

Pasin Bilong Lukautim Pikinini Gut or Parenting for Child Development

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

November 30, 2017

Project Name: Partnership for Positive Parenting

Project partner: UNICEF, Menzies School of Health, Catholic Archdioceses of Western Highlands, Madang and Chimbu

Total funding: \$1,787,760

Funding timeframe: 2015-17



Participants at a Positive Parenting training in Alexishafen, Madang Province, PNG. Photo: Professor Gary Robinson, Menzies School of Health Research, Charles Darwin University.

The findings of research are clear that reducing children's exposure to family violence has significant benefits for their development and has the potential to break the cycle of family violence. A pilot project in Western Highlands and Madang in Papua New Guinea has supported mothers and fathers to learn

positive parenting techniques. Following training, parents reported that they know more about child development and have significantly reduced harsh parenting practices.

UNICEF, the Menzies School of Health Research and Catholic Archdioceses of Western Highlands, Madang and Chimbu worked together to develop a positive parenting program specifically for the Papua New Guinea context.

Funded under the Australian aid program's [Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development](#) initiative, the project began with research to understand the parenting practices and strategies in use. The project partners worked together to consult, plan and review key messages. These messages were tested for their cultural and social relevance for the communities. They were then crafted into a series of workshops and materials to change parents' behaviour that were translated into Tok Pisin and Tok Ples. Catholic Archdiocese staff serving as child protection officers, family life educators, catechists and community child protection volunteers, were trained to facilitate the workshops to help parents learn more positive ways of parenting children.

A baseline study of 207 parents in the target communities revealed high levels of harsh parenting practices. Verbal abuse, corporal punishment and psychological control of girls and boys were widespread. During March and April 2017, six-day workshops were delivered to 223 fathers and mothers in 10 communities. Approximately 60 per cent of participants were mothers. Researchers found that, following the workshops, there had been statistically significant reductions in reported harsh parenting. The changes were apparent for both men and women. The greatest changes were in verbal abuse and corporal punishment.

[As one father reported: 'The most important lesson was how to manage my emotions. Sometimes I get angry with my children. I sometimes yell at them but now I can control myself. I tell my wife I have to leave the room, I go for a walk ... and then I cool down.'](#)

The qualitative research revealed that parents and caregivers had a limited understanding of the importance of their actions to the development of the child and later outcomes. Parents indicated that the workshops helped them to learn the significance of good parenting in the early years, the role of play in children's development, positive discipline strategies and parents needing

to control emotions in order to avoid hitting or verbally abusing their children. Both fathers and mothers reported that they were confident in their ability to change their practices.

The research also found some significant correlations. Family violence between adults, poor family cohesion and low confidence in ability to care for their children were associated with higher levels of harsh parenting practices. After participating in the workshops, there were significant reductions in all forms of harsh parenting. Further, parents were less likely to report that they experienced violence by a spouse and reported increased confidence in their ability to care for their children along with significant increases in family wellbeing overall.

**This Story of Change was originally published in the [Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016 – 2017](#). All values are consistent with that reporting period. For the most up-to-date value of activities, visit our [interactive map](#).*