

Thinking outside the box

Papua New Guinea [Enhancing Agency](#)

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A survey of more than 1,400 employees across three of the 15 companies in Papua New Guinea subscribing to Bel isi PNG, found that acceptability of violence was seven times lower than the general population. Only 11 per cent of the surveyed employees agreed that family and sexual violence is sometimes justified, compared with 70 per cent of the general population, the 2020 Bel isi PNG: Measuring the Business Case project found.¹

‘We need to think about how we can change mindsets and behaviour,’ said National Capital District Governor Powes Parkop, speaking at the 2019 Bel isi PNG Leadership Forum in Port Moresby. ‘And in doing so, we need to think outside the box,’ he said.

So, what is the Bel isi PNG project doing to change attitudes to violence?



Governor Powes Parkop leads Bel isi EVAW walk in 2019. Photo Credit: Bel isi PNG

The Bel isi PNG initiative aims to inspire the private sector, in partnership with government and civil society. It offers employees case management and safe house services and provides business leaders with transformational tools to support change in the workplace and community. Fifteen companies and organisations currently subscribe to the initiative, representing around 7,500 employees. Since Bel isi PNG began in 2018, its workplace awareness

sessions have reached over 3,961 employees. This includes executive briefings to secure leadership support and newly developed sessions for managers and supervisors to deepen corporate understanding of the impacts of family and sexual violence. Bel isi PNG has created and shared with all subscribers an employee toolkit, with resources available in both English and Tok Pisin.

In addition, Bel isi PNG operates a case management centre and safe house at which employees of subscribing companies receive priority placement. The increasing number of referrals from subscribing companies indicates increased understanding of the impact of family and sexual violence in the workplace and employees' increased knowledge of how, and confidence to, seek help.

Stephanie Copus-Campbell was the Executive Director of the Oil Search Foundation when the Bel isi PNG initiative began. 'With the majority of women in Papua New Guinea having suffered from some form of physical or sexual violence, changing mindsets is a major priority – and we're not going to do that without working in partnership,' she said.

The partners of Bel isi PNG have also been working together to assess the cost of family and sexual violence to employees. Their study of three Bel isi PNG subscribing companies estimated that just less than 10 days are lost for every employee each year owing to family and sexual violence. The research team estimated the total lost wage bill for the three participating companies at over PGK7.3 million each year.

Survivors of violence who disclosed their experience through formal channels at Bel isi PNG subscribing workplaces have reported positive outcomes. This included receiving support from their employer, such as paid time off, counselling and referral to Bel isi PNG case management services. 'Yes, we have reduced family and sexual violence,' celebrated Governor Parkop. 'But we need to stop it.'

This story has been developed for the [Pacific Women Final Report 2012–2021](#), featuring Pacific Women-funded initiatives and partners.

1. The Bel isi PNG survey was conducted in November 2020.