to activism@amnesty.org.au

WHAT'S NEXT?

In early 2010, Amnesty International will launch a report on HIV/AIDS in PNG. In 2002, AIDS/HIV was declared to be a generalised epidemic in PNG, meaning that the whole population is at risk. The report will focus particularly on the major obstacles created by gender inequality and gender-based violence, and the political, criminal justice and law enforcement sectors' failure to ensure justice for women and adequately address the risk of HIV/AIDS.

CONTACT DETAILS

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