



**Forum Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2022

**Theme of the Forum:** Embracing the Collective Power of our Movement

**Venue:** Ambgar Resource Centre, Kilbang Station

Voice for Change is a women's human rights organization based in Jiwaka Province, working collectively with key stakeholders and developing partners to end all forms of violence against women and girls and promote gender equality and human rights for all. Voice for Change is also a partner with the We Rise Coalition. With the theme titled embracing the collective power of our movements, Papua New Guinea has witnessed changes in certain in our political leadership circle. This NFF is a space for participants to congregate and share the achievements of our collaboration and solidarity resulting in achieving some progress in the space of Gender Equality and Ending Violence against Women and Girls.

A total of 46 women and 7 males from the 6 highlands provinces participated in the National Feminist Forum.

#### KEY achievements at the National Level

- Policy and legislations of Family Protection Act, Lukautim Pikinini Act
- The amended Sorcery Act to address issues related to violence against women and girls.
- National GBV Strategic Plan with a budget allocation of K7.93 million by the National Government.
- Establishment of the first ever Coalition of Parliamentarians Against Gender-Based Violence
- 2 women were elected to Parliament in the 2022 National General Elections

#### Provincial Level

- Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan
- Establishment of the Provincial GBV Secretariat

- New building for the Family Sexual and Violence Unit (FSVU) in many Police Stations through partnership with AusAID by the Jiwaka Provincial Government.

The Forum gave the opportunity to reflect, and WE ACKNOWLEDGE all the work done to date to address this crisis but note that we need to do much more to seriously reduce or eliminate GBV and the underlying cause of it: gender inequality.

We are presenting our request through this outcome statement to the decision makers and elected leaders representing our people and in pursuit of our National Constitution and its Goals and Directive Principles: WE RECOGNIZE that gender-based violence (“GBV”) is the single greatest human rights violation and development impediment for our country.

The key issues affecting women and children (families) identified prevalent in our homes and communities are.

- 1. We acknowledge that the practice of Polygamy is still a pressing issue.** It is true that our constitution acknowledges polygamy. However, lack of equal distribution of resources and opportunities results in increase of violence in homes due to negligence.
- 2. Sorcery accusation and its related violence is a continuous issue in all highlands provinces blaming any death or illness on the practice of sorcery.** The victims are the marginalized population of women in the society that endures the torture and pain resulting in deaths, internal displacement of survivors, and loss of homes and families.
- 3. The act of paying compensation contradicts the rule and process of the laws. Excessive demands burned the women to mobilize resources to cater for compensation. Perpetrators of gross abuse of human rights violations are not held accountable for the crimes committed.**
- 4. Many liquor outlets are operating without proper license and selling of homebrew at cheap prices is a prevalent issue.** This has contributed towards creating excessive social problems and putting the security of women and girls in the highland’s region.
- 5. Increase of presence of Firearms is becoming visible and dominant in the province.** The visibility of high-powered machine guns in our communities is Creating fear among women and children, giving false sense of security resulting in careless behaviour, and provoking tribal fights over manageable issues.

6. The forum recognises the increase in cases of child molestation and incest in our homes and communities. Children are no longer safe even in their homes and communities.
7. Our rural markets, the employment place for rural women, a place where grassroots women make money to sustain the family are falling apart and needs serious attention

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide technical and financial support to the Law and Justice sector for more collaboration with the Family Sexual and Violence Unit (Police).
2. Address the gap in quality and affordable health care for rural women survivors of GBV
3. Revisit and review the Adultery Act 1988 and make amendments accordingly on the penalties on the act.
4. Strengthen networking and establish partnerships with local community-based organisations,
5. Prioritize financial and technical resources for the implementation of all the Highlands Provincial Gender Based Violence Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (2022-2028); and ensure the Provincial Gender-based Violence Secretariat is established and operational.
6. Support community driven initiatives to Respond and Prevent GBV

Whilst the government and key stakeholders continue to re-strategize and design approaches to address GBV in the country, there is an urgency to strengthen existing referral pathways for service delivery.

*Author: The National Feminist Forum as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Feminist Forum*

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