

Supporting government to end sorcery accusation-related violence

Papua New Guinea [Ending Violence Against Women](#)

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Project name: Responding to Gender Based and Sorcery Related Violence in the Highlands

Project partner: Oxfam International Papua New Guinea

Total funding: \$3,294,500

Funding timeframe: May 2014–June 2019

Project name: Developing Communication Strategies for Social Change against Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence

Project partner: Queensland University of Technology in partnership with the Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka

Total funding: \$727,200

Funding timeframe: August 2016–June 2019

Project name: Improving the Impact of State and Non-State Interventions in Overcoming Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea

Project partner: Australian National University, School of Regulation and Global Governance

Total funding: \$1,059,200

Funding timeframe: September 2016–June 2020

The Government of Papua New Guinea has adopted a holistic multiple partner approach to ending violence that occurs in response to sorcery accusations through the 2015 Sorcery and Witchcraft Accusation Related Violence National Action Plan (National Action Plan).

The four core areas identified in the National Action Plan and supported by development partners are services (counselling, health sector and child protection), prevention through advocacy and communications, legal protection and prosecution and research.



Mary Kini speaking at the Yumi Sanap Strong Exhibition. Photo credit: Jake Malpass.

Local non-government organisations are responding to gender-based and sorcery accusation-related violence in the Highlands where government services are limited. These include Kafe Urban Settlers Women's Association, Kup Women for Peace, Highlands Women Human Rights Defenders Movement and Family For Change (in collaboration with Oxfam). They have established crisis support services and trialled relocation as a viable pathway out of violence. These activities are accompanied by community awareness, outreach and advocacy, including the Inap Nau! Campaign that encourages young people to become advocates for change and promote peaceful conflict resolution within the household and their communities.

Queensland University of Technology and the Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka are researching and developing communication strategies to effect social change. The project uses photography, digital storytelling and film through partnerships with

community-based organisations and human rights defenders to explore the causes, impacts and solutions around sorcery accusation-related violence. The project team has completed digital storytelling workshops in four provinces and helped communities produce over 40 digital stories about sorcery accusation-related violence. These creative research outputs demonstrate how sorcery accusations in Papua New Guinea need to be understood within local contexts and histories and how solutions to addressing violence can be developed from within these contexts. Partners are using the materials to strengthen representation of the issues in the media and to facilitate community discussions as part of Yumi Sanap Strong, a national initiative to change attitudes towards sorcery accusation-related violence.

A research partnership between the Divine Word University, the National Research Institute in Papua New Guinea and the Australian National University examines existing actions to address sorcery accusation-related violence and how responses can be improved. The researchers are identifying characteristics of victims and perpetrators and the factors that encourage or deter sorcery accusations and associated violence. Preliminary findings indicate that the most common immediate trigger for sorcery accusations is sickness or unexpected death that can lead to violence against the individuals suspected of practicing sorcery.

Analysis suggests there is relative impunity for those who engage in this violence and a high degree of community complicity, with people unwilling or afraid to help victims in many cases. The study also indicates that violence can be averted with the joint intervention of local leaders such as human rights defenders, church leaders or police. The research team is working with the Department of Justice and Attorney General to develop and deliver training programs for police on sorcery accusation-related violence, and with the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission on its work with the churches.

The National Secretariat of the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) investigates the problems associated with family and sexual violence and develops responses to address them. The Department of Justice and Attorney General leads on the National Action Plan. Assisted by coordinated support from both Pacific Women and the Australian-funded Justice Services and Stability for Development Program, the FSVAC and Department co-chair meetings of the National Action Plan Core Committee. The committee has developed a brochure and poster on sorcery accusation-

related violence that explain the laws and provide information on support services.

Pacific Women has strengthened these initiatives by supporting implementation of government policy and bringing partners together.