

Call for proposal from the Special Rapporteur on VAWG Geneva (UN-OHCHR)

A collective analysis from all the provinces in PNG.

Report submitted by: Magna Carta PNG Inc. with partner's reports.

This is a questionnaire form used to collect and collate information for the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls in PNG during the COVID 19 (VAWG)

The special Rapporteur wishes to receive all relevant information on the increase in gender-based violence against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic from civil society, States, National Human Rights Institutions, international organisations, academia and other stakeholders on the following issues:

1. To what extent has there been an increase in violence against women, especially domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns? Please provide all available data on the increase in violence against women, including domestic violence and femicides, registered during the COVID-19 crisis.

It has been a challenge for young families, especially young couples. Resorting to social media for personal entertainment. Entertainment via social media instigated petty arguments over social media entertainment due to the lock down. The other partner sees it as a threat to his/her relationship that results in them having verbal arguments that then end up in physical violence which caused grievous bodily harm resulting in death as the end result of violence between intimate partners.

The other marital issue that leads to IPV is the male partner 'forced sex' on their female partners. During the COVID-19 lockdown, partners, couples, and those in de-facto relationships were all at home. There was no other means of socialization. Normal social transactions were evoked by the strict lockdown regulations which placed social confinement. During the interview process, 64 women from the 82 that were interviewed said they were having issues because their male partners wanted to have sex during the day and at night. When the women responded negatively, or hesitated to have sex with the partner, their male partner started accusing them of infidelity. This then led to violence. Financial burdens is another issue that led to fights. Some mothers are bread winners compared to men. During the lockdown, when there were no markets, there was no way of earning cash to cater for their needs that has also led to violence.

The other issue pertains to the sexual health and family planning lifestyles. Some women were not able to continue with their planning methods because the services were on lockdown. This has led to unwanted pregnancies. The study that Magna Carta conducted found out that half or 50% of the interviewees used family planning methods without the knowledge of their husbands.

Diagram 1

¹TABLE 1: Forms of violence and its causes during the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Period

Intimate Partner Violence

IPV has been increasing during COVID 19. The Causes: Financial needs, mis-understanding between couples, force sex by male, social media issues

Impacts: Violence leads to GBH and other sustained injuries leading to deaths. No clinics were opened for medication and that has prolonged individual women's health and wellbeing. Children being scattered

Gender Based Violence: financial issues, gambling, stealing to survive, bag snatching, family issues, child protection issues, police brutality

Effect/Impacts: sustain severe injuries and injuries causing death

Sorcery Related Accusation Violence: land grabbing, greed and jealousy over properties, political influence.

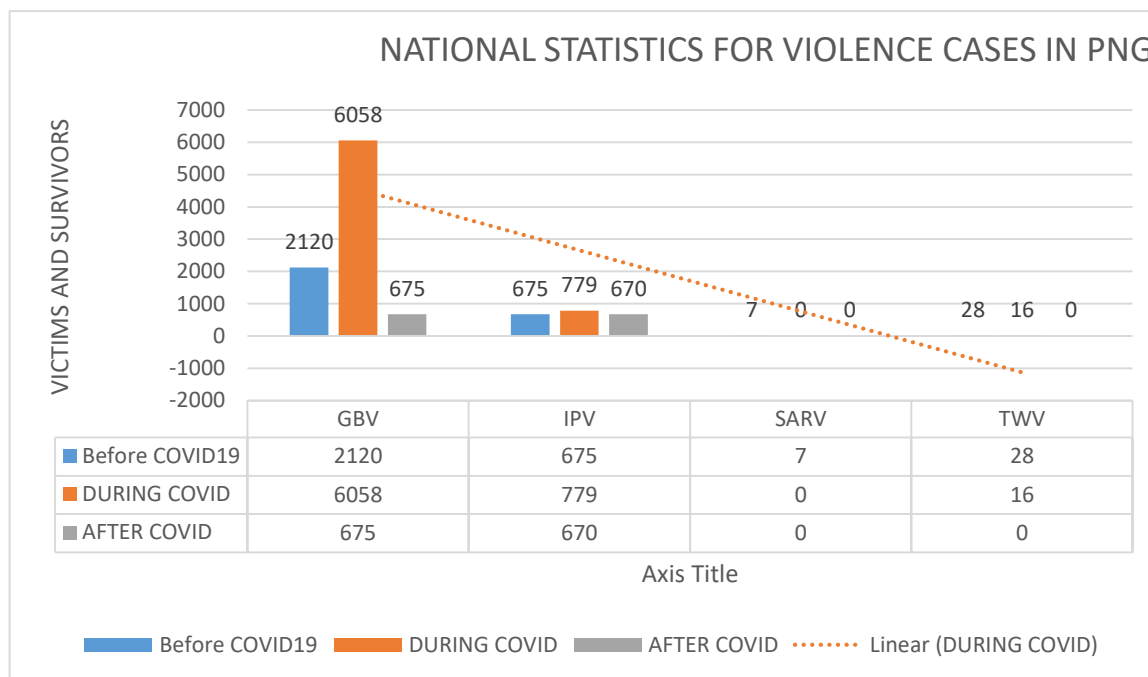
Effects and impacts: Village burns, families scattered, no food, shelter, injuries causing GBH and deaths, tortures to death

Tribal Warfare Violence: Reports from Porgera Gold mine in Enga Province of PNG indicated that the warring tribes' fought against each other over the mine ownership and benefits. Women were killed and several young girls were sexually abused and raped.

Secondly, women in Tari in Hela Province were ambushed by the warring tribesmen. Sadly, It is was sad to see innocent women being slaughtered like animals during the COVID 19 Pandemic, Land, mining, politics, states decision over the land owner's properties, police brutality

Effects and impacts: no homes, families, no schools, children scattered, leaving orphan children, no health and other services

¹ Stats taken from interviews conducted by MCPNGI using the Call for proposal Questionaries



2

Before COVID-19 (January-March) During Covid (mid-March-June) (July-on wards) effects)

- Are helplines run by Government and/or civil society available? Has there been an increase in the number of calls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the response to COVID-19, there were three different phases of lockdown, however, a ‘Lockdown’ meaning, all services came to a stop. Toll free numbers are working however the focus for the front liners is to address COVID-19 and they were forced to reject any other welfare matters. A lot of community services were denied because of the current Commissioner of the Police who was appointed as the National Coordinator of the National Response Management Team to COVID-19 a pandemic emergency. During this pandemic emergency, the police were more focused on controlling the lock down and maintaining security at the borders. In that response plan and coordination there is no inclusivity in their approach to consider the social norms and daily human transactions. Obviously, the Police were concerned about executing the orders of the pandemic emergency and overlooking its constitutional duty in times or emergency.

² Diagram 2: This chart presents the reports that were collected from different pockets of data. The data comes from selected CBOs, NGOs, and other Institutions in 24 provinces of PNG and media reports. It is difficult to obtain crime reports from Police. The challenging part in CSOs work in PNG is data collection and storage and dissemination. There is no mandated organization that is in charge of data.

3. Can women victims of domestic violence be exempted from restrictive measures to stay at home in isolation if they face domestic violence?

Yes, absolutely! Domestic violence victims especially women who are vulnerable to protect themselves from physical violence should be exempted from restrictive measures.

4. Are shelters open and available? Are there any alternatives to shelters available if they are closed or without sufficient capacity?

In PNG, we have only a few women's shelter or safe houses, legally regulated and operated. It is very sad and challenging to say that not all provinces in PNG have a safe house. Respectively in the PNG context, a women's shelter in the districts and remote villages can be the home of a human rights defender or a Church Pastor. It is disheartening to see women and girls who are continuously being abused in some provinces because of the insufficiency in the referral pathways system that includes safe houses. During the COVID 19, there were many challenges. One major one is the closure of two safe houses. Obviously, the safe houses received sponsors in cash or kind from companies, during the lock down, the business community went on halt. The business community withdrew their support which led to closure.

Shelters are open and available, however the focus of the police was on the COVID 19 pandemic. Secondly, the referral pathway in PNG start at the point of referral. It can be the medical officers after diagnosing the victim survivor or a policeman/woman after compiling reports. In PNG, no women are to go directly to a safe house to seek protection. It is always a referral made by an appropriate person in charge. The system is like a designated process to provide protection to the victim survivor. Sometimes, one process in the system doesn't work effectively, this leads to incomplete protection provided to the victim. In other centres, substantial reports submitted to MCPNGI by Highlands Region Women's Human Rights Defenders shows that safe houses were full. In Simbu Province, the only active safe house is full. Other women victims and survivors were sent back home due to limited spaces and lack of resources.

-
5. Are protection orders available and accessible in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Apparently, all the Courts systems in the country were on locked down. During the first month of lockdown, there were overwhelming abuses of human rights. Citizens' concerns were not heard and the police withdrew their constitutional duty to continue with family protection and child protection which were seen as civil cases which were not important to COVID-19 period.

6. What are the impacts on women's access to justice? Are Courts open and providing protection and decisions in cases of domestic violence?

Obviously the chances for women to access justice is inadequate, insufficient and stagnant due to the Covid-19

7. What are the impacts of the current restrictive measures and lockdowns on women's access to health services? Please specify whether services are closed or suspended, particularly those focusing on reproductive health.

Significant changes in finances due to loss of jobs or family income thus prevented victims to reach out for support and seek further assistance when needed. During the lockdown, public transport was on halt and also suburban Clinics were closed. This had also shut down antenatal services for pregnant women and girls. During the lockdown, a lot of pregnant mothers were denied their treatment and other care. Family planning clinics were also closed, and created issues for those women and girls who were using the family planning methods.

8. Please provide examples of obstacles encountered to prevent and combat domestic violence during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Three quarters of people that are living in the city are unemployed. These unemployed people are usually engaged in the informal sector and small and medium enterprises to empower the economy from the cash earned from selling and buying. During the lockdown, many had no other option to survive due to lack of money, no income, no family support or social services just to name the main obstacles encountered during the Covid -19 lockdown that contributed to the domestic violence pandemic in PNG.

9. Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by Governments.

Firstly, approach to preparedness and Response to covid 19 pandemic has to be a planned wider collaborative approach. The CSOs are the biggest actors in humanitarian space and the state plans should have an inclusive approach where providing Aid assistance can include persons with disability, people with chronic diseases, pregnant mothers and other vulnerable persons. Secondly, during the time of emergency, the appropriate bodies should work an extra mile in providing their support to NGOs or NHRIs or Women's/Men's Equality bodies in support of awareness programs and interventions in providing more safe Houses for victims escaping violence. The report presented by Highlands Region Women Human Rights Group has indicated that the only active Safe House in Simbu was over populated and there is still a demand for more safe houses to provide for the protection of our women and girls.

10. Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by NGOs and NHRIs or equality bodies.

There is evidence that advocacy and empowerment counselling interventions, as well as home visitations are promising in preventing or reducing intimate partner violence against women. There is a lack of coordination and messaging for different groups of people. Emergency coordination has to be inclusive at all levels of participation.

11. Please send any additional information on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on domestic violence against women not covered by the questions above.

There has been a lot of violence causing Deaths during COVID-19 crisis in Papua New Guinea and that is pandemic. Reports and Case story will be submitted independently through the special procedure by Magna Carta PNG Inc.

I give the permission to the OHCHR to publicly indicate my name and organization.

Name: Ms Shirley Gabrielle Kaupa

Organization: Magna Carta PNG Inc- Port Moresby PNG.

Ph: +675 74417 203

Email: abral.willie@gmail.com